

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

At the beginning of 1964 the then editor, Rev. Dodgson Sykes, retired and I took over at short notice as a stop-gap. The temporary arrangement, however, has stretched to nearly twelve and a half years! Last year I indicated to the trustees that I felt the time had come to pass on the task to a successor, and for the past few months they have been looking for a new editor, and very much hope that before long it may be possible to announce an appointment.

I have been casting my mind back over the past twelve years. How full they have been and in many ways how turbulent. In 1964 the second Vatican Council had still another year to run, with all the changes in Rome still in the future. In 1967 the Keele Congress saw many Evangelicals in the Church of England adopt a policy far removed from that of their predecessors, and from those Anglican Evangelicals who tried to maintain the old ways. The new line of action was to be involvement in the structures of the national Church, and beyond that in the structures of the World Council of Churches.

In the Baptist Union, in spite of strong Evangelical protest, the tide of radical error mounted higher with the notorious denial of the deity of Christ by a College principal. The Congregational Union left its historic independency—having already abandoned its evangelical heritage—to merge with the Presbyterians in the United Reform Church. Those Congregationalists who refused to repudiate the standards of Scripture continued outside the new Union.

Meanwhile two World Councils were held at Uppsala and Nairobi. The ecumenical shift became even more pronounced, with social and political policies pushing any semblance of faithfulness to Scripture into the background. The trend continued towards an even wider organisation than the World Council of Churches, as the notion of a union of the religions of the world gained ground.

The charismatic movement appeared within Roman Catholicism in 1967 and since then has mushroomed to become a large world-wide movement. Increasingly it has come to terms with Roman dogma and practice, and indeed has encouraged such things as Mariolatry and the Mass.

In the country at large, crime has soared to ever new heights. Abortion and homosexuality are now legal and accepted. Drunkenness and gambling are national obsessions, and the steady decline in outward attachment to the various churches continues from year to year.

But while the picture is very black, there are also gleams of light. To some they are insignificant, but to the Christian who accepts the Scriptural injunction not to despise the day of small things, they are tokens of the fact that the Lord God omnipotent reigns.

There has been a re-discovery by very many of the faith of the reformation. The doctrines of grace which seemed to have receded from view except in a minority of churches have returned to hundreds of pulpits. Young ministers have been particularly prominent in this return to the reformed faith. The growth of reformed literature has also been an important feature, with the Banner of Truth making a major contribution, but with other publishers entering the field or re-emerging with new vigour. New churches have appeared, particularly in new housing estates, with Christians standing for a clear gospel testimony in face of all the adverse trends of the day.

It has been my aim in the Magazine to expose and resist the errors of the day, and to declare the doctrines of grace in their application to our present situation. To exalt the Saviour and to promote holiness, to aim in all things at the glory of God—these have been the objectives in view. Where we have failed we look to God in His mercy to forgive; where we have been in any measure used to bring blessing, we acknowledge that we are in debt to the grace of God and give Him all the glory.

May God richly bless you the readers, and may He use the new editor to achieve greater things in the days ahead.

H. M. CARSON.

If God be for Us

H. M. CARSON

*A Sermon preached at the Annual Meeting
of the Sovereign Grace Union in London
on June 20th, 1964.*

'Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:

'For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.'—Acts 18 : 9, 10.

We are in danger sometimes of looking on the Apostle Paul as some kind of super-saint, and, of course, we have some grounds for that tendency because he was certainly an outstanding man of God, a man who obviously had a deep knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and a tremendous concern for the preaching of the Gospel, a man whose whole life was devoted to that task, and who was greatly used of God to open the door of faith to many. But it is good to realise that the Apostle Paul was a man of flesh and blood just like ourselves, and a man subject to the same temptations as those to which we are subject. I find it good, as I read the New Testament, to discover something of Paul's essential humanity. You will remember that when he was writing to the Corinthians he says that 'a great door' opened for him, obviously a door of service, but he said he was so troubled in mind about his friend Timothy that he could not take that opportunity (I Corinthians 16 : 9-11; Acts 19 : 22). One finds it was the same in the matter of Epaphroditus, where one again senses his need of human fellowship. He was not, as it were, the self-sufficient autocrat of the faith, but a very humble man of God, who needed the comfort and strength that came from his Christian friends and who therefore coveted their fellowship. This is why I think it does not take very much reading between the lines to see that here in Corinth Paul is tempted to be discouraged. It is evident from the very word which God here speaks to him, God does not speak irrelevant words to us. He speaks precisely to our present situation, and therefore when God says to the Apostle, 'Be not afraid', Paul was obviously in a situation where he was tempted to give way to fear and discouragement. 'But look,' you may say, 'he has been preach-

ing in Corinth, and God is blessing his ministry. There are even the beginnings of a Church in the city. Why should he be afraid?' Well, when God begins to bless, the devil begins to work, and along with the blessing on the Apostle's ministry in Corinth there was doubtless evidence of the beginnings of opposition. After Paul, the erstwhile rabbi, became one of the great protagonists of the despised sect of the Nazarenes, hostilities often came from the Jews, and it is no wonder that, as Paul looked at the situation in Corinth, he should feel, 'Yes, some have believed; but look at the opposition and hostility. What scheme will they devise next? How are they going to plan my overthrow?' One feels that Paul, the very human Apostle, was discouraged or tempted to fear, but God comes to him and says, 'Do not be afraid, Paul, but speak, and do not be silent, for I have much people in this city'.

So I thought we would have a word this evening about this whole question of temptation to discouragement that so easily besets the Christian worker, and, indeed, everyone of us who is engaged in Christ's service. What makes the discouragement worse, or the temptation all the more acute, is that often we conceal it even from our Christian friends. It is not considered the proper thing in Christian circles to appear discouraged or disheartened, and so, very often, I feel, Christians tend to keep up an appearance, wanting to appear to be joyful and victorious, when, deep down in their hearts, so far from feeling triumphant, they may feel thoroughly depressed and exceedingly fearful. Let us therefore look at this whole matter of fear. What is involved in it?

Well, fear, you know, in ordinary living can be a very healthy thing; in fact, I believe that in the providence of God fear is one of those things that God has linked with the instinct of self-preservation. You see it in the animal realm. An animal is afraid because it hears an unwelcome sound and it scurries away in order to escape and because it wants to preserve itself. I believe that the instinct has been built by our Creator into our constitution, so that fear is our healthy awareness that something—or, it may be, some person—is threatening us with harm or injury, and we realise also that that thing or person is much stronger than we are, and that the situation is utterly beyond our control. So we are afraid. Now fear means that we tend to preserve ourselves. We want to get away from that person, or to avoid that situation of impending danger, and fear impels us in the other direction. Fear is not the instinct that makes you stand up and fight, but

the instinct that compels you to turn round and make good your escape as fast as possible.

It is the same in the spiritual realm. There is this same tendency to be afraid when we see a problem looming into the forefront of our horizon, or a situation gradually deteriorating that we feel we cannot cope with. Now fear, I say, is a healthy thing if it drives a person in the right direction away from danger. And the fear which drives us in our spiritual problems in the right direction, namely, to God, is a healthy thing. But the fear in which the Christian is involved so often is not that kind of fear, not the reaction which impels you to turn to God at once for His strength, but the fear that locks you in with yourself, and that becomes craven cowardice. Surely this is the fear to which we are so often prone, a fear into which the devil leads us, and where he would seek to embed us just as if we were in a morass. It is to this fear that God addresses Himself when He says to Paul—and it may well be to some very discouraged soul in this meeting this evening—‘Be not afraid’.

Now why do Christians fear? Why do they get discouraged? I would suggest for two basic reasons: first, because we tend to be so *man-centred* in our thinking; and then, on the other side, because we so easily *forget God*, and His mercies to us, and His power on our behalf. We are so man-centred. This is because of our sinful nature. We are born in Adam, born into a sinful race, and man is at the very centre of the thinking and planning of that race. In the Middle Ages the astronomers never really broke out of the system which they created. For them the earth was the centre of the universe and everything went round it. Well, of course, there was no scientific advance with them. But then there came in astronomy the Copernican revolution, when it was realised that the sun was the centre of the universe and all the planets went round the sun. Astronomers then began to make some progress scientifically. Now we are pre-Copernican in our theological thinking. We have got man at the centre, puny little man, and we imagine that the universe revolves round him. What we need is to be, as it were, post-Copernican; we need to have the sun in the centre of the universe, that is, to be God-centred in our thinking.

When we are man-centred, we think in human terms, assess things by human standards, and are always applying humanly devised arguments. That is why we begin to fear and to be discouraged, because if we approach things from a purely human standpoint, we begin to magnify the difficulties. You know the phrase, ‘making mountains out of molehills’. Well,

in spiritual issues, when we meet what seem to us to be overwhelming problems, it is so often because we ourselves have magnified them, and the devil is a past-master at lending us a magnifying glass for the purpose, so that the more we concentrate upon the problems, the greater they become.

God is here speaking about hostility. 'Do not be afraid, Paul,' He says, 'for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee.' Paul obviously had in mind that there were people in Corinth who would have been only too glad to hurt him; in fact, only too glad to eliminate him altogether. Now when we face opposition, so often we tend to be man-centred, and to look not only at the opposition but at the people from whom it comes. We see their attitude, we can detect in their very expression just how they feel towards us, and we listen to their words: it may be the words they speak to us directly, but more often it is the words we suspect they are speaking about us behind our backs. Some of their words are malicious, critical, bitter, spiteful words, which may gradually percolate back to us, so that we know what they are saying; and we are concerned not only with what they are saying, but with what they are scheming and proposing to do, and the result of it all is that the problem is magnified. It is like a mountain looming in the road before us; we can see no way round it, and what we are really doing is, we are listening to the word of man rather than to the Word of God.

Another evidence of our man-centred thinking as we face such problems or such opposition is that we turn from those who are opposing us, not to God, to whom we ought to turn, but to ourselves, and we begin to assess our resources. That, of course, is the way the world works. If an engineer is constructing a new motorway, and he comes to some difficulty, he stands back, assesses the resources he has available, and thinks in terms of his own skill for dealing with the particular problem. So often we too think on a purely physical level, and when we face opposition or difficulty we begin to ask, 'How do I meet this?', and the trouble is that as we look at ourselves we find that our resources are pitifully thin; in fact, that we are utterly incapable of dealing with the situation.

We look for strength within, and what do we find? We find the most pathetic weakness, and then, of course, the devil who is always ready at our elbow will remind us—and how constantly he does it!—of past failure. 'Yes,' he says, 'you have met that kind of problem before, and you know what happened; you remember, too, the resolves you made, and how you were going to do this, that, and the other for God, and

how badly you fell.' We are thus pulled into a condition in which we simply oscillate backwards and forwards: we look at the problem, and we look at ourselves; we look at the opposition, and we turn to our own helplessness; we see the difficulty, and we turn back to our own sinful failure; and before we know where we are we are just moving round in a circle, and the more we move round in that circle the more discouraged we become, and sometimes we slip into a condition of real depression. Indeed, some can get very near the abyss of sheer despair, because they are so man-centred and so forgetful of God.

In such a situation one of our great needs is that we should look back, not at our sinful failures, but at what God has done. This is one of the great tonics, one of the great sources of stimulus and strength, that God has wrought great things, not only for us individually, but for all His people. This is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whom we serve, and in whom we trust. But one of the great sins of God's people has always been forgetfulness. Written across the history of Israel was just this—you know the refrain in the Psalms—'They soon forgot His works' (Psalm 106 : 13). He delivered them from Egypt, He fed them in the wilderness, He gave them water from the rock, He brought them into Canaan, but again and again they soon forgot it all.

Under the New Covenant, too, there has been the same forgetfulness of God's dealings. Look at the Apostles, that favoured group who had so much that should have taught them of God's providence and care for them. Christ feeds the five thousand, but when the four thousand need to be fed, they have forgotten what has happened before; here is an insoluble problem, and they do not know what to do! We say, 'What fools! Have they no memory?' Yes, but fools that we are, *we* have got to say just the same to ourselves! So often we lock ourselves up with our problems, and we dwell upon them and our own weakness, and we forget what God has done, as recorded again and again right through Scripture. We see Him working great things for His people, and as we turn the pages of Christian history we find Him again and again doing the same, and as we turn the few brief chapters of our own life, we look back and see the hand of God; but when we forget, need we wonder that we find ourselves depressed and discouraged?

Something else we forget: we forget *the promises of God*. This God is a gracious God, and everything about His dealings with His people speaks of His grace, His love, and His

mercy. We go constantly back to Calvary and we stand there in thought where the Lord hung and bled and died for us, and it speaks of that grace which stooped from high heaven to us in our need. This gracious God is the God who has spoken. He does not dwell in silence—solitary, remote and distant. He is not some cold, far-off deity. He is the God who has come, who has spoken in His Word, and He is at His most characteristic in His Word when He is making promises, and in those promises pledging Himself to us. There is nothing parsimonious about our God. He is not a God who is cheese-paring in His gifts, but One who so overflows with liberality, with bounty, and with generosity, that His blessings cascade upon us.

He is the promise-making God, and though we acknowledge with lip-service the fact that God has promised many blessings to His people in His Word, yet when we face our problem and it looms so large, we forget that God has spoken; we behave as if there were no Bible, as if there were no Word to open, no Word to hear, and as if the Holy Spirit had not spoken through men of God and was not able to take their words and apply them to our hearts. We forget, I say, the promises of God, the rich promises of His presence, His power, His blessing. Is it any wonder, then, that we find ourselves bogged down in this state of despondency, fear and weakness? We have an ally at such a time, of course, in the devil, who is only too glad to cast doubt upon the promises of God, and only too ready to make us forget them. He will tell us that they are not for us, that we cannot really depend upon them, or that they are not for our particular situation. He will, in fact, tell us *anything* (for he is the most plausible liar possible) if only he can get us to turn aside from them; and the more we listen to him, the more we think in purely human terms, and the more we shut our minds to the promises of God, the more we remain in our pathetic, discouraged condition.

It is a disastrous condition if persisted in. For one thing, it tends to *sap our spiritual strength*. It is true in the physical realm, is it not? A person trapped in a blazing building can be so terrified, so paralysed with fear, as to be completely incapable of movement. And we can become so fearful in our Christian lives that we are just incapable of doing anything about our situation, and we remain, as it were, spiritually numb, incapable of moving. And this fear does something else: it so often *stifles our witness*. Paul here was facing a situation in which clearly there was growing opposition and if we are

faithful to the Word of God and to the testimony of the Lord Jesus we too will face opposition, bitter opposition. So often in these days we do *not* face it because we are so unfaithful, but as sure as we are faithful to the Gospel we may expect abundant opposition, and one of our sad tendencies is to mute our witness. There are rough edges to the cross, rough edges to this Gospel, and we tend often in such a situation to smooth off these rough edges, to make our message more palatable, to push into the background some of the sterner truths which should be declared with forthrightness and boldness, and it is because of our fear and our craven cowardice, that we tend to whittle down the message that God has called us to proclaim.

Now God has a word for us in this situation, just as He had this word for Paul. 'Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.' The Lord came to Paul as He so constantly comes to His disciples in times of testing, and He came with a word of *reassurance and comfort*: 'Do not be afraid'. And He also came with a word of *command*: 'Speak out and do not be silent'.

But God's word of comfort is backed with His promises. After all, we may be in a desperate situation and people may say to us, 'Do not be afraid; do not worry'. People do say that kind of thing rather glibly, but a glib word like that is of little help. God, however, does not speak such empty words, but comes alongside His child at the time of testing, and speaks a word that is accompanied by the promise of His own presence: 'Do not be afraid of men, I am with you: do not be afraid of the opposition, I am with you; do not be afraid of all the hostility you are likely to encounter, I am with you. Who are these men in Corinth who are pitting their might against Me, the almighty God? Puny little creatures, mere specks on one minute speck of dust in a vast universe, for they, and this planet, and this whole universe have come from My hands. I am with you, Paul—I, the Creator of heaven and earth. And who are they, those specks of dust rebelling against their Creator, here today and gone tomorrow, up for a moment like the grass and then cut down? They are dying men, Paul—here for only fifty, sixty or seventy years! And against whom are they fighting? Against you? No, they are fighting against Me, the everlasting God, the One who was at the beginning and who will be at the end, the unchanging One. They are sinners, rebels against Me, and though

at the moment of their rebellion they seem to be so triumphant, they are going to stand before My judgment seat. So it is not against you, My ambassador, that they are fighting, but against the Judge of all the earth, the Creator, the Sovereign Lord. Let them say what they will, let them plan and scheme if they will, I am with you; I, the everlasting God, am your refuge.'

It is the God of the Covenant who speaks, the God who chose Paul, the God who chose you and me, if we are His, before the foundation of the world; the God who in the fulness of time gave His beloved Son to die on Calvary; the God who in our individual experience called us by His grace and made us His own children by adoption and grace; the God who has pledged Himself to us; this is the God who says, 'Do not be afraid, I am with you'. There was that time in the Old Testament when the prophet Elisha and his servant were shut up in the city of Dothan, besieged by the Syrians. There was the army all around getting ready to crash through the gates, and that would be the end. The servant was greatly troubled and the prophet prayed, 'Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see' (II Kings 6 : 17). The servant's eyes were wide open already, wide open with terror and apprehension, but God opened other eyes, the eyes of faith, and he saw something he had not seen before, chariots of fire, garrisoning the city, protecting God's servant, and it was as if God was speaking to that young man's heart straight from heaven, 'Do not be afraid, for I am with you'. This is still the word for us. We have the abiding presence with us of the living God. Oh, I know we pay lip-service to it, but does it really thrill our hearts? Do we know this for a truth, that God Almighty, the Sovereign Creator of the universe, is our God and that He is with us? The Lord said to His disciples before His ascension, 'And lo, I am with you all the days'. There is no moment when God absents Himself from His people, for He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps, and He says, 'I am with you, do not be afraid'.

But the Lord gave Paul a further word. It was a word for Paul then, and I believe it is one of the great words for us engaged in the task of preaching the Gospel in these days. 'Paul,' He said, 'I have much people in this city.' This city? Corinth? But Corinth was a filthy place morally, a cesspool of iniquity, a city where all kinds of foulness and moral perversions flourished. In the ancient world a Corinthian was a nickname for an immoral man. Indeed, Paul himself was to write later to the Corinthians, and in describing Corinth, he might

be writing about twentieth-century Soho. Listen to it! 'Fornicators, idolators, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners' (I Corinthians 6 : 9, 10). 'But,' God says, 'I have much people in this city. Something is going to happen here, Paul, through the preaching of the Gospel and through the powerful operation of the Spirit.' What was going to happen? Well, Paul describes later what did happen. Here are these vile people, wallowing in their moral and spiritual filth, but he says, 'Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.'

'Paul, you are looking at the opposition and at the difficulties, aren't you? But realise, Paul, that God has a purpose, a purpose of redemption, not a purpose that He devised a week or a month or a few years ago, but a plan that was formed in the counsels of the Godhead before the world began; and, Paul, it is going to be worked out in Corinth. You can only see the immorality and the vice and the foulness that prevails in this city, but God looks into this filth, and He sees His own jewels that He is going to take out of the filth and wash clean in the blood of Christ. So Paul,' says God, 'do not be afraid, for I am with you, and I have a purpose to fulfil in you and through you here in Corinth.' Now we look out on London, we look out on our country, and we know very well that this is just a picture of the unutterable vileness, the filth, the lasciviousness, the perversion that is increasingly characterising the country, and I believe the Lord would give us a reassuring word, saying, 'As you go out into this situation I am with you just as I was with Paul in that foul hole in Corinth, and I have much people in this city, and through the preaching of the Gospel I am going to bring them to Myself.'

Well, inevitably accompanying this there was a further word still. The Lord does not merely reassure and comfort His people, but He also challenges them. Many of us want to be comforted, and we like the consoling words of the Gospel, but we would like to relax with them. Too often we are looking for sedatives, tranquilisers in the spiritual realm, so that we can sit back; but the Lord brings His words of comfort in order that He may also arouse and awaken us. Hence there is also a straight word of command given to Paul: 'Speak, and hold not thy peace'. 'Lift up your voice, Paul, declare this Gospel which I have committed to you. You are a man who can say, "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel"'. Therefore, Paul, speak out and do not be silent, for I am with thee.' Had God a purpose for Corinth? Had He much people in that

city? Then how was that purpose going to be realised? Paul gives the answer himself as he writes to the Corinthians, 'It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe' (I Corinthians 1 : 21). God had His mind set upon them; He was going to save them. 'All that the Father giveth Me,' says Christ, 'shall come to Me: and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out' (John 6 : 37). But the instrument which God uses to accomplish His purpose is the preaching of the Gospel. That is the significance of what God is saying to Paul here: 'Lift up your voice, let it ring out in Corinth; let the testimony to Christ be heard and let this Gospel be sounded forth with power, for through the proclamation of this Gospel I am going to work out My purposes of salvation.'

You do not have to move far in evangelical circles in these days to hear it said that Calvinism sounds the death-knell of evangelism, and I think there are some good Christians who are seriously troubled by this. One of them indeed wrote a booklet not so very long ago. I cannot remember the title of it, but the burden of it was just this: here are all these young men who are turning to Reformed theology, and the result is, or will be, that they will lose all interest in the preaching of the Gospel. Well now, if anyone of us who has embraced Reformed doctrine gives cause for that statement, with the New Testament before us we ought to hang our heads in shame, for a man who *is* Reformed in doctrine ought to be passionately concerned with the spread of the Gospel. To see Paul burning with zeal for God, ready at all times to call all men everywhere to repent, as he did on Mars Hill; to see him becoming all things to all men that he 'might by all means save some'; to hear him saying, 'Woe is me if I preach not the gospel', is to listen to a Reformed theologian concerned with the spread of the apostolic Gospel; and I repeat, if we have given any grounds for the criticism that our Calvinism sounds the death-knell of the preaching of the Gospel, then, with the New Testament open before us, we ought to be ashamed.

I would say, on the contrary, that Reformed doctrine is the only adequate basis for Gospel preaching. We might quote the Reformed men right down the years who have thus engaged in the task. This city listened to the voice of Spurgeon in the last century; it heard the voice of George Whitefield; it heard the voice of the Reformers; and right down the centuries the men who have been foremost in the preaching of the Gospel and in reaching out to the unsaved have been men who have stood firm by Reformed doctrine. After all, if I

have no idea about the outcome of such preaching, and if it depends for its outcome on the response of man, the whole situation is so uncertain that I am left thoroughly depressed. If I look round today and see that there is apathy and unconcern, and that people do not want to receive the truth, and if I am locked up in this purely human situation, is it any wonder if I become dismayed? But if by the grace of God I am able to stand back, and if I look not from some petty human level but with spiritual perspective, so that I can see the almighty purposes of God, and realise that God will call out His elect from the four corners of the earth, and that He will fulfil the number whom He will thus call to Himself; and if I realise that it is by the preaching of the Gospel that He will do this, then my evangelism becomes completely new. It is not some earthly endeavour, some frantic attempt to bolster up a situation in the Churches in which things are getting out of control. Not a bit of it! We are lifted rather to a new level when we realise that we are simply instruments in the hands of God Almighty, through whom, by His grace, He is going to work out His purposes in saving men and women.

We live, do we not, in days of spiritual and moral decline. I do not need to enlarge on that because it is all too obvious, and even the secular news agencies report it at length and press it upon our attention. But from our standpoint, what is more serious than the abounding unrighteousness is the ungodliness which lies behind the unrighteousness, and I fear there is a danger in Christian circles of drawing in upon ourselves, of feeling that we are just a remnant, and that we must as it were, just hold a line. You will remember at the beginning of the Second World War how the French were completely outflanked. Why? Because they sat in their Maginot line. They had all their defences and ramparts around them, and while they were inside them the Germans by-passed them. I fear that in Christian circles we tend sometimes to have a Maginot mentality. We are on the defensive, and though we do not like to admit it openly, we feel that we are a contracting cause, and wherever we look at this Church or Chapel this seems to be the situation. But I believe that what we need to do is to lift up our hearts. God has not abdicated His position in the world; He has not been dethroned. We serve the sovereign Lord God Almighty. We talk about sovereign grace, but so often by our very actions we belie our profession, and we do not seem to believe that God is sovereign. But He is on the throne. He will work out

(concluded on page 178)

The Sovereignty of God

PART IV: SOVEREIGNTY IN REDEMPTION

S. M. HOUGHTON

We turn our thoughts this month to God's sovereignty in Redemption, 'a deep where all our thoughts are drowned', and in which it is supremely necessary rightly to divide the Word of Truth. Only as this is done can it be shown that Scripture is one harmonious whole.

Redemption, or buying back, is accomplished at the cost of the infinitely precious blood of Christ. It is a superlative work of God. In explanation of it, that which has been revealed by God, and that only, constitutes true knowledge. Human speculation in this 'holy of holies' counts for nothing. We need divine words to interpret this divine act. Concerning it, we have the remarkable statement from the pen of an apostle, 'Which things the angels desire to look into' (to investigate). It is what God has Himself said concerning the work of His Son when He offered Himself as a sacrifice for human sin that gives us a true understanding of this greatest of all transactions. Nature itself, to manifest sad sympathy with the suffering Son of God, donned the veil of mourning when 'God the mighty Maker died for man the creature's sin'. No other divine act, wonderful as all such acts are, reveals so much of the depths of Godhead as does the smiting of the Good Shepherd by the sword of the Most High: 'Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the Man that is my Fellow, saith the Lord of hosts; smite the Shepherd' (Zechariah 13 : 7). Never was seen so strange and fruitful a smiting! By the wounds of the Crucified came life and health to His chosen! It was by the pouring out of the precious life-blood of the God-Man that an end was made of sins (Daniel 9 : 24), that reconciliation was made for iniquity, and that God could be just in His justifying act (Romans 3 : 26). If Calvary had never been, redemption had never been known.

'Mystery of redemption this; all my sins on Christ were laid;
My offence was reckoned His; He the full atonement made.
Fully I am justified, free from sin, and more than free,
Guiltless since for me He died, righteous since He lived for

The subject is indeed great, and we touch but the fringe of it, confining our present attention to one point only—divine sovereignty as it is manifest in redemption.

It is a striking fact that when certain of the angels, led by the prince of darkness, broke out in horrid rebellion against their Maker, God spared them not, but cast them down to hell, delivering them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment (2 Peter 2 : 4; Jude 6). That is to say, God executed a swift and immediate judgment upon them, even though final judgment was held in reserve. In respect of such angels redemption found no place in God's thoughts. Mercy did not rejoice against judgment (contrast James 2 : 13). We behold here the severity of God. But when man sinned mercy was speedily a-wing. The first Gospel promise followed hard upon the heels of man's offence, and wrapped up in the word of promise was a blessed foreshadowing of redemption-work. The 'bruised heel' typed out the sufferings of the 'seed of the woman' which was Christ. Isaac Watts has caught the thought in the expressive words in which he contrasts the lot of the elect angels with that of sinful men: 'If sinless innocence be theirs, redemption all is ours.'

Again, we see divine sovereignty in the scope of Christ's redemptive work. Certainly it is the case that Scripture here and there uses 'large expressions' to indicate the wide-stretching character of the divine purpose. Men of all races and languages are included in the saving work of God. Jewish exclusiveness necessitated the use of strong expressions in order to break it down and to let Jewish believers know that God had thoughts of love towards Gentiles. We are not, however, to read into such expressions more than they are intended to convey, for harmonising with them are other modes of speech which define the precise scope of God's redemptive purpose. Thus we read that the Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep (John 10 : 11, 15), that it is the Church of God that He has purchased with His own blood (Acts 20 : 28), that the Heavenly Bridegroom loved the Church and gave Himself for it (Ephesians 5 : 25). Woe betide the man whose covenanted affections extend, in this regard, beyond his bride! Correspondingly, in Revelation, the saved speak in the new song of their redemption unto God OUT OF every kindred and tongue and people and nation (5 : 9). They are 'redeemed FROM AMONG men' (14 : 4). The Lord knows them that are His. His redemptive work on their behalf is the ground of their salvation and of His own satisfaction. The pleasure of the Lord prospers in His hand (Isaiah 53 : 10-11).

(concluded on page 178)

Doctrinal Definitions

PAUL TUCKER
PREACHING

TWO CATEGORIES OF PREACHING.

There is, in the New Testament, Evangelical or Gospel preaching, and also Expository or informative preaching. Both these kinds are seen in the Great Commission in Matthew 28 : 19, 20. The word translated 'teach' here means 'make disciples', literally 'disciple all nations'. That is Gospel preaching. In verse 20 our Lord uses an entirely different word. The word 'teaching' here means to instruct, to inform and to edify. In effect Our Lord is saying 'first, make disciples, then build them up in their faith'.

I. GOSPEL PREACHING.

For this we turn to the Acts of the Apostles. Although the early preachers preached often, they adopted different methods of preaching. In Acts 2, Peter was speaking to a congregation comprised of Jews primarily. They had a knowledge of the Old Testament and so when Peter begins his service he refers them back immediately to their own Scriptures. He takes them back to Joel, and to Psalms 16 and 110. All he has to say concerning the Messiah is confirmed from the Old Testament Scripture. When he applies this message to themselves he charges them with very real responsibility for the death of Christ. Notwithstanding the fact that the Lord Jesus came to the cross by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; that did not absolve his congregation of their responsibility, verse 23. They were convicted. They repented and were baptised.

It is the same gospel in Acts 10 and the message is summarised in verse 43, but the whole approach is different. As these people are Gentiles they have not got the Jewish knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures, so he does not begin with Old Testament Scriptures. He begins by appealing to them and telling them that God is no respecter of persons. They had all heard of two outstanding characters, both of whom had been murdered: John the Baptist, the rugged preacher, and Jesus of Nazareth, who had recently been crucified. He talks about Jesus Christ and he talks about John (verses 36, 37). He does not charge the Gentiles directly with responsibility for the death of Jesus Christ. He turns the responsibility over to those who were more blameworthy. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit he is very shrewd in his

presentation of the message to the Gentiles, and he says in verse 39, 'Whom *they* slew and hanged on a tree'. They did not possess the knowledge that those Jews possessed in Jerusalem who had crucified their Messiah, and so Peter's whole approach is different. He tells them why he is preaching this, verse 42, and then he brings in the Scriptures at the end, verse 43.

This is very instructive, because it shows us that in approaching people we have to begin where they are. It is no good beginning where they are not. Paul adopted exactly the same method. See Acts 12 : 14, 15. He was invited to speak, and so he stands up in the Jewish synagogue with the background of the Old Testament, and goes right through their history from the period when they were in bondage in Egypt to the time of Jesus Christ the Messiah, who had been crucified. Then he applies this message to them. See verse 38. Related to the Old Testament, the law and their history, they could appreciate the gospel and embrace it, those who desired so to do. In Acts 14 we find Paul in Lystra among a pagan people, and in verse 8 Paul gave healing to this man. The priest of Jupiter would then have done sacrifice, verse 13. The people wanted to worship Paul and Barnabas, verse 11. Paul was distressed about this, verse 14, and began to preach to them, verse 15. He cannot quote the Old Testament to them, as they do not know it. He cannot talk to them about the law of Moses, as they do not know the first thing about the law of Moses. He gives the same gospel, yet from a different angle. He tells them that there is one God who is the living God, verse 15. He points them to the true God who is the Creator, a longsuffering ruler and a loving benefactor, verses 15-17.

Turn to Acts 8—Philip went down to Samaria. The Samaritans were mongrel people, partly Jewish, partly pagan. They had incorporated the first five books of the Old Testament into their religion, but had rejected the rest. They rejected the Jewish temple. They had their own temple in Mount Gerizim and there was great hostility and animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans. Yet the Jews and the Samaritans had one thing in common: they were both looking for the Messiah; witness the conversation of the Lord Jesus with the woman of Samaria (see John 4 : 24, 25). Now notice in Acts 8 : 5. He preached Christ, not as Saviour at this point, but as Christ, the Anointed One, the Messiah. He tells these Samaritans that their Messiah has come. Here was a good ground of approach. He begins where they are. They are looking for and believe in Messiah, so he preaches Christ unto them.

Later in this chapter he is taken away into the desert and

joins the chariot of the Ethiopian who had come from North Africa and who was not Jewish in his background at all, but pagan. He had been influenced by Judaism to a certain extent and had gone to Jerusalem to try to learn about a purer form of religion, but he was still dissatisfied. He purchased the scroll of Isaiah, and he was so eager to learn the message of this scripture that he read it aloud to himself as the chariot trundled across the desert. And, as you remember, he had reached Isaiah 53 when Philip joined the chariot. Some people say the Bible is the best missionary. The Bible is indispensable. People can and have been saved simply through reading the Bible alone. Generally speaking, however, God uses a human instrument to interpret the Word of God to another person. The Bible is not always self-explanatory. We are glad of Bible notes and preachers. Though this Eunuch had the Bible, it did not lead him in and of itself to the Lord. Philip ran to him and heard him read Isaiah and said, 'Understandest thou what thou readest?' He replied, 'How can I, except some man should guide me?' You cannot get rid of the preacher! 'Then Philip began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus' (verse 35). This Eunuch is not concerned about a Messiah fulfilling Old Testament prophecy, for he is a pagan. He is, however, vitally interested in this Person whose life was cut off and who was obviously a sin-bearer; he is vitally interested in a Saviour, and so we find that to him Philip began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus as Saviour and Deliverer. It does not matter whether you start with Christ, Jesus, the law of Moses, John the Baptist, or the earthly ministry of Christ, we are coming to the one gospel.

EXPOSITORY PREACHING.

In the commission that our Lord gave to Peter in John 21, twice over He told him 'Feed my sheep' and once He said 'Feed my lambs'. Sheep and lambs are within the fold. Sheep belong to the shepherd, so that primarily the ministry of Peter was to believers. There is an echo of this in Acts 20 : 28. The Church is to be fed and nourished from the Scriptures. See verse 32. There are several places in this book of Acts where we find a teaching ministry to the church. See Acts 11 : 19-24. The church at Antioch was founded by lay-preachers and not by Apostles, deacons or evangelists. It was founded by those who were scattered abroad, at the time of the persecution, under Stephen. Barnabas' name in the New Testament is put in this way, 'Barnabas the son of consolation'. He was always consoling and encouraging people. It can be translated 'the son of exhortation'. The same word is used in verse 23.

Notice verses 25, 26. Barnabas went to Tarsus to seek for Saul. It is quite fair to infer that Barnabas was not a great teacher. He was an exhorter, he could encourage people, but he saw that his ministry was not deep enough. These who were grounded in the love of Christ, the grace of God, needed now to be grounded in the truth of Christ and in the truth of God, and so he brought Saul (Paul), who had a far deeper experience and a far richer ministry than his own (verse 25). Turn to Acts 20 : 8. Paul was preaching in Troas until midnight. Read verses 10, 11. This was ministry to the saints, because in verse 7 you notice it was the Lord's Day, and the Lord's table was preceded by this very lengthy discourse. Obviously Paul would never be passing this way again and he wanted to take great advantage of the opportunity to instruct these believers in the things of God, and so he went on for a very long time.

TWO GROUPS OF PREACHERS.

(1) *The ordinary people—every believer.* One of the words for 'preaching' in the New Testament means 'to announce good news'. See Acts 8 : 3, 4. These were not the Apostles, because the Apostles remained in Jerusalem. These were the ordinary people (see verse 1). All of us are called upon to witness to the Lord and to spread this gospel. This is a ministry in which we are all to engage. (2) *Those whom God has set aside for the ministry of the Word.* See Ephesians 4: Paul is speaking of the ascension of Christ. Read verses 11-13. There are several gifts to the church mentioned—apostles and prophets come first. These no longer exist. They apply to the apostolic age. Apostles and prophets were unique men who, before the canon of New Testament Scripture was completed, had a divine insight into future events. See Ephesians 2 : 20. According to Paul, the foundation of the church was the teaching of the apostles and prophets. The church is built upon apostolic teaching, and apostolic teaching is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. The other offices in the church, however, are surely continuing. In Ephesians 4 : 11, pastors and teachers are linked together. The pastor is expected to be a teacher; the teacher is also expected to fulfil the function of a pastor. Paul himself makes it plain to us that he was appointed a preacher (see 1 Timothy 2 : 7; also 4 : 14; 2 Timothy 1 : 6). There was nothing magical about the gift of the Holy Spirit to Timothy, but it is quite obvious that he was set aside for this ministry, and ordaining hands were laid upon him, the hands of the presbytery, the presiding elders and the hands of Paul himself. God chose that moment to endorse that ordination of Timothy by endowing him with all the gifts and
(concluded on page 192)

Perseverance Without Presumption

C. H. SPURGEON

*A Sermon preached on Thursday evening,
7th March, 1872, at the Metropolitan
Tabernacle.*

'I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand' (John 10 : 28).

Those of you who were present last Thursday evening will remember that I spoke then upon the necessity of 'holding fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end', and I showed you that it is only by continuing in the faith with which we began that we are proved to be partakers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, let us speak as plainly as we may, we are always liable to be misunderstood. The most eager hearer may easily confound his thoughts with our words, and so attribute notions to us that spring up spontaneously in his own mind. Thus, I met this week with an earnest anxious enquirer who thought I had meant that though a man should be a believer in Jesus Christ, yet after all he might perish. I dare say some expressions I used led him to think so. Had he been long a hearer here, he would not have imagined that I could give utterance to such a statement; for all of you who hear me continually know that, if there is one doctrine I have preached more than another, it is the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints even to the end. What I intended to say—I do not wonder that he did not quite understand me—was this: that the believer must always be a believer; having begun in that confidence, he must continue in that confidence; the alternative would be that he draw back unto perdition, in which case he would perish as an unbeliever; and then the inference would be that the faith he seemed to have was a fiction, that the confidence he seemed to enjoy was a bubble, that he really never did believe to the saving of his soul. This is a fair argument, based on the operation of the Spirit of God; it is in no sense a condition dependent on the good behaviour of men. The one way by which a soul is saved is by that soul's abiding in Christ; if it did not abide in Christ, it would be cast forth as a branch and be

withered. But, then, we know that they who are grafted into Christ will abide in Christ. We reason in the manner of the apostle Paul who, when he had spoken of the danger that some were in that, having begun well, they should end badly—after being enlightened and tasting the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, they should turn aside, he adds, 'But beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak'. The question, however, having been mooted, it occurs to me that it may not be unprofitable if I state briefly—not by way of controversy, but simply for the sake of instruction—the doctrine of the security of the believer in Christ, the certainty of the believer's perseverance even to the end, and of his entrance into eternal rest. This text at once suggests itself to me—'I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand'.

The three clauses of this sentence represent to us three gracious securities. Here is *a divine gift*—'I give unto them eternal life'; *a divine promise*, far-reaching and wide—'they shall never perish'; and *a divine holdfast*—'neither shall any pluck them out of my hand'.

I. First, then, observe THE DIVINE GIFT—'I give unto them eternal life'. Eternal life comes to every man who has it as a matter of gift. He did not possess it when he first entered into the world. He was born of the first Adam, and born to die. He did not educe it or evolve it from himself by some mysterious processes. It is not a home growth, a product of the soil of humanity: it is a gift. Nor is eternal life bestowed as a reward for service done. It could not be; for it is a pre-requisite to the doing of service. The term 'gift' shuts out all idea of debt. If it be of gift, or of grace, then it is no more of debt or of reward. Wherever eternal life is implanted in any person's soul, it is the free gift of the Lord Jesus Christ, not deserved but bestowed on the unworthy. Hence we see no reason why it should be revoked from the person who has received it. For, suppose there are certain disqualifications in the man who has participated in the gift, yet they cannot otherwise operate to his prejudice in enjoying the boon than they would have operated to his ever receiving it, if they had been taken into the account at all. The thing does not come to him because of any worthiness in him, but comes as a gratuity. There is no reason why it should not continue, since it has come into existence, or why the present tense, as we have it here, should not always be a present fact. 'I give'—I continue to give—'to them eternal life.' That cannot be affected by an unworthiness

subsequently discovered, because God knoweth the end from the beginning. When He bestowed eternal life upon the man who hath it, He knew right well every imperfection and failing that would occur in that man. These demerits, had they been reasons at all, would have been a cause for the not giving, rather than for giving and then taking away again. But it is inconsistent with the gifts of God for them ever to be disannulled. We have it laid down as a rule of the kingdom of which there is no violation, that 'the gifts and calling of God are without repentance'. He does not rescind in caprice that which He has conferred of His own good will. It is not according to the royal nature of the Lord our God to bestow a gift of grace upon a soul, and then afterwards to withdraw it—to lift up a man from his natural degradation and set him among princes by endowing him with a life eternal, and then to cast him down from his high estate by disendowing him of all the infinite benefits He has conferred. The very language I am using is contradictory enough of itself to refute the suggestion. To give eternal life is to give a life beyond the contingencies of this present mortal existence. 'For ever' is stamped on the charter. To take it away were not consistent with the royal bounty of the King of kings, even if it were possible that such a thing could be. 'I give unto them eternal life.' If He gives then, He gives with the sovereignty and generosity of a king; He gives permanently, on an enduring tenure; He gives so that He will not revoke the grant. He gives and it is theirs—it shall be theirs by divine charter for ever and ever.

We may infer the certain safety of the believer, not only from the fact that this life is an absolute gift, and will not therefore be withdrawn, but from the nature of the gift, it being eternal life. 'I give unto my sheep eternal life.' 'Yes, but,' says somebody, 'they lose it.' Then they cannot have had eternal life. It is a solecism in terms to say that a man hath eternal life and yet perisheth. Can death befall the immortal, or change affect the immutable, or decay corrode the imperishable? How can life be eternal if it comes to an end? How can it be possible that one shall have eternal life and yet die with sudden shock, or drop as feeble nature fails of all her functions? No! eternity is not to be measured by weeks or months or years. When Christ says eternal, He means eternal, and if I have received the gift of eternal life, it is not possible for me so to sin as to lose that spiritual life by any means whatever. 'It is *eternal* life.'

We may reasonably expect the believer to hold on to the end, because the life which God has implanted within him is

of that nature that it must continue to exist, must conquer all difficulties, must ripen, must perfect, must cast out sin from him, and must bring him to eternal glory. When Christ spake by the well to the Samaritan woman, He said, 'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life'. This cannot mean a transient draught that would slake the thirst for an hour or two, but it must imply such a partaking as changes a man's actual constitution and his destiny, and become in him a never-failing well-spring. For the life which God implants in believers by regeneration is not like the life which we now possess by generation. This mortal life does pass away. It is connected with flesh, and all flesh is like grass; it withers. 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh.' Not so the new life that is born of the Spirit and it is spirit, and spirit is not capable of destruction: it shall continue and last on world without end. The eternal life within every man who hath it was begotten in him 'not of the will of man, nor of flesh, nor of blood, but of God' Himself. Thanks be unto the Father, for it is of Him that we are 'begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead'. Tracing this implanted life to its germ, we are said to be 'born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever'. It is a holy seed. It cannot sin, for it is born of God. We are made partakers of the divine nature, and the new life within us is a divine life. It is the life of God within the soul of man. We become the twice-born, with a life that can no more die than the life of God Himself; for it is, in fact, a spark from that great central Sun: it is a new well in the soul which draws its supplies from the deep that lieth under; from the inexhaustible fountain of the fulness of God. This, then, is a second reason for believing in the security and final perseverance of the believer. He has a gift from Christ, and Christ will not withdraw His gift: he has a life which is in itself immortal and eternal.

But, further, this life within the believer which is a gift from Christ, is always in connection with Christ. We live because we are one with Christ; as the branch sucks its sap from the vine, so do we continue to derive our life's blood, our life's supplies from Christ Himself. The union between the believer and Christ is vital and to the fullest degree assuring. For what does our Lord say of it?—'Because I live, ye shall live also.' It is not a partnership which may be dissolved or a connection which may be severed; but it is a necessity that no accident can

interfere with; it is a fixed law of being—'because I live, ye shall live also'. That the union between Christ and His people is indissoluble appears obvious from the figures which are used to illustrate it. To such an overwhelming extent do they denote that there can be no separation, that we may well say, 'Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?' Are we not married unto Christ? What metaphor could be more expressive? To estimate its value you must take the divine account of the relationship. For although weddings are secularised by our Acts of Parliament, and nuptial ties are looked upon as civil contracts, God has pronounced man and wife to be of one flesh; yea, in the sight of heaven, he that is joined to a harlot is one body. If, then, in ordinary marriage divorce is possible, and, alas, too common; when you come to scripture, you find it written that He hateth putting away. He hath said, 'I will betroth thee unto me for ever, I have betrothed thee unto myself in righteousness and in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord'. The marriage between our souls and Christ can never be dissolved. It were blasphemy to suppose that Christ shall appeal for a divorce, or that there should be a proclamation made that He hath put away that spouse whom He chose of old, for whom He hath prepared the great wedding feast, and for whose eternal bliss He hath gone to glory to prepare a place. No, we cannot imagine such espousals leading to a separation.

Again, are we not members of His body? Shall Christ be dismembered? shall He every now and then be losing one limb and another? Can you suppose that Christ is maimed? I scarcely like to think, much less to express the thought, of here or there an eye, or a foot, or an ear wanting to complete the perfection of His mystic Person. No! it shall not be. Members of the body of Christ shall be so vitally quickened by the heart, and by Himself the head, that they shall continue to live, *because* He lives. When a man stands in water, the flood might naturally have power to drown him, but as long as his head remains above water, the stream cannot possibly drown his feet or his hands; and because Christ, the head, cannot die, cannot be destroyed, all the floods that shall come upon the members of his body shall not—cannot—destroy them.

Moreover, the life of the believer is constantly sustained by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is a matter of fact under the gospel dispensation that not only is the Holy Ghost *with* believers but He is *in* believers. He dwells in them, He makes them His temple. The life, as we have shown you, is *sui generis*, of its own kind, immortal; it is immortal because united with

an undying Christ; but it is also immortal because supported by a Divine Spirit who cannot be overcome, who has power to meet all the mischief of false and evil spirits that aim at our destruction, and who from day to day adds fresh fuel to the eternal flame of the believer's life within. Were it not for the Holy Spirit's abiding with us, we might be the subjects of some doubt, but as long as He continues to abide with us for ever, we will not fear.

The first consolation that we thus draw from the text is that we are the recipients of a divine gift—'I give unto my sheep eternal life'.

II. Now, secondly, we have, added to this, A DIVINE PROMISE: 'They shall never perish'. I am very thankful for this word, because there have been some who have tried to do away with the force of the entire passage—'neither shall any pluck them out of my hand'. 'No,' they have said, 'but they may slip between the fingers, and though they cannot be plucked out, yet they may go out of their own accord'; but here is a short sentence that puts all such thoughts out of the question—'they shall never perish'—in His hands or out of His hands, under any supposition whatever—'they shall never perish'. Observe that there is no restriction here; it includes all time. 'They shall never perish.' Are they young believers; their passions strong; their judgment weak? have they little knowledge, small experience, and tender faith? May they not die while yet they are lambs, and perish while they are so feeble? 'They shall never perish.' But, in middle life, when men too often lose the freshness of early grace, when the love of their espousals may perhaps have lost its power, may they not get worldly? May they not, somehow or other, then be led aside? 'They shall never perish.' 'They shall never perish.' Perish they would, could worldliness destroy them; perish they would could evil utterly and entirely get the mastery of grace, but it shall not. 'They shall never perish.' But, may they not grow older, and yet not wiser? May they not be surprised by temptation, as so many have been in times when they have become carnally secure, because they thought their experience had made them strong? 'They shall never perish'—neither if they are beginners, nor if they have all but finished their course. 'They shall never perish.' It shuts out all time—all reference to time, by taking the whole range of possible periods into the one word, 'never'. 'They shall never perish.'

No less does the sweep of the sentence include all contingencies. 'They shall never perish.' What, not if they are severely tempted? 'They shall never perish.' Not if they back-

slide? They shall be restored again. 'They shall never perish.' But, if they continue in backsliding and die so? Ah, that they shall not do. 'They shall never perish.' You must not suppose that which never can occur. 'They shall never perish.' They shall never get into such a condition that they shall be utterly without grace; they shall never be in such a state of heart, that sin shall have dominion over them—utter and entire dominion. It may come in; it may seem for a time to get the mastery, but sin shall never so have dominion over them that they shall perish before the Lord. 'They shall never perish.'

It takes in all the flock. 'They shall never perish'—that is, not one of His sheep. This is not the distinctive privilege of a few, but the common mercy of them all; none of them—not one of them—shall ever perish. If thou, believer in Christ, art the most obscure of all the family, thou shalt never perish. If thou hast indeed received the inner life and true grace be in thy soul, though no one knows thy name and no one lends thee a helping hand; though, as a solitary pilgrim thou shouldst walk the heavenly road all alone, weak and feeble, and trembling all the way, yet thou shalt never perish. The promise is not to some, but to all the believing sheep of Christ. 'They shall never perish.'

And, beloved, it may greatly strengthen our faith and sweetly revive our spirits, if we consider how this doctrine harmonises with other doctrines which are most surely believed among us. Christ's sheep were of old chosen of God unto salvation. But, if they perished, the election of God would be frustrated. From the foundation of the world He appointed them that would bring forth fruit unto holiness, even unto the end, and, if they do not, how can His will be done on earth as it is in heaven? They were a people set apart unto Himself, that they might honour Him by good works; did they fail of this, did they fall from their blest estate, did they utterly perish, the Father's counsel would be foiled; and that cannot be. The purpose of God secures their final perseverance. 'They shall never perish.'

We may rest assured that they shall be preserved because of the effectual redemption which Christ has wrought out for them. We believe, beloved, in this place (though the doctrine is very much disparaged nowadays), in an actual and literal substitutionary sacrifice.

We believe that Jesus died for His people, and

'Bore, that they might never bear
The Father's righteous ire'.

Now, if He paid their debts, they have no debts to discharge.

If He has borne their punishment, they have no penalty to suffer. If He stood in their stead, justice as well as grace—justice and grace together—demand that they should be saved. Jesus Christ has offered for them an atonement; and ‘who is he that condemneth’? ‘It is Christ that died, yea, rather that hath risen again.’ ‘If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.’ If He died to bear our guilt, much more, the atonement being completed, shall we enter into the fulness of rest. If He would not lose us, viewing us as unredeemed, but came and paid the price, much less will He lose us now that He hath redeemed us unto God by His blood out of every nation and people and kindred and tongue. He laid down His life for His sheep. He loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might present it unto Himself a glorious church; and He will effect the purpose for which He has already ventured so much, He will surely claim and as surely receive at the hand of justice the salvation of those for whom He was a vicarious victim.

Furthermore, dear friends, he that believeth in Christ is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses. Is it according to the manner of man first to justify and afterwards to condemn? Certainly not, but if it were it is not according to the supreme equity of the Most High God. Has He pronounced a man just, just that man is. When He has declared the man’s transgressions forgiven, shall they be again reckoned to him?—again laid to his door? Is it not said that He has put away our sins like a cloud, and will He gather the cloud of yesterday again? Hath He not said He hath cast our sins into the depths of the sea? Shall that which Jehovah Himself hath consigned to the oblivion of the ocean be washed up again as though He had only committed it to the shallows? As far as the East is from the West, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. Our East and West are wide enough apart; but what must God’s East and West be when He looks through infinite space! He has removed those sins so far from us, that the swiftest-footed devil could not bring them back again though he had a whole eternity to perform the feat. He hath put them away for ever. Yea, hear what is said of the Messiah—‘He hath finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness’. If it is finished, it is finished, and if He has made an end of it, where is it? Where is it? ‘If it be searched for it shall not be found’—yea, it shall not be, saith the Lord. O beloved, how then shall the man that believeth in Christ be condemned—

condemned for the sin that has been pardoned? How shall he be cast into hell? For what? For offences that have been borne by the Saviour? How shall he be condemned whom God has justified? Give no countenance to the thought. Let not fear nor fancy induce you to lend an ear to the suggestion. The sentence of remission once passed upon a man stands irrevocable. 'It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?'

In the believer, moreover, there is a work of God begun, which He has engaged to complete. It hath never been said of God that He began to build and was not able to finish. 'We are persuaded that He which hath begun a good work in you will carry it on and perfect it to the day of Christ.' It has not been according to Jehovah's wont to leave unfinished His works; why should He leave them unfinished? Is there a want of power? Inconceivable. Is there a want of will? We cannot imagine it! for if His will hath changed there must be some reason for the change. And if it be so, is God wiser than He was? Has He altered His plan because He has found out some error in it? If not, if infinite wisdom led Him to put His hand to it, infinite wisdom will keep His hand to the work.

'The work which wisdom undertakes,
Eternal mercy ne'er forsakes.'

O beloved, the very beginning of the work of God augurs that the work will be fully carried out.'

The doctrine of adoption supplies us with yet another argument for our safety. Every man who is saved, justified, forgiven, is also adopted into the family of God. And, dost thou think that God shifts and changes His children who are called by His own name? Dost thou imagine such a thing credible? Does it sound like a fact? Art thou thy Father's child today and somebody else's child tomorrow? Is not the absurdity too obvious to need refutation? Nay; I know not whence could have come so whimsical a thought as that we should be children of God today, and by-and-by children of the devil, changing thus the blessed paternity which God Himself claims as to all His people. 'But, we may play the prodigal,' saith one. Yes, I answer, and we may be brought back again after we have gone astray as the prodigal was. Besides; the prodigal was still a son; even when at the swine-trough, and when he had wasted all his substance in riotous living, he was still beloved of the father. And because he was a son, he came back again with weeping and bitterness of spirit, and found peace and pardon. Had he been no son, he might like others have spent his living with harlots, and there had been no saying, 'I will arise and go unto my father'; but grace operated

on his heart; he was quickened mysteriously, and he said, 'I must leave this life of poverty and sin and go back to my father's house again'. And, if God's child shall go astray, as it is possible (only God grant you and I never may), yet there is a voice that saith, 'Return, return thou backsliding Israel. I am married unto thee, saith the Lord'. Adoption is surely a grand proof that the Lord's people shall be kept and preserved; that there shall be an unbroken family of God in heaven. He shall not have to lament that His own dear sons and daughters, begotten by His grace, have utterly perished. Jesus *shall* say, 'Here am I and the children thou hast given me'.

III. And, now, the last point is THE DIVINE HOLDFAST—'None shall pluck them out of My hand'.

Then all the saints are in Jesus' hands. They are not only in His heart, but in His hands—just as the high priests wore the names of the twelve tribes on the breastplates, and also wore them on the shoulders, too. The power, as well as the affection, of Christ shall preserve the people of God. They are in His hands. 'All thy saints are in thy hands.' What a blessed place for us to be in—in the hand of Christ—always there!

But, does not our Lord intimate as if to forewarn us that a great many attempts would be made to pluck us out of that hand? Satan would do it; our own base lusts would do it; the ungodly would do it. The very air is full of tempters who would if they could pluck us away from Christ. We have, therefore, cause for great watchfulness, deep humility, but also for much thankfulness that we are placed where the tempters cannot reach us, for the promise assures us that none is able to pluck us out of Christ's hand. There is not power enough in legions of fallen spirits, if they were marshalled in battle array against one poor weak Christian, to snatch him away from Christ, yea, should they besiege him without intermission, like a vast herd of lions seeking to devour one lamb, the defence were so much stronger than the invasion that they could not pluck even that one out of Christ's hand. The destroyer has never yet celebrated a triumph over the Redeemer. He is not able to hold up a single jewel of the Redeemer's crown and say, 'Aha! aha! I stole it from thy diadem. Thou couldst not keep it!' He has no single sheep there to which he can point and say, 'Ah, Shepherd of the sheep, thou couldst not keep them all! The strong were safe enough: they helped themselves, but this poor weakling could not help itself, and thou couldst not help it. Lo! I have borne it away from thee; thy flock, which is thy pride, is not complete; thou thyself as Shepherd hast a spot upon thy name, for thou hast lost at least

this one that thy Father gave thee and whom thou hast purchased with thy blood.' It cannot be; it *shall* not be. The powers of darkness have conspired for this and struggled for this, but they have not yet prevailed, nor shall they. None shall pluck them out of My hand. Oh, rest in the hand of Christ, rest quietly; now thou art there thou art secure, neither shall any pluck thee thence. As if He would make assurance doubly sure, and give us very strong consolation, He added, 'My Father which gave them Me is greater than all, and none shall pluck them out of My Father's hand'. You can interpret the figure. There was Christ's hand and His people in it, and He shall shut it fast to hold them. But, then, that hand was pierced once, and so to make it doubly sure the Father clasps it with His hand, and so within a double enceinture the elect of God are held and embraced. There is the pierced hand of Jesus and there is the Father's almighty hand; so there are two hands to protect and defend them. Well may they now cheerfully defy all power terrestrial or infernal, ever to destroy them. They must, they *shall*, for ever rest in perfect security beneath the guardian care of the Man Mediator, Christ the Lord, and God the everlasting and ever blessed Father, who also takes them into His sacred keeping.

Do I hear anyone object, saying, 'Well, but if this be true, then may not a man live as he likes?' Sir, how canst thou ask that question? What dost thou mean by it? Dost thou mean, may a man live in sin? I have been trying to show that if a man is one of Christ's sheep, he cannot perish, by which I mean he cannot live in sin, for that is to perish. When I maintain that he cannot live in sin as he did, and cease to be a gracious man; you ask me whether he will not henceforth sin wilfully because he is saved from his sins? You must surely misunderstand me. 'But, may not a man fall? Now I have these checks taken from me, I may grow wanton.' What checks? What checks? If I lay it down that a man who is enlisted as a soldier is always a soldier, how can you tell me I have taken away some checks? I see not how that can be. I have rather implied a great many strong incentives to virtue than offered a single pretext for vice. Certainly he is not to lay down his soldiership because he is enlisted for life in the service of his Lord. If he ever did lay it down, he never could take it up again. Could these fall away, it were impossible again to renew them to repentance. If God's work did fail, if Christ's atoning blood did fall short of its aim, there would remain no hope for them. The ground on which the dew that moistens the flowers descends, when it yields nothing but

thorns and briars, is given up as worthless. Were a man in some fit of enthusiasm to profess that he believed the gospel, and then take a fit of libertinism and plunge into dissipation, you would all know what to think of his sincerity. When the guilt of sin is removed, the love of sin is purged out of the heart; and when the Spirit of holiness is given, the love of holiness is infused into the heart. The man who truly believes begins a life of holiness, and from that life of holiness he will never utterly depart. I grant you he may be overtaken in a fault; he may be surprised with a temptation; he may stumble through weakness, or through lack of watchfulness: but he will be led back again into repentance: he shall not be allowed to perish. The life that is in him is immortal, a holy incorruptible seed, and it will continue to develop in spite of sultry heat or biting frost, blight or mildew, till it blooms in the perfection of life above. Says one, 'Ah, sir, I hold no argument about your doctrine; my fear is for myself: I do not think I should live as I now do if I were not afraid of falling away.' Is not that a suitable fear for the child of the bondwoman? 'Unless I do so and so I shall be sent into the wilderness with my mother Hagar.' Very likely you will. But, I know this, I am the child of the free woman, that is Sarah, and I know my Father will never send His child into the wilderness. What then; shall His attachment provoke my alienation? Shall I act shame because He appoints me to honour? Nay, nay, but because He loves me so, I will love Him in return. I pray Him to forgive my offences, but I will seek to do all that is possible to show that I realise the greatness of His love, and desire to make some poor return for it as best I can. Well, but, says somebody, are we not admonished with warnings against falling away? Certainly, and they are the most terrible that language can describe. Undoubtedly the Scripture paints the pilgrim's path as full of peril. It is not by creature strength that we can hold our own. Could the precious blood lose its virtue; did the blessed Spirit withdraw His influence; were the timely succour withheld, we have no resource. For all manner of sin there is a remedy; believe in Christ as a Saviour; but for apostacy there is no cure. If you trample on the one sacrifice, no second sacrifice will ever be offered. There is but one new birth. Regeneration is once and once only. 'But why these warnings,' say you, 'if it cannot happen?' Remember God does not deal with His people as if they were blocks of wood or iron cast and run into a mould. We are beings with a will and a judgment, and God deals with us in that way. Now, if I have poison in my house and it should be needful for some reason

or other that poison should be there, I do not intend that my children should ever have that poison or take it. Suppose me to be omnipotent and that I have power to prevent their taking it, yet I do not lock it up and put it where they could not possibly get it. I put it where they can get it if they like, and it will kill them if they do get it; but I tell them they must not take it; I describe to them the results that will follow, and I have such a loving power over my children's hearts—(suppose it to be so)—that they do not disobey me so as to take this poison. Though it be there and devils come into the house and tempt them to take it, yet they will not take it, but put it from them. I should thus be making an exhibition to those who looked on, of the love to me that was in my children's hearts, and also of my power over my children's hearts, though I did not violate their wills, and did not make it impossible for them to destroy themselves. Now, it is so here. Sin is permitted to be in the world—I do not know why—and God does not render it impossible for a man to go and commit any sin. The man might, he would, unless God's grace prevented; but God's grace is not mechanical in its action; it is not like a fetter, or a chain; it is not (as I have heard some say) dragging people to heaven by their ears. No, it is a mighty force; an omnipotent power, but quite consistent with free agency, it never operates contrary to the laws of mind; and God is glorified in this, that though His children be thus tempted, they do not run into fatal soul-destroying sin; they do not go into such apostacy from Him as would be final and prove altogether destructive. They are kept by His gracious power—kept as men—drawn, but with cords of love—bound, but with the bands of a man. Do you object that 'good men fall'? Good men do not fall so as to perish. Good men do fall, for they are men. The old nature is in them. But, the truly gracious man with all his sins repents, still believes, and with broken bones goes back to his Lord and proves himself to be still a child. The sheep may fall into a ditch but it will not roll in the mire as a hog would if it fell there. A sheep even when it falls into a ditch proves that it is a sheep still. There is a difference in the nature of it. When I have seen a child of God fall into sin, I have known that if he were a child of God he would hate himself for it, he would grieve over it, and could not be at peace and ease in it. Do you tell me of a Christian who lived in sin and seemed very happy? Be sure that he was no Christian but a pretender. He who can continue in sin and delight in it is no child of God. He that can go day after day into vice, or can tolerate in himself any known sin, has a spot which is not the spot of God's

children. He has a mark upon him which never was yet and never shall be upon a truly quickened child of God. Be ye holy, for I am holy, is the voice which sounds in the saint's ear, and if he does not always obey it as he should, this is the complaining of his soul, and it makes him go weeping and lamenting before his God. But still, in the main it ever shall be, the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.

I have one word for any here who are unconverted, but would desire salvation. Do you know, dear friends, that one of the great leading thoughts of my young life, the master thought that brought me to the Saviour, was belief in the doctrine of final perseverance? Perhaps you wonder how that could be, but so it was. I saw while yet I was a lad many promising boys and lads who made total shipwreck early in their lives by falling into gross vices. I felt in my soul a loathing of their sins which I heard they had committed. I had been kept from them by divine counsels, by gracious interpositions, by parental teaching, and by pious example. Still I feared lest the sins into which these young men had fallen might master me. Such knowledge as I had of the depravity of my own heart led me to distrust myself. I was convinced that unless I was converted, born again, and received the new life, I had no safeguard. Whatever good resolutions I might make, the probabilities were they would be good for nothing when temptation assailed me, I might be like those of whom it has been said, 'They see the devil's hook and yet cannot help nibbling at his bait'. But that I should morally disgrace myself, as some had done whom I had known and heard of, was a hazard from the very thought of which I shrank with horror. When I heard and read with wondering eyes that whosoever believed in Christ Jesus should be saved, the truth came to my heart with a welcome I cannot describe to you. The doctrine that He would keep the feet of His saints had a charm indeed for me. I thought, 'Then if I go to Jesus and get from Him a new heart and a right spirit, I shall be secured against these temptations into which others have fallen; I shall be preserved by Him'. I do not say that drove me to Christ: a sense of sin did that, but it attracted me to Him. It was one of the beauties of His face that ravished me, that He was a faithful keeper of all souls that were committed to Him; that He was able and willing to take the young man and make him cleanse his way and keep him even to the end. O young people, there is no life assurance like a believing in Jesus Christ.

'Grace shall preserve your following years,
And make your virtues strong.'

I do not preach to you, tonight, a sandy foundation that will give way under your feet, but a rock to which you may continually retreat, in which you may always dwell secure. I do not present to you a salvation that may fail you under some stress of temptation, but a salvation that is strong, having in it 'the sure mercies of David'. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved—saved from sinning, from the guilt as well as the punishment of sin, and brought to heaven holy and meet for the inheritance of the saints. God grant you to be believers in Christ. Amen, and amen!

IF GOD BE FOR US (continued from page 157)

His purposes. He will call out His people. He will vindicate His Gospel. He will glorify His Son, and He will indeed be ultimately triumphant.

So He comes to us as He came to Paul, and says, 'Are you troubled about the situation? Do you feel it is getting beyond you? Do you feel that the Church has no future, no possibility of making any real impact in this land? Do not be afraid, for I am with you.' 'The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge' (Psalm 46:7, 11). We are not a pathetic band fighting a lonely and lost cause, and battling on in our own strength. But 'strong in the Lord of hosts and in His mighty power', we are more than conquerors, brethren. Then lift up your hearts. We lift them up unto the Lord. Do not be afraid, nerve your arm for the battle, realise that your strength is from God Himself, and go out assured that God has a purpose and that His purpose is by the preaching of the Gospel to save them that believe. O may the Lord encourage us; may He lift us from the slough of fear and anxiety and despondency in which so many of us are found. May He lift up our hearts that we may realise that He is with us, and that if God be with us, and for us, who can be against us? May the Lord enable us in these days to set our hearts upon Him and to live to the praise of His glory. Amen.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD (continued from page 159)

In other words, Redemption accomplishes the full purpose of a Triune sovereign God. Nothing is left undone. The Saviour receives the purchase of His blood. A Christ disappointed in the ultimate outcome of His work is unknown to Scripture. All the divine pleasure finds its complete fulfilment in Him. And for the humble believer—

'We may not know, we cannot tell, what pains He had to bear,

But we believe it was for us He hung and suffered there.'

ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

PAUL TUCKER

*Preached at Toronto Baptist Seminary
Convocation in Jarvis Street Baptist Church
on 10th October, 1966.*

This subject is the greatest one that any mortal can contemplate, that of a sacred, definite encounter with God.

May I begin by asking you a simple, but important, question? How do you think of God? I am not asking you 'Do you believe in God?' Not long ago there was a poll taken in the United States, described as the first extensive study of the beliefs and practices of adult Americans, and as a result of that poll 99 per cent of the people acknowledged a belief in a Supreme Being, a belief in God. If a similar poll were taken in India or in Morocco, in all probability 100 per cent of the people would acknowledge belief in a Supreme Being. The main question is not, Do you believe in God? but, In what kind of God do you believe? Nowhere does the Bible attempt to prove the existence of God.

The Bible everywhere assumes the fact that there is a God. It opens with majestic terminology: 'In the beginning God'—the fact of God. God standing at the portals of eternity and throwing open the gates of the ages: God saying, 'Let there be, and there was'. The Bible dismisses as of no account the individual who says there is no God. 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.' What the Bible does is to show us the character and the activities of the One true and living God; and so my question to you and to my own heart tonight is this, In what kind of God do you believe? In our country we have a paperback by Canon J. B. Phillips. I cannot endorse everything he says within the pages of the book, but I am challenged by the title he gives to it: *Your God Is Too Small*; and very often you and I have an inadequate understanding and conception of the God with whom we have to do.

Now Isaiah was a man to whom God gave an amazing disclosure of Himself, and in the 57th chapter of his prophecy, verse 15, we read these words: 'For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell

in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones'. Twice over this verse speaks of revival. It speaks of a spiritual enlargement of the soul, an awakening, an affusion of power upon an individual life, 'to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones'. How are we going to get true revival? By organising merely? Though that may be important, no. By ceaseless activity and attending many meetings till we are worn to a shadow? No. Revival always begins with a fresh awareness of God. Archibald Brown's son, Dr. Douglas Brown, wrote a series of articles on the subject of Revival, and in one of them there is a sentence I have never forgotten. This is what he says: 'Revival is not going down the street with a big drum. It is getting back to Calvary with a sob'. Now that spirit is engendered with the language of our text: 'to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones', and the true revival is a humbling experience. We see God as He is, and we are reduced to a sense of great unworthiness, and the Lord comes along and pours in the riches of His grace, and He lifts us up, and we are caught up in a new awareness and enjoyment of our blessed God.

Now may we for a few moments look at Isaiah who had an astonishing encounter with God. 'In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord high and lifted up, sitting upon a throne.' There are certain facts about Isaiah's encounter with God that are brought to our notice in our text tonight. We see, first of all, what I shall call **THE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD**. 'Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity: God in His greatness, His majesty, His transcendence, the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity.' As we look at God through the eyes of Isaiah we see that there are three aspects of God's transcendence brought to our notice. First *God's loftiness*: 'the high and lofty One'. This is clearly a reference to Isaiah's vision in chapter 6. As I understand the chronology of Isaiah, this man was already a prophet, he was already a servant of God before he received that vision in the 6th chapter, but God came to him in a new way, in a deeper way, in a richer way than ever before, and it transfigured his subsequent ministry, and the stamp of that vision is found all the way through the succeeding chapters of his prophecy. 'The high and lofty One,' says Isaiah, and the word 'lofty' in our text is translated 'lifted up' in Isaiah 6. It is exactly the same word in the original. 'I saw the Lord lofty, I saw the Lord high and lifted up' and years after this comes back to the mind of the prophet under the guidance and instruction of the Holy

Spirit, and he indicts these words spoken by God Himself through the prophet, 'Thus saith the high and lofty One'.

You remember how Isaiah had been a kind of chaplain to King Uzziah. There was a kinship, a friendship between these two men. Uzziah had reigned over Judah and was marvellously helped until he was strong, and when he was strong he was lifted up to his own destruction, and there came a day when the king died; and Isaiah was very upset about this, and he went into the temple probably. It was the year that King Uzziah died, not the day, but it was a grief that long remained with him (for the king had departed in a rather ignominious manner as a leper), and there came this moment when God showed him a throne whose king never dies, whose king never abdicates. 'In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord.' I had been looking at an earthly king, but He is a heavenly king, and He is lofty, high and lifted up. He is above all the limitation of human circumstance; He is above all physical limitation. He is above and beyond man's weakness and man's frailty. He is the altogether other, entirely separate, He is the transcendent One.

Isaiah saw Him as One whose authority is absolute, and whose power is infinite. Friends, the Bible is powerful in its condemnation of people who have small views of the Lord God Almighty. 'Though thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself,' says God to a wayward man, 'I am going to rebuke you, I am going to reprove you. If I were hungry I wouldn't tell you.' Oh, the glorious sovereign independence of God! Someone has well said, 'There is no use you and I talking about God *with* us, and God *in* us, and God *round about* us, in some pious sort of manner, until first of all we humbly recognise God ABOVE us.' In the glorious language of Paul, in the letter to the Romans, 'God over all blessed for evermore'. It is the loftiness of God, that He is above history, He is above human nature, He is above all human limitations, the high and lofty One. I so love to contemplate Isaiah 40, where God is contrasted with idols that cannot see and cannot hear, the God Who is the Creator, the God Who is the Sustainer, the God Who is Sovereign, who sits on the circles of the earth and the inhabitants are as grasshoppers; the nations are as dust in the balance, as the dust that cannot be seen by the naked eye that settles on the scales in the warehouse or in the shop, it is so fine it doesn't alter the weight at all, and yet the whole nations are like that dust that cannot be seen compared with the transcendence of the Almighty. He holds the sea in the hollow of His hand; He takes up the isles, including

the British Isles, as a very little thing, the LOFTINESS OF GOD.

The other aspect of God's transcendence is the *Unchangeableness of God*: 'the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity'. What a splendid, what a delightfully rounded phrase that is, 'the One who inhabits eternity'! He is called in Isaiah 9:6, 'the Everlasting Father', or the Father of eternity, and He inhabits eternity. This is just another way of saying that God is not a creature of time and space—you and I are such creatures, we are limited by the clock; we are limited by the calendar, and those students here tonight who are undergraduates and very young, the calendar is going to take care of that in a few years' time. They are going to grow older, but God is the eternal God. He is from everlasting to everlasting. I remember reading a sermon by Dr. Cole in which he had this delightful sentence: 'There are no wrinkles in the brows of Deity'. God just does not get old. He is the Ancient of days, but He does not change. He inhabits eternity. We are prisoners of time and space, but not God. God moves along with the leisure of eternity. He has the boundless resources of eternity. Of course, it is true to say that God works within the confines of time and space. This is the majesty and the glory of the Incarnation of our Blessed Lord Jesus, that the Word, the eternal unfolding of the thought of Deity, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. But although God operates within the realm of time and space He is above it, He is over it, He is superior to it but not limited by it, and that is why Peter has a word of encouragement for those who were troubled by scoffers concerning the delays of Providence: 'Where is the promise of His coming?' said the scoffers. Peter's answer was this: 'They are wilfully ignorant: they don't know their history, and they don't know the nature of God, for a day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years are as a day.' God can take a thousand years to accomplish what I in my limited way may think He ought to do now. I may think, 'Why doesn't God step in now?' On the other hand, God can do in one day what would take a man a thousand years to accomplish. He is this lofty One, He is this unchangeable One who inhabiteth eternity.

The third element of His transcendence is His *Holiness*. Listen to the language of the text: 'Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy.' Isaiah is back with that encounter with God in chapter 6. He saw the Lord high and lifted up. He saw Him enthroned. His train filled the temple, and the very threshold and the foundations of the house of God trembled at the voice of Him who spoke

as his nature itself was trying somehow to get away from the awfulness of the Holiness of God, and Isaiah heard the heavenly intelligences, the Burning Ones, the seraphim crying one to another, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts', and he saw them in the vision covering their faces and their feet. These are the elect angels who never rebelled against God, as did Lucifer, son of the morning, and his satellites, established in everlasting purity and innocence. 'Ye holy angels bright who wait at God's right hand.' Yet their holiness is a derived holiness. Only God is essentially, absolutely, infinitely holy, and because theirs is a derived and created holiness it pales in the light of the blazing glory of the Triune God. And so they cover their faces and their feet and cry, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts', and Isaiah felt, believer though he was, servant of God though he was, he could not join in that song. He could not sing that song because he was made acutely aware of his own uncleanness, and all his sins seemed to be concentrated on his lips, and he cried out, 'Woe is me! for I am undone; I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts'. Very significant was the confession of Isaiah.

You will notice in the previous chapter, in Isaiah chapter 5, that again and again he utters woes against other people—woe to those who rise up early and stay up late, drinking liquor, and engaging in frivolity and leaving God out of their lives. Woe unto those who draw iniquity with a cart rope, and he goes down the line pronouncing woes against everybody else and they all deserved it, but now he gets a vision of God, an encounter with God, and he forgets about everybody else and says, 'Woe is *me*', and, of course, the king had died from leprosy. He had been cut off from the palace and died in a private house. The leprosy had risen in his forehead, you remember, while he was trying to usurp the office of the priest in the temple and burn incense to the Lord, and a leper was a man who had to go around putting his hands to his lips and crying, 'Don't come near me, unclean, unclean!' Isaiah says, 'I've got a moral leprosy; I see myself as I really am. Woe is me, for I am undone. I am cut off. I am a man of unclean lips. I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts'.

Incidentally, Thomas Watson in his *Body of Divinity* (which I heartily commend to the students for careful study, with the exception of his teaching on Baptism which Spurgeon especially treated), says concerning the Holiness of God: 'It is the most sparkling jewel in the crown of Deity'.

We read no triple ascription of praise to any other attribute in the Bible. We do not read loving, loving, loving, is the Lord; merciful, merciful, merciful, is the Lord, though He is; but we do read Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord—the Triune God. There is nothing deeper in the nature of God than His holiness. It is the sum total of all His attributes. He is love, but He is holy love; He is merciful, but He is holy in the exercise of His mercy.

When Isaiah saw himself in this encounter with God, when he made his abject confession, I do so love to continue the passage which you all know so well: 'Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, with a live coal taken with the tongs from off the altar'. You notice the seraph, the creature, did not walk, he flew. He came with lightning speed on the mission. Does not this remind us of the alacrity of God to forgive and to cleanse away our unrighteousness? The live coal from off the altar, from the altar, the place of atonement—it speaks to us of the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is a *Live* coal, it is a *Burning* coal, as the cherubim and seraphim were burning ones; and that burning speaks to us of the Holy Spirit, and it is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to apply to our hearts and consciences all the merits of the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so the creature comes and purges this man till he can say, in the presence of God, 'By Thy grace, O God, I am cleansed'—the TRANSCENDENCE of God.

II.

But now look once more at God through the eyes of Isaiah, and with astonishment, perhaps, will you notice another aspect of God's nature—THE CONDESCENSION OF GOD, the Compassion of God, the Mercy of God. 'Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy. I dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite one.' An old writer says, 'God has two dwelling places, one is the highest throne in glory, the other is the humble and lowly heart', and we have these two great aspects of God's Being brought to our notice. On the one hand, there is His transcendence with its loftiness, its unchangeableness, its holiness; on the other hand, there is this thought, His coming down to men and women like ourselves and promising to dwell with us—'with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite one'. God dwells with a particular type of person. He doesn't dwell with everybody; He dwells with the humble and the contrite. This word

'contrite' is a strong word, as the Hebrew scholars on the platform will know better than I. It is a strong word, it means to 'be crushed'. Moffatt, I think, who is not always a safe guide, does translate this, if I remember, 'pulverised'—crushed. It is a very strong word. It is not, of course, mock modesty, the Uriah Heep type of person who goes around saying, 'See how 'umble I am'. Not that kind of person. This is a person who has had a vision of the Lord, and who is seeking to walk in the zeal of the Lord all the day long. Now there is a very interesting connection here. In Isaiah 53 : 8 we read of the Blessed Son of God that 'it pleased God to bruise Him'. It does not mean that God had any pleasure in inflicting punishment on His Son as our Substitute, but it means that it was consistent with the eternal covenant purposes of God in redemption to bruise His Son, the Mediator. Now the word 'bruise' there comes from the same root as the word 'contrite' in our text. Our Lord was crushed on the cross. The greatest suffering He endured was not at the hands of sinful men, terrible though that was. The greatest suffering He endured was at the hands of an angry God who laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Listen to the language of Spurgeon. Of Jesus, he says, I quote: 'He was ground between the upper and nether millstones of the wrath of God'. I know no place where we shall find humility more than at the cross contemplating Him who humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; and with people who are properly repentant and who live in the fear of the Lord and seek to walk humbly with their God, with such people, God is pleased to dwell. The TRANSCENDENCE of God, the CONDESCENSION of God, the IMMANENCE of God that He dwells with such people, and He dwells with them for a particular purpose, 'to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones'. I know the Lord subdues us by His majesty and His glory, but He has one end in view, that we may experience the preciousness of forgiveness, the joy of fellowship, that by being brought low we may be lifted up: 'Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God and He will exalt you in due time'; 'to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones'. The TRANSCENDENCE of God, the CONDESCENSION of God.

III.

May I take one moment to comment on the MYSTERY OF GOD—the fact that this God, our God, combines in Himself transcendence, which is infinite and absolute, and condescension, which is intimate and indwelling. Can you

explain that? How the eternal God can be on the throne of the universe and yet be dwelling in your heart? This makes nonsense to the unregenerate intellectual, but nowhere in the Bible is the mystery of God's Being explained to us. We just bow in awe and wonder and worship in the presence of it all, that the transcendently awful is the tenderly approachable, that the infinite One is the intimate One, and the One who is on high is also the One who indwells every believer.

The mystery of the Being of God! This is worked out for us tremendously in the New Testament by the Apostle Paul in the letter to the Ephesians. He begins by talking about the exceeding greatness of God's power 'which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand (the place of privilege and pre-eminence) far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all'. There you have the transcendence of our incarnate and enthroned Lord Jesus, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all raised to the highest place in glory. And yet, you turn the pages of Ephesians and Paul says, in chapter 3, that he is praying for the believers that the eyes of their understanding may be enlightened, and that they might know the hope of His calling, and that certain things may be their real and abiding experience, that they might be strengthened with all might by His Spirit in the inner man; that is, the Holy Spirit reinforcing every faculty of their redeemed nature, that Christ may dwell in their heart by faith; that's the Second Person of the ever blessed Trinity, settling down as a blessed experience and reality in their heart and life; and that they might be filled unto the fulness of God: God the Father, this exalted One who is on the throne, in the totality of His Triune Being, comes to abide in the humble and contrite heart. *Does Paul attempt to explain it or philosophise about it? He does not. He just goes into ecstatic adoration, and says, 'Unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages. Amen.'*

Our Lord's Attitude to the Scriptures

H. M. CARSON

As he approaches his Bible, and more especially as he comes to study the Old Testament, the Christian has all kinds of advice ringing in his ears. He is taught by one that the Scriptures are his final authority and are completely reliable; by another that they are full of contradictions, and require to be supplemented by the voice of the Church or by his own reason; by another that it is the spiritual message that matters and not the historical framework. Whom is he to believe? What attitude is he to adopt? The suggestion in this article is that we should begin by examining the attitude of our Lord Himself to the written Scriptures of the Old Testament, which was, of course, His Bible. If we can find the mind of Christ on the subject, that will be of supreme importance to us; for He is not only our Saviour, but also our Master; and we are His disciples, learning from Him.

1. His acceptance of the Old Testament

As we read the Gospels carefully, we find that Christ accepted Scripture as the final standard and as being thoroughly reliable. In the Sermon on the Mount He asserts that 'one jot or one tittle' of the law shall not pass till all be fulfilled. When we realise that the jot is the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and the tittle is the tiny part of the letter which distinguishes one consonant from another, we will see how far reaching His statement was. It was like saying in our English idiom that not one cross on a 't' and not one dot on an 'i' would pass—and this certainly is a tremendous claim to make. An equally definite assertion comes in John's Gospel where, in an allusion to a Psalm, Christ adds that 'Scripture cannot be broken' (John 10 : 35). In a similar vein He frequently refers to prophecy. For example, before His betrayal, He said, 'All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad!' And, as Judas and the others came towards Him, 'I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took Me not: but the Scriptures must be

fulfilled.' He sees that men's reactions to Him are inevitable because they have already been foretold by the prophets. The inference is that if it appears in the prophetic Scriptures, it must be true, and so you may expect the event to take place exactly as the prophet had declared.

Our Lord was well aware that human agents had been employed in the writing of Scripture. Thus He quotes from Moses and David. Yet at the same time He sees behind the human writer the activity of the Spirit of God. Thus in the discussion over marriage, He refers His opponents to the book of Genesis. 'Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh"?' (Matthew 19 : 4, 5, quoting Genesis 2 : 24). But, in quoting the words of the human author, He attributes them to God; and treats them as if God had spoken them. Here is another reinforcement of the truth that, while the Scriptures are varied in their authors and styles, there is behind all the variety the unifying work of the Holy Spirit.

In His controversy with the Sadducees (see Mark 12 : 24), Christ insists that one of the reasons for their error was their lack of understanding of the Scriptures. He plainly infers that to know the Scriptures is to know the truth of God. For Him the written Word was the final court of appeal. It was the Word of God, and hence was infallible—that is, sure, reliable, certain. Being itself without error, it was the only reliable guide to the truth.

2. His Study of the Scriptures

Lest any lazy Christian should be heaving a contented sigh that he is orthodox in his view of Scripture, we must add that such an attitude involves hard work. If Scripture is God's Word, then it is vital that we should study it in order to know God's will. But such study means sustained and disciplined effort. Yet when we turn again to our Lord's example, we find this very thing.

One of the few statements made about Christ's boyhood was that He 'increased in wisdom and stature'. While it is true that He was the Son of God, it is also true that He was the Son of Man. He was divine and human. As Man, He submitted to human limitations; and one of these is that knowledge is acquired by learning. Thus He increased in wisdom; that is to say that it was not all there ready made, but was gradually acquired. How thorough was this growth

in wisdom is seen in the amazing way in which, when He was twelve years of age, He dealt with the learned religious leaders in Jerusalem.

The careful study and memorising of the Scriptures is reflected in His astonishing grasp of their contents. Again and again He quotes the Scriptures during a controversy with His opponents; and each time He gives no hint of searching in the recesses of His memory for the appropriate word. He is so thoroughly acquainted with the Scriptures that they come at once to His mind. If you remember how easily you recall such dates as 1066, and how you have to pause and think before you can quote others, you will know that an easy quoting of any fact depends on the thoroughness of your acquaintance. Christ had obviously so steeped Himself in God's Word that it was virtually part of Him.

One other factor in His study of the Word is reflected in the variety of His quotations. Many Christians are at home in the twenty-third Psalm, the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah and other familiar territory, but are strangers to wide stretches of the Old Testament! But our Lord's knowledge reflects a study which is not only deep, but also broad; in using the Old Testament He quotes from far and wide. When He walked the road to Emmaus and spoke to the two discouraged disciples about His resurrection, He began at Moses and all the prophets and 'expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself'. Here is a pattern for us. Here is an insistent call to follow in the footsteps of One Who was above all others instructed in the Word of God.

3. His use of the Scriptures

It is instructive to see how greatly our Lord used Scripture. For Him it was not only the place to find strength for His own spiritual life; but it was also the weapon to use in meeting foes, or in witnessing to seekers. When He was facing the lonely battle with the Tempter in the wilderness He used the 'Sword of the Spirit' to confound the Enemy. Each time the assault was launched by Satan, it was parried with the confident reply, 'It is written'; and the Evil One was routed. When He hung in agony on the Cross, His strength was still the Word of God. Amid all the mental and spiritual anguish, the familiar passages of Scripture still flowed clearly in His mind, until He died with the words from Psalm 31 as His final prayer, 'Into Thy hands I commend My spirit'.

As He faced critics who refused to acknowledge that One Who wrought such miracles as He had must surely be the

Messiah, as He met foes who acted the hypocrite in order to trap Him in His words, as He encountered the dead weight of Jewish opposition, His final appeal was to Scripture. Here were His title deeds. Here was His justification. He would not merely argue but would point His critics to their own Scriptures which testified so clearly of Him.

When dealing with seekers or instructing His disciples, He still used Scripture. Was it the young man who seeks for eternal life? Christ brought to him the constant challenge of the Ten Commandments. Was it the multitude who listened to His preaching? He spoke of John the Baptist and referred them to the prophecy of Malachi. Was it Nathanael in the first hour of his call to be a disciple? Christ spoke of the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man; and turned the disciple's thoughts back to the story of Jacob at Bethel. Indeed, when He made His public declaration to Jerusalem that He was the Messiah, He did so by conforming to the prophecy of Zechariah, who foretold that God's chosen One would enter Jerusalem riding on an ass. In these, and in all His allusions to Scripture, our Lord kept insisting that, for those who had eyes to see, the Old Testament was full of testimony to Him. He was indeed the very centre of Scripture, and to Him all the varied writings bore their common witness.

Here, then, is the pattern for us in our approach to the Bible. We must begin, as our Lord began, by accepting it as the Word of God, thoroughly reliable, and requiring from us implicit obedience. We must be prepared to give ourselves to the study of the Word, working hard, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in order to master its contents and message. Then we shall be increasingly in a position to use the Word to strengthen and guide our lives, and to be a means of pointing others to Him of Whom Scripture speaks, even Christ our Saviour.

A church without life and zeal makes Christ sick (Revelation 3:16).—C. H. SPURGEON.

Complacency is a most serious sin in any church. A self-satisfied church is either dead or dying.—PROF. R. B. KUIPER.

I verily believe that the whole condition and state of the Church today is largely due to the fact that we fail at two points. It is because we never realise the depth of the pit out of which we have been brought by the grace of God that we do not thank God as we ought. And then there is our failure to realise the great heights to which He has raised us.—DR. D. M. LLOYD-JONES.

Book Reviews

SATAN CAST OUT. Frederick S. Leahy. Banner of Truth Trust. 181 pp. 75p.

The occasion for the writing of this book—the need to help missionaries overseas battling with the issue of spiritism—means that the approach is not theoretical but pastoral and practical. But unlike many whose pastoral approach is rooted in psychological considerations, his is firmly rooted in Scripture, which is his supreme authority both in diagnosing the condition and in suggesting the remedies.

He gives a careful survey of spiritism both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. But he is also ready to acknowledge that demon possession is not to be limited to the period of Jesus' ministry, but is still with us—not only in those lands where Satan has reigned unchallenged, but in our own increasingly pagan and godless society.

He is emphatic that the real answer is the power of the gospel—and there is only one gospel both for the demon possessed and those who are not possessed, but are still Satan's subjects. He rejects the idea of using the name of Jesus as an incantation—the sons of Scera tried that! He warns against the danger of a barren anti-Pentecostalism and urges the need of Churches filled with the Spirit to resist the Devil. A valuable book!

H.M.C.

HIS GREAT GOODNESS. Fred Windridge. Published by Mrs. Olive Perks, 12 Grosvenor Road, Watford, Herts., WD1 2QT. 398 pp. £3.50.

This volume has been published to record God's great goodness to Mr. Fred Windridge, late pastor of Providence Strict Baptist Chapel, London. It falls into four sections, the first of which is autobiographical and takes the reader from the time of his birth (1867) until 1923. Thereafter his story is told by his daughter, who makes ample use of Mr. Windridge's diary, and the story ends with his death in 1961 at the advanced age of 94. Eight sermons—three from the Old and five from the New Testament—form the third section, and the second edition of 'The Harp of Zion', a series of poetical pieces written by Mr. Windridge over a number of years, forms the final and fitting chapter of the book.

The book is very nicely produced and will undoubtedly make its greatest appeal to those who knew the subject per-

sonally or are connected with the denomination of which he was such an able minister. It is a pity that, printing costs being what they are, the book costs £3.50, as this will prove prohibitive to some. Nevertheless, we wish the volume well and endorse the prayer of Mr. Windridge himself: 'Should anyone receive encouragement in reading this book, to God be all the praise'. 'His Great Godness' may be obtained from Mrs. Perks and also from Mr. N. Roe, 36 Marlborough Road, Broomhill, Sheffield, S10 1DB.

ROBERT RODGERS.

THE AXMINSTER ECCLESIASTICA 1660-1698. Edited by K. W. H. Howard. Gospel Tidings Publications. £3.80. Available (post and packing 50p extra) from 36 Marlborough Road, Sheffield, S10 1DB.

Do not be put off by the title! This is not some specialist work for historians, but a very readable and quite fascinating record of the life of a local church during the stormy days of persecution after the Restoration of Charles II. It is in fact the church book of a local church, so that we are not presented with a historian's backward look at the seventeenth century, but with the account by one who took part in the events it records. This is an invaluable book for those who want to know how those early nonconformists lived and witnessed.

H.M.C.

JUST RECEIVED FROM FREE PRESBYTERIAN PUBLICATIONS, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G.3

The Life of John Knox: Thomas McCrie, £1.80.

The Apostolic Church: Thomas Witherow, 60p.

Gospel Gleanings for Young People, 90p.

Mother's Catechism: John Willison, 20p.

DOCTRINAL DEFINITIONS (*continued from page 163*)

graces of the Holy Spirit necessary for the fulfilment of his ministry. What a solemn charge Paul gives to him—in 2 Timothy 4: 'I charge thee therefore before God'.

A preacher is a man who is ever to live in the Presence of God, and ever to recognise that he is under the scrutiny of God. Read verse 1. Could any minister have a more solemn charge than that—that he is under the scrutiny of God, that his ministry is related to the day of judgment, that he himself will be subject on that day to a serious examination as to his fidelity or otherwise and he also has to prepare men and women for judgment? It is the most solemn charge that could ever rest upon any human being. See Colossians 1 : 23-29.