

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

It is typical of the Apostle Paul that he sets practical issues in a large context. His call for humility in church life in Philippians 2 is set in the framework of one of the great classic statements of the New Testament on the person of Christ. His exhortation on marriage in Ephesians 5 is within the wider doctrine of the relationship of Christ and His church. So too in 2 Corinthians 9 he deals with giving and again the broader issues appear.

The reason is that Paul is so God-centred in his thinking that everything is viewed from the standpoint of heaven. So while the needs of the believers in Judaea call for generous aid from the Greek churches, Paul is not content to deal with the matter simply on that level. He not only wants to promote generosity and concern for those in need. He wants to turn their thoughts God-wards.

So in the first place he speaks of God's attitude. God loves a cheerful giver. The Greek word translated 'cheerful' is the one from which we get our English word 'hilarious'. Certainly hilarious giving is far removed from a dutiful response to an appeal for money. But it is this kind of cheerful giving which God loves, and if that is God's attitude, then this surely is an incentive to give, and also an indication of the kind of giving in which we should engage.

An evil heart of unbelief may however raise a query. If I give in this liberal way, will I not run short of money for my own and my family's needs? Paul's answer is to point to the

farmer. God gives the grain at harvest not only to supply his needs but also to furnish seed for sowing next season. So in our giving we can confidently look to God to supply our needs and at the same time to enable us to give.

Your giving, he continues (11-12), will promote thanksgiving. It will supply the needs of the saints. But it will have an overflowing effect, for it will move them to thanksgiving. They will, of course, appreciate your generosity, but being Christians they will realise that it is God who has prompted you to give, and so they will praise Him.

Furthermore, he adds (13), you will glorify God by your giving. It is, after all, an evidence of your desire to obey Him, and obedience is always glorifying to God. You may well do your giving in secret, but that secret is open to the Lord, and in your obedience He will take a delight. It will indeed provoke from another quarter praise to God, namely from the angelic watchers who see reflected in the church the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3 : 10).

Then again, your giving will produce a response from those to whom you minister (14). They will be moved by your concern for them. Their hearts will respond to you. They will be praising God for your goodness to them, but they will also be praying for you. They may have no money to send a gift as a mark of their appreciation—and in any case you do not look for such—but they will send you something more valuable than gold, the assurance of their prayers.

This brings him to the climax. All this discussion of giving leads us to the great Giver Himself. Our giving is only a faint echo of the surpassing generosity of God. He gave to the uttermost, for He gave His only Son. 'Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!' In face of that stupendous act of liberality, what can I do but ask for grace that I may be a cheerful giver whose giving brings glory to my God.

H.M.C.

AN APOLOGY

In our last issue the index on the front cover remained unaltered from the previous issue. Our printers sincerely apologise for this error and trust the confusion caused was minimal.

The Traditionalist Liberated

H. M. CARSON

*A sermon on Acts 10:9-29 preached in Hamilton
Road Baptist Church, Bangor, Co. Down, on
Sunday morning 14th February, 1971.*

May I turn you to the passage which I read this morning from Acts, chapter 10. We have already looked once at this chapter and on that occasion we were considering Cornelius. We saw him as a man seeking God with all his heart, and we found him as a vindication of the Lord's promise: 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' But this morning we come to the chapter for another purpose, it is to look at the apostle Peter and to see the role which he played on this very significant occasion, because, in fact, it was a most significant occasion. This is one of the key chapters in the Acts of the Apostles; indeed, it is one of the important chapters in the New Testament, in view of the great event which was about to take place and for which God had prepared right through the Old Testament—God was about to reach out to the Gentile world with the gospel. The gospel, up to this point, had been preached within the context of the Jewish world. The early believers were Jews, and they still kept very close to the synagogue and very close to the temple. To them it was very difficult to envisage the possibility of Gentiles being brought into the Kingdom.

So, I say, it is a most significant chapter. God is opening the door of faith to the Gentiles, and in order to do this He has to overcome the prejudice and the traditional attitude of the apostle Peter. But to mention this attitude is to indicate the practical application of this chapter to our situation. It is true that the primary reference of the chapter is to a particular situation, and we look at it in order to understand the gradual moving forward of the purposes of God, and in this case the great radical new step forward in the outworking of those purposes. But there is also the practical application for ourselves. Here is a man who from an entrenched position is compelled by the pressure of the Spirit of God to open his mind to God's truth.

At the time of the Reformation the Reformers had a Latin slogan, 'ecclesia reformanda', which simply meant 'The church always in need of reformation'. They did not believe that they had completed the work of reformation in the church, they realised that there were always unreformed elements creeping back and so they maintained that the church must always be ready for reformation, always be open to fresh understanding of the Word of God. Now here is an illustration of a man who very reluctantly capitulated to the plain message from heaven. Peter is a standing reminder to us that one of the great obstacles to spiritual maturity is the closed mind, and one of the great obstacles to progress in the life of the church is also the closed mind. Sometimes a man may claim to have a deep conviction and to stand for principle, when in actual fact he may simply be stubborn. It may be his own obstinacy, it may be his refusal to open his mind to the truth of God's Word. Sometimes it may indeed be his own pride—he imagines he has got the whole thing buttoned up, and he knows every aspect of the gospel, there is nothing fresh for him to understand or learn. Sometimes, like Peter, he has to be humbled and to realise that there is always more to learn from the Word of God, and the closed mind has got to be exchanged for a mind opened by the Spirit of God.

So we follow Peter through this passage and we start with him at prayer. In a sense this is the key to everything that follows. Peter, we will discover, was very obstinate. He certainly had an entrenched position and it was only the Lord who could drive him out of that entrenched position. But one vitally important fact was present—Peter was praying. As a man of prayer, he was in communion with the Lord, and when a man is maintaining his communion with the Lord he is in a position where, by God's grace, he may advance in his understanding. As we will see, it took quite some levering before Peter did change direction, but the fact that he was walking in close fellowship with the Lord meant that he was in a position to hear what God had to say to him; and although he was slow to receive it, yet nonetheless his communion with the Lord predisposed him to listen and ultimately to obey.

You may remember when the Lord Jesus was teaching He spoke in parables, and the parables, while they had an appeal for the general public, who appreciated the stories, yet their significance was not fully understood. One of the evangelists in his narrative comments that Jesus explained the parables privately to His disciples; when He got the group around Him, and when they were listening to Him, He explained the signi-

ficance of what He was teaching. And it is when the disciple is in this intimate fellowship with the Lord that he hears the Lord's voice. He may be slow to grasp, he may be even more reluctant to give way and obey the word, but if with all his heart he is really seeking the Lord and walking in close fellowship, then I believe he is moving in the right direction and the Lord will reveal His truth. I have seen Christians, for example, who when they have been confronted with some fresh aspect of God's truth, confronted for example with the doctrines of grace, they react, and sometimes they react almost violently—this is something that simply does not fit into their scheme of things. But I have also seen them, because they really love the Lord and are in fellowship with Him, I have seen them gradually opening up to God's truth.

Peter was praying, but Peter was also prejudiced, and very deeply prejudiced. He was a Jew—and the Gentiles, what about them? Well, Peter saw it as a very difficult matter. How could he, a Jew, go to the Gentiles? You couldn't even eat with Gentiles if you were a Jew. They were common and unclean. A Jew, however, belonged to the covenant people. What was the source of this prejudice? Well, it was simply the traditions which Peter had inherited. Peter, like many another, was a thoroughgoing traditionalist, and it took a great deal to shake him out of his traditional attitude. We think about the church of Rome. We think about the way they make their appeal to Scripture and tradition, and we say, 'Ah, but for us it is Scripture alone'—until, if we are honest, we take a closer look at ourselves and we discover that there are a surprising number of traditions which we ourselves observe without necessarily finding them in the Word of God. Peter was in this position. Tradition was a powerful factor in his thinking.

What is tradition? Well, the word simply means 'what is handed on'. A tradition is something which you receive from those who have gone before; you receive it from a former generation, you receive it from your background and your upbringing. Now traditions may be good or they may be bad. But even a good and valuable tradition can become lifeless if it is something that we simply receive and never think it out for ourselves. There are Christians who have their catch-cries and their slogans, but when you analyse them you find that they have never really thought about the position they are adopting. It is simply the kind of thing with which they have grown up, which they have inherited, and there it is. Not only that, a tradition can become a great hindrance if a man is so

governed by his tradition that he fails to listen to the Word of God. There are many (and they are not Romans, they are Protestants, they are Evangelicals) and their traditional attitudes are like coloured spectacles which they put on when they are reading the Scriptures. There is a framework there, and as soon as they look at the Scriptures they are seeing everything in terms of a traditional pattern.

Tradition, and the prejudice that follows from tradition, can be very strong. Certainly it was strong in the case of Peter. It meant, for one thing, that he forgot his own Old Testament. He had been reared on the Old Testament. Had he forgotten the many prophecies which spoke of the home coming of the Gentiles? 'The Gentiles shall come to thy light.' 'Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.' 'The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.' Had he forgotten the whole thrust of the Old Testament? That God's purpose for the Jews was not only that they should have blessing and enjoy it for themselves, but that they might be the means by which the blessing of Jehovah would reach out to the far ends of the earth. But Peter was so entrenched in his traditional attitude to the Gentiles that he couldn't even remember what he had learnt from the Scriptures of the Old Testament. And a man can be so traditional in his ways that there are areas of Scripture for which he has a blind spot, and although you open the Bible and say—'Well, look what it says'; he says, 'Yes, but we don't do it that way', or 'We don't adopt that attitude'. The word is not open to him, he is forgetting it because of the strength of his own tradition.

Had Peter forgotten the Lord Jesus Himself? Had he forgotten what the Lord Jesus had to say about Gentiles? Had he forgotten the time when the Greeks came wanting to see Jesus and Jesus said, 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me'? Not Jews only, but Gentiles! Had he forgotten Jesus' words in John 10? 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.' Indeed, had he forgotten the commendation of a Gentile by the Lord Jesus when the Centurion's servant was healed and the Lord looked round at the Jewish crowd and said, 'I have not found such faith (as in the Roman centurion), no not in Israel'? Had he forgotten the commission of the Lord? Why he had stood with the others after the Lord's resurrection, and the Lord had commissioned them to go with this gospel—to whom were they to go? 'Go,' the Lord had said, 'and make disciples of all the nations. You shall be my

witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.' But Peter was so strongly entrenched that he could not remember the Scripture, he could not remember the words of the Lord.

And what is even more serious, Peter was so entrenched in his traditional attitude that when God speaks very clearly and plainly to him here, he is still resisting the word. He had this vision of the great sheet let down from heaven with the beasts in it, and of course to a Jew with his background of the Book of Leviticus there was a distinction between clean and unclean—you could eat certain animals, others were unclean. The Gentiles did not draw this distinction and that was why you could not have any social contact with the Gentiles. You could not eat with a Gentile because he might eat meat that was ceremonially unclean to you. And although the Lord does it three times, Peter keeps on resisting, resisting the plain words of the Lord, 'What God has cleansed, you are not to call common'. Peter! What you have got to realise is that the new covenant has come. You are still living as if the Book of Leviticus, with its ceremonial laws, is the determining factor. There is a new situation now. Christ, the Messiah, has come and the purposes of God in the Old Testament have reached their great climax. So God declares all foods to be clean, as Jesus had done in the days of His earthly ministry, you are not to call them common or unclean. Not only that, Peter, but God is declaring that the Gentiles, whom you reject because they don't draw this distinction between clean and unclean, that these Gentiles are acceptable to Him. Yet in spite of this plain clear word from the Lord, Peter three times resists. How strongly we can be entrenched in our traditional attitudes even when God makes it so plain! Peter is still resisting.

When the Pilgrim Fathers sailed for the Americas, John Robinson was their pastor, and one of his farewell words that has come down the years to us is a word that I think applies very strongly to this particular issue that we are considering this morning. He spoke about this necessity of being open to the Word of God and open to fresh truth from the Word of God, and someone who described his discourse spoke of it like this: 'He took occasion also miserably to bewail the state and condition of the reformed churches who had come to a full stop in religion and would go no further than the instruments of their reformation; as for example the Lutheran, they could not be drawn to go beyond what Luther taught, for whatever part of God's will He had further revealed and imparted to Calvin they would rather die than embrace it. And also the

Calvinists; they stick where he left them, a misery much to be lamented, because although they were precious shining lights in their time, yet God had not revealed His whole will to them and were they now living they would be ready and willing to embrace further light.' And so came John Robinson's famous statement: 'I am persuaded, I am very confident, that the Lord has more truth and light yet to break forth out of His holy Word.'

It is important to remember that Peter was a very godly man. This is not a man in a spiritual state of decline. This is not a man in a condition of backsliding. This is one of the leaders of the church. This is a man filled with the Spirit of God. This is a man mightily used of God in the preaching of the gospel; through his lips the gospel has been declared with such tremendous power that thousands have been brought to the Saviour, and yet this very godly man is very reluctant to listen to the Word. He needed to have his defences shattered by the Spirit of God. He needed to have the blinkers removed from his eyes. He needed to have his traditional attitudes broken down and his prejudices put to one side. Well, we all need the same thing. We need this openness to fresh truths from the Word of God.

Now Peter is puzzled by this vision. He is perplexed in his soul. What does it mean? We need not be surprised by that kind of puzzlement. When God is beginning to speak to us in a new way, when He is revealing fresh truths to us from His Word, and especially if that truth conflicts with our own established position, we may well expect a great deal of turmoil. When you discover from the Word of God that you have been going in the wrong direction, that something you have cherished as being gospel truth is in actual fact nothing of the sort, that it is simply a traditional attitude, and when you discover that the Word seems to conflict with it, there is an agonising debate very often within the heart; there is a whole state of turmoil, and indeed you can reach the condition where you feel utterly confused. Before, you felt everything was straightforward, but now the whole thing seems to be in a state of flux, you don't know where you are. Well, Peter was in this state, he was puzzled. A church fellowship can be in the same condition. If there is a further opening up of the Word of God, if we are not to be like the kind of church fellowship which John Robinson castigated in the seventeenth century, coming to a full stop in religion, going no further than our forebears taught, well, of course we remain at a full stop. But if the Word begins to penetrate and fresh vistas of the truth of God

are opened, we may well find great turmoil of mind. Indeed, we may feel at times a state of confusion, we don't know where we are, because here is something which seems to have overturned something we have stood for so firmly. I say, if it is the truth of God, let's forget our traditional attitude. Let us submit every tradition to the scrutiny of God's Word, and if God's Word declares a message to us, let us be ready to listen, to hear, to give heed.

Peter was pondering the word, he was letting his mind dwell on it. He is wondering what this vision means, and so he thinks it over, and he thinks it over in the presence of God. This is what we need to do. A traditionalist tends simply to accept, and sometimes to accept blindly what is handed to him—this is what the fathers have said, so we simply follow in their steps—these are the attitudes we have received, well, let's just continue. But this is not the attitude of a disciple at all. The disciple is a learner and he is constantly testing everything that is said to him by the Word of God. You remember the folk in Berea; Luke commends them. Why? It was because they were not even prepared to accept the preaching of the apostle Paul; they searched the Scripture daily to see whether these things were so. They listened to Paul, they listened to his arguments, they listened to his presentation of the truth, they listened to his appeal to the Old Testament, but they wanted to discover for themselves, they wanted to test what he was saying. And this is, I believe, the true attitude—testing, scrutinising, analysing, bringing everything to the touchstone of God's truth.

Peter was pondering the word. He was not like some people, dismissing this out of hand and refusing it. Certainly there is a measure of obstinacy with Peter, admittedly three times in the vision he said, 'No, I can't see it', but he did not say, as some people are inclined to say, 'I don't see it and I am not prepared to see it'. Peter did not see it and he was very slow to see it, but by God's grace he was prepared to see it, and this is the vital thing. He did not dismiss the thing altogether, he did not adamantly refuse. He keeps on chewing the matter over, keeps on thinking about it. He is not content even simply to let things work out. Someone may say, 'This truth seems to conflict with the position I have adopted, but I will just let things stand. Life has to be lived and I must get on with my Christian work, I won't trouble myself too much with this'. But this is not a path which leads to spiritual maturity. This is a path that leads to the backwaters of spiritual stagnation. Here is a man of God whose whole position is being shattered, whose whole traditional attitudes are being revolutionised, but

he is thinking it over, he wants to understand, he wants to press further into the truth of God.

When you have Christians like this they are a delight to be with! When you have a congregation like this they are a delight to preach to, because they are not concerned simply to buttress a position or to stand for that bastion or even just simply to accept what the preacher is saying—God deliver us from that! They want to test everything, both their own traditional attitudes and the contemporary preaching of the ministry of the Word, they want to test it all, by God's truth. Peter was very open, and so he was persuaded. Slowly, painfully, after a time of real perplexity, after a time of kicking against the truth, the Word of God broke upon him, the light of God's truth shone into his heart, the Spirit of God made the great impact. Peter saw how wrong he had been, how foolish to cling desperately to a traditional position that God had quite clearly said was finished with.

And when Peter is ready to receive the truth, then God has a word for him. The time has come to act, Peter, now you are ready to go; you are to go to Cornelius. And he goes to Cornelius, and as we will see later, he preaches with great power. The Spirit of God falls, there are many who turn to the Lord, and the door is opened wide to the Gentiles. But it is important to notice that Peter is not ready for action, he is not ready for this new departure, not ready for fruitful service, until he has been humbled and brought to the point of acknowledging his prejudice, brought to the point of having his mind opened to the Word of God. You know that sometimes in the kitchen, when you are dealing with containers, some of them open quite easily, but some of them don't, especially if they have not been opened for quite some time. Sometimes a tin of food gets a bit rusted around the rim and you cannot get it off, and you have to go and get a screwdriver and prise the lid off. There are many Christians like that, for their minds simply will not open. They have been encrusted with traditional attitudes and they cannot change. Often it takes the prising of the Spirit of God, applied with great power, to wrench open the minds in order that the truth of God may enter. We need to pray that God would deliver us from the kind of preconceived ideas which bound Peter so firmly. May the Lord deliver us from blind prejudice. May the Lord deliver us from a merely traditional attitude. May the Lord deliver us from being so entrenched in any one position that we are not ready to listen to what the Spirit has to say.

'I am very confident,' if I may echo John Robinson again,

'I am very confident that the Lord has yet fresh light and truth to break forth from His holy Word.' We need to pray—'Lord, open my mind and keep it open; Lord, give me this readiness of understanding, readiness to give heed to all that Thou hast to say to me. Give me the humility that is ready to admit that I have not yet compassed all the truth of God and that I am not yet complete in my understanding. Teach me the humility which says, the truth of God is so great, so rich, and I am so weak and finite and puny in my understanding, I have a long way to go. Teach me the humility which is ready to say that what I thought was right I have discovered to be inadequate and faulty.' Fresh truth, so long as it is truth from the Word of God, is a call to us to go forward—'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.' May the Lord give us open minds, ready hearts, and ready wills to obey His truth.

THEY COULD NOT ENTER IN BECAUSE OF UNBELIEF

(Hebrews 3 : 19)

Infidelity, and not believing God, is the root and cause of all our woe. It began with our first parents, and it cleaveth too close unto us, even unto this day . . . if a mortal man promise, we believe him, and rest upon his word, but all the Great God can do unto us . . . will not make us give credit to His Word.

—RICHARD SIBBES.

' . . . As you would avoid a viper, keep from all attempts to work up a spurious fervour in public devotion. Do not labour to SEEM earnest. Pray as your heart dictates, under the leading of the Spirit of God, and if you are dull and heavy tell the Lord so. It will be no ill thing to confess your deadness, and bewail it, and cry for quickening; it will be real and acceptable prayer; but simulated ardour is a shameful form of lying. Never imitate those who are earnest . . . Just be natural the whole way through, and ask of God to be guided in all . . . '

—C. H. SPURGEON.

The All-Sufficiency of God

H. P. WOTTON

John Mason (1646-94), who, for the last twenty years of his life, was Rector of Water Stratford, near Buckingham, wrote: 'God is all-sufficient: get Him for your "portion", and you have all: then you have *infinite wisdom* to direct you, *infinite knowledge* to teach you, *infinite mercy* to pity and save you, *infinite love* to care and comfort you, *infinite power* to protect and keep you. If God be yours, all His creatures, all His works of providence, shall do you good, as you have need of them. He is an eternal, full, satisfactory portion. He is an ever-living, ever-loving, ever-present friend . . .'

'God is all-sufficient,' said John Mason, 'get Him for your "portion" and you have all.' This is a wonderful truth. We can do without many things, but we cannot do without God.

William Law, the author of *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, points out that there are lessons to be learned everywhere in this world to teach us the wisdom of living a life devoted to God. And to this end, he would have us make use of those who have a form of knowledge and wisdom, but who are ignorant of the most important things. On one occasion I heard, on the radio, a well-known personality being asked what he would like to take with him and what he would do if he were stranded on a desert island. The professor was eventually asked what he would do if the circumstance arose in which he would have to leave the island. Could he swim? The answer was, 'No'. Yet in this situation his accumulation of knowledge would be of no service to him unless included among it he could answer in the affirmative the most important question of all—Had he a saving knowledge of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Which question, of course, was not asked. Let us, then, learn wisdom from the contemplation of wisdom's opposite.

The time will come when we will have to leave the desert island of this world. Our only need then will be God, and if He is not ours all will be lost. Our lives depend on Him, now and in the world to come. We may think it absolutely necessary to have a successful church fellowship, abundance of friends, and many other things, but good as they may be, they are not our 'portion', they are not our God.

We need to ponder the truth that if we have God we have all, and without Him we have nothing. Wrote the apostle to a church with probably little of this world's goods, 'All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's' (1 Corinthians 3 : 21, 22, 23). The teaching here is that these things were theirs only because they were Christ's; for if we are not His, all things militate against us.

*If God is yours,
you have infinite wisdom to direct you.*

This does not mean that He will give you an infinite amount of wisdom. Only God has that. What it does mean is that if God is yours, you will be directed by One who has infinite wisdom to do so. Some may think that God's wisdom to direct refers to what we should do for Him in outward service and where we should go. This is included in it, but it is not the main thing.

The most important thing is that we have God's wisdom to direct us how to regulate our inner lives for Him. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom' (Psalm 111 : 10). This is seen in the fact that 'the fear of the Lord is to hate evil' (Proverbs 8 : 13), and that 'by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil' (Proverbs 16 : 6). This is a work that we cannot do in the strength of natural wisdom, for without the fear of the Lord to teach us we do not know the things that cause us to stumble. The work is so intricate, and so far beyond our natural capabilities that we do not know where to start. Our fallen nature is so entwined in sinful thoughts and sinful motives that it takes the wisdom of God to disentangle us. But if God is our portion, He will surely make us wise unto salvation.

*If God is your portion,
you will have infinite knowledge to teach you.*

Those who have God for their teacher have come to the highest university, where no student rises to a higher status than that of an undergraduate, where he who attains to the highest place is he who sits on the lowest form, cheerfully confessing that he knows nothing of himself. It is only when we confess that we know nothing of ourselves that we are willing to be taught of God. And it is difficult to explain our unwillingness to have God for our teacher when there are no school fees and the only condition of entry is a humble mind.

The kind of knowledge God teaches His people is *heavenly knowledge*. Just as heaven is higher and far superior to the earth, so heavenly knowledge is higher and far superior to earthly knowledge. All who believe that there is a heaven where there are glorified saints and angels, must also believe that these glorified saints and angels have superior knowledge and greater intellectual powers than any down here. Heavenly knowledge includes the knowledge of God Who is infinite. What condescension that He should be prepared to teach sinful creatures, who are not worthy of the least of His mercies!

*If God is your portion,
you have infinite mercy to pity and save you.*

The tendency today is to equate *steadfast love* with *mercy*. But this is not satisfactory, for if *steadfast love* is always used instead of *mercy* we are going to dispense with *mercy* altogether. The plain fact is that *steadfast love* does not mean *mercy*. *Mercy* supposes the existence of sin and of the punishment due to it, but *steadfast love* supposes no such things.

The Arminian professes to believe that God loves all people equally, presumably including those who are eternally lost. But surely it would be mockery to go to the place where love can do them no good, and tell them that God loves them with *steadfast love*. They would prefer to hear of *mercy*, if that were possible.

What the convinced sinner wants to know is how an infinitely holy and just God can extend to him *mercy*, for it is *mercy* that he stands in need of, and *mercy* that he must have if he is to be saved. But he would not have *mercy* at the expense of God's perfect righteousness, for he knows that a just and holy God cannot extend *mercy* to a hell-deserving sinner unless his sin has been dealt with and atoned for. God is able to have *mercy* on a sinner only because of what Christ has done for sinners.

And so in this matter God is all-sufficient. He has infinite *mercy* to pity and save those who believe because He is their salvation through the perfect offering of His Son upon the cross.

*If God is your portion,
you have infinite love to care and comfort you.*

To have an interest in the infinite love of God is a great privilege. The love of God is intimately bound up with His people. So much so that their interests are His. Not only is

infinite love with them in all their joy and all their sufferings, but it was infinite love that appointed their joy and their sufferings. The mighty motive God had in sending His only-begotten Son into the world to save sinners was infinite love, and the motive of the Son in being willing to do and suffer on behalf of sinners was infinite love also.

There is much separation today in the lives of people who at one time professed to love each other. But infinite love is unacquainted with the word. The divine Lover is never separate from the objects of His love. When the apostle Paul saw this he went into an ecstasy of delight as he exclaimed, 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Romans 8 : 35, 38, 39).

We have infinite love to care and comfort us. There is never a time when God is not caring for His people. But this does not mean that He will always comfort them. There are times when infinite love does not think it wise to do so. We sometimes need to be reminded of our sins and failings, and infinite love will see to it that we are not deprived of this means of blessing.

*If God is your portion,
you have infinite power to protect and keep you.*

This does not mean that God will ensure that no evil will happen to the children of God. This would not be true to facts as we know them. The same things happen to the righteous as to the wicked, such things as accidents, illnesses, losses and death. On top of which the child of God is hated, and persecuted, if not by men, then by spiritual wickednesses in high places, by the god of this world, who goes about seeking whom he may devour.

The spirit of the world is diametrically opposed to the new principle of holiness that is in the born-again soul, and if the believer is not made to realise this, in his place of work and in his contacts with unconverted people, he has some reason to doubt whether he has the life of God in his soul.

Besides this, we find in ourselves the opposition of our old nature, always trying to keep us down, always opposing the desire to set our affections on things above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. No wonder the psalmist cried, 'My

soul cleaveth unto the dust; quicken Thou me according to Thy word' (Psalm 119 : 25).

We are inclined to take too much for granted, little realising how much we need God's power to protect and keep us. We are compassed about by dangers, seen and unseen, but we have an all-sufficient God Who has infinite power to protect and keep us.

We do well to look back sometimes and recall some of the ways in which our all-sufficient God has protected us right up to the present moment of time. When we realise that a very large proportion of the world's population is without sufficient food and shelter and that many die of hunger, we have reason to be thankful that we first opened our eyes in what is still, comparatively speaking, 'England's green and pleasant land'.

Then there was God's protecting power in the days when we were unconverted. We have reason to be eternally grateful that God did not shorten our lives when we were in our sins, as He has done to multitudes of people. His watchful eye is over His elect even in their unconverted state, for they cannot die until they are effectually called by divine grace.

We have reason to be eternally thankful also that God so protected us that we were enabled to keep the greatest appointment of our lives—they day upon which depended our eternal destiny—when by sovereign grace we were born into His kingdom. And since then—time would fail to tell of the all-sufficiency of God over perhaps many years—dare I say of service? at least, of many years of would-be service, of fightings, and fears, of victories and failings, of seekings and findings, of sunshine and shadow, of clouds that hide Him from our view, and of the parting of the clouds and the shining of the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness into our souls.

Finally, the quotation from John Mason concludes with these words: 'If God be yours, all His creatures, all His works of providence, shall do you good, as you have need of them. He is an eternal, full, satisfactory portion. He is an ever-living, ever-loving, ever-present friend; and without Him you are a cursed creature in every condition, and all things will work against you.'

These are faithful, solemn words. We are wise to treat them as such. We need to ask the question, and God grant that all who read it may be able to answer it in the affirmative—Is God in my life as my all-sufficient God in Christ? Is He indeed my portion?

Doctrinal Definitions

PAUL TUCKER

PRAYER III

I. INTERCESSION. We come now to a vital aspect of prayer touched upon in many parts of Scripture. See 1 Timothy 2 : 1. This word 'intercession' is used a number of times in the New Testament and it literally means 'a device to meet a need'. It suggests the ministry of someone who comes into the presence of God on behalf of someone else, so that we may say of intercession that it is one of the most unselfish forms of prayer mentioned in the Bible because almost invariably it is concerned not with our own personal needs, but with the needs of others.

1. *Some of the great prayers of intercession that are found in the Old Testament.*

(a) *Undoubtedly the first of an outstanding character is that of Abraham, in Genesis 18 : 23-33. He is praying that the righteousness of the godly might avail to cover and to spare the ungodly. In a way he was praying on the basis of substitution, and you remember how God said, 'Yes, if there are fifty, I will spare the place'. Then Abraham daringly dropped the number. Here we have the first great intercessory prayer in the Old Testament. A man praying for a doomed city, praying for the unsaved.*

(b) *Another great prayer of intercession is that of Moses, in Exodus 32. And the Lord repented. It does not mean that He changed His mind; He changed His attitude. Instead of assuming an attitude of judgment, He assumed an attitude of mercy toward the people, but it was in response to intercession. In verse 10 there is a tremendous tribute to the power of Moses' intercession. Let us remember that this is human language, God coming down to the limitations of our understanding and saying to Moses, 'Now therefore let Me alone'. God, so to speak, is putting Himself in the hands of Moses and saying, 'Now, Moses, let Me alone, if you go on interceding like this I shall change my attitude, let Me alone'.*

(c) *Another reference to intercessory prayer in the Old Testament concerns Job. See Job 42. You remember Job was greatly afflicted, physically, financially and domestically, and to add to his burden three of his friends came along and applied human philosophy to the situation and largely blamed it all on Job. God was very displeased with these three friends*

because of their behaviour towards Job. See verse 7. And in verse 10 we have these delightful words, 'And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before'. Now it needed a lot of grace to pray for those miserable comforters, but God gave Job the grace and he really did pray for them, and in praying for them he had a spiritual reward. He had spiritual release and his own fortune was turned and God blessed him so that his latter end was even more prosperous than his beginning. You know, there is a liberation of spirit that is found in praying for other people. God is no man's debtor, and if we put Him first, if we put the interest of His Kingdom first, if we put other people first, it brings its own benefits to the child of God.

2. *In the New Testament this word 'intercession' is directly connected with the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.*

(a) *For example, in Hebrews 7:25 we are told that our Lord even now is interceding for His people.* We must not think of our Lord as passive in glory. He is in glory, within the veil, exercising a ministry of intercession. His very presence in Heaven constitutes a prayer for the children of God, and we are linked to Him. He prays for His people on the basis of His redeeming work which He has accomplished on their behalf. He implements all that He wrought out for us by His constant intercession at the right hand of God. And if you want to know the kind of things that the Lord Jesus Christ prays for His people, you have to go through the Gospels.

(b) *What He did when He was on earth we can be sure He is doing now that He is in glory.* His return to glory has not interrupted His ministry. (i) He prayed for Peter, Luke 22 : 31. We can be sure that if faith is kept alive in us it is because of our Lord's intercession, that our faith may not fail. (ii) Our Lord prayed that His disciples in the world might be kept from the malice and from the pressure of the world, in His High-Priestly prayer in John 17. We may be sure that our Lord is continuing to pray that kind of prayer for His people.

(c) *The Holy Spirit also intercedes for the believer, within the believer.* Romans 8 : 26. There is this double intercession that the believer has, the Lord Jesus interceding for us in the presence of God as our Great High Priest, and the Holy Spirit interceding within us as God's agent. Though we may pray for the wrong thing, the Holy Spirit can take that prayer and turn it, if our motive is pure, and give that prayer a direct emphasis that has the approbation of God. 'He that searches the heart

knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He, the Spirit, maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.' Have you never felt within you that there are prayers to which you cannot give expression, you have commanded words, you have tried to express the deeper motions of the soul, but somehow you have been dissatisfied and at the end of your praying you have felt that you have not begun to pray? Well, we are told here not to be despondent, since that is an indication of the Spirit of God working within us at a level too deep for human language, 'with groanings which cannot be uttered'. If you and I would be like the Lord Jesus and would know the great co-operation of the Holy Spirit in our prayer life, then we too must be intercessors.

II. EJACULATORY PRAYER. This is emergency prayer which is quite different from intercession. It is a sudden short elevation of the heart to God. Now there are several such prayers in the Bible. See Matthew 14 : 30. There is a great illustration in the Old Testament of ejaculatory prayer, in Nehemiah 2 : 4. Notice the statement, 'so I prayed to the God of Heaven'. He lifted his heart suddenly to God for wisdom because everything depended upon the answer in that emergency situation. There was an amazing answer to this ejaculatory prayer (verse 6). One writer has called this the sky telegram. You can think of ordinary prayer, your everyday devotions at home, as writing a letter, and you take your time, but if there is some emergency and you want to get in touch with someone immediately, then you send a telegram because of the emergency situation. You lift the heart immediately to God and crave His help on the spot. Those who are regular in their prayer life will find the use of ejaculatory prayer very effective. I do not think this kind of prayer is useful to the person who has not got a prayer life, because it becomes presumption. Now what I like about Nehemiah is that he knew how to have regular times of devotional prayer. See 1 : 4-6. You notice in 1 : 4 'prayed *before* the God of Heaven' and in 2 : 4 'I prayed *to* the God of Heaven'. But the two kinds of prayer were different. The first prayer was the regular waiting upon God, and the second prayer was a sudden ejaculatory cry to God for immediate wisdom and help. So when unexpected dangers or opportunities come our way, when unforeseen temptation arises, we can use the sky telegram, but we must keep the communication open. The line must ever be clear, we must be walking in the light and living in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. THE PRAYER OF COMMITMENT OR THE PRAYER OF COMMITTAL. There are certain matters that eventually you

have to leave with God. You pray about them for a time and then the moment comes when the burden is lifted. A certain person has been upon your heart or mind and you have prayed and prayed, and then suddenly the burden has lifted and you feel that you can just commit that person to the Lord and leave it there. See Psalm 37 : 1-7. There is a moment when we have to commit our way unto the Lord and say, 'Well, Lord, you know all about it, you know all about this situation. I can do nothing about it, I have come to the end of my tether'. It is the prayer of commitment. Now the trouble with so many of us is that we bring these burdens to the Lord and then take them away again. I think this prayer of commitment applies particularly to death, to the end of life. Happy the man or woman who at the end of the journey can just commit themselves to the Lord, just resting in His love, care and compassion. That is exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ did upon the cross, Luke 23 : 46.

IV. PREVAILING PRAYER. This is laying hold upon God and continuing. Now here again we find that prayer is so rich and varied. In certain circumstances we must commit the matter and leave it there, but in other circumstances we are to plead with God and not to let go. We are to continue, to be importunate and persistent. That is what our Lord is teaching in Luke 11 and 18. The whole emphasis is upon persistent praying. Half-hearted asking always comes away empty-handed. Cold prayers, formal prayers invite their own denial. I suppose the greatest example of tenacity in prayer so far as the human being is concerned is Elijah. See James 5 : 16, 17. Here we are beyond theorising, here we are in the realm of reality, in the realm of something that ought to be a challenge to our souls. Are we prepared to prevail with God, to lay hold of God until the blessing comes, as Elijah did? Turn again to 1 Kings 18 : 42-46. You get something of the intensity of the man by his posture. He cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees. The great need was rain, because there had been drought for three and a half years. 'He said to his servant, go up now and look toward the sea, and he went up and looked and said' (very depressing news, you notice) 'there is nothing.' And that was the answer he gave for six or seven times. Nothing, no evidence whatever on the horizon that there was going to be a shower. A challenge for those of us who pray for an awakening, a reviving, and the situation seems to get worse instead of better. There is nothing. Well, there

(continued on page 269)

The Shield of Faith

D. W. MIDDLETON

*A sermon preached at Surrey Chapel, Norwich,
on Sunday morning, 7th February, 1971.*

'Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked' (Ephesians 6 : 16).

This great passage in the middle of Ephesians chapter six tells us that if we are Christians, then we have a fight on our hands. We are part of a warfare. The Christian life is neither easy nor peaceful. It is a battle; and it is a battle not only against ourselves, not only against the people who may persecute us, but, we are told here, it is a battle against the devil and his evil powers. We are told at the same time that we must not be downcast or despair, because Christ our Lord has already won this battle; and God has made full provision for us. We can be strong in the Lord, and we are to put on the armour of God, described by Paul, you remember, like the armour of a Roman soldier: the sword and the shield and the breastplate and the helmet, and so forth.

Now we have looked together so far at three parts of this armour—the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and last time, in verse 15, your feet shod with the firmness of Gospel peace. Now, as we come to verse 16, let us try to get this part of the picture clear in our minds. How did an enemy attack you in those days? What were his offensive weapons? Obviously he had a sword, and he had a spear or javelin, such as was thrust into our Lord's side when He hung on the cross. A battle-axe was used by the Syrians and the Babylonians. These were hand-to-hand weapons. For attacking from any distance the Israelites especially used a sling, and it was a very terrible weapon too. But much more common was the bow and arrow. The bow that was used was not like the English long-bow, just six feet of plain bow. It would probably be a double-curved bow, made of laminated layers of wood and horn, and would be a very powerful weapon, a formidable and armour-piercing weapon. The arrows would be metal-tipped and, of course, the darts spoken of here in our text are arrows.

The picture here is that the enemy is bending his bow and shooting arrows at the Christian. But not ordinary arrows: these are called 'fiery arrows'. Some people say this means poisoned arrows, but these were hardly known in those times, and in any case the word does not mean that. It was, apparent-

ly, a fairly common thing to dip the points of the arrows in pitch or something else inflammable, and then set light to them just as they were fired. And you can think how terrifying this must have been when, say, five hundred or a thousand archers all fired together and the sky was filled with flaming arrows. These were the flame-throwers of the old days. What could the infantryman do against that kind of attack? His only defence was to catch these flaming arrows on his shield.

There were two kinds of shield. There was a small light shield, not much bigger than a dartboard, and there was a large shield which was intended to cover the whole body. The Greek word in our verse for 'shield' means that very large shield, and is derived from the word that means a 'door'. That gives you some idea of the size and proportions of this shield. It was at least four or five feet high and something like two and a half feet wide. This, you see, is why the Apostle says, 'above all, taking the shield'. He means covering over everything else, not as being the most important thing, more important than anything else, but covering over everything else. This great shield must be held firmly in front of you, and on it catch, and quench, all the fiery arrows that are being shot at you by the devil. So here is the picture. The devil is shooting at us with these fiery flaming arrows. But we are not defenceless against him because, covering over everything else, we have the great, strong shield of faith.

Now that is the picture. But what is it all about? For a start, we are being told that the devil shoots these temptations at us. 'The wicked' at the end of verse 16, 'the fiery darts of the wicked', does not mean wicked people. It means the wicked *one*, the devil himself. And we are being told that his temptations are like flaming arrows, which is a very good description of them. Without going into much detail, surely it works out like this: one of the strange things about temptation is the way it can suddenly present itself to the mind. We all know this by experience don't we? You can be working away quite happily and then, suddenly, into the mind comes this temptation. One moment all was well. The next this temptation is strangely present. It is like an arrow shot swiftly through the air. Imagine a man walking quietly in a field and then suddenly, without warning, an arrow is sticking into his arm. Well, he doesn't think this comes from his sub-conscious. He knows that someone has shot at him. So with us; one moment we are all right, the next there is this strong temptation before us. Very often the devil does this by taking advantage of particular circumstances. Let me highlight three kinds of tempta-

tion that come especially in this way, noting that this kind of temptation comes especially in the realm of the emotions.

One obvious example is lust. I mention this not because it is the most important, but because it is so obvious. You remember the story of David and Bathsheba. All unawares David's eye fell on Bathsheba. He could have turned quietly away, but before he could, the devil had taken advantage of those circumstances and he had shot a fiery arrow into David's heart. And there are parallels to this in our own lives. The devil's temptation to lust suddenly comes into the heart like an arrow, and especially when circumstances provide an opportunity. Or again, as a second example, and again a very obvious one, the temptation to anger. Think again of the life of David, the story of how before he was king he sent to a man called Nabal for a little help, and how this man Nabal sent him a humiliating answer. Well, David was a big man. He could have shrugged this off, but immediately an arrow was fired into his heart and his anger rose up like a flood tide, and before he knew what had happened he was on the trail after Nabal with four hundred men with drawn swords in their hands and David cursing under his breath. The devil does this to us. In circumstances where we could pass things off quite patiently, or at the worst feel a moment's irritation which soon dies down, the devil shoots the fiery arrow into our hearts, tempting us and arousing us to fierce and bitter anger which afterwards we ourselves cannot understand. Or a third example is the way we are suddenly tempted to doubt and despair. The circumstances may be that someone, let's say someone we relied on completely, has let us down and disappointed us. It may be someone we always relied on as a good Christian, and then, maybe, in terms of Christian work and service, he lets us down horribly and even spoils God's work. Now, we ought to be able to bear it to God in prayer, but before we can, the devil fires an arrow into our hearts, tempting, and moving us to doubt and despair. He says, 'Why believe? Why bother? Why go on if that's the way people treat you?'

Lust, anger, despair, those are very much the flaming arrows the devil shoots at us. Now, you may say these are, surely, just natural emotional reactions. Why call them temptations? Isn't it natural to respond to certain situations with lust, anger, and despair? No, I would say not. There are situations which provide the raw material for such temptations, but then the devil comes in and takes advantage. He comes in on top of the situation, and brings in the temptation. Or think of it, if you will, in terms of this word 'fiery'. These are not ordinary

arrows the devil shoots. They are *fiery* arrows. What's the purpose of that? The purpose is that he wants not just to wound us or pain us; he wants to set fire to things. When these fiery arrows were used, this was the whole object: to set fire to houses, or to a soldier's clothing. Their purpose is to inflame.

Now James, in his letter, when he writes that famous chapter about the tongue and how the tongue can be the means of bitter angry cursing, says the tongue is a fire. And he says it sets fire to other things, and *it* is set on fire of hell. You get his argument? He says, 'Look at this angry tongue, with its bitter violent words. It's like a fire, isn't it? And it will set other things on fire. It will cause more trouble. It will cause more sin. It will spread the flames'. But then he asks where the flame came from in the first place. And he says it came from hell; that's where it came from. The devil shot an arrow tipped with a little hell-fire, and wounded you in your tongue, and set your tongue on fire with anger and cursing. And from you the fire spreads to others. That's how it works. That's where the power of temptation comes in. The devil's temptation inflames us.

The original cause of the lust, the anger, or the despair, may have been relatively small, yet surprisingly it spreads like a fire. It grows quickly in its power. It spreads 'like a house on fire'; and then, later on, we say I don't know what came over me. It spread so quickly till my whole being was taken up with this thing, although the original cause was so small. How did it spread so quickly? Because this was one of the devil's flaming arrows. This is exactly what he does. This is exactly what temptations are meant to do: to inflame, to spread, and ultimately, you see, if unchecked, to spread from us to other people and involve other people in our lust, our anger, our despair. I hope you can get this picture clearly. These temptations come from the enemy of our souls, says God's Word, and they are like flaming arrows. Don't forget that. And they have got a coal of hell-fire on the tip of them; they inflame sin in you and they even spread to other people like a fire.

Well then, why don't we simply get rid of the temptations straight away? Just throw it off the moment it comes? That is what we try to do sometimes, don't we? The thought comes into our mind and we shake our head and say 'Go away'. Why doesn't it go away? Because these temptations are like arrows. They stick into us. They are sharp. They are barbed. You cannot throw them off. Some arrows stick so fast into the flesh

that they have to be cut out. Or, for instance, if they come into the arm, they must be pushed clean through and taken out the other side. You cannot just brush these things away. Here is our difficulty then. We try simply to dismiss a temptation from our mind, but it is not that easy. These are arrows. They stick fast into us. We wrest our mind away. Back comes the thought again. We force it away from our mind. Back it comes again. It is like an arrow stuck in the flesh, and you cannot get rid of it.

All we are saying so far is this: how true to life is this description of temptation! All of us, young and old, have our temptations, and this is what they are like. They are exactly like this: like fiery arrows shot by the devil. They are swift, sudden, unexpected. They are fiery, inflammatory, incendiary. They are sharp, persistent, clinging. All of this, I say again, applies especially to these temptations in the emotional realm: lust, anger, despair, jealousy, cruelty, greed, these kinds of things. We are naturally prone to these failings. But the position is this: we are like dry tinder; and the devil is the one who shoots his burning arrows into us and sets us on fire from hell.

Now that is one side of our verse and I am sure every single one of us can back this up from our experience. This IS what happens to us. We know it only too well from personal experience. We DO get tempted like this, and all too often the temptation does its work, and we bring ourselves and others into guilt and misery.

So the question now is this: what defence have we got? If the devil's temptations are like fiery arrows, what *can* we do to stop them? Now, be sure of this: we cannot stop him firing them! So long as we are in this present life we are going to be tempted! Right through to the very end we cannot stop the devil firing these arrows. But can we stop them hitting us? This is exactly what the verse is about. We have a *shield* against these arrows. And the arrows must hit against the shield and fall harmless to the ground. What is this shield? It is the shield of faith. 'Above everything else, take the shield of faith, with which you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.' This is the shield: 'Faith'. Now what does this mean? And how does this work? How can faith possibly quench the devil's temptations?

First of all we have to get rid of some of the false ideas about faith, because if you have something that is not real Christian faith at all, it will not quench the devil's arrows.

Some people, when they hear the word 'faith', think of it in a very general, vague way. They are not quite sure what their faith is meant to be. It is for them simply a kind of virtue, something to do with being sincere. The most important question to ask is what is the object of your faith? Faith in ourselves is a poor, weak, shoddy thing. It is a shield of flimsy fabric, a kind of self-righteousness. It will not stop the devil's arrows. Just a general idea that you believe in the existence of God is not going to help you here. A surprisingly high percentage of people profess to believe in the existence of God. It does not help them. It does not do them any good in their practical lives. The only faith which is true faith is faith in the true God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that faith means casting yourself on God's mercy in Christ, for a start. It means laying hold of the promises of God in Christ. It means relying on the perfect life and death of Christ for your salvation. There is your true faith. The self-righteous man who reckons on satisfying God with his good deeds is still a stranger to this faith, because true faith means abandoning all trust in oneself, one's own resources, one's own goodness. Faith comes to God, the one true God, with an absolute dependence on the work of Christ and on the promises of Christ.

This is not just feeling. It is not just intellectual assent, the mind saying 'yes' to certain truths. This is the whole man, heart, mind, conscience, will, relying on God in Christ. True faith is the gift of God, as the Scriptures tell us: 'Faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.' If true faith were not the gift of God, how could the shield of faith be part of God's armour? We have said already that these are not our virtues described here. This is all of God. This is God's armour. True saving faith is not something we work up ourselves. It is the gift of God.

This, then, is the beginning: this saving faith. Anything short of that is not genuine Christian faith, and will prove itself not to be Christian faith because it will never stop any of the devil's temptations. Ask yourself: Do I have this faith at this moment in Jesus Christ the Lord? Am I right now trusting Him as my Saviour? If you have not yet reached that point, then as yet you have nothing to do with this shield of faith; and no wonder if the devil's fiery arrows shoot you down every time.

Now this has to be said: I believe one of the biggest mistakes made by Christians is to think that faith is only the way you start the Christian life, and afterwards it is something

you leave behind; that faith is the door into becoming a Christian and when you get through the door you leave the door behind. But they are terribly wrong here, because the Christian *life* is a life of faith. The Christian walks by faith, and we are to be strong *in faith*; we are to grow in faith. We never, never leave faith behind, just the opposite indeed, for our faith is to *increase* and we are to have an active faith.

And here is something else easily forgotten: faith is our great link with spiritual reality. The writer to the Hebrews says it is the 'assurance of things hoped for'; it is the 'conviction of things not seen'. Again and again, in Hebrews 11, you have this kind of faith that links man with spiritual reality, and thus all those heroes and heroines of faith used the shield of faith. There are your great examples; men and women of God whose faith was active.

So we walk by faith. But how does faith form a shield to guard against the devil's arrows? How does it work? Well, what happens to me when sudden temptations strike home? What happens is this: that sin and its temptation becomes for the moment the most important thing in the world. I must give vent to my anger; nothing can stop me. I lose sight of all the consequences. Never mind anything else, I must give vent to this. Or, when it is despair, I must plunge into it. Every reason against it is dim and unreal. My despair is everything. Or, if it is lust, I must satisfy it; it is all-important; nothing compares with it. So, what is happening? Spiritual things have become totally unreal, haven't they? Christ is forgotten. God is dead. My sin is the one great reality in the world. Isn't this true? Isn't this how we get taken up with these things when temptation comes?

If only at such a time Christ the Lord were really, if you like, physically there, it would need one look, wouldn't it? That's all! One piercing look from my Lord, His hands on my head, His voice saying 'Peace, be still' and the whole thing would be finished with. But no, He is so far away, He is unreal, He is forgotten. And if only Christ Himself could be more real than the sin, more near than the devil, *this is my need*. Wesley says:

'Pierce, fill me, with a humble fear;
My utter helplessness reveal.
Satan and sin are always near;
Thee may I always nearer feel.'

That is my need, And that is exactly where faith comes in. This is the power of faith.

Old William Gurnall, the Puritan, who writes on this, says: 'Faith hath a piercing eye. It is the evidence of things not seen. It looks behind the curtain of sense'. I like that: 'Faith hath a piercing eye'. It is our link with spiritual reality. Faith opens our eyes. It sees that Christ the Lord is nearer than Satan. It sees all the powers and promises of God immediately at hand. It sees sin for what it is. It sees the vileness of sin. It sees Satan for who he is: a defeated enemy. Faith opens the eyes the way the eyes of Elisha's servant were opened to behold the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire to defend him. Faith opens our eyes the way the eyes of Hagar were opened when she was dying in the desert, and there she saw a well of water that saved herself and Ishmael. Faith sees the spiritual realities that sin blinds us to. Faith, mighty faith, 'the promise sees, and looks to that alone, laughs at impossibilities, and cries it *shall* be done'.

Faith looks unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, and sees Him ever near. Blind unbelief is lost here. Can you feel this difference? Lust and violence and despair and greed and jealousy master unbelief. But FAITH is like a mighty shield. It quenches the fire in these flaming arrows, and they fall to the ground. Faith speaks in this way: 'How can I do this thing with my dear Saviour right beside me, holding my hand, keeping my heart, looking upon me? How can I do this sin in His presence, with Him right here looking at me? How can I do this thing when God my Father is looking upon me now, loving me, caring for me, and guiding me? Can I sin against His ever-present care? How can I do this thing while the blessed Holy Spirit lives at this moment within me? Dare I grieve Him? Quench Him? Resist Him? How can I defile His temple?' You see it? Faith makes these things real at this moment. How shall I do this thing when I see sin for what it is—vile and worthless and tragic and pathetic. How shall I do so utterly worthless and stupid and vile a deed? Faith sees it to be such. Faith sees it all. It has 'a piercing eye'. It does not look at the things that are seen. It is not deceived by the pleasures of sin. It looks on things unseen, things spiritual, things eternal. Faith sees reality and thus quenches temptation.

Surely, we have all had some experience of this. We know it works. This is effective; this is powerful. But the great thing is to act upon it. Exercise your faith. You remember the rebuke of our Lord to the disciples: 'Where is your faith?' 'O ye of little faith.' Pray to Him: 'Lord, increase our faith'.

Never take faith for granted; in all your prayers, pray for your faith to be strengthened and increased and purified,

because, you see, the shield has got to be used. It is no good knowing all about believing and its usefulness, yet never taking the shield and putting it into action. There is a command here. We are to act, to obey, to take the shield of faith.

‘What though a thousand hosts engage
A thousand worlds my soul to shake;
I have a shield to quell their rage
And drive the alien armies back.
Portrayed, it bears a bleeding lamb;
I dare believe in Jesus’ name.’

Therefore, ‘above all, take the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one’. Amen.

DOCTRINAL DEFINITIONS *(concluded from page 260)*

seemed to be nothing, but then you notice the seventh time when he came back, verse 44, ‘And it came to pass at the seventh time that he (the servant) said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man’s hand’. It must have been impressive when he saw it there. It was as if Elijah’s prayer had made an impression upon Heaven, because prayer, intercessory prayer and prevailing prayer in Scripture are associated with the lifting up of the hands. Then in verse 45, ‘And it came to pass in the meanwhile that the heaven was black with clouds and wind and there was a great rain’. There is nothing, there ariseth a little cloud about the size of a man’s hand, there was a great rain. And, of course, that was the scale of the earth’s need, because the earth was so parched and barren.

God is liberal in His bounty, vast in His power, mighty in His generosity. This is the sort of visitation we need, a great rain, the sound of an abundance of rain. But it is the result of persistent prayer, not a hit and run praying. What if Elijah had given up at the sixth time? But he did not and he is set before us in Scripture as this supreme example and a man of like passions with us, but he prayed and he prayed again, and the heavens yielded their increase.

EVOLUTION

E. W. JOHNSON

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

The particular thing about the theory of evolution which I want to bring out in this series of talks is that evolution is the cultural myth of our generation.

As a background to this discussion this morning, I want to read a passage from the first chapter of Romans. If you have your Bible, you might like to open it to the first chapter of Romans and follow me as I discuss certain verses in this chapter as a background for my discussion of evolution—THE CULTURAL MYTH OF OUR GENERATION.

Romans 1 : 18-32.

Let us look briefly in these verses at the sin of the Gentiles, and at the punishment which God visited upon them because of their sin.

Their sin was that knowing God from creation, Romans 1 : 20, they were not thankful for this knowledge, nor did they glorify God, but to add injury to insult, they corrupted His glory into idolatry.

Many people have the idea that idolatry is the heathen seeking after the knowledge of God, but this is not true. Idolatry according to Romans 1 : 18 is a holding down or repressing the knowledge of God. Idolatry is a means which men have devised to repress the pure imprint of the knowledge of God from their hearts and minds.

What is the punishment which God visited upon the Gentiles because of this sin against the knowledge of God as seen in creation? The Gentiles had taken away the pure glory of God from their minds by their idolatry, and so God took away their glory as human beings, and they became sex perverts. This does not mean that God made them sex perverts. It means that God withheld His restraining grace, and hence gave them up to the lusts of their own hearts. Read again Romans 1 : 24-28.

What is the connection between this sin and judgment of the ancient peoples and the sin and judgment which rest on our

generation? The Gentiles had their religious myths wherein they repressed the knowledge of God, and as they freed their consciences from the knowledge of God, they did indeed become free—free to be given up to the lusts of their own hearts, to become sex perverts.

Our generation is not given up to religious myths, all in all. This generation in this sense is not a religious generation. Our generation is given up to a scientific myth, for this generation, all in all, is a scientific generation.

What I mean by this statement is that our generation looks to something which is called science as the ultimate source of truth. They do not look to a Divine revelation as the ultimate source of truth, nor do they look to the philosophers. They look to something called science as the ultimate source of truth. In this sense this is a scientific generation.

There are no myths which do not have some basis in fact. In this series of talks on evolution as the cultural myth of our generation, I am not saying that evolution does not have some basis in fact. But I call evolution a myth for two reasons: (1) All myths are born of an effort, not to find truth, but to escape from truth. Myths are an endeavour to get out of real history, to live in a fantastic history. Myths are brought forth because men want to get away from reality, to live in fantasy. This is true of evolution.

(2) Myths are believed of men because they magnify certain facts and blind their minds to other facts. This also is true of those who adhere to evolution. Let me illustrate this characteristic of myths, that they are born of an effort of men to escape real history, to live in fantasy.

Suppose you have a man who is a nobody, just an ordinary human being like the rest of us, but he is not content to be a nobody. He wants to be a somebody, something beyond the ordinary run of the mill human being, as we all are.

But circumstances are such that this man cannot become rich, and thus think of himself as a step above ordinary men. He cannot become famous. He cannot gain high social or professional position among his fellows. And so what does he do? He revels in a myth about his ancestors. He talks about who his father and grandfather were. He has a coat of arms of his family upon the wall of his house. He revels in this fantasy about his being special in the way of ancestors. In this myth

he escapes history; in his mind, he gets out of real history, and lives in fantasy. And he finds this delightful.

There is a sense in which the history of all nations is myth, not totally so, but characteristically so. There is a sense in which all human history is as Napoleon said it was—a fable agreed upon.

I am sure that George Washington was a great and good man, but surely in his entire life he told at least one lie. The history which we have in our country about the father of this nation is true in that which it asserts, but there are surely some facts which are passed over.

We do not go as far as the ancient Greeks did in making fantasy of the history of their forefathers and of their nation. The ancient Greeks went so far in this that they made gods out of their forefathers. We in our fantasy do not make gods out of Washington and Lincoln, but we do exalt them into something which is just a little more than mere men.

There is only one history book in all this world which does not contain this element of myth, and that is the holy Bible. You read in this Bible the history of the nation Israel, as it is in the Old Testament, and you can note this absence of myth.

When Abraham, the father of this nation, lied, we have it all down here in black and white. When their greatest man, Moses, lost his temper and sinned, the Bible relates the incident just as it was. When their greatest kings, David and Solomon, sinned greatly, nothing is hidden in this history.

And in the New Testament it is the same. We have in the New Testament the history of the beginning of the Church. And what is hidden here concerning the humble beginnings of our Lord and of His crucifixion? What is hidden here concerning the sins of the apostles? Bible history is without this element of myth which all merely human history has.

You might say to me, 'Pastor, you are defeating yourself. Your illustrations do not make your point. In fact they defeat your point. You tell us about a man who is not a somebody, but is like the rest of us, just an ordinary human being, and so he spins this myth about his ancestors being something quite beyond the ordinary. You tell us that the ancient Greeks took the history of their nation and made gods of their ancestors. And you tell us that all nations do somewhat the same thing with their national history, though they do not go as far as the ancient Greeks did. And then you compare this to evolu-

tion, in which you see a device of men wherein they would make of themselves something very special, as they seek thereby to get out of real history into a mythological history. It would seem to me that your Bible is the myth which would make man something very special, when he is not all this special, whereas evolution would bring man back to real history, to make him in his mind what he really is—not one created in a special way, in the image of God, but just an animal on his way up.'

No, I shall hold to my illustrations, and affirm that man does three things with his evolutionary concept which enables him in his thinking to make of himself the supreme god, and in this myth he revels in our day—to his damnation.

I. *Evolution makes man the SUPREME BEING.*

There are several reasons why it is impossible for man to think without presupposing the idea of deity. His deity might not be a personal being. In this sense man might be an atheist, but man, if he thinks, must have a god, and he will think.

Man must think of something as the supreme being, a greater than which he cannot conceive. We know that plants have more being than inanimate things (whatever *being* is); we know this. We know that animals have more being than plants, (whatever *being* is); we know that this is true. And we know that man has more being than animals have (whatever *being* is); we know this.

If man is the highest being we know anything about, if we know nothing about angels, nor the Personal God, then is not man the supreme being in our thinking? And does not evolution feed this concept in our day?

II. *Evolution makes man the supreme god in the pantheon of CREATION.*

Evolution is in reality a myth which teaches that the natural order created itself. Evolution has a creator called nature. In this sense the evolutionists are *naturalist* in their concept of the creator.

And in the pantheism of our day in which all nature is deified as the creator, who is the supreme god in this pantheon? If man is the supreme being of which we know anything, is he not the supreme god of our generation?

This goes hand in hand with the Arminianism of our day, in which man has persuaded himself to believe that the free

(continued on page 280)

Confidence at His Coming

FERRELL GRISWOLD

'And now, little children, abide in him, that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming' (1 John 2 : 28).

The apostle John wrote this first epistle, not only to expose the Gnostic heresy, which denied the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, but also to give assurance of salvation to those who had placed their trust in Him for salvation. He states this purpose in chapter five, verse 13. Here we read, 'These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, *that ye may know that ye have eternal life . . .*' Throughout the epistle he gives three earmarks of the Christian: first, *the doctrinal test*; second, *the ethical test*; and third, *the social test*. Everyone who has come to Christ as Saviour believes and knows that He is the Son of God, the Christ come in the flesh, and so the doctrinal test of salvation. Anyone who denies that the historical Jesus is the eternal Son of God come in the flesh cannot be a child of God. Then, every child of God has been made a new creature, and so by nature loves righteousness. It is his desire to practice holiness and live according to the will of God. This is the ethical test. Again, every person who has been born of God's Spirit loves those who are of the same faith, and are members of the family of God. It is impossible for a Christian not to love other Christians. In this we have the social test.

In addition to this the apostle shows that this experience is not sporadic. Rather, the believer in Christ finally proves his having been a partaker of God's saving grace by his perseverance. This means that the child of God will continue in the doctrine of Christ, in righteousness, and love of the brethren throughout his life to death, or to the second coming of Jesus Christ. In our text (2 : 28) we read, 'little children, *abide in him*'. It is only as we do this that our profession of His name is true, and we will have confidence at His second coming. It is important to notice, in this same context, that the verb, in the statement 'and not be ashamed before him at his coming', is passive. The meaning, then, is not an emotion of shame that some will experience when they stand before Him, but rather

it means 'to shame away from Him'. No matter what one's profession of religion, unless there is true conversion he will be shamed out of Christ's presence at the time of His coming. This will mean, then, that those who are the recipients of this shaming away will have no confidence in His presence. All of us have had the experience of shaming a child for some wrong he has done to see him shrink back and lose his confidence in our presence until we reassured him of his relationship to us. In the day of Christ there will be no reassuring of sinners by Christ. Rather, He will command, 'Depart from me ye workers of iniquity, I never knew you'.

There is going to be a second, personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ as certainly as there was a first coming of the Lord into the world to be our Redeemer. We are to be watchful of the times, and be prepared for that event. There are several particulars whereby you may be assured that you will not be 'shamed out of His presence at His coming, but may have confidence'. I mention only two.

Firstly, you will not be ashamed at His coming if you are truly in God's family through the new birth. In verse 29 of chapter two we read, 'If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him'.

For clarification there are some things that need to be said about the new birth. There is no doubt but that this is an abused and misunderstood subject today. It is commonly held that the new birth is a transformation that takes place in the sinner's experience as the result of an act of will and decision, and is the result of his faith. This concept not only denies the teaching of the Scriptures on the subject, but also denies that the sinner is spiritually dead and cannot do anything pleasing to God. It may be shocking to you who for the first time are confronted with this statement, and those to follow, but I encourage you to examine the subject, from the Scriptures, for yourselves. Nowhere in Scripture are we told *how* to be born again. The classic chapter on this subject is John chapter three. You will search in vain to find any place where our Lord told Nicodemus the 'how' of the new birth. He tells us, through his conversation with Nicodemus, that *the New Birth is a great mystery*. In verse 8 He says, 'The wind blows where it pleases, and ye cannot tell from whence it came . . . so is everyone that is born of the Spirit'. We cannot describe the mystery of natural conception; how much less can we understand the mystery of the new birth. There is no simple formula that we are able to give to the sinner that will result in this

experience. Furthermore, until the new birth the sinner is dead in sin, and so cannot produce faith that is saving. *So, the new birth is Prevenient.* I mean by this that the new birth is the first work of the Spirit of God in salvation. The sinner is the *passive* recipient of life, and faith in the revealed Christ results from it. Not only is the new birth mysterious and prevenient, but *it is monergistic.* This means that it is the work of the Holy Spirit of God alone. In this the sinner does not co-operate with God, but, instead, receives the life-giving grace and power of the Spirit. Further, *the new birth, we learn from John chapter three, is sovereign.* The Lord Jesus said, 'The wind blows where it pleases'. The work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth extends no farther than the purpose of God in election and the work of the Son in redemption. God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. Again, the Scriptures teach us that *the new birth is effectual.* It is the sovereign, life-giving work of the Holy Spirit, and cannot be resisted by the dead sinner. Wherever the Spirit moves to impart spiritual life men are quickened, made new creatures, and believe and receive the Lord Jesus as He is declared in the gospel!

Although we cannot know the full mystery of the new birth, yet we can see its effects as we can see and know the wind is blowing by its effects. At the beginning I pointed out that those who are born of the Spirit may know that they are saved by *the Three Tests of Life* given by John in this epistle: they will have right views of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Saviour, they will love one another, and they will make a habit of practising righteousness. In verse 29 John uses the word 'know' twice. He says, 'If ye *know* that he (God) is righteous, ye *know* that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him'. The new-birth takes place within the inward nature of the sinner, and where we cannot see it. But I can see his outward conduct and know that he who is born of God doeth righteousness. In the Greek text John used two different words which are translated by our English word 'know'. The first word translated 'know' is 'oida' and the second is 'ginosko'. 'If ye *know* (oida) that he (God) is righteous.' 'Oida' is taken from the root word, 'eidon', which means to see. It means a fulness of knowledge which is gained from observation. So, it means that we know as a fact from observation based upon God's revelation of Himself that He is righteous. 'Ginosko' means to take in knowledge and come to an understanding. It often indicates a relation between the person knowing and the object known. It is a knowledge, in many cases, that is obtained by the Holy Spirit and is a pro-

gression in that which is known. So, if we know (oida) as a fact through perception that God is righteous, we also know (ginosko) through a relationship to God in salvation and by growing in understanding of this relationship that all who do righteously are born of Him. This does not mean that human righteousness saves, but that *righteousness*, not in degree, but *in kind*, practised in conformity with God's standard, results from the new birth. Therefore, when Christ comes, and we stand before Him, we will not have anything for which to be ashamed.

Secondly, the believer will not be ashamed at the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ because of the love of God the Father. In chapter three, verse one, we read, 'Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore, the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not'.

This love of God does not follow upon the new birth, but stands as a cause of it. God's love for His people is from everlasting to everlasting. It is not rooted in emotion, as is so often the case with human love, but is an attribute of His nature which He bestows upon whom He pleases. It was while we were yet sinners that He manifested His love in sending the Lord Jesus into the world to suffer in our stead on the cross. His love is never failing, and therefore will support us at the time of Christ's coming in judgment. If we know that He loves us we will have confidence in His presence.

John says, 'Behold, what manner love . . .' This is, in the Greek grammar, an aorist imperative punctiliar. The aorist tense means that which has happened in the past once and for all. So in this statement we have a command (the imperative) once and for all (aorist tense) at this very point (punctiliar) to look at the amazing love of God. In other words, 'JUST TAKE A LOOK AT THIS LOVE OF GOD!' 'What manner' means literally 'from what foreign country'. The love that God has for us in saving us through sending His own Son into the world to save us and which will sustain us in the judgment is a love that cannot be found in this world. It comes from another place, from God Himself.

John then points out that there is to be an expected resemblance between the redeemed and God. 'Therefore, the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.' From this it may be seen that even the world expects the Christian to be different from itself. We are to be made into the image of the Son of God, and we should not expect the world's friendship! My

(continued on page 280)

What if I am not Elect?

JOHN ANGELL JAMES

Many are exceedingly perplexed and distressed on the subject of their personal election to eternal life.

I have nothing to do now with those careless or profane persons who make this awful doctrine an excuse, or rather profess to make it an excuse, for the entire neglect of religion; and who, with a wicked indifference, exclaim, 'If I am elected to be saved, I shall be saved, without any concern of mine; but if I am not elected, no effort of mine will or can save me'. The fact is that such persons do not believe in the doctrine of election at all; nor, indeed, care anything about salvation, but are utterly ignorant and careless, and refer to this solemn truth, either to quiet their own conscience, or to silence and turn away the voice of faithful admonition. But there are others who do feel, especially in the early stages of religious inquiry, no small degree of perplexity on this subject. Now, here let me at once inform you, that you, who are inquiring after salvation, have nothing to do with the doctrine of God's decrees; nor, indeed, has any one ought to do with the secret purposes of God, as a rule of conduct. The sublime truth of God's sovereignty in the salvation of His people is introduced in Scripture, not to discourage the approach of the sinner to Christ for salvation, but to remind those who have come to Him, that their salvation is all of grace; to take away from them all ground of boasting; to confirm their faith in the accomplishment of the divine promises; to promote their comfort; to inculcate the necessity of personal holiness; and to encourage Christians amidst the afflictions of life, Romans 8 : 9; Ephesians 1 : 4, 5, 9, 11; 1 Peter 1 : 2. But it was never designed to be a source of discouragement to penitents. The rule of your conduct is the invitation and promise of Christ, not the secret purposes of God: 'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law' (Deuteronomy 29 : 29). The mercy of God is infinite; the merit of Christ's atonement is infinite; the power of the Spirit is infinite; and the invitations of the gospel are universal. 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden' (Matthew 11 : 28). And thus saith the Lord, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked' (Ezekiel 33 : 11). 'The Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should

perish, but that all should come to repentance' (2 Peter 3 : 9). 'Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out' (John 6 : 37). 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely' (Revelation 22 : 17). Now, these are the words of Scripture, and must, therefore, be true; and here is the rule of your conduct. You can understand this, but you know nothing about the secret purposes of God. Besides, if you knew you were elected, you would not be received and saved because of this knowledge, but because you believed in Christ who invites men, not as elected to life, but as lost sinners condemned to death. If you had been permitted to read the decrees of Heaven, and had seen your name in the Lamb's book of life, you would not be one whit more welcome to Christ than you are now that you know nothing about the matter. You are invited; and if you neglect the invitation which you do know, because of a decree which you do not know, the blame of perishing will lie at your own door; and you will find at last that you were lost, not in consequence of any purpose of God determining you to be lost, but in consequence of your own unbelief.

Why should the purpose of God, in reference to salvation, be the only view of the divine purposes that perplexes you? Do you not believe there is also a purpose which refers to the events of your natural life and death? But do you, on this account, hesitate in sickness to take the medicine prescribed for you by a skilful physician, lest you should not be ordained to life? No. You say, and with reason, 'I know nothing about the divine purpose; my business is with plain rules of duty, and with instituted means; for if I am to live, I can expect recovery only by these means'. Act thus in reference to your soul. Leave the decrees out of consideration, for you know nothing about them, and have nothing to do with them. You are invited to use the means of life; if you are decreed to be saved, you must be saved through these; and if you use them aright, you certainly will be saved. If any use at all is to be made, by an inquirer, of the doctrine of election, it is a use in his own favour. You know not that you are not elected, and the very solicitude of your mind about salvation is a presumption that you are, since that solicitude is the way in which God carries His decree into execution. Besides, if you get away from the invitation, and, instead of making that the rule of your conduct, trouble your head with other views and subjects, you will find as much perplexity in God's foreknowledge as you do in His decree. Even those who deny the purposes of God have just as much reason to perplex themselves with

divine prescience, and say, 'Whatsoever God foresees, and nothing but what He foresees, will take place; now He foresees either that I shall be saved or lost; and as I do not know that He foresees that I shall be saved I am greatly discouraged'. Abandon at once, therefore, all solicitude, and indeed all thoughts about the unrevealed purposes of God, and fix your attention on the invitation. Christ bids you come to Him for salvation; and every bar and obstacle which lies in the way of your coming is placed there by you, and not by Him. He does not say, Come when you have ascertained your election; but, Come and ascertain it. He does not say, You are welcome if you have read the decree; but, You are welcome if you believe the promise. He does not say, Come under the presumption that you are predestinated; but, Come with the assurance that you are bidden. Your business is to make your calling sure, and then you will no longer doubt of your election.

CONFIDENCE AT HIS COMING (*concluded from page 277*)

dear one, when Christ comes will you have confidence? Will you be shamed away? Not if you have been born again and brought to Christ as your Saviour out of God's love!

EVOLUTION (*concluded from page 273*)

will of God in His sovereignty is circumscribed and limited by the will of man. The world is ripe for antichrist.

III. Evolution makes man his own saviour.

Whatever we are trusting for final, ultimate salvation, must become the supreme object of our religious devotion. Whatever our saviour is in this sense, that is our god.

The scientific journals in our day reflect the power of this myth over the minds of men. They even go so far as thinking that man might replace the heat of the sun when it has exhausted its atomic fuel.

False saviours have wrought terrible mischief in the history of mankind. The world is ready for the chief of them all, antichrist, and evolution is preparing the way.

(To be continued)

Book Reviews

GOD MADE THEM GREAT. John Tallach. Banner of Truth Trust, 135pp, 60p.

I feel I must write with enthusiasm about this book. It fills a great gap in the field of providing well-written biography for children and young people. Here are five short biographies drawn from three centuries—George Muller, Isobel Kuhn, Billy Bray, David Brainerd, Robert Annan.

The author has succeeded admirably in selecting the salient factors in the fuller biographies and condensing them into short biographies which stand well in their own right. I have read them aloud in the family and also in a meeting of young people. I have found the same response. We have been moved by the pathos of Isobel Kuhn or Robert Annan, we have laughed with Billy Bray in his infectious joy, we have seen the depth of Muller's faith and of Brainerd's dedication.

Perhaps I should add two qualifications. I said it was designed for children and young people—but in fact I read it first myself with enjoyment and, I hope, profit! Then again I said it filled a gap—in fact it only begins to fill it and I do hope the manuscript of Mr. Tallach's next book is well under way! For a gift to a young person (or for an older one!) or for family reading, I rank this book highly.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM JAY. 586 pp, £1.95.

JOHN ELIAS LIFE AND LETTERS. 417 pp, £2.10.

Both published by Banner of Truth.

We may thank the Banner for rescuing from obscurity two great contemporaries whose lives have a particular significance in that they span the period between the Evangelical awakening and the mid-Victorian period, from the time of John Wesley to that of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Ryle once wrote that if you wanted your biography written as a famous preacher, you needed to minister in London! If this was true for English provincial clergy, how much more was it true of someone like John Elias, a Welsh-speaking preacher, whose ministry was largely confined to the Principality. I confess that I had not even heard of John Elias, but perhaps my Welsh

friends will charitably forgive my abysmal ignorance and attribute it to my Anglo-Saxon cultural background!

The two men differed in the type of ministry they exercised. Jay was settled in one church in Bath for the whole of an incredibly long ministry, while Elias was essentially an itinerant preacher who saw many congregations come to the birth.

Both men were alike in the breadth of their sympathies. While not disguising their own convictions, they yet displayed a charity in their relationships with others from whom they differed. Jay wrote of his church in Bath that 'the dipped and sprinkled live together in peace', and Elias, in spite of the hostility of many of the Anglican clergy, yet maintained a warm sympathy for evangelicals within the establishment.

Both men were strong in their support of the spread of the Scriptures. They stood with the British and Foreign Bible Society and resisted the formation of the Trinitarian. Indeed, it was Elias' opposition which was largely responsible for keeping the latter out of Wales in his day.

I found a rather irritating feature of the earlier part of Jay's autobiography—the constant insertion of editorial comments which would have been better relegated to footnotes. More positively—an attraction of the book is his brief pen portraits of many of his contemporaries, ranging from well-known figures like Newton and Wilberforce to comparatively obscure names.

Jay's shrewd comments on preaching bear the mark of a veteran of the pulpit. Elias' letters show him as a man who was warm-hearted and yet was ready to rebuke. Like Jay, his concern either in public ministry or in correspondence was to apply the Word.

THE REFORMED PASTOR, RICHARD BAXTER.

Banner of Truth, 256 pp, 65p.

How does one begin to review a classic which has for nearly three centuries influenced the lives and ministries of innumerable pastors? Simply to thank the Banner for making such a classic available to a new generation, urge every minister to read it and those who have read it to do what the reviewer is doing—reading it again.

ROME—OUR ENEMY. Clifford Smith. Published by the author, 86 pp, 40p.

The thesis developed in this vigorously written book is that

the real enemy of Ulster is Rome. She is indicted as being the agency ultimately responsible for the misery and suffering of the past years, and indeed of all the previous troubles of the last three centuries.

The strength of Mr. Smith's book is that Roman Catholic political activity and subversion can easily be demonstrated. Rome in her doctrine of the church claims an authority over rulers and governments, so that in her long history of political intrigue she has really been acting quite consistently with her own position—which the Evangelical would of course reject as a thoroughly unbiblical one. It is also clear, and he has documented this well, that many R.C. priests are either tacitly or actively behind the terrorist campaign. The spectacle of requiem masses for terrorists even when blown up by bombs designed to kill or maim others are familiar to us. The priests from Coventry and Glasgow engaged in subversion are notorious, but by no means uncommon.

The weakness of the book from a biblical position is that he himself still retains the erroneous Roman idea that religion and politics can be wedded. They can only be thus wedded if the religion is *not* New Testament Christianity. So he claims in an extraordinary statement 'Ulster is part of God's plan' (81). The basis for this is the undeniable fact that God has signally blessed us in years past with revival. But might one not say, in view of the drift of Protestantism from its biblical base, that the plan of God for Ulster may be judgment if we do not repent!

Then again this unbiblical blend of church and political party leads to a strange view of 'militant Protestant groups' which in his interpretation are those who are ready to take arms. His criticism of Dr. Paisley's Volunteers is not that it was a strange force for a minister of Christ who said 'My kingdom is not of this world', but simply that they did not see the need for combined action with other groups. His criticism of the new para-military groups is that they do not 'profess the same allegiance to the Protestant cause'.

Mr. Smith quite rightly shows that Rome really has in view her old ambition of Roman Catholic domination. As a politician he is wise to expose this—as indeed many a secular politician has done in Europe or U.S.A. Where he is surely wrong as a Christian is to forget that in the spiritual struggle with Rome 'the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God'. To see the conflict as one between a Roman Catholic dominated nationalism and a loyalist com-

munity is one thing, to equate that loyalist community with the people of God is a very different matter.

H.M.C.

PULPIT AND COMMUNION TABLE. John Duncan.

Free Presbyterian Publications, Scotland, 243pp, 70p.

Dr. John (Rabbi) Duncan was one of the outstanding Scottish ministers of Disruption days. 'He was,' says Dr. John Macleod, 'at once one of the most profound and versatile of scholars, one of the humblest of believers and one of the most erratic and absent-minded of men. His theology was the choicest of the Reformed school.' Duncan had been a missionary to the Jews in Hungary and had witnessed the blessing of the Lord upon that work which resulted in the conversions of Adolph Saphir and Alfred Edersheim, before being recalled by his denomination to occupy the Chair of Hebrew and Old Testament in the New College, Edinburgh. His biography was written by Dr. David Brown of Aberdeen, who also edited this volume of Duncan's Pulpit and Communion Table addresses.

Dr. Duncan left very little by way of printed matter and the fact that we have any material of his at all is largely due to two ladies—one in Newington and the other in Glasgow—who recorded with tremendous accuracy 'the unworldly sayings of the Rabbi'.

There is nothing cold or dispassionate about Duncan. His richly orthodox doctrine and elevated ideas are wedded to a warmth of feeling and an animated style which suggests that, like his friend Robert Murray McCheyne, he delivered to his people only that which had first of all proved a blessing to himself. There is an unction about his writings that makes them peculiarly attractive.

Some of these addresses were produced at one time as separate tracts, one of the most famous being the one entitled 'Mount Sinai and Mount Zion'. Here the reader has a fair sample of Duncan's unique style which left an indelible impression upon so many.

This is a choice book from a choice saint and will be a means of blessing to all who read it. ROBERT RODGERS.

CASES OF CONSCIENCE. Volume 1. Pike and Hayward.

Free Presbyterian Publications, Scotland, 178pp, 30p

The contents of this book represent the answers given by

Messrs. Pike and Hayward to questions of conscience submitted to them by those attending their weekly lectures in the mid-18th century. The lectures were designed 'to remove the doubts of the timorous Christian, quicken him in his way to Zion, to guard against presumptuous hopes and promote the life of religion in the soul'.

Faith, Scripture, tradition, legality and fantasy are some of the interesting matters dealt with, and though it would be too much to expect that *everyone* will concur with *every* answer given, yet this is a book that will commend itself to all who have given any consideration to the important area of the conscience.

Though the work is described as Volume 1, no hint is given that a second volume may soon appear, nor is there a biographical note of the two authors. This would have been most helpful since, in some circles at least, Pike and Hayward are not as well known as some of their contemporaries.

The book deserves serious and careful study by the individual, whilst Bible classes could well use it as the basis for discussion on a somewhat neglected area of Christian experience.

R.R.

ADDING TO THE CHURCH. The Westminster Conference, 99 pp, 50p.

The theme of the 1973 Westminster Conference was 'Adding to the Church', which naturally followed the previous year's consideration of 'Becoming a Christian'. Errol Hulse, Alan Tovey, Richard Bauckham and Eifion Evans contributed papers as follows: *Adding to the Church* (a) The Puritan Approach to Persuading Souls; (b) In the Teaching of the Elizabethan Separatists; (c) During the Early American Period; and (d) In the Teaching of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists. Two historical papers are also included, viz. D. M. Lloyd-Jones on 'Howell Harris and Revival' and David Boorman on 'Reformers Before the Reformation'.

As one has come to expect, these studies are both interesting and instructive, and amply fulfil the purpose of the organisers 'that by means of historical studies we might give considered attention to the theological issues of relevant importance in our own present situation'.

There is the inevitable unevenness in a symposium of this kind where various authors are dealing with different aspects of a general theme. This is particularly noticeable in differences which emerge between Hulse and Bauckham, with Mr. Hulse

sometimes marring an otherwise excellent paper by overstating his case.

We note that the next conference has been arranged for the 17th and 18th December, 1974, and that details may be obtained from the Secretary, Rev. David Bugden, 75 High Street, Warboys, Huntingdon, PE17 2TA. R.R.

PSALM 119. An Exposition by Charles Bridges. Banner of Truth Trust, 490 pp, £1.80.

Charles Bridges was one of the outstanding 19th century evangelical Anglicans who used both pulpit and pen for the instruction of God's people and the faithful admonition of those who were unrenewed in heart. For a time he was a near neighbour of J. C. Ryle's in Suffolk, and was certainly a man of the same pronounced orthodox stamp. If, as Spurgeon affirmed, Ryle was the best man in the Church of England, Bridges was certainly not far behind.

In his expositions of *Psalm 119*, *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes*, now all republished by the Banner, we have a legacy of deeply spiritual writings characterised by solid scholarship and sane judgment. This book reveals, without ostentation, the tremendously wide reading of the author as he quotes from a wide variety of writers and shows a particular love for Augustine. The expositions of Bridges won the warm approval and hearty commendation of the most trustworthy and competent judges and his treatise on *The Christian Ministry* was a favourite with Robert Murray McCheyne. This is a classic exposition and a very valuable addition to any library. R.R.

THE WORLD THAT PERISHED. John C. Whitcomb, Jr. Evangelical Press, 155 pp, 70p.

The subject of Creation cannot be dealt with in a superficial and light manner. Some authors, who have sought to make their work on the subject popular, have done little to enhance the argument against the theory of evolution. It is therefore refreshing to pick up a book which, although brief and readable, is also erudite and reasonably rigorous.

The author's earlier book with Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, set a high standard and one approaches the work under review with high expectations. These are realised. Much of the material is abridged and restructured from *The Genesis Flood*, but there is a considerable amount of new material. Those who have read the earlier book should not regard this new volume as unnecessary reading.

The book has four major divisions. The first three of these deal with the fact that God destroyed the world by a flood, that it covered the entire world and that its effects are visible today. The final section deals with the principles of biblical interpretation on this great controversy. This section, while very helpful in essence, is so concerned in places with criticism of *The Genesis Flood* that its impact would be seriously impaired for someone who had not read that book. It is not clear why this new book which is intended to give a more popular presentation of the arguments for Biblical Creation was regarded as a suitable vehicle for the defence of the earlier work.

The book is very well documented and the student who is intent on following the debate through will find this an excellent starting point.

The dramatic pictures, with their equally dramatic covering texts on opposing pages, are most interesting. However, these can get confused with the main text and might well have been grouped at the end of the book, or at least at the end of each section. Incidentally, the pictures would constitute a useful set of slides with a taped commentary for use among sixth formers and the like.

There are occasional passages which have a ring of sarcasm (e.g. pages 102, 106 and 107). This is a pity, since the arguments are adequately strong and cannot be enhanced by such a quality.

Altogether this book, with its profound respect for the Bible and its evident submission to God's sovereignty, can be heartily recommended.

HADDEN WILSON.

I beseech you to keep Christ, for I did what I could to put you within grips of Him. I told you Christ's testament and latter-will plainly and I kept nothing back that my Lord gave me. I gave Christ to you with good-will.—SAMUEL RUTHERFORD.

God grudges you nothing if you take it from His hands through Christ.—ANDREW A. BONAR.

ANNOUNCEMENT

When it was decided to issue bi-monthly from the start of 1974, and to alter the price of THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE and the postal subscription per year, the Trustees hoped that it would be possible to hold the current price at least for some time.

This hope has not been fulfilled, for costs and expenses have rapidly increased, so that printing costs, for example, no longer hold steady over a period as they did in the past. Each issue of THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE in 1974 has brought a larger printer's bill than the previous one. Thus the printing of the July-August issue cost over one-fifth more than the December 1973 issue.

It is with regret that we announce an increase in the price of The Gospel Magazine for 1975. The price for a single copy will be 15p from and including the January/February issue 1975; while the annual subscription for 1975, post paid, will be £1.10p.

We would invite the continued gifts of readers whose generous help in the past has been of such value. May we also suggest that Bequests and Legacies to THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE TRUST provide another way of aiding the free grace ministry we desire to exercise.

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