
Shield of Faith

A Primitive Baptist Publication

August, 2008

The Knowledge of His Will

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Colossians 1:9).

The Epistle to the church at Colosse was written by the Apostle Paul during his first imprisonment at Rome. Epaphras, who Paul identifies as “our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ” (Colossians 1:7) had reported to Paul on the condition of that church.

False doctrines were being taught, troubling the church. Some years earlier, Paul had written the letter to the Galatians to combat the false teaching of certain *Judaizers*, who were unsettling the minds of Gentile Christians by teaching that it was necessary for them to be circumcised and to observe the Jewish ceremonial law.

From Paul's statement in verses Colossians 2:11, and 16, it appears that the false teachers alluded to in the present letter were again primarily Jews, engaged in their old practice of unsettling the minds of Gentile Christians. Also, to the observance of Jewish ceremonial law, now they had added the importance of the sacred seasons, such as the Sabbath, the new moon, the feast day, and had laid down certain restrictions as to meats and drinks. This heresy nullified the doctrine of the All-sufficient Saviour, by holding that the Gospel of Christ must be supplemented by Jewish law.

Another heresy referred to by Paul was the doctrine of “a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels” (Colossians 2:18). In another verse he calls it *philosophy*. “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8). The Greek philosophy prevailed much in the regions around Colosse, and perhaps also the Gnostic philosophy. The basic heresy of this doctrine, is a denial that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Paul taught that any religion that sought to add to the simplicity of Christ as presented in the Gospel, or any that would take away from Christ, was necessarily a false religion.

While the church faced these challenges, Epaphras reported much that was good. Epaphras had reported of their “faith in Christ Jesus,” and of the love which they had “to all the saints” (Colossians 1:4). They possessed a constancy in adhering to the true faith, and had a true Christian love for all the saints, wherever they were. The church had a great hope according to the Gospel and that hope was bringing forth fruit (Colossians 1:5-6).

Epaphras had also “declared unto us your love in the Spirit” (Colossians 1:8). This love was in addition to, and beyond the love which they had “to all the saints” (Colossians 1:4). This love was wrought in them by the Holy Spirit. It was not mere natural affection, but love working in their hearts by the agency of the Holy Ghost. It was spiritually fervent affection, not moved by carnal considerations, arising from a renewed heart. It was love for Christ, for the gospel, the apostle, and all that did love the Lord Jesus in sincerity.

Upon hearing this report, Paul began unceasing prayer for the church. “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Colossians 1:9). While the church was doing well in many respects, Paul desired that they be able to stand against the heresies that troubled them, and to be ever growing in the discernment of God's will.

The Apostle Peter referred to Paul's writing and expressed the same desire for the church. “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To

him be glory both now and for ever. Amen” (II Peter 3:17-18). The life of a Christian is a life of growth. He is at first referred to as born of God, then a babe in Christ, then as a little child. He becomes a young man, then a father in Christ. Every father was once an infant, and had he not grown, he would have never been a man. Those who are content with the grace they received when converted to God, are, at best, in a continual state of infancy. In the order of nature, the infant that does not grow, and grow daily, is sickly and soon dies. In the order of grace, those who do not grow up into Jesus Christ are sickly, and will soon die; die to all experience and influence of heavenly things.

To know the Lord Jesus Christ—to possess correct views of his person, character, and work, is the essence of the Christian religion, and the only way heresy can be defeated. Thus, Paul prayed that the Colossians “...might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” The Colossians had knowledge, but they must have more; they must be “filled” with it. They had shown, by their faith and love, that they were disposed to do his will, and the apostle now prays that they might be fully acquainted with what he would have them do. They needed “full and accurate knowledge” as the Greek indicates.

It was not enough, however, to simply possess such knowledge. Paul desired that they would have knowledge of God's will in order to *do* God's will. He prayed, “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:10). The Christian life demands that every man behave himself as it is fitting for one so blessed with the excellent grace of God. We are to be holy as our God is holy. We must walk according to the precepts and commands of the gospel according to the privileges and liberty of the gospel, answerable to the pattern of holiness

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which the gospel sets before us, and the example of Jesus Christ. We are to constantly, consciously, seek to please God.

How may one know if his walk is pleasing to God? It will be made manifest by one's "...being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10). That the church at Colosse was bearing fruit was manifested in their faithfulness to the Gospel and their love for the saints. They still needed to *increase* in fruitfulness. As the church at Corinth, they needed to be "...stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord..." (I Corinthians 15:58).

Good works means works of devotion towards God, works of righteousness towards our neighbors, works of self-discipline towards ourselves, works of charity towards all. Fruitfulness in these good works means an unwearied diligence and persevering constancy in doing of them, that our fruitfulness be abounding and abiding.

"Increasing in the knowledge of God" in verse 10 differs from "the knowledge of his will" in verse 9. "Increasing in the knowledge of God" is daily increasing in the living, experimental knowledge of God, our Father. We must be ever increasing in our knowledge *about* God and also increasingly know Him *personally*.

Such knowledge is the very essence of eternal life. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). The word *know* here, as in other places, expresses more than a mere mental acquaintance with the character and perfections of God. It includes all the impressions on the mind and life which a correct view of God and of the Saviour produces. It includes love, reverence, obedience, honor, and thanksgiving. To know God as he is to know and regard him as a lawgiver, a sovereign, a parent, a friend. It is to yield the whole soul to him, and strive to obey his law.

As fruitfulness in good works contributes much to the increase of knowledge, so increasing in knowledge will contribute very much towards our fruitfulness in good works.

Paul recognized that no one can, in their own strength, walk in such a way as to please God. Such a life requires divine strength. Thus, he prayed that the Colossians be "Strengthened with all might,

according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness" (Colossians 1:11). He desired that they might be strengthened for the performance of duty, to meet temptations, and to bear up under the various trials of life. The sufferings for Christ are unavoidable. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). Ordinary, human patience and determination cannot equip the believer for such trials. Yet might, all might, glorious power, which is here prayed for, and elsewhere promised to believers, can and will enable us to stand under them! Glorious power is victorious power.

This power is "glorious," or, as it is in the Greek, it is the "power of his glory." It is manifestly the power of the great and glorious God, and is power characteristic of His glory. It is power that promotes his glory, and shows forth his praise.

Similarly, Paul prayed for the church at Ephesus, "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16). Paul prayed that the Ephesians be strengthened *in the inner man*. What did he mean? *The inner man* was a phrase by which the Greeks understood three things. (a) There was a man's *reason*. It was Paul's prayer that Jesus Christ should strengthen the reason of his friends. He wanted them to be better able to discern between what was right and what was wrong. He wanted Christ to give them the wisdom which would keep life pure and safe. (b) There was the *conscience*. It was Paul's prayer that the conscience of his people should ever become more sensitive. It is possible to disregard conscience so long that in the end it becomes dulled. Paul prayed that Jesus should keep our consciences tender and on the alert.

(c) There was the *will*. So often we know what is right, and mean to do it, but our will is not strong enough to back our knowledge and to carry out our intentions. Paul prayed that the Ephesians (and the Colossians) would have the strength necessary to carry out their intentions.

Paul prayed that the church of Colosse be strengthened "...according to his glorious power." Paul desired that from God's plentiful and superabundant power, the church would receive an abundant,

overflowing supply of strength to do the will of God. The strength is not of human means, but by the power of God. The best Christians here below are weak as well as imperfect, not able to perform what is required of them for doing and suffering the will of God till strengthened. It is the power which God gives them in the day of trial that enables the performance of His will.

This power is *glorious*, or, as it is in the Greek, it is *the power of his glory*. It is manifestly the power of the great and glorious God, and it tends to promote his glory, and to show forth his praise.

The result of such power would be "all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness" (Colossians 1:11). Patience is cheerful (or hopeful) endurance under trials.

Believers are to bring forth fruit with patience; to run with patience the race set before them; to bear patiently all afflictions and tribulations; to wait patiently for the things promised by God, and for the coming and appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the heavenly glory or hope laid up for them in heaven.

Longsuffering is to be slow to anger, and not easily provoked to wrath. It is to be ready to forgive injuries and to bear long, and with patience, all reproaches and persecutions for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel. All this requires daily fresh supplies of grace and strength.

"...all patience and longsuffering" is to be accompanied by *joyfulness*, with a cheerful spirit, or with joy in the Holy Ghost. We are to esteem reproach for Christ's sake above the riches and honours of this world and to rejoice when counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. This requires strength above that of nature, and a renewed supply of that of grace.

Long suffering expresses patience in respect of persons, and *patience* the same in respect to things. The man is longsuffering, who, having deal with injurious persons does not allow himself easily to be provoked by them, or to blaze up into anger. The man is patient who, under a great siege of trials, bears up and does not lose courage.

All this will lead to its proper conclusion, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Colossians 1:12).

Bible Quiz

No church can function without members. Match the church member below with his or her church.

1. Phebe
 2. Ananias and Sapphira
 3. Epaphroditus
 4. Epaphras
 5. Barnabas
 6. Sergius Paulus
 7. Epaenetus
 8. Manaen
 9. Aquila and Priscilla
 10. Gaius and Aristarchus
 11. Philip
 12. Aristobulus
 13. The eunuch
- a. Paphos (Acts 13:6-12)
 - b. Corinth (Acts 18:1-2)
 - c. Achaia (Rom. 16:5)
 - d. Antioch (Acts 13:1)
 - e. Caesarea (Acts 21:8)
 - f. Colosse (Col. 4:12)
 - g. Ethiopia (Acts 8:27-38)
 - h. Macedonia (Acts 19:29)
 - i. Jerusalem (Acts 5:1)
 - j. Philippi (Phil. 4:18)
 - k. Rome (Rom. 1:7; 16:10)
 - l. Antioch (Acts 13:1)
 - m. Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1)

Answers on page 4.

Fall Meeting

Fairview Primitive Baptist Church of Chattanooga, Tennessee will hold her annual Fall meeting September 16-18, 2008, at 7:00 PM, the Lord willing. Elder Jim McGill will be the guest minister. We invite you to join us for this series of meetings.

For directions or more information, contact Elder Greg Phillips, (423) 875-3652 or eldphil@bellsouth.net.

Never give in! Never give in! Never, never, never. Never-in anything great or small, large or petty-never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense.

Winston S. CHURCHILL

Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance.

SAMUEL JOHNSON

It takes time and perseverance to do big things.

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

The will to persevere is often the difference between failure and success.

DAVID SARNOFF

Atheist Group Calls Former Church Home

By GAYLE WHITE The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
Published on: 02/16/08

The atheists are going to church. Sort of.

The Atlanta Freethought Society, an educational organization for atheists and agnostics, will begin meeting this spring at the former Collins Springs Primitive Baptist Church in Smyrna. The society bought the 142-year-old building and about a half acre of land from a developer this month. Society leaders say they're not thumbing their noses at Christianity. "We're not taking over a church," said longtime society leader Ed Buckner. "We bought a building that used to be a church."

In fact, Buckner said, he imagines fondly gatherings at the church for weddings, funerals and covered-dish dinners in earlier days. He said he hopes the freethinkers also will pull in neighbors and friends for special events.

In the meantime, there's lots of work to do in the old building, which has been empty for years. The roof leaks; the avocado green carpet is stained and moldy; and most of the ceiling tiles that covered the antique beadboard are piled in the oak pews. The freethinkers won't have to tear out any stained-glass windows or remove any religious icons. The church had none. And there's no piano or organ.

The New Testament has no references to either religious images or instrumental accompaniment, said Elder Charles Westbrook, whose father was pastor of the church. "We hold strictly to the King James Bible of 1611," he said. "If it's in the Bible, that's what we hold to. If it's not in there, we don't hold to it." Although he ministered at a church in Powder Springs for 30 years, Westbrook kept his membership at Collins Springs until it disbanded.

A twisted path

The atheists came to own the church through a convoluted route that involves a developer and an alcohol license. Records say the present church building opened in 1866, replacing an earlier one that was believed to have been burned down during the Civil War by Sherman's army marching toward Atlanta.

Two restrooms and a foyer were added later, and at some point the church was covered in red brick.

The church probably had several dozen worshippers in its heyday. But as older members died and younger ones moved away and the surrounding area became more industrial and commercial, the flock dwindled. By the mid-1990s, fewer than a dozen members were meeting only once or twice a month for services.

Then came Kroger.

In 2001, a developer planned to build a gourmet Kroger on Atlanta Road across from the church. But county ordinances prohibited the sale of alcohol within 600 feet of a church. Collins Springs Primitive Baptist Church was too close. So, the developer offered to buy the church property and the remaining members agreed.

"The building was in disrepair," said Westbrook, "and we didn't have the money to keep it up."

The Kroger was built — despite other attempts to avert it — and a beer and wine license was granted.

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"GOD IS LIGHT"

Elder T. S. Dalton (1912)

"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." --Gen. i. 3.

The learned Scott once said, "The sublimity of this language, here used, has been universally admired by men of learning and taste; and indeed the simplicity of the whole narrative is unspeakably more majestic than those studied ornaments which are generally employed and admired. Before the formation of the sun, moon, and stars there was, in some way which we cannot explain, or understand, a regular succession of light and darkness, on the chaotic mass, which thus measured out "the first day."

To us it has been a matter of no little concern, and of great comfort, that here at the very opening of the sacred volume of God's word we have an assurance of the existence and work of the Holy Spirit, whose influence and operations from so conspicuous and distinguishing a part of the Revelation; for as the efficient cause of creation, "He moved upon the face of the waters." We would here invite all impartial readers to turn their attention for a moment to those texts in the New Testament which ascribe all creation to Jesus Christ, the Son, and Word of God, and in comparing them with this account of the work of the Spirit in creation, and with these texts which declare that God created all things, and see if not from the very beginning of the Sacred Writings, there is a real foundation for the doctrine of the three divine persons in the unity of the Godhead. This doctrine of the trinity in the Godhead has been a peculiar tenet of the faith of God's people, from the very beginning of the world.

The first of all visible things created was light, the great beauty and blessing of the universe; like the first-born, it, of all visible beings, most resembles its Great Parent; and while we know it exists, yet we know not its nature, nor what it is, nor by what way the light is parted from darkness, yet by the sight of it we should be led to the contemplation of Him who is light, infinite, and eternal. For He is called in the Bible the Father of lights (James xi. 17), who dwells in light inaccessible.

In the new creation the first thing

wrought in the soul is light. The blessed Spirit of God captivates the will and affections by enlightening the understanding, so shining in the heart with such brilliancy they that by sin were darkness by this grace become light in the Lord. "God willed, and the light was," was the expression of some heaven born soul of the past, and this serves us as a true copy, exactly answering the original idea in the Eternal Mind; "He spoke and it was done." Oh, the power of the word of God! "He commanded and it stood fast." With God it was only a word, and a world. Darkness had been perpetual, and almost impenetrable, and thus it remained until God spoke. "Let there be light," and that moment the work was completed, "There was light." God did not begin to woo, and beseech, and strive, and use different kinds of means and instruments to see what would accomplish the end, and perhaps at last try some untried means, as we once heard a preacher pray for Him to do in his meeting. But He spoke the words, "Let there be light," and, "Where the word of a king is there is power," and as soon as God said the word, "There was light."

Even so the divine light in the soul of the sinner is wrought by the same power of God, and the spirit and wisdom of revelation, opening the understanding and scattering the mist of ignorance and giving the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. This gross darkness would have been perpetually on the face of poor fallen man if Jesus, the Son of God, had not come and "given us an understanding." John v. 20.

We would have you perceive that God did not try to give us understanding. Such a word as try is not applicable to God at all. Such expressions as God tried to do a thing, implies failure, and God says "He shall not fail." Hence to use such expressions relative to God is blasphemy, and should not be used.

As the formation of light, and separating it from darkness was the first day's work in creation, even so is the first day's work in the new life or new creation. After this you begin to live a life you had never lived before; you are now living in the true light, and fully believing the Bible-

taught doctrine of, "total hereditary depravity." You had never believed that doctrine before, but now you learn its truth by sad experience. And now like David, you can truly say, "From the end of the earth" I cried unto thee, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I."

And oh, how sweet to your memory is that blessed day when the true light of heaven revealed to your poor burdened heart that Jesus was your Saviour! When the mist of conditionalism fled away, and you no longer trusted in your own performances for life and salvation, but rather felt yourself inclined to lean upon Jesus as your hope of heaven, and could then see the full force of the blessed language of the Lord when He said, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Like David you could then say, "Come hither all ye that fear God and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul. He hath taken me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and placed my feet upon a rock," and "put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God."

God divided the light from the darkness, so they can never be joined together or reconciled; for what fellowship hath light with darkness? Darkness truly has its place, because it has its use; as the light of morning befriends the business of the day, and is so necessary for us in the performance of our several duties; so the shadows of the evening befriend the repose of night.

In the Christian pilgrimage we may expect both light and darkness, but we should consider these among the "all things" that are to work for our good. Darkness makes us look well to our ways, lest we stumble and fall, for "Those that stumble, stumble in the night," and "they that be drunken, are drunken in the night. God divided them, and gave them their distinguishing names. He is therefore to His people Lord of both. Therefore we should acknowledge Him in the constant succession of day and night, and try to consecrate both to His service and honor by continuing steadfastly in His service every day, and resting in Him every night, and meditating in His law both day and night.

Answers to Bible Quiz

1-m, 2-i, 3-j, 4-f, 5-d, 6-a, 7-c, 8-I, 9-b, 10-h, 11-e, 12-k, 13-g

Devotions:

Daily Devotion

By Elder Bill Taylor

Workday Grace - July 30, 2008

Never Satisfied

"The horseleach hath two daughters, crying, Give, give. There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough: The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough." Proverbs 30:15-16

I remember hearing a story about an early American labor union leader who, when asked by an exasperated manager of the firm he was negotiating with for additional worker benefits and privileges, answered with words that fit today's proverb. After having offered benefits that were rejected, the manager asked him, "what exactly is it that you want, sir?" The labor union leader responded with, "More, more, and ever more!" He was setting the tone for all future negotiations, and that was that the union would never be satisfied with whatever they received. Are you a satisfied person today? Do you know many people who are satisfied with their lot in life? There are some positive things to be said for not being satisfied, I suppose. It sometimes shows that a person is always looking for ways to improve or make things better. That is not bad, is it? The problem is that usually dissatisfaction creates its own demand. If we set the tone for life as did the labor leader in my example, then getting what we want at the moment will not satisfy us. The minute we get that, we want more. The biggest problem with not teaching ourselves to be satisfied with what we have is that we may reach the place where we think we have to keep saying *more*, and may never be satisfied to say, "It is enough." Even Esau, when Jacob came back to face him after many years separation and offered him certain parts of Jacob's riches, said, "I have enough." The examples of dissatisfaction given us in today's verses are rather extreme, I suppose; but let's look at them. Surely the grave ought to be satisfied by now, if committing the bodies of those who have died into it could satisfy the grave. Verse 15 says, "the grave" never says, "it is enough." Death (the grave's supplier) is looking for nothing short of total consumption! The good news for God's people is that the Lord Himself has said, "it is enough!" He has defeated the power of the grave to hold the bodies that death has supplied it. The barren womb is not satisfied in its barren state. It desires to produce that which it has no power to make happen; yet God has the power to cause the barren womb to become as a fruitful field! His Holy word is filled with examples. God has power over the barren womb. The earth cries out in its own way for water to relieve its dry condition. There is nothing the earth can do to water itself; but God is able to cause it to rain where rain may never have come before! He did so during the time of the Flood, and He still controls the natural elements. Fire will never go out as long as it has something to burn. It is never satisfied with burning for a while and then leaving other combustible materials alone; yet God can extinguish the greatest fire that man or natural conditions has ever started! Can you be satisfied, no matter what your natural state is at the moment? You can if

Hymns and Hymn Writers

The Love of God

This hymn was written in a citrus packing house in Pasadena, California, by a German-born Christian named Frederick M. Lehman. At age four, Frederick and his family had immigrated to America, settling down in Iowa. Converted to Christ at age eleven while walking through a crabapple orchard, Frederick eventually entered the ministry and pastored churches in the Midwest. But his greatest love was gospel music, and he compiled five songbooks and published hundreds of songs.

In 1917, his finances had gone sour, and he found himself working in a packing factory in Pasadena, moving thirty tons of lemons and oranges a day. One morning as he arrived at work, a song was forming in his mind. He had been thinking about the limitlessness of God's love, and during breaks he sat on an empty lemon crate and jotted down words with a stubby pencil.

Arriving home that evening, he went to the old upright piano and began putting notes to his words. He finally had a melody and two stanzas, but almost all gospel songs of that era had at least three stanzas. At length, he thought of some lines he had recently heard in a sermon:

*Could we with ink the ocean fill and were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole though stretched from sky to sky.*

That verse perfectly formed the third stanza, but who had written it? As Frederick heard the story, it was composed on the wall of an insane asylum by an unknown inmate. Perhaps someone did find it there, but we now know the words originally came from the pen of an eleventh-century Jewish poet in Germany named Meir Ben Isaac Nehorai. Frederick lived the rest of his life in California, writing a number of hymns before his death in 1948.

*The love of God is greater far,
Than tongue or pen could ever tell
It goes beyond the highest star
And reaches to the lowest hell
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win,
His erring child He reconciled
And pardoned from his sin.*

you trust God to provide for your every need. If we can emulate the Apostle Paul, we may also reach the place where we can say, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (Philippians 4:11-13). Today is a good day to begin saying, "It is enough!" - and be satisfied with God's provision.

E-mail: wa_taylor@yahoo.com

Past Devotions: www.workdaygrace.us/wordpress

Web Site: www.primitive-baptist.org/

The Man of Galilee

By Elder William H. Crouse

"Behold the man!" (John 19:5).

Two thousand years ago, there lived across the waters, in the beautiful land of Palestine, the most remarkable character of all time. Jesus was His name. About His personality the tides of interest and discussion have flowed down the centuries, and around His name have revolved the greatest events of history for these two thousand years.

He was born among the lowly and the poor, coming out of Nazareth, a village despised, and from which it was thought no good could come. A little obscure village was the place of His nativity. His mother was unknown beyond a small circle of humble friends and neighbors, and Joseph, whom men reputed to be His father, was a poor carpenter.

In the little town of Bethlehem He was born, in a rude cattle enclosure. No physician or nurse was present to give attention. With her own hands Mary wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and a manger served for His cradle. In humble surroundings He grew to manhood. As viewed by the world, there was nothing extraordinary about His life, and judged by present-day practical ideas, His life was a dismal failure. He did no great thing. He made no great conquest: He built no empire; He founded no city; He filled no office: He amassed no fortune. He entered not into competition with the great of earth to build for Himself a name and cared nought for the praise and the applause of the world. At the age of thirty-three He died a death reserved for slaves and criminals. He was numbered with the transgressors, tried and condemned. On a rugged cross on Calvary's hill, He was crucified. The few disciples who had followed Him with more or less wavering allegiance and from motives not always unmixed with selfishness, forsook Him in the hour of His supreme trial and fled in confusion. In the sight of men, His enemies completely triumphed over Him. In the hour of His death, judged by all human standards, none would have been so foolish as to prophesy anything concerning Him

but that He would be speedily forgotten. His lifeless body was buried in a tomb which was not His own. Friends and foes alike felt His career was ended.

The weeping sisters felt that there was nothing left for them to do but to manifest their undying love by anointing His body and for this purpose to the sepulchre they came at the rising of the sun on the morning of the third day—as soon as the Sabbath was past. But they found only an empty tomb! His body was gone! At the request of the enemies of Jesus, the king's seal had been placed upon the tomb and a company of Roman soldiers had stood guard about it, lest His disciples come and steal the body and carry it away. Notwithstanding this precaution, the body was gone; nothing was left save the linen shroud in which He had been buried and the napkin which had been about His face. Required to give some explanation, the enemies of Jesus said that the soldiers went to sleep and while they slept His disciples came and bore the body away. To all such, its resting place is unknown to this day.

Twenty long centuries have rolled by, but Jesus is not forgotten. His disciples are almost numberless. His name is a household word and shines as the sun at the center of history. It has become the most viral force for righteousness known to mankind. In every civilized land, in every city and hamlet, houses have been built and dedicated to this memory, where multiplied thousands of the hungry at heart, the weary of soul, and the poor in spirit come to worship at His shrine. Thousands, in faithfulness to Him, have died as martyrs to His cause. And still they multiply and a numberless host now give of their time, their substance, their all that His spotless standard may be carried still farther to the regions beyond.

In enlightenment, in wealth, and in power, the greatest nations of the earth are those which seek to walk in the light of His teaching. His kingdom, of such humble beginning, has grown until its branches stretch to most all the known world.

He brought to earth a righteousness hitherto unknown and gave to mankind a new code of morals, which, if strictly observed, would change this earth into a

paradise. He taught that all men are equal before God and that the soul of the mightiest monarch was no more precious in God's sight than the soul of the humblest peasant. He condemned and defied the aristocracy of His time and championed the cause of the poor and the weak. He denounced corruption and called upon His disciples to take their stand for the right, though in doing so they might be numbered with the few and suffer bitter persecution and death.

All the powers of evil were arrayed against Him. They called Him a dreamer, an egotist, and an imposter. In envy, jealousy, prejudice and hate they persecuted Him unto death. But in His death He triumphed, and the world has echoed and reechoed with the words of him who condemned Him to the cross, "*I find no fault in Him.*"

In the minds and hearts of a multitude His name stands preeminently above every name, bringing food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, strength to the weak, balm to the wounded and brokenhearted, comfort to the bereaved and sorrowing, hope and cheer to the sick and the afflicted, and solace to the dying. In his name a countless throng approach the Father at the seat of mercy, sing His praise, believe His word, walk in His footsteps and confidently look forward to His return from the skies to gather His people unto Himself in a land where cometh no night, where all tears are wiped away and where none ever grow old. Around the globe, on land, on the sea, in the air, a multitude of voices vie with each other in singing,

"All hail the power of Jesus' name.
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown Him Lord of all."

O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. (Isaiah 40:9-10)

The Supremacy of God

By A. W. Pink in *Gleanings in the God-head*

IN ONE OF HIS LETTERS to Erasmus, Luther said, "Your thoughts of God are too human." Probably that renowned scholar resented such a rebuke, the more so, since it proceeded from a miner's son. Nevertheless, it was thoroughly deserved. We, too, prefer the same charge against the vast majority of the preachers of our day, and against those who, instead of searching the Scriptures for themselves, lazily accept their teachings. The most dishonoring conceptions of the rule and reign of the Almighty are now held almost everywhere. To countless thousands, even professing Christians, the God of Scripture is quite unknown.

Of old, God complained to an apostate Israel, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself" (Psalm 50:21).

Such must now be His indictment against apostate Christendom. Men imagine the Most High is moved by sentiment, rather than by principle. They suppose His omnipotency is such an idle fiction that Satan can thwart His designs on every side. They think that if He has formed any plan or purpose at all, then it must be like theirs, constantly subject to change. They openly declare that whatever power He possesses must be restricted, lest He invade the citadel of man's free will and reduce him to a machine. They lower the all-efficacious atonement, which redeems everyone for whom it was made, to a mere remedy, which sin-sick souls may use if they feel so disposed. They lessen the strength of the invincible work of the Holy Spirit to an offer of the Gospel which sinners may accept or reject as they please.

The god of this century no more resembles the Sovereign of Holy Writ than does the dim flickering of a candle the glory of the midday sun. The god who is talked about in the average pulpit, spoken of in the ordinary Sunday school, mentioned in much of the religious literature of the day, and preached in most of the so-called Bible conferences, is a figment of human imagination, an invention of maudlin sentimentality. The heathen outside the pale of Christendom form gods of wood and stone, while millions of heathen inside Christendom manufacture a god out of

their carnal minds. In reality, they are but atheists, for there is no other possible alternative between an absolutely supreme God, and no God at all. A god whose will is resisted, whose designs are frustrated, whose purpose is checkmated, possesses no title to deity, and far from being a fit object of worship, merits nothing but contempt. The supremacy of the true and living God might well be argued from the infinite distance which separates the mightiest creatures from the Creator. He is the Potter, they are but the clay in His hands, to be molded into vessels of honor or to be dashed into pieces (Psalm 2:9) as He pleases.

Were all the denizens of heaven and all the inhabitants of earth to combine in open revolt against Him, it would cause Him no uneasiness. It would have less effect upon His eternal, unassailable throne than the spray of Mediterranean's waves has upon the towering rocks of Gibraltar. So puerile and powerless is the creature to affect the Most High, Scripture tells us that when the Gentile heads unite with apostate Israel to defy Jehovah and His Christ, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh" (Psalm 2:4).

The absolute and universal supremacy of God is plainly affirmed in many Scriptures. "Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all... And thou reignest over all" (1 Chronicles 29:11-12). Note "reignest" now, not "will do so in the Millennium." "O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? And rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none [not even the Devil himself] is able to withstand thee?" (2 Chronicles 20:6).

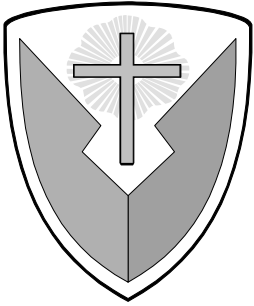
Before Him presidents and popes, kings and emperors, are less than grasshoppers. "But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth" (Job 23:13). My reader, the God of Scripture is no make-believe monarch, no imaginary sovereign, but King of kings, and Lord of lords. "I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought of thine can be hindered" (Job 42:2); or, another translator, "no purpose of thine can be frustrated." All that He has designed,

He does. All that He has decreed, He perfects. All that He has promised, He performs. "But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" (Psalm 115:3). Why has He? Because "there is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD" (Proverbs 21:30).

God's supremacy over the works of His hands is vividly depicted in Scripture. Inanimate matter, irrational creatures, all perform their Maker's bidding. At His pleasure, the Red Sea divided and its waters stood up as walls (Exodus 14); the earth opened her mouth, and guilty rebels went down alive into the pit (Numbers 14). When He so ordered, the sun stood still (Joshua 10); and on another occasion went backward ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz. To exemplify His supremacy, He made ravens carry food to Elijah (1 Kings 17); iron to float on the waters (2 Kings 6:5); lions to be tame when Daniel was cast into their den; fire to burn not when three Hebrews were flung into its flames. Thus, "Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places" (Psalm 135:6). God's supremacy is also demonstrated in His perfect rule over the wills of men. Ponder carefully Exodus 34:24. Three times in the year all the males of Israel were required to leave their homes and go up to Jerusalem. They lived in the midst of hostile people, who hated them for having appropriated their lands. What, then, was to hinder the Canaanites from seizing the opportunity, during the absence of the men, to enslave the women and children and take possession of their farms? If the hand of the Almighty was not upon the wills even of wicked men, how could He make this promise beforehand, that none should so much as "desire" their lands? "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water; He turneth it whithersoever he will" (Proverbs 21:1).

But, some may object, do we not read again and again in Scripture how men defied God, resisted His will, broke His commandments, disregarded His warnings, and turned a deaf ear to all his exhortations? Certainly we do. Does this nullify all we have said? If so, then plainly the Bible contradicts itself. But that cannot be. What the objector refers to is simply the wickedness of men against the external

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And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, Hebrews 10:24

Atheist

The Supremacy of God

(Continued from page 3)

'Just a building'

For years, the church sat empty. Freethinker Lew Southern decided to investigate. Southern, 76, who retired from a career selling educational films and videos, is a former Baptist himself, but of the larger Southern Baptist variety. Southern and the other members of the 200-strong Atlanta Freethought Society had held their talks and programs in a series of meeting sites, settling for the past several years into two office condominiums they owned. But they wanted a proper meeting hall, one that would hold as many as 100 people. They plan to be meeting in the former church by April when they have a speaker coming from Americans United for Separation of Church and State, based in Washington. Westbrook, the Primitive Baptist pastor, said atheists' meetings might not be what he would have chosen for the historic building, but the church lives on. "If they had wanted to turn it into a dance hall, it would be the same thing," he said. "But that's just a building. The church is the people. That's just a place where the church could meet."

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word of God. We have mentioned what God has purposed in Himself. The rule of conduct He has given us to walk by is perfectly fulfilled by none of us. His own eternal counsels are accomplished to their minutest details.

The absolute and universal supremacy of God is affirmed with equal positiveness in the New Testament. We are told that God "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Ephesians 1:11) — the Greek for "worketh" means "to work effectually". For this reason we read, "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen" (Romans 11:36).

Men may boast they are free agents, with a will of their own, and are at liberty to do as they please. But Scripture says to those who boast, "we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell... ye ought to say, If the Lord will" (James 4:13, 15).

Here then is a sure resting-place for the heart. Our lives are neither the product of blind fate nor the result of capricious chance. Every detail of them was known from all eternity and is now ordered by the living, reigning God. Not a hair of our heads can be touched without His permission. "A man's heart deviseth his way, but the LORD directeth his steps" (Proverbs 16:9).

What assurance, what strength, what comfort this should give the real Christian! "My times are in thy hand" (Psalm 31:15). Then let me "Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him" (Psalm 37:7).

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