



THE
SOVEREIGNTY
OF
GOD

ARTHUR W. PINK

100th ANNIVERSARY EDITION COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

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OF
GOD



ARTHUR W. PINK
(1886-1952)

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD



100th Anniversary Edition
Complete & Unabridged



BY
ARTHUR W. PINK



The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc.

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Thou hast given a *standard* to them that fear thee;
that it may be displayed because of the truth.

— *Psalm 60:4*

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THE WALDENSIAN EMBLEM
lux lucet in tenebris
“The Light Shineth in the Darkness”

The front cover picture is a depiction of
Mount Sinai (Hebrew: **הַר סִינַי**, Har Sinai) in the Sinai peninsula.
On some maps it is called in Egyptian Arabic: **جَبَل مُوسَى**,
Jabal Mūsā or Jebel Mūsā, the ‘Mountain of Moses’.

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FOREWORD TO THE
100th ANNIVERSARY EDITION

THROUGHOUT THE BIBLE, the truth is emphasized that the knowledge of God, of his existence, nature and ways, is given to all of God's children. For example, in the Old Testament we read, "*I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God*" (Exodus 6:7), and "*Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me*" (Isaiah 43:10), and "*I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD*" (Jeremiah 24:7). This truth is emphasized in the New Testament in the teaching of the LORD Jesus Christ Who said, "*It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me*" (John 6:45), and in His prayer when He said, "*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 same truth is emphasized in the words of the apostle Paul, who wrote, "*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*"

(2 Corinthians 4:6). This truth is also taught in the words of the apostle John, who wrote, “*And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life*” (1 John 5:20).

This knowledge of God, of his existence, nature and sovereign ways, is one of the blessed and inestimable privileges given to the children of God and is an essential part of the Christian life. Without a Divinely-given, Spirit-implanted, Bible-based knowledge of God, there can be no acceptable believing, for “*how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?*” (Romans 10:14). The same is true of love (Mark 12:29–30), hope (Psalm 42:5), prayer (Psalm 86:5–7; Philippians 4:6), worship (Psalm 29:2; Matthew 4:10; John 4:24; Acts 24:14; Hebrews 12:28), obedient service (Deuteronomy 11:13; Joshua 24:14; Luke 1:68–75), or understanding and profiting from one’s trials, troubles, and afflictions (Ruth 1:21; Job 1:21; 2:10; 5:17–19; 27:2; Psalm 119:75; Hebrews 12:5–11).

That the God of the Bible has a “nature” can neither be credibly doubted or denied, since it has been verified by the inspired words of the apostle Paul, who wrote that the Galatians, before their conversion, served them, which, “*by nature are no gods*” (Galatians 4:8). This implies that though the idols they had worshipped were not, yet there was one Who was, by nature, God; otherwise there would be an impropriety in denying it of them. Essence, which is the same thing as nature, is ascribed to God. He is said to be “*excellent תרשיע in essence*” (Isaiah 28:29), that is, He has the most excellent nature or essence, for so these words may be rendered.¹ God’s various names, Elohim, Adonai, El-Shaddai, Jehovah, Jehovah-Tsidkenu, “I am that I am,” etc., are all expressive of His nature or essence,

1. John Gill. *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity &c.* (Paris, Arkansas: Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc., 1984). Page 30.

and we are required to believe that this God exists and has such an essence or nature (Hebrews 11:6).

The following book by Arthur W. Pink is about the unique nature and sovereign ways of God. In it the author examines and extols the excellent “greatness” of God’s nature. Herein he follows the example of the Psalmist David, who wrote, “*I will extol thee, my God, O King... I will declare thy greatness*” (Psalm 145:1–6). It is right they both should do this for the LORD, through Moses, calls upon Heaven and Earth and all things therein to “*ascribe greatness unto our God*” (Deuteronomy 32:3), and the Scriptures reveal a vast number of reasons for our doing so. For example, the Bible speaks repeatedly of God’s “*greatness*” (1 Chronicles 29:11), of the “*greatness of His excellency*” (Exodus 15:7), of His “*excellent greatness*” (Psalm 150:2), of the “*greatness of His arm*” (Exodus 15:16), the “*greatness of His might*” (Isaiah 40:26), the “*greatness of His strength*” (Isaiah 63:1), the “*greatness of His power*” (Psalm 66:3), the “*exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe*” (Ephesians 1:19), and the “*greatness of His mercy*” (Numbers 14:19) which is “*above the heavens*” (Psalm 103:11) and “*endureth forever*” (Psalms 136:1–26). Furthermore, both (Psalm 96:2–5) and (Psalm 99:2) declare, “*the LORD is great,*” and David’s entire Psalm 145 seems especially dedicated to extolling God’s greatness, for it appears to be composed of the following elements: [1] the *Determination* of David to Praise God’s Greatness (Psalm 145:1–2); [2] the *Explanation* of David’s Determination to Praise God’s Greatness (Psalm 145:1–20) in which he explains: {A} How He Will Praise God’s Greatness (Psalm 145:1–2); {B} Why He Will Praise God’s Greatness (Psalm 145:3–6); and {C} What Aspects of God’s Greatness He will Praise (Psalm 145:7–20); [3] the *Reiteration* of David’s Determination to Praise God’s Greatness (Psalm 145:21a); and [4] the *Admonition* of David for All Others to Praise God’s Greatness (Psalm 145:21b). Clearly, the greatness of God’s unique

nature is something toward which the Bible is repeatedly directing every reader's attention.

It should also be particularly noted that David emphasized one special aspect of God's greatness in Psalm 145 about which all men should ever be mindful, but concerning which, alas, most of us are usually quite oblivious – "*His greatness is unsearchable*" (Psalm 145:3). In the Hebrew-English Interlinear Old Testament this phrase in Psalm 145:3 is translated "*of His greatness there is not examination.*"² In the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia Hebrew-English Interlinear Old Testament, this phrase is translated "*searching there is not to the greatness of him.*"³ The Septuagint Greek Old Testament translates this phrase, "*there is no end of his greatness.*"⁴ This English word "unsearchable" in Psalm 145:3 is a translation of two Hebrew words meaning, *that which cannot be searched, examined or explored; that which is inscrutable, hidden, and mysterious.* Thus, while God has been pleased to reveal many things about Himself in creation (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:18–20) and the natural creatures (Isaiah 43:20), in providence and history (Psalm 9:16), in the Holy Scriptures (Psalm 119:130), in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:18), in regeneration and the way of salvation (2 Corinthians 4:6; 1 John 5:20; Psalm 21:5; John 17:1–3), and to the glorified saints in Heaven (1 Corinthians 13:12; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 22:1–6), these are all only "*parts of his ways*" (Job 26:14), and none of them reveal God perfectly or enable any creature to discover Him completely. Even the revelation of God in Jesus Christ – which is, without question, the best, highest, and

2. *The Hebrew-English Interlinear Old Testament.* The Complete Biblical Library. Volume 10. Thoralf Gilbrant, International Editor. (Springfield, MO: World Library Press, Inc., 1995). Page 680.

3. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia Hebrew-English Interlinear Old Testament.* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2014). Page 1378.

4. *Septuagint Greek-English Old Testament.* Lancelot Brenton, Translator. (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, Ltd., 1851). Page 784.

most complete revelation God has yet given of Himself (Matthew 11:27; John 14:7; 12:45; Hebrews 1:3) and which, throughout eternity, will continue to be the glorious medium of Divine revelation and the eternal source of the saints' ever-expanding knowledge of God (John 17:25–26; Revelation 7:15–17) – has never, at one moment, completely exhausted the immeasurable fullness and inexplicable greatness of God's unique, infinite nature.

Because the greatness of God's infinite nature is “*unsearchable*,” there has been, and always will be, some inexplicable aspects of the Divine nature, some mysterious elements in the Divine attributes, and some unfathomable depths in the sovereign ways and dark providences of God. Thus we read, “*He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it*” (Job 26:9), “*when he hideth his face, who then can behold him*” (Job 34:29), “*He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him dark waters and thick clouds*” (Psalm 18:11), “*Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne*” (Psalm 97:2).

Though not prayerfully and thoroughly considered as they should be, the infinite, unknown, and unsearchable greatness of God and his sovereign ways are often emphasized in Scripture. For instance, “*Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him*” (2 Chronicles 2:6); “*Behold, God is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out*” (Job 36:26); “*There is no searching of his understanding*” (Isaiah 40:28); “*He doeth great things and unsearchable*” (Job 5:9); “*He doeth great things past finding out*” (Job 9:10); “*His judgments are unsearchable and his ways past finding out*” (Romans 11:33); “*Thy judgments are a great deep*” (Psalm 36:6); “*Thy thoughts are very deep*” (Psalm 92:5); “*How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more than the sand of the sea*” (Psalm 139:17); “*Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known*” (Psalm 77:19); “*The thunder of his power*

who can understand?” (Job 26:14); “Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee” (Jeremiah 32:17; Genesis 18:14); “with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37); and the apostle Paul prayed that the Ephesians would be enabled to know the love of Christ which “*passeth knowledge*” (Ephesians 3:14–19).

Consequently, man’s inability to examine fully and understand completely the greatness of God’s infinite nature and sovereign ways is set forth repeatedly in the Bible. For example, “Behold, God is great, and we know him not” (Job 36:26); “Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out” (Job 37:23); “Great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend” (Job 37:5); and “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it” (Psalm 139:6). Man’s incapacity to examine all the immeasurable dimensions of God’s infinite nature has been emphasized by various writers. For example, William Wisheart wrote, “*Thou, a poor mean, vile worm, crawling on the earth, dost thou think to search God out unto perfection, or to contain and comprehend him whom ‘the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain?’* (2 Chronicles 6:18). Dost *thou* think that the short line of thy understanding can fathom this boundless Being? No, no, it is impossible... We may sooner drain the ocean with a little shell, than comprehend the glorious perfections of God in our understanding. God hath been the subject of the discourses and debates of men in all ages: Yet after all, every age must give him this testimony, ‘*We have heard the fame of him, but he is hid from the eyes of all living*’ (Job 28:21–22)... they who know God best, are most sensible of their ignorance of him; because such as know him best, know this of him, that he cannot be known! Hence, Elihu cries out, ‘*Behold, God is great, and we know him not*’ (Job 36:26).”⁵

5. William Wisheart. *Theologia; or Discourses Of God &c.* Volume 1. (Paisley, Scotland: Robert Reid, 1716). Pages 94–95.

This human inability to investigate God thoroughly and comprehend him perfectly, which arises primarily from the greatness of His infinite nature, is put beyond all dispute in the book of Job, in the questions and comments of Zophar, “*Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea*” (Job 11:7–9). Reading through the book of Job, one can see that in his discourses, Job complained of God’s dark providences, because he could not see any justification for, what he considered, God’s unreasonable dispensations toward him. Therefore Zophar, one of Job’s counselors, explains that God’s mysterious ways toward man are far above his reach, because God himself is unsearchable (Job 11:7–9).

In Job 11:6, Zophar speaks of the secrets of Divine wisdom. He makes the point that as the Divine wisdom itself is incomprehensible, so the secrets thereof cannot be understood by man. But God’s attributes, in this case His wisdom, are not separate qualities in Him, as they are in the creatures, but are really one and the same with His essence and being. Therefore, though verse 6 refers to Divine wisdom, it must necessarily be true also of God Himself. Thus, Zophar, having spoken in the 6th verse of the wisdom of God as being a great secret of unsearchable depth, in verses 7–9 he shows that what is true of Divine wisdom must needs be true of God Himself, because His very essence is infinite and unsearchable.

To reinforce what he said in verse 6, Zophar, in Job 11:7, puts forth two questions: “*Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?*” In the first question of verse 7, the word in the original translated “searching,” signifies the most exact diligence in investigation. It is as if he had asked, “*Canst thou, by all thy studies and endeavors, or the utmost improvement of all*

thine abilities, find out God?” The question implies an unequivocal denial. “*Canst thou find him out?*” No, surely, you cannot; your own conscience will tell you as much; it would be absurd to imagine you could! This begets the question – “But is not God to be *found* by searching?” Certainly, from one perspective He is (Jeremiah 29:11–14). Much of God may be found in His works, for the heavens declare His glory (Psalm 19:1); and the invisible perfections of God are clearly seen in the things He hath made (Romans 1:20); and there are yet clearer discoveries of Him to be had by faith, for Moses saw Him who is invisible (Hebrews 11:27). But though we may *find* God by searching, yet we cannot *find Him out*; that is, we cannot attain to the complete knowledge of His nature, or the perfect discovery of His Majesty. This is explained in the second question of verse 7, in the words that follow: “*Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?*” (Job 11:7b). The words of this second question in verse 7, are exegetical of the former, that is, they explain the former. We may *find* Him, in some sense, but not *to perfection*; not so as to fully and perfectly understand His infinite nature and sovereign ways. We can never come to the uttermost of what God is. This is an impossible task for any mere finite creature.

To further establish man’s incapacity, in this present state, to comprehend perfectly the majestic greatness of God, or to form a perfectly in-depth conception of him, Zophar points to the fact that man cannot even search out or measure the several dimensions of the created works of God. We cannot measure the dimensions of Heaven or Hell, or the sea, or the dry land. To what purpose are Zophar’s comments in the two verses following verse 7 – “*It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea*” (Job 11:8–9) – if not to emphasize the fact that man cannot find out God to perfection? Do they not emphasize the incapacity of man to measure perfectly and find out exactly the

several dimensions of Heaven and Hell, sea and land? Do they not focus on our inability? If we cannot measure that which is *finite*, how can we measure Him who is *infinite*? If neither the height of Heaven, nor the depth of Hell, nor the length of the earth, nor the breadth of the sea, can be found out and measured exactly; much less can we find out the Almighty unto perfection. How can we comprehend the height of His power, or the depth of His wisdom, or the breadth of His love, or the length of His duration? Would not a man's mental state be questioned if he thought to ascend into the starry heavens and attempt to measure perfectly the dimensions of all the planets in our solar system? What would we think of an attempt, by some means, to measure "exactly" all the vast, unknown reaches of the universe, whose end we cannot even determine? Yet he that would find out God unto perfection must go infinitely higher, seeing "*the heavens, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain him*" (2 Chronicles 6:18). Who knows what lies hid in the bowels of the earth? Much less can any man know what is in the infernal regions of Hell and the dreadful torments concealed therein. How then can we know or comprehend Him who "*setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection; the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death*" (Job 28:3)? We cannot, by any means, search out perfectly all the vast depths of the sea or the subterranean crevices of the earth's core; how then can we find out Him who hath, "*measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance*" (Isaiah 40:12)? We cannot find the end of the heavens or measure their circumference; much less can we comprehend Him Who, "*telleth the number of the stars and calleth them all by their names*" (Psalm 147:4), and Who challenges us with this question, "*To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things,*

that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power and not one faileth" (Isaiah 40:25–26).

Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that even though the infinite God has not revealed Himself *totally* and finite man cannot comprehend Him *perfectly*, God has graciously condescended to reveal Himself *sufficiently* to the limited capacity of finite creatures, and so the people of God are brought to know Him *truly*. While no Christian ever has or ever will *perfectly* know God, they can and do *really* know Him. This *true* knowledge of the existence, nature, and ways of God is imparted to Christians through the instruction of the Father (Matthew 11:25–26; 16:17; John 6:44–45), the Son (Matthew 11:27; John 1:18), and the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13–15; 1 Corinthians 2:10). The Bible teaches that God sovereignly dispenses different spiritual gifts to different individual Christians (1 Corinthians 12:11), but He also gives to every Christian a “measure of grace” (Ephesians 4:7), a “measure of faith” (Romans 12:3), and a “measure of knowledge” (Mark 4:11; John 17:3) and He usually imparts this *true* knowledge through a prayerful, persistent consideration of the Word of God (Proverbs 2:1–6; John 5:39; 2 Timothy 2:15); that is, while God first gives His people the *ability* to know spiritual truth (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20), the *specific things* they come to know afterward are usually imparted and ordinarily⁶ improved in connection with prayerful consideration of God’s Word. Thus, growth in knowledge (1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18) and a more accurate view of the greatness of God are obtained as born-again believers, under the blessing of

6. *The 1677/89 Second London Confession of Faith*. Chapter 5. Article 3. See: William Lumpkin’s, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*. (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1959). Pages 256–257.

the Lord, prayerfully read and study what the Bible reveals about God's infinite nature and sovereign ways, particularly about His *uniqueness* and *exclusivity*. According to the Bible, God is not only great; He is exclusively great, uniquely great, incomparably great! Based upon the Scriptures, we can say that God is unequalled in His Deity and Divine nature, unmatched in His infinity and attributes, unsurpassed in His authority and supremacy, and unrivaled in His absolute, ever-active sovereignty.

These exclusive truth-claims that God makes in the Bible are increasingly under attack. For various reasons, many professing Christians are being persuaded to embrace the concept of religious pluralism and the equal validity of all religions despite their different, often conflicting, unbiblical doctrines. Those who advocate such ideas are either seriously uninformed or deliberately rejecting what the Bible teaches about false religions, images, and idols. For example, while the apostle Paul recognized there were other religions and ideas of God in the world, he did not hesitate to denounce them as false: "*we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many) . . . to us there is but one God*" (1 Corinthians 8:4–6). Even though the residents of Ephesus were followers of the idol goddess Diana (Acts 19:26–27, 35), it is important to note that Paul described the Ephesians, before they were quickened by God, as being, "*dead in trespasses and sin*" (Ephesians 2:1–3), "*without hope and without God*" (Ephesians 2:12). Paul's New Testament view of idols and false religions coincides with the Old Testament teaching which states, "*all the gods of the nations are idols*" (Psalm 96:5) and condemns them all as "*the vanities of the Gentiles*" (Jeremiah 14:22), "*wind and confusion*" (Isaiah 41:29), "*falsehood*" (Jeremiah 10:14), "*the work of errors*" (Jeremiah 10:15; 51:18), and "*profitable for nothing*"

(Isaiah 44:8–10). Furthermore, the Old Testament strictly forbids the people of God having them: “*Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the nations, which are round about you*” (Deuteronomy 6:13–14; 7:25; 12:3; 13:1–8; Leviticus 19:4) or making them: “*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image*” (Exodus 20:4; Leviticus 26:1; Psalm 97:7).

Since the advocates of religious pluralism – with its humanly-devised ideas of God, man, sin, Christ, and salvation, etc. – oppose what the Bible teaches about false religions, images, and idols, it is not surprising they are also vehemently antagonistic to the exclusive truth-claim that the God of the Bible is the only true God. Nevertheless, in total disregard of man’s thoughts, arguments, or wishes, the Bible declares that the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Jesus, Paul, etc., is the only true God. Consider the following.

THE TRUE GOD IS TOTALLY UNIQUE IN HIS DEITY. It adds greatly to the excellency of anything if it is unique and one of a kind, if it has neither peer nor equal, if it is beyond compare. If you can find something else of the same kind, just as good, this detracts from its excellency. It belongs to the excellency of God’s existence and nature, that He is God alone and hath no equal in worth or perfection. He alone has the Divine nature. There is no other God. To advocate or imagine other gods, just as good, is to diminish God’s excellency and dishonor Him, for it reduces Him to being just one among many. But the greatness of the God of the Bible is evident in that He is totally unique. There is not another like Him. This is why the Spirit of God insists so much upon this truth in the Holy Scriptures: [1] There is only one true God: “*there is none other God but one*” (1 Corinthians 8:4–6; Mark 12:29–32; John 17:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 Timothy 2:5; James 2:19); [2] Jehovah is the name of the one true God: “*the LORD is the true God, he is the living God,*

and an everlasting king” (Jeremiah 10:10; Psalm 83:18); [3] Jehovah is God alone: “O LORD God of Israel... thou art God, even thou alone” (2 Kings 19:15, 19; Psalm 86:10; Nehemiah 9:6; Isaiah 37:16; 42:8); [4] There is no other God before Jehovah, with Jehovah, or beside Jehovah: “I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me” (Isaiah 45:5; 43:10; 44:6–8; Deuteronomy 4:35; 32:39; 1 Kings 8:60); [5] There is none like Jehovah, equal to Jehovah or comparable with Jehovah: “I am God, and there is none like me” (Isaiah 46:5, 9–10; Exodus 9:13–14; 1 Kings 8:23; 2 Samuel 7:22; Psalm 86:8; Isaiah 40:18; Jeremiah 10:6–7); [6] Jehovah is greater than all gods and above all gods: “the LORD is greater than all gods” (Exodus 18:11; 1 Chronicles 16:25; Psalm 95:3; 97:9; 135:5). The true God is totally unique in His Deity and this uniqueness and exclusivity demonstrates His unsearchable greatness, “I am God, and there is none else; I am God and there is none like me” (Isaiah 46:9).

THE TRUE GOD IS TOTALLY UNIQUE IN HIS INFINITY. Since it adds greatly to the excellency of anything if it is unique and one of a kind, if it has neither peer nor equal and is beyond compare, our perception of God’s greatness is enhanced as we see that He alone is neither bound nor limited by the creation, but transcends it, for God “inhabiteth eternity” (Isaiah 57:15). God alone is without beginning or end, the first and the last, Who “only hath immortality” (1 Timothy 6:16). Of this Moses wrote, “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” (Psalm 90:2). Nothing in creation can compare with God. He alone is infinite. The Greek word for infinite signifies “without bounds or limits... God, who bounds everything else, is Himself without bounds.”⁷ In the Bible God is revealed as unbounded, unlimited, unsearchable, incom-

7. Thomas Watson. *A Body of Practical Divinity &c.* Reprint. (London: W. Baynes, 1807). Page 57.

prehensible, and inexplicable. God's infinite nature is displayed in His infinite attributes and unsearchable, sovereign ways. Thus, He is neither bound nor limited: [1] by time, so He is Eternal (Deuteronomy 33:27; Psalm 90:1–2; Isaiah 57:15); [2] by space, so His Omnipresence fills all creation (Psalm 139:7–10; Jeremiah 23:23–24; Acts 7:47–50) and His Immensity transcends it (2 Chronicles 2:6); [3] in knowledge and wisdom, so He is both Omniscient and All wise (Psalm 147:5; Isaiah 40:28; Hebrews 4:13; Romans 16:27); [4] in power, so He is both Almighty (Genesis 17:1; Job 11:7; 37:23) and Omnipotent (Revelation 19:6). Since God transcends everything in creation, nothing is like Him or can compare with Him. This unique infinity of God's Divine nature demonstrates His unsearchable greatness.

THE TRUE GOD IS TOTALLY UNIQUE IN HIS AUTHORITY. Authority is the moral and legal right to make laws and command obedience. In the minds of many people, authority is thought to be identical with power, but it is not. *Power* is the ability to give orders or influence others, but *authority* refers to the claim of legitimacy and the legal right to exercise that power. For example, while a mob may have the power to punish a criminal by beating or lynching, the rule of law indicates that only a legitimate police force can arrest a person, and only a legitimate court of law has the authority to determine guilt or innocence and refer a criminal for punishment when necessary. Hence, authority is not just a matter of the ability or power to make laws and command obedience, but also about the legitimacy and legal right to make these laws and execute them with commensurate power. The basic types of authority are: [1] Executive; [2] Legislative; and [3] Judicial. According to the Bible, the LORD alone possesses and exercises all three. He exercises supreme authority over all the earth as: [1] the ultimate King (Psalm 47:2); [2] the ultimate Lawgiver (James 4:12); and

[3] the ultimate Judge of all men (Genesis 18:25; Psalm 9:8; 96:13). Hence, God has the legitimate right to make laws, command obedience, pass judgment for infractions against His laws, and to execute punishments accordingly. God’s supreme authority is connected with His unique Deity and infinite nature and, as God alone, He is the MOST HIGH over all the earth: “*Thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth*” (Psalm 83:18; Psalm 92:8). Forty-eight times the Bible describes God as the “MOST HIGH” Who exercises His supreme authority as: [1] *Creator* of all (Isaiah 40:28; Genesis 1:1; Psalm 102:25); [2] *Owner* of all (Genesis 14:19,22; Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalm 24:1; Ezekiel 18:4); [3] *Preserver* of all (Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 36:6; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3); [4] *King* over all (Psalm 47:2–7; 10:16) [5] *Head* above all (1 Chronicles 29:11); [6] *above the heavens* (Psalm 8:1); [7] *above all the earth* (Psalm 97:9); [8] *above all the nations* (Psalm 113:4); [9] *above all kings, princes and empires*, “*by me kings reign*” (Proverbs 8:15–16; Isaiah 40:23; Daniel 2:21); [10] *above all people* (Psalm 99:2); [11] *above the angels* (Psalm 103:20; Job 4:18); and [12] *above all gods* (Exodus 18:11; Psalm 95:3; 135:5; Jeremiah 10:10–16). “*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*” (1 Chronicles 29:11). Thus, the uniqueness of God is evident in that He alone has absolute authority. He alone is King over all the earth. The uniqueness and exclusivity of God’s supreme authority demonstrates His unsearchable greatness.

THE TRUE GOD IS TOTALLY UNIQUE IN HIS SOVEREIGNTY. The Sovereignty of God refers to His legal right to exercise the prerogatives and powers of His exclusive Deity. Because He alone is God, because He alone is infinite, with unbounded knowledge, wisdom, and power, because He alone is the Most High over

Heaven and Earth, because He alone is the Creator and Owner of all things, God has the legitimate, absolute authority to govern, control, and administer everything He owns as He thinks best. This truth was emphasized in Christ's teaching about the legal rights of the "householder" or owner of the vineyard who asked, "*Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?*" (Matthew 20:15). If man has a legal right to control or dispense his own property as he sees best, does not the Almighty God have the same right and even more so? The Bible repeatedly teaches this truth, that God always does as He pleases and only as He pleases: "*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 is able to withstand thee?*" (2 Chronicles 20:6); "*Our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased*" (Psalm 115:3); "*Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places*" (Psalm 135:5-6); "*There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand*" (Proverbs 19:21); "*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); "*I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?*" (Daniel 4:34-35). Because God alone is the Most High, He rules and reigns with legal, absolute authority over all the earth and everything in it, "*God is the King of all the earth . . . God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness*" (Psalm 47:7-8; 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1; Isaiah 52:7; Revelation 19:6). Furthermore, as the MOST HIGH, God is above all other jurisdiction, so He "*giveth not account of any of his matters*" (Job 33:13) to any person, king,

nation, court, judge, or institution, “*I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me... My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure*” (Isaiah 46:9–10). The 1677/1689 London Baptist Confession states, “God, the good Creator, of all things, in His infinite power and wisdom, doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence to the end for which they were created... so that there is not anything befalls any by chance, or without His providence.”⁸

To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the MOST HIGH over all the earth, that He is the Almighty, who possesses the ultimate legal authority and power in Heaven and earth and exercises that authority and power so that none can defeat His counsels, thwart His purpose, or resist His will (2 Chronicles 20:6; Job 23:13; Psalm 115:3). To say God is Sovereign is to declare that “*the kingdom is the LORD’s: and he is the Governor among the nations*” (Psalm 22:28), setting up kingdoms, directing nations, overthrowing empires, and determining the course of dynasties as pleases Him best (Proverbs 8:15–16; Isaiah 40:23; Daniel 2:21). To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the “*Only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords*” (1 Timothy 6:15). As such, even the Salvation of men is carried out according to the “*good pleasure of his will*” (Ephesians 1:3–11), hence, salvation, “*is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God who showeth mercy*” (Romans 9:16). God’s exercise of His sovereignty is the exercise of His supreme authority. Thus, the uniqueness and exclusivity of God’s absolute sovereignty demonstrates His unsearchable greatness.

In closing, let us mention five things.

8. 1677/1689 *London Baptist Confession of Faith*, Chapter 5, Articles 1 and 2. See: William Lumpkin’s, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*. (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1959). Page 256.

FIRST In light of all the Holy Scriptures we have considered, it is our firm opinion that a rejection of either God's exclusive Deity as the only true God, or a rejection of the unique Infinity of His nature and attributes, or a rejection of His supreme Authority, or a rejection of His absolute and ever-active Sovereignty over all things, is a rejection of the true God.

SECOND Some Bible-based knowledge of the nature and ways of God is absolutely necessary for practical Christian living. For instance, according to the Lord Jesus Christ, "*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*" (Matthew 4:10; Mark 12:29–30). Thus, the uniquely Divine, essentially infinite, legally supreme Jehovah God, who lawfully reigns and sovereignly rules over all things as He pleases (1 Chronicles 29:11–13; 2 Chronicles 20:6; Psalm 47:6–8; Jeremiah 10:6–7, 10; Daniel 4:34–35), is both the *specific* and *exclusive* object of all religious worship and service. This perfectly coincides with Old Testament teaching (Exodus 20:1–17; Deuteronomy 6:1–5; etc.). Additionally, the Lord Jesus Christ taught that the essential, spiritual nature of Jehovah God (John 4:19–24) is inseparably connected with religious worship, defining and controlling both the proper *object* and the proper *manner* of Christian worship. If we do not worship God as He has revealed Himself in the Bible, we do not worship God at all. According to the Lord Jesus, worship not based upon Bible teaching is meaningless and futile because it teaches for doctrines the commandments of men. Furthermore, the Bible declares that all "*vain*" (Matthew 15:9), "*ignorant*" (John 4:22; Acts 17:23), "*will-worship*" (Colossians 2:23), is unacceptable with God because it is based upon the traditions of men and not the commandments of God. William S. Plumer wrote, "Nothing has a more pernicious effect on man's character than low thoughts of God. We should on many accounts labor to have just and elevated views of His

excellent greatness (Psalm 145:3). Unless we have great thoughts of God, our thoughts of sin will be low, our sense of obligation feeble, and our praises dull.”⁹

THIRD Even though we cannot *perfectly* know God, we can *truly* know Him (Matthew 13:11; John 8:32; 14:17; 17:3, 8, 25; 1 John 2:3, 13; 3:16, 19, 24; 4:2, 6, 7, 13; 5:20). We can *truly* and *really* know God and we should make every effort to use the Holy Scriptures and prayer for they are God-ordained means to that end. John Gill wrote, “The nature of God is, indeed, incomprehensible by us; somewhat of it may be apprehended, but it cannot be fully comprehended; ‘*Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?*’ (Job 11:7). No: but then this does not forbid us searching and inquiring after him: though we cannot have adequate ideas of God, yet we should endeavor to get the best we can, and frame the best conceptions of him we are able; that so we may serve and worship him, honor and glorify him, in the best manner.”¹⁰

FOURTH To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that the God of the Bible is God, not just in name but in fact. To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the MOST HIGH over all things, who “*worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*” (Ephesians 1:11) not only in Creation (Psalm 135:5–6; Revelation 4:11), but also in Providence (Psalm 103:19; Proverbs 16:9, 33; 19:21; Jeremiah 10:23; Matthew 10:29–30), and in the Salvation of men, “*For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him*

9. William S. Plumer. *Psalms. A Critical and Expository Commentary with Doctrinal and Practical Remarks.* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Company, 1872). Page 1188.

10. John Gill. *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity &c.* (Paris, Arkansas: Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc., 1984). Page 31.

that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Romans 9:15–16). About man's salvation, Jesus said, "*I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight*" (Matthew 11:25–26). To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is "*the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting*" (1 Timothy 6:15–16). To say that God is Sovereign is to emphasize what Christ taught when He said, "*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,*" but "*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him*" (John 6:37–45). Let us ever remember that not only are the days of our life (Job 14:1–5) in God's hands, but also our souls, "*Salvation is of the LORD*" (Jonah 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14). The Sovereignty of God is one aspect of God's infinite greatness. God's absolute sovereignty has been described as "*the key to history, the interpreter of Providence, the warp and woof of Scripture, and the foundation of all true Christian theology.*" The following book by A.W. Pink explains this doctrine at length. We know of no better nor more thorough, or more specific modern explanation of this doctrine than what is presented in this book.

FIFTH When we consider various aspects of the infinite, incomprehensible nature of God, let us never forget the Mediator. J.C. Ryle wrote, "A sense of God's presence abases man and makes him feel his sinfulness. We see this strikingly illustrated by Peter's words, when the miraculous draught of fishes convinced him that One greater than man was in his boat. We read that Peter, '*fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord*' (Luke 5:8). The words of Peter exactly express the first feelings of

man when he is brought into anything like close contact with God. The sight of Divine greatness and holiness makes him feel strongly his own littleness and sinfulness. Like Adam after the fall, his first thought is to hide himself. Like Israel under Sinai, the language of his heart is, *'let not God speak with us, lest we die'* (Exodus 20:19) . . . Let us strive to know more and more, every year we live, our need of a mediator between ourselves and God. Let us seek more and more to realize that without a mediator our thoughts of God can never be comfortable, and the more clearly we see God the more uncomfortable we must feel. Above all, let us be thankful that we have in Jesus the very Mediator whose help our souls require, and that through Him we may draw near to God with boldness, and cast fear away. Out of Christ God is a consuming fire. In Christ He is a reconciled Father. Without Christ the strictest moralist may well tremble, as he looks forward to his end. Through Christ the chief of sinners may approach God with confidence and feel perfect peace."¹¹

We conclude with a quotation that summarizes the importance of knowing the "greatness" of our God.

" . . . the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and go our way with the thought, 'Behold I am wise.' But

11. J.C. Ryle. *Expository Thoughts On The Gospels. Luke*. Volume 1. (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1879). Pages 133–134.

when we come to this master-science, finding that our plumb-line cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought that vain man would be wise, but he is like a wild ass's colt and with the solemn exclamation, 'I am but of yesterday, and know nothing.' No subject of contemplation will tend more to *humble* the mind, than thoughts of God... But while the subject humbles the mind it also *expands* it. He who often thinks of God, will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe... after all the most excellent study for expanding the soul is the science of Christ, and him crucified, and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity. And, whilst humbling and expanding, this subject is eminently *consolatory*. Oh, there is, in contemplating Christ, a balm for every wound, in musing on the Father, there is a quietus for every grief, and in the influence of the Holy Ghost, there is a balsam for every sore. Would you lose your sorrows? Would you drown your cares? Then go plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea; be lost in his immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul, so calm the swelling billows of grief and sorrow, so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead."¹²

2018

THE BAPTIST STANDARD BEARER, INC.

12. C.H. Spurgeon. *New Park Street Pulpit*. Volume 1. 1855. Reprint. (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1975). Page 1.



FOREWORD TO THE FIRST EDITION

IN THE FOLLOWING pages an attempt has been made to examine anew in the light of God's Word some of the profoundest questions which can engage the human mind. Others have grappled with these mighty problems in days gone by and from their labors we are the gainers. While making no claim for originality the writer, nevertheless, has endeavored to examine and deal with his subject from an entirely independent viewpoint. We have studied diligently the writings of such men as Augustine and Aquinas, Calvin and Melancthon, Jonathan Edwards and Ralph Erskine, Andrew Fuller and Robert Haldane.¹ And sad it is to think that these eminent and honored names are almost entirely unknown to the present generation. Though, of course, we do not endorse all their conclusions, yet we gladly acknowledge our deep indebtedness to their works. We have purposely refrained from quoting freely from these deeply taught theologians, because we desired that the faith of our readers should stand not in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. For this

1. Among those who have dealt most helpfully with the subject of God's Sovereignty in recent years we mention Drs. Rice, J.B. Moody, and Bishop, from whose writings we have also received instruction.

reason we *have* quoted freely from the Scriptures and have sought to furnish proof-texts for *every* statement we have advanced.

It would be foolish for us to expect that this work will meet with general approval. The trend of modern theology – if theology it can be called – is ever toward the deification of the creature rather than the glorification of the Creator, and the leaven of present-day Rationalism is rapidly permeating the whole of Christendom. The malevolent effects of Darwinianism are more far reaching than most are aware. Many of those among our religious leaders who are still regarded as orthodox would, we fear, be found to be very heterodox if they were weighed in the balances of the Sanctuary. Even those who are clear, intellectually, upon other truth, are rarely sound in *doctrine*. Few, very few, today, really believe in the *complete* ruin and *total* depravity of man. Those who speak of man’s “free will,” and insist upon his inherent power to either accept or reject the Saviour, do but voice their ignorance of the real condition of Adam’s fallen children. And if there are few who believe that, so far as *he* is concerned, the condition of the sinner is *entirely hopeless*, there are fewer still who really believe in the *absolute Sovereignty* of God.

In addition to the widespread effects of unscriptural teaching, we also have to reckon with the deplorable *superficiality* of the present generation. To announce that a certain book is a treatise on doctrine is quite sufficient to prejudice against it the great bulk of church-members and most of our preachers as well. The craving today is for something light and spicy, and few have patience, still less desire, to examine carefully that which would make a *demand* both upon their hearts and their mental powers. We remember, also, how that it is becoming increasingly difficult in these strenuous days for those who *are* desirous of studying the deeper things of God to find the time which such study requires. Yet, it is still true that “Where there’s a will, there’s a way,” and in spite of the

FOREWORD TO THE FIRST EDITION

discouraging features referred to, we believe there is even now a godly remnant who will take pleasure in giving this little work a careful consideration, and such will, we trust, find in it “Meat in due season.”

We do not forget the words of one long since passed away, namely, that “Denunciation is the last resort of a defeated opponent.” To dismiss this book with the contemptuous epithet – “Hyper-Calvinism”! will not be worthy of notice. For controversy we have no taste, and we shall not accept any challenge to enter the lists against those who might desire to debate the truths discussed in these pages. So far as our personal reputation is concerned, that we leave our Lord to take care of, and unto Him we would now commit this volume and whatever fruit it may bear, praying Him to use it for the enlightening of His own dear people (insofar as it is in accord with His Holy Word) and to pardon the writer for and preserve the reader from the injurious effects of any false teaching that may have crept into it. If the joy and comfort which have come to the author while penning these pages are shared by those who may scan them, then we shall be devoutly thankful to the One whose grace alone enables us to discern spiritual things.

June 1918.

ARTHUR W. PINK.



FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

IT IS NOW two years since the first edition of this work was presented to the Christian public. Its reception has been far more favorable than the author had expected. Many have notified him of the help and blessing received from a perusal of his attempts to expound what is admittedly a difficult subject. For every word of appreciation we return hearty thanks to Him in Whose light we alone “see light.” A few have condemned the book in unqualified terms, and these we commend to God and to the Word of His grace, remembering that it is written, “a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven” (John 3:27). Others have sent us friendly criticisms and these have been weighed carefully, and we trust that, in consequence, this revised edition will be unto those who are members of the household of faith more profitable than the former one.

One word of explanation seems to be called for. A number of respected brethren in Christ feel that our treatment of the Sovereignty of God was too extreme and one-sided. It has been pointed out that a fundamental requirement in expounding the Word of God is the need of *preserving the balance of Truth*. With this we are in hearty accord. Two things are beyond dispute: God is sovereign, and man is a responsible creature. But in this book we are treating

of the Sovereignty of God, and while the responsibility of man is readily owned, yet, we do not pause on every page to *insist* on it; instead, we have sought to stress that side of the Truth which in these days is almost universally neglected. Probably 95 per cent of the religious literature of the day is devoted to a setting forth of the duties and obligations of men. The fact is that those who undertake to expound the Responsibility of man are the very ones who have *lost* 'the balance of Truth' by ignoring, very largely, the Sovereignty of God. It is perfectly right to insist on the responsibility of man, but what of God? – has *He* no claims, no rights! A hundred such works as this are needed, ten thousand sermons would have to be preached throughout the land on this subject, if the 'balance of Truth' is to be regained. The 'balance of Truth' has been lost, lost through a disproportionate emphasis being thrown on the human side, to the minimizing, if not the exclusion, of the Divine side. We grant that this book *is* one-sided, for it only pretends to deal with one side of the Truth, and that is, the neglected side, the Divine side. Furthermore, the question might be raised: Which is the more to be deplored – an over emphasizing of the human side and an insufficient emphasis on the Divine side, or, an over emphasizing of the Divine side and an insufficient emphasis on the human side? Surely, if we err at all it is on the right side. Surely, there is far more danger of making too much of man and too little of God, than there is of making too much of God and too little of man. Yea, the question might well be asked, *Can we press God's claims too far? Can we be too extreme in insisting upon the absoluteness and universality of the Sovereignty of God?*

It is with profound thankfulness to God that, after a further two years diligent study of Holy Writ, with the earnest desire to discover what almighty God has been pleased to reveal to His children on this subject, we are able to testify that we see no reason for making any retractions from what we wrote before, and while we have re-

FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

arranged the material of this work, the substance and doctrine of it remains unchanged. May the One Who condescended to bless the first edition of this work be pleased to own even more widely this revision.

1921.

ARTHUR W. PINK,
SWENGEL, PA.



FOREWORD TO THE THIRD EDITION

THAT A THIRD edition of this work is now called for, is a cause of fervent praise to God. As the darkness deepens and the pretensions of men are taking on an ever-increasing blatancy, the need becomes greater for the claims of God to be emphasized. As the twentieth century Babel of religious tongues is bewildering so many, the duty of God's servants to point to the one sure anchorage for the heart, is the more apparent. Nothing is so tranquillizing and so stabilizing as the assurance that the Lord Himself is on the Throne of the universe, "working *all* things after the counsel of His own will."

The Holy Spirit has told us that there are in the Scriptures "some things hard to be understood." but mark it is "hard" *not* "impossible"! A patient waiting on the Lord, a diligent comparison of scripture with scripture, often issues in a fuller apprehension of that which before was obscure to us. During the last ten years it has pleased God to grant us further light on certain parts of His Word, and this we have sought to use in improving our expositions of different passages. But it is with unfeigned thanksgiving that we find it unnecessary to either change or modify any *doctrine* contained in the former editions. Yea, as time goes by, we realize (by Divine grace) with ever-increasing force, the truth, the importance, and

the value of the Sovereignty of God as it pertains to every branch of our lives.

Our hearts have been made to rejoice again and again by unsolicited letters which have come to hand from every quarter of the earth, telling of help and blessing received from the former editions of this work. One Christian friend was so stirred by reading it and so impressed by its testimony, that a check was sent to be used in sending free copies to missionaries in fifty foreign countries, "that its glorious message may encircle the globe"; numbers of whom have written us to say how much they have been strengthened in their fight with the powers of darkness. To God alone belongs *all* the glory. May He deign to use this third edition to the honour of His own great Name, and to the feeding of His scattered and starved sheep.

A.W.P.

Morton's Gap,
Kentucky.

1929



FOREWORD TO THE FOURTH EDITION

IT IS WITH profound praise to God “most high” that another edition of this valuable and helpful book is now called for. Though its teaching runs directly counter to much that is being promulgated on every hand today, yet we are happy to be able to say that its circulation is increasing to the strengthening of the faith, comfort, and hope of an increasing number of God’s elect. We commit this new edition to Him whom we “delight to honour,” praying that He may be pleased to bless its circulation to the enlightening of many more of His own, to the “praise of the glory of His grace,” and a clearer apprehension of the majesty of God and His sovereign mercy.

1949

I. C. HERENDEEN



INTRODUCTION

WHO IS REGULATING affairs on this earth today – God, or the Devil? That God reigns supreme in Heaven, is generally conceded; that He does so over this world, is almost universally denied – if not directly, then indirectly. More and more are men in their philosophisings and theorisings, relegating God to the background. Take the material realm. Not only is it denied that God *created* everything, by personal and direct action, but few believe that He has any immediate concern in *regulating* the works of His own hands. Everything is supposed to be ordered according to the (impersonal and abstract) “laws of Nature.” Thus is the Creator banished from His own creation. Therefore we need not be surprised that men, in their degrading conceptions, exclude Him from the realm of human affairs. Throughout Christendom, with an almost negligible exception, the theory is held that man is “a free agent,” and therefore, lord of his fortunes and the determiner of his destiny. That Satan is to be blamed for much of the evil which is in the world, is freely affirmed by those who, though having so much to say about “the responsibility of man,” often *deny* their *own* responsibility, by attributing to the Devil what, in fact, proceeds from their *own* evil hearts (Mark 7:21–23).

But who *is* regulating affairs on this earth today – God, or the

Devil? Attempt to take a serious and comprehensive view of the world. What a scene of confusion and chaos confronts us on every side! Sin is rampant; lawlessness abounds; evil men and seducers *are waxing* “worse and worse” (2 Timothy 3:13). Today, everything appears to be *out of joint*. Thrones are creaking and tottering, ancient dynasties are being overturned, democracies are revolting, civilization is a demonstrated failure; half of Christendom was but recently locked-together in a death grapple; and now that the titanic conflict is over, instead of the world having been made “safe for democracy,” we have discovered that democracy is very *unsafe* for the world. Unrest, discontent, and lawlessness are rife every where, and none can say how soon another great war will be set in motion. Statesmen are perplexed and staggered. Men’s hearts are “failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth” (Luke 21:26). Do *these* things look as though *God* had full control?

But let us confine our attention to the religious realm. After nineteen centuries of Gospel preaching, Christ is still “despised and rejected of men.” Worse still, *He* (the Christ of Scripture) is proclaimed and magnified by very few. In the majority of modern pulpits He is dishonoured and disowned. Despite frantic efforts to attract the crowds, the majority of the churches are being emptied rather than filled. And what of the great masses of non-church goers? In the light of Scripture we are compelled to believe that the “many” are on the Broad Road that leadeth to destruction, and that only “few” are on the Narrow Way that leadeth unto life. Many are declaring that Christianity is a failure, and despair is settling on many faces. Not a few of the Lord’s own people are bewildered, and their faith is being severely tried. *And what of God?* Does He see and hear? Is He impotent or indifferent? A number of those who are regarded as leaders of Christian-thought told us that, God could not help the coming of the late awful War, and that He was

unable to bring about its termination. It was said, and said openly, that conditions were *beyond* God's control. Do these things look as though *God* were ruling the world?

Who *is* regulating affairs on this earth today – God, or the Devil? What impression is made upon the minds of those men of the world who, occasionally, attend a Gospel service? What are the conceptions formed by those who hear even those preachers who are counted as “orthodox”? Is it not that a *disappointed* God is the One whom Christians believe in? From what is heard from the average evangelist today, is not any serious hearer *obliged* to conclude that he professes to represent a God who is filled with benevolent intentions, yet unable to carry them out; that He is earnestly desirous of blessing men, but that they will not let Him? Then, *must not* the average hearer draw the inference that the Devil has gained the upper hand, and that God is to be pitied rather than blamed?

But does not everything seem to show that the Devil *has* far more to do with the affairs of earth than God has? Ah, it all depends upon whether we are walking by faith, or walking by sight. Are your thoughts, my reader, concerning this world and God's relation to it, based upon what you *see*? Face this question seriously and honestly. And if you are a Christian, you will, most probably, have cause to bow your head with shame and sorrow, and to acknowledge that it *is* so. Alas, in reality, we walk very little “by faith”. But what does “walking by faith” signify? It means that our thoughts are formed, our actions regulated, our lives moulded by the Holy Scriptures, for, “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing *by the Word of God*” (Romans 10:17). It is from the Word of Truth, and that alone, that we can learn what is *God's* relation to this world.

Who is regulating affairs on this earth today – God or the Devil? *What saith the Scriptures?* Ere we consider the direct reply to this query, let it be said that, the Scriptures *predicted* just what we

now see and hear. The prophecy of Jude is in course of fulfillment. It would lead us too far astray from our present inquiry to fully amplify this assertion, but what we have particularly in mind is a sentence in verse 8 – “Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, *despise dominion and speak evil of dignities.*” Yes, they “speak evil” of the Supreme Dignity, the “Only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.” Ours is peculiarly an age of irreverence, and as the consequence, the spirit of lawlessness, which brooks no restraint and which is desirous of casting off everything which interferes with the free course of self-will, is rapidly engulfing the earth like some giant tidal wave. The members of the rising generation are the most flagrant offenders, and in the decay and disappearing of parental authority we have the certain precursor of the abolition of civic authority. Therefore, in view of the growing disrespect for human law and the refusal to “render honor to whom honor is due,” we need not be surprised that the recognition of the majesty, the authority, the sovereignty of the Almighty Law-giver should recede more and more into the background, and that the masses have less and less patience with those who insist upon them. And conditions will not improve; instead, the more sure Word of Prophecy makes known to us that they will grow worse and worse. Nor do we expect to be able to stem the tide – it has already risen much too high for that. All we can now hope to do is warn our fellow-saints against the spirit of the age, and thus seek to counteract its baneful influence upon them.

Who is regulating affairs on this earth today – God, or the Devil? What saith the Scriptures? If we believe their plain and positive declarations, no room is left for uncertainty. They affirm, again and again, that God is on the throne of the universe; that the sceptre is in His hands; that He is directing *all things* “after the counsel of His own will.” They affirm, not only that God created all things, but also that God is ruling and reigning over all the works

of His hands. They affirm that God is the “Almighty”, that His will is irreversible, that He is absolute sovereign in every realm of all His vast dominions. And surely it *must* be so. Only two alternatives are possible: God must either rule, or be ruled; sway, or be swayed; accomplish His own will, or be thwarted by His creatures. Accepting the fact that He is the “Most High,” the only Potentate and King of kings, vested with perfect wisdom and illimitable power, and the conclusion is irresistible that He must be God *in fact*, as well as in name.

It is in view of what we have briefly referred to above, that we say, Present-day conditions call loudly for a new examination and new presentation of God’s omnipotency, God’s sufficiency, God’s sovereignty. From every pulpit in the land it needs to be thundered forth that God still lives, that God still observes, that God still reigns. Faith is now in the crucible, it is being tested by fire, and there is no fixed and sufficient resting-place for the heart and mind but in *the Throne of God*. What is needed now, as never before, is a full, positive, constructive setting forth of the Godhood of God. Drastic diseases call for drastic remedies. People are weary of platitudes and mere generalizations – the call is for something definite and specific. Soothing-syrup may serve for peevish children, but an iron tonic is better suited for adults, and we know of nothing which is more calculated to infuse spiritual vigor into our frames than a scriptural apprehension of the full character of God. It is written, “The people that do *know their God* shall be strong and do exploits” (Daniel 11:32).

Without a doubt a world-crisis is at hand, and everywhere men are alarmed. But God is not! *He* is never taken by surprise. It is no unexpected emergency which now confronts Him, for He is the One who “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” (Ephesians 1:11). Hence, though the world is panic-stricken, the word to the believer is, “Fear not”! “All things” are subject to

His immediate control: “all things” are moving in accord with His eternal purpose, and therefore, “all things” are “working together *for good* to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” It *must* be so, for “of Him, and through Him, and to Him are *all things*” (Romans 11:36). Yet how little is this realised today even by the people of God! Many suppose that He is little more than a far-distant Spectator, taking no immediate hand in the affairs of earth. It is true that man has a will, but so also has God. It is true that man is endowed with power, but God is all-powerful. It is true that, speaking generally, the material world is regulated by law, but behind that law is the law-Giver and law-Administrator. Man is but the creature. God is the Creator, and endless ages before man first saw the light “the mighty God” (Isaiah 9:6) existed, and ere the world was founded, made His plans; and being infinite in power and man only finite, His purpose and plan cannot be withstood or thwarted by the creatures of His own hands.

We readily acknowledge that life is a profound problem, and that we are surrounded by mystery on every side; but we are not like the beasts of the field – ignorant of their origin, and unconscious of what is before them. No: “*We have* also a more sure Word of Prophecy”, of which it is said ye do well that ye “take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:19). And it is to this Word of Prophecy we indeed do well to “take heed,” to that Word which had not its origin in the mind of man but in the Mind of God, for, “the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake moved by the Holy Spirit.” We say again, it is to *this* “Word” we do well to take heed. As we turn to this Word and are instructed thereout, we discover a fundamental principle which must be applied to every problem: Instead of beginning with man and his world and working back to God, we must begin with God and work down to man – “In the beginning *God*”! Apply

this principle to the present situation. Begin with the world as it is today and try and work back to God, and everything will seem to show that God has no connection with the world at all. But begin with God and work down to the world and light, much light, is cast on the problem. Because God is *holy* His anger burns against sin; because God is *righteous* His judgments fall upon those who rebel against Him; because God is *faithful* the solemn threatenings of His Word are fulfilled; because God is *omnipotent* none can successfully resist Him, still less overthrow His counsel; and because God is *omniscient* no problem can master Him and no difficulty baffle His wisdom. It is just because God is who He is and what He is that we are now beholding on earth what we do – the beginning of His outpoured judgments: in view of His inflexible justice and immaculate holiness we could not expect anything other than what is now spread before our eyes.

But let it be said very emphatically that the heart can only rest upon and *enjoy* the blessed truth of the absolute sovereignty of God as *faith is in exercise*. Faith is ever occupied with *God*. That is the character of it; that is what differentiates it from intellectual theology. Faith *endures* “as seeing Him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27): endures the disappointments, the hardships, and the heart-aches of life, by recognising that *all* comes from the hand of Him who is too wise to err and too loving to be unkind. But so long as we are occupied with any other object than God Himself, there will be neither rest for the heart nor peace for the mind. But when we receive all that enters our lives as from *His* hand, then, no matter what may be our circumstances or surroundings – whether in a hovel, a prison-dungeon, or a martyr’s stake – we shall be enabled to say, “The lines are fallen unto me in *pleasant* places” (Psalm 16:6). But *that* is the language of *faith*, not of sight or of sense.

But if instead of bowing to the testimony of Holy Writ, if instead of walking by faith, we follow the evidence of our eyes, and

reason there from, we shall fall into a quagmire of virtual atheism. Or, if we are regulated by the opinions and views of others, peace will be at an end. Granted that there *is* much in this world of sin and suffering which appals and saddens us; granted that there is much in the providential dealings of God which startle and stagger us; that is no reason why we should unite with the unbelieving worldling who says, “If I were God, I would not allow this or tolerate that” etc. Better far, in the presence of bewildering mystery, to say with one of old, “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it” (Psalm 39:9). Scripture tells us that God’s judgments *are* “unsearchable”, and His ways “past finding out” (Romans 11:33). It must be so if faith is to be tested, confidence in His wisdom and righteousness strengthened, and submission to His holy will fostered.

Here is the fundamental difference between the man of faith and the man of unbelief. The unbeliever is “of the world,” judges everything by worldly standards, views life from the standpoint of time and sense, and weighs everything in the balances of his own carnal making. But the man of faith *brings in God*, looks at everything from *His* standpoint, estimates values by spiritual standards, and views life in the light of eternity. Doing this, he receives whatever comes as from the hand of God. Doing this, his heart is calm in the midst of the storm. Doing this, he rejoices in hope of the glory of God.

In these opening paragraphs we have indicated the lines of thought followed out in this book. Our first postulate is that because God *is God*, He does as He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases; that His great concern is the accomplishment of His own pleasure and the promotion of His own glory; that He is the Supreme Being, and therefore Sovereign of the universe. Starting with this postulate we have contemplated the *exercise* of God’s Sovereignty, first in Creation, second in Governmental

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Administration over the works of His hands, third in the Salvation of His own elect, fourth in the Reprobation of the wicked, and fifth in Operation upon and within men. Next we have viewed the Sovereignty of God as it relates to the human Will in particular and human Responsibility in general, and have sought to show what is the only becoming attitude for the creature to take in view of the majesty of the Creator. A separate chapter has been set apart for a consideration of some of the difficulties which are involved, and to answering the questions which are likely to be raised in the minds of our readers; while one chapter has been devoted to a more careful yet brief examination of God's Sovereignty in relation to prayer. Finally, we have sought to show that the Sovereignty of God is a truth revealed to us in Scripture for the comfort of our hearts, the strengthening of our souls, and the blessing of our lives. A due apprehension of God's Sovereignty promotes the spirit of worship, provides an incentive to practical godliness, and inspires zeal in service. It is deeply humbling to the human heart, but in proportion to the degree that it brings man into the dust before his Maker, to that extent is God glorified.

We are well aware that what we have written is in open opposition to much of the teaching that is current both in religious literature and in the representative pulpits of the land. We freely grant that the postulate of God's Sovereignty with all its corollaries is at direct variance with the opinions and thoughts of the natural man, but the truth is, *we* are quite *unable* to think upon these matters: we are *incompetent* for forming a proper estimate of God's character and ways, and it is because of this that God has given us a revelation of *His* mind, and in that revelation He plainly declares, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8, 9). In view of this scripture, it is only to he

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expected that much of the contents of the Bible *conflicts* with the sentiments of the carnal mind, which is *enmity* against God. Our appeal then is not to the popular beliefs of the day, nor to the creeds of the churches, but to the Law and Testimony of Jehovah. All that we ask for is an impartial and attentive examination of what we have written, and that, made prayerfully in the light of the Lamp of Truth. May the reader heed the Divine admonition to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

"There is no attribute of God more comforting to his children than the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe troubles, they believe that Sovereignty hath ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them, and that Sovereignty will sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children of God ought more earnestly to contend than the dominion of their Master over all creation, the kingship of God over all the works of his own hands, the throne of God, and his right to sit upon that throne. On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by worldlings, no truth of which they have made such a football, as the great, stupendous, but yet most certain doctrine of the Sovereignty of the infinite Jehovah. Men will allow God to be everywhere except on his throne. They will allow him to be in his workshop to fashion worlds and to make stars. They will allow him to be in his almonry to dispense his alms and bestow his bounties. They will allow him to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars thereof, or light the lamps of heaven, or rule the waves of the ever-moving ocean; but when God ascends his throne, his creatures then gnash their teeth; and when we proclaim an enthroned God, and his right to do as he wills with his own, to dispose of his creatures as he thinks best, without consulting them in the matter, then it is that we are hissed and execrated, and then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us, for God on his throne is not the God they love. They love him anywhere better than they do when he sits with his scepter in his hand and his crown upon his head. But it is God upon the throne that we love to preach. It is God upon his throne whom we trust."

C. H. SPURGEON

New Park Street Pulpit. Volume 2. 1856. Reprint. (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1975). Page 185.

"Man naturally disowns the rule God sets him . . . when we disown his authority, we disown his Godhead: it is the right of God to be the Sovereign of his creatures . . . in breaking out against God's sovereignty, we disown his being as God; for to be God and Sovereign are inseparable. He could not be God if he were not supreme; nor could he be a Creator without being a Lawgiver. To be God, and yet inferior to another, is a contradiction."

STEPHEN CHARNOCK

Discourses Upon The Existence And Attributes Of God. Volume 1. Reprint. First American Edition. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1840). Pages 99.

"Neither, indeed, is there any broader way of apostasy from the Gospel than a rejection of God's Sovereignty in all things . . ."

JOHN OWEN

The Works Of John Owen. Volume 7. (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1852). Page 158.

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