

# WRITINGS OF LLOYD

by Lloyd

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*A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Lloyd, compiled for study and devotional reading.*

4 Chapters

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## S. Discerning The Times

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Discerning The Times by D. M. Lloyd-Jones A Two Chapter Excerpt from his book Knowing the Times From the Back Cover of the booklet: There are in our modern day two developments that threaten the very foundation and fabric of Biblical Christianity: the undoing of the Protestant Reformation and the denial of the authority of the Bible. These two issues were masterfully addressed by Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who was in the opinion of many evangelicals the greatest preacher of the twentieth century and pastor of Westminster Chapel in London for thirty years. Preaching back in 1960 and 1961, he dealt with these two concerns with his characteristic boldness and directness, citing Scripture and history as irrefutable proof of the need to return to the principles of the Reformation and Biblical authority. As you read his words, you will be struck by how they mirror our day, even though it's over forty years later. The same needs exist today, and we pray that this booklet will have wide circulation. We also highly recommend the book from which this booklet was extracted, Knowing the Times (Banner of Truth Trust).

### Remembering the Reformation

[The report of an address given in the Usher Hall, Edinburgh on 5 April, 1960, in commemoration of the Reformation in Scotland.]

Mr Chairman and Christian friends, I would like to say immediately that I regard this occasion as one of the greatest privileges that has ever fallen to my lot. I prize the invitation that I received from the friends of the Free Church of Scotland very highly indeed. This is an historic occasion. We are doing something that I am certain is well pleasing in the sight of God and which I trust, under God's benediction and blessing, will prove to be of value and of benefit to our souls and, let us hope, to the whole cause of God in this nation and in all nations at this present time. I always say, when I have the pleasure of coming to Scotland, that I am interested to come, not only because of my concern about the gospel, but because of the deep feeling of admiration which I have always had within me for you as a nation and as a people. And there is certainly nothing in your long history which is more glorious and more remarkable than that great movement of God which took place four hundred years ago, and which we are met tonight to commemorate. Therefore, for every reason I was very ready to come here to Edinburgh once more.

Now our Chairman has very rightly put to you one of the questions that I also felt should be put, because it is a question which does arise, apparently, in the minds of some people. Why, they wonder, should we consider the Reformation in Scotland at all at a time like this, with the world as it is and with the multiplicity of problems that are pressing in upon us on all sides? Why turn back and consider what happened four hundred years ago? As I understand it there are two main objections to doing this. The first is a general objection to looking back, a feeling that the past has nothing to teach us. For, after all, we are the people of the twentieth century, the people who have split the atom, who are encompassing all knowledge and have advanced to such giddy heights as our forefathers could not even have imagined. Why then should we, of all people, look back, and especially look back four hundred years? The whole climate of opinion today, and indeed during

the last hundred years, has been governed by the evolutionary theory and hypothesis, which holds that man advances from age to age and that the present is always better than the past; this whole climate of thought is inimical to the idea of looking back and learning from previous history. That is one objection. The other objection is that we should not hold a meeting like this because the Reformation was a tragedy. Now this is a view which is gaining currency very rapidly at present. We are told that what we should be considering today is unity, and that if we spend our time considering the disruption and division in the church which took place four hundred years ago, we are doing something sinful. There is, alas, an increasing body of opinion in Protestant circles which is saying, openly and unashamedly, that the Protestant Reformation was a tragedy and that it is our business to forget it as soon as we can and to do everything possible to heal the breach, so that we shall be one again with the Church of Rome, and there shall be one great world church.

Those are the two commonest objections, as I see the situation, which are brought against what we are engaged in doing this evening. Why then are we doing it? How do we justify a gathering such as this, and the other gatherings that are to follow? Well, let me say quite frankly that there are wrong and false ways of doing what we are doing here tonight. There are people who are interested in the past merely in an antiquarian sense; history happens to be their great interest in life. They like delving into the past and reading about the past, not that they are interested in it in any kind of active philosophic or religious sense; they just like burrowing in ancient history. There are people who do this in other realms; some like collecting old furniture, and the glory of anything to them is that it is old. They are not interested in a chair from the standpoint of something to sit upon; what they are interested in is the age of the chair. Now that is antiquarianism, and it is possible for us, of course, to be governed by a purely antiquarian or historical motive. But there is no value in that; the times in which we are living are too urgent and too desperate for us to indulge a mere antiquarian spirit.

Now the last time I stood at this desk, I said that I could not speak without having a text. Well, I am still the same. And it seemed to me that there were two texts which would not be inappropriate for this meeting, and for our consideration this evening. There is a right way and a wrong way of viewing a great event like the Reformation and the great men who took part in it. The first, the right way, we are told of in Hebrews 13:7-8 : 'Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of [or, the outcome of, their lives and of] their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.' That is the right way to do it; we look at these men in order that we may learn from them, and imitate and emulate their example. But there is a wrong way of doing this, and we find it in Matthew 23:29-32. These are terrible and terrifying words: 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?'

Now those are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ and He was addressing His own generation, His own contemporaries. He said, in effect, You are paying great tribute to the memory of the prophets; you are looking after and garnishing their sepulchres and you are saying what great men they were — How noble, how wonderful, we must keep their memory alive — and you say what a

terrible thing it was that your forefathers should have put these men to death. If you had been alive then, you maintain, you would not have joined them in those wicked deeds; you would have listened to the prophets, you would have followed them. You hypocrites, says our Lord, you would have done nothing of the sort.

How, then, does He prove it? Well, He does it in this way. He tests their sincerity by discovering what their attitude is at the present to the successors to the prophets. What is their reaction to the people who are still preaching the same message as the prophets? He says, You say that you are admirers of the prophets and yet you are persecuting and trying to compass the death of a man like myself who is the modern representative of the same message, and the same school of prophecy. Ah, says our Lord, it is one thing to look back and to praise famous men, but that can be sheer hypocrisy. The test of our sincerity this evening is this: What do we feel about, and how are we treating, the men who, today, are preaching the same message as was preached by John Knox and his fellow reformers?

So, you see, this meeting is a very important one for us. You cannot do a thing like this without examining yourself, without coming under scrutiny. Our presence indicates that we are admirers of these great prophets of God, but I wonder whether we are in reality? So it is a good thing, it seems to me, that we should come together, if only so that we can examine ourselves in the light of this word of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Why then are we doing this? How do we justify our action? Our Chairman has already dealt with one of the answers. The fact is that you simply cannot understand the history of Scotland unless you know something about the Protestant Reformation. It is the key to the understanding of the history of your great country in the last four hundred years. What Scotland has been she has been, directly and unmistakably, as a result of the Protestant Reformation. So if we had no other reason, that is enough.

You are a nation of people famous for education, for knowledge, for culture. Everybody knows that. The peasants of Scotland were cultured and able, intelligent and intellectual people. What accounts for that? It is not merely a matter of blood, because before the Protestant Reformation they were woefully ignorant, backward, and illiterate. What is it, then, that has caused your nation to be regarded, perhaps by the whole world, as supreme in her interest in education and the pursuit of knowledge? The answer is, the Protestant Reformation. So, apart from any religious considerations we have this mighty and all-important consideration. And then I want to add a third reason. Why are we considering the Reformation of four hundred years ago? Well, if I am to be quite honest, I must confess that this is my main reason: because of the state of affairs today. I am primarily a preacher, not a lecturer, not an historian, very fond of history, but not an antiquary, as I have said. No, I am interested in this because, as a preacher I am concerned about the present state of affairs which is increasingly approximating to the state of affairs that obtained before the Protestant Reformation. You are aware of the state of the morals of this country, and of Great Britain in general, before the Reformation: vice, immorality, sin were rampant. My friends, it is rapidly becoming the same again! There is a woeful moral and social declension. We are being surrounded by the very problems that were most obvious before the Reformation took place. The moral state of the country, these urgent social problems, juvenile delinquency, drunkenness, theft and robbery, vice and crime, they are coming back as they were before the Protestant

Reformation. But it is not only a matter of moral and of social problems. What of the state of the church? What of the kirk? What about the numbers who are members of the church? How many even attend? We are going back to the pre-Reformation position. What about the authority of the church? What about the state of doctrine in the church? Before the Reformation, there was confusion. Is there anything more characteristic of the church today than doctrinal confusion, doctrinal indifference — a lack of concern and a lack of interest? And then perhaps the most alarming of all, the increase in the power, influence, and numbers of the Church of Rome, and the romanizing tendencies that are coming into and being extolled in the Protestant church! There is no question about this. This is a mere matter of fact and observation. There is an obvious tendency to return to the pre-Reformation position; ceremonies and ritual are increasing and the Word of God is being preached less and less, sermons are becoming shorter and shorter. There is an indifference to true doctrine, a loss of authority, and a consequent declension, even in the matter of numbers. I wonder, Christian people, whether I am exaggerating when I suggest that at the present time we are really engaged in a great struggle for the very life of the Christian church, for the essence of the Christian faith? As I see the situation, it is nothing less alarming than that. We are fighting for an heritage, for the very things that were gained by that tremendous movement of four hundred years ago. That to me is the most urgent reason. We cannot afford the luxury of being merely antiquarian; we should be concerned about this because of the state of affairs in which we find ourselves.

But, somebody might say, why go back for the answer to that? Why don't you do what is being done everywhere else, and in every other realm of life? I read an article in a supposedly evangelical weekly paper not so long ago, which said, 'Why does the Church stand still?' The man went on to say something like this: 'I see in business and everywhere else that people are making experiments, they are employing the backroom boys and the experimenters, and they are trying to discover new methods, new machinery, new everything — Why doesn't the Church do this? The Church always seems to be looking back.' They regard that as something which is wrong. Now the answer to that, as I see it, can be put like this. I am not at all sure but that the greatest of all the lessons which the Protestant Reformation has to teach us is just this, that the secret of success in the realm of the church and of the things of the Spirit, is to go back. What happened in essence four hundred years ago was that these men went back to the first century, they went back to the New Testament, they went back to the Bible. Suddenly they were awakened to this message and they just went back to it. There is nothing more interesting, as one reads the stories of Luther and of Calvin, than to notice the way in which they kept on discovering that they had been rediscovering what Augustine had already discovered, and which had been forgotten. Indeed I suggest that perhaps the greatest of all the lessons of the Protestant Reformation is that the way of recovery is always to go back, back to the primitive pattern, to the origin, to the norm and the standard which are to be found alone in the New Testament. That is exactly what happened four hundred years ago. These men went back to the beginning, and they tried to establish a church conforming to the New Testament pattern. And so, let us be guided by them, as we look at them this evening and as we try to garner certain lessons from them.

What, then, happened four hundred years ago? Well, whatever your views may be, you will have to admit that it was one of the most remarkable historical phenomena that have ever taken place. It is no exaggeration to say that the Protestant Reformation changed and turned the entire course

of history, not only the history of the church but secular history too. There is no question about this, and it is granted by historians, that the Reformation laid the foundation of the whole democratic view of government. That is a fact of history. All the nations of the world at present are looking to the United States of America. How did the United States of America ever come into being? It would never have come into being were it not for the Protestant Reformation. The Puritan fathers who crossed the Atlantic in the Mayflower were men who were products of the Reformation, and it was the desire not only for religious liberty, but also for democratic liberty, that drove them to face the hazards of crossing the Atlantic at that time and to establish a new life, a new state, and a new system of government in the New World. You cannot explain the story of the United States of America except in terms of the Protestant Reformation. The Reformation gave life and blood to the whole democratic notion in the realm of politics, and the consequences, as judged from a social and from a moral standpoint, simply baffle description. This country of yours, from being a dissolute, drunken, and illiterate country, became famous throughout the world for her sober, righteous, able, intelligent people. And it was the Protestant Reformation that led to it. My difficulty on this occasion is to know what not to say. The theme as you see, is endless. But let me interject this before I proceed, for it is one of the greatest lessons which need to be learned at the present time. Everybody today is aware of the moral problem, and they are trying to deal with it along various lines: acts of Parliament, prison reform, psychiatric treatment in the prisons, and the various other expedients which are advocated. But they do not seem to be very successful, do they? Why not? For the reason that you cannot have morality without godliness. The tragedy of the last hundred years has been due to the fallacy of imagining that you could shed Christian doctrine but hold on to Christian ethics. That has been the controlling notion. But it cannot be done. There is one verse Romans 1:18, which should have put us right on this once and for ever: 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.' You notice the order — ungodliness first, unrighteousness second. If you do not have a godly people, you will never have a righteous people. You cannot have righteousness without godliness. And the Protestant Reformation is the most striking proof of this that the world has ever known. Once you have godliness, righteousness and morality follow. We are today trying to have morality, righteousness, and a good ethical conception without the godliness, and the facts are proving, before our eyes, that it simply cannot be done. So if you are a sociologist in this meeting, if you are a politician, if you are just interested in the moral problem, then I say to you, go and read the history of the Reformation. There you will see that the only way to exalt your nation, is to put godliness first, and righteousness will then follow. As I have said, the Reformation was not purely a religious movement. It was a general movement and it was witnessed, not only in Scotland, but in England, France, Holland, Switzerland, Germany, and various other countries on the Continent. It was a great movement of the Spirit of God in which your country was given her share and portion.

Well, what do we find as we look at it? I can only give you some headings. If you want the details, I commend to you very warmly and happily the book by our Chairman, which has already been mentioned to you. It gives a clear, succinct account of what actually happened, and it is a thrilling and moving story. Buy it, read it, and digest it. He gives you the general setting and shows you the peculiar features in Scotland. The one excellence, of course, which we who come from south of the border have to grant you is that your reformation was a pure reformation. In Scotland, there was no question of a king trying to get out of his matrimonial difficulties and entanglements. You were free of that. It was a pure reformation and the result was, I believe, that you had a purer

church. But, generally speaking, what happened here was the same as what happened in most other countries.

What do we see then? Well, of course the first thing that attracts our attention is the men, the men that God used. Look at them, Patrick Hamilton, George Wishart, John Knox, Andrew Melville, John Welsh, and many others. Here are men worthy of the name! Heroic, big men, men of granite! Our Chairman need not apologize for being a history worshipper, I am a hero worshipper! Think what you like of me, I like to look at and to read of a big man! In an age of pygmies such as this, it is a good thing to read about great men. We are all so much alike and of the same size, but here were giants in the land, able men, men of gigantic intellect, men on a big scale in the realm of mind and logic and reason. Then look at their zeal, look at their courage! I frankly am an admirer of a man who can make a queen tremble! These are the things that strike us at once about these men. But then I suppose that the most notable thing of all was the fact of the burning conviction that dwelt within them; this is what made them the men they were.

What were these convictions? We have already been referred to some of them; let me add some others. What did these men believe? What did they teach? What were their characteristics?

Here is the first, obviously: their belief in the authority of this Book. The pre-Reformation church was moribund and asleep under a scholastic philosophy that displayed great cleverness, with intellectual and critical acumen. But it was all in the clouds and dealt with vague generalities and concepts, while the people were kept in utter ignorance. The men who did the teaching and the lecturing argued about philosophic concepts, comparing this view with that, and indulging in refinements and minutiae. But, in contrast, the great thing that stands out about the reformers was that they were men who went back to the Bible. They said, nothing matters but this. This, they said, is the Word of God in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, this is not theory, supposition, or speculation, this is the living God speaking to men: He gave His Word to the prophets, they wrote it; He gave it to the apostles, they recorded it; and here it is for us. Here we have something which is in a category of its own, the living Word of God speaking to men about Himself, about men, about the only way they can come together and live together. They stood for the authority of the Bible, not for scholastic philosophy.

You see, my friends, the importance of looking back at the Reformation. Is not this the greatest need at the present time, to come back to this Word of God? Is this authoritative or is it not? Am I in any position to stand above this Book, and look down at it and say, That is not true, this or that must come out? Is my mind, is my twentieth-century knowledge the ultimate judge and decider as to the veracity of this teaching? It is since the time, a hundred years ago, when that notion began to creep in, that the church has been going down. But the reformers based everything upon this Book as the Word of God to man, which they were not to judge but to preach. And you and I have got to return to this. There can be no health, there can be no authority in the church, until she comes back to this basic authority. It is idle to talk about this as the Word of God in a sense which still allows you and me to decide that certain things in it are not true! The Book hangs together, the Lord Jesus Christ believed the Old Testament. After His resurrection, He took His disciples through the books of Moses and the Psalms and the prophets. He says, I am there, let me show you myself there. Read them, why have you not understood them? Why have you not believed all that the prophets have written? That was their trouble, it has always been the trouble of the church

in periods of declension, and we must come back to the Protestant reformers' position and recognize that we have no authority apart from the authority of this Word of God. In this Book they found also the mighty doctrine of the sovereignty of God, which taught them not to approach their problems in a subjective manner as you and I are prone to do. Their concern was not, how can I get a bit of help, how can I get some physical healing, how can I get guidance, how can I get happiness and peace, how can I get a friend who will help me in my loneliness? No, they saw themselves before this almighty, sovereign God and the one question was, How can a man be just with God? They bowed before Him! They were godly men; they were God-fearing men. God was at the centre of their thoughts, the controller of their activities and their lives. The sovereignty of God! They did not talk much about free will, as I read them, but they knew that God was over all, and He was to be worshipped and to be feared. And then there was the great central doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ and His perfect finished work. They did not feel sorry for Him as they looked at Him on the cross, they saw Him bearing their sins, they saw God laying on Him the iniquity of us all, they saw Him as a substitute, they saw God putting our guilt upon Him and punishing Him for our guilt. The substitutionary atonement! They preached it; it was everything to them. The finished, complete, atoning work of Christ. They gloried in it! And that in turn, of course, led to the great pivotal central doctrine of which we were reminded in the reading, justification by faith only.

Now, I may be mistaken, but as I see the contemporary situation, the greatest battle of all, perhaps, at the moment is the battle for justification by faith only. 'Works' have come back! I was reading a religious newspaper a fortnight ago which carried the words 'Saint Gilbert' as a heading to a paragraph. The writer of the paragraph was of the opinion that this man whose Christian name was Gilbert was undoubtedly a saint and we must accord him the name and the dignity of a saint. Then he went on to say this: 'Of course I know that in actual practice he called himself a rationalistic agnostic.' Though this man Gilbert called himself a rationalistic agnostic, a so-called Christian paper says that nevertheless he was a saint. And they justified their assertion on the basis of his life: he was a good man, he was a noble man, he had high and exalted ideals, he gave much of his life to the propagation of the League of Nations union, and to uplift the human race, he tried to put an end to war, he made protests against war; therefore, the argument goes, though he denied the being of God, though he did not regard the Bible as the Word of God, though he did not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, nevertheless, he was a saint. What makes a man a saint? Oh, his works, his life!

We are confronted again by a generation that no longer believes in justification by faith only. We are told that 'the greatest Christian' of this century is a man whose belief in the deity of Christ, to put it at its mildest, was very doubtful, who certainly did not believe in the atonement, whose creed seemed to be what he calls 'reverence for life'— yet we are told that he is the greatest saint and Christian of the twentieth century! Look at his life, they say, look what he has done; he gave up a great profession and he has gone out to Central Africa, look what he has suffered, look what he has given up, he might be wealthy, he might be prosperous, but he is living like Christ, he is imitating Christ, he has done what Christ has done! You see, it does not matter what you believe. According to this teaching, it is the life that makes a man a Christian. If you live a good life, if you live a life of sacrifice, if you try to uplift the race, if you try to imitate Christ, you are a Christian, though you deny the deity of Christ, though you deny His atonement, though you deny the miraculous and the supernatural, the resurrection and many other things, nevertheless you are a

great Christian and a great saint! My friends, John Knox and other men risked their lives, day after day, just to deny such teaching and to assert that a man is justified by faith alone without works, that a man is saved not by what he does but by the grace of God, that God justifies the ungodly, that God reconciles sinners unto Himself. It is all of God and none of man, and works must not be allowed to intrude themselves at any point or in any shape or form. The battle for justification by faith only is on again! And if this meeting and these celebrations do nothing else, I trust that they will lead us to a rediscovery of the absolute centrality of the doctrine of justification by faith only.

These reformers were also men who believed in possessing assurance of salvation. Now I am somewhat more controversial, am I not? Do you believe in assurance of salvation as the Protestant reformers did? I have known people who have paid great tribute to the memory of John Knox and others, who deny the possibility of assurance and regard it as almost an impertinence. I know that the Westminster Confession of Faith is careful to say that a man can be saved without assurance of salvation, that saving faith and assured faith are not the same thing, and I am happy to agree with the Westminster Confession. But let me say this: The Protestant reformers were so against the Roman Catholic Church which teaches that a man can never be certain, that they did not draw that distinction, and they would have been equally against a modern movement, which likes to claim itself as reformed, but which denies the possibility of assurance. These Protestant reformers said that a man was not truly saved unless he had assurance! Without going all the way with them, we must notice this, that whenever the church is powerful and mighty and authoritative, her preachers and ministers have always been men who speak out of the full assurance of faith, and know in whom they have believed. It was for that reason that the martyrs could smile in the face of kings and queens, and regents and local potentates, and go gladly to the stake; they knew that from the stake they would wake in heaven and in glory and see Him face to face! They rejoiced in the assurance of salvation!

Then, to make my little list complete, I must add a few more of their main convictions. They were men who believed in the universal priesthood of believers. They held to simplicity of worship. Away with idols, away with vestments, away with forms and ceremonies. A simple service! And not least important, a pure church. The three marks of the church that they taught are these: it is a place where the pure gospel is preached, where the sacraments are administered, and where discipline is exercised. A pure church! No room for all and sundry; no room for men who are doubtful, no room for men who show by their lives that they love the world and its ways and its sin. No! A pure church, because the church is the body of Christ! Those were their convictions, those were the doctrines which they held. The other thing I want to note about them is this: their power in prayer. We must not think of these reformers only in terms of doctrine, though we must start with that. This other thing was equally notable and remarkable about them, they were men of prayer. Did not Mary Queen of Scots fear the prayers of John Knox more than she feared the English soldiers? Of course she did! Why? Because he was a powerful man in prayer. Have you read about the prayer life of John Welsh, the son-in-law of John Knox? There was a man who spent nights in prayer; his wife would wake up at night and find him on his knees almost stone-cold. What was he doing? Praying for the townspeople to whom he was ministering, asking for power, asking for authority. These men, every one of them, were men of great prayerfulness; they spent hours of their lives in prayer, knowing that in and of themselves, though their doctrines were right and orthodox, they could do nothing. I like to hear that story of another of these men, Robert Bruce. We read that

when he was praying with some ministers one day, he felt they were lifeless and dull. He cried to God that the Holy Spirit might come down upon them but nothing seemed to be happening. Then as he began banging on the table they were all conscious of God coming among them and thereafter men spoke of Bruce as one who knocked down the Holy Ghost among them! Is not that the kind of man we need today? Where is the power, where is the influence, where is the authority? These reformers were only men like us but they knew these things. They were men of prayer, who lived in the presence of God and who knew they could do nothing without Him. This brings me to the last point: their preaching. We have been reminded that the reformers re-introduced preaching and that they put preaching at the centre instead of ceremonies and sacraments. Yes, but let us remember that there is preaching and preaching. Merely to speak for twenty minutes is not necessarily preaching. Though you may have taken a text and divided it up very cleverly, it is not necessarily preaching. Oh, there is preaching and preaching! What is the test of preaching? I will tell you; it is power! 'Our gospel came unto you', says the apostle to the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 1:5, 'not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance'. Who had the assurance? The preacher! He knew something was happening, he knew God was using him, he knew that he was the vehicle and channel of divine and eternal grace. 'Much assurance'! And that was the sort of preaching you had from the Protestant reformers. It was prophetic preaching, not priestly preaching. What we have today, is what I would call priestly. Very nice, very quiet, very ornate, sentences turned beautifully, prepared carefully. That is not prophetic preaching! No, what is needed is authority! Do you think that John Knox could make Mary Queen of Scots tremble with some polished little essay? These men did not write their sermons with an eye to publication in books, they were preaching to the congregation in front of them, anxious and desirous to do something, to effect something, to change people. It was authoritative. It was proclamation, it was declaration. Is it surprising that the church is as she is today; we no longer believe in preaching, do we? You used to have long sermons here in Scotland. I am told you do not like them now, and woe unto the preacher who goes on beyond twenty minutes! I was reading in the train yesterday about the first Principal of Emmanuel College in Cambridge, Chadderton, who lived towards the end of the sixteenth century. He was preaching on one occasion, and after he had preached for two hours he stopped and apologized to the people: 'Please forgive me, I have got beyond myself, I must not go on like this.' And the congregation shouted out, 'For God's sake go on!' You know I am beginning to think that I shall not have preached until something like that happens to me. Prophetic! Authoritative! Proclamation! Declaration! Their view of preaching was certainly not our modern idea of having a friendly discussion. Have you noticed how we have less and less preaching on the wireless programmes? Instead we have discussion. Let the young people say what they think, let us win them by letting them speak; and we will have a friendly chat and discussion, we will show them that after all we are nice, decent fellows, there is nothing nasty about us; and we will gain their confidence; they must not think that we are unlike them! If you are on the television you start by producing your pipe and lighting it; you show that you are like the people, one of them! Was John Knox like one of the people? Was John Knox a matey, friendly, nice chap with whom you could have a discussion? Thank God he was not! Scotland would not be what she has been for four centuries if John Knox had been that kind of man. Can you imagine John Knox having tips and training as to how he should conduct and comport himself before the television camera, so as to be nice and polite and friendly and gentlemanly? Thank God prophets are made of stronger stuff!

An Amos, a Jeremiah, a John the Baptist in the wilderness in his camel-hair shirt — a strange fellow, a lunatic, they said, but they went and listened to him because he was a curiosity, and as they listened they were convicted! Such a man was John Knox, with the fire of God in his bones and in his belly! He preached as they all preached, with fire and power, alarming sermons, convicting sermons, humbling sermons, converting sermons, and the face of Scotland was changed: the greatest epoch in your long history had begun!

There, as I see it, were the great and outstanding characteristics of these men. What was the secret of it all? It was not the men, as I have been trying to show you, great as they were. It was God! God in His sovereignty raising up His men. And God knows what He is doing. Look at the gifts He gave John Knox as a natural man; look at the mind He gave to Calvin and the training He gave him as a lawyer to prepare him for his great work; look at Martin Luther, that volcano of a man; God preparing His men in the different nations and countries. Of course, even before He produced them, He had been preparing the way for them. Let us never forget John Wyclif and John Hus; let us never forget the Waldensians and all the martyrs of these terrible Middle Ages! God was preparing the way; He sent His men at the right moment, and the mighty events followed. Shall I try to draw certain lessons for ourselves? The conclusion of all this is that righteousness, and righteousness alone, exalts a nation, and there is no righteousness without a preceding godliness. The times are cruel; the world is in a desperate plight; there is an appalling moral breakdown before our eyes. Marriage is breaking down, home life disappearing, little children not knowing home and loving parents. It is a tragedy! Can nothing be done? Is there no hope? To me the main message of the Protestant Reformation of four hundred years ago is to point us to the one and only hope. Things were bad in Scotland when God called John Knox and sent him out as a burning flame and the others with him. Our position is not hopeless, for God remains, and with God nothing shall be impossible! The conditions could not have been worse than they were immediately before the Reformation; yet in spite of that the change came. Why? Because God was there and God sent it. So the only question we need ask is the old question of Elisha face to face with his problem: 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?' And I want to ask that question this evening: Where is the God of John Knox? Our meeting will have been in vain if we do not ask that question. If we stop with John Knox it is not enough; the question is, Where is the God of John Knox, He who can give us the power, the authority, the might, the courage, and everything we need, where is He? How can we find Him? I suggest to you that the answer is to be found again in Hebrews 4:14-16. They seem to me not inappropriate as I end this evening.

How can we find this God? Here is the answer: 'Let us hold fast the confession.' It does not actually mean there, of course, the Westminster Confession, though in reality it does! Hold fast the old Scots Confession. You will never find the God of John Knox without that. 'Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession'. What is the confession? It is the confession about 'Jesus the Son of God', our great high priest; the Scots Confession, the Westminster Confession, the faith of these Fathers. We must have it because without it, who dares go into the presence of God? As it is put there in Hebrews 4:16 : 'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace.' What is the 'therefore'? The knowledge that we possess, that we have got this great high priest that has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, and that He is 'touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin'. Where is the God of Elijah? How can we

find Him? How can we receive the power that we need? We must go back to the confession, go back to the faith, go back to the Word, believe its truths, and in the light of it go with boldness, confidence, assurance, to the throne of grace; to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. We are living in an appalling time of need, sin and evil rampant; the whole world is quaking and shaking. Is the end upon us? The times are alarming ■ 'time of need'. The one thing necessary is to find this God, and there seated at His right hand, the One who has been in this world and knows all about it, has seen its shame, its sin, its vileness, its rottenness face to face; friend of publicans and sinners, a Man who knew the hatred and the animosity of the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees, the doctors of the law, and Pontius Pilate. The whole world was against Him, and yet He triumphed through it all; He is there, and He is our representative and high priest. Believe in Him, hold fast to the confession. Let us go in His name with boldness unto the throne of grace, and as certainly as we do so we shall obtain the mercy that we need for our sinfulness and unfaithfulness, and we shall be given the grace to help us in our time of need, in our day and generation. The God of John Knox is still there, and still the same, and thank God, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. Oh, that we might know the God of John Knox!

How Can We See a Return to the Bible?

[An address given at the National Bible Rally, organized by the Evangelical Alliance, at the Royal Albert Hall, 24 October, 1961.] As we are met together on this great and interesting occasion, it seems to me that there are two main things which we need to do. The first is to remember and commemorate the printing of the Authorized Version of the Bible in it 1611. The second great purpose of this gathering is to call back the people of this nation to the Bible.

I will take the second purpose first. Why should we come together in this manner and call the men and women of this country back to the consideration of this book which we call the Bible? There are many answers that can be given to that question. But what I regard as the most urgent reason of all is simply that the conditions in which we find ourselves at this very moment are, in the main, due to the departure of men and women from the Word of God. This is true, in the first place, with regard to the Christian church herself. We are here, I take it, to be honest and to search ourselves. These are no days for coming together just to enjoy ourselves. The times are evil; the times are out of joint. I trust we are all here animated with a desire to do something, and to discover what we have to do, in order to deal with the appalling conditions which prevail round and about us. I say that the condition of the church herself is due to her departure from the authority of the Bible. The Christian church in this country is in a deplorable condition. The statistics tell us that only some ten per cent of the people of this country claim to be even nominally Christian; ninety per cent of the population is entirely outside the church! It was not always thus.

What has been the cause of this; why the difference in the condition of our churches today as distinct from what they were a hundred years ago? I know there are many explanations put forward. People point to the world wars, and I do not dispute that they did contribute to it. They also point to the wireless, the television, the motorcar, and all these other agencies that are militating against the work and the appeal of the church. I am prepared to grant to such causes a certain amount of influence, but when you come to examine this question seriously and soberly, there is only one adequate answer for the fact that the masses of the people are no longer attending places of worship. It is due to the loss of the authority of the Scriptures. And to what is

that due? Without question, it was the devastating Higher Critical movement, so called, which began in Germany around the 1830s, and which subsequently came and infected this and most other countries. This meant the substitution of the mind of men and of what is called 'philosophy', for divine revelation. It was claimed that this Book must be regarded as every other book, and examined in the same way as every other book is examined. Added to this, there was the Darwinian teaching which came in 1859 and immediately became so popular. Then psychology played its part. And in these ways men began to look at this Book, not as they had hitherto looked on it throughout the centuries as the Word of the living God, but as a human word. They began to talk more and more, not about the power of the Holy Spirit in the preacher, but of his scholarship, of his knowledge of philosophy and the sciences, and of psychology. Human reason was put upon the throne, and the very pulpits of the church herself were engaged in undermining the faith of the masses of the people in this Book as the Word of God.

It is time we face these facts. We are trying to do all we can to improve the existing condition. But, if this is the major problem, is it not obvious that nothing except a rectifying of this can deal with the situation that confronts us? There is no question about the reason for what has happened. Men began to talk about 'the assured results' of scholarship and of criticism, and the masses of the people believed these 'great experts'. Tonight, of course, we know that 'the assured results' are not quite as assured, and increasingly, we find the scholars having to abandon the positions which were put with such dogmatism before the people at the end of the last century and in the first fourteen years or so of this century. Not only so, we know that liberalism, the modernism, so called, which was so popular up until 1914, has become utterly outmoded. The First World War shattered it; the confidence in man and in man's own ability ended with that war. The old liberalism which emptied our churches is as dead as the dodo and utterly discredited.

Unfortunately, that does not mean that people have returned to the Book. They seem to be prepared to do everything except come back to the Book and submit themselves to it. Some of them are cleverly trying to say that you must take the message of the Book, but not the facts. Others say that God speaks in the Book through great acts, but not in propositions and not in teaching. In other words, they still will not submit to the authority of the Book. It is they who decide what to accept and what to reject, what to believe and what not to believe, so that though the old liberalism and modernism are utterly discredited, the position in reality is no better. I am here to assert that this is one of the main causes, if not indeed the main cause, of the decline of the Christian church.

There is one other cause of present conditions which I add with regret, and that is statements made by Christian ministers from Christian pulpits, which are nothing but blank contradictions of the basic teaching of the Bible. We hear the ridicule that is poured on the doctrine of sin, the rejection of the miracles and of the precious blood of Christ, and, to cap it all, recently, a statement to the effect that we can 'expect to meet atheists in heaven'. If this is true, if we are to expect to meet atheists in heaven, if a man who does not believe in God can go to heaven, why should we ask him to believe in the Bible? Why should we have a Christian church at all? If an atheist who lives a good life is to go to heaven, there is no need for the Christian church and all the organizations, and there is absolutely no need for the Scriptures. The masses of the people are outside the Christian church because they have been given the impression that the Christian church herself no longer believes in the Book as authoritative.

I say that this is the explanation not only of the state of the church, but also of the world in general, and conditions in general in this country. Look at our industrial problems which are so acute at the moment and so dangerous. Look at our social and moral problems, to which reference has already been made. What are these due to? It seems to me that there is only one adequate answer: it is that the whole notion and concept of law and of duty, of punishment and retribution, has gone. As men have ceased to believe in the Bible, they have ceased to believe in law, in justice, and in righteousness. So the whole notion of punishment and retribution is derided and dismissed. Indeed, I am afraid we can go a step further and say that one of the major problems in this country tonight is this, that the whole idea of responsibility is disappearing rapidly. We are approaching a state in which a prisoner standing in the dock in a law court will be examined in terms of disease, or what they call 'diminished responsibility', rather than in terms of crime. The whole notion of crime is going out. A man behaves as he does, it is argued, because of the odd combination of the ductless glands in his body, or because he was not well at a particular moment. Today it is a case of diminished responsibility; there is no such thing as a crime, there is no such thing as a criminal; it is all a problem for the doctors. So with the disappearance of the law of God goes the disappearance of belief in any law, in the notions of punishment, correction, and discipline. Thus — and I could elaborate so easily — the state of the church and of the world in general is due to this one major cause: there is no authority, no ultimate sanction, to which men feel compelled to bow.

If that is so, the question that should be uppermost in our minds here tonight is how to get the people back to the Bible? How can we bring them back again to this Book? There are many suggestions put before us on this subject, and I want to look at one in particular. We have been reminded tonight, and very rightly, of the part that this Book has played in the history of the life of this country. There is no question about it; the true greatness of this country was laid down and established, whatever you may think of it politically, in the Cromwellian period and by men in the House of Commons who believed this to be the Word of the living God. You do not understand the history of this country if you do not know something about the influence of this Book.

However, I do not hesitate to say tonight that it is not the appeal to history that is needed. There are people who are so ignorant that they are not interested in the past, or in the past glory of this country. They think they have got something better. Others — and the statesmen particularly are very fond of doing this — talk about the Bible and praise it as literature. Of course, as literature, it is incomparable, but merely to tell people that this is 'great literature' is not going to make them submit to its message. Look, they say, at the influence it has had upon the great masterpieces of our literature. Perfectly true, but the average man is not interested in that sort of thing; he is out for his bingo, or whatever he may chance to call his pleasure. That is not the way to bring them back.

What else can we do? Well, there are many who are engaged in a kind of defence of the Bible. That is sometimes called apologetics. I am not here to say a word against it. Archaeology comes into that department, and we thank God for it and for Professor Wiseman as one of the distinguished people who are practising in this realm. But that is not going to be enough either. I agree with what Spurgeon said about this: 'You don't defend a lion, you just let him loose', and the same is true of the Bible. Apologetics are all right as far as they go and they can be helpful in strengthening the faith, but we are living in a period when we need something much more. Still less must we fall back upon any tendency to accommodate the teaching of the Bible to modern

learning and to modern views. Sometimes, I fear, I see a tendency to do that, even among evangelical people. Why should we be afraid of the scientist? He has no facts which interfere with this Book. We must not accommodate them; we must not try to placate people and please them. That is not the way to handle this Book. And now I must say a word — and I do so with considerable hesitation and trepidation — but it seems to me that, if we are to face the facts, this is unavoidable. I suppose that the most popular of all the proposals at the present time for bringing people back to Scripture is this: Let's have a new translation of the Bible. We have had one in this year, 1961 [The New English Bible]. The argument is that the people are not reading the Bible any longer because they do not understand its language, its archaic terms. 'What does your modern man, what does your modern Teddy boy know about justification, sanctification, and all these biblical terms?' That is the question. No, they say, it is no good; they cannot understand the Bible. And so we are told that the one thing necessary is to have a translation which Tom, Dick, and Harry will understand. I began to feel about six months ago that we had almost reached a stage at which the Authorized Version was being dismissed, to be thrown into the limbo of things forgotten, no longer of any value. Need I apologize for saying a word in favour of the Authorized Version in this gathering? Well, whatever you may think, I am going to do it, and I am going to do it without any apology. As I read the Christian periodicals earlier this year — and I am sorry to have to add, even the evangelical ones — and all the articles about this new translation, I almost began to think for a moment that the letters NEB stood for New Evangelical Bible. Everybody seemed to have succumbed to the ballyhoo, the propaganda, and the advertising. I began to wonder whether evangelical people really had lost the vital spark; but, thank God, by tonight I think I see signs of a recovery and a return to sanity.

We must examine this for a moment. Let us, first of all, be clear about the basic proposition laid down by the Protestant reformers that we must have a Bible which is, as they put it, 'understanded of the people'. That is common sense; that is obvious. We all agree too that we must never be obscurantist; we must never approach the Bible in a mere antiquarian spirit. Nobody wants to be like that, nor to defend such attitudes. But there is a very grave danger incipient in much of the argument that is being presented today for these new translations. There is a danger of our surrendering something that is vital and essential.

Look at it like this. Take the argument about the terms that the modern man does not understand, the words 'justification', 'sanctification', and so on. I want to ask a question: When did the ordinary man ever understand those terms? I am told the modern Teddy boy does not understand them. But consider the colliers to whom John Wesley and George Whitefield used to preach in the eighteenth century. Did they understand them? They had not even been to a day school, an elementary school. They could not read, they could not write. Yet these were the terms which they heard, and the Authorized Version was the version used. This is a very specious argument, but it does not hold water. The common people have never understood these terms. However, I want to add something to this. We must be very careful in using such an argument against the Authorized Version, for the reason that the very nature and character of the truth which the Bible presents to us is such that it is extremely difficult to put into words at all. We are not describing an animal or a machine; we are concerned here with something which is spiritual, something which does not belong to this world at all, and which, as the apostle Paul in writing to the Corinthians, reminds us, 'the princes of this world' do not know. Human wisdom is of no value here; it is a spiritual truth; it is

something that is altogether different. This is truth about God primarily, and because of that it is a mystery. There is a glory attached to it, there is a wonder, and something which is amazing. The apostle Paul, who probably understood it better than most, looking at its contents, stands back and says, 'Great is the mystery of godliness' (1 Timothy 3:16).

Yet we are told, It must be put in such simple terms and language that anybody taking it up and reading it is going to understand all about it. My friends, this is nothing but sheer nonsense! What we must do is to educate the masses of the people up to the Bible, not bring the Bible down to their level. One of the greatest troubles in life today is that everything is being brought down to the same level; everything is being cheapened. The common man is made the standard and the authority; he decides everything, and everything has got to be brought down to him. You are getting it on your wireless, your television, in your newspapers; everywhere standards are coming down and down. Are we to do this with the Word of God? I say, No! What has always happened in the past has been this: an ignorant, illiterate people in this country and in foreign countries, coming into salvation, have been educated up to the Book and have begun to understand it, and to glory in it, and to praise God for it. I am here to say that we need to do the same at this present time. What we need, therefore, is not to replace the Authorized Version with what, I am tempted at times to call, the ITV edition of the Bible [in 1961, ITV was the only British television channel financed by advertising] We need rather to teach and to train people up to the standard and the language and the dignity and the glory of the old Authorized Version.

I am here to suggest that we ought to protest against the dropping of great words like 'propitiation' and 'redemption' which are very essential to a true understanding of our gospel. And I protest against a translation that translates 2 Timothy 3:16 like this: 'Every inspired scripture has its use for teaching the truth.' That is an obvious statement but it is not what the apostle Paul wrote. The correct translation is 'All Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable'. Paul does not speak of 'every Scripture that is inspired' because every Scripture is inspired. The translators have perpetuated the error of the Revised Version, which even the Revised Standard Version of America has corrected and brought back to the translation of the Authorized Version. As I leave this aspect of the matter, my only remaining comment upon this new version, which is so popular, is to quote two statements, first from the Times Literary Supplement of the 24 March. This is not a Christian publication, but it is a very scholarly one, and a very learned one, and this is what a contributor says: 'What then is lost in this new translation is dimension in depth and in time, and with dimension, beauty and mystery. In short,' he goes on, 'insofar as religion is rational, social, simple, communal, historical, the new Bible may help. Insofar as religion touches and satisfies men's deepest aspirations and needs, it is almost all loss.' Such is the opinion of the Times Literary Supplement. It is not the view of some ignorant evangelical like myself, or of Mr Terence Brown [The General Secretary of the Trinitarian Bible Society] who has been so vilified. Here is a learned writer in the Times Literary Supplement. But let me also quote to you an Archbishop of the Anglican communion, the Very Rev Philip Harrington who is the Anglican Archbishop of Quebec, a learned, scholarly man and the author of two massive volumes on the early Christian church. This is how he writes: 'The intelligent reader will find much of it that is helpful and even illuminating, but he must keep his old Authorized Version by his side in order to find out what the apostles or prophets actually said, if that is what he wants to know.' I am free to confess that I came nearer to becoming an Anglican when I read that than ever in my life! But the Archbishop does not stop at

that point — there are archbishops and archbishops it seems to me! — he adds: ‘When the old and new differ in meaning, King James, at least in the Revised Version of 1881, will be correct ninety-nine times out of a hundred.’ That is the opinion of the Anglican Archbishop of Quebec, writing this year on the New English Bible.

Very well, my friends, let me say a word for the old book, the old Authorized Version. It was translated by fifty-four men, every one of them a great scholar, and published in 1611. And here is another thing to commend it to you: this Authorized Version came out at a time when the church had not yet divided. I mean by that she had not yet divided into Anglican and Nonconformist. I think there is an advantage even in that. They were all still as one, with very few exceptions, when the Authorized Version was produced.

Another important point to remember is this. The Authorized Version was produced some time after that great climactic event which we call the Protestant Reformation. There had been time by then to see some of the terrible horrors of Rome and all she stood for. The early reformers had too much on their plate, as it were; Luther may have left many gaps; but when this translation was produced, there had been time for men to be able to see Rome for what she really was. These translators were all men who were orthodox in the faith. They believed that the Bible is the infallible Word of God and they submitted to it as the final authority, as against the spurious claims of Rome, as against the appeals to the Church Fathers, and everything else. Here, I say, were fifty-four men, scholars and saintly, who were utterly submitted to the Book. You have never had that in any other version. Here and here alone you have a body of men who were absolutely committed to it, who gave themselves to it, who did not want to correct or sit in judgment upon it, whose only concern and desire was to translate it and interpret it for the masses of the people. In view of all this, my argument is that the answer does not lie in producing new translations; they are coming out almost every week, but are they truly aiding the situation? No, and for this reason: men no longer read the Bible not because they cannot understand its language, but because they do not believe in it. They do not believe in its God; they do not want it. Their problem is not that of language and of terminology; it is the state of the heart. Therefore what do we do about it? It seems to me there is only one thing to do, the thing that has always been done in the past: we must preach it and our preaching must be wholly based upon its authority.

We must not come to the Bible to find out whether it is true or not; we must come to find the meaning of the truth that is there. That has been the fatal error of this so-called Higher Criticism that has come to the Bible to find which part is true and which part is not. The moment you do that you are already wrong, irretrievably wrong! We do not come to the Bible to discover whether it is true; we come to discover its meaning and its teaching. And therefore I say the only hope is that we preach its message to the people. We must preach it to them as the Word of God. Yes, this Book is the very thing that it claims to be. Look at its original writers! Did any one of them say it was his own idea? No, they are all unanimous in saying that it was given to them. Some of them did not even want to write it. Isaiah, given his commission, says, ‘I am a man of unclean lips’; I am not fit to do this. It is not a question of a great man, a great philosopher, a great thinker, who has got to tell the people what to do. No, Isaiah is given a mission and a commission. He says, I am not fit. Jeremiah says, ‘I cannot speak: for I am a child.’ Ezekiel, when he was given his commission and message, sat stunned and amazed for seven days, and it needed the Holy Spirit to put him on his feet again. Amos said, I am a herdsman, a man tending sycamore trees. I am no

prophet, nor the son of a prophet. That is what they all say. They say it is not their message. Well, what is it? Oh, they say, it is 'the burden of the Lord', the message of the Lord; the burden of the Lord came unto me. Jeremiah did not want to speak, but he could not refrain; it was like a fire burning in his bones. God had given him a message and was sending him out with it. You and I must come back to this: 'No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost' (2 Peter 1:20-21). That is the authority. Look what our Lord says about it. He refers to the Scriptures using phrases such as 'It is written'. He believed the Old Testament; He believed it all. He says, 'the scripture cannot be broken' (John 10:35): who are we to dispute it? And the apostles — look at their attitude to Scripture; they constantly refer to it and quote it. For them it is the final argument; it settles all disputes.

We must present the Bible as the Word of God, not the words of men, but the Word of the living God: God speaking about Himself; God speaking about men; God speaking about life; God telling us what He is going to do about a fallen world. That is what we need to preach with certainty, with assurance. Let us tell the people about its marvel, that though it contains sixty-six books, written at different times and in different centuries, there is only one message in it. Let us tell them about fulfilled prophecy. Let us point out to them how things prophesied and predicted hundreds of years before the events were actually verified in the fullest and minutest detail. Let us tell them: they do not know it. It is for us to proclaim the Word of God, and especially at this critical time in our history. Let us tell people something about its message. It is the only book that explains life. It is the only book that explains the world as it is tonight. We have been told now for nearly a century that the world is advancing, that man is becoming more and more perfect, that with more and more education and scientific knowledge there will be no more war. The problem was, they said, that people did not know one another. They did not meet. If only they met they would all love one another and embrace one another; but now that we are meeting so constantly, we cannot live together for even a few seconds! You see, there is no explanation except the explanation that is given in this Book.

'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked' (Isaiah 57:21). You can be clever, you can be mighty and great and strong, you can be a great philosopher, and be very wealthy, you can own the whole world — but you will never know peace, either as an individual or among men and nations, while you are wicked. The Bible alone has the explanation. It is man's sin, man's rebellion against God.

You see, you must come back to theology; you must seek the Book and discover its message, its theology, its doctrines. If you evangelical people are against doctrine you will never get people back to the Bible. It is not enough just to read a few verses. You must dig down and get the doctrine, the doctrine of a wholly absolute God, who is the creator of the ends of the earth, and who is the judge of the whole earth. Man is not something that came out of some primeval slime, but a creature made in the image of God, given something of the stamp of the eternal Lord of creation, meant to live in communion and correspondence with his creator! But man has fallen into sin, has asserted his own will-power, has said that he is autonomous, that he can arrange his life, that he does not need God, he does not need God's direction and God's Word: that is why the world is in trouble. This is what we must tell people; we must try not just to defend the Bible but to preach its truth. Tell men that they are in their present state because the world has turned its back

upon God. That is why this twentieth century is so appalling. It is the century of all centuries that has asserted itself and its own will and, its own understanding over and against God and His truth and His eternal will. We must tell, them this, we must tell them very plainly and without any apology that the wrath of God has been revealed from heaven 'against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men' (Romans 1:18). We must tell them that the very history of this century, with its two awful wars and all its present horrors, is due to the same thing. These things are a part of the judgment of God. The apostle Paul puts it thus in Romans 1:1-32, that one way in which God punishes men is, that He abandons people to themselves. He 'gave them over to a reprobate mind' (Romans 1:28). I believe this is what is happening tonight; it is to me the only explanation of this present century. God is saying to us, Very well, you said you could live without me; you said you could make a perfect world without my laws, without my Word, without my truth — get on with it, see what you make of it! And this is what we have made of it: man a creature of lust, self-centred and selfish, fighting all others. War is inevitable while man is in that condition. The Bible alone explains this. And when you turn to the future it is exactly the same thing: there is no light for the future anywhere except in this Book. There are people who, in the name of Christianity, are still saying that if we only preach this message we can put an end to wars. Never! The Bible asserts that there shall be wars and rumours of wars right to the end. While man is evil and sinful and the creature of lust, there will be wars. Christianity has not come into the world to put an end to war; it has not come to reform the world. What has it come for? It has come to save us from the destruction that is coming to the world. This Book asserts a judgment, an end of history. God in Christ will judge the whole world in righteousness, sending those who have turned their backs upon Him, refused His offer of salvation in Christ, to everlasting perdition, and ushering the saints into the glory of 'new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness' (2 Peter 3:13).

Christian people, we must proclaim to the world that we are not afraid of the morrow. We are not afraid of what the nations may do. We know that an evil world is under condemnation, and that the only course of safety and of wisdom is to come in penitence and contrition to the Son of God, our blessed Lord and Saviour, who came out of eternity, who died for our sins, and who will come again to receive His own unto Himself. That, it seems to me, is the thing to which we are called. We must preach the Bible's message without fear or favour and with the holy boldness of the apostles of old, not merely to say it, but to have the Holy Ghost upon us as we do so. Pray for power to proclaim it so that it shall become like 'a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces' (Jeremiah 23:29). Or in the words of the apostle Paul, the message must be seen to be 'mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ' (2 Corinthians 10:4, 2 Corinthians 10:5). That is our calling.

O Word of God incarnate, O wisdom from on high, O truth unchanged, unchanging, O light of our dark sky!

O make thy Church, dear Saviour, A lamp of burnished gold, To bear before the nations Thy true light as of old.

## S. Ecclesiola in Ecclesia

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Ecclesiola in Ecclesia D.M. Lloyd-Jones The following was an address delivered at the Puritan and Westminster Conference in 1965. The theme of this particular Conference was, 'Approaches to the Reformation of the Church'. The subject allotted to me is one that comes in a logical sequence as well as in a chronological sequence to what we have already heard in this Conference. It is in a sense a kind of postscript, or critique of the approaches to reformation which we have been considering, and may, therefore, legitimately come under the general heading, although in and of itself it cannot properly be defined as 'an approach' to reformation. In other words what I am going to put before you is something which, I trust I shall be able to demonstrate, throws light upon those various points of view towards, and efforts at reformation which were carried through in the 16th century. But in addition, and this is why it is so important for us, I think I will be able to show that it has a very real relevance to the pastoral position in which most of us who are pastors here today find ourselves, having as members of churches many, unfortunately, whom we can at best only regard as nominal Christians. The subject before us will inevitably raise the question as to what our attitude should be to these people who are in the church, but concerning whom as evangelical pastors we may have serious reservations.

I

First of all let us define the term 'Ecclesiola in Ecclesia'. It is very important that we should be clear as to the precise definition, because the whole argument turns on this precision. What does it mean? It really means 'little church in the church' or 'little churches within a church'. In other words the idea of those who formed these little churches was not to form a new church. That is basic. They were not concerned at all about separation; indeed they were bitterly and violently opposed to it. They were not out to change the doctrine of the church. The early Reformers in this country, like Thomas Bilney and others, were out to do that; but the people who believed in forming 'ecclesiolae' had no such intention whatsoever.

What were they concerned about? Well, their position was that they were not so much dissatisfied with the nature as with the functioning of the church. They were not concerned about the church's doctrine, but were very concerned about its spiritual life and condition. This is quite basic to our whole outlook upon this subject. The people who believed in the idea of the 'ecclesiola' were not out to change the whole church, but to form a church within a church which would form a nucleus of true believers inside the general church. Their object in the formation of this nucleus was that it might act as a leaven and influence the life of the whole church for the better. That is the definition. It was thought of in terms of the local church and local churches. It was not a movement, but something that was to happen in individual local churches. That being our definition, we have to understand further— and this was true, I think we can say, of all the men who became interested in this and tried to put it into practice — that for these people this was only a second best. The argument seems to be that if the attempt to reform the whole church fails, well then, all you can do, and the thing that you should do, is to form this nucleus within the church which you trust will

permeate the life of the whole and eventually reform it. The subject is in some ways a little difficult to handle because it was attempted by a number of different men in different countries and in different centuries. I must not weary you with a detailed description of all these. Indeed I deliberately refrain from this because to do so might only end in confusion. I am much more concerned about the principle involved in the idea. That, it seems to me, is the important thing for us. But we must give some general indication as to how this idea was put into operation. There are certain things which were common to practically all of them. For instance, they were all animated by that same fundamental idea. They all likewise stressed the voluntary membership of these nuclei. People could either join this inner church, this little nucleus, or not; it was left entirely to their own volition. But the moment you did join you had to submit to a very strict discipline. They kept a list of members and observed their attendances very closely, and if a man or a woman failed to turn up with regularity he or she would be excluded, excommunicated. Sometimes indeed, a fine was imposed.

What did they do in these societies? Actually there was a good deal of variation about this, but the central idea in all of them was that the meetings should be an occasion for instruction which could not be given in the open preaching. Most of them held this kind of meeting of this select company, the true believers in the church, once a week. They met in a more informal manner, and there they could go over the sermons preached on the previous Sunday, and people would have opportunities for asking questions and discussion. Some gave opportunity for people to relate their experiences, others frowned upon that and did not believe in it at all. In the case of those that appeared in Germany there was a good deal of discussion of doctrine, and indeed at times of philosophy, and they almost became debating societies; whereas in others doctrinal discussions were completely banned and prohibited. So you see there was this considerable variation in the way in which meetings were conducted, but this does not affect the principle.

Another thing that is common to most of these meetings is that they gave opportunities to the laymen. This is where we touch on that question of the universal priesthood of all believers, referred to in an earlier paper. These people felt that the laymen had not been given sufficient opportunity, so in these gatherings the laymen were allowed to speak and put questions. That is an important principle for us to bear in mind. There was a good deal of difference with regard to the place of women. In most of them women were allowed. In the case of Spener, the German to whom I shall be referring, women were allowed to attend these meetings but they had to be behind a screen out of sight, and they were not allowed to speak! Others were very careful to divide even between married men and single men, and married women and single women, and particularly where the question of the giving of experiences was involved.

Another point which is of importance is that they nearly all insisted upon ministerial supervision. Some of them taught that the minister himself should always be in charge of the meetings; others took a freer view and said that the people, if they liked, could choose a pastor of their own. Luther, for instance, took that point of view. But they nearly all agreed about the need of ministerial supervision because there were some instances where people like this met together without such supervision and it ended in a good deal of trouble in the form of excesses. Nevertheless they were all interested in giving the lay people a greater part to play, a greater influence in the life of the church.

## II

Those are some of the general characteristics of these 'little churches within the church'. Let us now turn to some historical examples. In a sense it can be said that the first example in history of this kind of nucleus within the Church in general, strange though it may sound to us, is monasticism. In principle the idea behind monasticism was very much the same; it was a dissatisfaction with the general state of the church and a calling together of men who were concerned about this and anxious to do something about it. They remained within the church; they did not want to go out of it; indeed that was the last thing they thought of. They were in the church, but they were a special body within it. And, of course, as time passed you had the phenomenon of nuclei being formed inside the original nucleus as the original nucleus tended to degenerate. Another pre-Reformation illustration of this idea is found in the case of the United Brethren who certainly started in this way. I think that you can include the Waldensians also under this heading.

I do not want to stay with these because the first really big example which we have of a man seriously considering this whole matter of an 'ecclesiola in the ecclesia' is none other than Martin Luther. This is where we follow on so directly from what we have already been considering. Calvin and Zwingli never considered this idea, and as far as I can discover were really opposed to it. They certainly never tried to put it into practice. Obviously the Anabaptists also never considered it at all. The action that they had taken was the exact opposite of this, and because of the nature of that action they argued that this was unnecessary. What they had done, they said, was right; they had separated, they had gone out. The principle behind Anabaptism is therefore the very antithesis of what we are considering here. But Luther is a particularly interesting case with regard to this whole matter. I hope to emphasize and point out certain questions which arise in particular out of the fact that Luther of all people not only toyed with and played with, but advocated the formation of these 'ecclesiolae'. He began to think of this as far back as 1522 and 1523; but it was in 1526 that he published something really definite on the subject. It was in his 'Preface to the German Mass' that he put the thing quite plainly and said that something along these lines must be done.

Why did he do so? Here is the interesting thing — he did it because he was profoundly depressed by the state of the church. From 1513 onto 1520 and even 1521 he was on the crest of a wave as it were. There was great excitement and everything seemed to be going well. But then a reaction set in, the reformed impetus seemed to be pausing, nothing much seemed to be happening. A spirit of caution arose, people were hesitant, political considerations came in and Luther became profoundly depressed. But still more important, and still more serious, he was disturbed at the condition of the church to which he himself belonged, the churches which had responded to his teaching. He felt that they were lacking in true spiritual life and vigour, that they were not living the Christian life; so he began to feel the need of discipline. The Protestants had even been defeated in military battle, and baffled, and he felt that that was mainly due to their lack of discipline, that their whole life was lacking in discipline. Therefore a measure of discipline should be introduced into the church. Another thing that greatly aggravated this feeling which developed in him was the phenomenon of Anabaptists. He was upset by them, and he reacted strongly against them. He felt that the true church, which followed him, must be protected against them, and the only way to do that was to impose discipline.

Luther's relationship to the Anabaptists is a most fascinating one; it is a kind of ambivalent relationship. He reacted against them, and yet in a sense he admired them and was a little bit jealous of the wonderful discipline that they were able to exercise in their own churches. He had to admit that there was a quality of life in their churches which was absent in the churches to which he belonged. So he reacts in two ways to them; he has got to discipline his people against them, and yet he wishes to have in his church the kind of thing that was working so well in their churches. The result of all this was that he felt that the only thing to do was to form these nuclei within the churches. He seemed to be failing to reform the whole church; well then, the best he could do was this second best, which was to gather together the people who are truly Christian into a kind of inner church.

Luther went so far as to say that these are the only people who should be allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper. The others are members of the church, remember, but it is only these true Christians whom he would allow to partake of the Lord's Supper; the others are unfit to do so. So he carries this distinction in his mind to the extent that while all are in the church, the general church, the state church, the land church — call it whatever you like — the only people who are fit to come to the Communion are those who belong to this inner body. That was Luther's idea, and he proposed now that this should be put into practice. But he never did so, for two main reasons. One was that he felt that he could not discover the people who were fit to belong to the nucleus. It was as bad as that; and that is a very serious consideration. But the other was the Imperial Diet of Speier which was issued in 1526. This was a purely political action on the part of the Emperor which appeared to be giving liberty to the heads of these states, the Electors, so Luther began to think that perhaps after all he could do the big thing. Here was an opportunity which had not been present hitherto. Everything had seemed to be against him, the Electors were so slow and lethargic and fearful; but at last they seemed to be given freedom to reform by the Emperor himself, so Luther felt that he could abandon the second best and go back to the original idea of reform. The result was that, as far as action was concerned, the idea of 'ecclesiola' came to an end there and then. But more than once later on he seems to be looking back wistfully to this idea of the 'ecclesiola'. When he becomes discouraged he goes back to it in his mind; but he never really put it into operation.

Another contemporary proponent of this idea was a man of the name of Franz Lambert. He had been a Franciscan but he had been converted. While travelling, he went to Zurich and met Zwingli and was very impressed by him. Then he went on to Strassburg and met Martin Bucer (or Butzer, as he preferred to be called). While he was there, Philip of Hesse became anxious to reform the church in his area, and he was advised to consult Franz Lambert who had now developed ideas about a kind of perfect church, a church of true Christian people. So Lambert went to Philip and drew up his scheme. Philip was on the point of accepting it, but he thought that perhaps he had better consult Luther first, and he did so. Luther by this time had changed his mind, and strongly advised Philip not to do this. The result was that Lambert's ideas were never put into practice there. Lambert then took a post as lecturer in the new University of Marburg and died about 1530. The whole thing came to an end at that point. That incident provokes the following remark about Luther. It does seem to me to be increasingly clear that Luther never really thought out his doctrine of the church truly. He believed, of course, in the church, and in the true church; he was concerned to bring back the church of the New Testament, but I do suggest that he never really thought it

through. We have been reminded that Calvin did so in a way that Luther never did. Indeed I think that Luther can be quite honestly and fairly described as an opportunist.

Now in a sense that is not a criticism. We have got to remember the position in which Luther found himself. He had rediscovered the doctrine of justification by faith only and had experienced its liberating power, and what he desired was that that be made known to all people everywhere. His chief idea of the church was that it is a body that does that. But it seems to me that he never worked it out in detail and the result was that he was always improvising. He would often change his mind and his opinion according to changing circumstances. I have already shown that he did so over this one particular matter. He gets influenced by events and he goes back to an idea and rejects it again, and so on. He was a truly great man, and one cannot help but admire him even at this particular point. Yet we do know that what he said and taught tended to be not only adopted but hardened into fixed dogma which has influenced the Lutheran Church ever since. This throws light on the subsequent history of the Christian church; it emphasizes the whole danger of regarding any man as an ultimate oracle and that everything he said and did and thought is the only rule.

We come now to another man who is much more important in this connection, and that is Martin Bucer or Butzer, of Strassburg. He was a man above all others who became concerned about the great need of discipline. You will remember that he influenced John Calvin a good deal because Calvin spent a number of years in Strassburg with Bucer and found his wife there. He was certainly influenced by Bucer in his whole attitude to the need of discipline. I think it is fair to say that Bucer struggled with this problem, in a sense, more than any one of these men, and what he was concerned about above all else was that discipline in the church should be ecclesiastical and not by the civil power. That was the thing for which he fought and contended, and he had to go on doing so for a number of years.

Bucer published a book in 1546 bearing the title *The Need and Failure of the Churches and how to Improve Them*, and he approached the whole problem in a thoroughly biblical manner. He has been attacked as being a biblicist; well, that is just a compliment to him in that he was concerned to base everything upon the plain teaching of the Scriptures. He drew up a scheme in terms of this which continued for a few years in spite of great opposition, and in the end, owing to a political event, Bucer and a friend had to leave the country and they came to England. In a few years he had died and the whole thing came to nothing. Indeed his ideas were rejected and what he had inaugurated was quite deliberately undone.

Those were the chief attempts at this idea in the 16th century. As we move on to the 17th century, we come to a most important man, a most important name — Philip Jacob Spener. He has been called 'the father of Pietism', and he had a great influence on the religious life of our country through the Moravians, and ultimately the Methodists, in the 18th century. He was born a Lutheran and was a very able man. He was early influenced by the book of Arndt called *What is true Christianity?* and also, let us not forget (because there is a two-way traffic in these matters), greatly influenced by a famous book called *The Practice of Piety*, by Lewis Bayly, one time Bishop of Bangor in North Wales.

Under these influences Spener became quite a remarkable teacher and preacher. He got on to this whole idea of the 'ecclesiola' in this way. He was, as I say, a great and influential preacher,

influential in the sense that a number of young men students and others listening to him regularly were so moved by his preaching that they wanted further instruction from him, and asked if he would be good enough to meet with them. That is how the whole thing started. He began to meet with these men in his own house to start with, then in other houses, and then in public buildings and so on, the whole idea being to give further instruction to these people who were anxious to learn and to live a holy life.

Spener, again, was an orthodox Lutheran. He did not desire to change anything in the realm of doctrine; he did not want to go out of the church; he was not concerned, in a sense, about reforming the church. What he was concerned about was the life and piety of the church; and so he began to meet with these people. He formed what he called Collegia Pietatis, and to help them he published a book called Pia Desideria, which has recently been re-published and is available in this country. Translated, this title means, 'Earnest desires for a reform of the true Evangelical church', and it is a most important and valuable book. In it Spener analyzes the position and causes of the spiritual decline, and what, in his view, can be done with respect to it, and so on.

Spener was actively opposed to the idea of separation and he produced a whole series of arguments against it. These were, that the possibility of affecting the others in the church for good is forfeited, and a breach of love is committed; a wound is torn in the side of Christ's body, already sufficiently split and rent; the papists are given an opportunity for derision; it is contrary to the example of divine patience shown by the Saviour and also by the Apostles and Prophets; the separatists injure themselves; and one separation always leads to another. True Christians must therefore not think of going out and separating; what they must do is to form these 'colleges' within the churches, and then as they grow and their influence increases they will affect the whole lump.

Another, who was contemporary with Spener, though thirty years younger, was again one who has had a great deal of influence on the Christian life of this country. August Hermann Francke. You may have heard of him in connection with the work of George Muller and Muller's Orphan Homes. Francke is famous for the orphanage which he began, and George Muller is not the only one who borrowed his idea. George Whitefield did exactly the same thing in the 18th century, and Howel Harris had the idea for his community at Trevecca also from Francke.

It has been rightly said about Francke and Spener that what animated them was the desire to stress the inner spiritual life and experience as over against 'the secularization of the State church, the ecclesiasticism of orthodoxy, the purely external Christianity that had developed and the petrification of doctrine'. In the 17th century Lutheranism developed into a kind of scholasticism. The term 'petrification' is quite a fair one. Doctrine had become petrified, it was lifeless, it was useless, it was something purely intellectual. Pietism was a protest, if you like, against formalism.

These two men fought this battle thoroughly and had to suffer a lot. They were both very able theologians and commentators. It is a tragedy that we in this country are so lacking in literature on these two men and in translations of their writings. Wherever they went, and they had to move from one place to another, they started these 'colleges' or 'ecclesiolae', and they certainly had a potent influence upon the life of Germany.

One man influenced by them — and he is the next I have to mention — is none other than Count Zinzendorf who, of course, belongs mainly to the 18th century. Now here again was a man who

started as a very orthodox Lutheran and did not want to leave the Lutheran Church. He is an interesting case from the standpoint of this idea of the 'ecclesiolae' because, having started with it, he departed from it. I shall be showing in a moment how that is a tendency that is inherent and incipient, it seems to me, in the whole idea; and in the case of Zinzendorf, as you know, it did eventually lead to a separation and to the formation of the United Brethren, or Moravian Brethren, which became a sectarian body.

### III

There, we have looked very hurriedly at the history of this idea on the Continent of Europe. I could mention other countries also. This influence came into Holland as well; in fact there was an attempt at something like this in most countries especially where the works of Spener and Francke became well-known. But turning to this country, what do we find? Here is a most interesting thing. Were the Puritans believers in the 'ecclesiola in ecclesia'? There is only one answer, and that is that they were not, strange though it may sound at first. Puritanism at its outset was a movement, a spirit, an influence, but not in terms of the idea of an 'ecclesiola'. It was a school of thought, it was not even a society, or a defined group. But the material point for us is that the Puritans were not concerned to form these nuclei within the church. Many of them in practice seemed to be doing that, but I think it can be pointed out that that was not their intention nor their objective. If it did happen it was a kind of accident, because the majority in the church did not respond to what they were anxious to do for them. They never consciously went out to set up these 'little churches within the church'; indeed their primary object was to influence the whole of the Church of England, and to carry on the reform which they felt had stopped instead of going on and completing itself. So they do not come under this particular heading. Has this idea, then, no advocates in this country? It has. There is a famous example of this in the case of Dr Anthony Horneck. It is he who really first started this idea in this country; and he did so in 1678. He was a German, a very able man, and a very able preacher. He became the preacher at the Savoy Chapel about 1671, and, again, in a most interesting way he was driven, as it were, to form an 'ecclesiola' in exactly the same way as Spener. It was entirely the result of his preaching. He influenced able, thoughtful young men and they came to him with the request that he should meet with them. He began to do so, and out of that the whole idea developed, and from his example the thing spread widely. As in the previous examples they again met every week, and Horneck was very strict in his discipline. He would not allow discussion on controverted points of theology; such discussions were entirely banned. The gatherings were intended to be meetings for devotional purposes. I must go on repeating this, because the primary idea which they all certainly had in all places and at all times was devotional rather than primarily theological.

Others began to follow and to form the same kind of societies. Here I must put in a note. You may have read of 'Societies for the Reformation of Manners'. Now they are not strictly speaking 'ecclesiolae in ecclesia' at all; they had a different object and intention, they had a more purely practical purpose. But the question is, why did Horneck and others ever resort to this expedient of 'the little church within the church'? The answer again is a profound dissatisfaction with the spiritual state and condition of the Church of England. As the result of what had happened in 1662, and the influence of the Restoration period headed by King Charles II and his company, the state of the Church, spiritually speaking, had sunk to such a low level that these men felt that it was the only thing to do.

Another great name in this connection is that of Josiah Woodward who preached in Poplar. I cannot stay with him. He wrote an account of these societies, and the result of the publication of his book, which passed very quickly through several editions, was that the whole idea became extremely popular and these 'Religious Societies' as they were called (they were nothing but these 'ecclesiolae') spread all over the country. Thus when you come to the time of George Whitefield you will find that, when he began to be used of God in that phenomenal manner, he told his converts to go to these societies at Bristol, London, and in other places. He recognized their value, although by this time they had lost most of their spirituality, and it was his hope that they might help his converts and that they, in turn, might be helped by the converts.

Thus we come on to the 18th century. Another man who introduced and practised this idea in his church was William Grimshaw, of Haworth. Another was Samuel Walker, of Truro. His case is interesting and very important, especially because of his correspondence, not to say controversy, with John Wesley. Samuel Walker really formed an 'ecclesiola' in his church. Henry Venn did the same thing in Huddersfield, and Charles Simeon did it in Cambridge.

What of Methodism? Here again is a most interesting case. Methodism is, and is not, an illustration of this at one and the same time, very much in the same way as happened in the case of Zinzendorf. The Wesleys, and Whitefield for that matter, and, of course, the Countess of Huntingdon in particular, are a difficult case for this reason, that they were not content to stop at an 'ecclesiola in ecclesia', but went beyond that. They, of course, were first and foremost concerned about the care of their converts; that was their controlling idea. They could see that their converts could not fit in to the churches as they then were, and they felt that they must make some provision for them. So in that respect, even at the very beginning, there is a difference between them and the idea behind the 'ecclesiolae'. With the Methodists it was not so much a calling out of the most Christian people and forming them into a society, but the needs of the new converts of the revival, and what could be done for them. Others, of course, were allowed to join. In the case of John Wesley he would admit to his societies people who were not members of the Church of England, so there he definitely departs from this whole idea of the 'ecclesiola'. And not only that! Because of his organizing genius, it seems to me that from the very beginning there was a powerful and prominent sectarian tendency in the Methodist societies, and the moment the Conference was organized and arranged I feel he had already crossed the line. It is all very well to say Wesley died a member of the Church of England. You can recognize many things on paper, but what really matters is what you do in practice. He really was a sectarian from the time of starting of the annual Conference, although he tried to argue that it was not so. But from the beginning it was surely quite inevitable that Methodism should become a distinct and separate body. The case of Brethrenism (Plymouth) by definition does not call for consideration because it is essentially separatist.

There is our historical review except for one further case. I think that the most perfect illustration of this idea of the 'ecclesiola in ecclesia' that can be found is in the case of Norway. There was a great revival in that country in the early part of the last century, the main leader of which was a farmer of the name of Hauge. He held very strongly that his converts must not leave the moribund Lutheran church of Norway, so what he did was to organize them within the church and he called it the 'inner mission'. It is still there today. The famous Professor Hallesby belonged to this 'inner mission'. They are within the Lutheran church, but they are a distinct and separate body within it.

They have their own seminary, their own foreign mission society, their own schools and so on. That is, perhaps, the most perfect example of an 'ecclesiola in ecclesia' that has ever been known.

#### IV

What happened to these efforts, these experiments in forming little churches within the churches? The answer is that with the notable exception of Norway they all ended in failure. Luther, as we have seen, himself came to the conclusion that the idea was impracticable because he could not find the people, could not find a sufficient number of good Christian people to form such an 'ecclesia'. There were also the other factors to which I have referred. In the case of Bucer, as I have told you, it ended in ultimate failure. I know that political factors came in, and that circumstances made a very big difference particularly in his case, but the point is that it came to nothing. But I want to go further and to suggest that this whole idea is bound to come to nothing for various reasons. Here are some of them. Is it not inevitable that the larger portion of the church, which you may call if you like the nominal church, will always resent this? If you divide up your church and say, 'I am going to call out the true Christians and I am going to have special meetings for them', what effect is that going to have upon the others? It is bound to arouse resentment and opposition; and it has invariably done so. So that far from helping these other people you create within them a spirit of antagonism.

Secondly, is there not implicit in it, as I have suggested, a sectarian element in its very essence? You are causing a division.

Then another factor which has always militated against this idea is that it has always produced tension over the question of churchmanship and over the relationship of the minister to this. Imagine a minister, a non-evangelical minister, a 'dead' minister, as it were, in a church where such an 'ecclesiola' is formed and in which the people are entitled to choose their own leader. It is inevitable that tensions are bound to arise.

Another cause of trouble — and they all had this, including Spener and Francke — was in connection with excesses. Some people are always ready to go too far and to abuse the privileges. Discussion tended to become wrangling, and the relating of intimate personal experiences and feelings is always likely to lead to trouble, and so the authorities have to intervene.

Another inherent defect in this idea, and again it is practically inevitable, is spiritual pride — spiritual pride in these people whom you call out, and who are ready to be called out because they regard themselves as being better than the others. And there is nothing more dangerous to the soul than spiritual pride. A further difficulty arose in this way. This idea is all right as long as you have an evangelical minister. But what happens when he leaves and is replaced by a non-evangelical minister? This happened in the case of Samuel Walker. He opposed Wesley. He told the latter that he must not organize his societies as he was doing, that the right method, the only safe method, was a group within the church guided by the minister himself. Samuel Walker scarcely allowed anybody to speak at all, but did all the speaking himself, even in the 'ecclesiola'. He was so concerned that none of the sectarian tendency should come in. However, what actually happened was that when Samuel Walker died the members of his 'ecclesiola' left the Church, St Mary's, Truro, and the majority of them joined the two Countess of Huntingdon's churches in

Cornwall. Thus the whole experiment came to an end. Exactly the same thing happened when Henry Venn left Huddersfield and went to the little village of Yelling. The 'ecclesiola' disappeared in Huddersfield. Venn got into trouble over this because, having gone from Huddersfield to Yelling, his successor did not carry on in the same way, and the members of the 'ecclesiola' wrote to Venn for advice and instruction. He gave it to them, and thereby, of course, broke the rules. He should not have done that. A minister who interferes in his former church in that way is asking for trouble. Venn regretted afterwards that he had ever done this. The point is that for these various reasons the experiments of 'the little church within the church' failed. All this is a sheer matter of history; one of two things happened to them all. They either failed in the way I have been describing, or, secondly, they ended definitely in separation and the formation of a new church. That happened, as I have shown, in the case of Methodism in England. It happened in exactly the same way with Calvinistic Methodism in Wales, which became a separate denomination in Wales in 1811.

V That leads to the next vital question — can these 'ecclesiolae in ecclesia' be justified on any grounds? First, can they be justified on scriptural grounds? How do you justify this procedure? Many of us, I know, have been tempted to do this very thing in our churches. You have had the idea of calling together your truly Christian people to pray for revival or something like that. Well, is there any justification for this on scriptural grounds? These men were scriptural men as I have been emphasizing and they did quote the Scriptures in defence of their procedure. What were they?

These are the only Scriptures they could find to justify this procedure of the 'ecclesiola in ecclesia': 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst' (Matthew 18:20); 'And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another' (Romans 15:14); 'Speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord' (Ephesians 5:19); 'Wherefore comfort one another with these words' (1 Thessalonians 4:18); 'Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men' (1 Thessalonians 5:19); 'For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe' (Hebrews 5:13). That does indicate that there are different kinds of people in the church; does it do any more? 'Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching' (Hebrews 10:24, Hebrews 10:25). Those were the Scriptures that they produced, and the question we have to ask is whether any one of them is really applicable to this point? Does any one of them justify the formation of an 'ecclesiola in ecclesia'? The New Testament clearly recognizes that there are different kinds of people in the church. There are some who are strong, and some who are weak. There are some who are called 'ye that are spiritual', implying that there are those who are less spiritual. There are all these kinds of divisions and differences and distinctions recognized in the members of the church. We are always exhorted to bear one another's burdens, and the strong must help the weak, and so on. But surely none of these justify this kind of drawing out of some from amongst the others? Not one of these texts does so in any shape or form. I would go as far as to say that this procedure is one which is directly contrary to the New Testament teaching. If you do regard the church as a gathering of true believers, and if you insist upon the three marks of a true church, where is there even a vestige of scriptural substantiation for this kind

of practice? The New Testament is always concerned about the whole church. It does not recognize any separation and special treatment for a nucleus. Its teaching always is that the members of the church are sharing and are participating together in these things and are enjoying them together. Surely the New Testament does not cater for anything but that? The advocates of this idea did not mention, any of them, as far as I can make out, the Parable of the Tares; and rightly so of course, because that does not deal with this kind of issue at all. It is concerned about the question of judgment, but in no way does it justify the minister or anyone else, performing an act of separation and calling out certain people for special treatment and for special instruction. So it seems to me that we are left without any scriptural warrant at all for this procedure. This will, of course, finally determine our whole attitude towards the question.

There is one special question which I should like to raise before I come to a few final questions which this whole story seems to me to pose for us. Some may feel, perhaps, that this is the idea that we ought to adopt as evangelical people at this present time. If there is going to be a great world church does not this teaching and this idea indicate to us that we as evangelicals should be the nucleus, the 'ecclesiola' in the great world 'ecclesia'? Many believe that we should 'stay in' in order to infiltrate and influence in an evangelical direction — 'In it to win it', as someone has put it.

What is the answer to that? It seems to me that that can be negated quite easily in this way. As I emphasized in the definition, none of these people were concerned primarily about doctrine. There was no difficulty about that; they were all concerned about practice and about spirituality. Can anyone suggest that any of the men I have mentioned would allow or even tolerate within the church men who deny most of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith? We know perfectly well that they would not. They had separated from Rome and they denounced Rome and her teaching. Not only that, we know what they did with people whom they regarded as heretics. They expelled them, and some of them advocated that they should even be put to death. So there is no case for the argument that we can borrow from this idea of the 'ecclesiola in ecclesia' support for the idea that we can remain in the same general 'world church' with men who are not only heretics but who are notorious opponents of the truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus our Lord as we see it.

## VI

Let me therefore put to you what! regard as the urgent questions that this story of the 'ecclesiola in ecclesia' idea raises for us. Can a view of the church which leads to the necessity of forming an 'ecclesiola in ecclesia' possibly be right? The great Reformation, the great divide had just taken place, yet Luther by 1522 was already having to think of this idea. Was not there something essentially wrong with his whole idea of the church? If you have to resort to this expedient does it not ipso facto suggest that there is something incomplete in the Reformation because there is something wrong in your whole view of the church? That question arises, and it is a most important one. The second question, obviously must be: what is a Christian? Luther said that the majority of the members of the church were not fit to come to the Communion Table. Lambert definitely described them as heathen. And yet they were members of the church! He said they were heathen who needed to be evangelized. Well, we have heard of people today who say that they regard the church as 'a good place to fish in'. Is that a New Testament conception? Can people whom you regard as heathen be Christians and church members? You say, 'But how and who are we to decide, how can you define these matters?' But if you call them 'heathen' you are

defining. A man cannot be a heathen and a Christian at the same time. So if you call them heathen you are saying that they are not Christians.

Then, thirdly, what is the Christian church? We are really facing this fundamental question. This issue brings it up. It was there immediately after the Reformation; it is with us as acutely today.

Fourthly, who should be admitted to church membership?

Fifthly, are not we today still tending to do what the Reformers did in this whole matter? Are we not failing to learn the lesson of the centuries and failing to go back to the New Testament? I think we have got to face that question. We have been reminded several times already in this conference, that the Reformers did what they did at certain points because that was the position that they found and inherited. We see clearly in the case of Luther that it was accepting what he 'found' that drove him to such depression that he had even to resort to the idea of an 'ecclesiola in ecclesia'. Should he not have seen that? But above all, should not we learn the lesson that these men teach us? We can look on objectively at what they did, and what they failed to do; but are we not tending to repeat the selfsame error?

I would put as my sixth point the familiar argument which says that if you reject this idea, if instead you call for separation, you will have to do exactly the same thing again in a hundred years or so. That is an argument that is often produced in favour of the 'ecclesiola' idea. Spener used it. He said that you would find that, if you start separating, you will have to go on separating. That, of course, was the famous Roman Catholic charge against Protestantism. It is most interesting to note how many Protestants, even evangelicals, still use it against other Protestants, It is really a Roman Catholic argument, and they are the only people who are really entitled to use it. But in any case it is a foolish argument. Who ever claimed that we are in a position to legislate for the church in perpetuity? We are only responsible for the church in our own day and generation. Of course you may have to go on doing this. We pray that you do not have to; but in any case the question for us is, what are we doing, how are we facing our position, and the challenge of our present position? What our grandchildren may do is not our responsibility; but we are responsible for what is happening now.

Then I go on to the seventh question. Take the argument that Spener used, and it is still being used, that if instead of forming the 'ecclesiola' you go out, you will lose your opportunity of influencing those people and that therefore you must stay in with them in order that you may influence them and make Christians of them. There is only one thing to say about this — it seems to me to be based entirely on a lack of faith in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is true to say today that the religious bodies and denominations that are growing most rapidly in the United States of America are the ones that are most rigorous and which have the highest standard. In any case we have evidence before our very eyes that our staying amongst such people does not seem to be converting them to our view but rather to a lowering of the spiritual temperature of those who are staying amongst them and an increasing tendency to doctrinal accommodation and compromise. But in any case it seems to me to be sheer lack of faith in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are forgetting the 'doctrine of the Remnant'. We are trusting to expediency and expedients and not saying that, if we are faithful, the Holy Spirit has promised to honour us and our testimony, however small our numbers and however despised by 'the wise and prudent'. So I come to the last question which seems to me to be raised, and I think it is the most acute question of all. God forbid

that this last question should ever cause a division amongst us who are evangelical, but it does seem to me that this story of the 'ecclesiola in ecclesia' raises this great question. It was there at the beginning with Luther; it is still here. Should we start with the situation and the position as it is and try to reform it, or should we start with the New Testament and apply it? It comes to that! The Reformers began with the situation as they found it, and as we have been reminded several times in the conference, their policy was to reform it. If their premise was right I think their procedure can be justified. You must then be patient and diplomatic and so on. But the great question I am raising is this — were they right in that original question? Where do you start? Do you start with the existing situation and try by adjustment and accommodation and meetings and fellowship and readiness to give and take for the sake of the body that is already there, to get the best modifications you can? Is it that? History seems to show that, if you do start with that, you will soon be having to think of starting an 'ecclesiola in ecclesia' because of the dead wood in the church. That seems to me to be the argument of history. Do you start with that then? Or do you rather start by asking 'What is the New Testament teaching?' Let us start with that. Our one object and endeavour should be to put that into practice, cost what it may, believing that as we are trying to conform to the New Testament pattern we shall be blessed of God. It is a difficult, it is a perplexing, it is a vexing question. As I have tried to remind you, in all fairness, the Reformers were concerned to bring back the New Testament idea; but they failed. There was this kind of polarity in their thinking and they kept on swinging between two basic ideas. That is why I am raising this as the ultimate and fundamental question. This is the question that remains with us, and the ecumenical movement, it seems to me, has made it a more urgent question than it has been for several centuries. The leaders of that movement are saying, let us throw everything into the melting-pot. They are not actually doing that because they are committed to the principle of modification and accommodation. But they are saying it. Well, let us say it! Let us say that we are living in a situation where we really must and can face these things in a new and fundamental manner. Let us determine to do so in the light of the New Testament teaching and not in the light of 'the scientific man of the mid-twentieth century' or in the light of 'the results of scholarship and of latest knowledge'. It is a profound, it is a fundamental question, and I believe that every one of us will not only have to face it but also have to decide one way or the other, and that very soon. May God keep us all humble, may He give us great charity, give us great patience, but above all may He give us a single eye to His glory and to His praise.

#### Author

Born in South Wales, Dr. Lloyd-Jones trained at St. Bartholomew's Hospital and thereafter practiced as a physician and was assistant to the famous Lord Horder. After leaving medicine in 1927, he became the minister of a Welsh Presbyterian Church in Aberavon, South Wales. He was there until 1938 when he moved to London to share the ministry of Westminster Chapel in Buckingham Gate with the late Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, who retired in 1943. This ministry lasted for 30 years until Dr. Lloyd-Jones retired in August 1968. He then engaged in a wider preaching ministry and in writing until shortly before his death in 1981. This article is taken from *The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors* published by the Banner of Truth Trust, (London: 1987).

## S. Heresy

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### Heresy D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

We have seen that the devil is never quite so subtle, and never quite so successful, as when he succeeds in persuading people that he does not exist at all! That, as we have suggested, was his supreme masterpiece, and it is certainly a part of our problem at the present time. The tendency now is to say that we must not talk about 'the devil' but only about 'evil'. We must not tell people to 'renounce the works of the devil', we must tell them to 'resist evil'. In other words, the whole tendency today is to say that our fight is only against a principle of evil that is in ourselves and in others, and perhaps in the very environment into which we are born. But it is not considered to be 'consistent with modern knowledge' to believe still in a personal devil. We must not even make that principle of evil positive. What has been called 'evil', we are told, is simply the absence of good qualities rather than something positive in and of itself! But the whole emphasis of the Apostle here is on the devil as a person. A principle cannot be subtle. It is only a person who can be subtle. 'The wiles of the devil!' The Apostle's whole object is to tell us that we are not fighting merely against flesh and blood, merely against some principle, or absence of principle, which is within us as flesh and blood, as men and women. He goes out of his way to say that it is quite otherwise. In other words what he says is the exact opposite of what is being taught commonly at the present time. But somebody may ask, 'Does it matter whether you believe in a personal devil or not?' The answer is that the Apostle most certainly assures us that we are fighting personalities and 'spirits' of evil, the world 'rulers of this darkness', not the 'darkness', but 'the rulers' of the darkness. His whole object is to get us to see that we must not be deluded in this respect, but realize that there are these spiritual entities, personalities, headed up by the devil himself, who are warring a terrible, subtle, vicious warfare against God and all His people. This is not a matter of opinion, it is not just a matter of accommodating our teaching to suit the modern mind and modern knowledge and understanding; if you do not believe in the person of the devil you are rejecting not only the teaching of the Apostle Paul but you are rejecting the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself! The problem that arises here primarily is the problem of revelation. Was the Apostle Paul just a creature of his age, or was he given this revelation by the Lord Jesus Christ through the Spirit? Was our Lord Himself but a creature of His age? He obviously believed in a personal devil, and in these powers. He addressed demons as persons, saying 'Come out'. You cannot say that to a principle! You cannot dismiss the devil, as it were, in that way; you are denying at the same time the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. You are saying that you are in a superior position to Him, that your knowledge is greater, that you have greater understanding. You are involved in the whole question of revelation and of authority. This digression is important, for the business of preaching is to relate the teaching of the Scriptures to what is happening in our own day; and if this teaching in Ephesians is true there is nothing more dangerous than to substitute for a personal devil a principle of evil! The whole of our faith is ultimately involved in the matter. The trouble with the critics is that they really do not believe in the spiritual realm. Many of them are equally doubtful, as I have shown, of the Person of the Holy Spirit. He is just a principle, a power, an influence. There

is, in fact, nowadays, a fundamental lack of belief in the spiritual realm and the reality of these spiritual personalities. Never was there a time when it was more necessary that we should consider carefully what the Apostle has to teach us, and what all parts of the Bible teach us, concerning 'the wiles of the devil'.

Having looked at the wiles in general we must now become more particular in our approach. Here, again, I would sub-divide our treatment of this matter into two main sections. First, we must consider the devil's activity in general, and then his activity in detail, for it is quite clear that there are certain general activities of the devil described in the Scriptures, and which are seen very clearly in the history of the Church throughout the centuries, and in the Church today. These in turn can be sub-divided into strategy and tactics. It is the same classification as is used in military warfare.

We start with these generalities, these matters of broad strategy. There have been certain movements initiated by the devil which have affected the life of the whole Church, and which in turn have affected the lives of individual believers in the Church. We are, indeed, involved in these very things at the present time. 'To be forewarned is to be forearmed.' Let us use again the analogy of international problems. The last War came upon this country suddenly and unexpectedly because people would not face the facts, because we were nearly all believers in, and supporters of appeasement, surrendering this and that, saying that war could not happen again, and that two World Wars do not occur within a quarter of a century! This country kept on refusing to face the plain facts of the international situation. Men wanted to be happy and to enjoy themselves, and dismissed the man who kept on warning us as a 'warmonger', a 'difficult person' with whom nobody could work, an 'individualist'. Precisely the same, it seems to me, is happening in the realm of the spiritual today. People say, 'Do not be negative; let us be positive; let us just preach the simple gospel'. But the Bible is full of negatives, full of warnings, ever showing us these terrible possibilities. If you find in yourself a dislike of the warnings of the Scripture and of this negative teaching, it is obvious that you have been duped by the wiles of the devil. You have not realized the situation in which you are placed. The movements to which I am referring can be best classified and considered along the following lines. We start with Heresies within the Church, which have been caused and produced by the devil and his powers. I am not concerned to go into the detail of heresies; I am simply concerned to emphasize the fact of heresies, the fact of movements within the life of the Church that have so often led to terrible trouble and produced a state of chaos. A heresy is 'a denial of or a doubt concerning any defined, established Christian doctrine'. There is a difference between heresy and apostasy. Apostasy means 'a departure from the Christian truth'. It may be a total renunciation or denial of it, or it may be a misrepresentation of it to such an extent that it becomes a denial of the whole truth. But a heresy is more limited in its scope. To be guilty of heresy, and to be a heretic, means that in the main you hold to the doctrines of the Christian faith, but that you tend to go wrong on some particular doctrine or aspect of the faith. The New Testament itself shows us clearly that this tendency to heresy had already begun even in the days of the early Church. Have you not noticed in the New Testament Epistles the frequent references to these things? There is scarcely one of them that does not include mention of some particular heresy that was creeping in, and tending to threaten the life of some particular church. It is seen in this Epistle to the Ephesians; it is still more plain, perhaps, in the Epistle to the Colossians where heretical tendencies were entering through philosophy and other agencies. It is

found likewise in the Epistles to Timothy.

Incipient heresy can be detected from the very earliest days. There is an enemy who comes and sows tares. I am not applying that parable in detail, I am using it as an illustration to show the kind of thing we are considering. The enemy's object, of course, is to disturb the life of the Church, to shake the confidence of Christian people, to spoil God's work in Christ. The Epistles were in a sense written to counteract these evils. The threat was already there in many different forms, for before the New Testament closes, all the major heresies were beginning to show their heads in the Early Church. But from the second century of the Christian era the evil becomes still more evident and obvious. The simple fact is that for several centuries the Christian Church was literally fighting for her very life. With the conversion, and the coming in, of those who were trained in Greek philosophy and teaching, all kinds of dangers immediately arose, and the danger became so great as to threaten the whole life of the Church. People who called themselves Christians, and moved in the realm of the Church, began to propagate teachings that were denials of Christian truth. The threat became so great that the leaders of the Churches held certain great Councils in order to define the Christian faith. Their object was to pinpoint heresies, and to protect the people from believing them. Such confusion had come in that people did not know what was right and what was wrong. So the leaders met together in these great Councils, and promulgated their famous Creeds, such as The Athanasian Creed, The Nicene Creed, and The Apostles' Creed.

These Creeds were attempts on the part of the Church to define, and to lay down, what is true and what is not true. And in this way they were able to brand certain teachers as heretics, and to exclude them from the life of the Christian Church. The confusion that led to the drawing up of the Creeds was a great manifestation of the wiles of the devil. And today there are many people who recite these Creeds in their churches every Sunday, and then in conversation tell you that what you believe does not matter at all — 'believe anything you like!' But the Creeds are a permanent reminder to us of the wiles of the devil in this respect.

During the great period of the Protestant Reformation likewise the different sections of the Reformed Church drew up their Confessions of Faith, such as the Belgic Confession, the Augsburg Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and in this country the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. In the next century Protestant theologians meeting in Westminster Abbey in London in and after 1643, eventually produced 'The Westminster Confession of Faith'. What was their purpose? I ask the question because we are living in an age when many say, 'Of course, these things do not matter at all, they have no relevance to us'. I am trying to show their vast importance, their extreme relevance at this present time. Confessions were drawn up for the same reason as held good during the earlier centuries. Church leaders, led by the Holy Spirit, and enlightened by Him, saw very clearly that they must, as their first duty, lay down clearly and on paper what is true and what is not true. In part they had to define their faith over against Roman Catholicism. And not only so, but also over against certain heresies that were tending to rise even amongst themselves. So they drew up their great 'Confessions' — which in a sense are nothing but the Creeds once more — in order to give the people light and guidance and instruction with respect to what they should believe. Is there someone who feels at this point, 'Well, really, what has all this to do with me? I am an ordinary person, I am a member of the Church and life is very difficult. What has all this to say to me?' Or there may be someone who is recovering after illness and who says 'Well, I was hoping to have a word of comfort, something to strengthen me along the

way, something to make me feel a little happier; what has all this about Creeds and Confessions and the wiles of the devil to do with me?' If you feel like that, the truth is that the devil has defeated you. The Apostle Paul says, 'Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners' (1 Corinthians 15:33). He means that wrong teaching is desperately dangerous. He is there dealing with the great question of the resurrection, he is concerned with that one doctrine, and he says, 'Make no mistake about this; it is not a matter of indifference as to whether you believe in the literal physical resurrection or not. 'Ah but,' you say, 'I am a practical man of affairs, I am not interested in doctrine, I am not a theologian, I have no time for these things. All I want is something to help me to live my daily life.' But according to the Apostle you cannot divorce these things, 'Evil communications' —wrong teaching, wrong thinking, wrong belief — 'corrupt good manners'. It will affect the whole of your life.

One of the first things you are to learn in this Christian life and warfare is that, if you go wrong in your doctrine, you will go wrong in all aspects of your life. You will probably go wrong in your practice and behaviour; and you will certainly go wrong in your experience. Why is it that people are defeated by the things that happen to them? Why is it that some people are completely cast down if they are taken ill, or if someone who is dear to them is taken ill? They were wonderful Christians when all was going well; the sun was shining, the family was well, everything was perfect, and you would have thought that they were the best Christians in the country. But suddenly there is an illness and they seem to be shattered, they do not know what to do or where to turn, and they begin to doubt God. They say, 'We were living the Christian life, and we were praying to God, and our lives had been committed to God; but look at what is happening. Why should this happen to us?' They begin to doubt God and all His gracious dealings with them. Do such people need 'a bit of comfort'? Do they need the church simply as a kind of soporific or tranquillizer? Do they only need something which will make them feel a little happier, and lift the burden a little while they are in the church? Their real trouble is that they lack an understanding of the Christian faith. They have an utterly inadequate notion of what Christianity means. Their idea of Christianity was: 'Believe in Christ and you will never have another trouble or problem; God will bless you, nothing will ever go wrong with you'; whereas the Scripture itself teaches that 'through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God' (Acts 14:22), or as the Apostle expresses it elsewhere, 'In nothing be terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake' (Php 1:28-29). Our Lord says, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world' (John 16:33). There is nothing which is so wrong, and so utterly false, as to fail to see the primary importance of true doctrine. Looking back over my experience as a pastor for some thirty-four years, I can testify without the slightest hesitation that the people I have found most frequently in trouble in their spiritual experience have been those who have lacked understanding. You cannot divorce these things. You will go wrong in the realms of practical living and experience if you have not a true understanding. If you drop off into some heresy, if you go wrong at some point, if you believe, for instance — I give one example in passing — 'that healing is in the atonement', that it is never God's will that any of His children should be ill, that it is always God's will that all His children should be healthy, and that no Christian should ever die from a disease . . .; if you believe that, and then find yourself, or someone who is dear to you, dying of some incurable disease, you will be miserable and unhappy. Probably you will be told by certain people, 'There is something wrong

with your faith, you are failing somewhere, you are not really trusting as you should be', and you will be cast into the depth of despair and misery and unhappiness. You will be depressed in your spiritual life, and you will be looking here and there for comfort. Such a person's condition is due to error or heresy concerning a primary central doctrine. He or she has insinuated something into the Christian faith that does not truly belong to it.

Nothing is more urgently relevant, whether we think of ourselves in particular or the Church in general, than that we should be aware of heresy. Take the New Testament, take the history of the Christian Church, or take individual Christian experience, and you will see that true doctrine is always urgently relevant. It is of supreme importance for the whole life of the Church. The Holy Spirit is the power in the Church, and the Holy Spirit will never honour anything except His own Word. It is the Holy Spirit who has given this Word. He is its Author. It is not of men! Nor is the Bible the product of 'flesh and blood'. The Apostle Paul was not simply giving expression to contemporary teaching or his own thoughts. He says, 'I received it by revelation'. It was given to him, given to him by the Lord, the risen Lord, through the Holy Spirit. So I am arguing that the Holy Spirit will honour nothing but His own Word. Therefore if we do not believe and accept His Word, or if in any way we deviate from it, we have no right to expect the blessing of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will honour truth, and will honour nothing else. Whatever else we may do, if we do not honour this truth He will not honour us. This is surely one of the major problems in the Church at the present moment. Everyone is aware of the fact that the Church is lacking in power. The leaders are trying to seek the cause of this in order that they may discover how to remedy it; and apparently, they are all jumping to one conclusion, namely, that the cause of our lack of power is found in our divisions. So we must all come together. That is the argument. The divided Church is the cause of the trouble, and so the argument follows that if only we all come together we shall be blessed, we shall obtain the missing power, and tremendous things will happen. But how are we to come together? One believes this, another believes that. The main trouble, we are told, is that some put far too much emphasis on what one believes. Surely, they say, we ought to recognize that the one thing that matters is that there are great common enemies against us, for example, Communism, so we must all come together, all who call themselves Christian in any shape or form. We are all one; why divide about these things? We must all come and stand together as Christians, and then we shall have power.

We read about these things constantly in the newspapers. Some are rejoicing because Protestantism and Roman Catholicism are drawing nearer together. 'What does the past matter?' they say, 'Let us have the right spirit, let us come together, all of us, and not be concerned about these particularities.' I have but one comment to make about this matter, and I regret to have to make it. To me, all such talk is just a denial of the plain teaching of the New Testament, a denial of the Creeds and the Confessions and the Protestant Reformation! It is carnal thinking, in addition to being a denial of the truth. According to the teaching of the Bible, one thing only matters, and that is the truth. The Holy Spirit will honour nothing but the truth, His own truth. But that, He will honour. To me the most marvellous thing of all is that, the moment you come to such a conclusion, you realize that in a sense nothing else matters. Numbers certainly do not matter. But today the prevailing argument is the one that exalts numbers. If only we all got together and formed a mammoth World Church! Some would even extend that idea further and bring in everyone who believes anyhow in God. They talk about the 'insights' of Mohammedanism and Hinduism and

Confucianism, and dream of all who believe in God uniting against a godless, atheistic Communism. The present, they say, is no time to be dividing on these small, irrelevant differences of belief, the result of which is that we are dividing our forces and become ineffective. I can only comment: What a tragic fallacy! What a tragic failure to understand the basic elementary teaching we are given here in Ephesians about the wiles of the devil! To explain this matter further I use an analogy which seems to me to be an apposite one at the present time. I am not concerned about its political aspect; but look at the condition of the Labour Party in this country at the present time. People say, 'There is no Opposition today, there is no "Her Majesty's Opposition".' This is due, they say, to the fact that the Party's members are all divided into groups and factions. They argue with one another, and they will carry no weight until they settle their internal differences and all speak with one voice. Now, when you are talking about a political party, that is absolutely right. Political parties can do nothing unless they have a majority. Political parties function in terms of majority rule. However right what they believe may be, if they cannot command the votes they will not be able to form the Government; in fact, governmentally they will be paralysed. Obviously they must get together and try to achieve unity so that they will command votes and increase the possibility of forming a government. But this argument is not only wrong, it is dangerously wrong, if you relate it to the realm of the Christian faith. The whole Bible testifies against it. The glories of Church history protest loudly against it. The Christian position is entirely different. Here, you do not begin by counting heads, you are not concerned primarily about numbers and masses. You do not think in that way. You are in an entirely different realm. Here, the one thing you think of primarily is your relationship to God! Over against the modern faith in numbers we must say with an American of the last century, William Lloyd Garrison, 'One with God is a majority'. God has come in, the everlasting, the almighty, the eternal God! It is the power of God that matters. And the moment you realize that, the question of numbers, as regards men, is comparatively irrelevant and unimportant.

Nothing matters in the spiritual realm except truth, the truth given by the Holy Spirit, the truth that can be honoured by the Holy Spirit. Is there anything more glorious in the whole of the Old Testament than the way in which this great principle stands out? God often used individual men, or but two or three, against hordes and masses. Is there anything more exhilarating than the doctrine of the remnant? While the majority had gone wrong, the ones and the twos saw the truth. Take a man like Jeremiah. All the false prophets were against him. There is a man who had to stand alone. Poor Jeremiah — how he hated it and disliked it! He did not like being unpopular, he did not like standing on his own, and being ridiculed and laughed at, and spat upon, as it were; but he had the truth of God, and so he endured it all. He decided at times to say nothing, but the word was like fire in his bones, and he had to go on speaking it. Obloquy and abuse were heaped upon him, but it did not matter; he was God's spokesman and God's representative. Similarly Moses had to stand alone when he came down from the Mount where he had met God. To stand in isolation from one's fellows, but with God, is the great doctrine of the Old Testament in many ways. And it is emphasized in the New Testament also. Is it not amazing that people should forget the Scriptures and past history? Look at the Early Christian Church. From the standpoint of the modern argument the position was ridiculous. The Son of God goes back to heaven and leaves His cause in the hands of twelve men! Who are they? No one had ever heard of them. We are told about the authorities of Jerusalem that they noticed that they were 'ignorant and unlettered men'. Incidentally, they added that they had been 'with Jesus'. They did not see the significance of that fellowship. What they saw was ignorant and unlettered men, and only a handful of them at that! A

mere handful of men in a great pagan world with all the Jews against them, and all the authorities! Everything on earth was against them.

I do not understand that mentality in the Christian Church today which says that we must all come together and sink our differences; and that what we believe does not matter. It is a denial of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, and of the story of the twelve ignorant, untutored and unlettered men who knew whom and what they believed, and who had the power of the Spirit upon them, and who 'turned the world upside-down'. This is surely one of the central messages of the Bible. The great concern of the New Testament Epistles is not about the size of the Church, it is about the purity of the Church. The Apostles never said to the first Christians, 'You are antagonizing people by emphasizing doctrine. Say more about the love of God and less about the wrath of God. They do not even like the Cross, and they cannot abide the story of the resurrection! Drop that talk about the wrath of God and Christ's ethical teaching!' Not so do the Apostles speak!

There is an exclusiveness in the New Testament that is quite amazing. The Apostle Paul writing to the Galatians says, 'Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed' (Galatians 1:8). 'My Gospel!', says Paul writing to Timothy. He denounces other teachers. So many of these modern preachers are much nicer people than the Apostle Paul! They never say a word against anyone at all, they praise everybody, and they are praised by everybody. They are never 'negative'! They never define what they believe and what they do not believe. They are said to be 'full of love'. I am not misjudging them when I say that that is not the explanation. The explanation is that they do not 'contend for the truth', they are innocent concerning the 'wiles of the devil'. It is not for us to decide what to leave out and what to drop for the sake of unity. My business is to expound this truth, to declare it — come what may! We must not be interested primarily in numbers, we must be interested in the truth of God. Why are many today denying the glory of the Protestant Reformation? Martin Luther — one man, standing against the whole Church — would be dismissed today as 'just an individualist who never cooperates'. But he stood up and said in effect, 'I am right, you are all wrong!'

Without realizing it the moderns are dismissing Luther as a fool, and as an arrogant fool, because he stood alone. But why did he stand alone? There is only one answer. He stood alone because he had, seen the truth of God, and had known and experienced the blessed liberation it brings. He had seen the light and had also been awakened to 'the wiles of the devil'. When a man sees this truth he has no choice. He does not force himself to stand alone. He does not even want to do so; but he can do no other. As Luther said, 'Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God!' And God did help him. Of course He did! God will always honour His truth and the man who stands for it. Of course such a man will meet criticism and sarcasm and derision; much mud will be thrown upon him. But that does not matter. The man who continues to stand, and who is ready to die for the truth of God, will have 'the peace of God that passeth all understanding' in his heart and mind. He will say with the Apostle Paul, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me'. He will 'know both how to be abased, and how to abound; how to be full, and how to be empty'. He will be able to hold on his way quietly, steadily, knowing that God will vindicate His own truth sooner or later. As an individual he may be spat upon and trampled upon, or even be put to a cruel death. But God's truth 'goes marching on!' It will be vindicated, it will be honoured by the Spirit; and he knows that ultimately, beyond this temporary, passing world, he will hear the most glorious words

a man can ever hear, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant'. There is nothing beyond that — to have the Almighty God and our blessed Lord looking down upon us and in effect saying, 'While you were in the midst of all the confusion, you preached the truth; you stood for it in spite of everything — Well done!'

Heresies always result from the wiles of the devil, the efforts of the principalities and powers. Are your eyes open to it? Do you realize the relevance of all this to you as a member of the Christian Church? Are you being carried away by this loose, general, sentimental talk? God forbid that any of us should ever say that it matters not what you believe as long as you are a Christian. May God open our eyes, and having given us to see the truth, then enable us 'to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might'. 'Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.'

#### Author

Born in South Wales, Dr. Lloyd-Jones trained at St. Bartholomew's Hospital and thereafter practised as a physician and was assistant to the famous Lord Horder. After leaving medicine in 1927, he became the minister of a Welsh Presbyterian Church in Aberavon, South Wales. He was there until 1938, when he moved to London to share the ministry of Westminster Chapel in Buckingham Gate with Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, who retired in 1943. This ministry lasted for thirty years until Dr. Lloyd-Jones retired in August 1968. He then engaged in a wider preaching ministry and in writing until shortly before his death in 1981.

## S. The Everlasting Covenant

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The Everlasting Covenant by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Ephesians 1:3

Here, once more, we have one of those glorious, staggering statements which are to be found in such profusion in the writings of the Apostle Paul. Nothing, perhaps, is more characteristic of his style as a writer than the frequency with which he seems to state the whole gospel in a phrase or verse. He never tires of doing this; he says the same thing in many different ways. This surely is one of his, even his, most glorious statements.

We must approach it, therefore, carefully and prayerfully. The danger when considering such a statement is to be so charmed and enraptured by the very sound of the words, and the very arrangement of the words, that we are content with some passing general effect, and never take the trouble to analyse it and thereby to discover exactly what it says. We may be content with a purely general aesthetic effect, with the result that we shall miss the tremendous richness of its content. We must be unusually careful, therefore, to analyse it, to question it, and to discover exactly the meaning and the content of every word. And we must do this in the light of the teaching of the Scriptures as a whole. The first thing we have to do is to observe the context. First of all, in the first verse the Apostle has reminded the Ephesians of who they are, and what they are. Then in the second verse he has offered a prayer for them, and has reminded them of the things they can enjoy, and should enjoy, and should seek to enjoy —‘Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ’. Having done that he is now concerned to remind them of how it is that they have become what they are, and of how it is possible for them to enjoy these priceless blessings of grace and peace. That is the connection; and again we must emphasize the fact that this preliminary salutation is not a mere formality; it is full of the logic that always characterizes Paul the Apostle.

Having reminded them that they are ‘saints’, are ‘faithful’, and ‘in Christ’, and as the result of that should be enjoying grace and peace from the Lord Jesus Christ, he now proceeds to show how all that is possible in this third verse. There is a sense in which we can say truthfully that this third verse is the centre of the entire Epistle. The Apostle is concerned to do this above all else. He desires these Christian people to come to an understanding and realization of who they are and what they are, and of the great blessings to which they are open. In other words the theme is the plan of salvation, and the way of salvation, this tremendous process that puts us where we are, and points us to God and the things that God has prepared for us. He does this because he desires these Ephesian Christians and others to enter into their heritage, that they may enjoy the Christian life as they should, and that they may live their lives to the praise and glory of God. And, of course, the same applies to us. Whether we know it or not our main trouble as Christians today is still a lack of understanding and of knowledge. Not a lack of superficial knowledge of the Scriptures, but a lack of knowledge of the doctrines of the Scriptures. It is our fatal lack at that

point that accounts for so many failures in our Christian life. Our chief need, according to this Apostle, is that 'the eyes of our understanding' may be wide open, not simply that we may enjoy the Christian life and its experience, but in order that we may understand the privilege and possibilities of our high 'calling'. The more we understand the more we shall experience these riches. A lack of knowledge has ever been the chief trouble with God's people. That was the message of the prophet Hosea in the Old Testament. He says that God's people at that time were dying from 'a lack of knowledge' (Hosea 4:6). It was always their trouble. They would not realize who they were, and what they were, and why they were what they were. If they had but known these things they would never have wandered away from God, they would never have turned to idols, they would never have sought to be like the other nations. There was always this fatal lack of knowledge. The New Testament is full of the same teaching.

We must therefore consider this verse very carefully because here the Apostle introduces us to this knowledge, this doctrine which leads into an understanding of what we are. We can look at it in terms of the following principles, and in the order in which they are presented by the Apostle. The first proposition is that the realization of the truth concerning our redemption always leads to praise. It bursts forth at once in the word 'Blessed'. The Apostle seems to be like a man who is conducting a great choir and orchestra. This truth is what Handel seems to have understood so well; it is the characteristic of some of his greatest choruses. Think of the opening note of 'Worthy is the Lamb'. The Apostle starts off with this same tremendous burst of praise and acclamation — 'Blessed be God', 'Praised be God'. He always does so. Examine all his epistles and you will find that this is so. The first thing, always, is praise and thanksgiving, and this is so because he understood the doctrine; it was the result of his contemplation of the doctrine that he praises God.

Surely praise and thanksgiving are ever to be the great characteristics of the Christian life. Take, for instance, the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. It has been said of that Book that it is the most lyrical book in the world. In spite of all the persecution which those early Christians had to endure, and all the hardship and difficulties, they were distinguished by a spirit of praise and thanksgiving. They were people who were thrilled with a sense of peace and happiness and joy they had never known before. The same note is found, too, throughout the New Testament epistles — 'Rejoice in the Lord', 'Rejoice in the Lord always'. Even in the Book of Revelation which portrays trials and tribulations that are certain to face God's people, this note of triumph and praise is to be found running through it all. This is the ultimate peculiar characteristic of God's people, of Christians.

Praise is quite inevitable in view of what we have already seen in this Epistle. If we realize truly what 'grace' and 'peace' mean we cannot help praising. I suggest therefore, before we go any further, that there is no more true test of our Christian profession than to discover how prominent this note of praise and thanksgiving is in our life. Is it to be found welling up out of our hearts and experience as it invariably did with the Apostle Paul? Is it constantly breaking forth in us and manifest in our lives? I am not referring to the glib use of certain words. Certain Christians, when you meet them, keep on using the phrase 'Praise the Lord' in order to give the impression of being joyful Christians. But there is nothing glib about the Apostle's language. It is nothing formal or superficial; it comes out of the depth of the heart; it is heart felt.

All must surely agree that it is impossible to read through the New Testament without seeing that this is to be the supreme thing in the Christian life. It must of necessity be so, because if this

gospel is true, that God has sent His own Son into the world to do for us the things we have been considering, then you would expect Christians to be entirely different from unbelievers; you would expect them to live in a relationship to God that would be evident to all, and that should above everything else produce this quality of joy. Even the Roman Catholics, whose doctrine and teaching in general tend to depress and to oppose assurance of salvation, before they will 'canonize' anyone, lay down as an absolute essential this quality of joy and of praise. At that point they are absolutely right — praise should be the characteristic of all 'saints', of all Christians. Hence we find this constant exhortation in the New Testament to praise God and offer up thanksgiving. This is what differentiates us from the world. The world is very miserable and unhappy; it is full of cursing and complaints. But praise, thanksgiving and contentment mark out the Christian and show that he is no longer 'of the world'.

Praise distinguishes the Christian particularly in his prayer and in his worship. The Manuals on the devotional life which have been written throughout the centuries, and irrespective of particular Communion, agree that the highest point of all worship and prayer is adoration and praise and thanksgiving. Are we not all guilty at this point? Are we not aware of a serious deficiency and lack as we consider this? When we pray in private or in public what part does adoration play? Do we delight simply to be in the presence of God 'in worship, in adoration'? Do we know what it is to be moved constantly to cry out, 'Blessed be our God and Father', and to ascribe unto God all praise and blessedness and glory? This is the highest point of our growth in grace, the measure of all true Christianity. It is when you and I become 'lost in wonder, love and praise' that we really are functioning as God means us to function in Christ.

Praise is really the chief object of all public acts of worship. We all need to examine ourselves at this point. We must remember that the primary purpose of worship is to give praise and thanksgiving to God. Worship should be of the mind and of the heart. It does not merely mean repeating certain phrases mechanically; it means the heart going out in fervent praise to God. We should not come to God's house simply to seek blessings and to desire various things for ourselves, or even simply to listen to sermons; we should come to worship and adore God. 'Blessed be the God and Father' is always to be the starting point, the highest point. But let us note that the praise and the adoration and the worship are to be ascribed to the blessed Holy Trinity. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings.' The blessings come through the Holy Spirit. The praise and worship and adoration, indeed all worship, must be offered and ascribed to the Three blessed Persons. The Apostle Paul never fails to do this. He delights in mentioning the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Christian position is always and inevitably Trinitarian. Christian worship must be Trinitarian if it is true worship; there is no question, no choice about this. If we have the correct biblical view of salvation, then the Three Persons of the blessed Holy Trinity must always and invariably be present. So often people stop at one Person. Some stop at the Person of the Father; they talk about God and about worshipping God and about having forgiveness from God; and in all their talk and conversation even the Lord Jesus Christ is not mentioned. Certain others seem to stop only and entirely with the Lord Jesus Christ. They so concentrate upon Him that you hear little of the Father and little of the Holy Spirit. There are others whose entire conversation seems to be about the work of the Holy Spirit and they are interested in spiritual manifestations only. There is this constant danger of forgetting that as Christians we of necessity worship the Three Persons in the

blessed Holy Trinity. Christianity is Trinitarian in its origin and in its continuance. But not only must we be careful always that the Three Persons are in our minds and our worship, we must be equally careful about the order in which they are introduced to us in the Scriptures — the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. There is what our forefathers called a divine economy or order in the matter of our salvation among the blessed Persons themselves; and so we have always to preserve this order. We are to worship the Father through the Son, by the Holy Spirit. Many evangelical Christians in particular seem to offer all their prayers to the Son, there are others who forget the Son altogether, but the two wrongs do not make one right. So we notice here at the commencement of this Epistle that the Apostle not only praises, but praises the three blessed Persons, and ascribes unto them thanksgiving and glory in this invariable order. The second principle is that God is to be praised. My first principle was that a true realization of the nature of salvation leads to praise. Now we turn to consider why the blessed Persons of the Holy Trinity should be thus praised. There are many answers to that question, but we must concentrate on the one which the Apostle emphasizes specially in this verse. God is to be praised because He is what He is. The ultimate characteristic or attribute of God is blessedness. It is indescribable, but if there is one quality, one attribute of God that makes God God; (I speak with reverence) if there is one thing that makes God God more than anything else, it is blessedness. And God is to be praised. We are to say 'Blessed be God' because of what God is and what He does.

God is also to be praised because He has blessed us: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings.' Before we come to that, however, we note that the Apostle has gone on to something else. God is to be praised and to be blessed because of the way in which He blesses us. I have already been hinting at that in reminding you of the importance of our relationship to the Three Persons in the blessed Holy Trinity. In other words, the greatness emphasized in this verse is the planning of our salvation; and not only the planning but the way in which it has been planned, the way in which God has brought it about. Once more must we not plead guilty to a tendency to neglect and ignore this? How often have we sat down and tried to contemplate, as the result of reading the Scriptures, the planning of salvation, the way in which God worked out His plan, and how He put it into operation? Our salvation is entirely from God but because of our morbid preoccupation with ourselves and our states and moods and conditions, we tend to talk of salvation only in terms of ourselves and of what is happening to us. Of course that is of vital importance, for true Christianity is experimental. There is no such thing as a Christianity which is not experimental; but it is not only experience. Indeed it is the extent of our understanding that ultimately determines our experience. We spend so much of our time in feeling our spiritual pulses and talking about ourselves and our moods and conditions that we have but little understanding of the planning of what God has done. But the Apostle generally starts with this, as also does the Bible.

I call attention to this matter, not because I am animated by some academic or theoretical interest, but because we rob ourselves of so much of the glories and the riches of grace when we fail to take the trouble to understand these things and to face the teaching of Scripture. We tend to take a chapter at a time; we pass on; and we do not stop to analyse and to realize what it is saying to us. Some even try to excuse themselves by saying that they are not interested in theology and doctrine. Instead, they want to be 'practical' Christians and to enjoy Christianity. But how terribly wrong that is! The Scriptures give us this teaching, the Apostle Paul wrote these letters that people

like ourselves might understand these things. Some of the people to whom Paul wrote were slaves who had not had a secondary or even a primary education. We often say that we have not the time to read — shame on us Christian people! — the truth being that we have not taken the trouble to read and to understand Christian doctrine. But it is essential that we should do so if we really desire to worship God. If there is no praise in a Christian's life it is because he is ignorant of these things. If we desire to praise God, we must look at the truth, and expand our souls as we come face to face with it. If we want to say 'Blessed be God' from the heart we must know something about how He has planned this great salvation.

God's great plan is suggested in this verse. There was a great eternal council held between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The next verse tells us when it was held: 'According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.' Do we realize that our salvation was planned before the world was planned or created? It is the realization of this fact that makes a man stand on tip-toe and shout out praise to God — 'chosen before the foundation of the world'. The three blessed Persons in the eternal council were concerned about us — Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the first chapter of the Book of Genesis we read that God said, 'Let us make man in our image', but, thank God, that council not only considered the creation of man, it went on to consider also the salvation of man. The Three Persons met in conference (I speak with reverence, in terms of Scripture) and planned it. Let us get rid for ever of the idea that salvation was an afterthought in the mind of God. It was not a thought that came to God after man had fallen into sin — it was planned. 'before the foundation of the world'. The Apostle tells us that the work was divided up between the three blessed Persons, each One agreeing to engage in particular tasks. This is what led the old theologians to talk about the 'economic Trinity'. The three blessed Persons in the Trinity divided up the work — the Father planned, the Son put it into operation, and the Holy Spirit applies it. This is made clear in our chapter. In Ephesians 1:4-6 we are told of the Father's part; in Ephesians 1:7-12 we are told about the Son's part; and in Ephesians 1:12 and Ephesians 1:14 we are told about the part of the Holy Spirit; and note that in each case the description ends with the phrase, 'to the praise of the glory of his grace', or similar words. The divine council considered everything 'before the foundation of the world' and the work was divided up and planned in that manner. The Father has His purpose, the Son voluntarily says He is going to carry it out, and He came and did it, and the Holy Spirit said He was ready to apply it. But before we leave it, I must add this, that what really happened in that eternal Council was that God drew up a great covenant called the covenant of grace or the covenant of redemption. Why did He do so? Let me ask a question by way of reply. Why does the Apostle say, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'? There are those who say that the answer is that He wants us to know the kind of Father God is. I agree with that. I remember an old preacher saying once that if you told certain people that God is a Father they would be terrified and alarmed. There are some people, he said, to whom the term 'Father' means a drunkard who spends all the family's money and comes home drunk. That is their idea of a father; it is the only father they have ever known. So God in His kindness, and in order that we may know the kind of Father He is, says: I am the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Son is like the Father; but even that does not go far enough, there is much more than that here. This new description of God is one of the most important statements in the New Testament. Go back to the Old Testament and you will find God described as 'the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob'. God also speaks of Himself as 'the God of Israel', but now we have

'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'. This is in order to teach us that all the blessings that come to us come in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, and as a part of that covenant that was made between the three blessed Persons before the foundation of the world. Even the blessings that came to the Old Testament saints all came to them through the Lord Jesus Christ. Before the foundation of the world God saw what would happen to man. He saw the Fall, and man's sin which would have to be dealt with, and there the Plan was made and an agreement was made between the Father and the Son. The Father gave a people to the Son, and the Son voluntarily made Himself responsible to God for them. He contracted to do certain things for them, and God the Father on His side contracted to do other things. God the Father said He would grant forgiveness and reconciliation and restoration and new life and a new nature to all who belonged to His Son. The condition was that the Son should come into the world and take human nature and the sin of mankind upon Himself and bear its punishment, stand for them, and suffer for them and represent them. That was the covenant, that was the agreement that was made, and it was made 'before the foundation of the world'. God was able to tell Adam about that in the Garden of Eden when He told him that 'the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head'. This had been planned before creation, and God began to announce it even there.

Later certain subsidiary arrangements were made. A covenant was made with Noah, with Abraham, with Moses. These are not the original covenant, the covenant made with the Son. They were temporary, but all these subsidiary covenants point to this great covenant. The types and ceremonial offerings and sacrifices were all pointing to Christ. 'The law was our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ' and His great offering. The law given to Moses does not annul the covenant made with Abraham, but that, in turn, points back to the great covenant made with the Son Himself in eternity.

Thus we begin to see why Paul says, 'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'. God before time, and before the world, saw our predicament and entered into this agreement with His own Son. He has taken an oath, He has signed, He has pledged Himself in a covenant, He has committed Himself. Everything is in Christ. He is our Representative, He is our Mediator, He is our Guarantor — all blessing comes in and through Him. Who can realize what all this meant to the Father, what all this meant to the Son, what all this meant to the Holy Spirit? But that is the gospel and it is only as we understand something of these things that we shall begin to praise God.

Look at the matter in this way. Here are you and I, miserable worms in this world, miserable worms with our arrogance and our pride and our appalling ignorance. We deserve nothing but to be blotted off the face of the earth. But what has happened is that before the foundation of the world this blessed God, these three blessed Persons, considered us, considered our condition, considered what would happen to us, and the consequence was that these Three Persons, God, whom man hath never seen, stooped to consider us and planned a way whereby we might be forgiven and redeemed. The Son said, I will leave this glory for a while, I will dwell in the womb of a woman, I will be born as a babe, I will become a pauper, I will suffer insult in the world, I will even allow them to nail Me to a Cross and spit in My face. He volunteered to do all that for us, and at this very moment this blessed Second Person in the Trinity is seated at the right hand of God to represent you and me. He came down to earth and did all that, and rose again, and ascended to heaven; and it was all planned 'before the world' for you and for me. Do you still say that you are not interested in theology? Do you still say that you have not time to be interested in doctrine? You

will never begin to praise God or worship or adore Him until you begin to realize something of what He has done for you. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' We are in the covenant; and we shall now try to consider some of the consequences of that covenant.

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