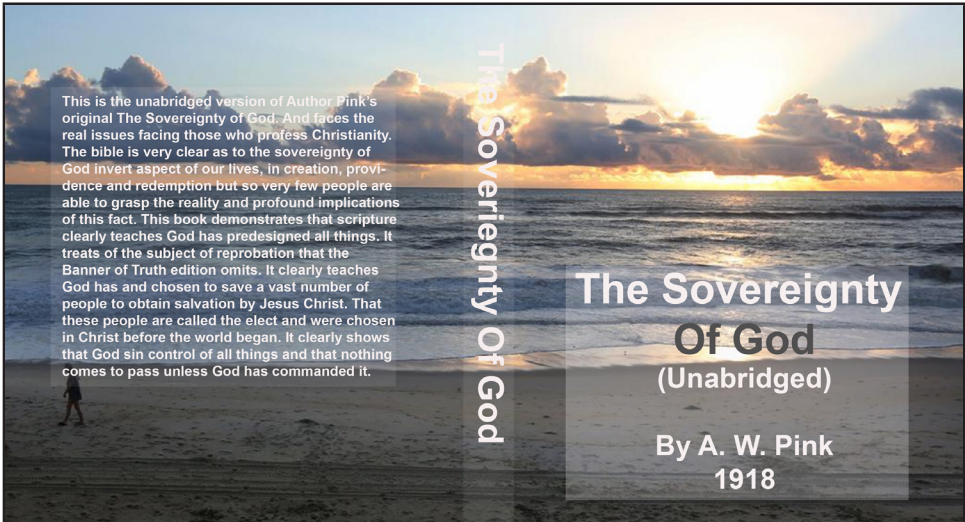


THE SOVEREIGNTY

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PDF TEXT <https://www.biertonparticularbaptists.co.uk/resources/The%20Sovereignty%20of%20God%20AW%20Pink%20Unabridged%20pls.pdf>

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Introduction

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

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

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

Who is regulating affairs on this earth today-God, or the Devil? What impression is made upon the minds of those men of the world who, occasionally, attend a Gospel service? What are the conceptions formed by those who hear even those preachers who are counted as “orthodox?” Is it not that a disappointed God is the One whom Christians believe in? From what is heard from the average evangelist today, is not any serious hearer obliged to conclude that he professes to represent a God who is filled with benevolent intentions, yet unable to carry them out; that He is earnestly

desirous of blessing men, but that they will not let Him? Then, must not the average hearer draw the inference that the Devil has gained the upper hand, and that God is to be pitied rather than blamed?

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

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

Who is regulating affairs on this earth today-God, or the Devil? What saith the Scriptures? If we believe their plain and positive declarations, no room is left for uncertainty. They affirm, again and again, that God is on the throne of the universe; that the sceptre is in His hands; that He is directing all things “after the counsel of His own will.” They affirm, not only that God created all things, but also that God is ruling and reigning over all the works of His hands. They affirm that God is the “Almighty,” that His will is irreversible, that He is absolute Sovereign in every realm of all His vast dominions. And surely it must be so. Only two alternatives are possible: God must either rule, or be ruled; sway, or be swayed; accomplish His own will, or be thwarted by His creatures. Accepting the fact that He is the “Most High,” the only Potentate and King of kings, vested with perfect wisdom and illimitable power, and the conclusion is irresistible that He must be God in fact as well as in name.

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

Without a doubt a world-crisis is at hand, and everywhere men are alarmed. But God is not! He is never taken by surprise. It is no unexpected emergency which now confronts Him, for He is the One who “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph. 1:11). Hence, though the world is panic-stricken, the word to the believer is, “Fear not!” “All things” are subject to His immediate control: “all things” are moving in accord with His eternal purpose, and therefore “all things” are “working together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” It must be so, for “of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things” (Rom. 11:36). Yet how little is this realized today even by the people of God! Many suppose that He is little more than a far-distant Spectator, taking

no immediate hand in the affairs of earth. It is true that man is endowed with power, but God is all-powerful. It is true that, speaking generally, the material world is regulated by law, but behind that law is the law-Giver and law-Administrator. Man is but the creature. God is the Creator, and endless ages before man first saw the light "the mighty God" (Isa. 9:6) existed, and ere the world was founded, made His plans; and being infinite in power and man only finite, His purpose and plan cannot be withstood or thwarted by the creatures of His own hands.

We readily acknowledge that life is a profound problem, and that we are surrounded by mystery on every side; but we are not like the beasts of the field-ignorant of their origin, and unconscious of what is before them. No: "We have also a more sure Word of Prophecy," of which it is said ye do well that ye "take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19). And it is to this Word of Prophecy we indeed do well to "take heed," to that Word which had not its origin in the mind of man but in the Mind of God, for, "the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake moved by the Holy Spirit." We say again, it is to this "Word" we do well to take heed. As we turn to this Word and are instructed thereout, we discover a fundamental principle which must be applied to every problem: Instead of beginning with man and his world and working back to God, we must begin with God and work down to man-"In the beginning God!" Apply this principle to the present situation. Begin with the world as it is today and try and work back to God, and everything will seem to show that God has no connection with the world at all. But begin with God and work down to the world, and light, much light, is cast on the problem. Because God is holy His anger burns against sin; because God is righteous His judgments fall upon those who rebel against Him; because God is faithful the solemn threatenings of His Word are fulfilled; because God is omnipotent none can successfully resist Him, still less overthrow His counsel; and because God is omniscient no problem can master Him and no difficulty baffle His wisdom. It is just because God is who He is and what He is that we are now beholding on earth what we do-the beginning of His outpoured judgments: in view of His inflexible justice and immaculate holiness we could not expect anything other than what is now spread before our eyes.

But let it be said very emphatically that the heart can only rest upon and enjoy the blessed truth of the absolute Sovereignty of God as faith is in exercise. Faith is ever occupied with God. That is the character of it; that is what differentiates it from intellectual theology. Faith endures "as seeing Him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27): endures the disappointments, the hardships,

and the heartaches of life by recognizing that all comes from the hand of Him who is too wise to err and too loving to be unkind. But so long as we are occupied with any other object than God Himself there will be neither rest for the heart nor peace for the mind. But when we receive all that enters our lives as from His hand, then, no matter what may be our circumstances or surroundings-whether in a hovel, a prison-dungeon, or a martyr's stake-we shall be enabled to say, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places" (Psa. 16:6). But that is the language of faith, not of sight or of sense.

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

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

In these opening paragraphs we have indicated the lines of thought followed out in this book. Our first postulate is, that because God is God He does as He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases; that His great concern is the accomplishment of His own pleasure and the promotion of His own glory; that He is the Supreme Being, and therefore Sovereign of the universe. Starting with this postulate we have contemplated the exercise of God's Sovereignty, first in Creation, second in Governmental Administration over the works of His hands, third in the Salvation of His own elect, fourth in the Reprobation of the wicked, and fifth in Operation upon and within

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

We are well aware that what we have written is in open opposition to much of the teaching that is current both in religious literature and in the representative pulpits of the land. We freely grant that the postulate of God's Sovereignty with all its corollaries is at direct variance with the opinions and thoughts of the natural man, but the truth is, we are quite unable to think upon these matters: we are incompetent for forming a proper estimate of God's character and ways, and it is because of this that God has given us a revelation of His mind, and in that revelation He plainly declares, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8, 9). In view of this Scripture, it is only to be expected that much of the contents of the Bible conflicts with the sentiments of the carnal mind, which is enmity against God. Our appeal then is not to the popular beliefs of the day, nor to the creeds of the churches, but to the Law and Testimony of Jehovah. All that we ask for is an impartial and attentive examination of what we have written, and that made prayerfully in the light of the Lamp of Truth. May the reader heed the Divine admonition to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21).¹⁸