

Radical Calvinism!

Note to the Reader:

The following article appeared in *The Biblical Evangelist* (a tabloid periodical published bi-monthly by Biblical Evangelism, the ministry of Evangelist Robert L. Sumner), Volume 31, Number 6 (November-December, 2000) p. 1. It is a "review" of my book. We have quoted it here in full in order to give the reader a fair assessment of our response to it. Since Sumner was unwilling to print my rebuttal to his "review," we have posted it on our web site, although we are confident that the majority who read the review in his periodical will not find our response to it.

I would like to note a couple of things that I did not address in the response. First, Dr. Sumner is correct in observing (toward the end of the review) that I was not careful in some broad statements that appear to include him and others. For example, I wrote, "Free-willers teach that salvation depends upon one's holding out to the end." Sumner objects: "He acknowledges that he wrote the book primarily as an answer to [Dr. John R.] Rice'[s] (sic) *Predestined for Hell? NO!* and many of his major arguments are against him, along with Samuel Fisk, Robert L. Sumner, Henry C. Theissen, and Dwight L. Moody — **not a one of whom believed any such thing!**" He is correct, although I did not write the book primarily as an answer to Rice. But I still maintain that eternal security is a Calvinistic doctrine which is clearly out of sync with the "free-will" position.

I also needed to be more specific in some statements, such as "Sumner's hatred for election is obvious . . ." after which I quoted his derogatory reference to the doctrine of *unconditional* election. He accused me, and rightly so, of falsely charging him. He *loves* the "biblical doctrine of election," as he understands the Bible teaches it—*conditional* election. On the other hand, he certainly hates the "biblical doctrine of election" as I understand the Bible teaches it—*unconditional* election.

Third, Sumner accused me of misrepresenting Dr. John Rice concerning his editing of Spurgeon's sermons, a practice which Sumner went on to verify (thank you!). Whether Rice's remark to my unnamed source was serious or in jest is irrelevant, Rice misrepresented Spurgeon. I took Rice's periodical, *The Sword of the Lord*, for years and cannot remember one statement that any of the sermons I read had been edited for publication. And Sumner accused me of selectively quoting Spurgeon? My theology is very much in agreement with Spurgeon's. Sumner apparently does not understand how much of a Calvinist Spurgeon was.

Let us save other matters for our response. The following is **Dr. Sumner's review of my book:**

A Review of a Bad Book That Carries Calvinism to Its "Hyper" Extreme

PREDESTINED FOR HEAVEN? YES! by Jeffrey W. Alexander; Cause, of God & Truth Publications, Lamar, CO; 13, Chapters, 232 Pages; \$15, Paper

This book has a strange title and we don't know anyone who would disagree with it, from Hyper-Calvinist to Rabid Arminian. *Of course the saved are predestined for Heaven!* We told the author prior to receiving a copy, when he asked us if we would be willing to review it, "I hope you included me as one who has been '*Predestined for Heaven*, because that is my position."

Alas, he viciously attacks me by name, along with a number of my friends, and denigrates our position from cover to cover — which is his right of course, just as it is our right to refute his foolishness. His subtitle is more indicative of how he sees its contents *Examining, Wrong Views of the Doctrines of Grace*, by which Alexander means any other position than his own. (Both Arminians and those who call ourselves Biblicists believe in "the doctrines of grace" of course but not Alexander's understanding of the term.

Actually, the author, who told me he was trained in my position and then saw the light — which is the exact opposite of my experience, since I was trained in a 4-point position and, after carefully studying the Scriptures, repudiated irresistible grace and unconditional election in salvation (but *not* in service, where it does not show respect of persons, something God *cannot* do) — penned a book that started as an *attack upon* and a *repudiation* of the work by my dear friend and long-time associate now in Heaven, Dr. John R. Rice, *Predestined for Hell? NO!* whom he calls "woefully biased in his opinion." (Alexander is *not* woefully biased in his opinion, of course!?) We, incidentally, endorse the Rice work whole heartedly and urge you to obtain a copy, if you do not already have it. As far as we know, it is still available through the Sword of the Lord Publishers.

While Alexander says his brand of Calvinism dates back to the New Testament, we are unable to trace it back beyond the imaginations of its inventor, Augustine, who also, gave us such theological blunders as amillennialism, infant baptism, covenant theology, and a host of other doctrinal aberrations — including accepting the Apocrypha as equally inspired with the Word of God. In fact, he was a Roman Catholic throughout his life (after conversion) and frankly stated of that cult, "Outside this body the Holy Spirit gives life to no one" (which means that, according to his own acclaimed hero, Alexander is not even a Christian), Prior to Augustine, not one single church father — or anyone else, for that matter — interpreted any Bible statement to teach that God *unconditionally* selected (then drew by *irresistible* grace) certain people to be saved. (In

fairness, we should say that Alexander himself repudiates both "pedobaptism and amillennialism," thereby taking issue with most of those who believe in "the doctrines of grace" as he sees them.)

However, the author has bought "the whole ball of wax" on rigid, narrow Calvinism: *i.e.*, the fact that one must be born again, regenerated, Spirit-indwelt and Heaven-bound before he or she can put faith and trust in Christ for salvation. The whole idea is so inane, I have no idea where it originated. Honest Calvinists like Charles Haddon Spurgeon taught no such nonsense, I can assure you. Nor can Alexander tell sinners that God loves them, again taking issue with "the great Charlie," although he quotes him repeatedly throughout his book — when what Spurgeon said supports his argument — as though Spurgeon held his position.

Regeneration Before Conversion?

Let me intersperse here a word about what Spurgeon believed regarding "regeneration before conversion," which Alexander holds. Read his sermon on the "Warrant of Faith" (#531 in the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Volume 9, 1863; also available in pamphlet form from Pilgrim Publications, as is the sermon set) in which he refuted the Hyper-Calvinism of the "Strict Baptists" led by James Wells. Here is an excerpt: "*In our own day certain preachers assure us that a man must be regenerated before we may bid him believe in Jesus Christ; some degree of a work of grace in the heart being in their judgment the only warrant to believe. **This also is false. It takes away a gospel for sinners and offers us a gospel for saints. It is anything but a ministry of free grace***" (boldface added for emphasis).

Here is another quote from the same sermon: "If I am to preach faith in Christ to a man who is regenerated, then the man, being regenerated, is saved already, and it is an unnecessary and ridiculous thing for me to preach Christ to him, and bid him to believe in order to be saved when he is saved already being regenerate. But you will tell me that I ought to preach it only to those who repent of their sins. Very well; but since true repentance of sin is the work of the Spirit, any man who has repentance is most certainly saved, because evangelical repentance never can exist in an unrenewed soul. **Where there is repentance there is faith already, for, they never can be separated.** So, then; I am only to preach faith to those who have it. **Absurd, indeed!** Is not this waiting till the man is cured and then bringing him the medicine? This is preaching Christ to the righteous and not to sinners" (emphasis added).

Remember those quotes well, because we will refer to them again, before we finish.

Does God Love Sinners?

Does God love the world as John 3:16 says? Not according to Alexander, who cannot tell a sinner God loves him because he can't be sure that the person is one of the chosen favored! You see, Alexander has discovered "hidden meaning" in John 3:16 that proves God the Father only loves the elect. In fact, he has a dozen pages in just one section alone in which he sets out to prove that "God so loved the world" doesn't mean "God so loved the world." He certainly is a "sorry Calvinist," isn't he? Here is what Calvin taught when referencing "God so loved the world." You will find it in *Calvin's Commentaries, John's Gospel*, Volume I, beginning on page 122 (quoted in *Baptist Bible Tribune*, December 15, 1999):

"'For God so loved the world.' Christ opens up the first cause, and, as it were, the source of our salvation, and he does so; that no doubt may remain; for our minds cannot find calm repose, until we arrive at the unmerited love of God. As the whole matter of our salvation must not be sought anywhere else than in Christ, so we must see whence Christ came to us, and why he was offered to be our Savior. Both points are distinctly stated to us: namely, that faith in Christ brings life to all, and that Christ brought life, **because the Heavenly Father loves the human race, and wishes that they should not perish**" (emphasis added). Calvin taught that God not only loves the elect, but the entire "human race," Alexander also disagrees with Calvin about the extent of the atonement (Calvin says the provision was for all, not just the elect), but that is another point we'll not go into now, making a long review even longer.

Can One Be a Biblicist?

Alexander pokes fun at those who say, as does this reviewer, they are neither Arminian nor Calvinist, but Biblicists. He has a section in which he sums up what the first two say on a number of issues, then says, after each point: "**Biblicism says, '??'**" If he doesn't know what we believe, why is he talking about it? (Incidentally, I could answer every one of his question marks in a scriptural manner, but he doesn't, appear to be looking for answers — he seems to want only to ridicule.) It is amazing to me that he could have read all the books written by Biblicists that he lists in his Bibliography and still not know what we believe. What kind of scholarship is that? Or did he just want to mock? He was especially dishonest in saying "??" as to what Biblicists believe about the security of the saints. Perhaps he didn't want to put in print what we really do believe.

The author makes some claims with which we have no argument. For example, that God is sovereign. *Of course He is!* Even the wildest and most radical Arminian believes that. God is in control? *Of course He is!* The same is true for the idea that God, in every age, calls out a people for His Name. Those are not the issues; *how* He does it is the question. If you accept what Alexander promotes, He does it in eternity past without any consideration of His foreknowledge and "if you is, you is; and if you ain't, you ain't" We came to the conclusion Alexander thinks (he says he doesn't but his book doesn't come off that way) he has all the answers on the subject since he ridicules Douglas R. McLachlan for saying "anyone who thinks he has all the answers on this matter simply has not yet heard all the questions."

Alexander says God saves "a great host of sinners elected by Him according to His own purpose and grace" — to which we concur happily — but then he adds "wholly apart from anything which He foresees in them." for which he doesn't have a scintilla of biblical proof (Peter puts it, in I Peter 1:2, "Elect **according to the foreknowledge of God** the Father," emphasis added). Alexander's answer to Peter is: "Scripture shows that God not only saw that they would believe; He ordained that they would believe (Romans 8:29)." Alas for him, those who take the trouble to look up the verse in Romans he references will find that the "seeing" preceded the "ordaining" not vice versa. He then seeks to make "determinate counsel" and "foreknowledge" in Acts 2:23 mean the same thing, in contradiction of such scholarship as Dean Alford, F. Godet, C. Wordsworth, G. Campbell Morgan, and others.

A New "Vocabulary"

Alexander prefers "particular redemption" to the harsh and ugly thought of "limited atonement," but a rose by any other name is still a rose (in this case, a "weed" is still a "weed"). And he prefers "effectual inward calling" to "irresistible grace" for the same reason. Some how he imagines that the change in terminology will eliminate the fact that his form of Calvinism blames God for the sinner's damnation. Yet, when all is said and done, he is left with the "irresistible" conclusion that the bottom line of his doctrine teaches that God **refuses** to give the non-elect sinner an opportunity to be saved. Too, he changes the "perseverance of the saints" from the thought of eternal security to "responsibility of the believer to live a holy and godly life by the grace and power of God."

In fact, when he gets through changing definitions to fit his theology you may not recognize what he is saying, In this area, Alexander reminded me of cultist Herbert W. Armstrong, who proved his points by inserting brackets with his comments into the Scriptures he referenced. Here is Alexander's version of the "golden chain" of Romans 8:30: "*Moreover whom he did predestinate [to be chosen in Christ by His elective love to be like Christ], them he also called [by His effectual inward call through the gospel]: and whom he called, them he also justified [declared righteous by the substitutionary redemptive work of Christ], and whom he justified, them he also glorified [securing their everlasting acceptance in holiness, and, righteousness by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and the priestly work of Christ's intercession before the Father's throne].*"

Do you get the drift of what 'I am saying?

Fairness and Kindness

Alexander says he has tried to treat the opposition fairly and kindly, but, if so, I'm grateful that he wasn't unfair or unkind. By way of example, he consistently describes those who do not believe as he does as "free-will gospel advocates," putting "free-will" in quotes. This suits the put down intended by the term, but, as we noted to him in private correspondence, "You say you don't use the term 'free will' in quotes as a term of 'slander' and contempt, . . . but if you don't want to offend, why not use the expression we accent namely, '*whosoever* will'? We wouldn't even mind if you used quotes around it. I guess a biblical term like that would ruin all your arguments though, wouldn't it.

We thought at the time it was a good point; we still think so, especially since so many ridicule the Biblicist position with the expression "free will." Why don't — make that why *won't* — Calvinists refer to it as "whosoever willers" instead of "free willers"? Is it because all their arguments would go down the drain if they were forced to use Bible terminology? Perhaps so. It is certainly a possibility to consider.

How honest and fair is this: "Free-willers teach that salvation depends upon one's holding out to the end"? He acknowledges that he wrote the book primarily as an answer to Rice' *Predestined for Hell? NO!* and many of his major arguments are against him, along with Samuel Fisk, Robert L. Sumner, Henry C. Theissen and Dwight L. Moody — **not a one of whom believed any such thing!**

How honest and fair is this: Arguing a false thesis that "conditional salvation" would be more in harmony with the position of Rice, Sumner, Fisk, *et al*, he says, "but eternal security is a more desirable benefit to believers." I strongly resent his dishonest accusation that we determine our theology by what we find "desirable," rather than by the "thus saith the Lord." Mr. Alexander owes us all an apology! (And doesn't he know that judging our motives is wicked sin, condemned by Christ?).

How honest (well skip "fair" on this one) is this: In a footnote he says, "In the interest of consistency, I have developed an acrostic for our free-will (Arminian) brethren, although I am not certain that they will be pleased with the 'flower' of my labors," then he gives a version of the old "Pansy" acrostic that has been bandied about for decades. If he "developed" it and it is the "'flower' of his labors," he is much, much older than I think he is.

How honest and fair is this: "Sumner's hatred for election is obvious [then he quotes me]: 'If you will forgive us for saying so', *unconditional election*, is the kind they have in Communist Russia, Red China, and Fascist Spain — *it is a stuffed ballot box!*" Note how he accused me of **hatred** for *election*; which is untrue (I *love* the *biblical* doctrine of election), and then quoted my speaking of "*unconditional* election," to prove his false charge. Talk about taking things out of their context to, unfairly establish an argument!

Again, *how honest and fair is this*: "Sumner seems to think that the sinner is 'able to hear; see, move, act and be cognizant of things.' He doesn't sound as if he is dead: he doesn't sound as if he is even sick!" His sarcasm, aside, he jolly well knew, since my book had to be open before him to quote it, that I was talking of spiritual death (which is what the sinner has), not physical death. As for spiritual death, the spiritually dead rich man in Hell was able to hear, see, and move, act, and be cognizant of things" In this, Alexander is trying to compare oranges with apples to make his opponent look bad. It won't work with honest, discerning and knowledgeable people! If he doesn't understand the difference between physical and spiritual death he ought not to be writing religious books dealing with the subject.

Strangely, earlier (before he wanted to take that potshot at me, he had written, "Inability does not mean that the sinner has no natural faculties (understanding and will) to respond to the gospel" My sentiments exactly! Since his "dead man" is capable of "responding," why quibble about mine? In one place he will wax eloquent about man's responsibility to God and in another place just as eloquently insist man is helpless.

Alexander spends some time "refuting" my quote of Dr. Arno C. Gaebelein; a consulting editor of the Scofield Reference Bible, about "akin to blasphemy," listing several things he charges to my "distortion," all of which are either facts I believe or he has misrepresented what I believe. His conclusion was, "Unconditional election does not teach that God created evil in this baby, then damned it forever." Why does he insist on putting words in print I **never** said — and thoughts I have **never** entertained — as though they were my own, just to prove he is right and I am wrong? I have never stated and I certainly do not believe for a single moment that "God created evil in this baby," or any baby. And since I will assume he is an intelligent man, I think he knows I don't believe it.

Then he tried to defend the idea of reprobation, but no matter how you slice it, *the bottom line of his theology is that sinners go to Hell because God refuses to elect them to Heaven!* If that is not reprobation it is close enough to do until he can show a real distinction.

He misrepresented Dr. Rice by saying, "A man who knew Dr. Rice once told me that Dr. Rice felt justified in editing Spurgeon because 'he knows better now and would approve.'" I am not faulting Alexander here because he is quoting some "unnamed, unidentified" individual who supposedly said it. But I can assure you that this man "who knew Dr. Rice" didn't know him as well as I did. Dr. Rice edited every sermon he ever printed - mine as well as every other preacher. If he took something out it was because he didn't believe it and he refused to print even *minor* things he didn't believe (I am a whole lot more charitable in this area than he was and if it isn't heresy, I usually let it go, as a difference of opinion; maybe he was right in that and I am wrong). I will acknowledge that because he had such a keen, sense of humor; perhaps Dr. Rice joked to someone he knew quite well in such a fashion, but if that is the case the "unnamed, unidentified" brother knew he was joking, I can guarantee you! But go back and read what I said earlier about how Alexander "selectively" quoted Spurgeon when it suited his purpose and ignored what he said when it contradicted his position. What is the difference in what he did and what Rice did? Both edited Spurgeon's true position to fit their convictions. Let him toss the first rotten apple who is without guilt in this matter!

He Likes the Creeds!

Like most books, of this type, heavy reliance is made upon "creeds" of the past, which were written by fallible humans, of course. Along this line, you church history buffs may be surprised to learn, with the compliments of Alexander, that the Reformation was brought about to "restore" his idea of Calvinism. He quotes a statement by John Piper (to which we wholeheartedly subscribe and add a fervent *Amen!* although many of Piper's statements we could not and would not, especially in the Calvinism area), then remarks, "This was the 'old' gospel revived in the Reformation and later called Calvinism." That, my friends, is what is known as 'rewriting history.'

Incidentally, in the author's Preface he made this statement, summing up what he was going to prove in his book, "The whole controversy can be reduced to this: which view focuses upon human 'free will' while limiting God's will?" We *totally* repudiate the idea that the position of Rice, Fisk, Sumner, et al, limits God's will in any sense of the word — or any sense of The Word! And it is certainly wicked and sinful to make "whosoever will" contradict "God's will!"

But why go on? If I answered every erroneous argument the author sets forth in this volume, we'd be here until the cows come home - and my review would be several times the length of his book. I've given you enough so that you have the gist of what he saying.

Don't waste your money on this one! There is not enough heat in it to warm the cockles of your heart, to say nothing of providing nourishment for your soul.

Instead, why not get the book by . . .

Sumner's review ends with an advertisement to purchase anti-Calvinistic books published by his organization. Since I am not willing to promote his books, I will let the reader find his own copy of the review containing the in-formation. Instead, may I now direct the reader to ["A Response to "Radical Calvinism!"](#)?