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A Polemic Against The Prevailing
Arminian* Gospel Theology

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*See foreword quotations for explanation
of Arminianism.

Foreword

The following quotation is from "The Church in History", a Christian school textbook, on the subject of the free will concept, known as Arminianism:

From Page 39, an earlier root of the subject theology, "In 529 the Synod of Orange refuted the teachings of the Semi-Pelagians--that it is up to the individual to accept or refuse God's "offer" of grace,"

And from Pages 266-268: "Arminianism, while maintaining the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, stresses man's will at the expense of God's sovereignty."

"In his (Arminius's) lectures his departure from historic Calvinism (independent, sovereign grace) became more and more noticeable, although he retained his belief in the Trinity, the deity of Christ, and salvation by faith in Christ's atoning work on the cross."

"Arminius held some ideas which remind us of Pelagius. He denied the total inability and depravity of man."

"Arminius did not deny the doctrine of election outright. But he taught that God had elected those who He had foreseen would believe. His teaching was a somewhat subtle and indirect denial of election. He made God's election depend on the action of man. In that way, while seemingly holding to the doctrine of election, he actually denied and destroyed it" (and this is what anyone but a complete 5-point Calvinist does to the true doctrine).

"He also taught that Christ died for all men, and that it is possible to fall from grace. He denied that the work of the Spirit is irresistible."

".....Arminianism acquired a far greater influence in England (than the Netherlands Reformed Church). It invaded the Anglican Church and nearly all the dissenting denominations. John Wesley adopted Arminianism, and it became the creed of the Wesleyan Methodists. Today it has become the accepted doctrine in most of the churches in America" (fundamentalist, so-called, as well).

Parenthetical portions, and underlinings, added.

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INTRODUCTION

I should like first to give some explanation of my reasons for writing on the historically controversial interpretations of the doctrine of God's election of sinners to salvation.

For several years now,* I have become increasingly interested and concerned about this matter, which I now believe to be of first importance and priority to the church. Even more, I think it is a key to the mystery and solution of some of our greatest church problems. Whether we will use that key is the matter which will remain to be seen, in the time the church has left.

No matter what form of election belief I professed to maintain--the one thing I was "sure" that tempered or affected it all, was the "fact" that man's "free" will had to be exercised voluntarily in response to the Gospel without any coercion, or forcing by God. This, therefore, controlled or conditioned the meaning of predestination, foreknowledge, foreordination, chosen, and all such related election terms.

The transition and transformation of my beliefs on this subject from a dualistic concept of the free will of God, and the free will of man--to a definite free will and act of God theology only--has not been without times of much difficulty, and doubts, and wavering and wondering. Some of the questions and considerations that must be faced and understood, accepted or rejected, are very heavy and hard things for the human heart and mind to grapple with. And this is because of the conditioned reflexes of humanism, and associated free will indoctrination that permeates and controls most of what we think and do.

Therefore, because of this Arminian tradition (call it what we will) which has so biased our minds, and motivated our methods, there is something of a mental and emotional revolution which the church must go through to overcome this situation that exists, and hopefully be re-established on the original scriptural principle of salvation decreeing from the sovereign, efficacious will of God; independent of anything in man, foreseen or otherwise.

Again, I believe, we have been programmed to say almost automatically: "I have a free will", "Man is a free moral agent", etc., without even questioning it, or qualifying it, despite all the scriptural evidence to the contrary.

Some of the various thoughts and questions that must be seriously considered are these:

Can Calvinism as affects salvation, and Arminianism both have God's approval? May they co-exist in the ministry of the Gospel?

*Written in 1978.

How important is the issue of the real meaning of election?

Can it be resolved? Must it be?

Dare we look long and hard at it through objective scriptural study?

I am aware of some of the past and present great conflict and damage that has resulted from this controversy. The cause of which, I believe lies not in the difficulty of the subject itself but in the typical nature of our attitude towards it. The following quote from the writings of Amy Carmichael very clearly expresses this point: "The eternal substance of a thing never lies in the thing itself, but in the quality of our reaction to it".

I mean by this--an almost universal ignorance, or misunderstanding of the scriptural teaching of this great basic doctrine. A. W. Pink, in his book, *The Sovereignty of God*, said something to the effect that far from being anything standard in the church's fundamental doctrines, that the idea of the complete sovereignty of God in election, and other spiritual works has long become so ignored and forgotten as to be strange and foreign language to the church today. At the very least, we must agree with the premise of the following quotation from Lorraine Boettner, "Every Christian must believe in some kind of election; for while the scriptures leave unexplained many things about the doctrine of election, they make very plain the fact that there has been an election".

We also ought to realize that Satan has the power, and would use the master strategy of deceiving us in the most important ways--that would do the most damage. If this problem is really that bad, then to our shame we can not say as Paul did in 2 Cor. 2:11, "that we are not ignorant of his devices".

Consequently, wrong reactions to the subject have resulted in compromise, humanistic interpretations, and the rejection of a completely God-performed working principle; substituting some form of irreconcilable parallelism of the "free" will of man, and the sovereign will and grace of God.

What we have left is the so-called Gordian knot of theology, or a mysterious dualism of two irreducible principles: (1) the sovereignty of God in action, and (2) the independence of man in reaction*. The question that begs to be answered first is this: What is theology? Is it an objective science, or a subjective philosophy; fact, or theory? *The first, actual; the second, assumed.

I know from my own experience and observation, how prevalent and often militant the opposition is to a strict

application of absolute unconditional election. Except by the grace of God, some would never even begin reading this book, or any other on the subject. But brother, as you have read thus far, I ask your continued indulgence to make honest inquiry and examination of whether the position set forth in this book may be substantially true, or not.

If the words Calvinism and Arminianism do not always best describe the basic contrast in question--the main purpose is to emphasize the truth of the free irresistible grace of God as the only working principle in salvation versus the belief that the grace of God in salvation is an offer to man, subject to his will, which is free to either accept or reject that grace.

To emphasize the first position, a few of John Calvin's comments are very fitting to consider at this point:

"Our salvation doth not begin after we have knowledge, discretion, and good desires (even from the Gospel), but is grounded in God's everlasting decree before any part of the world was made".

"The devil hath no fitter instruments than those who fight against predestination". (This can be done even by a wrong interpretation of the doctrine--not only an outright opposition).

"Who^oever cannot come to the everlasting election of God, taketh somewhat from him, and lesseneth his honor".

"A Christian ought to be so well resolved in the doctrine of election that he is beyond doubt". (This is far from the normal condition today).

Parenthetical portions, and underlinings mine.

Even though it is becoming more convincing all the time, that the church is lapsing further into the Laodicean period of it's Revelation prophecy, we know that God always gives space to repent, and overcoming victory to "he that hath an ear to hear..... what the Spirit saith unto the churches".

And I believe with growing conviction and assurance, that the message of this book is responsive to that Spirit, and that it is both a privilege and responsibility to communicate it for the good of the church, and glory of God (and you can't have one without the other).

Therefore, the need and responsibility of expounding the way of God more perfectly, is ample justification for the purpose of this book--in the doctrinal areas involved. This includes disputing and persuading the things concerning the subject. Acts 18:26, 19:8.

CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Some who read what I have said so far will naturally say--just as I have wondered much about myself--What makes someone like me think I could be right, when the great majority of the church does not hold such an extreme position in this age-old conflict and controversy?

And I realize what is at stake; that either I am woefully deceived and a potential deceiver of many others--even to possibly wreak some kind of havoc among God's people--or, if I am essentially right, what else could it be but a special working of the grace of God to use me as a part of the lifting of this terrible blindspot and error that I believe has pervaded the church for even centuries--accelerating in its works to unprecedented proportions in more recent years. This is not to say that there is not a stream, or rills of soundness in the true election doctrine in some churches, and individuals.

Therefore, if the situation is that serious, it is critically important for the church to examine and apply itself diligently to the study of this doctrinal controversy until it has been settled, through faithful, exegetically scriptural study and teaching, once and for all--one way, or the other!

The subject mishandled, as it traditionally has been, is extremely dangerous, divisive, and destructive. So conditioned and steeped are we in some degree of "free" will bias in our theology and thinking, and consequent preaching, witnessing, writing, etc., that if ever the shift is to be made back to what I believe was the original belief of the doctrine--it will have to be a very careful, and prayerful work of reconstruction.

It may appear to be an almost impossible situation to change, but let us remember that such great issues have been settled in the church's history before. God will give the victory, and I believe there is great need of that victory--even as an extension, or new work of reformation. I feel strongly that this basic subject with its many ramifications ought to be seen as a major reconstruction theme, occupying priority time and attention throughout the church.

If we should be tempted to think or say that we have no right to probe into this matter as if it were too complicated or unresolvable; or not God's will to be so technically involved in doctrinal matters, let us remember that the Bible says the secret things belong to God, but the things that are revealed belong to us. Deut. 29: 29. And this is not to be seen as more of a privilege than responsibility, to keep the faith as once delivered to the saints, etc.

Therefore, every time the subject is presented in the word of God, which is many, we are bound to our responsibility to learn the truth as fully as possible, and likewise communicate it. II Tim. 2:15, Tit. 1:9, I Tim. 4:13-15, etc.

Reactions and Results

As examples, effects, and problems of the two contrasting wrong reactions to the truth (be it so) of absolute election, the following notes are listed here for further explanation elsewhere in the text of the book.

1. Extreme left reaction (opposing, free will belief). Problem: Tendency to preoccupation and overemphasis in evangelism, with its many errors, extreme forms, and varieties--particularly the widespread practice of soulish vs. spiritual methods, even in otherwise fundamental, faithful Christian evangelism. An exceptional example of insight into this little-realized problem may be gained from Watchman Nee's book, The Latent Power of the Soul (with just a word of caution, esp. on wonders, and Spirit-baptism). Other results of the extreme left reaction are neo-evangelicalism, and the charismatic movement, etc.

Characteristic Effects

Failure to follow God in full discipleship, i.e., devotion, study of other doctrines, esp. the application of the cross to the life of the believer, etc. Hence, susceptibility to imbalance, error, lack of growth, carnality, etc.

Failure to obey God in dual-purpose life responsibilities: (1) to have dominion over all the earth in all areas of learning and development--science, government, agriculture, commerce, law, etc., etc. To wit, that Christians should be the best authorities, and sources of knowledge and examples in every legitimate field of life--as well as, (2) a Christian witness of the Gospel, and testimony of all the graces of God.

2. Extreme right reaction (full acceptance, or strict predestination belief). Problem: Tendency to under-emphasis in evangelism, because of failure to understand both the cause, and means of election. That is, that God is the cause, and men are the means (but always under God's active control).

Characteristic Effects

Unresponsiveness, and irresponsibility to God; producing various degrees of militant, spiritless, dogmatic, unhealthy Christians and churches from an extremism of interpretation, not balanced with legi-

imate Christian service, i.e., works of service, etc., as means (instruments) of God's sovereign grace in His work of salvation.

Balance What It Is, and What It Isn't

I would at this point make an important qualification to help check against a serious and common error regarding attempts to adopt some form of "balance" between the two extremes noted above. Balance in the Christian's doctrinal belief does not consist of any kind of middle-of-the-road, not-conservative, not-liberal interpretation of a principle, subject, etc.

The need of balance is that taught to us in II Timothy 2:15, "rightly dividing the word of truth". The thought occurs to me that rightly dividing the word of truth, will not wrongly divide the believers of truth. Something of the sense of I Cor. 11:19 of an approved division vs. heresy is the implication here intended. Balancing, or reconciling one doctrine with others at points of inter-relation without compromising one truth against another, is of vital importance to keep us from error.

We must always be on guard against this. I am reminded of what someone else has said about the often fine line, or mistake, made between balance, so-called, and compromise: "Compromise is surrender on the installment plan". This, in regards to the right interpretation of a teaching, can mean such a surrender of real meaning and truth as to be the first step down the age-old "garden path" of destruction. And we know who is leading us--Satan, working relentlessly, insidiously, supernaturally to draw us away from our God, and His ways.

The Great Deception and Imbalance

I hope further to make the connection implied here, that it is part of the "mystery of iniquity" (II Thess. 2:7) by which the devil has almost universally deceived the church. If you would consider the possibility, at least, (from the word of God) that election of sinners to salvation, is an absolute predestinated work of God; so that neither the number who will believe and be saved can be reduced, nor added to by a single soul--can you not see how the whole main thrust of much of our organized Christianity has been a man-centered and motivated theology? And this, at the cost of failing to follow God's will as (1) the right kind of Christian witnesses (as means of His grace), and (2) in not fulfilling our other still basic, never-revoked command of God in Genesis to continue where Adam left off--as lords of creation (Even though, now with limited qualifications for it; because of judgment conditions from the fall, and the usurped power of Satan over the fallen creation).

Here, I believe, is the most devastating case of lack of balance that Christians are guilty of. Is it too far-fetched to believe that the great majority of Christians--in the wide realm of the work of evangelism--have marched to the wrong drummer; lured away from our full duties of life? Which, if it is true, as I strongly believe, and hope to show more proof of, has caused us to seriously neglect God's first command for our life--to have dominion over this earth. And though we must wait for the future redemption of the earth from its judgmental curse, we have no excuse for abandoning our responsibility for doing everything we can reasonably do to carry out that commission.

Derelict in Duty ?

Look at the results today. And again, we must be cautious to learn the balance that God's will requires--both as to our duty, and our realization that much of what is wrong is the fruit of wickedness, and not necessarily Christian failure. But if we would, for purposes of illustration, confine ourselves to only the Christian element--it can not be easily discounted or argued against--that we are reaping the results of this great disobedience of orders; or wholesale abandonment of our full life responsibilities.

Witness the education situation--what are the principles most widely taught and accepted in science, philosophy, religion, commerce, law, government, technology, agriculture, music, art, and on and on? Who are the teachers, leaders, authorities, etc.? Overwhelmingly, the unregenerate! Which, while it follows suit with Satan's control of the majority of mankind and their domain, still should not go as unchecked, unrestrained, and unopposed as the universal Christian community has allowed it to.

Though I admit some measure of common grace to all mankind, unregenerate as well, which can be of great con-

tribution and benefit to us all--the command of Gen. 1:26, etc., particularly after the fall, can only be rightly be carried out by those who are redeemed, and restored to God through salvation (regeneration). (It is not hard to see how sin interferes with every lawful pursuit of life). This requires the special grace possessed only by Christians, enabling us as stewards to develop as much human progress as possible over every element (aspect) of this earth. Psalm 115:16 tells us that earth was given to man (Even more than stewards--noting the restricted circumstances resulting from the fall).

Is it too fanciful--only theoretical--to think that if over the past few hundred years we had stuck to the reformation resurgence of truth about freedom and responsibility to live in direct relationship to God in matters of faith, and consecration of every department of life--what great advances might have been made in every area of life?

Continual Reformation

But, as is the sad case of history, how soon we fall away, and fail to hold the line and strengthen the cause. The following quotation from the beloved Charles H. Spurgeon on the subject of reformation will well explain the problem alluded to:

"One reformation will never serve the church; she needs continually to be wound up and set a-going afresh; for her works run down, and she does not act as she used to do. The bold, bald doctrines that Luther brought out began to be a little modified until layer after layer was deposited upon them, and at last the old rocky truth was covered up, and there grew upon the superficial subsoil an abundance of green and flowery errors that looked fair and beautiful, but were in no way whatever related to the truth, except as they were the products of its decay". (This is very apropos to where I think we are in the doctrine of election).

"Then there came bold men who brought the truth out again and said, 'Clear away this rubbish; let the light blast upon these deceitful beauties; we want them not; bring out the old truth once more!' And it came out. But the tendency of the church is perpetually to be covering up its own naked simplicity (this point ought to be a constitutional watchword for every believer), forgetting that the truth is never so beautiful as when it stands in its unadorned, God-given glory. And now, at this time, we want to have the old truths restored to their places. The subtleties and refinements of the preacher must be laid aside. We must give up the grand distinctions of the schoolmen, and all the lettered technicalities of men who have studied theology as a system but have not felt the power of it in their hearts; and when the good old truth is once more preached by men whose lips are touched as with a live coal from off the altar, this shall be the instrument in the

hand of the Spirit for bringing about a great and thorough revival of religion in the land".

Parenthetical portions, and underlinings mine.

Questions and Objectives

To whom do you think God would have given the blessings of discovery, and the unlocking and understanding of secrets and mysteries of this earth? Christians, of course, who should be the authority (or set the standard)--with some exceptions conceivable by God's will or allowance--in every field of life!

Only fairly recently has there been some awakening to this situation--and that we owe to the reconstruction development of Christian schools. I refer to new textbooks being written by Christians in the various fields of science, history, etc.

The higher scholastic results being achieved in this new growing school system attests to the great potential capacity of learning and development that God will always give to Christians who obey and follow him (fully, and directly).

But for much more of the church the situation demands such thorough investigation and analysis to either: (1) justify the one-sided emphasis that prevails in the whole spectrum of evangelism, and its related thinking and effect upon the rest of life, or (2) to see and do something about the captivating deception and commandeering of our lives that has been worked upon us by the master mind of the prince of this world, Satan; but for which we are responsible to God--especially as pastors, and teachers of the truth of every command^{and} promise in the book ("to whom much is given, much is required"). Remember, Jesus always pointed to the leaders of false doctrine, for their extreme culpability.

Yet, every Christian, able to do as the Berean Christians--"to search the scriptures and see if these things be so"--will have to bear his own burden of failure to learn the truth, and reject the opposite; no matter how hard the decision may be. "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small". Prov. 24:10.

The Secret to Success in Both Duties

It must be seen and maintained faithfully, and tenaciously that the truth of the absolute election work of God (be it so) makes us truly free to carry out our obligation to fulfill God's primary command to be masters, under Him, of this earth. That is, at least, to attempt whatever is still possible under the conditions of having lost the lordship of the earth.

Yet, we must remember that we have an additional great privilege and responsibility to be part of God's wonderful work of salvation, to be instruments and means of His grace in the calling of His church to Himself.

Let's also be careful to note that just as Jesus called his disciples to leave their occupations and follow and serve him in special service--some, even many of us, would be called into definite spiritual positions --often to the exclusion of any secular work.

But, has there been any balance in this great dual-purpose responsibility?

Think then, for a moment, even if it is only hypothetical to you, of what a tremendously stabilizing, freeing, purifying, and unifying effect that a steadfast, healthy knowledge of absolute predestination could have in the Christian's life, and the corresponding church's life; and even upon the progress and condition of the earthly life of much of mankind--however imminent and certain judgment may be.

A good example of this one-track-mindedness that we have been in the habit of--even in our otherwise fundamental, sound churches--is this:

Our young people almost always are expected to either go into the relatively few categories connected with church or evangelism work, such as pastoral, missionary, music, literature, or maybe some associated trade or profession needed in mission fields, schools, etc.

If, however, God wants us to still obey our other life responsibilities; at least in the sense of acquiring knowledge through discovery, study, promulgation and production--how many of us, when one of our children would like to be an engineer, doctor, lawyer, craftsman, farmer, etc., instead of realizing the very good thing this could be, think rather that it is a decision against the Lord, or that it is second best (even choosing the world instead of God)?

Has not the church, then, to some serious extent left the world in the hands of the unsaved, and the great deceiver, Satan? And, living under the many resulting failures and corruptions of this ungodly system--the church has put most of its talents, time, and resources into a burgeoning campaign of super evangelism--itself fraught with so many evils, errors, and multifarious forms, all because of a principle diametrically contrary to the truth. That being, simply, that man having this so-called inviolable "free" will must be brought to a point of decision. And nothing describes its methodology more tersely, unfortunately, than the anti-Christian principle: "that the end justifies the means". If this seems too harsh, or critical, please refer again to what Spurgeon said about modification of the truth (page 5 and 6).

Therefore, except as God-controlled means of His exclusively sovereign work of bringing His elect to Himself, all of the other prodigious effort, endless innovations*, and inventions--even blood, sweat, and tears beyond comprehension--can not have availed one thing to glorify God as true evangelistic service, or to add one soul to the already determined number of predestinated believers. Impossible to be true? If that is not bad enough, I even think that it can, and has helped produce an untold number of 'tares among the wheat'. If this is true, it doesn't take much deliberation to think of what that has done to the detriment and confusion of the true church. "Ye reap what ye sow", is an incontrovertible law of God.

Having said many things needing scriptural reference and explanation, let us look into some of the many texts of the word of God, on the subject, for the convincing and convicting proof that He can give us, through the teaching of His Spirit. Some reminders of things to encourage, and exhort us as to our feelings and set opinions, are again--Deut. 29:29, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever"..... and I Cor. 8:2, "And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know". Isaiah 55:8, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord", and I Thess. 5:21, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good".

In keeping with the necessity of "rightly dividing the word of truth" of II Tim. 2:15, I shall endeavor to follow the method of comparing scripture with scripture to interpret scripture.

*A quote from John Calvin on human innovations, corruptions, etc. of pure doctrine is worth noting: "Experience teaches that the human mind is a soil fertile in false inventions, and that when sowed even with the smallest grain, as if all its powers combined, yields an immense increase".

Contest Rules

Those who hold to the strict sense of election have their particular repertoire of verses or passages, and the free will believers claim certain seemingly supporting scriptures for their side. But a true understanding can never be had this way of the one "possible" real truth, or even of any kind of amalgamation of the two (which I do not suggest, in any way).

Arguing, or reasoning from either side of the two extremes usually proves or settles nothing, but rather increases the mutual opposition, and difficulty of solution. It reminds us of the old adage that, "a man convinced against his will, is of the same opinion still", or "don't confuse me with the facts, my mind is made up".

Therefore, the method of attempting to prove, promote, and establish the one true interpretation that must exist (whatever it may be)* must be objective vs. subjective; exegetical vs. opinionated; thorough vs. one-sided; open-minded vs. biased, etc.

*Hypothetically.

To say it another way, each of the various important doctrines involved in salvation regarding the truth about God and man, must be reconciled--that is, they must "square" with each other. Or, have we ridden our hobby horses too long to try anything different? And we must also determine the order and priority of the various related doctrines.

For example, how can we test the validity of the belief of the responsibility of man in the above way? Will it, as it is conventionally held, align with the other things the Bible teaches in connection with salvation?

By contrast, does the belief of the sovereign grace of God as the only working principle of salvation reconcile, or square better with these other doctrines than the free will, or responsibility-of-man belief does?

The several doctrines referred to above are:

1. Original sin (Union of Adam and race).
2. Total depravity.
3. Atonement--or redemption.
4. Predestination.
5. God's love.
6. Faith.
7. Regeneration.
8. Identification with Christ (Union of Christ and believers).

There are other doctrinal subjects involved in God's work of salvation, but the above ones are probably the principal elements. In the following chapters, I shall try to deal with our election/free will issue as each side of the argument relates to what I believe the scriptures teach us about each of the eight doctrines listed. Not that the treatment of the subjects will be very complete, but that enough may be said to indicate, at least, that the great weight of evidence, and inductive reasoning from the testimony of scripture is squarely on the side of unconditional election.

1. Under Original Sin (the subject of)

The question of the cause of condemnation to hell, must be determined as either one thing, or another.

A. Is it unbelief and rejection of Christ--as certain scriptures seem to state, or imply?

B. Or did the original sin of Adam produce the condemnation, with no further universal provision for deliverance?

If A is true, it must mean that God replaced one universal test of man with another. And this would constitute a major doctrine in the theology of salvation, to the extent of placing the one sin of ultimate unbelief in a separate class from all other sins, or alienation against God. The popular conception that the ability to believe, is implied in the necessity to believe, especially in view of the doctrine of total depravity, presents a very serious conflict and contradiction of integral principles. Even if it were to be conceded that there is an inherent or developed ability to believe, the fact that many do not hear the gospel, or have any opportunity to believe in Christ, at least establishes that there is something very selective, or exclusive about the application of this principle that the sin of unbelief is a whole new universal basis of condemnation.

If the test of Adam as organic head and representative of the race, was sufficient in itself to bring the eternal judgment of condemnation upon the whole race, does not the act of unbelief and rejection of Christ rather prove this corrupted, condemned state of the soul than to be itself a new cause for those who for some mysterious reason, compared to others, do not believe and receive Christ? Please re-read this long sentence structure, so that the point or question will not be missed.

However, if B is true, the doctrine of absolute election by God to save some from the just condemnation of their fall in Adam, is perfectly within the sovereign right and power of God. What man lost in Adam, God can and does restore to him, or the elect, through the substitutionary redemptive work of Christ. The certainty of their required belief and acceptance of Christ is assured--not by forced compliance (especially of the alienated heart and mind of fallen natural man) but because God, the efficacy, or working principle of his own electing purpose, makes the elect able to believe through sanctification of the Spirit (I Thess. 2:13, and regeneration (Titus 3:5). See also II Tim. 1:9.

The question is, therefore, which belief--unconditional election (sovereign grace), or conditional election (subject to the free will of man) reconciles, or squares better with the doctrine of original sin? From the brief analysis above, isn't the complete predestination interpretation much more consistent and logical, and most importantly, more defensible from the word of God?

Obviously, this area could be enlarged upon, but my purpose in the scope of this book is not to be exhaustive as much as stimulative. Anticipating objections and defense of the free will proponents; or as further development of theology more oriented to the sovereignty of God than the centrality of man will in course of time call for much more in-depth analysis and presentation of the truth advocated, than is required at this point.

2. Under Total Depravity

Herein lie some of the most important and decisive elements of the subject in question. Either we believe in the complete meaning of this doctrinal truth, or we don't! If we do, we must not forget it in our evangelistic fervor; where time and time again, excess humanism and emotionalism in preaching, teaching, and witnessing contradicts the effect or capacity of the completely corrupted and alienated nature of fallen man. That nature being so perverted, and spiritually dead, that it can never be coaxed, cried, bought, shamed, scared, convinced, or anything else into believing something spiritual--until the capacity to perceive things in that dimension is restored by the regenerative miracle of John 3:3, and as elsewhere revealed in the word.

Let us look at some selected texts which deal with this doctrine and its application to the two sides of the controversial issue. I Cor. 2:11-14 very sharply contrasts and explains the limits of the natural man compared to the spiritual. I believe if we diligently and consistently apply the full meaning and implication of verse 14, we will see how much more credence this gives to the necessity of election as completely carried out by God vs. any kind of a voluntary cooperation by the natural will of man, however highly motivated and presented with the truth he may be.

The indisputable contrasting truth of verse 14 is (1) that the natural man receiveth not the things of God; because (2) they are spiritually discerned. In other words, we have here contrasted: a natural man, and a spiritual man. We must look further into the extent of this decisive factor and make the resultant application to our subject.

We must always remember that there can be no exception to (1) above--it is a fixed principle; a spiritual law--and we can not violate its permanent, unalterable meaning.

Now if we believe the negative side of this principle, that the natural man cannot understand the things of God, then how can he believe the gospel? If, as it says, he must be spiritual to understand anything of God at all, what does the Holy Spirit do to enable a natural man to have the capacity, or power of choice to believe or accept Christ--who, to be said reverently, is one of the "things of God" that man cannot ever understand in his natural state?

Can we honestly think that there is any way to bridge this gap for the sake of the so-called free will of man? In fact, what is free about a will that cannot respond to God according to this highly conclusive text, among others.

Total depravity has to mean that every part of man is dead to God, corrupted; as the psalmist tells us that "man is full of sin from head to toe". The idea that there can be anything exempt from this complete degeneration and defilement, such as man's will being somehow technically invulnerable, or inviolable puts such an impossible limitation on the doctrine of total depravity, that to consciously and persistently maintain it is, I believe, not only abject error, but even heresy! I mean not to offend anyone, but to defend what I believe the word of God teaches on this subject.

How can we ever teach from the word of God, consistently with all the important related doctrines, that the natural man has a free will--able to believe the truth about God, and himself unto his salvation? If he must first be spiritual to believe, as our text undeniably teaches us, when or how can he pass from the natural state to the spiritual state, unless it is by a miraculous change produced by God himself, and which also must be permanent?

Can we conceive of some kind of temporary enlightening by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of man to either believe or reject Christ? Is this really any different essentially, than the "sufficient" grace of Arminianism? Can man become spiritual to meet this requirement which cannot be violated in I Cor. 2:14, long enough to possibly reject Christ, and then somehow revert back to natural man? Do we think God plays games, or casts his pearls before swine?

Or, putting it the other way around, could he--with the capability to believe, ever reject Christ? One of the most precious verses bearing on this whole subject is I Cor. 12:3, "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed; and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost". If you are not sufficiently aware of the implications of this verse, please meditate upon it so you may be able to appreciate the impact it has on the whole question of who can believe, or not believe, and how. There is also to be seen something of the eternal security of believers, and apostasy of unbelievers.

In order not to leave one of our eight doctrinal tests for another, and possibly lose the emphasis of each, I would like to leave further explanation of this point to the consideration of the doctrine of regeneration--item 7. Suffice it to say for now, for me at least, that the idea of man having a free will to believe in God, and His Son, and His Gospel does not reconcile to the doctrine of the total depravity of the fallen nature. It must be seen to be the myth that Martin Luther called it. I believe that most all of the early church fathers, plus many for some centuries after them, would be appalled at the extent that some form of this free will belief has dominated the church for so many years since.

Can we not see how, in our emotional zeal of the moment--our carnal bent of mind being what it is--that we have so often pleaded and preached, and planned, and worked and counted results, more upon a fleshly conception and assumption than on the objective and scriptural basis of all the doctrines involved, to wit: that man's salvation is by the process of God's efficacy, only; or the self-fulfillment of His own elective will, which when so directed is both irresistible, and guaranteed to accomplish its purpose? "Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth"..... James 1:18.

Anything else tends to dishonor, and caricature the very idea that God is completely sovereign in all his works. Another example of the thinking or "theology" that develops from the man-oriented Christianity of today, is the idea that God has in some ways limited himself to us. No true interpretation of God, or man, from scripture could ever justify this claim. If ever, in any consequential sense, we think that God would relinquish any such power to our independent use, the next thought we ought to have is: what does that do to our conception of how sovereign and supreme his omnipotence really is? And it ought to raise a number of other serious questions as well, such as: what do we think there is about man, saved or not, that could ever be trusted or left

with any eternally important decision that God would place outside of his active control? At any rate, the effect of this view is just that much further tendency to detract from the highest conception of God, and add to the relative valuation of man.

Let us look back at Adam, before and after he fell--which is, of course, each one of us too, if we believe in the organic unity of the race under the federal headship of Adam, the progenitor of the human family. As Adam walked, and talked, and lived in communion with God, he was a spiritual man; that is, able to know and understand God. When he sinned--through disobedience to God's declared will--God withdrew his Spirit from him (or Adam's spirit became dead to God), and Adam became a carnal, natural, unspiritual man; not able to know and understand God. (Light to darkness, degeneration, alienation, etc.).

Therefore, if this is correct theology so far, what ever has changed this law, or principle, to make the Gospel able to be believed by natural man, which of course, we all are by inheritance of Adam's nature? I answer, nothing! Unless God makes us able to believe (that is, restores our spiritual ability to understand, and respond) we can never be saved. IIThess. 2:13, Titus 3:5-7, etc.

The same analogy is true of faith. Faith is indeed the ability to believe, or trust God, and as in Ephesians 2:8-9, salvation--including faith--is the gift of God. Now can we make this bestowment of faith something temporary, or conditional--as if it would be given to natural man to believe with if he wants to? Or, if he does not, is this faith then withdrawn from him?

I do not mean to oversimplify the problem, as if these things should be so obvious, or without difficulty to see and prove. But there seems to be involved at least three basic things which must be vitally important factors in this matter--or in fact, in the determination of any scriptural truth.

What Saith God

No. 1--must be the requirement of literal, objective interpretation, and obedience to it, of the teaching of each and every subject of the word of God.

What Saith Man

No. 2--must be the recognition of the humanistic factor of our old nature, being allowed to operate--through misinterpretation of scripture, or failure to obey it implicitly. It is a spiritual law--that when light is rejected, or neglected, a judgmental darkness results, at least in a certain area, that will continue until there is a turning back to that particular light. John 12:35.

What Saith Satan

No. 3--must be the realization of the mystery of iniquity--especially of the manipulating, controlling power of Satan over the "flesh" of Christians (i.e., II Tim. 2: 26), who can so infiltrate the church, and draw even the majority of believers away from God (which has been his unceasing work) into a perverted knowledge of the doctrine of salvation, and corresponding evangelistic practices, which can do more to serve Satan than God. Is it possible? What a terrible thought this is, if so!

The Responsibility of Man Defined

In short, there is in No. 1 a beautiful, right application of the sovereignty of God, and the responsibility of man (regenerated man). I do not even take issue with the fact of the responsibility of unsaved man, but only with the question of his ability to fulfill that responsibility. Because of sin, man became naturally unable to fulfill God's requirement of righteousness; but God never removed that requirement. An earthly illustration of the justice ^{of} such a principle (which should not be questioned as being God's prerogative) is the obligation of citizens to keep the laws of society. An individual may become intoxicated, and break a civil law, which because of his drunkenness he was unable to obey. But his inability does not free him from his responsibility to keep the law. It was his responsibility to maintain the ability that he had before he became intoxicated. So too, was every human being responsible as identifiable with Adam, to keep the laws of God--which, even under grace are not revoked in principle, though man, through sin, lost his ability to obey God spiritually.

Moreover, No. 2 and No. 3 can only ^{operate} when No. 1 is disobeyed--because God has made provision for deliverance and victory over every possible working of No. 2 and 3. I Cor. 10:13, James 4:7, etc.

The contention, therefore, that the ability to believe is in itself spiritual, can only be consistent with absolute election by grace--that is, planned, carried out, and effected wholly by God, including every aspect of conversion. The idea of natural man having a free will capable of a positive, understanding response to God is entirely inconsistent, and contrary to the doctrine of total depravity.

If God's word means what it says--look at the complete statement of the fixed principle in I Cor. 2:11, again, I am sure you agree that God permits us to add his own words, or truth to another part of his word, when it is definitely implied in the same text. It is not necessary, but helpful, to see how complete a proof we have of the

truth of how we believe spiritually, by adding the phrase already in the verse--"which is in him"--to the end of the verse for extra emphasis of the fact. The verse, not altered, but amplified, would read as follows: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God (which is in him)". And this can only be the Christian, by the regenerative miracle of the new birth.

3. Under Atonement--or Redemption

We would do well to use the term propitiation as the proper biblical meaning of Christ's sacrificial and redemptive work on the cross for our true at-one-ment with God. Refer to the very helpful explanation of Lev. 16:6 by Scofield footnote for difference between atonement (Old Testament limited sacrificial offering), and propitiation (New Testament complete sacrifice of Christ). But from traditional theological usage, the meaning of atonement is intended to be the same. It is, however, a concept; not scripturally correct.

The element of greatest importance in both redemption, and the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, is his blood. The question must be answered whether the blood of Christ is sufficient for possible redemption of all; or efficient in the actual redemption of certain ones only.

To make the application, or saving power of the precious blood of Christ subject to the acceptance of man, with some kind of mysterious free will option, is, I believe, to pervert and confuse everything inherently true about redemption and propitiation, as well as the plan and purpose of God in this part of the process of salvation!

In the Old Testament record of the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, we must remember the elements involved, i.e., redemption is completely of God. In the Exodus type of redemption, which must be the true type of all redemption--look at some of God's words: "I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them unto a good land" (not if they want to, as if optional). Exodus 3:7-8, Acts 7:25.

When God set about to redeem Israel out of Egypt, he didn't just offer it to them, he said he would redeem them out of their bondage, and they came out of Egypt just as God said they would. This type can not be denied to picture the church being called out of the world (the bondage of sin and Satan--like Egypt and Pharaoh). And the important element pertinent to our subject of election--is that just as surely as Israel was actually delivered out of their bondage--so too, will every object of God's election

of the church be delivered, and come to him and be his people, as in the type (Exodus 6:6-8).

A New Testament reference to the positiveness of our redemption is in the past completed action sense of the Greek verb in John 1:29--"The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world". Though this verse is often used in defense of universal atonement, provisional or otherwise; because of the word "world", there is much more to the verse which makes that interpretation difficult to support. Also see connection with discussion of "reconciliation" later in book.

The Law of First Principles

If first principles are to be adhered to regarding biblical interpretation, we must take original words literally, and furthermore agree that the main subject of this verse is the principle of the sacrifice of Christ --its adequacy (value), and its efficacy (power to produce the desired results).

If we are to believe that full propitiation was made for the sins of all who Christ died for, and the "world" in this verse (and many others) means everyone, then everyone's sins are taken away--including unbelief--and they cannot be condemned finally. This conflict being apparent to some, is where the idea of provisional or potential atonement came from to try to keep the door open for every humanistic theology akin to the Arminian errors, and any other exceptions to a scripturally constitutional belief that "God does it all, from start to finish".

Nothing is contained in this passage--nor in fact, in the entire principle of Christ's redemptive sacrifice--which conditions its completion or accomplishment upon any such thing as man's acceptance, or rejection. It has been done--a finished work, satisfying the holiness and justice of God, redeeming and delivering the souls of its objects unto the one who bought them with the price of redemption--His own blood (Rev. 1:5).

The next important thing to establish is who are the objects, or recipients of this deliverance from sin. The English word "world", if taken in its widest sense to mean everyone on earth--forces an interpretation upon the meaning of Christ's sacrifice which makes it a sufficient offer for all, rather than a definite efficient action for some.

The question of whether the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ was efficacious for the deliverance of its objects is of extreme importance in the question of whether absolute election by God, or free will choice of

man is true. Heb. 10:10 says, "we are sanctified forever through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all", and vs. 14, "For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (set aside for God--justified, etc.).

The only way to make this conditional upon the will of man is to add by implication at least: "if they believe". In effect, we make this offering to God, of Christ, also an offer to man. Election, rather, means that being sanctified already we will come to believe, and partake of our purchased redemption; our inheritance.

May we draw this point to a conclusion, as follows: That the redemptive sacrifice of Christ does actually accomplish the forgiveness of sins, and procurement of salvation and righteousness for its objects (the elect), and that instead of being subject to the possibility of acceptance, or rejection by the unregenerate will of anyone--rather means that, faith (the ability to believe; which granted, is required) will be given to those for whom Christ died, so that his blood will be applied to their hearts, and His life (Holy Spirit) imparted to them at the same time (if not technically first--per I Cor. 2:11-14, II Thess. 2:13, etc.).

4. Under Predestination

Of the various terms related to election, there is probably much more of similarity, often interchangeability than there are important differences. By this, I mean that it is essentially the same thing to say regarding our election to salvation, that God has ordained, fore-ordained, predestinated, chosen, elected, decreed, called us, to salvation.

While it would require some further proof of the original Greek--it seems equally safe to say that even the tense used in such passages as Rom. 8:29-30, etc. regarding our calling, justification, and glorification, establishes God's past completed action of our assured salvation.

For the moment also--subject to more disclosure of the Greek which applies--I believe the very term "foreknowledge", traditionally made to be the basis of election, is equally grounded in God's sovereign will, not as the result of something he foresaw that might happen, but that was guaranteed to happen because he foreordained it to. It may then be that the word "foreknowledge" is more than precognition, prescience, or God's ability to foresee the future, especially since all such future events are either caused, or controlled by Him. By this I mean that the Father's foreknowledge of the elect in Christ

is probably more of a term referring to the intimacy of our relationship to Him, as seeing and knowing us in Christ at the time of predestinating us to all the wonderful things of Romans 8:29-30--called, justified, to be conformed to the image of his Son, glorified. That the elect are personally known by the Father in eternity past, is a much more precious and meaningful connotation of this word than impersonally foreseeing what the future conveys.

In keeping with our testing method of comparing the various related doctrines with the two questions of (1) an irresistible work of God's grace, or (2) a resistible free will choice of man, let us see which belief most logically and consistently fits the doctrine of predestination.

The Supremacy of God's Will

Ephesians 1:5 tells us that God has "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will". This, without question, is a statement that clearly supports absolute election, and must be severely strained to make an action of the will of God, somehow the result of a foreseen act of the will of man. The demeaning implication is this: that if we ever make a work of God subject to a work of man--we make God subject to man! In other words, man's will would be sovereign, at least in one area, instead of God's will. And that, no matter how it is rationalized, is the ultimate effect of free will theology.

And, again, if the words of verse 5 are not conclusive enough, look at the added emphasis in verse 6 where it says that "to the praise of the glory of his grace, he hath made us accepted in the beloved". But even here, the typical free will bias will infer a qualification to both the words, "grace", and "made", that the complete sovereignty principle can not countenance. That principle is in fact, 180° opposed to any concept of a natural free will--having any capacity to affect God's will for either their own lives, or anyone else's.

Going on to verse 9 in Ephesians 1, again we have the explanation of how His will is carried out which he purposed in himself. How hard it is for us to come to the place of admitting, or agreeing with the idea that God originates (within Himself) such a great work as salvation without any factor external to himself conditioning its ultimate consummation, including man's will.

One of the difficulties seems to be the conventional interpretation of the word "foreknowledge", as I have mentioned before. From what I can see so far, being

untaught in the Greek, it is difficult to be very dogmatic about the real meaning and priority of foreknowledge in God's elective decree. And as I stated earlier, the purpose of my writing is necessarily stimulative, more than definitive, though my convictions are resolute, despite formidable trials. I think most current interpretations, including Scofield, are either unwarranted or unwise to make such positive remarks about foreknowledge preceding election in the divine order; with predestination following. I think further that careful study might well reveal a very close affinity, even some inseparable relationship of the terms.

For example, in Rom. 8:29 foreknowledge seems to stand in the order and significance of foreordination, as well as in I Peter 1:20. I Peter 1:2 is the almost singular basis for Scofield and others' classification of foreknowledge preceding--even determining election.

Here again, the sometimes unconscious bias one way or the other towards free will, or free grace may influence this particular doctrinal statement accordingly--as well as many others. In this case, the contrasting question is this: does God foreordain, because he foreknows; or foreknow because he foreordains? Is it not at least a tendency in the wrong direction to think that God has to foresee something happening, or that may happen in the future before he makes a decision to affect it? It betrays the highest view we ought to hold of God's infinite sovereignty, and omnipotence.

One of the best passages to see some light on what it is that affects or determines foreknowledge, is Acts. 2: 23, where both the divine design of the cross, and the human guilt of it are explained. As we are trying to gain perspective and insight on the question of election, we will not be concerned here with the latter part of the verse. In the first part referring to "Him (Christ) being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.....", indicates at least, that the first thing we have revealed about this great, momentous event is that it was God's will (determinate counsel).

Scofield and others in tracing back the elective procedure usually end up with foreknowledge being the first step, and then comment that nothing is revealed as to what it is in the divine foreknowledge that determines the election. While often there is probably no subtle, or conscious reason for stopping there--the effect is to make the doctrinal element of foreknowledge more of a mysterious cause in itself, than it is relative to something greater.

In other words, if indeed the mind and will of God is

sovereign and supreme, isn't it better to say--rightly so--that God has not revealed why he has elected anyone to salvation; including the fact that the idea of foreknowledge of any thing external to himself can not be of any causative, or extenuating effect upon that decree. My point is, that we ought to start everything with the will of God, which is probably practically synonymous with his mind--and that foreknowledge as prescience, as great a power as that is, is by comparison a faculty or attribute.

Again in summary, first, I think there is something importantly akin between foreknowledge and foreordination. Secondly, the application of the word as God's ability to know beforehand refers more to who is known, than what is known. By this, I mean that the believer is foreknown personally in Christ because of his election--versus being elected as the result of a foreseen positive response to the gospel. A note from M. R. Vincent on I Peter 1:20 as to foreordained being foreknown is good on this: referring to the "place held and continuing to be held by Christ in the divine mind". Also the perfect participle, "has been known from all eternity down to the present time". Note also the same sense of meaning applied to spiritual Israel in Rom. 11:2, "God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew".

As with the other doctrines looked at thus far, I would make the test of seeing which side of the issue best aligns with the scripture involved--in this case, under the heading of predestination. Although we can not, in the scope of this book, bring in many of the numerous passages concerned. To cite a few, at least, let us first consider John 15:16, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, etc.". To persist in making this emphatic statement of God's sovereignty in election explainable as a free will choice of man--does such violence to the clear meaning of words, English or their Greek counterparts, as to betray the very ethics of true scholarship.

Objective Theology vs. Subjective Theory

A note which I came across on alleged scholarship as an argument for theories, beliefs, etc. from Robert Dick Wilson, the renowned Old Testament scholar, will help underscore the importance of this:

"My point is that you ought to be able to trace back this (an) agreement among scholars to the original scholar who propounded the statement, and then find out whether what the scholar said is true. What was the foundation of his statement?"

"My plan has been to reduce the Old Testament (Bible) criticism to an absolutely objective science; something which is based on evidence, and not opinion. I scarcely ever make a statement which rests merely on my own subjective belief". (And we might add: neither should we make statements, untested and unproven--based upon tradit-

ion, popularity, etc.).

Can we bring the essential points of this quotation into comparison by this question: Is majority agreement among scholars in itself a safe guide for our doctrinal beliefs, or is true scholarship an objective science, even if it is a minority position?

Referring again to John 15:16, the only possible question this verse can leave is whether this is the only way God works. Are some saved this way, and others by some other method? (which I do not imply is so, in any way). We must prove everything by the word.

Another statement of scripture, which is equally strong in its sovereign emphasis is Acts 13:48, "and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." To explain this decisively clear teaching as being subject to the free will of man (as a doctrinal prerequisite), again rends the very order and meaning of the words asunder. We might as well put the whole preposterous idea together as this: "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed, because those who would believe were ordained to eternal life". If this is true, whose will is really sovereign: God's, or man's?

I clipped the following quotation from a church bulletin--from either a poem or song--the second verse of which so well expresses the predestination principle. The captions, notes, and underscorings are mine.

Redemption

Would you win a soul to God?
Tell him of a saviour's blood,
Once for dying sinners spilt
To atone for all their guilt.

(Note at this point, no distinction between the two methods: free will, or predestination; but proper proclamation of the gospel).

Regeneration

Tell him--it was sovereign grace
Led thee first to see his face;
Made thee choose the better part,
Wrought salvation in thy heart.

(Please note the full process, as all God's work. Not a step optional, or dependent upon man's "free"will decision).

Release

Tell him of that liberty,
Wherewith Jesus makes thee free!

Testimony

Sweetly speak of sins forgiven,
Earnest of the joys of heaven.

Hammond

Probably the strongest and clearest passage in the Bible on the subject of God's sovereignty in salvation is Romans 9:11-23. I will refer to parts of the passage a little later on, but will just remark in passing that it is either much neglected or misinterpreted, not to be recognized as a proof text for the whole basic truth that God not only has the right to do whatever his will conceives of, but that in fact he actually does the specific things that are spoken of in the verses cited. How much more absolute can the power of God's will be than is described to us here?

The better question would seem to be, how much less sovereign do we dare say that His will is? The admonitions to us in the passage not to question the sovereign right and might ^{of} his will, are enough to teach us to be very careful in our attitude and thoughts on the very personal and private domain of God's eminent authority.

An example of the strength of the predestination principle: among its many advocates in post-reformation history is quoted below from the Lambeth Articles produced in England in 1595. The articles were formulated by instigation of King James against an increasing free-will controversy, caused by the Arminian movement. (Which is today's entrenched synthetic gospel theology).

Article No. 2

"The moving, or efficient cause of predestination unto life is not the foresight of faith, or of perseverance, or of good works, or of any thing that is in the persons predestinated, but only the good-will and pleasure of God". (See Eph. 1:5, upon the truth of which, such a statement is predicated). Parenthetical note, mine.

This statement with eight other resolved articles were published after much serious debate and deliberation among the many learned and grave Church of England divines assembled together at Lambeth by persuasion of the King.

I am likewise convinced of a similarly imperative need today of facing this issue before it does even more damage; and believing in the power of God to settle for as much of the church as possible--the same controversial problem that exists today. Especially does it need to be done with very careful, diligent devotion to God, and His truth.

Beza, fellow worker, and pastoral successor of Calvin, wrote of him (Calvin) the following description:

"Close attention, clearness of thinking, order, frequent repetition, uncommon pleasure and deep interest in the great object of his pursuit--the cause of God and His truth, by defense, illustration, and explanation of the Scriptures--gave him an accuracy, extent, and quickness of retentive faculties rarely surpassed".

I know personally from reading some of Calvin's sermons, teaching, letters etc., how wonderfully gifted of God in intellect he was, plus (not often realized today) being blessed with a special measure of the other graces of God which were characteristics of his life--which endeared him to his people, colleagues, contemporaries, and much of the church and world since, who knew what kind of man he really was.

The secret to success--or right results in this grand, and glorious object--is to be seen in another of Calvin's comments:

"The teachableness in which every godly man will ever hold all the powers of his mind under the authority of the word of God, is the true and only rule of wisdom".

The truth expressed in quotations like this, and some others mentioned ought to be impressed upon our minds, and a habit of reference to them developed, lest we forget and stray away from such important principles; which often is the pattern of many of God's people.

Calvin also said with regard to the maintenance of sound doctrine, that: "It is a dishonor to us that we do not ratify at least with ink, that doctrine which so many pious persons have delivered to us, sealed with their own blood".

I would add, that it is therefore our duty to give forth full explanation of doctrine, so that those who need and depend upon leaders' and teachers' authority and knowledge may not remain in doubt or error. And yet from the standpoint of individual responsibility, no intermediary is technically required, nor may be offered to God for any excuse for personal failings.

5. Under God's Love

Again, to hold to our test method of using scripture to interpret scripture, we must try to see whether the subject of God's love is more explainable in terms of sovereign particular grace (to the elect-in Christ), or as common universal grace (to all mankind- even in their sinful state).

The question from one extreme to another must be asked, and the subject explored throughout the Bible until it is a settled doctrine--however difficult it may seem to be.

Does God love everyone? Does he hate anyone, or did he ever? If so, why? We know from scripture that God definitely loves some, at least; and, as it may be seen, at most.

The question is who does he love? If particular ones only, why? We also know from the word of God, that God definitely hates some. Who are they, and why?

Is there a common denominator for the objects of God's love? Is there also some common factor for those he hates? Is the love final, and definitive? The hate?

It would seem logical to start from the beginning of the Bible, and trace some examples of each, as well as related statements on the subject in Psalms, and elsewhere.

First in order, and foremost in weight of proof of the truth of God's sovereignty in election, and love is the case of Jacob and Esau. In Genesis 25:23 the Lord said to Rebekah that there were two nations in her womb, two manner of people, one to be stronger than the other, and that the elder would serve the younger. Especially significant is the latter decree, which is completely opposite from the usual order of the seniority birth-right position of the elder. Here, God exercised His sovereign right to make an exception to his own rule.

Malachi 1:2,3, and Romans 9:13 tells us specifically that God loved Jacob, and hated Esau. If we look at what it was in their lives that could be the cause of this contrasting love and hate, we find that the human factors in their lives would definitely produce the reverse of the above. Surely Jacob did more wrong than Esau; naturally speaking.

But not only does the comparison of their lives give

such support to God's sovereign exclusive will being the reason of his love and hate to Jacob and Esau respectively, Romans 9:11-13 clearly and pointedly answers the whole matter:

"(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.)"

The weight of this truth is so preponderous, we should never lose sight of it.

"It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger."

"As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

The strength of the principle of God's love being not all-inclusive, but particular is evident enough in this example from scripture alone, but let us look at some other references on the subject.

Before we leave Romans 9 for other scriptural examples--notice the same emphatic principle in Rom. 9:18:

"Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy (particular ones), and whom he will he hardeneth (also particular ones)."

This is not just something God may do--but that he has done, and will yet do in multitudes of instances (in fact, in every life--one way, or the other).

Having looked at an incontrovertible example of God's exclusive, particular love in the case of individuals, let us note for a few moments an example of God's love nationally, and internationally.

Subject to correction, for something I may not know, or have presently forgotten; until the time when the gospel was first directed by God to be given to the Gentiles by Peter (Acts 11:18), the only objects and recipients of God's love in terms of faith and salvation, were the Jews.

No other people or nations in all the centuries between Adam and Peter were "granted repentance unto life eternal". In other words--especially as underscored by the numerous references in the Old Testament of the wickedness of man which God hated, etc.--no people outside of Israel were loved by God; at least, personally and directly.

The common interpretation of God loving everyone in John 3:16 does not reconcile to the Old Testament record (nor to the New Testament record, in context).

Obviously, the question must be answered as to what John 3:16 really means, and who it applies to. Other similar references to the subject must also be studied.

I would suggest as a starting point, that we test some of our traditional concepts, and assumed interpretations of just what kind of message the gospel really is.

Is John 3:16 a statement of universally-applying truth about God's love, and a universal invitation for salvation? Does the word "world" mean every individual on earth?

Does John 3:16 reconcile to, or fit the belief of the universal love and offer of salvation, better than the doctrine of particular personal election?

Since, probably the conventional interpretation and use of John 3:16 makes it almost a standard article of confederation for the free will, Arminian (+ or -) concept, it must admittedly be crucially tested and analyzed for its true meaning, insofar as possible in itself, and (always) in connection with other related scriptural teaching on the subject.

I would respectfully caution anyone to be openminded enough, as a Berean student of the word, not to operate on the basis of John 3:16, and certain other strongholds of the free will position as if it were a foregone conclusion that it could not possibly support or be explained in terms of election. That is, not as convincingly as a declaration and proof* text of the proposition of unlimited love, and universal availability of salvation.

* assumed proof.

Regardless of what kind of a reaction some have to what I am writing, and trying to stimulate interest in favor of--I hope that it would be believed that I am also trying to encourage the kind of study and debate of the subject that is based only upon faithful exegesis and exposition of the word of God.

It will not be an easy task to try to counter the tradition of human reasoning, and mortal practices and influences that generally prevail, especially when many opinions on the other side are sincere, and serious, and held to be scripturally true. The one vital hope and prayer we should have is that there would be a will-

ingness to honestly and diligently work at the problem; earnestly seeking to know the one real answer and truth of the issue of the doctrine of election.

Getting back to particular word consideration, if there is any word in our English Bible which must be better understood, and more carefully construed as to its case by case meaning, it is the word "world". Without going into a Greek analysis in this presentation, which I could not do anyway, may it suffice for purposes of illustration to make some general remarks and observations on the nature of this one example of the need to determine original word meanings and applications. I would also like to show some of the errors caused by literal interpretation of the translated language, versus the original inspired words.

Conceding that the 'apparent' meaning of the words of John 3:16 give convincing support for the belief that God's love, and "offer" of salvation are all-inclusive--the necessity of proving the accuracy of the translation (especially as related to current word usage) is extremely important. For if this interpretation of John 3:16 is right, then there is no such thing as absolute sovereign election; or at best only some kind of dual-principle system exists.

Whatever possibilities are conceivable from the word of God as we have it translated, may have to be studied, examined, and compared diligently with the original inspired language of scripture to establish whatever the true doctrine of salvation is. However, I believe that God has caused the authorized King James version to be sufficiently accurate to determine the truth in itself.

One extreme, or the other, or some kind of combination, or variation of the two poles of interpretation must be eventually vindicated as the truth above all other ideas, and accepted as the church's united article of faith on the subject.

Some of the things I would point out in explanation of the use of the word "world" in scripture are not news to most Christians who have studied much. But it only serves to underscore the problem we have--as it reminds me of the statement that someone so aptly expressed, that: "We know so much, but understand so little".

"For God so loved the world". The Greek word "kosmos" translated as world is more nearly the word "mankind". Yet the elementary meaning conveyed in this word is not even that simple to express in one conclusive English word.

However, as "mankind" is the common most accurate English counterpart, let's put it into the verse in place of "the world":

"For God so loved "mankind", or "man" (the race). In either case, "the world", or "mankind", etc. does not in itself mean every individual in the world, any more than it can well mean "man" in the generic sense--as special creations, and then spiritual re-creations of God. As the latter, they would be the objects of His special purpose, grace, love, and predestination.

If Israel only was referred to as the people of God, my people, etc.--excluding every other contemporary nationality throughout the ages before the Gentiles were "granted repentance unto life"--why can we not see the very clear possibility that God is referring only to a specific people in John 3:16 as the elect of the world; certain men who were already ordained to salvation before the foundation of the earth?

Many other examples of the variant uses of "world" in the Bible will help illustrate the unreliability of connotations, and common usage of words and phraseology to determine the original actual meaning of God's word as he gave it in the Hebrew and Greek.

A. W. Pink in his book, *The Sovereignty of God*, gives many good references to the foregoing (within limits).

Next in order of words of John 3:16 to examine and help clarify the meaning of is "whosoever": "that whosoever believeth in him", etc. The obvious English meaning of the word is an unqualified anyone, and everyone. I take no issue with that, and believe that the Greek original means the same.

The key is in the word that follows "whosoever", or in the complete phrase "whosoever believeth", agreeing again, that it is a truth just as it is stated, that whosoever believeth in him shall be saved.

I mentioned before the question of whether the gospel is invitational and propositional to all, or proclamational and promissory to the elect.

I believe it can be seen with at least equal credibility, from the verse itself--and with even more logic and strength of support from other scriptural references--that the objects of God's love and promise of salvation in John 3:16, etc. are the elect of God only. Nothing else is consistent with all the other great doctrinal truth about God and man.

It may take a few times to re-read the verse to notice the distinction I am referring to. A biased, or preconceived belief in the universality of God's love, atonement, and offer of salvation will automatically impute the following implication to the phrase "whosoever believeth", to wit, that it is an invitation or offer that is open to anyone to believe if they choose to. If they "will" is often used; but what is it to "will" something? Can they "will" it, in their natural state, etc. as discussed from I Cor. 2:11-14?

Please do not think that I am being subtle, or manipulating words with ideas--but that I seriously believe that Satan has subtly deceived us, and our humanistic ways have misled us from the basic, objective underlying principle that is inherently in the familiar verse, John 3:16, and other similar places.

I believe that the phrase "whosoever believeth", or "whosoever will" in another place, etc. are not an open general offer to everyone as is so commonly assumed--but a statement of promise --directed to the elect (yea, to them partly as a process of invitation or drawing), that is like a covenant assurance to them of their election. They are being drawn to God irresistibly (eventually); that is, they alone can, and will believe. John 6:29 (with the usually overlooked fact of it being God's work, that we believe), John 6:37, 39-40, 44-45. Incidentally, I am not a covenant theology advocate, regarding salvation.

I feel no impropriety of spiritualizing, etc. to add such words for emphasis of this principle truth as these: whosoever can eventually believe, will (and only the elect can, ever). Their election guarantees the bringing to pass, or to be, of their faith and acceptance of their ordained inheritance. Acts 13:48, etc.

Just as a word of caution--we do not have to preach, or unwisely publicize some of these deeper things of the doctrine of election to the yet unsaved or to the world at large. Yet, I certainly do not mean by this that there is any danger or harm we can do regarding people's eventual salvation. Nor that there is anything too controversial or difficult to explain and justify to the world. The dispensational teaching of the blinding and deafening of Israel to the Gospel is scriptural warrant enough, among others, to speak likewise in our time of election truth.

However, I refer to any unwise, divisive, blazoning forth of the technical realities of the doctrine of election--mainly as a counter-offensive to the Arminian or free will majority faction of the church. I see in this kind of preaching and contending over doctrine, more flesh than spirit; more fight or hate, than love; and hence, a shameful betrayal of our responsibility to God,

His word, and His church. It has taken hundreds of years for the church to get into this general Arminian, free will, state--and anything openly abrupt and antithetical will bring confusion, rebellion, bewilderment, schism, and even chaos to God's people.

The natural way to hopefully eventually reverse the situation we are in, is through the pastors, and teachers of each local church, seminary, etc. But even there, possibly first a careful, selective approach must be made to such leaders whose spiritual character and openness are known to be such that they will thoughtfully and diligently consider the tremendous implications and effect of the revaluation, and re-establishment of this doctrine.

6. Under Faith (belief and trust)

Probably no stronger statement of the source and cause of faith is to be found in scripture than that of Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God". The primary gift, it may be argued, is salvation. But even though the secondary aspect of the verse is faith, it also must be seen as part of that gift. In other words, God gives the means, as well as the end. Also, it should be stressed that grace is a work of God--not a granting of opportunity, as the free will salvation concept represents it.

Also, Romans 10:17, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" is equally emphatic as to the origin and method by which faith is received. We must not let this bedrock truth of the doctrine of faith escape our thinking, whenever we consider the matter of believing, or trusting in God for salvation. In fact, as I Cor. 12:9 tells us: a special further power of faith is given to some believers to use in the ministry of serving God and the church, and that different measures of faith are given. Rom. 12:3.

I can not overlook the close analogy between Eph. 2:8, and I Cor. 2:11-14 (see pages 12-13). Just as surely as the natural man can not understand spiritual things--neither can a man without faith believe. Now we can not question that as in Eph. 2:8, the natural man has not faith. Neither can it be argued against that it is definitely received from God--a gift. The same question begs to be answered as in I Cor. 2:11-14. What kind of a gift, or enabling is it? A temporary faculty--subject to the will of natural man to use or not use? Or is it more logical and consistent with the word of God that it is another conclusive evidence of how God personally performs the transforming miracle of salvation from start to finish--by giving certain men the ability to believe which they can neither finally refuse, nor fail to use?

The idea that God undertakes a work that he will not completely finish; or even desires something that will not ultimately come to be, is a contradiction of the highest theological concept of the nature of God that we ought to hold.

Again then, only a predisposed, prejudiced mind for the upholding of the free will position can relegate faith to anything less than a God-given capacity to understand and believe spiritual things, purposely bestowed upon the elect to effectuate their ordained salvation.

It is not unsound or wrong to emphasize the truth of the source and vehicle of faith, by shortening the phraseology of Rom 10:17 (for proof of the point) as follows: 'faith cometh by the word of God'. Is not this the literal meaning of how and when faith is received?

Some Distinctions of Faith

So many times we hear the appeal for people to believe, in such terms as: "put your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ", etc. (as if they had the inherent capacity to believe if they wanted to). I think that even in some of our translations, notes, etc. we have changed or missed the essence of what faith really is, when the phrase "the faith of Jesus Christ, or God" is rendered or interpreted as faith in Christ, or God. At least, the Arminian influence often conveys the conventional idea of faith in Christ, even when the scripture itself definitely says, "faith of Christ."

Galatians 2:20 so often quoted by believers to testify of our new life which is actually Christ within us, says that we live this life by "the faith of the Son of God"-- "the faith of", not "faith in" as usually assumed. Verse 16 of the same passage tells us that we are not justified by the works of the law, but by "the faith of Jesus Christ".

Another example of misinterpretation is Mark 11:22, latter part, "Have faith in God" (spoken to disciples, or believers) is more accurately translated (per Scofield notes, etc.): "Have the faith of God". How many times we are guilty of accommodating certain connotations, or renderings to our personal and traditional concepts.

Romans 10:8 calls the gospel- "the word of faith". Galatians 3:23 has an especially good description of the source and process of faith, "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed". Also, Ephesians 3:12, "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him" (not faith in him, as we usually think of the subject).

II Thess. 3:2 tells us "that all men have not faith" --so that no matter what we think about when faith is

given--we can not deny that some are never given it. Yet the big problem must be either (1) who is given faith and why, or (2) is it some kind of ability which is optional, or conditional as to its use or capability? Heb. 12:2 leaves no question as to the origin of our faith- "Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith". I think we ought not to lose the continuity of the expression either--that he will finish what he has started, because it is all of grace.

One last thought for now on what faith really is, comes from Rev. 14:12 referring to the patience of the saints in "keeping (1) the commandments of God, and (2) the faith of Jesus".

7. Under Regeneration

John 3:3 tells us that "except a man be born again he can not see*the kingdom of God". II Thess. 2:13 gives the order by which a man is saved: (1) chosen, (2) sanctified through the Spirit, and (3) belief of the truth.

Titus 3:5-7 states that "according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.....etc."

The question is whether the new birth necessarily follows belief or faith, or may precede or be part of the same process. I see a law fixed in I Cor. 2:14 that the natural man can not understand the things of God, as invariable and unchangeable, except by a miracle of transformation by God. That transformation must take place before a man can understand and believe spiritual truth. What else, then, is the transformation but the very regeneration or new birth which we are talking about?

The new creation which the believer is in II Cor. 5:17 did not himself elect to be so created, but was elected to be (re)created by God. The basic analogy of the new birth to the natural birth--that is, that it is an act of the parent (God, in the new birth), or parents (man, and woman, in the natural birth) that produces the child; not an act of the offspring-- can not be denied as an essential principle, whatever the differences may be.

* perceive, or enter.

8. Under Identification (Union of Christ and believer)

Closely related to Item 3 particularly, that is, atonement or redemption, is the wonderful and all-comprehensive fact of the Christian's identification with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection.

If the organic unity of the race in Adam is an accepted truth to us, are we less convinced or aware of the spiritual unity of believers in Christ, and when it actually started? I refer to an actual, spiritual participation--not merely an imputation, or application.

In other words, the first creation under the federal headship of Adam, organically includes every member of the human race. The doctrine of original sin, accountable to every human being, means that because we are each and all identified with Adam--that when he committed the first sin, we committed it too, in him.

Therefore, the parallel truth of union in the second creation (re-creation) under the corporate headship of Christ, spiritually includes every member of the body of Christ. The doctrine of imputed righteousness (justification, and all that is associated with it) accountable to every believer, or Christian, means that because we are identified in union with Christ we have his righteousness.

When did it happen, and why? At the cross, because of God-appointed election! Some would say it happened at the cross because of foreseen faith. But I would say that faith is the after-the-fact appropriation by the appointed believer of his cross-secured life in Christ.

Yet, the matter in question is who are members of this new union, and how, and when? I believe the Bible will prove to us in many direct, and inter-related examples that just as we had no individual choice in becoming part of Adam's race or posterity--neither do we become members of the church--that is, the body of Christ--voluntarily; but by the design and development of God's sovereign elective will. He is calling out his (Christ's) chosen bride.

One analogy that helps illustrate the truth contended for is that of Israel as the wife of Jehovah. and the church as the bride of Christ. Christ the child, the Godman was born by the express plan and purpose of God through Israel--having thereby an earthly natural mother, but God himself as the Holy Spirit being the father by the miraculous virgin conception.

The scriptures abound with the truth of the church being

similarly born by God's plan and purpose through the Holy Spirit, and His word.

Furthermore, the fact of our selection by God to become part of Christ's bride is unmistakably clear in John 6, and John 17 where it explains how we (certain elect ones only) are drawn to God, and can only come if we are drawn, and will never be cast out when we do so come.

The whole essential principle of personal salvation is embodied in this truth. It is by the plan, purpose and power of God only--and is for particular ones only, whose ultimate salvation is promised and guaranteed.

There is historically in the world a custom in some cultures where the bride is chosen for a son by the father. Regardless of what we may think of this practice, it is very interesting to note that this is just what God does in electing us to be the bride of Christ and presenting us to him, and being assured by the word (John 6:37) that we are never refused by Christ as God's love-gifts to him.

Now consider the vast difference, if in any way we substitute for such a specific plan and fulfillment--the idea of an offer from God, subject to the fickle nature of man, who may or may not become part of this special body--the bride of Christ--as their corrupted "free" wills dictate, or govern.

In Eve, as the wife of Adam, we have a type of the bride of Christ. Though we know that typology does not constitute doctrine, the fulfillment of the anti-type is the only reasonable explanation we can make. As God both created and gave the woman Eve to Adam as a help(mate), so too did God(re)create and give us to Christ as his espoused companions.

We realize, of course, that there are certain qualifications to these analogies, i.e., Israel as the wife of Jehovah is yet to be restored to the purity required of her, and that we are now being prepared to become the chaste bride of Christ in the marriage feast to come in heaven.

But still we must go further into direct scripture quotations to determine the intrinsic factors which reveal the truth about the controversial aspects of the who, how, and when of our salvation.

Our subject in this section is the union of Christ and believers, particularly in the events of the cross.

The Arminian concept of God providing sufficient grace for all to believe in Christ for salvation if they are presented with the gospel truth, and accept by free will choice, is one interpretation to be dealt with.

Another, more subtle or difficult concept to follow, is the idea of provisionary, or conditional atonement. A book which I have read and studied on this theory is "The Death Christ Died" by Robert P. Lightner. It contains many worthwhile things to consider from him and from other authors, etc. on various elements of the question of the extent and application of the atonement.

The book further classifies its adherents as moderate Calvinists. Lightner explains this qualification to the historic Calvinistic position as being a modification (but decisive) of 1 of the 5 basic points of so-called Calvinism, as contrasted with Arminianism, and other opposing views.

The one exception is that, whereas the strict Calvinistic belief is that of a limited atonement, or particular redemption--moderate Calvinism maintains the belief of an unlimited atonement, or provisional basis of salvation for all.

One conspicuously missing link in Lightner's book is the subject under consideration, that is, the union of Christ and the believer at the cross. For example, the following comments are excerpted from Page 97: Lightner says "The substitutionary work of Christ is complete, and at the same time conditional. It is conditional in that its accomplishments must be appropriated by faith" (as if there is a question as to whether faith will occur). And further that "no elect person was saved at the time of Christ's dying".

To this, I say it is only true in the time perspective of the Christian's earthly existence. We must not overlook the Godward side of the cross in the believer's inclusion with Christ (and even that by ordination before the foundation of the world). To the necessity of faith and acceptance on the manward side, it is inevitable --if it happened there, it will happen here!

Probably the clearest explanation of our spiritual union with the Lord is in Romans 6. Verses 3-5 refer to our baptism into Jesus Christ as our baptism into his death--and speaks of this great mystery as an accomplished fact. Parallel and complementary to this passage is II Cor. 5:14-17, Col. 2:12-13, and 3:13 on the subject of our inclusion in Christ's death.

The important feature of this wonderful truth is the design of God which ordained and accomplished the intrinsic identification with Christ in the three-fold act of his death, burial, and resurrection.

This is different in value, or actual accomplishment than the idea of a provisional act of God which is retroactively effective only by the operation of faith; which itself is more properly a consequence of our union with Christ in his cross-work--than a cause of subsequent application, as is more commonly thought.

This is a major doctrine, yet like election, it is not often listed or explained distinctively for its great importance, and decisive effect on other doctrines, subject or consequent to it.

Yet it is similarly not surprising, because it is comparatively more of a sovereign, independent work of God along with the whole elective process. Anything which tends to a more humanistic, man-favoring interpretation is the popular concept; and thereby susceptible to the danger of deviating from the faith (doctrine) once delivered (Jude 3).

To try to draw the relatively brief consideration of this point to a close for now, we must attempt to keep our theology straight. That is, we must be biblically consistent. Tradition, feelings, humanistic reasoning, and appeals are not the tools of faithful scriptural exegesis.

If I may coin a phrase or two (but not a new idea) to contrast this:

The rock of theology is objective factual truth.
The sand of theology is subjective theoretical opinion.

Whether the mystical union of Christ and believers (to-be) in the events, effects, and eventualities of the cross is spiritually actual, unconditional, and effectual for certain elect ones only--and inevitable to be applied and appropriated, is the strict predestinarian side of the question.

The other side of the issue is whether the benefits of the death of Christ are (or were) potentially available for all, and conditional to the extent of required faith of whoever might eventually believe.

Put another way, the first interpretation holds to a completely sovereign plan and act of God whereby a certain remedy and deliverance is afforded to some (as selected by God) from the otherwise condemning results of original sin.

Unbelief--New Basis of Condemnation?

The second concept, or interpretation in Lightner's book is that the cross is a new provisional basis for salvation of believers, or condemnation of unbelievers (and specifically for that reason only: unbelief).

The latter point is held to as a constitutional principle by adherents of this second theological view. Yet, to put this one (admittedly finalistic) sin in a singular capacity of such tremendous import is very difficult to support in light of other essential related doctrines.

While not the most direct or conclusive evidence to the contrary of such an interpretation--the doctrine of judgment of the wicked dead for their works in Rev. 20:13, etc. is very incompatible to such a concept.

If the world was reconciled to God through Christ on the cross--so that only subsequent unbelief and rejection of Him is condemnatory, why are the wicked dead to be judged according to their works? That is, is there anything to the belief of various causes and degrees of punishment for the eternal state of the wicked? Rev. 21:8 specifies some of these particular classes of sinners. Note also John 5:29, Luke 3:17. Fire is a symbol of judgment--which as the fire in hell is never quenched, means that the judgment or punishment of the condemned never ends.

The infinite duration of the sinful nature of unregenerate man, must eternally invoke the infinite justice of God's retributive wrath. As the depravity probably increases, producing continuous evil results throughout eternity--the judgment of God against it must be correspondingly unceasing and intense.

Some Observations and Thoughts about Reconciliation

The so-called moderate Calvinist view also holds to the following representative interpretation of reconciliation, as excerpted from a quotation of John Walvoord: "The whole act of reconciliation, therefore, is an act of God, a free gift to man, provided for all men, effective to those who believe". (Underlining, mine).

Reference is made to II Cor. 5:18-20, especially, as though it proves that all men (every human being) are reconciled to God; that is, changed from a position of enmity to a position of amity (friendship) and peace.

That this latter phrase describes the effect of reconciliation is true (as rightly understood); but that it means all mankind is the matter to prove, or disprove.

"World" - Analyzed in Context

The more I study the word "world" in the scriptures, and note how often it relates by contrast to Israel, the more convinced I am that a great majority of our interpretations of texts with this word in it are not accurate, but are misunderstood and technically wrong, or exaggerated.

Likewise sometimes, the whosoevers, all men, and misapplication of many other relative terms, or words.

The subject of reconciliation seems especially to bear this out. Looking at Romans 10 for some reference to the matter of the unbelief of Israel, and the corresponding required faith of others (Gentiles) as in verses 6, 8-21, and in Chapter 11, particularly verse 15, tells us that the reason for reconciling the world is the casting away of Israel (for a time).

I realize that there is the promise of Abraham's seed which includes Gentiles, but still no matter which way we turn, or consider our salvation, there is always the reference, or contrasting relationship to Israel. The centrality of that people in God's whole span of plans can not be forgotten as we formulate our theology, especially the doctrines involving salvation.

Those who insist that the word "world" means the entire race, every individual, etc. in certain verses or passages, may be inclined to think the same way with the reference to Israel in Rom. 11:26. The verse reads: "And so all Israel shall be saved, etc.". Now we have no problem saying further that this means Israel as a nation is going to be saved, versus individual cases in the church age, who are coming to know the Lord.

But when we recognize the various remnants of Israel that have been saved in the nation's history, and study the prophecy regarding their national restoration and salvation during the tribulation, we can not possibly conclude that every Israelite at that time is going to be saved, any more than all Gentiles turn to the Lord. Yet, verse 26 says all.

If we agree that this word is comparative; relative, and not inclusive of every individual Jew, even at any one time in the future, so too ought we to at least concede the possibility that the use of the word "world" as used in the New Testament translation is not always (if even often) synonymous with everyone in the race at any given time.

I would mention again that most of these examples are

not in-depth studies and arguments, but glimpses and illustrations of points contended. It may require much greater treatment of the subjects involved to defend, and prove the positions taken, or conversely if wrong, to refute and disprove them.

Another good example of when a word such as "all" is definitely qualified can be seen in Jer. 10:26, the last part, which says that "all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart". Now, no matter how we may consider this statement, we ought to agree that it is particularly contrasting Israel as a nation to individuals. It likely refers, in relation with other scriptures, to the future restoration and national election of Israel (esp. per Deut. 30:6)

Yet, we are concerned with the scope of the word "all". It can not mean that no Israelite was circumcised in heart, when we know there were many personal, plus remnant cases of faith and belief among the Israelites throughout their history.

Instances like this, and there are many others, show us important distinctions of the qualification of words to which we may tend to apply current usage, or traditional subjective reasoning.

To continue the consideration of whether the word "world" as related to reconciliation means every individual, or something less or different (as stated elsewhere), let us trace several scriptural instances of the words being used.

Romans 11:15, which says: "For if the casting away of them (Israel) be the reconciling of the world, etc.", if nothing else, at least shows us that the world as here, and elsewhere used, excludes Israel.

This is significant to temper the interpretation of an English word which, apart from scripture, ordinarily means the entire race, or all of mankind, to us. In this passage, "world" is used to describe people other than Jews. It would not be wrong to substitute the word "Gentiles" as implied and elsewhere stated to emphasize the contrast between the setting aside of the chosen nation, and the extension of salvation to other nations. At any rate, there is surely nothing conclusive in this referred scripture to support reconciliation of every individual in the world, then or since.

Now, if we compare Rom. 11:15 and II Cor. 5:19 which says "that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, etc.", why can it not mean the same thing? That is, that the "world" means people or nations, as contras-

ted to Israel. Is that not the established fact of it all? In other words, this interpretation is certain, but whether there is an all-inclusive application of the doctrine and ministry of reconciliation to the entire earth's population (except Israel?) is not a certainty*, as many would conclude. *Nor, I would contend, even a possibility!

Not even is it any more decisive to refer to verse 14, which says "that if one died for all, then were all dead". It is not obvious, nor definite that 'all' means everyone in the world, any more that it can well mean all that were particularly died for (a certain class, or number). And to be consistent with predestination, this means the elect of God only.

Another essential distinction of this passage is that it speaks church truth, much more than it can be used as a declaration of something very deep and particular which has been done for the entire world.

The truth of organic union and identification applied to the interpretation of I Cor. 15:22 (also Rom. 5:18-19) is to me the key to the meaning of this case in point: For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive".

The first clause--relating to a certain creation, would be rendered as (1) Whoever (which is all humanity) that were in Adam die, because they were in Adam.

The second clause--relating^{to} a contrasting creation, would read as (2) Whoever is in Christ (which is not necessarily--nor even possibly all humanity) will be made alive because they were in Christ.

In each of the passages noted, the words "many", or "all" men are the same Greek word meaning what they say in English--but they do not apply to the same entire class, or group of people. They are each a certain "all", not a common "all".

The true interpretation, then, is not a declaration of universal salvation, or even provisional salvation for all, as in the unlimited atonement concept.

The truth is, rather, of two contrasting creations, and of two different heads of these creations--with judgment falling upon the posterity of one, and righteousness upon the other. This scripture teaches the principle of the organic unity and identification between each member in their own class, as related to the particular head of each domain, after the law which characterizes them--sin and death in the Adamic creation, and life and righteousness in the new creation of the body of Christ.

But there is no automatic transfer of the "all" of one group into the other. They are not necessarily, even consistently with scripture, the same "all".

Again in Eph. 2:11-16 we see Jew and Gentile contrast, and subsequent reconciliation, vs. 16. Nothing is said, nor hardly implied that the Gentile inclusion in the grace of God means necessarily all mankind other than Jews--any more than Israel means every Jew. And again, election truth teaches us the designed limit of God's plan, as in Acts 15:14: that "God did at the first visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name".

Col. 1:20-23 gives some more specific indication of who is reconciled. Rom. 11:15, Eph. 2:16, etc. tell us that Gentiles vs. Israel were the objects of the reconciliation. Here, in Col. 1:21-22, it refers to believers being reconciled. Verse 21 may appear to mean anyone or everyone, but verse 22 talks about presenting these (particular) reconciled ones "holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight".

This, as II Cor. 5:14-21, is church truth, not the proclamation of a universal work of Christ, as the moderate Calvinist view maintains. The all too common habit of applying church truth to the world indiscriminately, is exemplified by Rom. 4:25, where the "our" is the church, or believers, not the world in general. The continuity of this principle can be seen by noting that the "we" in the subsequent verses of Chapter 5, etc. is definitely believers only.

Something that Calvin said which is helpful and suggestive to remind us not to be too liberal, and presumptuous in our application of the extent of the cross is quoted as follows:

"It will not be enough for any man to regard (assume) Christ as having died for the salvation of the world, unless each can claim for himself the effect and possession of that grace."

It comes to me time and again that any doctrinal belief that comes short of actual salvation for anyone, is very questionable as to its authenticity and value when it claims any effect and application of a certain provision or accomplishment of Christ's sacrificial death. What purpose or logic can be contended for a partial participation in a process, that does not eventuate in the fulfillment of the final, essential object of it all?

In an earthly illustration, it is like going halfway home; what good is it if you never get there? Or like a rescue operation where the victim is partially helped, or encouraged, but never brought to safety! Especially if it was in the will, and power of the rescuer!

The following observations on the difference between particular Gentile references, and the common practice of applying them automatically to everyone may be helpful.

Personal appropriation and reference itself is not in question, only whether particular church truth (doctrine) can be universally applied to mankind by implication, tradition, or otherwise. For example, see how typically we think only individually or personally when there is often a larger context or frame of reference involved:

Please turn to your Bible, and begin reading at Eph. 2:1-10, etc. While I would not impersonalize any of these truths and promises to believers, I suggest putting in the word Gentile(s) in various places and consider whether it is an important distinction. A specific reference later in the chapter should substantiate this factor, but my point is that we often overlook the main emphasis.

Keeping in mind at the same time the personal application, verse 1 would read as follows: "And you (Gentiles) hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins" (not only personally, but of an entire bloc of humanity).

Vs. 4, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us (Gentiles)."

5. "Even when we (Gentiles) were dead in sins, hath he quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye/Gentiles/ are saved)".

7. "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us (Gentiles) through Jesus Christ".

8. "For by grace are ye (Gentiles) saved through faith, etc. in vs. 10."

And now especially see the actual reference in vs. 11, "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, etc.", and verse 12, "That at the time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope (as Gentiles), and without God in the world,

and vs. 13, "But now in Christ Jesus ye (Gentiles) who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ (but by no means conclusive that every Gentile is meant, Rather, that by contrast to Israel, the way is opened to others)'. Is this not the key truth of reconciliation?

Then on in verses 14-22, more explanation of the reality of the unity of Jew and Gentile in the body of Christ.

Chap. 3, vs. 6, "That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, etc."

Vs. 8....."that I should preach among the Gentiles, etc."

Vs. 9, "And to make all men* (Gentiles, in addition to Israel) see what is the fellowship of the mystery (which had been previously hid) "

*nationalities.

My object has been to show the contrast, and then the comparison of Gentile and Jew, as two classes of people (broadly speaking, God's people-Israel-historically, and the heathen-other nations-not historically included in God's grace, and covenants).

And if it be agreed that there is a natural, and a spir-
itual Israel as to God's provisions and promises which does not include every individual Israelite, ever; so too must we realize that there is a similar differentiation among the Gentiles.

Though, indeed, much is beyond our comprehension as to the fullness of knowledge or understanding of the doctrines of our faith, we are responsible to distinguish as clearly as possible between fact and theory.

We have at least noted that the word "world" was used in contrast to Israel, and rather than mean everyone on earth, actually is used to show God's extension of grace to non-Israelites, or heathens or Gentiles as a whole con-
trasting class of people. And to the extent that it is personal, it applies to the elect, and not mankind en toto.

Now, though tradition has characterized the interpretation of John 3, esp. vs. 16, etc. as applying to anyone, and everyone without exception, is it not at least reasonable to consider it in the foregoing respect?

Jesus was talking to a representative Jewish leader, Nicodemus, explaining the new way of righteousness: the new birth, faith, etc. In verses 15-18, the same fore-mentioned pattern is to be noted of progressing in dis-
course from Jew to Gentile (law to grace); vs. 15, who-
soever, vs. 16, the world, whosoever, vs. 17, world.

Does not the context of the passage, with previous examples noted, suggest with very good reason the follow-
ing paraphrased interpretation of John 3:16: "For God so loved "others" (the world, (Gentiles) in contrast to Israel) but not all others, even with the modifier "who-
soever", as that word has been previously discussed under Item 5, Page 30-31?

The main doctrine which I have stressed in this book that determines the whole process and outcome of salva-
tion, is election, sovereignly predestinated by God. Which, if it is truly the priority overriding factor, then all other related doctrines must be subordinate, or subject to it. The question may be put as, "Which determines which?" Does your interpretation of the doctrine of God's love, condition or qualify the

doctrine of election, or vice-versa?

The doctrine of an exclusive election by God of certain individuals to be saved, and the idea as usually maintained from John 3:16, etc. of a universal opportunity for salvation can not co-exist--because they contradict each other; and God's word must, and does harmonize.

What we can safely say is that John 3:15-17 shows the broadening of God's grace from Israel only, to other nations, tongues, etc.

What we can not safely say, without definitive evidence, is that this extension of salvation is inclusive, without exception, of every human being on earth, at any particular time, or otherwise.

Sometimes we adopt little phrases and sayings which are good and appropriate for many occasions. But we do not always go far enough with some of these nutshell philosophies. I think of the statement someone has made that, "Truth is not always popular, but it is always right". It may be a good paraphrase to also say that truth is not often popular, but always right. A statement that I just recently heard Dr. Clarence Didden make regarding the current charismatic problem, etc. is a good example of this point: "The devil sees to it that error gets plenty of publicity, but that truth gets a hard time".

So that if something is commonly held to be true, it ought to be investigated, and either confirmed or refuted by the church, continuously. The more strictly sovereign doctrines of God's administrations are not at all popular. This alone doesn't prove anything, but if we know anything from God's word about human nature, and Satan's powers, plus corresponding prophecy, we ought to realize what the typical tendencies, and dangers would be.

We have only to read and study the messages to the 7 churches in Revelation to put this problem in perspective, with the associated warnings and promises. And what must we conclude when we try to establish first causes, and priorities? What is the first line of defense? If we agree that it is holding to the word of God, then doctrine is all-important, and we must include every doctrine. The difficult, demanding, even controversial, as well as the more appealing and presumably attainable things such as love, works, etc.

There is, in all of life, the law of first things first. So too, is it with Christianity, and its theology. There is an order of importance in the fundamental articles of our spiritual beliefs. At least in broad contrast, God is first, and man is last. There are doctrines which re-

late more to God's perfect character, his complete worthiness, his unlimited authority, his sovereign administrations. That is, we ought to be motivated and oriented to know more of who God is, and what he is, and what he does, and how", mainly to worship and glorify him for his sake. Instead we are apt to be more inclined to look at God from a personal perspective, and his acts in relation to ourselves, as if He exists for our purposes, rather than vice-versa.

Defense and Confirmation of the Faith

What is involved in this responsibility? Is it mainly relative to the basic gospel message, and fundamentals as commonly known? Or does it properly and essentially include the fullness of every doctrinal element of truth in the scriptures?

As I also may have indicated elsewhere, I can almost hear the anticipated reactions to much of what I have written here. Some, comparatively few, may generally agree--for which I am hopeful and would be thus encouraged. This assumes of course, which I believe, that I am right in the unconventional interpretations which I have come to believe. And I admit that to be right, it is only possible by some special grace of God--and yet is not everything by grace, in the first place? I Cor. 4 should never be forgotten: "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what has thou that thou didst not receive?, etc.".

Others, whom I would be careful to seek out first to submit manuscript copies of this publication to, I would expect good treatment from. This does not mean that they may not disagree, or even be considerably exercised by some things I have said. But they would be brethren who could be expected to give honest and diligent attention to what I have written, especially if it were understood that it is rendered in genuine conviction, and good will. James 3:13, 17-18, etc.

Still others, might give little attention to a book of this nature--it being too "theological" and "technical" for them. To such ones, which unfortunately are many, I would offer the following statement, quoted from Dr. Diddan, that "Every Christian ought to be a theologian". Realizing, as he does, that there is of course a special gift and ministry to some in this; can we deny that we are all to be as the Berean Christians--"searching the scriptures to see if these things be so", and "studying..... and rightly dividing the word of truth"?

Last, but not least, in regard to difficulties to be

encountered and hopefully overcome, would be the relatively large segment of Christianity which is indoctrinated and entrenched against the strict predestinarian principle of God's sovereign administration of salvation (in every aspect).

Examples of the Depth of the Problem

An illustration of the reactionary problem referred to can be seen in the following experience, which is not a bit untypical of many situations involving differences of belief and practices among Christians and churches.

In a serious, but supposedly good-spirited, conversation with another Christian man (teacher, and leader), I had expressed what I considered to be a thoughtful opinion or interpretation of how the mystery of iniquity can affect evangelism. My basic theme was the doctrine of election and whether it should have any effect on how we witness, and evangelize.

I posed the thought to him of whether it is possible for a Christian to cause (or help cause) people to make false professions, by over-aggressive, humanistic efforts, motivated by the common free-will theology of the day. If this is possible, to whatever extent, can not Christians themselves be guilty of helping the devil sow tares among the wheat? Can we safely assume that God would prevent it because we may be sincere, unaware, etc.?

I do not have access to the book at the moment, nor recall if this particular aspect was brought out by the author or not, but I would recommend for anyone not sufficiently familiar with the subject of the mystery of iniquity, to read F. V. Dabold's book of that title. You will find it very interesting, even eye-opening to the many realities and possibilities of this problem. Also, Watchman Nee's book, The Latent Power of the Soul, is very good on this, and other related problems.

One point I am trying to make is, that in everything in this life God wants us to know Him and His ways, so that we will better understand our own ways, and how often we may think and work independently of Him, and not suspect it. An interesting watchword that the Puritans had, among others, was "beware of ambitious men". Watchman Nee's example of himself in the first several years after his conversion should make us think carefully, too. He apparently was a naturally dynamic personality, businessman, etc., and even though he had changed his life's work from some secular field to Christian service, his operating principle or method was the same human capacity carried over into another dimension. As I recall, it

took him years to learn (especially from an elderly Christian lady) the secret of yielding to the Lord, and walking in the Spirit (Rom. 6 to 8, etc.). Though there were seemingly many results in those first years which would be considered fruit--what kind it really was, I think he questioned much. And so ought we to wonder how much real life there is in many of the so-called works of Christianity in the world today.

Going back to the conversation with the Christian acquaintance on the subject of election, and the example of Christians possibly helping sow tares among the wheat, let me explain further, a little more of that and some of the results.

Having tried to at least pose the very real possibility of such a thing, with the effect that it could have on the body of Christ to hurt it, adulterate it, and confuse its testimony, I had hoped it would strike a responsive chord and at least be worthy of some thought and consideration to him. I had also had other opportunity to talk with him and others associated with him, in similar veins before.

I had likewise prayed at times for some change to occur in this direction for them, and others, in ways which I am very sure are needed, and in other things of which I am as convinced but possibly not always able to prove or support as well. At any rate, I was glad for the exchange and did not know until several months later, that there was definitely more serious opposition from him and his colleagues than any degree of acceptance.

And even when I did hear a reaction to the former conversation by reference from another person of leadership in his church--at the time I did not connect one matter with the other. Yet, when I remembered later, it was quite obvious, if not highly coincidental, that I was the object or cause of the denunciation of Calvinism which the speaker took liberty to make in no uncertain terms, when addressing the audience at a particular ceremony. All of this is being said to help emphasize the depth of resolution and opposition to the Calvinistic position, especially of unconditional election, that characterizes so many Christians.

The gist of the comments were as follows: That the speaker had become so exercised and apparently overcome with discouragement and resentment over controversy that had developed among some students in the college he was

attending, that he had all but decided to leave the institution to get away from what he called the "damnable doctrines" of so-called 5-point Calvinism" (words to this effect--the first two being verbatim).

In all fairness, it can be understood what great problems can develop when the subject is mishandled, and even erroneously represented. But when the indoctrination in free will theology and practice is so ingraved and permeated that there is often no openness, nor intent to study the opposite doctrines of sovereign grace, even as a scriptural scholar, we need to realize how unbalanced or bound by tradition we often are--and yet we have not proven whether the tradition is really from God, or man.

Another instance of the strength of reaction and resistance to the principle of absolute election and predestination by some of God's people is the following example: A pastor, who I assume to be of good character, and generally sound doctrine, was in my home one night during a church conference several years ago. In the course of a conversation of several things--somehow or other (not intentionally by myself, as I recall) the subject of election came up.

And while I had not mentioned anything too dogmatic or antagonistic, I was disappointed, if not surprised, to have him remark that he "could not believe in, or worship a God like that" who would ordain a plan of salvation that is available only to a certain number, or especially that would predestinate ^{anyone} to be eternally lost, and condemned to hell.

The point is, that he was so "sure" of his theological interpretation of salvation--which was the conventional, "anyone can eventually believe and be saved" conviction, that he was willing to attack any doctrinal position which denied this; as if it was impossible that God would do anything different.

My children, while not of the age or experience to be convinced of any of the unconventional interpretations, upon hearing this man's strong, even angry denunciation, were surprised that he dared to hold and show such antagonism against even the possibility of complete predestination.

The general attitude toward the subject of election, as the sovereign, controlling doctrine in the salvation process--that I believe it to be--is usually strong opposition. In fact, many pastors, leaders of educational institutions, etc. are practically unapproachable on the

subject. That is, they are so resolutely sure that they are right, because of the many apparent evidences of blessing and fruit of their own work. And the cause is not helped, by the case of at least one cold war conflict going on between a particular free-will ministry, and a certain misguided Calvinistic counter-offensive continuously launched by a periodical Christian literature medium.

Spiritually speaking, at least, there is no such a thing as a right way to do a wrong thing, but there is a wrong way to do a right thing. And this is what has happened there, and in some other quarters.

Note, too, the reformed theology denomination which while seeming to perpetuate the Calvinistic doctrines, is little more than the corpse of the reformation model--ministers of the letter, but not of the Spirit; often a cold, lifeless message without heart, or spirit. This is not the true representative of predestination. The truth of God ministers life only by the Spirit. Without the latter, we have only dead orthodoxy.

And even many believers who may have considerable knowledge of the doctrine, may not have the maturity and balance that is so essential to a proper ministry of the truth. The following words of C. H. MacIntosh, from his book "Notes on the Pentateuch" beautifully express the essence of both the problem, and the solution:

"The grand difficulty is to combine a spirit of intense separation with a spirit of grace, gentleness, and forbearance; or, as another has said, 'to maintain a narrow circle with a wide heart'. This is really a difficulty. As the strict and uncompromised maintenance of truth tends to narrow the circle around us, we shall need the expansive power of grace to keep the heart wide and the affections warm. If we contend for truth otherwise than in grace, we shall only yield a one-sided and most unattractive testimony. And, on the other hand, if we try to exhibit grace at the expense of truth, it will prove in the end, to be only the manifestation of a popular liberality at God's expense--a most worthless thing!" Amen! (added by me).

By contrast, regardless of what the subject is, see how much better the following attitude and reaction is:

A well known pastor and evangelist of many years experience had invited a young pastor, not long before ordained, to his place of radio ministry, etc. The younger man suggested something that he thought was more scripturally right than what the pastor and his staff were doing.

What was his reaction? Instead of possibly being resentful, or ignoring the advice--after a little consideration, he called his staff together and said to them, "Gentlemen, we're doing it all wrong". Now, this doesn't mean the whole work was wrong, but something significant about a part of it. But what a wonderful attitude and receptiveness of this busy, experienced servant of the Lord to be willing to listen, and humble enough to admit his error openly, and begin immediately to correct it.

It is a strange situation indeed that probably most pastors and other leaders who are in a type of church, school, or mission that may be too aggressively evangelistic, neo-evangelical, heretical, or of any major doctrinal slant, etc.--which is different than the real New Testament pattern of the nurturing, teaching, counseling church--are hardly ever open to discussion to anyone of the more Biblically separated persuasion.

The irony of it is, that probably every one of them would say that he is completely open to the Lord for wisdom, understanding, etc. But the deception lies in what they may decide is of the Lord, and what is not. So that often, even if they did receive you and listen to what you had to say and ask--the reaction would either be resistant and argumentative, as if you were serving the devil more than God to interfere with their work--which to them is unquestionably on the right track, abounding with fruitful evidence, and in the will of God all the way.

They might even feel sorry for you, and would likely shun you as if you didn't really care enough about souls, and other ministries, which to them are more important and productive than "technical doctrinal issues". One of the usual comments of objectors, is that too much concern for doctrinal differences does more harm than good; splits churches, etc. I personally think this is a typical lie of the devil--because rightly done, doctrinal soundness is the first line of defense to every believer, and every church, and work of God. And what can produce progress in life, but true progress in doctrine? That is, we grow in proportion to what we know! II Tim. 3:16, Eph. 1:17, etc.

As to the the common closed-mind attitude of many of God's servants, who are otherwise sincere and faithful; listen to another worthy reminder from Calvin:

"He whom God hath placed as teacher in his house, must show himself ready and willing to receive (all) doctrine, and good instruction--ready to hearken when other men give counsel, and be willing to receive information." Parenthetical insert, mine.

It is no unjust criticism to note a characteristic pride in certain denominational groups--otherwise fundamental and orthodox. The differences among these sectarian factions are often the result of that deep-rooted natural element of pride in man, which almost unconsciously labors to be distinctively different, competitively; more than conscientiously trying to prove and vindicate their positions. And worse still, ^{they} can not seem to see the awful reprimands that are sure to come at the Judgment Seat of Christ for many of God's servants, churches, and believers who could not (would not) work together, or resolve their differences--with all the related hypocrisy, and denial of Christian principles involved. As if we can go our own way, and not be rebuked by the Lord, either now, or then.

Again, from Calvin: "Pride hath always been the mother of heresies". Do we think that's just an archaic comment that has no relevance today? Are many Christians like this, more often than we dare ^{to} believe? Sometimes we dress up the fact of heresy, as error or difference of opinion, etc. But any mixture of truth and error is adulteration, and can never be held as an absolute; or the true interpretation. A half-truth is no truth at all.

Such is the modern conception of the doctrine of election. When it is preached, or alluded to, etc., it is usually conveyed conflictingly with the underlying, if not overriding, obsessed belief that man must have a free will (and always has had) to choose his own destiny. To which, I say you can't have one with the other. (1) God's sovereignty, and (2) man's responsibility (represented by a "free" will, or otherwise) can not be parallel working principles, in the pursuit of the same object--namely, salvation. Not even can there be a 99-1 ratio. For God to be completely sovereign in any, and all of his works, including salvation, the ratio is 100 to 0 or else God's will is not supreme. Man must hold no balance of power against God in any way.

The following thoughts express something of what the sovereignty of God is:

The complete right and power of God to do anything he wills--which will always be consistent with his complete perfection, and therefore, is never arbitrary--never unjust--never conditioned by any cause, or effect outside of Himself.

For example; God's mercy is always under his sovereign will, which is always grounded in infinite wisdom, and justice; essential to His absolute perfect character.

A word from scripture seems in order on this matter of factions due to pride, deception, etc., from I Cor. 14:26, "How is it brethren? when ye come together (even in comparison to other bodies, or assemblies) everyone of you hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edification". And vs. 33, "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints." Note parenthetical application to church differences).

I would like to focus on something particular, which is one of the most large-scale, consequential examples of this problem. Think of the proliferating effect of the following situation:

A Christian college with a few thousand enrollment has the typical free will salvation philosophy of "evangelism above everything else"; which either means that it is the greatest and singularly most important ministry of the church, or that they are justified on some grounds to gear their entire training program to such an intensive specialization. They specify in their literature, etc. that the main thrust of their ministry is evangelism. This is further underscored by a quotation from a responsible source that they do not promote, or emphasize expository preaching as it is fundamentally known--since, apparently, this method of ministry is regarded by them as less effective (even counterproductive?) in their objective of evangelism, than the usual gospel-type, salvation-oriented form of preaching.

There are, of course, some favorable factors involved, but for an institution as large as this to launch hundreds of students each year into the mainstream of Christianity (filling pastorates, etc.) with this kind of philosophy and training is not only difficult to justify, in light of the New Testament pattern for churches as continuously taught in the epistles--it is quite disturbing to think what kind of Christians this type of training is going to produce. This is tomorrow's church, which unfortunately is not unlike today's--but more widespread, and where will it end?

This example may seem to paint a bad picture of some men of God who are otherwise gracious, faithful, and administrators and teachers of many good things of the Lord. But it is very serious, and while not undermining all the good that they teach and exemplify, something very basic and important is wrong--and this is not an exception, or minority situation.

What can cause such an imbalance, or misconception to exist among men who love the Lord, and sincerely believe they are teaching and leading in the right way? What else, primarily (as far as salvation is concerned), but

an elementary failure to understand the truth of God's plan and system of election! If election is a fixed and guaranteed plan of God to save each and every one he has unconditionally chosen, what can justify such a full scale specialization in evangelism (especially free will evangelism)?

Think what is sacrificed and lost in such a consuming preoccupation--extending for generations in the churches, if the Lord should tarry. A little perspective may be gained when we think of the thrice-repeated command given by the Lord Jesus to Peter in John 2:1, where he says, "Feed my sheep". The admonition should be obvious, that as much as the Lord undoubtedly loves to see souls won, he devotes much more of his attention and teaching to his disciples, and consequently his church. Likewise we must not be motivated to soul winning as our primary purpose! The main responsibility and ministry of the shepherds is to care for the sheep that are already in the fold.

The Lord--though using believers to do it--will draw the elect into the church, as in Acts 2:47, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved". In Matthew 28:19 the so-called "great commission" is widely acknowledged and promulgated--but the special injunction of verse 20 is not often emphasized, if even seen very clearly: "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, etc."

An indication of an error in priorities, and misconception of first principles is to consider how many churches, etc. state their main purpose to be the winning of souls, or evangelism. (Read your own church constitution, covenants, etc.). Whereas, we are both created, and re-created to glorify God in our lives above everything, and in everything!

This means much more than being faithful in evangelizing--in fact, that service alone or above certain other things, is not only an error in knowledge, it is a trap to keep one from a true understanding of his main purpose in life. And though we must be sympathetic and careful in our criticism, an interesting comment from Calvin on the cause of such a problem is well worth reflecting on: "A Christian ought to believe that the word of God is so full and complete in every respect that whatever is defective in our faith (life, etc.) ought rightly to be attributed to our ignorance of the Scriptures". Even one doctrine, which is the case here, essentially. A visiting pastor from our New England IFCA fellowship, spoke at our chapel on the subject of ideas at variance with the

knowledge, or truth of God--such as neo-evangelicalism, etc. The textual reference was II Cor. 10:5, and the salient point which he made was that, "The devil knows that whatever he can get us to believe, we are going to act on." And also the admonition, "Don't try to twist the word of God--no matter how difficult it is for us to understand it, or accept it". If, as I believe, the idea of man having a free will is at variance with the word of God, especially total depravity, and election--imagine what the outgrowth of this has been!

While there are many intermediate problems and causes which have produced and fostered neo-evangelicalism, and every other free will work there may be--I believe the real root of the dilemma is that the church has not stood on the truth of the doctrine of predestinated election. Once having seriously deviated from this bedrock salvation principle, the associated truth of such other related doctrines as total depravity, faith, regeneration, and other important factors have similarly been affected--either by compromise or some other humanistic modification.

Referring again to the primary purpose of our lives, bearing fruit as Christians does not mean the same thing as winning souls. If (hypothetically-if you will) election is a foregone fact whereby God has determined who will be saved--souls may be won by many and various believers, some who never grow much spiritually. This type of believer does little to glorify God through

submission, and obedience to the Lord in his principles of true discipleship.

But the Christian who is in the process of growing, and gaining victory over the flesh and all that it stands for--is bearing the fruits of the Spirit, and is the real wise soul winner of Proverbs 11:30, etc. Not by what he does for the sake of doing it, but what he is as a result of spiritual development. That is, he is a soul winner because he is wise--not wise because he is a soul winner. Is this not different and more important and true, compared to the usual assumption of what this verse means?

As essential and great as it is, the work is only started in the recruitment, if it may be said that way. Liken it if you would to military induction, especially in light of the fact that we are called soldiers in the Lord's army. The military recruit is not much of a soldier. Furthermore, he never would become much of a soldier if he was instructed to spend most of his time recruiting others, while never becoming taught and trained in the knowledge and skills of his new profession.

For example, he would be no problem for the enemy

(Satan and his forces) for he would not know how to effectively resist him--and would often be easy prey as in IITim. 2:26. Nor, would he be able to stand against the enemy's strategies, and the rigors of warfare, as symbolized by the armor of Ephesians 6:11-17.

Especially would he be unskilled in the use of the only offensive weapon the Christian has: the sword of the Lord, which is the word of God--but rightly used it is all he needs.

As you know, and can see, the analogy could go on. But the point is made, that all the orders--even the priority ones--are not often being obeyed. In the military service, the commanding officer issues (directly, or otherwise) daily instructions which are called "orders of the day". The staff of officers is responsible to see that the orders are conveyed to the troops and carried out.

Does not God, as the commanding officer, do the same thing with His word daily (continuously)--sometimes directly to the believers, but often through the pastors, teachers, etc.? What if these staff officers do not convey all the orders to the troops, but become sidetracked, or negligent, or misinterpret their duties?

No illustration is perfect, but isn't there enough here to remind us how imperative it is that we (especially pastors, teachers, etc.) know and teach the whole counsel of God--and insofar as possible to determine the priority order and fullness that is required for each doctrinal part.

Though I may appear to ramble in some of the things I am saying, I am trying to bring out something which I see to be very important, very basic, and extensive. I know that some--either from prejudice or other predisposition will not accept or even see the essential point which I am trying to ^{make} make. And also, I realize that it is easier to say something which expresses my responsibility to God for what I may write, than to convince others that I actually know how awesome that responsibility is.

Some Personal Reflections and Explanations

I have prayed and examined myself before the Lord many times over the message of this book, seriously asking God to stop me from both pursuing this course, and writing this book if I am not essentially right and in His will; even appointed to do it. I am not a preacher, but an elder in my church, and have not had formal theological training--but have studied personally for a number of years, in addition to receiving good teaching from my pastors and other capable men of God. I know too, that whatever acceptance this book has, whatever value it

will have in the church, is in the hands of the Lord, whom I trust gave it to me in the first place. Two authors' introductory comments come to mind at this point. One is from Henry L. Roush in his wonderful little book, *Henry and the Great Society*, where he was trying to explain why he was compelled to write the book. After expressing thoughts about a combination of burden, and excitement with the blessing of the knowledge he had gained from God on the subject of the book, he gave an interesting little illustration of something on the humorous side, but demonstrative of what I mean.

He said it was "why his dog arouses at night to bark at a passing train. He does not hope that it will stop, or even slow as it crosses the path of his life at a distance; nor does he imagine that all on that train have heard his voice and are meditating on his message; he only does what he knows he must do." And then after saying something about it being for the readers to decide their reaction, etc., he said that "Whatever the case, I beg your indulgence in my desire to bark at the train of your life; and afterward, you may go back to your sleep, if you can". If "sleep" sounds a little offensive to you, as it is not intended verbatim, I would substitute: 'you may go back to your previous position, if you can'.

Watchman Nee, in his book: *The Latent Power of the Soul*, speaking on the difference between spirit, and soul said that many well-disposed brethren reacted to his teaching of the subject as a "dispute over words having no great significance", etc. In several things which I have already expressed in this book, I am naturally apprehensive of the same reaction to some of the unconventional interpretations or emphases I have given to certain texts, verses, words, etc. which for the great majority of the church have traditionally different meanings or applications.

To sum up the point of these remarks, though I have some natural fears, and reluctance to present this book to anyone, I can honestly say that it would be a much greater woe upon my soul if I did not continue to publish these convictions which I believe were wrought in my heart and mind by the Spirit of God.

Though I wish that some of ^{the} impact and shock waves could be avoided that a book like this must create, I am consoled and encouraged by the confidence of a very good factor. That is, that most of God's people who are well taught and familiar with His word, are not so surprised or easily overcome by other--even radical--interpretations of doctrine, as many less knowledgeable believers may be. So that the depth of their study and experience has given them sufficient contact with most doctrinal elements, that it may sometimes be a matter of not having it quite put together, or at least they are strong

enough in the Lord to faithfully and diligently study it to a safe conclusion, one way or the other, eventually.

Of the former situation, once a key factor is found, or realized, things begin to fall into order and place. What may have been confusing, or contradictory, or seemingly unanswerable begins to take on "new" meaning. This is part of the wonderful experience of "rightly dividing" the word of truth. There is harmony, where there was discord; understanding where there was ignorance or error. And the best part of it all is, that once the right basic interpretation is learned and established in the Christian's mind it gives added security, and appreciation of God's person, and His works. It cannot ultimately hurt; it must help.

The whole system of God's salvation--once oriented to His will and consummate act of election, is not only more logical, but much more consistent with every attribute of His nature--including love. The truth is, that there is new light and understanding of these very things, once they are seen in their proper perspective. That being, in relation to God directly, as the scriptures teach, not theological concepts--so often accommodated to the rationale of specious human reasoning.

So subtle is the flesh, that even when some degree of belief in an absolute God-controlled election is theologically held by many, their preaching fervor for salvation decisions often either betrays, or contradicts that principle. It is as if the truth of election is elusive to them, because in certain instances when the subject is being emphasized it is supported and explained with some justice. Yet when the gospel is being preached and the emphasis is an evangelistic appeal to the unsaved--more times than not, the truth of election does not control or stabilize the preaching or witnessing method, or message.

I do not mean that every word must be so theologically technical in this regard, because there must be allowance for our human limits; and there is justification for earnest desire to see anyone possibly saved. But yet, I have observed much more careful and consistent maintenance of other principles of the faith, than election.

By all of which, I believe that the problem is a lack of real knowledge and conviction of the true principle of election. If it were a resolute and fixed fundamental article of our theology, would it not be as faithfully maintained as the other important doctrines, even governing our words and actions in everything subject to it?

I said a little bit previously that the truth of election seems to be elusive. While most fundamental believers--especially pastors, teachers, etc. realize that the doctrine of election is a basic, important principle, the lack of prominence that it has as a major doctrine is obvious--with but little reflection on the matter.

In the fervency of preaching and witnessing, as motivated by the common free-will influence, the basic principle of election is often over-ridden, and negated by the warnings and appeals to the will of the unsaved to respond, as if the final decision rests with them, as optional.

I know there must be many of God's people who have great difficulty trying to understand how to reconcile--without conflict--the many scriptures ^{that} speak positively on the side of a definite special election, with the also many verses and passages which "seem" to be equally positive about a universal provision and offer of salvation.

As far whether the doctrine of election is itself too difficult for the church to fully understand, and hold on to, I do not think that at all. God is not the author of confusion. Confusion belongs to man. While a somewhat different subject--the point of the cause of confusion may be seen in Daniel 9, where the prophet said that unto Israel belongeth confusion of faces. The cause of the confusion could definitely be traced back to their turning away from the precepts and commandments, to which obedience would have kept them from the problem of the confusion of their race.

So too, is it with every truth of God--including the doctrine of election. The fact that the subject was no great issue in early church times, means that there was no problem of departure from it as an established and accepted article of the faith. Is it any great wonder that it has undergone such a setback in priority, that I believe it rightfully had in the primitive church period? Wouldn't Satan work harder to undermine something so decisive and consequential as the doctrine of an exclusive election? What greater confusion and diversion of Christianity could he engineer?

May we not think for a moment--that Satan could interfere with the actual salvation of the elect, down to the last one chosen. But what do we think would keep him from deceiving the church into believing an erroneous idea of God's plan of salvation; or specifically who may be the recipients of that salvation, and how?

Examination of Other Text Cases

In addition to some scriptures that have been commented on previously--it would be well to consider certain other commonly referred-to passages which are taken to mean free-will opportunity for all.

II Peter 3:9 is almost always quoted to "prove" the unlimited scope of the gospel message. The verse says in the latter part, that the Lord "is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance". This portion taken by itself--especially out of context--sounds like indisputable universal opportunity, or offer of salvation. That is the traditional interpretation.

As hard as it may be to see anything else, consider the following factors: the context and theme of chapter 3 is the second coming of the Lord, and the day of Jehovah. It is written for encouragement to the church in view of the false teaching and apostasy that was previously described in chapter 2, etc.

In verse 9 where the reference in question is found, the very special reason is given to comfort and remind the church why the Lord has not yet come. The first part of verse 9 refers to the Lord not being slack concerning his promise. This should not be misconstrued as referring to the gospel--but the Lord's promise of coming again (as in the whole chapter to this point, and immediately after verse 9, reminding and explaining both subjects--that is, God's promised judgments to such as the false teachers, and all ungodly works of man; plus admonitions to believers to watch and prepare for the Lord's return.

Again, in our subject verse, the "us-ward" is loosely and inadvisedly applied to everyone without much exception. First of all, the letter is written to believers: vs. 1, etc., "This second epistle, beloved, (and that is never the unsaved, though misused) I now write unto you". And then after continuing reference to scoffers, etc., the believer is reminded again in verse 8 (beloved), and vs. 9 (us-ward) not unbelievers of the reason for His longsuffering. That being, not a general unlimited offer of salvation, but that no matter how bad the world may become, and how long it may seem to be that the Lord has not returned for His church--that He will come only when the last of the elect sheep are brought into the fold, and the church or body of Christ is completed by the last one called. And the significance of this word "called" has much bearing on the subject of election, which I haven't brought out anywhere, as I recall.

This passage in Peter, is just one more of so many instances where church truth is misapplied to the world at large as being evangelistic doctrine, when often that is not the context, if even an application. However much the effect of this verse may seem to convince us of the availability of salvation to all, it can not over-

rule, or even qualify a definite limited election.

Another similar reference which sounds universal and unlimited on the surface, and by itself is I Tim. 2:4, which says God our Saviour (vs. 3) "who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth". I admit it seems to say what it sounds like, but it must be interpreted in connection with what we must be able to understand of several things involved:

1. What is it for God to will something? Does he wish it, or does his will act to accomplish what he desires, especially in such an eternally important object as is declared in this verse?
2. As was discussed under the subject of "world", etc., does "all" mean every individual, any more that it can mean all classes of men, as nations, races, in addition to Israel (the primary objects of God's plans)?

The same consideration must be given to the "all" who Christ gave himself a ransom for in I Tim. 2:6. A specific, qualified all is just as possible as an unqualified all, here, as in I Cor. 15:22, as discussed before (Page 42).

3. How can anybody come to the knowledge of the truth unless they are drawn to God (which can only be the elect) and subsequently enabled to believe and receive Christ?

There are various instances in scripture which state that God is not a respecter of persons. Rom. 2:11, Eph. 6:9, Col. 3:25. This is often taken to mean that no one is excluded from the opportunity of salvation. Again, this is not the purpose of this scripture. It is given as a warning or explanation that God makes no allowance for the rich, or masters, etc. in considering their sinfulness.

See the example of James 2:1,3, and 9 in context, for similar admonitions to believers about having undue respect for affluence, etc. of some, compared to the more common people. Also for his own just reasons, the Lord does especially regard the poor versus the rich in his salvation grace, per James 2:5, I Cor. 1:26-28, and John 7:48. Most of the Lord's ministry on earth was directed to the common people; purposely, of course.

Concepts and Practices

As I continue to think of the unbalanced position that so many Christians seem to be in, regarding their concepts of election and evangelism, an example of the problem comes to mind--which shows the depth of conviction that may be held regarding one principle, or belief versus another. Most truly fundamental believers have no problem with the fact of their own personal salvation being completely a matter of God's grace, and nothing of their own effort. This is a well ingrained, practically unshakeable

conviction of the majority of believers.

Yet, that same majority of believers, while also affirming a conviction of election (even the principle of a predestinated salvation; somehow) often very inconsistently with this avowed conviction will go to amazing efforts to try to get as many people as humanly possible to hear the gospel; and will work assiduously with them to try to get them to make a decision for Christ. And lest you miss the subtle factor involved in many of these cases, much of this kind of witnessing and preaching the gospel is done with such human, psychical motivation and intensity that it actually betrays any real constitutional belief that election is the controlling and determining factor in the whole realm and process of who may be saved, and how.

Again, it bears repeating that the pre-world decision of God to appoint souls to salvation is exclusive, and selective (and independent of anything in

the objects as a reason, or contributing factor). And while some may hold to a general atonement, it is impossible to support in view of the doctrine of election, as well as some of the other salvation fundamentals, previously discussed.

I heard a man say recently that while he may have been somewhat over-zealous in his aggressive methods of personal evangelism--he stated, or implied that he did not think he was wrong in attempting to witness to as many people as he could personally contact and confront with the gospel. This, by way of ^{his} illustration, would include for example: stopping as many people as possible on the streets to encounter them with the message of salvation--very zealously and pointedly, including preaching, discussing, urging tracts upon them, etc. to lead them to a decision for Christ as soon as possible. The assumed necessity and urgency of this kind of evangelism is the justification he was trying to convey.

My question is, does election work this way? How much of this type of evangelism is man (psychically, soulishly), and how much is God (spiritually, of course). It is very easy, and probably all too common to predicate our works upon familiar references to God's power, his grace, his will etc.--and yet how many times does the Christian work as if something eternally consequential depended on him. Our articles of theology say no to this, but our actions say yes, time and time again.

I would re-iterate and encourage on the positive side, that though there seems to be something almost universally elusive in the church about the true interpretation and priority of the doctrine of election, many of God's people are such serious and good students of the word that they are really not far from being able to put it all together, and begin to reconstruct their salvation theology, and evangelism ministry. But, no doubt, few would ever do it!

By this I do not mean to minimize the initial and recurring shock effects that this abrupt encounter, or change of thinking will have on almost anyone indoctrinated (even inoculated) against it by generations of free-will, Arminian tradition and influence. But I can't help but feel that the conflict of the two beliefs, that of election and free will, has many times to many of God's servants and other believers, been a very great mystery, which has often left them in a quandary, and the recurring problem of wavering conviction on the two points.

The argument has often been used that you can't press either principle too far, or you will be confused, wrong, etc. My conviction now, after several years of study and corre-

sponding reformed theology, is that there is (1) no such thing as going too far with the true election principle, and that conversely (2) any degree of acceptance of the concept that man has a free will is going too far!

When the 'fact' of this finally registered with me, it was a combination of a wonderful breakthrough to the real truth, which so often eluded me before; and the beginning of many re-encounters with the trappings of the old free will bias. Yet all these trying tests, and orientation ordeals have ultimately served to prove and strengthen the "new" belief.

I do not mean to indicate that there are not difficulties at times still, but the strength of my convictions of the interpretation of election which I have set forth in this book, now is beyond the point of any conceivable return to a free will theology of any kind.

I freely admit the strong pull of many of the traditional inferences and interpretations of scripture which seem to support the claims of God's love being universal; the atonement unlimited; salvation an offer--available to anyone who will believe (which is said to be possible of everyone, because of the inherent possession of a "free" will).

Much of the conventional influence and consensus must be seen as attributable to the natural inclination toward a doctrine which appears to make man (even in his sinful state) the main object of God's interests, more than the reverse--which should be man's first concern always. The contrast may also be stated as a man-centered philosophy, versus a God-centered theology.

When we at least agree that the basic emphasis of free will advocacy is man-sided, while election is God-sided, we ought to recognize which direction would be the safest one to lean to. And we must always justify any possible leaning away from a position which regards God's interests first, and man's second, in everything of life--including salvation.

I would like to comment further as to the anticipated adverse reactions to this book. First of all, I understand it from my own experience, and expect it as a natural resistance in defense of the established system. It is obviously too antithetical to the status quo, not to cause major upheavals and protests.

Yet there are at least several very serious other things which our God has ordained that are very difficult for us to comprehend, and often may evoke similar reactionary feelings. The awesome severity of many of God's earthly judgments, past and future, and especially eternal condemnation--when deliberated upon, are the main examples.

So that, a strict unqualified interpretation of predestination as the determining element in salvation--ought not to be more difficult to accept than man's will having such an eternally consequential responsibility. From the standpoint of efficacy (power to produce the desired results), God can not fail, or make a mistake; but man has no such unerring capacity. Whatever is left to human volition is at best very unreliable.

If we would just stop and think that if salvation is so singularly important both to man and God--that for God to relegate his unquestionable ability to save, to man's will power--puts that highly suspect faculty of man in a peculiarly superior position even to his ultimate possible salvation (which all the time could have been insured by a completely independent act of God). This latter statement is the essential claim of absolute election, as contended for throughout this book.

Hell, or eternal condemnation, is viewed by free will proponents (which is the great majority of believers) as an avoidable consequence for anyone. For strict predestinarians, it is seen as an inevitable consequence for all, but the elect.

I think I remarked previously as a point of emphasis, that hell glorifies God as surely as heaven does. This statement does not nearly align with the free will salvation concept, as it does with predestination, and election. From God's side both heaven and hell are positive things, while hell from man's side is usually only negative. Yet each glorifies God--one his mercy and love; the other his righteous justice.

The decisive factor, or essential cause for the free will position is unbelief, or rejection of Christ. The other interpretation--strict predestinated election--holds to the doctrine of original sin (through universal organic unity with Adam) as being both the cause of the fall, and eternal condemnation.

Frequently we hear it said in answer to the charge or question whether God sends or consigns people to hell, that anyone who refuses to repent and accept Christ chooses, or sends himself to hell. Yet wouldn't it be more consistent with the truth of original sin in identification with Adam, to say that that is when the condemned sinner chose to die rather than heed the warning of God; and that the rejections and refusals during his literal earthly existence are confirmations of his original contrary choice in Adam?

And while it may be stated flatly that that is the way it is whether we believe it, like it, or not--God does not leave us without consolation or remedy in our limited capacity. What he gives us always for recourse is the basis of our whole Christian life--His mercy.

This is no oversimplification, but is really the way we should see every aspect of our faith, especially the knowledge of some of the deeper truths of life. How neatly and completely we sometimes think we have our theology classified and understood. But whenever we pursue certain things far enough, we become more and more aware of our limits. We either come to some kind of impasse (real, or assumed), or the extent of our knowledge in a given area, or very often we reach the limit that God has established for us to understand His works.

Instead of being discouraged, confused, or defeated by it--we ought to realize that it is really a built-in blessing to us. Why? Because it keeps us in our place, as we are thrown back again and again where we belong--upon the mercy and grace of God as the only reason we can be sure of that God saves anyone, and also for the comfort and strength we need no matter what we come up against (including the contentions of this book).

In other words, if the interpretations of this book are disturbing and upsetting to you--your immediate and continual recourse must be to God and his word, to either sustain and re-affirm your own convictions if you are right, or to give you the grace to change your theological position if you are wrong. Is not victory assured to us in everything? Without the personal experience of this refuge in God, I could not have continued in this direction without some effects and problems too difficult to cope with. And though it is still unsettling at times not to have more contemporary support, I have a definite peace that I am doing the right thing--though with a certain strangeness, because of the circumstances noted.

Also, is it not part of our warfare to take territory

back from the enemy which we may have lost, as well as defending the ground which we do possess, and making new conquests?

The point here must not be missed--that something positive and beneficial must result. Rather than being reacted against emotionally, and subjectively rebuked and denounced, I ask for brotherly, objective, scriptural treatment of what I have written.

If I am negatively responded to, may I be shown so by a well-considered exposition of the scriptures involved. Likewise on the very probable* basis of being mainly right, my hope is that this book may be instrumental in bringing about the eventual change in as many of God's people as His grace may affect.

* implying no uncertainty.

The experience should humble us every time we see something more of the awesome greatness and presently unfathomable mysteries of our God, and His ways, and His works. Surely when we consider that the consequence of Adam's sin (which is our's also) is so eternally condemnable--as to be irrevocable for all of Adam's posterity except the elect, what attention this ought to focus upon the wickedness of all sin, and its intolerable contempt in God's sight.

A natural contrast exists on this point between the more humanistic free will motivation, and the true predestination principle. The tendency to see man's need or opportunity (as "available to all" in the gospel) versus his sinfulness as an exceeding offense against God is the general characteristic of free-will-mindedness. Whereas the doctrinal belief which attaches the righteous condemnation of man to his fall in Adam--and sees the cross as a remedy only for the elect, maintains a much stronger perspective of sin as it is regarded by God (both originally, and continually).

I would like to express a few more thoughts to try to explain my personal feelings with regard to the subject of this book. The thought of being out of place with contemporary interpretation and practice, may appear to some to be like being in no man's land. But to me it is like living in the past, the right way, or believing what the early church is assumed to have believed about predestination and election--and then being catapulted into the modern church era where there appears to be little semblance of the original belief.

Observing therefore, what has been lost and adulterated, and realizing how deeply ingrained and prevalent the new theology of this subject is--there is often the feeling of perplexity and fear of adverse reactions, and confusion if the old way is anything but very carefully presented. And

even then, what may be expected from the current state of affairs? There is much cause for apprehension, whether to continue to develop and disseminate such a controversial position. How much conflict can be justified?

I have the recurring human feeling that I am making a bomb! And yet I have no intention of exploding it all at once, though I realize that may be the effect on some who do read it at first. I do not want to have a negative or disturbing effect on anyone. The problem, I sincerely believe, is not the strength and controversy of what I have presented, but the far left position of the church in this doctrine which makes the arguments of this book appear antithetical and disruptive.

Also, lest I forget to mention it, I want to remind some readers who may question some of the detailed technical wording of various parts of the book--that the complexity of the controversy requires it. The issue itself is too important and longstanding to write simply about. Certain senses and implications often hinge on a familiar word, or phrase.

As there will undoubtedly be misunderstandings, rebuttals, etc. it will save some future repetition and explanation to have clarified points of difference now--rather than cause misinterpretations and reactions, and criticisms that might be prevented.

We are engaged in a very deep, complicated situation--which can only gradually, even painstakingly, be handled and hopefully changed; or conversely, redefine and establish any basically right interpretations which may exist. There must also be repetition (which has been called theological mucilage) of key matters so that the argument against the free will bias, etc. can be substantive, cohesive, and effective. In other words, we must all do our homework well--for, or against the cause.

It may not be easily understood that I have certain misgivings about submitting this book to anyone, even though it will be done very selectively at first for analysis and advice. The apprehension is for the test and trial it will cause to some--especially on certain traditional interpretations. If it were not that I am confident in the Lord, by His word and Spirit that I am justified in at least most of what I have written, I could personally choose not to continue on this course.

That is, to spare the expected natural trying effect this will have on many of God's servants and other brethren. That is why I said it was something like making a bomb. I realize the tremendous potential for damage something like this can do, especially by use of the wrong methods.

In fact, the misrepresentation of the doctrines of sovereign grace already have had such destructive force in at least two areas of this continent today. As previously mentioned there is an unhealthy situation existing in a southern part of our country, as well as another in Canada, which is more like a bitter political harangue than a spiritual debate or issue, which should only be handled in a well-disposed, and carefully guided way.

This book could foster the same problem, even if it is basically right, unless there is a very carefully sought, prayerful and faithful course taken which will not launch any kind of attack or campaign that the church can not cope with before it is prepared for it. The nature of the problem requires very special treatment--which while it can not avoid bringing conflicts, and even some counter-revolution, must be very thoughtfully handled to minimize the opposition and trouble that could result for years to come.

At any rate, there seems to be only two justifiable alternatives to the issue in question. That is, to prove which side is right--there is no justification for remaining status quo, or withdrawing, or even changing sides--without determining the truth. The object in either case, must be to verify and vindicate the one true interpretation, and establish it as the official church principle, with the corresponding required practices.

I believe when we assess the situation for what it really is, we must realize that for as many as are aware of the controversy, that the lines are being drawn for a confrontation and debate which could undoubtedly be a long process and ordeal to overcome. But again, God promises victory to whoever follows him and obeys him in whatever comes. The secret is to both act and react as Christians; faithful to the Lord, and faithful to each other.

My purpose is to do a right thing in the right way, which honors God by an earnest desire to learn and promote the truth of His word. Anyone who reads this book, or others like it, or deals with the subject in any way must have a similar attitude. I certainly do not mean to minimize the tremendous responsibility that I have to be as sure as possible that I am both ethically and technically right in what I am doing.

And though I don't expect to prevent some that will be in opposition to what I have written, from reacting wrong, I would try to caution you. Even if I am wrong, you will not easily be justified in the Lord by being offended, or emotionally or prematurely responding to the position I have tried to present. Also I would mention again, as a forethought to some reactionary questions and assumptions--why I have not dealt with some scriptures, or points that

could well be raised. I have purposely avoided being any more comprehensive in one book at this stage to keep from causing too long of a delay in getting the subject into discussion and consideration. At the same time, the nature of the issue required enough detail and elaboration to prevent as much misinterpretation, as reasonably possible.

Therefore, though there are probably many other thoughts and questions which some have, I could not practically include much more in this presentation--though I believe I am aware of most other related considerations, and have dealt with them in my study. Such other things that will undoubtedly come up, can be discussed later.

In bringing the book to a close at this point, I submit both myself and it to the Lord in the following manner: First, to the church for pastoral review, and recommendation for further presentation to the I.F.C.A. Regional Executive Board, and certain other selected brethren, who hopefully would wisely and responsibly deal with its arguments and propositions.

May God direct its course and control its effect, and may only He stop it, or change it, if necessary.

As it is written, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."

And though I believe that "my heart is inditing (expressing) a good matter", may I not add nor take away from God's holy word. Amen.

An afterthought occurs to me of an important distinction that should be observed. This is, that probably the one most common denominator of the free will philosophy, is that it is a doctrinal system (a subjective theology), composed largely of separate verses of scripture lifted from context, and formed into an extra-biblical creed, and operating principle. It is, then, in a word: synthetic!

This may be difficult to recognize, or distinguish from the sound scriptural principle of "rightly dividing the word of truth", but upon close examination it will not stand the test of true interpretation--which does not violate the contextual principles of doctrinal consistency.

Also, I should explain that many statements like the above, which I have made that may appear overly assertive, and dogmatic, should first of all be taken as positive expressions of my own convictions--not as authority, unless established by the word of God. Therefore, please excuse any cases where I have not properly qualified what I may have said.

DTFWC-Appendix

“Free Will” Treatise - Scriptures

- Page 8 Deut. 29:29 “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us, and to our children forever”. Denoting God’s realm, and ours.
- “ ” I Cor. 8:2 “And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet, as he ought to know”. Humbling motivation for study.
- “ ” Isaiah 55:8 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord”. To respect the sovereignty and authority of God.
- “ ” I Thess. 5:21 “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good”. Command of God for diligent pursuit of knowledge.
- Page 2,8 II Tim. 2:15 “Study to show thyself approved, rightly dividing the word of truth, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed”. Importance of doctrinal correctness, and unity. Applying to next three references, as well.
- “ iii Acts 18:26 Expounding the way of God more perfectly. Slightly paraphrased.
- “ ” Acts 19:8 Disputing and persuading the things of God.
- “ ” I Cor. 11:18-19 “I hear that there be divisions among you.....that they which are approved may be made manifest among you”
- Page 11,
15 Titus 3:5 “.....by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost”. God’s exclusive work in converting us to Christians.
- “ ” II Tim. 1:9 “Who hath saved us.....according to his own purpose and grace.....”. God’s will, and prerogative, to save us.
- Page 12 John 3:3 “.....except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Spiritually understand it , nor enter it.
- Page 12, 13,
19,31, I Cor. 2:14 “.....the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God..... neither can he know them.....”. Pre-conversion state of man’s mind, per preceding note.

- Page 14 James 1:18 “Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth.” By divine grace only.
- Page 15 John 12:35 “.....walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you.....”.
Warning against turning away from the truth; and the consequences.
- Page 16 I Cor. 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with temptation also maketh a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”
Promise of grace to succeed, and be protected.
- “ ” James 4:7 “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Promise of power to thwart Satan. Application also, in the last two verses above, to problem of deviating, or being lured away from the literal interpretation of God’s word.
- Page 11,
19 II Thess. 2:13 “.....because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.” God’s plan of salvation, and elements of its execution.
- Page 6 Acts 17:11 “.....they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Personal responsibility to learn the whole truth, directly from the bible, or by confirmation of same.
- “ ” Ps. 115:16 “The heaven,, even the heavens, are the Lord’s: but the earth has he given to man.” Our heritage of responsibility (within God’s limits).
- Page 16,
57 II Tim. 2:26 “And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.” Power of Satan, and need of Christian deliverance.
- Page 18 John 1:29 “The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” Efficacious sacrifice for the elect Gentiles, in addition to the chosen Jews.
- “ ” Rev. 1:5 “.....Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” Per previous note; also including following two verses.
- Page 19 Heb. 10:10 “.....we are sanctified forever through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

Page 19 Heb. 10:14 “For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.”

Page 19,

20 Rom. 8:29-30 “For whom he foreknew, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”
Encompasses the complete process of salvation (which is all a work of God, independent of any human action).

Page 20 Eph. 1:5 “God) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.” Per preceding note.

“ ” Eph. 1:9 “Having made known unto us his good pleasure, which he purposed in Himself.” Per prior note.

Page 21 Acts 2:23 “Him (Jesus) being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” God’s control of man’s actions.

Page 22 Rom. 11:2 “God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.”

“ 22,

23 John 15:16 “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you..... etc.” With prior verse; unmerited, independent divine election of certain ones to salvation.

“ 23 Acts 13:48 “.....and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”
Exclusive salvation of the elect.

Page 26,

27 Mal. 1:2,3, and Rom. 9:11-13 “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”
Particular vs. universal love.

Page 28,29

45 John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”
Include verses 15, 17-18. The advent of Gentile salvation.

Page 31 John 6:29,37,39-40,44-45 On the subjects of the words “believe”, and “will”.

- Page 32 Rom. 10:17 “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”
Origin and method by which faith is received.
- “ ” Eph. 2:8 “For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.”
- Page 33,
34 Gal. 2:20, Mk. 11:22, Rom. 10:8, Gal. 3:23, Eph. 3:12, Rev. 14:12. References to source, and distinction of faith (per II Thess. 3:12) “.....all men have not faith.”
- Page 34 II Cor. 5:17 “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (creation): old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.”
- Page 55 Acts 2:47, John 6:17 The elect are drawn to God, and added to the church by him.
- “ ” Rom. 6 Union with Christ. Also II Cor.5:14-17, Col. 2:12-13, 3:13. The subject of inclusion in Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection.
- Page 38 Jude 3 Contending for the faith.
- Page 39 II Cor. 5:18-20, Rom. 10:11-15* About reconciliation. *”God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.”
- Page 43 Rom. 4:25 Use of “we”, and “our”. Applying to the church, not the world.
- Page 44 Eph. 2:1-10 Use of “ye”, “us”, “we”, “all men”, etc., referring to Gentiles vs. Israel’s salvation.
- Page 52 II Tim. 3:16, Eph. 1:17, etc. We grow in proportion to what we know (rightly know; that is, spiritually understand and appreciate).
- Page 54 I Cor. 14:26 “How is it brethren? When ye come together, every one of you hath a doctrine.....etc.”
- Page 55 John 2:1 “Feed my sheep.”
Matt. 28:19-20 “.....teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,.....etc.”
- Page 56 Prov. 11:30 A soul winner, because wise, not vice-versa, as commonly assumed.
- Page 61 II Pet. 3:9 The Lord “.....is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any

should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Reference to the elect, not the world in general. Church truth. Also I Tim. 2:6.

Page 62 Rom. 2:11, Eph. 6:9, Col. 3:25 Misused as universal opportunity of salvation. Real meaning: no allowance is given for rich, powerful, etc. vs. common or poor people.