

P.O. Box 240,
Bucksport, Maine
May 16, 1981

To: N.E./I.F.C.A. Pastor

Dear N.E.P.

Hoping this letter finds you well, I am enclosing an article that I have finally completed after various delays since starting it last year.

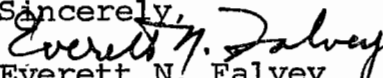
It is sent to you in good will, for your consideration, and others' whom you are associated with, or responsible to.

Feeling that there is some misunderstanding between us, I want to assure you that I do not submit ^{my} views on the subject issue to you in any sense as an antagonist. I deeply believe in the interpretations which I hold, as both substantially correct, and necessary to be communicated to the church. Also, I have so far kept the distribution of my material to a minimum; not wanting to create any premature over-reaction.

While the interpersonal dealing with those of ^{an} opposite doctrinal position, is at times very trying and testing, we must not become alienated to each other. Though holding no resentment, or undue criticism, I was at least disappointed that you seemed to be offended by a mutually objective admonition which I made in the letter accompanying my rebuttal to your 12-point paper on atonement. Having only received a brief postcard acknowledgment and defensive comment from you, per above, I know not what you, or others in your circle, think about what I presented for your consideration.

Surely, we have much more responsibility for what we are doing than to close the lines of communication. Even politicians, objectively have to try to work together for the good of the people they represent--however divergent their philosophies and methods may be, before (ideally, at least) they may come to one mind in their beliefs. As fellow-believers, we can do no less.

Therefore, I would appreciate your reactions to the the paper enclosed, in due time, and any thoughts, etc. you may have toward resolving this basic doctrinal dispute.

Sincerely,

Everett N. Falvey

Chronological Distinctions
of
Faith and Salvation

A polemic against the "free will" misrepresentation of the doctrine of elementary faith.

Everett N. Falvey
153 Turnbull Way
Ellsworth, ME 04605

Relationship of
The Four Dimensions of Life
To Faith and Salvation

Where in the total natural and spiritual life span of a Christian is believing faith first exercised? What is its life principle?

From the perspective of the following diagram, showing departments of life from Adam to eternity, where are we to locate the beginning point of faith? First, I believe the contemporary concept of elementary faith as it is typically represented, preached, and otherwise conveyed, is erroneous; that is, doctrinally misused. This being so, it is no mere technicality, but a serious contradiction of a fundamental theological principle. Consequently, it has had a wideranging, pervasively influential effect on the type of evangelism that is practiced by the church at large.

And if, as I believe, this effect is detrimental to the quality of the church's life, testimony, and service, it is more importantly a dishonor to God, as not rightly representing the truth of His revealed word in the area of scripture involved.

A Diagram of
The Four Dimensions* of Life

First
Faith

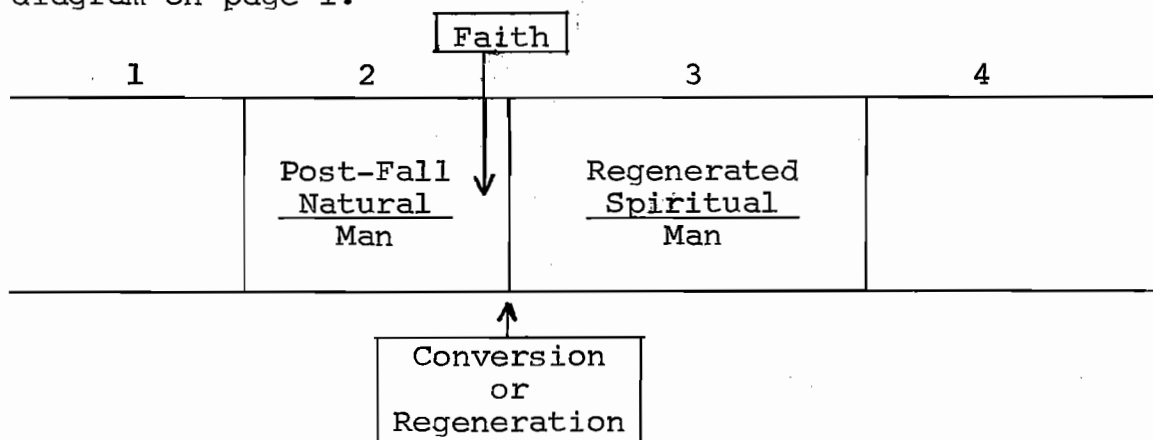
Dimension	1	2	3	4
Applica- tion	Adam/Eve	All Mankind	Believers	A. Believers
* Life Character- istic, or Principle	Pre-Fall <u>Spiritual</u> Man	Post-Fall <u>Natural</u> Man	↓ Regenerated <u>Spiritual</u> Man	Heaven
				Glorified Spiritual Man
				B. Nonbelievers
				Hell
				Condemned Natural Man
Age/Basis	Innocence	Law/Works	Grace/Faith	Eternity
Dimensional Turning Point	↑ Fall or <u>Original Sin</u>	↑ Conversion or Regeneration	↑ A. Salvation <hr/> B. Reprobation	

* Though not as complete, or fully identical with, the spiritual of Dimension 3, or 4A.

It will be readily noted, that I have placed the beginning of faith immediately following the point of regeneration. Can this be possible in view of the great majority of scriptures which are traditionally and universally taken to mean that faith must exist or occur before one can become a Christian?

Is faith, then, a condition or prerequisite for entering the 3rd Dimension (new life), or the 4th Dimension (heaven)? Right away it may be thought that there is no reason to link saving faith with the entrance to heaven; and that ^{it}"obviously" relates to going from the natural life of Dimension ² to spiritual life in Dimension 3.

The basis of the latter interpretation, being the idea or concept that natural man has a spiritually inducible free will, is represented by the following modification of the diagram on page 1:



How may we determine which distinction is right, the one on page 1, or the above? Does not scripture provide the full answer? How important is the order and precision of God's divine dealings? Put another way, is the theology of Christianity a science, or not?

If so, must not its particulars be irreducible minimums of truth, or fact? Getting more personal and professional, do we have such exact knowledge maintained in all of our doctrinal interpretations?

I feel that most all of the more faithful, doctrinally well-learned brethren of the church today are scientifically sound in most biblical areas, except the doctrines of grace involved in man's redemption, and regeneration. I believe further that such has been the condition of the church with comparatively few exceptions, for centuries; even since the early church.

In the literal interpretation of most scriptures which state or imply that faith is a prerequisite to salvation, lies one of the keys of escape from the free will syndrome

that has prevailed in the church for so long. These are the same scriptures which, because of traditional misinterpretation, help sustain the free will concept; perhaps more than anything else.

That is, the general assumption that the words, "saved", "salvation", etc. automatically equate to conversion (or the inception of Christianity), naturally leads one to consider faith as something previous, or prerequisite to actually becoming a Christian.

But, when we look closer at the words involved, especially the references to "saved", "salvation", etc., even though they may be the most frequent and familiar terms of the gospel, it is critically important to prove the literal meaning of these words, and hence, establish what event they refer to, and when it actually occurs.

Surely, you may think, with something so basic and well understood (?), there could be no problem of misinterpretation, or misapplication. But before we test the proposition, note the implications of the following comments excerpted from James Stalker's book, "The Life of Christ" (though the subject is different, the same principle of situation and reaction exists).

Consider therefrom, not only objectively, but subjectively or introspectively, how very difficult it is to get someone (especially a great majority with a common--though erroneous --view or concept) off center from their position.

Quoting from Stalker then, "He (Jesus) went forth and spoke out without hesitation, what he believed, though it shook to their foundations, the institutions, the creeds, and customs of His country, and loosened the opinions of the populace in a hundred points in which they had been educated."

We need only to turn the principle of this to our current doctrinal issue (yes, within the true fundamental church), and if the whole free will scheme is wrong, with all of its implications and ramifications--and if the message of sovereign free grace election be well enough proclaimed, correlatively with all other salvation doctrine, as the true redemption theology--it must eventually produce the comparable impact and effect of the above quotation.

And again from Stalker, which we may relate to why our problem of entrenched error exists: "Our convictions are fixed on us by authority (?) from without, instead of waxing from within (by the tuition of God's spirit, and word); our opinions are blown to us in fragments on every wind". (Traditional human subjective ideas, reinforced on every hand and occasion over a lifetime, having prevailed for centuries, has made the doctrinal error in question perhaps the most

formidable problem in the church's history (and it knows not that the problem even exists). Rev. 3:17.

And of Jesus, again: "How clearly amidst the sounds (interpretations, etc.) which filled the ears of His time, He heard (from God) the neglected voice of truth, which was quite different from them (the prevailing concepts, etc.)."*

I deeply believe that this is the case with today's evangelism--even among otherwise sound and faithful brethren--throughout the church, with little exception.

Again, I am talking about men who love the Lord, and His word, and are straight on most, if not all, other doctrine; but are seriously wrong in a key area of their underlying evangelistic theology, particularly in the applicability of the gospel.

While most may not consciously visualize it as shown in the modified diagram on page 2, nonetheless, we must conclude that the free will concept creates or necessitates a strange middle ground between the natural and spiritual dimensions of life, which is very confusing theology to account for from scripture--both logically and scientifically.

Now, can we demonstrate the common mistake that appears to be made with most faith/belief texts of scripture? What do we mean by being saved? What does the bible actually mean in context when it links faith, or belief with salvation?

The meaning of the Greek word for either belief, or faith (and their several forms) is the basic claim, or key to the right interpretation. This, coupled with the dispensational, futurist view of promised events, and results of the Christian life, gives us the answer to our question, or problem. Also, what was meant originally by both the Greek and English words involved? Contemporary or traditional usage of words does not constitute proof of original meanings.

I shall begin by stating a conviction--likely to the surprise of many--that I believe that the mainstream evangelistic language and program of the church today is based upon a liberal vs. literal interpretation of the applicability of the gospel.

This includes a liberal view of the associated doctrines of: (1) total depravity (the extent of its effect), (2) election (its determining cause), (3) atonement (its efficacy, and extent of application), (4) faith (its life principle, and availability or possessibility), (5) grace (particularly as effectual divine influence upon the heart and mind), (6) reprobation (its cause, and negative relation to

*Note: parenthetical inserts in Stalker quotations, page 3, and 4, added by me for emphasis and adaptation.

election), (7) God's decreeing, or purposing will (its sovereignty, supremacy, and irresistibility), (8) man's will (its condition, capacity, and limitations), and still other related doctrinal factors.

This may appear to be a harsh, or very judgmental attack on a great majority of God's servants, and church in general. I do not mean to have any unkind, accusatory effect on anyone, but at what cost shall we not vindicate God's truth; however drastic the contrast and impact of its declaration may be?

And if indeed it ~~is~~ really ^{from} God--something He is doing to straighten out his church from this chronic, deep-seated error--must we not each heed his voice, and be willing to reform "our" theology, and ministry; continuously thanking and glorifying ^{Him} for his intervening grace?

To pick up again on distinctions to be made about faith, as related to regeneration, and salvation (especially the future aspect of actual deliverance from the former destiny of hell), the following remarks are offered:

To begin with, may we be reminded that we are bound to the basic rule of literal interpretation of words, whenever determinable, and their contextual meaning, always. A common cause of misinterpretation seems to stem from the typical--too human--tendency to liberalize the application of words and texts, especially wherever man would be the conceivable benefactor, thereby. This may often be done unconsciously, or unintentionally, but we are not absolved of responsibility to learn the truth the way God has given it, no matter the cost and effect of correction.

What then is faith?

Faith is a spiritually acquired faculty by which we know God, and communicate with him, and live for him. But it is not a means by which we become a Christian, because that is accomplished first, directly and independently by God, in spiritual regeneration.

Faith proceeds (immediately) from the regenerated nature, not vice-versa. Gal. 5:22 exegeted completely, upon its inherent principle, proves this doctrinal distinction. Not that it stands alone as proof, but it is perhaps the singularly most conclusive verse to cite. Others which come to mind are: Acts 14:27, 15:9, Rom. 10:17, Gal. 2:16, 20, 2 Pet. 1:1.

Faith is not the threshold of regeneration, regeneration is the threshold of faith. However close-timed the occurrence of these two developments may be to each other, the technical order is essential to distinguish, if we would scientifically formulate true theology.

The first expression of faith can only be made after the

life principle of faith (the Spirit) is received (possessed).

This first expression of belief occurs within the vestibule--inside the entrance to the new life dimension. See diagram, page 1.

The moment I believed, is not when I became a Christian, it is when I confirmed that I had been made one--for only a Christian can believe.

"You must open the door", may be humanly impressive in a song, etc., but it isn't to be found in scripture, except Rev. 3:20, and that is an injunction to the church to return to the Lord in fellowship, obedience, etc.--not an evangelical invitation to the unsaved, as so commonly treated.

Gal. 5:22 names faith among eight other graces, which are fruits of the Spirit. Are these permanently possessed characteristics? If so, as the scripture here teaches, when are they received? If we say: upon receipt of the Spirit in regeneration, how can faith--one of its elements--be in any^{way} possessed before conversion, or as a means to the end, when it is itself part of the intermediate end; the real end being as in I Pet. 1:9, "the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls"?

Is the Spirit the fruit of faith, or faith fruit of the Spirit? Free-willists effectively, if not outrightly, make the Spirit (that is, the receipt of same in regeneration) the result of faith.

Another aphorism I would offer is, that it is impossible to exercise faith (that is, believe something spiritual--even the gospel) without the inner principle of the new nature being first implanted; II Cor. 2:14, I Cor. 12:3, etc., as I have previously indicated.

One error that is so commonly--yet subtly--made is our evangelistic habit of automatically equating the scriptural term "saved", "salvation", etc. with conversion or regeneration.

Uses and Misuses of the word:
"saved", and its forms

Let us test Eph. 2:8 in the manner stated in the previous paragraph:

1. "By grace, are ye saved, through faith!"
Is this equivalent to:
2. By grace, are ye born again, through faith?

Automatically, and naturally, we say yes, as if there is no question. I believe we err here, and in many similar instances, by not interpreting "saved", "salvation", etc. in the more literal, futuristic sense.

Too often, the word "saved", and its forms, are taken to be the same act or event as conversion, or regeneration--when though one is potentially, or essentially saved at conversion, the deliverance factor that "saved" properly means, is the future rescue or deliverance from ^{the} judgment and hell of original condemnation. ^

This may be illustrated if we connect Eph. 2:8, with the sense of the following scriptures: I Pet. 1:9, "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls", and Rom. 13:11, "And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed"; also, I Cor. 5:5 (latter phrase), "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ".

The parallel distinction is especially emphasized by Matt. 10:22, ".....he that endureth to the end, shall be saved".

Also, the technically future factor of having eternal life--even though now regenerated, and irrevocably in possession of that life principle--is a comparable point in Matt. 19:29, "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, etc.....for my names sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life", and I John 2:25, "And this is the promise that he hath promised us (believers), even eternal life."

Can we not more accurately interpret, or paraphrase Eph. 2:8 as follows:?

'By election (grace), are ye to be delivered from hell (saved), through being a believer (faith)'.

Please take time to carefully read, and digest this.

Relating it to the diagram on page 1, we may say that by God's elective grace, we are (by direct operation of God in regeneration) taken from Dimension 2 (natural unregenerate life), and placed into Dimension 3 (the life of faith vs. the works of Dimension 2), to eventually escape the original destiny of hell in Dimension 4B (saved from); being transported to heaven instead--Dimension 4A (saved to).

We should bear in mind as we read scripture, that God often speaks in terms of grace (faith, spiritual life, righteousness, etc.) versus law (human merit, works, etc.). Particularly note this in the epistles dealing with the Jews, and their problem with grace vs. law.

Faith, as representing the whole new life dimension (Dept. 3, per diagram, page 1), is continually put forth as the necessary way of life to escape hell, and gain heaven, in contrast to the natural way of life (Dimension 2), which can only be escaped by election; that being wholly of God: to call his

appointed ones to himself, and make them new creatures. In a word, then, God speaks to man (specifically, the elect) where he is (Dimension 2), and tells him where he has to be (Dimension 3), to get to where he finally shall escape hell (Dimension 4B), and enter heaven (Dimension 4A). And all this is ensured to the elect, for God is the 'dynamic of his own demands' ("the author, and finisher of our faith" (Jesus), Heb. 12:2).

But we misuse and violate the order of God's salvation process, by making things synonymous when they are not, and inverting the system to fit our misconceptions.

The following comparative illustration may help put the point in perspective:

Right 1 2 3 4
 1. grace/ regeneration/faith/salvation.
 (3 is actually part of 2, but not preceding it, and 4 is the literal, future event)

Wrong 1 2 3 4
 2. grace/faith/regeneration/literal salvation.
 (salvation is usually interchangeable with regeneration in 3)

Example 1 says I am here (2, 3 and 4) because of monergistic grace (active divine agency, and passive human element). Or, I am born again (2), believe (3), and am saved (4), by irresistible grace (1).

Example 2 says I am here, God and I cooperating, by synergistic grace (co-active divine, and human agencies). Or, I am born again, and saved by resistible grace, and potential, or optional faith.

Further, the passage, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved", is not equivalent to: 'believe and thou shalt be born again'. True, we are effectively saved (per Dimension 4, page 1) at the time of our conversion, but the terms are not synonymous, or interchangeable in such verses as the one cited, and others like it.

Words must always be given their own grammatical distinction; application, by extension, not being primary interpretation. I would propose the following guideline, as being a safe and accurate interpretation rule of scriptures using the word forms, "saved", "salvation", etc. (the gospel usage):

Primarily, place the literal construction on the word that it technically, but essentially, applies to: the yet future event of deliverance from hell, and entrance to heaven.

Secondarily, by extension to its ultimate effect, the word "saved", etc. applies from the inception of personal regeneration, and characterizes the certainty, and eternal security.

of the believer's life principle.

The Futuristic Emphasis

If we are ever to recognize and rightly interpret the believer's salvation and eternal life in the literally future sense, then we must always do it when that is the distinction of any particular scripture.

And if more would hold to this II Tim. 2:15 method of study--which they claim as a guiding principle, (but in connection with the gospel, often betray), a whole new appreciation for the true meaning of many of such words and passages would be gained. And accordingly, many of the traditional free will misappropriations of these texts could be seen for their error, which would be vital steps toward disentanglement from the whole fallacious concept.

For example, in Mk. 16:15-16, see how logical a literal sense of the futuristic meaning of "saved" is, versus the more common evangelistic use of the verse, which strains it to apply as the minimum requirement of conversion:

"He that believeth³ and is baptized shall be saved^{4A}, but he that believeth not² shall be damned^{4B}". As the numbers refer to the diagram, page 1, we may add that the verse emphasizes not the way from Dimension 2 to 3, but from 3 to 4A

The following series of verses further support this principle of interpretation, notwithstanding their "free will" misappropriation:

Rom. 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation^{4A} to every one that believeth³; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek".

Connecting the above with I Cor. 1:18, 21 the distinction is reinforced: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God", "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save^{4A} them that believe³".

Rom. 5:9, "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we (already believers) shall be saved from wrath through him". (Looking to Dimension 4 from 3).

Acts 15:11, "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we (believing Gentiles) shall be saved (delivered from hell, Dimension 4B), even as they (believing Jews). (Points from Dim. 3 to 4, not 2 to 3. Verses 5, 8 and 9 of the same chapter establish that they were already believers. Note in verse 9, the phrase: "purifying their hearts by faith". Whose faith?, theirs, upon conversion; or a faith which God himself imparted to them as a result of purposely converting them whom he had so elected?

Rom. 10:13 is frequently quoted as a verse to claim or use to become a Christian; "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved".

Is this preliminary to regeneration--an invitation or direction telling what to do to be born again? I believe it is assurance to believers of their eventual deliverance from the literal condemnation of hell--which is everyone's natural destiny, unless rescued from it by conversion to faith.

And again, though this point is easily overlooked: the emphasis is on the word "whosoever" in the verse (10:13) as referring back to vs. 12, "for there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek". In other words, it is the Gentile distinction again--contextually carried on from the preceding chapter (9), vs. 25, "I will call them my people, which were not my people"; and a similar expression in verse 26.

This "whosoever" qualification is not--by again noting the contextual references, etc.--an all-inclusive term for every individual member of the race, but indicates the extension of grace and mercy to other nationalities than only Israel. See the thread of this oft-repeated teaching again in the end of chapter 10, and on into Ch. 11:11-12, 15, etc. Please read and note.

The Covenant Aspect of Faith

Those--which is the vast majority of contemporary Christians--who believe that faith is something man can exercise by sufficient evangelistic inducement, must either ignore or stumble at such scriptures as Gal. 3:23, which speaks of faith coming from God: "before faith came", and being "shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed".

Also Phil. 1:29 is an especially strong example of faith's origin: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer, etc.". Here we have the covenant of John 17:2, "that he (Christ) should give eternal life to as many as thou (God) has given him".

This covenant, along with the sovereign grace interpretation of every doctrine involved in God's plan and execution of elect man's salvation, must include every aspect of redemption; every means to the end.

The plan and work of salvation is no "iffy" thing--depending or conditioned upon any determining action of man. His part, while it may appear to be decisive, is really only a passive, inevitable response to God's irresistible operation upon, or within him.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved". Does this mean how to be born again, or how to ultimately be delivered from hell by entrance to heaven?

From this scripture and many like it, can we not agree that believing (or being a believer) is the requirement for escaping hell, and gaining heaven? What then, is the prerequisite for becoming a believer, believing?

When salvation truth is properly systematized (or life truth is departmentalized, as in the diagram, page 1), can, and must, we not determine and declare what the productive factor of belief or faith is; and where and when it occurs in the process of Christian development?

If the gospel is indeed spiritual truth, then how does one believe things spiritual without the new nature of a Christian? The spiritually ignorant question of which came first, the chicken or the egg (as if there should be any problem answering it), appears to have its counterpart among Christians. That is, they do not know how to rightly place the similarly creative act of regeneration in relation to the inception of faith, or belief.

Most would say that belief comes first, and the new life follows, which is the proverbial cart before the horse, and they can not (will not) see that the order of events is inverted. And except for some special intervention of God in our thinking, neither apparently can anyone, under the circumstances of our syndromatic blindness, or obsession with the synthetic free will philosophy.

Some Diagrammatic Classifications

Using the diagram on page 1, as a basis of true interpretation of salvation doctrine, I would propose the following illustrated method of establishing the literal meaning of certain scriptures, which are typically misinterpreted and misapplied by free will adherents.

Rom. 10: 9-13:

9 "That if thou shalt confess³ with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe³ in thine heart³ that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved^{4A}."

10 "For with the heart³ man believeth³ unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession³ is made unto salvation^{4A}."

11 "For the scripture saith, whosoever believeth³ on him shall not be ashamed^{4B}."

12 "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord is rich unto all that call³ unto him."

13 "For whosoever shall call³ upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved^{4A}."

Summarily, then, this is all believer truth, not evangelistic in the sense of free will opportunity or option; as if anyone but the elect could ever come to the point of being able to perform any of the actions specified. And why so? Because the vital principle by which all of the above acts are executed is spiritual; that is, through the already^{new} nature of a Christian only (which God independently imparts[^] to the elect, causing them to become the believers of Rom. 10:9-13, preceding, etc.)

Note, in relation to page 11 examples, that the free will assumed principle would put 2's where 3's are, and 3's for 4's.

To the extent that such scriptures may well^{be} spoken to the unsaved in general, God works inwardly only upon the elect to bring them into the new dimension of life. And again, the contextual element of elect Gentiles in addition to Jews, is to be noted for its importance--whereby in this passage, and many others, God often reinforces this dispensational aspect of his plan of salvation, per Eph. 3:1-9, etc.

Using the method of diagram classifications per example on page 11, we may thus interpret any other salvation passage. To further illustrate, I Cor. 2:11, 14, and 16 would be marked as follows:

11 "For what man knoweth the things of man^{2&3}, save the spirit of man which is in him^{2&3}? even so, the things of God knoweth no man², but the Spirit of God³" (which is in him).

14 "But the natural man² receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God³: for they are foolishness unto him²: neither can he know them², because they are spiritually discerned³".

16 "For who hath known the mind of the Lord (in anything), that he may instruct him²? But we have the mind of Christ³".

And the well known, but often misused passage--John 3:15-18:

15 "That whosoever believeth in him³ should not perish^{4B}, but have everlasting life^{4A}".

16 "For God so loved the world (elect of 2), that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him³, should not perish^{4B}, but have everlasting life^{4A}".

17 "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn^{4B} the world, but that the world through him³ might be saved^{4A}".

18 "He that believeth on him³ is not condemned^{4B}: but he that believeth not² is condemned^{4B} already, because he hath not believed² in the name of the only begotten Son of God³".

John 1:12-13 would be diagram-referenced as follows:

12 "But as many as received him³, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his name³:"

13 "Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh², nor of the will of man², but of God³."

The only life principle that man ever has in Dimension 2 is flesh, natural, unregenerate, etc.--never spiritual. Faith can not occur there; its life source is Spirit, and only operates in man in Dimension 3, and 4A.

I have used the foregoing method of identifying and classifying the various aspects of faith/belief doctrine, as an aid, or auxiliary tool in the systematization of salvation theology. The purpose of which, is a continuation of effort to propound arguments for a monergistic salvation principle, (or Calvinism, properly understood) as being the true basis of interpretation of scripture on the subject.

Conversely, the object of dispute and refutation, is the prevailing synergistic syndrome, or free will concept of interpretation; which, while many may resent the label, must be called Arminianism, in sum and substance, because of its contrasting philosophy.

It is my hope that at least some better understanding may be acknowledged of various scriptures, which have often been used speciously, and out of context from their basic, literal meanings. And every time we are able to establish or confirm the true contextual interpretation of a word, a verse, or passage, the cause of God's truth, and the church's enlightenment and edification is thereby promoted.

Anything else, regarding the controversy in question, only serves to foster and perpetuate the prevailing error (even heresy); betraying God by mishandling his word, and thereby rendering the church victims of this particular leaven of false doctrine, with which she is so obsessed!

Is Anybody Listening?

I had a marginal note on the manuscript at this point, that I might have to temper some of this to avoid antagonism, unless it was sincerely felt necessary in view of the typical lack of response, and settled resistance to even a propositional presentation of the complete monergistic principle of interpretation.

But I am increasingly convinced by my study of this doctrinal controversy, that the humanistic mold of Arminian free-willism, which holds the church in error, can and must be broken.

I freely admit, that many of the realities and implications of absolute sovereign election are staggering to our traditional free will disposition of mind. They are indeed awesome from any human perspective. I further think that the church's typical reaction to these doctrinal extremes reveals, and proves its inveterate man-oriented mentality.

Here is a clear example of this brainwashed condition: A pastor, thinking that there must always be some way to reconcile or affirm both divine predestination, and human free will "opportunity", etc., made the following remark: "I know all about predestination (as if he fully understood, and agreed with it), but there are people dropping off into hell every day, while some, or many Christians are sitting around making daisy chains".

Now the implication of the last two phrases is a complete contradiction and denial of the first phrase. Absolute, God-ordained election can not be thwarted by Satan, or Christian failure, or anything else! The only way a remark like the one quoted, can be explained--but never justified--is that predestination must somehow be held to be contingent upon human response; similar to an offer and acceptance agreement, which is only complete and effective if both parties subscribe to it by consent. Such contract requirements presuppose that the offeree is capable of understanding the "offer", and fulfilling its conditions.

Now there is of course, communicability between strictly man and man (flesh to flesh). There is even understanding of flesh by Spirit, so that there is one-way communication, but there can be no understanding by flesh of Spirit (that is, of things spiritual). If flesh can discern anything from spiritual principles, commands, promises, etc., it is only in a human, non-spiritual sense. I Cor. 2:11-14, if it were the only teaching of scripture on the subject (which of course, it is not), should prove and settle this fact in our minds permanently.

God never violates his own declared principles, nor any of his ways, unless he reveals some dispensational change, etc., which we can clearly cite and explain. There surely are none for this principle; not for the sake of the gospel, its required faith, repentance, or any other thing purported to be required of natural man, in response to God.

Oh, the subtlety of the flesh mixed with spirit: we take God's work, and make it ours; and call our work, God's! Out of one side of our mouth we praise God for his grace, his power, even some superficial concept of his sovereignty of will and action. And out of the other side, we think, speak, and act according to our own opinions of what God wants done, and how we are to do it.

Human philosophy and psychology often characterize whole ministries. Key doctrinal distinctions are missed, or

ignored. Even major principles often receive only lip service; the mode of action being contradictory.

For example, any true fundamental believer will quickly say that salvation is of the Lord, all of grace, etc. But what they include under grace, is the revealing evidence of what they really believe about it as a principle. Human means, that God uses in His work of grace, become decisive, causative factors to the "free will" advocate. Because, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" (and does he).

Even the more conscientious pastors, etc., motivated by the free will bias, must accommodate all scripture to that mold. When they appear to be too difficult to resolve into doctrinal certainties, they often are referred to as mysteries not fully revealed, or controversies to be "left to the theologians" (as if they were a different class of Christians).

There is a maxim, or proverb that I find very applicable to the type of subtle excuses we allow ourselves when we try to sophisticate our reasons for not coming to grips with various issues and controversies that confront us:

"Things of the same effect, are equal to the same thing". Misrepresentation of the truth, for which we are responsible, whether it be willful or ignorant, are equally inexcusable before the Lord. The effect on the ones to whom truth is to be communicated is similarly negative, or disserving in either case.

The Incurable Humanism

Succumbing again, and again, to subjective rationalism, the great majority can not ever seem to come all the way to some of God's revealed truths that call for complete objective acceptance, and fidelity.

We do not really apply the admonition of Isaiah 55:8, that our thoughts and ways are not God's--when we perpetuate our own ideas of how God works in salvation. Unwittingly, or not, we reduce God to our image of him, and his ways. In the final analysis, it is our concept of love, mercy, grace, justice, etc. by which God is characterized in our representations of Him, and his word.

We have compressed his salvation doctrine into an illusory mold of our own making--preaching a product of our own minds (another Gospel?) in the name of the Lord. Gal. 5:8.

For example, it may be said that the scriptures do not in themselves contain a great volume of evangelistic language, as such; and that therefore, it has been necessary to develop certain terminology, and forms of expression in order to effectively communicate the gospel.

This, in itself, is probably quite true, but the governing rule of any such amplification and illustration, is that it accurately and consistently conform to the biblical truth it represents. It may not change the essence, even the sense of the underlying scriptural principle and statement from which it is drawn, or to which it relates.

Today's evangelistic language is rife with such violations of principle and text. I shall enumerate some of the more common expressions used pervasively by the true church as patent, stock-in-trade phraseology:

"Put your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ". Allowing some room for the possible use of this solicitation in an untechnical sense, the free will use of the statement implies that anyone can (at least with sufficient leading) make a personal decision to receive salvation from the Lord.

"Last opportunity". In various ways, this admonition is often used in evangelistic preaching, to convey to the unsaved the idea of urgency, because of a contended uncertainty of further "opportunity" to be saved.

A thoughtful examination of this warning or appeal, reveals a betrayal of even the Arminian concept of election, let alone the Calvinistic interpretation. Free willists claim election to be based upon God's foresight of a faithful response by some who hear the gospel. They even include a more positive element, that God ensures that those who would favorably respond to the gospel, will all hear it (and thence be converted).

Where, then, does "last opportunity" come in? Doesn't this change the basis of salvation to opportunity, with an uncertain result? And does not this, then, represent the doctrine of election to be man's possible choice of God, rather than God's choice of specific men?

Do you not see how weak is the structure of the free will concept of man's salvation? None of its tenets are clearly defined, fixed principles. This is essentially because every thing is made to hinge, or finally depend upon man's supposed free will.

And how can we think that God would limit himself, and his will and powers to the capricious mind of unregenerate man (if even, in any consequential sense, to a renewed man), is untenable with an avowed understanding of the true nature of God!

We mock at the outright liberals who characterize Him as the passive, paternal patron of all humankind; practically irrespective of their sin, etc.--yet, most of us fundamentalist believers, with all of our professed enlightenment, have reduced Him to the image of our own man-serving con-

cepts of His sovereign character and principles; particularly as it relates to salvation.

We would be up in arms in a minute, from our assumed bastion of complete orthodoxy, if anyone suggested that we might not only be in error, but even possibly heretical in an area of doctrine. What, we who can point out in a minute the errors of neo-orthodoxy, neo-evangelicalism, ecumenism, charismatics, and practically everything--but the one major fallacy of our own?

Continuing with further examples of what I believe is doctrinally wrong evangelistic language, the preceding comments may be further illustrated.

"Repent now and believe, before it is too late". Is this the language of scripture; implicit, or otherwise? How can any kind of election to salvation, work on such a tenuous basis?

Another similar admonition or appeal, is that a presentation of the gospel may be God's "last call" to some individuals. What, except psychological leverage, can be claimed for such a statement? We can not, except by some straining of texts, ever support such expressions from the bible--which, it shouldn't be necessary to say, is our only authority for whatever we preach.

"God wants everyone to be saved". Is this defensible, by such scriptures as II Pet. 3:9, that the Lord "is not willing that any should perish", or John 3:16, that "God so loved the world that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life", and I Tim. 2:4, (God) "who will have all men to be saved", etc.?

Are we so locked in to the traditional use of these scriptures in evangelism, that we won't listen to the possibility that they have been lifted out of context, ignoring even the key words and themes of such passages, as the "us-ward", and second coming connection of II Pet. 3, and the Jew + Gentile distinction and reassurance of John 3:16, and I Tim. 2:4?

Both refer to the elect, and God's plan of redemption for them, not a universalism of salvation opportunity, that the free-willists would like it to mean. Oh, we ought to be so much better students and scholars of the word not to make such serious mistakes in doctrine, that we do not know when we are misapplying and misinterpreting texts.

What can cause such common misuse of scripture, but a compelling predisposition of mind that must make everything fit its mold? The subjective rationalism that both produced, and perpetuates the synergistic salvation theology known historically as Arminianism, or free-willism in whatever form, I

would classify as basically humanistic religion. How can it be controverted that practically every doctrine involved in salvation theology under that system, represents God (in his person, power, and principles) as essentially, or finally, subject to the will of man?

Whereas, that objective, monergistic interpretation of scripture, known historically as Calvinism, very clearly represents God as completely sovereign in every aspect of His domain; never being subject to the will of man in anything, but inherently holds that man is entirely subject to Him, "who worketh all things (irresistibly) after the counsel of His own will". Eph. 1:11.

While indeed there are many ramifications, and distinctions to be considered in examining the two sides contrasted above, the opposite poles in basic theology can not be denied.

Which representation of God, therefore, exalts Him the most in every attribute of His being, without subjugating, or limiting any of them, to accommodate the self-serving ends of a human concept?

Rationalize it away as we might, only one view holds God to the highest in every regard; that is the sovereign, monergistic grace interpretation of every aspect of salvation. The other concept is practically void of that principle, in any absolute soteriological sense--while it claims to more fully exalt God (than the Calvinistic system) in His love, and mercy, by espousing a synergistic, free will system of salvation (with universal potential application) as the fundamental truth of scripture.

The word of God on this subject, as with all matters of scripture, has only one real interpretation. It (the word), therefore, is the infallible judge of the controversy. But in the courtroom of the church, the majority of the jurors (believers) are so biased against the real truth by their "free will" indoctrination, that it is nearly impossible to get a true verdict.

It is both ironic and pathetic, that the very opposite situation exists than should be the case. Error should always be on trial, with truth its judge--but in the case of the free will syndrome that pervades and dominates the church's thinking, the truth of sovereign grace (to wit: monergistic salvation) is now judged guilty by the usurped "authority" of the false doctrine that took its place.

And no matter how much good gospel is used: 90% truth, and 10% error on the same subject = error, or false doctrine. Lest anyone become misled that it is even that wide of a ratio, I believe the subjective content of most evangelistic preaching is so permeated with the free will corruption, that it often outweighs the amount of objective gospel truth in the message.

Is this not the "leaven that leaveneth the whole lump"? If the free will philosophy is error, is it not leaven?, hence, false doctrine?

Summary Comments

A basic tenet of what I have written in this paper, and elsewhere on the subject, is that there can be no crossing of the line between flesh and Spirit (without regeneration --that being a direct, independent act of God upon His ordained elect, only).

This is indeed scripturally provable, as I have noted a number of times and ways. And that is only a small part of many reliable commentaries and works on the monergistic interpretation of salvation doctrine.

Unfortunately, there are also many not-so-well written books and articles on the Calvinistic, sovereign grace side of the controversy, which often hinder an understanding of the system, more than they promote it.

As much as I value, and have profited by, the great majority of what Calvin, and Spurgeon have written on the subject, even they can be found to make incompatible statements. Yet, they may have been as much as 98% consistent with the complete sovereign grace principle; and while there are undoubtedly others who may be fully consistent, there is only one whom I have read extensively, and find no comments favoring or implying a free will interpretation of doctrine.

I refer to John Gill, a thorough-going monergist, whose scripturally sound argumentation disputes and disproves the free will concept at every turn. Quoting from Jay Green, in his preface to Gill's, "The Cause of God and Truth", he says, "Here John Gill takes those Scriptures which have been, by many men of various persuasions, misread and misinterpreted, expounding them in their true meaning. This is not done in the interest of 'Calvinism', nor as a put-down to 'Arminianism', but as a rescuing of certain Scriptures from a false interpretation given to them by men of all shades of belief", and"(he) will gently open the meaning of every verse of Scripture normally used to controvert the doctrine of God's unfettered sovereignty."

The fact that I have found so comparatively few steadfast advocates of the complete predestination principle, only serves to accentuate how powerful is the grip of humanism on the church's mind in gospel theology.

I feel that this tremendous "old nature" undercurrent is what has caused many, who realize the implications of unconditional election and all that goes with it, to capitulate in favor of the free will concept; falsely comforted and sustained by the preponderance of historical and contemporary allies of the same persuasion.

Not being unsympathetic to the more stable, well-disposed brethren who would indeed have a difficult transition period (even as I did), many of the hyper-evangelical type would all at once be practically tongue-tied; even traumatically disoriented. So fraught is their vocabulary and methodology with the pseudo-gospel element under discussion, that only a divinely interposed therapy could rehabilitate them, through the necessary deprogramming and reconstruction period.

And I have no doubt that God not only wants the above, but warns the church to "strengthen the things that remain", as continuing, or resuming the historic reformation process.

In closing this composition, may I add a thought on another very important aspect of the great deception that keeps the church bound up in this plight of error. It practically goes without saying that no faithful, conscientious servant of the Lord flatly ignores, or fails to consider controversies to some extent, such as the one herein discussed. Furthermore, most would have the habit of bringing such matters before the Lord in prayer asking Him to show them if, and when they may be wrong, even asking Him to stop them, if necessary.

What then is the deception I have alluded to? It's just this simple, but subtly elusive factor: God has already given the answers to such prayers in His word. That is to say, that true doctrine is abundantly and clearly available in the scriptures. There will, therefore, usually be no special action by the Lord to show us the answers to dilemmas and errors of our own making--when the safeguard and solution is in the very authority of the scriptures by which we claim to live and serve, but nonetheless have erred from.

What do we do, then? Go back to the word, diligently searching and studying with a truly open heart, and unbiased mind, those things at issue--until we have proven what the true interpretation is of the subject in question. At the same time, we must also be open and willing to listen to whomever God may be using to help straighten out our thinking.

There ought to be such a compelling sense of concern and responsibility to determine the truth of the matter, and to vindicate our positions--that symposiums, or synods be held for the very purpose. Certainly enough reasonable, logical points have been made or brought to attention against the free will concept of salvation, that a concerted effort should be made to examine and seek to establish the true theological interpretation of the subject.

Brethren, we must come to it! If we don't do it here, I believe many (even the great majority) are going to be ashamed at His coming, and judgment seat, for having so grossly misrepresented not only the gospel; but the Lord, Himself!

I close, therefore, with an earnest intercessory prayer that the universal church may yet begin to extricate itself from the convoluted results of centuries of insidious humanism; whereby, even the fundamental "orthodox" church perpetuates an adulterated gospel theology; unabashedly calling it sound doctrine.

"My brethren, these things ought not so to be".

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong".

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches".

And may we endeavor together, always to keep the precious balance of fidelity to God, and love to each other. Amen.