

# **Intro to Reformed Theology:**

## **A Calvinist Survival Guide**

**Edited by John Hendryx**

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## **Preface - What is Reformed Theology?**

Reformed theology...

... is always being Reformed by the Holy Spirit according to the word of God. Not only our doctrine but our worship and life must be determined by Scripture and not by human whim, creativity or the spirit of the age.

...presupposes God's Word alone as our ultimate authority and it testifies that Jesus Christ is the prism through which all light concerning God is reflected. This means that Jesus Christ is the beginning and the end, better, the starting point and summary, of both Old and New Testaments. Reformed Theology declares that God in any sense differentiated from Jesus Christ is unknowable.

...stresses the sovereignty of God, that is, His reign over all things, meticulously determining (Eph 1:11) all that comes to pass (i.e. God is never taken by surprise).

...warns strictly against having any confidence in the flesh, declaring the utter inability of the unregenerate man to believe the gospel apart from the Holy Spirit, and glories in Christ Jesus alone for all spiritual blessings (John 3:37, 15:5; Eph 1:3), including His giving us a new heart to believe (Ezek. 36:25-27).

...emphasizes a Christ-Centered proclamation of the gospel, that salvation is wholly of God, by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone as revealed in the Scripture alone to the Glory of God alone.

...views the Bible as a redemptive-historical organic unfolding drama of revelation which is structured by three covenants (redemption, works and grace).

... grew to greater maturity out of the sixteenth-century revolt against the Roman Catholic church.

Those in the Reformed Tradition hold to the doctrines of grace (the five points of Calvinism), man's helpless condition apart from Christ, the necessity of evangelism and the work of the Holy Spirit who (monergistically) quickens the dead to life through the preaching of the word as God turning their heart of stone to flesh, and

opening their eyes to the excellencies of the gospel (uniting them to Christ). In other words, Reformed Theology stresses the way the objective, written Word together with the inner, supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit work together. For the Word without the illumination of the Holy Spirit remains a closed book. We (the church) cast forth the seed of the gospel and the Holy Spirit germinates it, so to speak, with the blood of Christ bringing forth life in people from every nation, tribe, language, and people (Rev 14:6).

“Reformation Theology” is a term designating the theological doctrines and convictions held in common by the great sixteenth century Protestant reformers, including Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, and others. Although some of these reformers had widely varying beliefs in certain areas, they were nevertheless firmly united against the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church in some very foundational doctrines. They all believed that the scriptures alone were sufficient to govern all believers in matters of faith and practice, and that the scriptures taught that justification was by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ. Likewise, they stressed a robust federal, or covenant theology (see questions 31 ff. above), and they held that man's will is wholly bound in sin, and that only the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit could give the faith that results in justification.

Perhaps one of the best the best ways to understand the foundational truths that united these different reformers is to read through the various creeds and confessions that were composed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The “three forms of unity,” consisting of the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession of Faith, and the Canons of Dort, provide perhaps the clearest explanation of the common faith of the first reformers. Also, the Westminster Standards, including the Westminster Confession of Faith and the shorter and longer catechisms, were a landmark seventeenth century work codifying the doctrines of the Reformation.

### **Quotes on Reformed Theology:**

"For non-reformed theologies..."at the end of the day, the security of the believer finally rests with the believer. For those in the opposite camp [Reformed], the security of the believer finally rests with God -- and that, I suggest, rightly taught, draws the believer back to God himself, to trust in God, to a renewed faith that is of a piece with trusting him in the first place."

**- D.A. Carson**

If our religion be of our own getting or making, it will perish; and the sooner it goes, the better; but if our religion is a matter of God's giving, we know that He shall never take back what He gives, and that, if He has commenced to work in us

by His grace, He will never leave it unfinished.

- **C.H. Spurgeon**

"It is not for us to imagine that we can prove the truth of Christianity by our own arguments; nobody can prove the truth of Christianity except the Holy Spirit, by his own almighty work of renewing the blinded heart. It is the sovereign prerogative of Christ's Spirit to convince men's consciences of the truth of Christ's gospel and Christ's human witnesses must learn to ground their hopes of success not on clever presentation of the truth by man, but on powerful demonstration of the truth by the Spirit."

- **J. I. Packer**

"Grace is not like a box of candy that you can send back if you don't want it. Grace is divine favor, an attitude of God's own heart. We cannot stop him from loving us, if he chooses to do so. Nor can we stop him from giving us blessings of salvation: regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification, glorification. His purpose in us will certainly be fulfilled, Phil. 1:6, Eph. 1:11. "

- **John Frame**

"Let God give what He commands, and command what He will."

- **Augustine, Confessions**

"Through freedom man came to be in sin, but the corruption which followed as punishment turned freedom into necessity."

- **Augustine, On Man's Perfection In Righteousness**

"To will is of nature, but to will aright is of grace."

- **Augustine, Sermons**

"God bids us do what we cannot, that we may know what we ought to seek from him."

- **Augustine, On Grace And Free Will**

"Let us take heed we be not compelled to believe that Almighty God would have any thing done which doth not come to pass."

- **Augustine, Enchiridion**

"Grace does not destroy the will but rather restores it."

- **Augustine, On Grace And Free Will**

"Who does not tremble at these judgments, where God works even in evil men's hearts, whatever he wills, yet renders to them according to their deserts?"

- **Augustine, On Grace And Free Will**

"No man ever believes with a true and saving faith unless God inclines his heart; and no man when God does incline his heart can refrain from believing."

- **Blaise Pascal**

"Election does not in any way depend on the foreseen faith or good works of man, as the Arminians teach, but exclusively on the sovereign good pleasure of God, who is also the originator of faith and good works. If God owed the forgiveness of sin and eternal life to all men, it would be an injustice if He saved only a limited number of them. But the sinner has absolutely no right or claim on the blessings which flow from divine election. As a matter of fact he has forfeited these blessings. Not only have we no right to call God to account for electing some and passing others by..., but we must admit that He would have been perfectly just if He had not saved any."

- **Louis Berkhof Systematic Theology, Part I, Predestination**

"If damnation be justice, then mercy may choose its own object."

- **Jonathan Edwards**

"Oh, my reader, be not deceived on this vital matter; to mortify the lusts of the flesh, to be crucified unto the world, to overcome the Devil, to die daily unto sin and live unto righteousness, to be meek and lowly in heart, trustful and obedient, pious and patient, faithful and uncompromising, loving and gentle; in a word, to be a Christian, to be Christ-like, is a task far, far beyond the poor resources of fallen human nature."

- **A. W. Pink, from Saving Faith**

"Just as the sinner's despair of any hope from himself is the first prerequisite of a sound conversion, so the loss of all confidence in himself is the first essential in the believer's growth in grace."

- **A. W. Pink**

"When the believer sins he does not forfeit eternal life, and why? Because it is a gift - a free gift from God. He could do nothing to merit this gift (if he could, it would cease to be a gift: in such a case it would be a reward), consequently, he can do nothing to demerit it."

- **A. W. Pink**

**Note on Pink's quote:** "In fact, those who believe a person can lose their salvation deny Christ. Such a person does not believe the work of Christ is sufficient or enough to save him to the uttermost, and as such, are still trusting in their own righteousness. if a pastor is teaching his congregation that they can lose their salvation by committing such and such a sin, they are, in fact, declaring that salvation is by works, not by Chr...ist alone. This is playing in the fire and while



Christ may save hearers in spite of the messenger, yet believing that message as is, is damnable. It is the same error that the book of Hebrews warns against. That epistle says Christ is better than Moses, the Angels, the Levitical priesthood and the sacrifices. It's warning are to never go backwards in redemptive history to these shadows because they pointed forward to Christ, who fulfilled them. The severest warnings were given here. What was their sin? To trust in something other than Christ alone (like sacrificial bulls)."(John H.)

God knoweth we have nothing of ourselves, therefore in the covenant of grace he requireth no more than he giveth, and giveth what he requireth, and accepteth what he giveth.

- **Richard Sibbes**

"Truths and prospects are already contained in the word of God; but without the light of the Spirit they are not discerned."

- **John Newton**

The God who gives the commandments is first of all the Saviour who has delivered his people from bondage (Exod. 20:1-2)."

- **William Still**

You did not make the cross effective in your life by faith. The cross became effective in our life by purchasing your faith.

- **John Piper**

"To suppose that whatever God requireth of us that we have power of ourselves to do, is to make the cross and grace of Jesus Christ of none effect."

- **John Owen**

"Some make man God's co-worker, to ratify election by his consent. Thus, according to them, man's will is superior to God's plan. As if Scripture taught that we are merely given the ability to believe, and not, rather, faith itself!"

- **John Calvin, Institutes Ch XXIV.3**

"Indeed the Word of God is like the sun, shining upon all those to whom it is proclaimed, but with no effect among the blind. Now, all of us are blind by nature in this respect... Accordingly, it cannot penetrate into our minds unless the Spirit, as the inner teacher, through his illumination makes entry for it."

**John Calvin Institutes 3.2.34**

"If people mean [by free will] that man has in himself the power to work in partnership with God's grace they are most wretchedly deluding themselves.

--**John Calvin, Institutes** edited by John T. McNeill, Volume 1 chap 3.11 page 306

"Nobody who has not the Spirit of God can see a jot of what is in the Scriptures. All men have their hearts darkened, so that even when they can discuss and quote all that is in Scripture, they do not understand or really know it... The Spirit is needed for the understanding of all Scripture and every part of Scripture."

**- Martin Luther The Bondage Of The Will**

"A man who has no part in the grace of God, cannot keep the commandments of God, or prepare himself, either wholly or in part, to receive grace; but he rests of necessity under the power of sin."

**- Martin Luther**

"The will of man without grace is not free, but is enslaved, and that too with its own consent."

**- Martin Luther**

"It is false that the will, left to itself, can do good as well as evil, for it is not free, but in bondage."

**- Martin Luther**

[Erasmus asks ]"if we can do nothing, to what purpose are so many laws, so many precepts, so many threatenings, and so many promises?"— Paul here gives answer: "By the law is the knowledge of sin." His answer is far different from that which would enter the thoughts of man, or of "Free-will. He does not say, by the law is, proved "Free-will," because it co-operates with it unto righteousness. For righteousness is not by the law, but, "by the law is the knowledge of sin:" seeing that, the effect, the work, and the office of the ...law, is to be a light to the ignorant and the blind; such a light, as discovers to them disease, sin, evil, death, hell, and the wrath of God; though! it does not deliver from these, but shews them only. And when a man is thus brought to a knowledge of the disease of sin, he is cast down, is afflicted, nay despairs: the law does not help him, much less can he help himself. Another light is necessary, which might discover to him the remedy. This is the voice of the Gospel, revealing Christ as the Deliverer from all these evils. Neither "Free-will" nor reason can discover Him. And how should it discover Him, when it is itself dark and devoid even of the light of the law, which might discover to it its disease, which disease, in its own light it seeth not, but believes it to be sound health."

**- Martin Luther**

Next time you have an exchange with a friend who affirms "libertarian free will', ask him or her if a person can come to faith in Jesus Christ apart from the grace of God. If he says "no" then you have just demonstrated that he does not really believe in libertarian free will, for, why does he need the grace of God if his will is

already free?

- **John Hendryx**

"[fallen man] cannot find God for the same reason that a thief can't find a police officer."

- **Michael Horton**

"...if anyone makes the assistance of grace depend on the humility or obedience of man and does not agree that it is a gift of grace itself that we are obedient and humble, he contradicts the Apostle who says, "What have you that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7), and, "But by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10).

- **Council of Orange Canon 6**

"The wickedest of enemies of God are only axes and saws and hammers in his hands, and are ignorantly his instruments for doing his work in the world."

- **J. C. Ryle**

"God is working out his eternal purpose, not only in spite of human and satanic opposition, but by means of them."

- **A. W. Pink**

"There is a defect even in man's will. Sin has affected the whole of man. Our failure to appreciate the power of God in our very act of believing is due to our failure to realize the devastating effect of the Fall. It marred and defaced God's image in us, with the inevitable consequences that our minds and wills became defiled."

- **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

"How may I know I'm elect? [i.e. that God has done a work of grace in me] First, by the Word of God having come in divine power to the soul so that my self-complacency is shattered and my self-righteousness is renounced. Second, by the Holy Spirit convicting me of my woeful, guilty, and lost condition. Third, by having had revealed to me the suitability and sufficiency of Christ to meet my desperate case and by a divinely given faith causing me to lay hold of and rest upon Him as my only hope. Fourth, by the marks of the new nature within me - a love for God; an appetite for spiritual things; a longing for holiness; a seeking after conformity to Christ. Fifth, by the resistance which the new nature makes to the old, causing me to hate sin and loathe myself for it..."

- **A. W. Pink**

"If I really believe that "all things" are for God's glory and by His invincible and perfect will, then I shall receive submissively, yea, thankfully, whatsoever He

ordains and sends me."

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- **A. W. Pink**

"To be Christians under the law of grace does not mean to wander unbridled outside the law, but to be engrafted in Christ, by whose grace we are free from the curse of the law, and by whose Spirit we have the law engraved upon our hearts." -

- **John Calvin**

"If people mean that man has in himself the power to work in partnership with God's grace they are most wretchedly deluding themselves." JOHN CALVIN

- **John Calvin**

"I would rather believe a limited atonement that is efficacious for all men for whom it was intended, than a universal atonement that is not efficacious for anybody, except the will of men be added to it."

- **C. H. Spurgeon**

"The ultimate tragedy of man's self-understanding is that he believes himself to be free, has all the feelings of a free agent, but does not realize that he is a slave to sin and serves the will of Satan."

- **Sinclair Ferguson**

"My advice to young Calvinists is to learn your theology from the historic mainstream Calvinist authors, not from blogs and discussion forums on the Internet. Some of the forums may be helpful in pointing you to more important resources."

- **Phil Johnson**

"Arminians say that the Augustinian tradition subordinates the love of God to the will of God ... But this is not what distinguishes the Augustinian tradition from the Arminian tradition. The distinction is between intensive and extensive love, between an intensive love that saves its loved ones, and an extensive love that loves everyone in general and saves no one in particular. Or if you really wish to cast this in terms of willpower, it's the distinction between divine willpower and human willpower. Or, to put the two together, does God will the salvation of everyone with a weak-willed, ineffectual love, or does God love his loved ones with a resolute will that gets the job done? The God of Calvin is the good shepherd, who names and numbers his sheep, who saves the lost sheep and fends

off the wolf. The God of Wesley is the hireling, who knows not the flock by name and number, who lets the sheep go astray and be eaten by the wolf. Which is more loving, I ask?"

- **Steve Hays**

What the Arminian wants to do is to arouse man's activity: what we want to do is to kill it once for all - to show him that he is lost and ruined, and that his activities are not now at all equal to the work of conversion; that he must look upward. They seek to make the man stand up: we seek to bring him down, and make him feel that there he lies in the hand of God, and that his business is to submit himself to God, and cry aloud, 'Lord, save, or we perish.' We hold that man is never so near grace as when he begins to feel he can do nothing at all. When he says, 'I can pray, I can believe, I can do this, and I can do the other,' marks of self-sufficiency and arrogance are on his brow.

- **C. H. Spurgeon**

"Faith is not our physician; it only brings us to the Physician. It is not even our medicine; it only administers the medicine, divinely prepared by Him who healeth all our diseases. In all our believing, let us remember God's word to Israel: I am Jehovah, that healeth thee (Exod. 14:26). Our faith is but our touching Jesus; and what is even this, in reality, but His touching us?"

- **Horatius Bonar**

Faith can expiate no guilt; can accomplish no propitiation; can pay no penalty; can wash away no stain; can provide no righteousness. It brings us to the cross, where there is expiation, and propitiation, and payment, and cleansing, and righteousness; but in itself it has no merit and no virtue."

- **Horatius Bonar**

"Faith itself is man's act or work and is thereby excluded from being any part of his justifying righteousness. It is one thing to be justified by faith merely as an instrument by which man receives the righteousness of Christ, and another to be justified FOR faith as an act or work of the law. If a sinner, then, relies on his actings of faith or works of obedience to any of the commands of the law for a title to eternal life, he seeks to be justified by works of the law as much as if his works were perfect. If he depends either in whole or in part, on his faith and repentance for a right to any promised blessing, he thereby so annexes that promise to the commands to believe and repent as to form them for himself into a covenant of works. Building his confidence before God upon his faith, repentance and other acts of obedience, he places them in Christ's stead as his grounds of right to the promise and so he demonstrates himself to be of the works of the law and so be under the curse." Galatians 3:10

- **John Colquhoun (A Treatise on Law and the Gospel)**

"God ... as he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, actually worketh faith and repentance to us, gives them unto us, bestows them on us; so that they are mere effects of his grace in us. And his working in us infallibly produceth the effect intended, because it is actual faith that he works, and not only a power to believe."

- **John Owen**

"As grace led me to faith in the first place, so grace will keep me believing to the end. Faith, both in its origin and continuance, is a gift of grace."

- **J. I. Packer**

Ezekiel 36 says of the Spirit's work, "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."

- **Ez 36:25-27**

"And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live."

- **Deut 30:6**

Unwarranted confidence in human ability is a product of fallen human nature ... God's grace in Christ is not merely necessary but is the sole efficient cause of salvation. We confess that human beings are born spiritually dead and are incapable even of cooperating with regenerating grace. We reaffirm that in salvation we are rescued from

God's wrath by his grace alone. It is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that brings us to Christ by releasing us from our bondage to sin and raising us from spiritual death to spiritual life. We deny that salvation is in any sense a human work. Human methods, techniques or strategies by themselves cannot accomplish this transformation. Faith is not produced by our unregenerated human nature.

- **Cambridge Declaration**

### ***The Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace***

"For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them (Ro 10:5). [but] The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me (Ro 7:10) "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it." (Jas 2:10) "For God [sent] his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh ... in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Ro 8:3-4)

Perfect law-keeping is required to merit eternal life. But the law brings death because we all have failed to keep it, save for Jesus Christ who was "born under the law" and fulfilled its righteous requirements on our behalf. Praise be to God. - **John Hendryx**

In God's economy both moral and immoral people are equally alienated from God. This may be counter-intuitive but it is often the case that goodness keeps people from God. In fact many people avoid Jesus by avoiding sin because they are trying to become their own saviors ... attempting to justify themselves. Christ calls us to repent of both our good and bad works, for we have no righteousness of our own.

- **John Hendryx**

"Regeneration is expressly denied to be of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man (John 1:13), and is ascribed to God himself. Not all men have faith in Christ; and those who do have it, have it not of themselves; it is the gift of God, worked out through the Redemption which is in Christ through the mighty operation of his Spirit, which is the fruit and effect of His invincible grace."

- **John Hendryx**

"...the Lord Christ fulfilled the whole law for us; He did not only undergo the penalty of it due unto our sins, but also yielded that perfect obedience which it did require...Christ's fulfilling of the law, in obedience unto its commands, is no less imputed unto us for our justification than His undergoing the penalty of it is."

- **John Owen**

**Dr. Robert L. Reymond defines the active obedience of Christ as:**

"Christ's full obedience to all the prescriptions of the divine law...[making] available a perfect righteousness before the law that is imputed or reckoned to those who put their trust in him.

**Dr. Robert L. Reymond defines the passive obedience of Christ as:**

"[Christ's] willing obedience in bearing all the sanctions imposed by that law against his people because of their transgression...[being] the ground of God's justification of sinners (Rom. 5:9), by which divine act they are pardoned..."

"Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up" - Matt 15:13

## **What are the "Five Solas," and What do they Mean?**

The "five solas" is a term used to designate five great foundational rallying cries of the

Protestant reformers. They are as follows: “Sola Scriptura” (Scripture Alone); “Sola Gratia” (Grace Alone); “Sola Fide” (Faith Alone); “Solus Christus” (Christ Alone); and “Soli Deo Gloria” (To God Alone Be Glory).

These “five solas” were developed in response to specific perversions of the truth that were taught by the corrupt Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Church taught that the foundation for faith and practice was a combination of the scriptures, sacred tradition, and the teachings of the magisterium and the pope; but the Reformers said, “No, our foundation is sola scriptura”. The Catholic Church taught that we are saved through a combination of God's grace, the merits that we accumulate through penance and good works, and the superfluity of merits that the saints before us accumulated; the reformers responded, “sola gratia”. The Catholic Church taught that we are justified by faith and the works that we produce, which the righteousness that God infuses in us through faith brings about. The reformers responded, “No, we are justified by faith alone, which lays hold of the alien righteousness of Christ that God freely credits to the account of those who believe”. The Catholic Church taught that we are saved by the merits of Christ and the saints, and that we approach God through Christ, the saints, and Mary, who all pray and intercede for us. The Reformers responded, “No, we are saved by the merits of Christ Alone, and we come to God through Christ Alone”. The Catholic Church adhered to what Martin Luther called the “theology of glory” (in opposition to the “theology of the cross”), in which the glory for a sinner's salvation could be attributed partly to Christ, partly to Mary and the saints, and partly to the sinner himself. The reformers responded, “No, the only true gospel is that which gives all glory to God alone, as is taught in the scriptures.”

Today, the Catholic Church teaches the same essential perversions of truth; and much of Protestantism has seen a regress to many of the same corruptions, in many circles and denominations. It is a pressing need for Christians everywhere to reaffirm and champion anew the “five solas” which underlay and gave impetus to the Protestant Reformation.

Terry Johnson, a PCA pastor in Georgia explains the fives solas like this:

### **Scripture Alone**

By what means do we determine the faith and practice of the church? This was probably the fundamental battle between the Reformers and the church authorities. The position of the late Medieval church was that faith and practice was to be determined by the Bible plus the tradition of the church. "Tradition" included a host of extra-biblical practices and beliefs which had been received into the church over the centuries whether by common acceptance or by the decisions of Popes and councils. Against the position the Reformers said sola scriptura. Scripture alone is to determine what we believe and what we practice.



Luther set the tone for the Reformation at the Diet of Worms in April 1521. There before the assembly of the German Princes and the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire Luther's theology was examined and condemned. It was demanded that he recant. As the hearings came to their dramatic close, Luther was asked:

Martin, how can you assume that you are the only one to understand the sense of Scripture? Would you put your judgement above that of so many famous men and claim that you know more than they all? You have no right to call into question the most holy orthodox faith, instituted by Christ the perfect lawgiver, proclaimed throughout the world by the apostles, sealed by the red blood of the martyrs, confirmed by the sacred councils, defined by the Church in which all our fathers believed until death and gave to us as an inheritance, and which now we are forbidden by the pope and the emperor to discuss lest there be no end of debate.

Then finally knowing that his life probably depended upon how he answered, it was put to him,

I ask you, Martin - answer candidly and without horns - do you or do you not repudiate your books and the errors which they contain?

Luther answered:

Since then your Majesty and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason - I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other - my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.

Evangelicals are thrilled by Luther's words because we endeavor to stand where he stood. We believe that God's "infallible" word (as Luther called it) is "the rule of faith and practice" (Westminster Confession of Faith, I.2.).

Every corruption of biblical Christianity begins by compromising this principle. Every deviation from Christianity as Christ and the Apostles established it begins by adding to the Bible or by taking away from it. For them all it is the Bible plus or minus something.

For Christian Science, it is the Bible plus Mary Baker Eddy's Key. For the Mormons it is the Book of Mormon. For the Jehovah's Witnesses it is the Watchtower. For the Seventh Day Adventists it is the revelations of Ellen White. For the Roman Catholic, it is tradition. For many modernists, it is common sense,

logic, or the latest scientific discoveries. Calvin's question of all extra biblical practices and beliefs is this: "by what word of God, by what revelation, by what example, is this done" (Institutes III V. 10). Unless it comes from the Holy Writ, it has no place in the church. Scripture alone determines our faith and practice. To depart from this position is to be guilty of the sins of the Pharisees who, "neglecting the commandments of God . . . hold to the traditions of men" (Mark 7:8).

This is why the Reformers translated the Scripture into the language of the people, and why we continue to encourage the so-called laity to study their Bibles for themselves.

Authority in the church is not based upon creeds or councils or clerics, not common sense, logic, intuition, science or even new revelation. Scripture alone - the infallible, inerrant, completely sufficient written word of God is our only rule of faith and practice.

### **Christ Alone**

Where do these Scriptures everywhere and always direct us? To Jesus Christ alone! "How may a person be in the right before God," Job asked (9:2). This is the fundamental question of human existence - the question of the ages, the question of all questions. Universally people know that God exists. Universally there is a sense that He is not pleased and something must be done to please Him (Romans 1). The history of religion is the history of attempts to do so. Some religions direct one toward an "internal" sacrifice such as enlightened moral conduct or ascetic practices such as prayer, fasting, and physical deprivation in order to please the deity. Others devise "external" sacrifices, such as human or animal blood sacrifices, in order to satisfy God and begin the journey down the road of salvation, whatever the particular religion may conceive of that to be. The problem with approaching God on these terms is that one never senses that one has done enough. There remains the nagging reality of God's disfavor.

In this respect the Medieval church was much like the rest of the religions of mankind. The average citizen of Christendom viewed God as unapproachable and unappeasable. By his works he did all he could to please God. He attended church. He kept his 10 commandments. He observed the church calendar. He helped those in need. But for all of that, it was never enough.

So he enlisted help. He felt unworthy to approach God on his own so he prayed through priests, never directly. Still, it was not enough. Though he said his prayers, though he visited shrines and relics, though he purchased indulgences promising the forgiveness of sins, the church taught there would still await him

hundreds and thousands of years in Purgatory.

With great zeal the Reformers jettisoned the vast bulk of this religious system and proclaimed in its place Solus Christus, by Christ alone we are saved. By this they meant,

1. Christ's sacrifice alone.

There is no other satisfactory way to deal with one's guilt. There is no other way to be right and reconciled to God. There is no other way, no other truth, no other valid approach to God. His sacrifice alone can remove the guilt that lies behind my guilty feelings. This was the position of the Reformers and as difficult as this is to maintain in our relativistic age, it remains conviction today. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but by Me" (John 14:16).

Peter preached that,

There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

Jesus Christ is the only Savior for sinners. We, with them, look to no other and present no other. The writer to the Hebrews says,

But He having offered one sacrifice for sins for all times, sat down at the right hand of God (Hebrew 10:12, cf. Hebrew 7:27).

His atoning sacrifice was a once for all accomplishment. In His death He bore the sins of the whole world in the whole of history. It needs no supplementation. Nothing may be added to it. It is totally sufficient for all of our sins.

Because the Scripture teaches this, the Reformers rejected the Medieval concept of the mass as a re-sacrificing of Christ, or even as a re-enactment of that Sacrifice, because His death was once for all. It need never be repeated. They rejected the sale of "indulgences," whereby one could purchase the benefits of the "merits of the saints" toward the remission of one's sins. One need not go to saints for merits (even if they had any; they don't), because Christ's merits are sufficient. They rejected the doctrine of Purgatory, where the souls of believers are alleged to go to be purged of the guilt and stain of unpaid (or unatoned) for sins. In Christ there are no unpaid for sins. His sacrifice is for all sins for all time. They rejected prayers for the dead, because as Calvin put it "the entire law and the gospel do not furnish so much as a single syllable to pray for the dead" (III. V. 10).

They did not pray for the dead because the dead are in eternity. Their future is sealed. Either by Christ's sacrifice they are in Heaven or because of rejecting Him they have descended into the Abyss. His sacrifice was once for all and sufficient for all our sins!

## 2. Christ's mediation alone.

We read in 1 Timothy 2:5 that "there is one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ." Likewise from Hebrews 7:24, "He always lives to make intercession" for His people. To whom do I turn to get what I need from God? Who can assist me in my search for the forgiveness of my sins, and peace of conscience? The answer of the Reformation and of the Scriptures and Evangelicals today is "Christ alone." He alone mediates the blessings of redemption. He alone justifies. He alone declares us forgiven. He alone sanctifies. He alone adopts us into the family of God. I go directly to God through Jesus Christ. I need no celestial mediators, such as angels, or saints, or Mary. I need no earthly mediators such as clergymen and priests.

Thus, the Reformers affirmed the priesthood of all believers. Each believer has the right of direct access to God in Christ. Peter says we are "a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9). John says Christ "has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father" (Revelation 1:6). Our privilege, joy and right is to go directly to God through Jesus Christ without the help of any created being. The Roman Catholic church may be the single most important force for good in our world today. I thank God for the uncompromising stand that it has taken on a variety of moral issues, especially in the area of sexual ethics. But when Pope John Paul II dismisses the "widespread idea that one can obtain forgiveness directly from God" and continues to exhort the faithful to confess their sins more often to their priests, we must continue to say in return that to Christ alone we confess our sins and by Christ alone we are forgiven. When the Pope continues to say "Mary is the source of our faith and our hope," we must continue to say in response that our hope "is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness." He alone makes us partakers of the blessings of redemption. He alone is the Savior. He alone is the Mediator. For these tasks He is entirely sufficient and without need of assistance. We Evangelicals look not to the saints, but to Jesus Christ alone.

### **Faith Alone**

What must I do to receive what Christ accomplished on the cross? Luther struggled with this question for more than 10 years. In July of 1505, at the age of 21, while caught out in a rainstorm he was suddenly hit by a lightning bolt. In a flash he saw horrible visions of fiends in Hell and in terror cried out, "St. Anne,

help me! I will become a monk."

That week Luther entered the monastery and began there his pilgrimage in search of the assurance of God's love and favor and escape from the terrors of His wrath and hell. An earnest young man, he thought that through ascetic practices he might please God. He fasted. He prayed. He slept without blankets. He deprived himself of all worldly comforts and pleasures. Yet all he did seemed to fall short. All his efforts could not compensate for the weight of his guilt. He could sense only God's anger and displeasure. He later said, "If ever a monk got to heaven by monkery, it was I." Yet his best efforts, his greatest works, were not enough.

In November of 1510 he journeyed to Rome, the "Holy City," where he thought surely he would find peace with his maker. There he sought to appropriate the merits of the saints. He viewed relics. He conducted masses and he repeated the Pater Noster. He visited the Holy sites. While he earned considerable merits from the "treasury of the saints," he still could sense no satisfaction. Still, he felt alienated from God. While crawling on his knees up the supposed steps of Pilates Palace, saying the Pater Noster on each step, he arrived at the top and said, "who knows whether it is so."

April, 1511 Luther was transferred to Wittenburg. There he began to seek peace with God through the confession of sins. And confess his sins, he would, sometimes for up to six hours a day, terrified that he should forget even one.

Seeing the futility of this approach he then began to study the German Mystics. Their writings urged him to stop striving. Instead they urged that he surrender himself to the love of God. He must yield. He must surrender all ego and all assertiveness. He must let go and let God do it for him. Luther now was coming close to the answer, but not quite. It would work for a while. He would feel himself at peace with God and with himself for a season. And then it would crash. Again he would fall under the burden of his guilt. God's anger was too great! The distance was too far! The Holy God could not be satisfied with any of his efforts.

The turning point came when he was asked to study for his doctorate and to take the chair of Biblical Studies at the University at Wittenburg. The more he studied, the clearer the gospel became. He taught the Psalms (1513), then Romans (1515), and then Galatians (1516). Yet he continued to wrestle with the phrase "the justice of God," which he took to mean God exacting His pound of flesh, which everyone owed but no one could escape. Finally, Luther had what has come to be known as his "Tower Experience," where at long last he came to understand the gospel. Let us pick up his own account of his conversion:

I greatly longed to understand Paul's epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, "The justice of God," because I took it to mean that justice whereby God is just and deals justly in punishing the unjust. My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage Him. Therefore I did not love a just angry God, but rather hated and murmured against Him. Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant.

Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that "The just shall live by faith." Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before "The justice of God" had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven. . . .

If you have a true faith that Christ is your Savior, then at once you have a gracious God, for faith leads you in and opens up God's heart and will, that you should see pure grace and should look upon His fatherly, friendly heart, in which there is no anger nor ungraciousness. He who sees God as angry does not see Him rightly but looks only on a curtain, as if a dark cloud had been drawn across his face. (Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand*, p. 65)

Evangelicals stand with Luther and the Reformers because this too has been our experience. What must I do to receive what Christ alone accomplished on the cross? Good works? Religious works? Social works? No! Never! What we must do is believe. This is what the Bible has taught us and what we have found to be true. It is the one "who does not work but believes" who is saved (Romans 4:5). It is by faith alone that we are saved. It is by faith alone that we receive Christ's word and forgiveness and assurance of eternal life.

What about our works? What about keeping the Ten Commandments, attending church, being helpful to others, and doing one's best? Isn't it faith plus works? Don't they contribute? We say with Calvin, "Assuredly we do deny that in justifying a man they are worth one single straw."

Why should God let you into heaven? Evangelicals continue to answer, only because of what Christ has done for you on the cross which you have received not because of any good works but through empty-handed, beggarly faith. So again when John Paul II says "It would be . . . foolish, as well as presumptuous . . . to

claim to receive forgiveness while doing without the sacrament of penance," we must respond "whoever believes in Him shall not perish." It is by faith alone apart from works that we are saved.

## **Grace Alone**

Lest one be tempted to claim credit for your faith, the Reformers said in addition to "faith alone" that we are saved by "grace alone." The Reformers saw that to stop at "faith alone" could have the effect of turning faith into a work. In other words, if the one required response to Christ is faith, and we are saved because we have faith, then doesn't faith become a sort of work? It is an effortless work, but nevertheless a work, the exercising of which earns us salvation.

So the Reformers were careful to remove the last possible ground of human merit by saying that while faith is the means by which we receive eternal life, the ground or basis of our salvation is "grace alone." **Faith does not save us. Christ does, on the basis of the unmerited mercy of God which He has shown toward the undeserving. Our response of faith is itself a part of what God gives in salvation. Far from being meritorious, faith is a gift. It is not even our own. If you believe, it is because God gave you the ability to do so.** Paul says,

For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast (Ephesians 2:8,9).

We are saved "by grace . . . through faith." What faith? The faith that is "not of (our)selves." God gave it to us. Evangelicals affirm in addition to "faith alone" the unmerited mercy and grace of God alone.

"Grace alone" reminds us that "it is by His doing" that we are in Christ Jesus" (1 Corinthians 1:30). If I believe, it is because God gave me the ability to believe. If I have chosen Christ, it is because He first chose me (John 15:16). If I love Christ, it is because He first loved me (1 John 4:10). It was while I was dead and blind and ignorant and helpless that Christ died for me and then began to work decisively in my life. The Reformers, and we with them, must never lose sight of the fact that it is by the sovereign, initiating, electing love of God in Christ that we were saved. Calvin in his only statement regarding his conversion, found in the preface to his commentary on the Psalms, shows the biblical perspective in our salvation in saying,

God drew me . . . God at last turned my course by the secret rein in His providence . . . by an unexpected conversion He tamed to teachableness a mind

too stubborn for its years . . .

Why am I saved? Because "God so loved." And why did God so love? One can plunge no deeper than Deuteronomy 7:7 - He loves us because He loves us. Nothing we have done, nothing He might have seen or foreseen has attracted, earned, or merited His favor. Our salvation is of God's sheer mercy and grace alone.

### **God's Glory Alone**

Patrick Hamilton, a noble blooded 24 year old Scotsman returned home early in 1528 from studying in Germany a convert to the Protestant faith. He returned knowing that his new convictions meant for him certain death. For six weeks he preached, and as Knox said,

Neither the love of life, nor yet the fear of that cruel death, could move him a jot to swerve from the truth once professed.

He was arrested, tried and condemned. On February 29, 1528, Patrick Hamilton was burned in St. Andrews. For six hours, on a cold and wet winter day the fire struggled to burn. Finally he cried out,

Lord Jesus receive my spirit.

Patrick Hamilton, with all of life before him, came to a tragic end.

Eighteen years later, February 28, 1546, George Wishart, a mighty preacher of the gospel and John Knox's mentor, was burned in front of St. Andrew's castle. The little book, Seven Men of the Kirk, describes his moving end:

When he came to the fire he prayed: AFather of heaven I commend my spirit into Thy holy hands." To the people he said: AFor the Word's sake, the true gospel given me by the grace of God, I suffer this day by men; not sorrowfully, but with a glad heart and mind. For this cause I was sent, that I should suffer this fire for Christ's sake. This grim fire I fear not. If persecution comes to you for the Word's sake fear not them that slay the body, and have no power to slay the soul." The hangman knelt beside him and said: ASir, I pray you forgive me." ACome hither to me," he answered and kissed him on the cheek. ALo, here is a token that I forgive thee. My friend, do thy work" (p.25).

What possesses men to do such things? Certainly this is where the previous point, and indeed all other points have been leading us. The Reformers lived and died for Scripture alone, Christ alone, faith alone, and grace alone because they



saw in these principles that which gave all of the glory to God and none to man. God's word and God's work alone were glorified by the cry of sola. Indeed, the goal of everything we do is to be God's glory - "for from Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, to Him be the glory forever and ever" (Romans 11:36).

The Reformers were among the most humble, self-effacing, God exalting men who ever lived. The Psalmist cry,  
Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy name give glory (Psalm 115:1),

might be called the motto verse of the Reformation. Indeed Soli Deo Gloria was the motto of mottos for them, as they sought not their own glory but God's.

Calvin, by his instruction, was buried in a simple pine box and an unmarked grave. His grave site is unknown to this day. Why? Lest anyone should be drawn to him and not to God alone; lest in death anyone should make a hero of him and have their eyes drawn away from Christ.

It is our aim to stand where they stood. We seek not the glory of our church, and not the glory of our own names, and not our own fame and fortune. Our teaching is for God's glory. Our evangelism is for God's glory. Our giving is for God's glory. "Whether then you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). That is our motto. We are here to live, no longer for ourselves, "but for Him who died and who rose again on our behalf" (2 Corinthians 5:15).

We celebrate our Reformation heritage because we stand where they stood, squarely on these fundamental principles of biblical, Evangelical and Reformed Christianity.

## **The Corruption of Man, His Conversion to God and the Manner Thereof**

### **Synod of Dort Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, 1618-1619**

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THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 1. Man was originally formed after the image of God. His understanding was adorned with a true and saving knowledge of his Creator, and of spiritual things; his heart and will were upright, all his affections pure, and the whole man was holy. But, revolting from God by the instigation of the devil and by his own free will, he forfeited these excellent gifts; and an in the place thereof

became involved in blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity, and perverseness of judgment; became wicked, rebellious, and obdurate in heart and will, and impure in his affections.

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 2. Man after the fall begat children in his own likeness. A corrupt stock produced a corrupt offspring. Hence all the posterity of Adam, Christ only excepted, have derived corruption from their original parent, not by limitation, as the Pelagians of old asserted, but by the propagation of a vicious nature, in consequence of the just judgment of God.

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 3. Therefore all men are conceived in sin, and are by nature children of wrath, incapable of saving good, prone to evil, dead in sin, and in bondage thereto; and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, they are neither able nor willing to return to God, to reform the depravity of their nature, or to dispose themselves to reformation

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 4. There remain, however, in man since the fall, the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, or natural things, and of the difference between good and evil, and shows some regard for virtue and for good outward behavior. But so far is this light of nature from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God and to true conversion that he is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and hinders in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God.

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 5. In the same light are we to consider the law of the decalogue, delivered by God to His peculiar people, the Jews, by the hands of Moses. For though it reveals the greatness of sin, and more and more convinces man thereof, yet, as it neither points out a remedy nor imparts strength to extricate him from his misery, but, being weak through the flesh, leaves the transgressor under the curse, man cannot by this law obtain saving grace.

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 6. What, therefore, **neither the light of nature nor the law could do, that God performs by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the word or ministry of reconciliation**; which is the glad tidings concerning the Messiah, by means whereof it has pleased God to save such as believe, as well under the Old as under the New Testament.

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 7. This mystery of His will God reveals to but a small number under the Old Testament; under the New Testament (the distinction between various peoples having been removed) He reveals it to many. The cause of this dispensation is not to be ascribed to the superior worth of one nation above another, nor to their better use of the light of nature, but results wholly from the

sovereign good pleasure and unmerited love of God. Hence they to whom so great and so gracious a blessing is communicated, above their desert, or rather notwithstanding their demerits, are bound to acknowledge it with humble and grateful hearts, and with the apostle to adore, but in no wise curiously to pry into, the severity and justice of God's judgments displayed in others to whom this grace is not given.

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 8. As many as are called by the gospel are unfeignedly called. For God has most earnestly and truly declared in His Word what is acceptable to Him, namely, that those who are called should come unto Him. He also seriously promises rest of soul and eternal life to all who come to Him and believe.

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 9. **It is not the fault of the gospel, nor of Christ offered therein, nor of God, who calls men by the gospel and confers upon them various gifts, that those who are called by the ministry of the Word refuse to come and be converted. The fault lies in themselves;** some of whom when called, regardless of their danger, reject the Word of life; other, though they receive it, suffer it not to make a lasting impression on their heart; therefore, their joy, arising only from a temporary faith, soon vanishes, and they fall away; while others choke the seed of the Word by perplexing cares and the pleasures of this world, and produce no fruit. This our Savior teaches in the parable of the sower (Matt 13).

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 10. But that others who are called by the gospel obey the call and are converted is **not to be ascribed to the proper exercise of free will**, whereby one distinguishes himself above others equally furnished with grace sufficient for faith and conversion (as the proud heresy of Pelagius maintains); but it must be **wholly ascribed to God, who, as He has chosen His own from eternity in Christ, so He calls them effectually in time, confers upon them faith and repentance, rescues them from the power of darkness, and translates them into the kingdom of His own Son;** that they may show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light, and may glory not in themselves but in the Lord, according to the testimony of the apostles in various places.

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 11. **But when God accomplishes His good pleasure in the elect, or works in them true conversion, He not only cause the gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illuminates their minds by His Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God; but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit He pervades the inmost recesses of man; He opens the closed and softens the hardened heart, and circumcises that which was uncircumcised; infuses new qualities into the will, which, though heretofore dead, He quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory, He renders it good, obedient, and pliable; actuates and strengthens it, that**

**like a good tree, it may bring forth the fruits of good actions.**

**THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 12. And this is that regeneration so highly extolled in Scripture, that renewal, new creation, resurrection from the dead, making alive, which God works in us without out aid. But this is in no wise effected merely by the external preaching of the gospel, by moral suasion, or such a mode of operation that, after God has performed His part, it still remains in the power of man to be regenerated or not, to be converted or to continue unconverted; but it is evidently a supernatural work, most powerful, and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious, and ineffable; not inferior in efficacy to creation or the resurrection from the dead, as the Scripture inspired by the Author of this work declares; so that all in whose heart God works in this marvelous manner are certainly, infallibly, and effectually regenerated, and do actually believe. Whereupon the will thus renewed is not only actuated and influenced by God, but in consequence of this influence becomes itself active. Wherefore also man himself is rightly said to believe and repent by virtue of that grace received.**

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 13. The manner of this operation cannot be fully comprehended by believers in this life. Nevertheless, they are satisfied to know and experience that by this grace of God they are enabled to believe with the heart and to love their Savior.

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 14. Faith is therefore to be considered as the gift of God, not on account of its being offered by God to man, to be accepted or rejected at his pleasure, but because it is in reality conferred upon him, **breathed and infused into him; nor even because God bestows the power or ability to believe, and then expects that man should by the exercise of his own free will consent to the terms of salvation and actually believe in Christ, but because He who works in man both to will and to work, and indeed all things in all, produces both the will to believe and the act of believing also.**

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 15. God is under no obligation to confer this grace upon any; for how can He be indebted to one who had no previous gifts to bestow as a foundation for such recompense? Nay, how can He be indebted to one who has nothing of his own but sin and falsehood? He, therefore, who becomes the subject of this grace owes eternal gratitude to God, and gives Him thanks forever. Whoever is not made partaker thereof is either altogether regardless of these spiritual gifts and satisfied with his own condition, or is in no apprehension of danger, and vainly boasts the possession of that which he has not. Further, with respect to those who outwardly profess their faith and amend their lives, we are bound, after the example of the apostle, to judge and speak of them in the most favorable manner; for

the secret recesses of the heart are unknown to us. And as to others who have not yet been called, it is our duty to pray for them to God, who calls the things that are not as if they were. But we are in no wise to conduct ourselves towards them with haughtiness, as if we had made ourselves to differ.

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 16. But as man by the fall did not cease to be a creature endowed with understanding and will, nor did sin which pervaded the whole race of mankind deprive him of the human nature, but brought upon him depravity and spiritual death; so also this grace of regeneration does not treat men as senseless stocks and blocks, nor take away their will and its properties, or do violence thereto; but is spiritually quickens, heals, corrects, and at the same time sweetly and powerfully bends it, that where carnal rebellion and resistance formerly prevailed, a ready and sincere spiritual obedience begins to reign; in which the true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will consist. Wherefore, unless the admirable Author of every good work so deal with us, man can have no hope of being able to rise from his fall by his own free will, by which, in a state of innocence, he plunged himself into ruin.

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 17. As the almighty operation of God whereby He brings forth and supports this our natural life does not exclude but require the use of means by which God, of His infinite mercy and goodness, has chosen to exert His influence, so also the aforementioned supernatural operation of God by which we are regenerated in no wise excludes or subverts the use of the gospel, which the most wise God has ordained to be the seed of regeneration and food of the soul. Wherefore, as the apostles and the teachers who succeeded them piously instructed the people concerning this grace of God, to His glory and to the abasement of all pride, and in the meantime, however, neglected not to keep them, by the holy admonitions of the gospel, under the influence of the Word, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical discipline; so even now it should be far from those who give or receive instruction in the Church to presume to tempt God by separating what He of His good pleasure has most intimately joined together. For grace is conferred by means of admonitions; and the more readily we perform our duty, the more clearly this favor of God, working in us, usually manifest itself, and the more directly His work is advanced; to whom alone all the glory, both for the means and for their saving fruit and efficacy, is forever due. Amen.

Read the [The Canons of Dordt](#) in full.

## by Benjamin B. Warfield

1. I believe that my one aim in life and death should be to glorify God and enjoy him forever; and that God teaches me how to glorify him in his holy Word, that is, the Bible, which he had given by the infallible inspiration of this Holy Spirit in order that I may certainly know what I am to believe concerning him and what duty he requires of me.
2. I believe that God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and incomparable in all that he is; one God but three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, my Creator, my Redeemer, and my Sanctifier; in whose power and wisdom, righteousness, goodness and truth I may safely put my trust.
3. I believe that the heavens and the earth, and all that is in them, are the work of God hands; and that all that he has made he directs and governs in all their actions; so that they fulfill the end for which they were created, and I who trust in him shall not be put to shame but may rest securely in the protection of his almighty love.
4. I believe that God created man after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, and entered into a covenant of life with him upon the sole condition of the obedience that was his due; so that it was by willfully sinning against God that man fell into the sin and misery in which I have been born.
5. I believe, that, being fallen in Adam, my first father, I am by nature a child of wrath, under the condemnation of God and corrupted in body and soul, prone to evil and liable to eternal death; from which dreadful state I cannot be delivered save through the unmerited grace of God my Savior.
6. I believe that God has not left the world to perish in its sin, but out of the great love wherewith he has loved it, has from all eternity graciously chosen unto himself a multitude which no man can number, to deliver them out of their sin and misery, and of them to build up again in the world his kingdom of righteousness; in which kingdom I may be assured I have my part, if I hold fast to Christ the Lord.
7. I believe that God has redeemed his people unto himself through Jesus Christ our Lord; who, though he was and ever continues to be the eternal Son of God, yet was born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that are under the law: I believe that he bore the penalty due to my sins in his own body on the tree, and fulfilled in his own person the obedience I owe to the righteousness of God, and now presents me to his Father as his purchased possession, to the praise of the glory of his grace forever; wherefore renouncing all merit of my own, I put all my trust only in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ my redeemer.

8. I believe that Jesus Christ my redeemer, who died for my offences was raised again for my justification, and ascended into the heavens, where he sits at the right hand of the Father Almighty, continually making intercession for his people, and governing the whole world as head over all things for his Church; so that I need fear no evil and may surely know that nothing can snatch me out of his hands and nothing can separate me from his love.

9. I believe that the redemption wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ is effectually applied to all his people by the Holy Spirit, who works faith in me and thereby unites me to Christ, renews me in the whole man after the image of God, and enables me more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness; until, this gracious work having been completed in me, I shall be received into glory; in which great hope abiding, I must ever strive to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

10. I believe that God requires of me, under the gospel, first of all, that , out of a true sense of my sin and misery and apprehension of his mercy in Christ, I should turn with grief and hatred away from sin and receive and rest upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation; that, so being united to him, I may receive pardon for my sins and be accepted as righteous in God's sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to me and received by faith alone; and thus and thus only do I believe I may be received into the number and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.

11. I believe that, having been pardoned and accepted for Christ's sake , it is further required of me that I walk in the Spirit whom he has purchased for me, and by whom love is shed abroad in my heart; fulfilling the obedience I owe to Christ my King; faithfully performing all the duties laid upon me by the holy law of God my heavenly Father; and ever reflecting in my life and conduct, the perfect example that has been set me by Christ Jesus my Leader, who has died for me and granted to me his Holy Spirit just that I may do the good works which God has afore prepared that I should walk in them.

12. I believe that God has established his Church in the world and endowed it with the ministry of the Word and the holy ordinances of Baptism, the Lord's Supper and Prayer; in order that through these as means, the riches of his grace in the gospel may be made known to the world, and, by the blessing of Christ and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them, the benefits of redemption may be communicated to his people; wherefore also it is required of me that I attend on these means of grace with diligence, preparation, and prayer, so that through them I may be instructed and strengthened in faith, and in holiness of life and in love; and that I use my best endeavors to carry this gospel and convey these means of grace to the whole world.

13. I believe that as Jesus Christ has once come in grace, so also is he to come a

second time in glory, to judge the world in righteousness and assign to each his eternal award; and I believe that if I die in Christ, my soul shall be at death made perfect in holiness and go home to the Lord; and when he shall return to his majesty I shall be raised in glory and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity: encouraged by which blessed hope it is required of me willingly to take my part in suffering hardship here as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, being assured that if I die with him I shall also live with him, if I endure, I shall also reign with him. And to Him, my Redeemer, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, Three Persons, one God, be glory forever, world without end, Amen, and Amen.

**The Reformers' Hermeneutic:  
Grammatical, Historical, and Christ-Centered  
by Nathan Pitchford**

It is widely recognized that the formal principle underlying the Reformation was nothing other than *sola scriptura*: the reformers' diehard commitment to the other great solas was an effect arising from their desire to be guided by scriptures alone. The exegesis and interpretation of the bible was the one great means by which the war against Roman corruption was waged; which is almost the same thing as saying that the battle was basically a hermeneutical struggle. In light of these observations, one could say that the key event marking the beginning of the Reformation occurred, not in 1517, when Martin Luther nailed his theses to the church door in Wittenberg; but two years prior to that, when he rejected Origin's four-layered hermeneutic in favor of what he called the grammatical-historical sense. This one interpretive decision was the seed-idea from which would soon spring up all the fruits of the most massive recovery of doctrinal purity in the history of the Church. We would do well to learn from this: our ongoing struggle to be always reforming, always contending for the faith which was once delivered to the saints, is essentially a process of bringing every doctrine under the scrutiny of scripture. And in order to have the confidence that we are doing so legitimately, we must give much effort to being hermeneutically sound. Hermeneutics is the battlefield on which the war is won or lost.

If it is indeed the case that the recovery of a grammatical-historical hermeneutic was the formal principle underlying the Reformation, then we ought to be highly interested in what exactly Luther (and the other Reformers) intended by the expression. If Luther's hermeneutic was so effective in preserving the purity of the



gospel in his day, then we may, with some reason, assume that it would benefit us in the gospel-battles of our day. Most, if not all, evangelicals today would certainly affirm that they are laboring with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic of the Reformation – but do they mean by this term everything that Luther meant by it? In many cases, one would have to assume that they do not; because it is often the case that a basically un-Christian reading of much of the Old Testament in particular is supported by means of a "literal," grammatical, historical hermeneutic. For Luther, the grammatical-historical hermeneutic was simply the interpretation of scripture that "drives home Christ." As he once expressed it, "He who would read the Bible must simply take heed that he does not err, for the Scripture may permit itself to be stretched and led, but let no one lead it according to his own inclinations but let him lead it to its source, that is, the cross of Christ. Then he will surely strike the center." To read the scriptures with a grammatical-historical sense is nothing other than to read them with Christ at the center.

What exactly do I mean when I say that many evangelicals demonstrate "a basically un-Christian reading of much of the Old Testament"? Simply put, I mean they employ a hermeneutic that does not have as its goal to trace every verse to its ultimate reference point: the cross of Christ. All of creation, history, and reality was designed for the purpose of the unveiling and glorification of the triune God, by means of the work of redemption accomplished by the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The bible is simply the book that tells us how to see Christ and his cross at the center of everything. It tells us who God is by showing us the person and work of Christ, who alone reveals the invisible God. If we do not intentionally ask ourselves, "How may I see Christ more clearly by this passage," in our reading of every verse of scripture, then we are not operating under the guidance of Luther's grammatical-historical hermeneutic. If we would follow in the steps of the reformers, we must realize that a literal reading of scriptures does not mean a naturalistic reading. A naturalistic reading says that the full extent of meaning in the account of Moses' striking the rock is apprehended in understanding the historical event. The literal reading, in the Christ-centered sense of the Reformation, recognizes that this historical account is meaningless to us until we understand how the God of history was using it to reveal Christ to his people. The naturalistic reading of the Song of Solomon is content with the observation that it speaks of the marital-bliss of Solomon and his wife; the literal reading of the reformers recognizes that it has ultimately to do with the marital bliss between Christ and his bride, the Church. And so we could continue, citing example after example from the Old Testament.

But how was it that this shift came about in the commonly perceived meaning of the term "historical-grammatical sense" from the reformers' day to our own? In a word, the rise of academic liberalism. The reformers were contending for the truth in a society in which the supernatural world was as definitely accepted as the natural world. They had no need to demonstrate that the Bible was a spiritual book, given by

God to teach us spiritual truths, that is, truths about Christ and the cross – everyone accepted that much. They were contending instead with a hermeneutic that essentially allowed one to draw from any text whatever spiritual significance he liked – if he had the authority of the Church behind him. But the Enlightenment so radically changed the face of society, that it was soon thereafter no longer sufficient to speak of a "literal" hermeneutic: one also had to make clear that this literal hermeneutic had as its object a thoroughly spiritual and Christ-centered corpus of writings. The basic intent of the liberal theologians subsequent to the Enlightenment was to downplay the supernatural; hence, their reading of the scriptures emphasized the human authors and human historical settings entirely apart from the God who was governing all. And, although the thoroughgoing naturalism of the liberals was soundly defeated by many evangelical scholars, some of its emphases seem to have seeped into the very idea of a grammatical-historical hermeneutic, where they continue to exert a deadening influence on much of evangelical scholarship even today. Three specific ways in which, I would contend, the modern conception of a literal hermeneutic has been colored by the Enlightenment, are, first, the maximized emphasis on the human authors of scriptures (together with the corresponding de-emphasis of the divine author); second, the naturalizing of the hermeneutic, so that it intends to discover what a natural man, upon an acquaintance with the natural setting, would immediately understand about a text; and third, the resultant fragmentation of the bible, so that it reads less like one unified, coherent story about a promised Redeemer and how he actually came in human history and accomplished his work – and more like a handful of loosely related sacred documents, with various purposes, intentions, and themes.

Our task as modern reformers has much to do with the recovery of the Christ-centered element of the grammatical-historical hermeneutic. If we would let our sola scriptura lead us to solus christus, then we must be willing to battle against the modern corruption of one of the reformers' most precious legacies – a literal hermeneutic. To that end, I would submit the following six reasons why any hermeneutic which does not see Christ at the center of every verse of scripture does not do justice to the Reformed worldview.

1. A naturalistic hermeneutic effectively denies God's ultimate authorship of the bible, by giving practical precedence to human authorial intent.
2. A naturalistic hermeneutic undercuts the typological significance which often inheres in the one story that God is telling in the bible (see Galatians 4:21-31, for example).
3. A naturalistic hermeneutic does not allow for Paul's assertion that a natural man cannot know the spiritual things which the Holy Spirit teaches in the bible – that is, the things about Jesus Christ and him crucified (I Corinthians 2).

4. A naturalistic hermeneutic is at odds with the clear example of the New Testament authors and apostles as they interpret the Old Testament (cf. Peter's sermon in Acts 2, Paul's interpretations in Romans 4 and Galatians 4, James' citing of Amos 9 during the Jerusalem council of Acts 15, the various Old Testament usages in Hebrews, etc.).

5. A naturalistic hermeneutic disallows a full-orbed operation of the analogy of faith principle of the Reformation, by its insistence that every text demands a reading "on its own terms".

6. A naturalistic hermeneutic does not allow for everything to have its ultimate reference point in Christ, and is in direct opposition to Ephesians 1:10, Colossians 1:16-18, and Christ's own teachings in John 5:39, Luke 24:25-27.

## **The Reformed Faith**

**by Loraine Boettner**

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### **The Sovereignty of God**

The purpose of this article is to set forth, in plain language and in terms easily understood, the basic differences between the Calvinistic and the Arminian system to theology, and to show what the Bible teaches concerning these subjects. The harmony that exists between the various doctrines of the Christian faith is such that error in regard to any one of them produces more or less distortion in all of the others.

There are in reality only two types of religious thought. There is the religion of faith,

and there is the religion of works. We believe that what has been known in Church History as Calvinism is the purest and most consistent embodiment of the religion of faith, while that which has been known as Arminianism has been diluted to a dangerous degree by the religion of works and that it is therefore an inconsistent and unstable form of Christianity. In other words, we believe that Christianity comes to its fullest and purest expression in Reformed Faith.

In the early part of the fifth century these two types of religious thought came into direct conflict in a remarkably clear contrast as embodied in two fifth-century theologians, Augustine and Pelagius. Augustine pointed men to God as the source of all true spiritual wisdom and strength, while Pelagius threw men back on themselves and said that they were able in their own strength to do all that God commanded, otherwise God would not command it. We believe that Arminianism represents a compromise between these two systems, but that while in its more evangelical form, as in early Wesleyanism, it approaches the religion of faith, it nevertheless does contain serious elements of error.

We are living in a day in which practically all of the historic churches are being attacked from within by unbelief. Many of them have already succumbed. And almost invariably the line of descent has been from Calvinism to Arminianism, from Arminianism to Liberalism, and then to Unitarianism. And the history of Liberalism and Unitarianism shows that they deteriorate into a social gospel that is too weak to sustain itself. We are convinced that the future of Christianity is bound up with that system of theology historically called "Calvinism." Where the God centered principles of Calvinism have been abandoned, there has been a strong tendency downward into the depths of man centered naturalism or secularism. Some have declared - rightly, we believe - that there is no consistent stopping place between Calvinism and atheism.

The basic principle of Calvinism is the sovereignty of God. This represents the purpose of the Triune God as absolute and unconditional, independent of the whole finite creation, and originating solely in the eternal counsel of His will. He appoints the course of nature and directs the course of history down to the minutest details. His decrees therefore are eternal, unchangeable, holy, wise and sovereign. They are represented in the Bible as being the basis of the divine foreknowledge of all future events, and not conditioned by that foreknowledge or by anything originating in the events themselves.

Every thinking person readily sees that some sovereignty rules his life. He was not asked whether or not he would have existence, when or what or where he would be born, whether in the twentieth century or before the Flood, whether male or female, whether white or black, whether in the United States, or China, or Africa. All of those things were sovereignly decided for him before he had any existence. It has been recognized by Christians in all ages that God is the Creator and Ruler of the world, and

that as such He is the ultimate source of all power that is found in the world. Hence nothing can come to pass apart from His sovereign will. Otherwise He would not be truly GOD. And when we dwell on this truth we find that it involves considerations which establish the Calvinistic and disprove the Arminian position.

By virtue of the fact that God has created everything that exists, He is the absolute Owner and final Disposer of all that He has made. He exerts not merely a general influence, but actually rules in the affairs of men (Acts 4:24-28). Even the nations are as the small dust of the balance when compared with His greatness (Is. 40:12-17). Amid all the apparent defeats and inconsistencies of our human lives, God is actually controlling all things in undisturbed majesty. Even the sinful actions of men can occur only by His permission and with the strength that he gives the creature. And since He permits not unwillingly but willingly, then all that comes to pass - including even the sinful actions and ultimate destiny of men - must be, in some sense, in accordance with what He has eternally purposed and decreed. Just in proportion as this is denied, God is excluded from the government of the world, and we have only a finite God. Naturally, some problems arise which in our present state of knowledge we are not able fully to explain. But that is not a sufficient reason for rejecting what the Scriptures and the plain dictates of reason affirm to be true.

And shall we not believe that God can convert a sinner when He pleases? Cannot the Almighty, the omnipotent Ruler of heaven and earth, change the character of the creatures He has made? He changed the water into wine at Cana and converted Saul on the road to Damascus. The leper said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean" (Matt. 8:2). And at a word his leprosy was cleansed. Let us not believe, as do the Arminians, that God cannot control the human will, or that He cannot regenerate a soul when He pleases. He is as able to cleanse the soul as the body. If He chose He could raise up such a flood of Christian ministers, missionaries and workers of various kinds, and could so work through His Holy Spirit, that the entire world would be converted in a very short time. If He had purposed to save all men He could have sent hosts of angels to instruct them and to do supernatural works on the earth. He could have worked marvelously in the heart of every person so that no one would have been lost.

Since evil exists only by His permission, He could, if He chose, blot it out of existence. His power in this respect was shown, for instance, in the work of the destroying angel who in one night slew all of the first-born of the Egyptians (Ex. 12:29), and in another night slew 185,000 of the Assyrian army (II Kings 19:35). It was shown when the earth opened and swallowed Korah and his rebellious allies (Nu. 16.31-35). King Herod was smitten and died a horrible death (Acts 12:23). In Daniel 4:34-35 we read that the Most High God's "dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom from generation to generation; and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the

inhabitants of the earth; and no one can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"

All of this brings out the basic principle of the Reformed Faith - the sovereignty of God. God created this world in which we find ourselves, He owns it, and He is running it according to His own sovereign good pleasure. God has lost none of His power, and it is highly dishonoring to Him to suppose that He is struggling along with the human race, doing the best He can to persuade men to do right, but unable to accomplish His eternal, unchangeable, holy, wise, and sovereign purpose.

Any system which teaches that the serious intentions of God can in some cases be defeated, and that man, who is not only a creature but a sinful creature, can exercise veto power over the plans of Almighty God, is in striking contrast to the biblical idea of his immeasurable exaltation by which He is removed from all weaknesses of humanity. That the plans of men are not always executed is due to a lack of power, or a lack of wisdom, or both. But since God is unlimited in these and in all other resources, no unforeseen emergencies can arise. To Him the causes for change have no existence. To assume that His plan fails and that he strives to no effect is to reduce Him to the level of His creatures and make Him no God at all.

### **Man's Totally Helpless Condition**

As we read the works of various Arminian writers, it seems that their first and perhaps most serious error is that they do not give sufficient importance to the sinful rebellion and spiritual separation of the human race from God that occurred in the fall of Adam. Some neglect it altogether, while for others it seems to be a far away event that has little influence in the lives of people today. But unless we insist on the reality of that spiritual separation from God, and the totally disastrous effect that it had on the entire human race, we shall never be able properly to appreciate our real condition or our desperate need of a Redeemer.

Perhaps it will help us to realize more clearly what fallen man's condition really is if we compare it with that of the fallen angels. Angels were created before man, and each angel was placed on test as an individual, personal, moral being. This apparently was a pure test of obedience, as was that of Adam. Some of the angles stood their test, for reasons only fully known to God, and, as a result, were then confirmed in a state of perfect angelic holiness, and are now the elect angels in heaven (I Tim. 5:21). But others fell and are now the demons that we read of in the Scriptures, the devil apparently being the one of highest rank among those who fell.

In Jude we read of "angels that kept not their own principality but left their proper habitation, he [God] hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (v.6). And in II Peter we read that "God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (2:4). The devil and the demons are totally alienated from God, totally given over to sin, and without any hope of redemption. Their fate is described by Christ as that of being cast into "the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels: (Matt. 25:41).

There is no redemption for fallen angels. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "For verily not to angels doth he give help, but he giveth help to the seed of Abraham" (2:16). Their fate is fixed and certain. For men and for angels endless punishment is the penalty for endless sinning against God. Some would try to make God appear unjust as though He inflicts endless punishment for sins committed only in this life. But lost men and lost angels or demons are endlessly in rebellion against God, and they endlessly receive punishment for that rebellion.

But when God created man a moral creature, He proceeded on a different plan than He did with the angelic order. Instead of creating all men at one time and placing them on test individually, He created one man, with a physical body, from whom the entire human race would descend, and who, because of his union with all of those who would come after him, could be appointed as the legal or federal head and representative of the entire human race. If he stood the test, he and all of his descendants, his children, would be confirmed in holiness and established in a state of perpetual creaturely bliss as were the holy angels. But if he fell, as did the other angels, he and all his posterity would be subject to eternal punishment. It was as if God said, "This time, if sin is to enter, let it enter by one man, so that redemption also can be provided by one man."

Therefore Adam in his representative capacity was placed on a test of pure human obedience. The penalty of disobedience was clearly set before him: "And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17).

Hence, the clearly declared penalty for sin was death - exactly the same penalty that had been inflicted on the angels who fell. As with angels, it was purely a test of whether or not man would be an obedient and appreciative subject in the kingdom of heaven. It was a perfectly fair, simple test, clearly set forth, very much in Adam's favor, for which he would have no excuse if he disobeyed.

But, tragedy of tragedies, Adam fell. And the entire human race fell representatively in him. The consequences of his sin are all comprehended under the term death, in its

widest sense. It was primarily spiritual death, or separation from God, that had been threatened. Adam did not die physically until 930 years after he fell. But he was spiritually estranged from God and died spiritually the very instant that he sinned. And from that instant his life became an unceasing march to the grave. Man in this life has not gone as far in the ways of sin as have the devil and the demons, for he still receives many blessings through common grace, such as health, wealth, family and friends, the beauties of nature, and he still is surrounded with many restraining influences. But he is on his way. And if not checked, man would eventually become as totally evil as are the demons. In his fallen state he fears God, tries to flee from Him, and literally hates Him, as do the demons. If left to himself he would remain forever in that condition, because as it is written, "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none that understandeth, There is none that seeketh after God" (Rom. 3:10-11). Nothing, absolutely nothing, but a mighty supernatural act on the part of God can rescue him from that condition. Hence if he is to be rescued, God must take the initiative, must pay the penalty for him, must cleanse him from his guilt, and so reinstate him in holiness and righteousness.

And that is precisely what God does. He sovereignly picks a man up out of the kingdom of Satan, and places him in the kingdom of heaven. Those are the elect that are referred to some 25 times in the Scriptures: Matt. 24:22: "For the elect's sake, whom he chose, he shortened those days" (at the destruction of Jerusalem). I Thess. 1:4: "Knowing, brethren, beloved of God, your election." Rom. 11:7: "The election obtained it, and the rest were hardened." Rom. 8:33: "Who shall lay anything to charge of God's elect"; and many more.

The Bible tells us that God has rescued a multitude of the human race from the penalty of their sins. In order to perform that work, Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, took upon Himself human nature through the miracle of the virgin birth, and was born into the human race as any normal child is born. God thus became incarnate, became one of us. Jesus then lived a perfectly sinless life among men as the representative of His people, placed Himself before His own law, and suffered in His own Person the penalty that God had prescribed for sin. In His sinless life He kept perfectly the law of God that Adam had broken, and so earned perfect righteousness for His people and thereby earned for them the right to enter heaven. What He suffered, as a Person of infinite value and dignity, was a just equivalent of what His people would have suffered in an eternity in hell. In this manner He freed His people from the law of sin and death. And as the fruits of that redemptive work are applied to those who have been given to the Son by the Father, they are said to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit, that is, to be made alive spiritually, to be born again.

Paul expresses this broad truth when in the Epistle to the Romans he says:

"Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through



sin, and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned ... But no as the trespass, so also is the free gift. For if by the trespass of the one many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many ... so then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation, even so through the one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification to life. For as through the one's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:12-19).

Unless one sees that contrast between the first and the second Adam, he will never understand the Christian system. And writing to the saints that were at Ephesus, Paul said, "And you did he make alive, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins." And he goes on to say that we:

"...were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest, but God, being rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus: for by grace have ye been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, that no man should glory. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:1-10)

In Christian theology there are three separate and distinct acts of imputation. In the first place Adam's sin is imputed to all of us, his children, that is, judicially set to our account so that we are held responsible for it and suffer the consequences of it. This is commonly known as the doctrine of Original Sin. In the second place, and in precisely the same manner, our sin is imputed to Christ so that He suffers the consequences of it. And in the third place, Christ's righteousness is imputed to us and secures for us entrance into heaven. We are, of course, no more personally guilty of Adam's sin than Christ is personally guilty of our sin, or than we are personally meritorious because of His righteousness. In each case it is a judicial transaction. We receive salvation from Christ in precisely the same way that we receive condemnation and ruin from Adam. In each case the result follows because of the close official union which exists between the persons involved. To reject any one of these three steps is to reject an essential part of the Christian system.

Thus we see the strict parallel between Adam and Christ in the matter of salvation. In the above passages Paul piles one phrase upon another stressing the fact that we were not merely sick, or spiritually disinclined, but spiritually dead. Christ Himself said, "Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). And again

He said, "Why do ye not understand my speech: even because ye cannot hear my words" (John 8:43). The unregenerate man cannot see the kingdom of God, nor hear in any spiritually discerning way the words spoken concerning it, much less can he get into it. Had we been left to ourselves we, like the fallen angels, would never have turned to God.

A spiritually dead person can no more give himself spiritual life that a physically dead person can give himself physical life. That requires a supernatural act on the part of God. We get into the family of God in precisely the same way that we get into our human family, by being born into it. By that supernatural act God Himself, through His Holy Spirit, sovereignly takes us out of the kingdom of Satan and places us in His spiritual kingdom by a spiritual rebirth.

And having once been born onto the kingdom of God, we can never become unborn. Since it took a supernatural act to bring us into a state of spiritual life, it would take another such act to take us out of that state. Hence the absolute certainty that those who have been regenerated and who therefore have become truly Christian will never lose their salvation, but will providentially be kept by the power of God through all the trials and difficulties of this life and will be brought into the heavenly kingdom. "He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life" (John 5:24). "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature" (II Cor. 5:17). "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them unto me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (John 10:27-29). This is known as the doctrine of eternal security or the perseverance of the saints.

This gift of eternal life is not conferred upon all men, but only upon those whom God chooses. This does not mean that any who want to be saved are excluded, for the invitation is "He that will [KJV, whosoever will], let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). The fact is that a spiritually dead person cannot will to come. "No man can come unto me except the Father that sent me draw [literally, drags] him" (John 6:44). Only those who are quickened (make spiritually alive) by the Holy Spirit ever have that will or that desire. These in Scripture are called the elect. But in contrast with these, there is another group that we may call the non-elect. And concerning them Professor Floyd Hamilton has very appropriately written:

"All that God does is to let them alone and allow them to go their own way without interference. It is their nature to be evil, and God simply has foreordained to leave that nature unchanged. The picture often painted by opponents of Calvinism, of a cruel God refusing to save all who want to be saved, is a gross caricature. God saves all who want to be saved, but no one whose nature

has not been changed wants to be saved."

## **Christ's Atonement**

We are not told why God does not save all mankind when all were equally undeserving, and when the sacrifice on Calvary was that of a Person of infinite value, amply sufficient to save all men had God so desired it. But the Scriptures do tell us that no all will be saved. However, we can say that the atonement, which was worked out at an enormous cost to God Himself, is His own property, and that He is at liberty to make whatever use of it He chooses. No man has any claim to any part of it. We are told repeatedly that salvation is by grace. And grace is favor shown to the undeserving, even to the ill-deserving. If any part of man's salvation were due to his own good works, then indeed there would be a difference in men, and those who had responded to the gracious offer could justly point the finger of scorn at the lost and say, "You had the same chance that I had. I accepted, but you refused. Therefore you have no excuse." But no. God has so arranged this system that those who are saved can only be eternally grateful that God has saved them.

It is not for us to ask why God does as He does, for the Scripture declares:

"Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Or hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering vessels fitted unto destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy which he afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he also called." (Rom. 9:20-24)

Only the Calvinist seems to take the fall of man seriously. A proper evaluation of the fall and of man's present hopeless condition is the missing element in so much of today's thinking, teaching and preaching. Arminianism seriously errs in assuming that man has sufficient ability to turn to God if only he will. The Calvinist insists that man is not merely sick or indisposed or just needs the right incentive, but that he is spiritually dead, and that the atonement of Christ does not merely make salvation an abstract possibility such that all men can turn to God if they will. The Calvinist holds that the atonement was an objective work accomplished in history which removed all legal barriers against those to whom it was to be applied, and that it would be followed by the work of the Holy Spirit subjectively applying the merits of that atonement to

the hearts of those for whom it was divinely intended.

We call attention again to one of the most important verses in Scripture concerning the matter of salvation: "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him" (John 6:44). Another like it is; "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and he that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). And to the Christians in Corinth, Paul wrote: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged" (I Cor. 2:14).

And how does God cause the elect to exercise faith? The answer is: In regeneration the Holy Spirit subdues man's heart to Himself, and imparts to man a new nature which loves righteousness and hates sin. He does not force man against his will, but makes him lovingly and spontaneously obedient to His will. When the Lord Jesus appeared to the hardened persecutor Saul as he was on the way to Damascus, he immediately became obedient to the Lord's will. "Thy people offer themselves willingly in the day of thy power," said the Psalmist (110:3). Thus God gives His people the will to come. That act on God's part, in the sub-conscious nature of the person, is known as regeneration, or as a new birth, or being born again. When a man is thus given a new nature, he reacts according to that nature, as do all of God's creatures. He then exercises faith and does good works characteristic of repentance as naturally as the grape vine produces grapes. Whereas sin was his natural element, now holiness becomes his natural element - not all at once, for he still has remnants of the old nature clinging to him, and as long as he remains in this world he still is in a sinful environment. But as his new nature is free to express itself he grows in righteousness; he enjoys reading God's Word, praying, and having fellowship with other Christians.

We therefore have to choose between an atonement of high efficiency which is perfectly accomplished, and an atonement of wide extension which is imperfectly accomplished. We cannot have both. If we had both we would have universal salvation. But the Arminian extends the atonement so widely that so far as its actual effect is concerned, it has practically no value other than as an example of unselfish service. Dr. B. B. Warfield used a very simple illustration to present this truth. He said that the atonement is like pie dough - the wider you roll it the thinner it becomes. And the Arminian, in making it apply to all men, reduces its effectiveness to such an extent that it becomes practically no atonement at all.

Furthermore, for God to have laid the sins of all men on Christ would mean that as regards the lost He would be punishing their sins twice, once in Christ, and then again in them. Certainly that would be unjust. If Christ paid their debt, they are free, and the Holy Spirit would invariably bring them to faith and repentance. If the atonement was truly unlimited, it would mean that Christ died for multitudes whose fate already had been determined, who already were in hell at the time He suffered. If the atonement

merely nullified the sentence that was against man so as to give him a new chance if he would exercise faith and obedience, it would mean that God was placing him on test again as was his ancestor Adam. But that kind of a test was tried and had its outcome long ago, even in a far more favorable environment. Carried to its logical conclusion, the theory of unlimited atonement leads to absurdity.

We should remember that Christ's suffering in His human nature, as He hung on the cross those six hours, was not primarily physical, but mental and spiritual. When He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," He was literally suffering the pangs of hell. For that is essentially what hell is, separation from God, separation from everything that is good and desirable. Such suffering is beyond our comprehension. But since He suffered as a divine-human person, His suffering was a just equivalent for all that His people would have suffered in an eternity in hell.

As a matter of fact, the redeemed man gains more through redemption in Christ than he lost through the fall of Adam. For in the incarnation God literally came into the human race and took human nature upon Himself, which nature Christ in His glorified body will retain forever, and evidently He will be the only visible God that we will see in heaven. Peter tells us that we now are "partakers of the divine nature" (II Peter 1:4); and Paul says that we are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17). Think of that! Partakers of the divine nature, and joint-heirs with Christ! What greater blessing could God possibly confer upon us? As such we are superior to the angels, for they are designated in Scripture only as God's messengers, His servants.

Ultimately the Arminian is faced with precisely the same problem as is the Calvinist - that broader problem as to why a God of infinite holiness and power permits sin at all. In our present state of knowledge we can give only a partial answer. But the Calvinist faces up to that problem, acknowledges the Scriptural doctrine that all men had their fair and favorable chance in Adam, that God now graciously saves some of the fallen race while leaving others to go their own chosen sinful way and manifests His justice in their punishment. But having admitted foreknowledge, the Arminianism has no explanation as to why God purposefully and deliberately creates those who He knows will be lost and who will spend eternity in hell.

However, as regards the problem of evil, we can say that God created this world as a theater in which He would display His glory, His marvelous attributes for all of His creatures to see and admire - His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. Here we are concerned primarily with His justice.

God's justice demands that goodness must be rewarded and that sin must be punished. And it is just as necessary that sin be punished as it is that goodness be rewarded. God would be unjust if He failed to do either. Therefore He created men and angels not as robots who would automatically produce good works as a machine

produces bolts or tin cans but who would deserve no rewards, but as free moral agents, in His own image, capable, in Adam before the fall, of choosing between good and evil. He manifests His justice toward those whom He has purposed in grace to save by rewarding them for the good works that are found in Christ their Savior and credited to them, confirming them in holiness, and admitting them into heaven. And He manifests His justice toward those whom He has purposed to by-pass for their willing continuance in sin.

Likewise, if sin had been excluded, there could have been no adequate revelation God's most glorious attributes, grace, mercy, love and holiness, as is displayed in His redemption of sinners. Let us remember that the angels in heaven earned salvation through a covenant of works, by keeping God's law. As in the Case of Adam, they had been promised certain rewards if they obeyed. They did obey, and were confirmed in holiness. They have not experienced salvation by grace. There is an old hymn which says, "When I sing redemption's story, the angels will fold their wings and listen." And so it will be in the ultimate contrast between men and angels.

Hence the explanation of sin is that God permits it, but controls and overrules it for His own glory. If sin had been excluded from the creation those glorious attributes could never have been adequately displayed before His intelligent universe of men and angels, but for the most part would have remained forever hidden in the depths of the divine nature.

### **God's Foreknowledge**

The evangelical Arminian acknowledges that God has foreknowledge, and that He therefore is able to predict future events. But if God foreknows any future event, then that event is as fixed and certain as if foreordained. For foreknowledge implies certainty, and certainly implies foreordination. The evangelical Arminian does not deny that there is such a thing as election to salvation, for he cannot get rid of the words "elect" and "election," which occur some twenty-five times in the New Testament. But he tries to destroy the force of these words by saying that election is based on foreknowledge, that God looks down the broad avenue of the future and sees those who will respond to His gracious offer, and so elects them.

But in acknowledging foreknowledge, the Arminian makes a fatal concession. Figuratively speaking, he cuts his own throat, for the simple reason that as God foresees those who will be saved, He also sees those who will be lost! Why, then, does He create those who will be lost? Certainly, He is not under any obligation to create them. There is no power outside Himself forcing Him to do so. If He wants all men to be saved and is earnestly trying to save all men, He could at least refrain from creating

those who, if created, certainly will be lost.

The Arminian cannot consistently hold to the foreknowledge of God and yet deny the doctrines of election and predestination. The question persists: Why does God create those who He knows will go to hell? It would be mere foolishness for Him to wish to save or try to save those who He knows will be lost. That would be for Him to work at cross purposes with Himself. Even a man has better sense than to try to do what he knows he will not do or cannot do. The Arminian has no alternative but to deny the foreknowledge of God - and then he has only a limited, ignorant, finite God who in reality is not God at all in the true sense of that word. If election is based on foreknowledge, that makes it so meaningless that it becomes more confusing than enlightening. For even as regards the elect, what sense is there for God to elect those who He knows are going to elect themselves? That would be just plain nonsense.

### **The Universalistic Passages**

Probably the most plausible defense for Arminianism is found in the universalistic passages in Scripture. Three of the most quoted are: II Peter 3:9, "Not wishing [or, KJV, not willing] that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"; I Tim. 2:4, [God our Savior] "who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth"; and I Tim. 2:5,6, "...Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all."

In regard to these verses we must keep in mind that, as we have said earlier, God is the absolute sovereign Ruler of heaven and earth, and we are never to think of Him as wishing or striving to do what He knows He will not do. For Him to do otherwise would be for Him to act foolishly. Since Scripture tells us that some men are going to be lost, II Peter 3:9 cannot mean that God is earnestly wishing or striving to save all individual men. For if it were His will that every individual of mankind should be saved, then not one soul could be lost. "For who hath resisted his will?" (Rom. 9:19).

These verses simply teach that God is benevolent, and that He does not delight in the sufferings of His creatures any more than a human father delights in the punishment that he sometimes must inflict upon his son. The word "will" is used in different senses in Scripture as in our everyday conversation. It is sometimes used in the sense of "desire" or "purpose." A righteous judge does not will (desire) that anyone should be hanged or sentenced to prison, yet he wills (pronounces sentence) that the guilty person shall be punished. In the same sense and for sufficient reasons a man may will to have a limb removed, or an eye taken out, even though he certainly does not desire

it.

Arminians insist that in II Peter 3:9 the words "any" and "all" refer to all mankind without exception. But it is important first of all to see to whom those words were addressed. In the first verse of chapter 1, we find that the epistle is addressed not to mankind at large, but to Christians: "...to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us." And in a preceding verse (3:1), Peter had addressed those to whom he was writing as "beloved." And when we look at the verse as a whole, and not merely at the last half, we find that it is not primarily a salvation verse at all, but a second coming verse! It begins by saying that "The Lord is not slacking concerning his promise" [singular]. What promise? Verse 4 tells us: "the promise of his coming." The reference is to His second coming, when He will come for judgment, and the wicked will perish in the lake of fire. The verse has reference to a limited group. It says that the Lord is "long-suffering to us-ward," His elect, many of whom had not yet been regenerated, and who therefore had not yet come to repentance. Hence we may quite properly read verse 9 as follows: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any of us should perish, but that all of us should come to repentance."

In regard to I Tim. 2:4,6 "Who would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth ... who gave himself a ransom for all," is used in various senses. Oftentimes it means, not all men without exception, but all men without distinction - Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, men and women, rich and poor. And in I Tim. 2:4-6 it clearly is used in that sense. Through many centuries the Jews had been, with few exceptions, the exclusive recipients of God's saving grace. They had become the most intensely nationalistic and intolerant people in the world. Instead of recognizing their position as that of God's representatives to all the people of the world, they had taken those blessings to themselves. Even the early Christians for a time were inclined to appropriate the mission of the Messiah only to themselves. The salvation of the Gentiles was a mystery that had not been known in other ages (Eph. 4:6; Col. 1:27). So rigid was the pharisaic exclusivism that the Gentiles were called unclean, common, sinners of the Gentiles, even dogs; and it was not lawful for a Jew to keep company with or have any deals with a Gentile (John 4:9, Acts 10:28, 11:3). After an orthodox Jew had been out in the marketplace where he had come in contact with Gentiles he was regarded as unclean (Mark 7:4). After Peter had preached to the Roman Centurion Cornelius and the others who were gathered at his house, he was severely taken to task by the Church in Jerusalem, and we can almost hear the gasp of wonder when, after Peter told them what had happened, they said, "Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance to life" (Acts 22:15), that is, not to every individual in the world, but to Jews and Gentiles alike. Used in this sense the word "all" has no reference to individuals, but simply to mankind in general.

When it was said of John the Baptist that "There went out unto him all the country of



Judea, and all they of Jerusalem; and they were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins" (Mark 1:5), we know that not every individual did so respond. We read that after Peter and John had healed the lame man at the door of the temple, "all men glorified God for that which was done" (Acts 4:21). Jesus told his disciples that they would be "hated of all men" for His name's sake (Luke 21:17). And when Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself" (John 12:32), He certainly did not mean that every individual of mankind would be so drawn. What He did mean was that Jews and Gentiles, men of all nations and races, would be drawn to Him. And that is what we see is actually happening.

In I Cor. 15:22 we read, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." This verse is often quoted by Arminians to prove unlimited or universal atonement. This verse is from Paul's famous resurrection chapter, and the context makes it clear that he is not talking about life in this age, whether physical or spiritual, but about the resurrection life. Christ is the first to enter the resurrection life, then, when He comes, His people also enter into their resurrection life. And what Paul says is that at that time a glorious resurrection life will become a reality, not for all mankind, but for all those who are in Christ. And this point is illustrated by the well known fact that the race fell in Adam, who acted as its federal head and representative. What Paul says in effect this: "For as all born in Adam die, so also all born again in Christ shall be made alive." Verse 22, therefore, refers not to something past, nor to something present, but to something future; and it has no special bearing at all on the Calvinistic-Arminian controversy.

Two other verses that also are often quoted in defense of Arminianism are "Behold, I stand at the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20); and "...he that will [KJV, whosoever will], let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). This general invitation is extended to all men. It may be, and often is, the means that the Holy Spirit uses to arouse in certain individuals the desire for salvation as He puts forth His supernatural power to regenerate them. But these verses, taken by themselves, fail to take into consideration the truth that already has been stressed in this article, that fallen man is spiritually dead, and that as such he is as totally unable to respond to the invitation as are the fallen angels or demons. Fallen man is as dead spiritually as Lazarus was dead physically until Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth," and the Pharisee Nicodemus, "Except one be born anew [or, from above], he cannot see the kingdom of God"(John 3:3). And again, He said to the Pharisees, "why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word" (John 8:43). Apart from that divine assistance no one can hear the invitation or put forth the will to come to Christ.

The declaration that Christ died for "all" is made clearer by the song that the redeemed sing before the throne of the Lamb: "Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. 5:9).

Oftentimes the word "all" must be understood to mean all the elect, all His Church, all those whom the Father has given to the Son, as when Christ says, "All that which the Father giveth me shall come to me" (John 6:37), but not all men universally and every man individually. The redeemed host will be made up of men from all classes and conditions of life, of princes and peasants, of rich and poor, bond and free, male and female, Jews and Gentiles, men of all nations and races. That is the true universalism of Scripture.

## **The Two Systems Contrasted**

We have said that Christianity comes to its fullest expression in the Reformed Faith. The great advantage of the Reformed Faith is that in the framework of the Five Points of Calvinism it sets forth clearly what the Bible teaches concerning the way of salvation. Only when these truths are seen as a unit and in relation to each other can one really understand or appreciate the Christian system in all of its strength and beauty.

The reason that so many Christians have only a weak faith, and that so many churches present only a rather superficial form of Christianity, is that they never really see the system in its logical consistency. It is not enough for the professing Christian to know that God loves him and that his sins have been forgiven. He should know how and why his redemption has been accomplished and how it has been made effective. And that is set forth systematically in the Five Points of Calvinism.

Historically, the Five Points of Calvinism have been held by the Presbyterian and Reformed churches and by many Baptists, while the substance of the Five Points of Arminianism has been held by the Methodist and Lutheran churches and also by many Baptists.

The Five Points of Calvinism may be more easily remembered if they are associated with the word T-U-L-I-P:

- T - Total Inability
- U - Unconditional Election
- L - Limited Atonement
- I - Irresistible (Efficacious) Grace
- P - Perseverance of the Saints

The following material, taken from Romans: an Interpretive outline, by David N. Steele and Curtis Thomas, Baptist ministers in Little Rock, Arkansas, contrasts the Five Points of Calvinism with the Five Points of Arminianism in the clearest and most concise form that we have found anywhere. It is also included as an Appendix in The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination, by the present writer. Each of these books is

## **THE "FIVE POINTS" OF ARMINIANISM**

### **1. Free-Will or Human Ability**

Although human nature was seriously affected by the fall, man has not been left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. God graciously enables every sinner to repent and believe, but He does not interfere with man's freedom. Each sinner possesses a free will, and his eternal destiny depends on how he uses it. Man's freedom consists of his ability to choose good over evil in spiritual matters; his will is not enslaved to his sinful nature. The sinner has the power to either cooperate with God's Spirit and be regenerated or resist God's grace and perish. The lost sinner needs the Spirit's assistance, but he does not have to be regenerated by the Spirit before he can believe, for faith is man's act and precedes the new birth. Faith is the sinner's gift to God; it is man's contribution to salvation.

### **2. Conditional Election**

God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world was based upon His foreseeing that they would respond to His call. He selected only those whom He knew would of themselves freely believe the gospel. Election therefore was determined by or conditioned upon what man would do. The faith which God foresaw and upon which He based His choice was not given to the sinner by God (it was not created by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit) but resulted solely from man's will. It was left entirely up to man as to who would believe and therefore as to who would be elected unto salvation. God chose those whom He knew would, of their own free will, choose Christ. Thus the sinner's choice of Christ, not God's choice of the sinner, is the ultimate cause of salvation.

### **3. Universal Redemption or General Atonement**

Christ's redeeming work made it possible for everyone to be saved but did not actually secure the salvation of anyone. Although Christ died for all men and for every man, only those who believe on Him are saved. His death enabled God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe, but it did not actually put away anyone's sins. Christ's redemption becomes effective only if man chooses to accept it.

### **4. The Holy Spirit Can Be Effectually Resisted**

The Spirit calls inwardly all those who are called outwardly by the gospel invitation; He does all that He can to bring every sinner to salvation. But inasmuch as man is free, he can successfully resist the Spirit's call. The Spirit cannot regenerate the sinner

until he believes; faith (which is man's contribution) proceeds and makes possible the new birth. Thus, man's free will limits the Spirit in the application of Christ's saving work. The Holy Spirit can only draw to Christ those who allow Him to have His way with them. Until the sinner responds, the Spirit cannot give life. God's grace, therefore, is not invincible; it can be, and often is, resisted and thwarted by man.

## 5. Falling from Grace

Those who believe and are truly saved can lose their salvation by failing to keep up their faith, etc.

All Arminians have not been agreed on this point; some have held that believers are eternally secure in Christ - that once a sinner is regenerated, he can never be lost.

According to Arminianism:

Salvation is accomplished through the combined efforts of God (who takes the initiative) and man (who must respond) - man's response being the determining factor. God has provided salvation for everyone, but His provision becomes effective only for those who, of their own free will, "choose" to cooperate with Him and accept His offer of grace. At the crucial point, man's will plays a decisive role; thus man, not God, determines who will be recipients of the gift of salvation.

## **THE "FIVE POINTS" OF CALVINISM**

### 1. Total Inability or Total Depravity

Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not - indeed he cannot - choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ - it takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation - it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.

### 2. Unconditional Election

God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response of obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are the result, not the cause of God's choice. Election therefore was not

determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ. Thus God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.

### 3. Particular Redemption or Limited Atonement

Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, therefore guaranteeing their salvation.

### 4. The Efficacious Call of the Spirit or Irresistible Grace

In addition to the outward general call to salvation which is made to everyone who hears the gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The internal call (which is made only to the elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion. By means of this special call the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ. He is not limited in His work of applying salvation by man's will, nor is He dependent upon man's cooperation for success. The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ. God's grace, therefore, is invincible; it never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended.

### 5. Perseverance of the Saints

All who are chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of Almighty God and thus persevere to the end.

According to Calvinism:

Salvation is accomplished by the almighty power of the Triune God. The Father chose a people, the Son died for them, the Holy Spirit makes Christ's death effective by bringing the elect to faith and repentance, thereby causing them to willingly obey the gospel. The entire process (election, redemption, regeneration) is the work of God and is by grace alone. Thus God, not man, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation.

# God Glorified in Man's Dependence

by Jonathan Edwards

Preached on the Public Lecture in Boston, July 8, 1731; and published at the desire of several ministers and others in Boston who heard it. - This was the first piece published by Mr. Edwards.

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*“That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”* - 1 Corinthians 1:29-31.

Those Christians to whom the apostle directed this epistle, dwelt in a part of the world where human wisdom was in great repute; as the apostle observes in the 22nd verse of this chapter, "The Greeks seek after wisdom." Corinth was not far from Athens, that had been for many ages the most famous seat of philosophy and learning in the world. The apostle therefore observes to them, how God by the gospel destroyed, and brought to naught, their wisdom. The learned Grecians, and their great philosophers, by all their wisdom did not know God, they were not able to find out the truth in divine things. But, after they had done their utmost to no effect, it pleased God at length to reveal himself by the gospel, which they accounted foolishness. He "chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and the base things of the world, and things that are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught the things that are." And the apostle informs them in the text why he thus did, That no flesh should glory in his presence, &c.--In which words may be observed,

1. What God aims at in the disposition of things in the affair of redemption, viz. that man should not glory in himself, but alone in God; 1 Cor. i. 29, 31. That no flesh should glory in his presence,--that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

2. How this end is attained in the work of redemption, viz. by that absolute and immediate dependence which men have upon God in that work, for all their good. Inasmuch as,

First, all the good that they have is in and through Christ; He is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. [1 Cor. i. 30.] All the good of the fallen and redeemed creature is concerned in these four things, and cannot be better distributed than into them; but Christ is each of them to us, and we have none of them any otherwise than in him. He is made of God unto us wisdom: in him are all

the proper good and true excellency of the understanding. Wisdom was a thing that the Greeks admired; but Christ is the true light of the world; it is through him alone that true wisdom is imparted to the mind. It is in and by Christ that we have righteousness: it is by being in him that we are justified, have our sins pardoned, and are received as righteous into God's favor. It is by Christ that we have sanctification: we have in him true excellency of heart as well as of understanding; and he is made unto us inherent as well as imputed righteousness. It is by Christ that we have redemption, or the actual deliverance from all misery, and the bestowment of all happiness and glory. Thus we have all our good by Christ, who is God.

Secondly, another instance wherein our dependence on God for all our good appears, is this, that it is God that has given us Christ, that we might have these benefits through him; he of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, &c.

Thirdly, it is of him that we are in Christ Jesus, and come to have an interest in him, and so do receive those blessings which he is made unto us. It is God that gives us faith whereby we close with Christ.

So that in this verse is shown our dependence on each person in the Trinity for all our good. We are dependent on Christ the Son of God, as he is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. We are dependent on the Father, who has given us Christ, and made him to be these things to us. We are dependent on the Holy Ghost, for it is of him that we are in Christ Jesus; it is the Spirit of God that gives faith in him, whereby we receive him, and close with him.

## **DOCTRINE**

"God is glorified in the work of redemption in this, that there appears in it so absolute and universal a dependence of the redeemed on him."--Here I propose to show, 1st, that there is an absolute and universal dependence of the redeemed on God for all their good. And, 2dly, that God hereby is exalted and glorified in the work of redemption.

I. There is an absolute and universal dependence of the redeemed on God. The nature and contrivance of our redemption is such, that the redeemed are in every thing directly, immediately, and entirely dependent on God: they are dependent on him for all, and are dependent on him every way.

The several ways wherein the dependence of one being may be upon another for its good, and wherein the redeemed of Jesus Christ depend on God for all their good, are these, viz., that they have all their good of him, and that they have all through him, and that they have all in him: That he is the cause and original whence all their good comes, therein it is of him; and that he is the medium by which it is obtained and

conveyed, therein they have it through him; and that he is the good itself given and conveyed, therein it is in him. Now those that are redeemed by Jesus Christ do, in all these respects, very directly and entirely depend on God for their all.

First, the redeemed have all their good of God. God is the great author of it. He is the first cause of it; and not only so, but he is the only proper cause. It is of God that we have our Redeemer. It is God that has provided a Savior for us. Jesus Christ is not only of God in his person, as he is the only-begotten Son of God, but he is from God, as we are concerned in him, and in his office of Mediator. He is the gift of God to us: God chose and anointed him, appointed him his work, and sent him into the world. And as it is God that gives, so it is God that accepts the Savior. He gives the purchaser, and he affords the thing purchased.

It is of God that Christ becomes ours, that we are brought to him, and are united to him. It is of God that we receive faith to close with him, that we may have an interest in him. Eph. ii. 8, "For by grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." It is of God that we actually receive all the benefits that Christ has purchased. It is God that pardons and justifies, and delivers from going down to hell; and into his favor the redeemed are received, when they are justified. So it is God that delivers from the dominion of sin, cleanses us from our filthiness, and changes us from our deformity. It is of God that the redeemed receive all their true excellency, wisdom, and holiness; and that two ways, viz. as the Holy Ghost by whom these things are immediately wrought is from God, proceeds from him, and is sent by him; and also as the Holy Ghost himself is God, by whose operation and indwelling the knowledge of God and divine things, a holy disposition and all grace, are conferred and upheld. And though means are made use of in conferring grace on men's souls, yet it is of God that we have these means of grace, and it is he that makes them effectual. It is of God that we have the Holy Scriptures; they are his word. It is of God that we have ordinances, and their efficacy depends on the immediate influence of his Spirit. The ministers of the gospel are sent of God, and all their sufficiency is of him.--2 Cor. iv. 7, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Their success depends entirely and absolutely on the immediate blessing and influence of God.

1. The redeemed have all from the grace of God. It was of mere grace that God gave us his only-begotten Son. The grace is great in proportion to the excellency of what is given. The gift was infinitely precious, because it was of a person infinitely worthy, a person of infinite glory; and also because it was of a person infinitely near and dear to God. The grace is great in proportion to the benefit we have given us in him. The benefit is doubly infinite, in that in him we have deliverance from an infinite, because an eternal, misery, and do also receive eternal joy and glory. The grace in bestowing this gift is great in proportion to our unworthiness to whom it is given; instead of deserving such a gift, we merited infinitely ill of God's hands. The grace is great



according to the manner of giving, or in proportion to the humiliation and expense of the method and means by which a way is made for our having the gift. He gave him to dwell amongst us; he gave him to us incarnate, or in our nature; and in the like though sinless infirmities. He gave him to us in a low and afflicted state; and not only so, but as slain, that he might be a feast for our souls.

The grace of God in bestowing this gift is most free. It was what God was under no obligation to bestow. He might have rejected fallen man, as he did the fallen angels. It was what we never did any thing to merit; it was given while we were yet enemies, and before we had so much as repented. It was from the love of God who saw no excellency in us to attract it; and it was without expectation of ever being requited for it. And it is from mere grace that the benefits of Christ are applied to such and such particular persons. Those that are called and sanctified are to attribute it alone to the good pleasure of God's goodness, by which they are distinguished. He is sovereign, and hath mercy on whom he will have mercy.

Man hath now a greater dependence on the grace of God than he had before the fall. He depends on the free goodness of God for much more than he did then. Then he depended on God's goodness for conferring the reward of perfect obedience; for God was not obliged to promise and bestow that reward. But now we are dependent on the grace of God for much more; we stand in need of grace, not only to bestow glory upon us, but to deliver us from hell and eternal wrath. Under the first covenant we depended on God's goodness to give us the reward of righteousness; and so we do now: but we stand in need of God's free and sovereign grace to give us that righteousness; to pardon our sin, and release us from the guilt and infinite demerit of it.

And as we are dependent on the goodness of God for more now than under the first covenant, so we are dependent on a much greater, more free and wonderful goodness. We are now more dependent on God's arbitrary and sovereign good pleasure. We were in our first estate dependent on God for holiness. We had our original righteousness from him; but then holiness was not bestowed in such a way of sovereign good pleasure as it is now. Man was created holy, for it became God to create holy all his reasonable creatures. It would have been a disparagement to the holiness of God's nature, if he had made an intelligent creature unholy. But now when fallen man is made holy, it is from mere and arbitrary grace; God may for ever deny holiness to the fallen creature if he pleases, without any disparagement to any of his perfections.

And we are not only indeed more dependent on the grace of God, but our dependence is much more conspicuous, because our own insufficiency and helplessness in ourselves is much more apparent in our fallen and undone state, than it was before we were either sinful or miserable. We are more apparently dependent on God for holiness, because we are first sinful, and utterly polluted, and afterward holy. So the

production of the effect is sensible, and its derivation from God more obvious. If man was ever holy and always was so, it would not be so apparent, that he had not holiness necessarily, as an inseparable qualification of human nature. So we are more apparently dependent on free grace for the favor of God, for we are first justly the objects of his displeasure, and afterwards are received into favor. We are more apparently dependent on God for happiness, being first miserable, and afterwards happy. It is more apparently free and without merit in us, because we are actually without any kind of excellency to merit, if there could be any such thing as merit in creature excellency. And we are not only without any true excellency, but are full of, and wholly defiled with, that which is infinitely odious. All our good is more apparently from God, because we are first naked and wholly without any good, and afterwards enriched with all good.

2. We receive all from the power of God. Man's redemption is often spoken of as a work of wonderful power as well as grace. The great power of God appears in bringing a sinner from his low state, from the depths of sin and misery, to such an exalted state of holiness and happiness. Eph. i. 19. "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power."-

We are dependent on God's power through every step of our redemption. We are dependent on the power of God to convert us, and give faith in Jesus Christ, and the new nature. It is a work of creation: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 17. "We are created in Christ Jesus," Eph. ii. 10. The fallen creature cannot attain to true holiness, but by being created again. Eph. v. 24, "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." It is a raising from the dead. Colos. ii. 12, 13. "Wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Yea, it is a more glorious work of power than mere creation, or raising a dead body to life, in that the effect attained is greater and more excellent. That holy and happy being, and spiritual life, which is produced in the work of conversion, is a far greater and more glorious effect, than mere being and life. And the state from whence the change is made--a death in sin, a total corruption of nature, and depth of misery--is far more remote from the state attained, than mere death or non-entity.

It is by God's power also that we are preserved in a state of grace. 1 Pet. i. 5. "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." As grace is at first from God, so it is continually from him, and is maintained by him, as much as light in the atmosphere is all day long from the sun, as well as at first dawning, or sun-rising.--Men are dependent on the power of God for every exercise of grace, and for carrying on that work in the heart, for subduing sin and corruption, increasing holy principles, and enabling to bring forth fruit in good works. Man is dependent on divine power in bringing grace to its perfection, in making the soul completely amiable in Christ's glorious likeness, and filling of it with a satisfying joy and blessedness; and for the

raising of the body to life, and to such a perfect state, that it shall be suitable for a habitation and organ for a soul so perfected and blessed. These are the most glorious effects of the power of God, that are seen in the series of God's acts with respect to the creatures.

Man was dependent on the power of God in his first estate, but he is more dependent on his power now; he needs God's power to do more things for him, and depends on a more wonderful exercise of his power. It was an effect of the power of God to make man holy at the first: but more remarkably so now, because there is a great deal of opposition and difficulty in the way. It is a more glorious effect of power to make that holy that was so depraved, and under the dominion of sin, than to confer holiness on that which before had nothing of the contrary. It is a more glorious work of power to rescue a soul out of the hands of the devil, and from the powers of darkness, and to bring it into a state of salvation, than to confer holiness where there was no prepossession or opposition. Luke xi. 21-22. "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor, wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." So it is a more glorious work of power to uphold a soul in a state of grace and holiness, and to carry it on till it is brought to glory, when there is so much sin remaining in the heart resisting, and Satan with all his might opposing, than it would have been to have kept man from falling at first, when Satan had nothing in man.-- Thus we have shown how the redeemed are dependent on God for all their good, as they have all of him.

Secondly, they are also dependent on God for all, as they have all through him. God is the medium of it, as well as the author and fountain of it. All we have, wisdom, the pardon of sin, deliverance from hell, acceptance into God's favor, grace and holiness, true comfort and happiness, eternal life and glory, is from God by a Mediator; and this Mediator is God; which Mediator we have an absolute dependence upon, as he through whom we receive all. So that here is another way wherein we have our dependence on God for all good. God not only gives us the Mediator, and accepts his mediation, and of his power and grace bestows the things purchased by the Mediator; but he the Mediator is God.

Our blessings are what we have by purchase; and the purchase is made of God, the blessings are purchased of him, and God gives the purchaser; and not only so, but God is the purchaser. Yea God is both the purchaser and the price; for Christ, who is God, purchased these blessings for us, by offering up himself as the price of our salvation. He purchased eternal life by the sacrifice of himself. Heb. vii. 27. "He offered up himself." And ix. 26. "He hath appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Indeed it was the human nature that was offered; but it was the same person with the divine, and therefore was an infinite price.

As we thus have our good through God, we have a dependence on him in a respect that man in his first estate had not. Man was to have eternal life then through his own righteousness; so that he had partly a dependence upon what was in himself; for we have a dependence upon that through which we have our good, as well as that from which we have it; and though man's righteousness that he then depended on was indeed from God, yet it was his own, it was inherent in himself; so that his dependence was not so immediately on God. But now the righteousness that we are dependent on is not in ourselves, but in God. We are saved through the righteousness of Christ: He is made unto us righteousness; and therefore is prophesied of, Jer. xxiii. 6. under that name, "the Lord our righteousness." In that the righteousness we are justified by is the righteousness of Christ, it is the righteousness of God. 2 Cor. v. 21. "That we might be made the righteousness of God in him."--Thus in redemption we have not only all things of God, but by and through him, 1 Cor. viii. 6. "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

Thirdly, the redeemed have all their good in God. We not only have it of him, and through him, but it consists in him; he is all our good.--The good of the redeemed is either objective or inherent. By their objective good, I mean that extrinsic object, in the possession and enjoyment of which they are happy. Their inherent good is that excellency or pleasure which is in the soul itself. With respect to both of which the redeemed have all their good in God, or which is the same thing, God himself is all their good.

1. The redeemed have all their objective good in God. God himself is the great good which they are brought to the possession and enjoyment of by redemption. He is the highest good, and the sum of all that good which Christ purchased. God is the inheritance of the saints; he is the portion of their souls. God is their wealth and treasure, their food, their life, their dwelling-place, their ornament and diadem, and their everlasting honour and glory. They have none in heaven but God; he is the great good which the redeemed are received to at death, and which they are to rise to at the end of the world. The Lord God is the light of the heavenly Jerusalem; and is the "river of the water of life" that runs, and "the tree of life that grows, in the midst of the paradise of God." The glorious excellencies and beauty of God will be what will forever entertain the minds of the saints, and the love of God will be their everlasting feast. The redeemed will indeed enjoy other things; they will enjoy the angels, and will enjoy one another; but that which they shall enjoy in the angels, or each other, or in any thing else whatsoever that will yield them delight and happiness, will be what shall be seen of God in them.

2. The redeemed have all their inherent good in God. Inherent good is twofold; it is either excellency or pleasure. These the redeemed not only derive from God, as caused by him, but have them in him. They have spiritual excellency and joy by a kind of

participation of God. They are made excellent by a communication of God's excellency. God puts his own beauty, i.e. his beautiful likeness, upon their souls. They are made partakers of the divine nature, or moral image of God, 2 Pet. i. 4. They are holy by being made partakers of God's holiness, Heb. xii. 10. The saints are beautiful and blessed by a communication of God's holiness and joy, as the moon and planets are bright by the sun's light. The saint hath spiritual joy and pleasure by a kind of effusion of God on the soul. In these things the redeemed have communion with God; that is, they partake with him and of him.

The saints have both their spiritual excellency and blessedness by the gift of the Holy Ghost, and his dwelling in them. They are not only caused by the Holy Ghost, but are in him as their principle. The Holy Spirit becoming an inhabitant, is a vital principle in the soul. He, acting in, upon, and with the soul, becomes a fountain of true holiness and joy, as a spring is of water, by the exertion and diffusion of itself. John iv. 14. "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Compared with chap. vii. 38, 39. "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water; but this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." The sum of what Christ has purchased for us, is that spring of water spoken of in the former of those places, and those rivers of living water spoken of in the latter. And the sum of the blessings, which the redeemed shall receive in heaven, is that river of water of life that proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb, Rev. xxii. 1. Which doubtless signifies the same with those rivers of living water, explained, John vii. 38, 39. which is elsewhere called the "river of God's pleasures."

Herein consists the fullness of good, which the saints receive of Christ. It is by partaking of the Holy Spirit, that they have communion with Christ in his fullness. God hath given the Spirit, not by measure unto him; and they do receive of his fullness, and grace for grace. This is the sum of the saints' inheritance; and therefore that little of the Holy Ghost which believers have in this world, is said to be the earnest of their inheritance, 2 Cor. i. 22. "Who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." And chap v. 5. "Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." And "Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession. (Eph. i. 13-14) "

The Holy Spirit and good things are spoken of in Scripture as the same; as if the Spirit of God communicated to the soul, comprised all good things, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him? (Matt. vii. 11)" In Luke it is, verse xi. 13. "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" This is the sum of the blessings that Christ died to procure, and the subject of gospel-promises. Gal. iii. 13-14. "He was made a curse for us, that we

might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." The Spirit of God is the great promise of the Father, Luke xxiv. 49. "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you." The Spirit of God therefore is called "the Spirit of promise," Eph. i. 33. This promised thing Christ received, and had given into his hand, as soon as he had finished the work of our redemption, to bestow on all that he had redeemed; "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye both see and hear. (Acts ii. 13)" So that all the holiness and happiness of the redeemed is in God. It is in the communications, indwelling, and acting of the Spirit of God. Holiness and happiness is in the fruit, here and hereafter, because God dwells in them, and they in God.

Thus God has given us the Redeemer, and it is by him that our good is purchased. So God is the Redeemer and the price; and he also is the good purchased. So that all that we have is of God, and through him, and in him. "For of him, and through him, and to him, or in him, are all things. (Rom. xii. 36)" The same in the Greek that is here rendered to him, is rendered in him, 1 Cor. viii. 6.

II. God is glorified in the work of redemption by this means, viz. by there being so great and universal a dependence of the redeemed on him.

1. Man hath so much the greater occasion and obligation to notice and acknowledge God's perfections and all-sufficiency. The greater the creature's dependence is on God's perfections, and the greater concern he has with them, so much the greater occasion has he to take notice of them. So much the greater concern any one has with and dependence upon the power and grace of God, so much the greater occasion has he to take notice of that power and grace. So much the greater and more immediate dependence there is on the divine holiness, so much the greater occasion to take notice of and acknowledge that. So much the greater and more absolute dependence we have on the divine perfections, as belonging to the several persons of the Trinity, so much the greater occasion have we to observe and own the divine glory of each of them. That which we are most concerned with, is surely most in the way of our observation and notice; and this kind of concern with any thing, viz. dependence, does especially tend to command and oblige the attention and observation. Those things that we are not much dependent upon, it is easy to neglect; but we can scarce do any other than mind that which we have a great dependence on. By reason of our so great dependence on God, and his perfections, and in so many respects, he and his glory are the more directly set in our view, which way soever we turn our eyes.

We have the greater occasion to take notice of God's all-sufficiency, when all our sufficiency is thus every way of him. We have the more occasion to contemplate him as an infinite good, and as the fountain of all good. Such a dependence on God demonstrates his all-sufficiency. So much as the dependence of the creature is on

God, so much the greater does the creature's emptiness in himself appear; and so much the greater the creature's emptiness, so much the greater must the fullness of the Being be who supplies him. Our having all of God, shows the fullness of his power and grace; our having all through him, shows the fullness of his merit and worthiness; and our having all in him, demonstrates his fullness of beauty, love, and happiness. And the redeemed, by reason of the greatness of their dependence on God, have not only so much the greater occasion, but obligation to contemplate and acknowledge the glory and fullness of God. How unreasonable and ungrateful should we be, if we did not acknowledge that sufficiency and glory which we absolutely, immediately, and universally depend upon!

2. Hereby is demonstrated how great God's glory is considered comparatively, or as compared with the creature's.--By the creature being thus wholly and universally dependent on God, it appears that the creature is nothing, and that God is all. Hereby it appears that God is infinitely above us; that God's strength, and wisdom, and holiness, are infinitely greater than ours. However great and glorious the creature apprehends God to be, yet if he be not sensible of the difference between God and him, so as to see that God's glory is great, compared with his own, he will not be disposed to give God the glory due to his name. If the creature in any respects sets himself upon a level with God, or exalts himself to any competition with him, however he may apprehend that great honor and profound respect may belong to God from those that are at a greater distance, he will not be so sensible of its being due from him. So much the more men exalt themselves, so much the less will they surely be disposed to exalt God. It is certainly what God aims at in the disposition of things in redemption (if we allow the Scriptures to be a Rev. of God's mind,) that God should appear full, and man in himself empty, that God should appear all, and man nothing. It is God's declared design that others should not "glory in his presence," which implies that it is his design to advance his own comparative glory. So much the more man "glories in God's presence," so much the less glory is ascribed to God.

3. By its being thus ordered, that the creature should have so absolute and universal a dependence on God, provision is made that God should have our whole souls, and should be the object of our undivided respect. If we had our dependence partly on God, and partly on something else, man's respect would be divided to those different things on which he had dependence. Thus it would be if we depended on God only for a part of our good, and on ourselves, or some other being, for another part: or if we had our good only from God, and through another that was not God, and in something else distinct from both, our hearts would be divided between the good itself, and him from whom, and him through whom, we received it. But now there is no occasion for this, God being not only he from or of whom we have all good, but also through whom, and is that good itself, that we have from him and through him. So that whatsoever there is to attract our respect, the tendency is still directly towards God; all unites in him as the center.

## USE

1. We may here observe the marvelous wisdom of God, in the work of redemption. God hath made man's emptiness and misery, his low, lost, and ruined state, into which he sunk by the fall, an occasion of the greater advancement of his own glory, as in other ways, so particularly in this, that there is now much more universal and apparent dependence of man on God. Though God be pleased to lift man out of that dismal abyss of sin and woe into which he was fallen, and exceedingly to exalt him in excellency and honor, and to a high pitch of glory and blessedness, yet the creature hath nothing in any respect to glory of; all the glory evidently belongs to God, all is in a mere, and most absolute, and divine dependence on the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And each person of the Trinity is equally glorified in this work: there is an absolute dependence of the creature on every one for all: all is of the Father, all through the Son, and all in the Holy Ghost. Thus God appears in the work of redemption as all in all. It is fit that he who is, and there is none else, should be the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the all and the only, in this work.

2. Hence those doctrines and schemes of divinity that are in any respect opposite to such an absolute and universal dependence on God, derogate from his glory, and thwart the design of our redemption. And such are those schemes that put the creature in God's stead, in any of the mentioned respects, that exalt man into the place of either Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, in any thing pertaining to our redemption. However they may allow of a dependence of the redeemed on God, yet they deny a dependence that is so absolute and universal. They own an entire dependence on God for some things, but not for others; they own that we depend on God for the gift and acceptance of a Redeemer, but deny so absolute a dependence on him for the obtaining of an interest in the Redeemer. They own an absolute dependence on the Father for giving his Son, and on the Son for working out redemption, but not so entire a dependence on the Holy Ghost for conversion, and a being in Christ, and so coming to a title to his benefits. They own a dependence on God for means of grace, but not absolutely for the benefit and success of those means; a partial dependence on the power of God, for obtaining and exercising holiness, but not a mere dependence on the arbitrary and sovereign grace of God. They own a dependence on the free grace of God for a reception into his favor, so far that it is without any proper merit, but not as it is without being attracted, or moved with any excellency. They own a partial dependence on Christ, as he through whom we have life, as having purchased new terms of life, but still hold that the righteousness through which we have life is inherent in ourselves, as it was under the first covenant. Now whatever scheme is inconsistent with our entire dependence on God for all, and of having all of him, through him, and in him, it is repugnant to the design and tenor of the gospel, and robs it of that which God accounts its luster and glory.



3. Hence we may learn a reason why faith is that by which we come to have an interest in this redemption; for there is included in the nature of faith, a sensible acknowledgment of absolute dependence on God in this affair. It is very fit that it should be required of all, in order to their having the benefit of this redemption, that they should be sensible of, and acknowledge, their dependence on God for it. It is by this means that God hath contrived to glorify himself in redemption; and it is fit that he should at least have this glory of those that are the subjects of this redemption, and have the benefit of it.--Faith is a sensibleness of what is real in the work of redemption; and the soul that believes doth entirely depend on God for all salvation, in its own sense and act. Faith abases men, and exalts God; it gives all the glory of redemption to him alone. It is necessary in order to saving faith, that man should be emptied of himself, be sensible that he is "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Humility is a great ingredient of true faith: he that truly receives redemption, receives it as a little child, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, he shall not enter therein. (Mark x. 15)" It is the delight of a believing soul to abase itself and exalt God alone: that is the language of it, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory. (Psalm cxv. 1)"

4. Let us be exhorted to exalt God alone, and ascribe to him all the glory of redemption. Let us endeavor to obtain, and increase in, a sensibleness of our great dependence on God, to have our eye to him alone, to mortify a self-dependent and self-righteous disposition. Man is naturally exceeding prone to exalt himself, and depend on his own power or goodness; as though from himself he must expect happiness. He is prone to have respect to enjoyments alien from God and his Spirit, as those in which happiness is to be found.--But this doctrine should teach us to exalt God alone: as by trust and reliance, so by praise. Let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord. Hath any man hope that he is converted, and sanctified, and that his mind is endowed with true excellency and spiritual beauty? That his sins are forgiven, and he received into God's favor, and exalted to the honor and blessedness of being his child, and an heir of eternal life? Let him give God all the glory; who alone makes him to differ from the worst of men in this world, or the most miserable of the damned in hell. Hath any man much comfort and strong hope of eternal life, let not his hope lift him up, but dispose him the more to abase himself, to reflect on his own exceeding unworthiness of such a favor, and to exalt God alone. Is any man eminent in holiness, and abundant in good works, let him take nothing of the glory of it to himself, but ascribe it to him whose "workmanship we are, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

## **The Plan of Salvation**

**by Benjamin B. Warfield**

## **Part I - Differing Conceptions**

THE SUBJECT to which our attention is to be directed in this series of lectures is ordinarily spoken of as "The Plan of Salvation." Its more technical designation is, "The Order of Decrees." And this technical designation has the advantage over the more popular one, of more accurately defining the scope of the subject matter. This is not commonly confined to the process of salvation itself but is generally made to include the entire course of the divine dealing with man which ends in his salvation. Creation is not uncommonly comprehended in it, and of course the fall, and the condition of man brought about by the fall. This portion of the subject matter may, however, certainly with some propriety, be looked upon as rather of the nature of a presupposition, than as a substantive part of the subject matter itself; and no great harm will be done if we abide by the more popular designation. Its greater concreteness gives it an advantage which should not be accounted small; and above all it has the merit of throwing into emphasis the main matter, salvation. The series of the divine activities which are brought into consideration are in any event supposed to circle around as their center, and to have as their proximate goal, the salvation of sinful man. When the implications of this are fairly considered it may not seem to require much argument to justify the designation of the whole by the term, "The Plan of Salvation."

It does not seem necessary to pause to discuss the previous question whether God, in his saving activities, acts upon a plan. That God acts upon a plan in all his activities, is already given in Theism. On the establishment of a personal God, this question is closed. For person means purpose: precisely what distinguishes a person from a thing is that its modes of action are purposive, that all it does is directed to an end and proceeds through the choice of means to that end. Even the Deist, therefore, must allow that God has a plan. We may, no doubt, imagine an extreme form of Deism, in which it may be contended that God does not concern himself at all with what happens in his universe; that, having created it, he turns aside from it and lets it run its own course to any end that may happen to it, without having himself given a thought to it. It is needless to say, however, that no such extreme form of Deism actually exists, though, strange to say, there are some, as we shall have occasion to observe, who appear to think that in the particular matter of the salvation of man God does act much after this irresponsible fashion.

What the actual Deist stands for is law. He conceives that God commits his universe, not to unforeseen and unprepared caprice, but to law; law which God has impressed on his universe and to the guidance of which he can safely leave his universe. That is

to say, even the Deist conceives God to have a plan; a plan which embraces all that happens in the universe. He differs with the Theist only as to the modes of activity by which he conceives God to carry out this plan. Deism involves a mechanical conception of the universe. God has made a machine, and just because it is a good machine, he can leave it to work out, not its, but his ends. So we may make a clock and then, just because it is a good clock, leave it to tick off the seconds, and point out the minutes, and strike the hours, and mark off the days of the month, and turn up the phases of the moon and the accompanying tides; and if we choose, we may put in a comet which shall appear on the dial but once in the life of the clock, not erratically, but when and where and how we have arranged for it to appear. The clock does not go its own way; it goes our way, the way which we have arranged for it to go; and God's clock, the universe, goes not its way but his way, as he has ordained for it, grinding out the inevitable events with mechanical precision.

This is a great conception, the Deist conception of law. It delivers us from chance. But it does so, only to cast us into the cogged teeth of a machine. It is, therefore, not the greatest conception. The greatest conception is the conception of Theism, which delivers us even from law, and places us in the immediate hands of a person. It is a great thing to be delivered from the inordinate realm of aimless chance. The goddess Tyche, Fortuna, was one of the most terrible divinities of the old world, quite as terrible as and scarcely distinguishable from Fate. It is a great thing to be under the control of intelligent purpose. But it makes every difference whether the purpose is executed by mere law, acting automatically, or by the everpresent personal control of the person himself. There is nothing more ordinate than the control of a person, all of whose actions are governed by intelligent purpose, directed to an end.

If we believe in a personal God, then, and much more if, being Theists, we believe in the immediate control by this personal God of the world he has made, we must believe in a plan underlying all that God does, and therefore also in a plan of salvation. The only question that can arise concerns not the reality but the nature of this plan. As to its nature, however, it must be admitted that a great many differing opinions have been held. Indeed pretty nearly every possible opinion has been announced at one time or another, in one quarter or another. Even if we leave all extra-Christian opinions to one side, we need scarcely modify this statement. Lines of division have been drawn through the Church; parties have been set over against parties; and different types of belief have been developed which amount to nothing less than different systems of religion, which are at one in little more than the mere common name of Christian, claimed by them all.

It is my purpose in this lecture to bring before us in a rapid survey such of these varying views as have been held by large parties in the Church, that some conception may be formed of their range and relations. This may be most conveniently done by observing, in the first instance at least, only the great points of difference which

separate them. I shall enumerate them in the order of significance, proceeding from the most profound and far-reaching differences which divide Christians to those of less radical effect.

1. The deepest cleft which separates men calling themselves Christians in their conceptions of the plan of salvation, is that which divides what we may call the Naturalistic and the Supernaturalistic views. The line of division here is whether, in the matter of the salvation of man, God has planned simply to leave men, with more or less completeness, to save themselves, or whether he has planned himself to intervene to save them. The issue between the naturalist and the supernaturalist is thus the eminently simple but quite absolute one: Does man save himself or does God save him?

The consistently naturalistic scheme is known in the history of doctrine as Pelagianism. Pelagianism in its purity, affirms that all the power exerted in saving man is native to man himself. But Pelagianism is not merely a matter of history, nor does it always exist in its purity. As the poor in earthly goods are always with us, so the poor in spiritual things are also always with us. It may indeed be thought that there never was a period in the history of the Church in which naturalistic conceptions of the process of salvation were more wide-spread or more radical than at present. A Pelagianism which out pelagianizes Pelagus himself in the completeness of its naturalism is in fact at the moment intensely fashionable among the self-constituted leaders of Christian thought. And everywhere, in all communions alike, conceptions are current which assign to man, in the use of his native powers at least the decisive activity in the saving of the soul, that is to say, which suppose that God has planned that those shall be saved, who, at the decisive point, in one way or another save themselves.

These so-called intermediate views are obviously, in principle, naturalistic views, since (whatever part they permit God to play in the circumstantials of salvation) when they come to the crucial point of salvation itself they cast man back upon his native powers. In so doing they separate themselves definitely from the supernaturalistic view of the plan of salvation and, with it, from the united testimony of the entire organized Church. For, however much naturalistic views have seeped into the membership of the churches, the entire organized Church--Orthodox Greek, Roman Catholic Latin, and Protestant in all its great historical forms, Lutheran and Reformed, Calvinistic and Arminian--bears its consentient, firm and emphatic testimony to the supernaturalistic conception of salvation. We shall have to journey to the periphery of Christendom, to such sects of doubtful standing in the Christian body as, say, the Unitarians, to find an organized body of Christians with aught but a supernaturalistic confession.

This confession, in direct opposition to naturalism, declares with emphasis that it is

God the Lord and not man himself who saves the soul; and, that no mistake may be made, it does not shrink from the complete assertion and affirms, with full understanding of the issue, precisely that all the power exerted in saving the soul is from God. Here, then, is the knife-edge which separates the two parties. The supernaturalist is not content to say that some of the power which is exerted in saving the soul; that most of the power that is exerted in saving the soul, is from God. He asserts that all the power that is exerted in saving the soul is from God, that whatever part man plays in the saving process is subsidiary, is itself the effect of the divine operation and that it is God and God alone who saves the soul. And the supernaturalist in this sense is the entire organized Church in the whole stretch of its official testimony.

2. There exist, no doubt, differences among the Supernaturalists, and differences which are not small or unimportant. The most deeply cutting of these separates the Sacerdotalists and the Evangelicals. Both sacerdotalists and evangelicals are supernaturalists. That is to say, they agree that all the power exerted in saving the soul is from God. They differ in their conception of the manner in which the power of God, by which salvation is wrought, is brought to bear on the soul. The exact point of difference between them turns on the question whether God, by whose power alone salvation is wrought, saves men by dealing himself immediately with them as individuals, or only by establishing supernatural endowed instrumentalities in the world by means of which men may be saved. The issue concerns the immediacy of the saving operations of God: Does God save men by immediate operations of his grace upon their souls, or does he act upon them only through the medium of instrumentalities established for that purpose?

The typical form of sacerdotalism is supplied by the teaching of the Church of Rome. In that teaching the church is held to be the institution of salvation, through which alone is salvation conveyed to men. Outside the church and its ordinances salvation is not supposed to be found; grace is communicated by and through the ministrations of the church, otherwise not. The two maxims are therefore in force: Where the church is, there is the Spirit; outside the church there is no salvation. The sacerdotal principle is present, however, wherever instrumentalities through which saving grace is brought to the soul are made indispensable to salvation; and it is dominant wherever this indispensability is made absolute. Thus what are called the Means of Grace are given the "necessity of means," and are made in the strict sense not merely the *sine quibus non*, but the actual *quibus* of salvation.

Over against this whole view evangelicalism, seeking to conserve what it conceives to be only consistent supernaturalism, sweeps away every intermediary between the soul and its God, and leaves the soul dependent for its salvation on God alone, operating upon it by his immediate grace. It is directly upon God and not the means of grace that the evangelical feels dependent for salvation; it is directly to God rather than to the

means of grace that he looks for grace; and he proclaims the Holy Spirit therefore not only able to act but actually operative where and when and how he will. The Church and its ordinances he conceives rather as instruments which the Spirit uses than as agents which employ the Holy Spirit in working salvation. In direct opposition to the maxims of consistent sacerdotalism, he takes therefore as his mottoes: Where the Spirit is, there is the church; outside the body of the saints there is no salvation.

In thus describing evangelicalism, it will not escape notice that we are also describing Protestantism. In point of fact the whole body of Confessional Protestantism is evangelical in its view of the plan of salvation, inclusive alike of its Lutheran and Reformed, of its Calvinistic and Arminian branches. Protestantism and evangelicalism are accordingly conterminous, if not exactly synonymous designation. As all organized Christianity is clear and emphatic in its confession of a pure supernaturalism, so all organized Protestantism is equally clear and emphatic in its confession of evangelicalism. Evangelicalism thus comes before us as the distinctively Protestant conception of the plan of salvation, and perhaps it is not strange that, in its immediate contradiction of sacerdotalism, the more deeply lying contradiction to naturalism which it equally and indeed primarily embodies is sometimes almost lost sight of. Evangelicalism does not cease to be fundamentally antinaturalistic, however, in becoming antisacerdotal: its primary protest continues to be against naturalism, and in opposing sacerdotalism also it only is the more 'Consistently supernaturalistic, refusing to admit any intermediaries between the soul and God, as the sole source of salvation. That only is true evangelicalism, therefore, in which sounds clearly the double confession that all the power exerted in saving the soul is from God, and that God in his saving operations acts directly upon the soul.

3. Even so, however, there remain differences, many and deep-reaching, which divide Evangelicals among themselves. All evangelicals are agreed that all the power exerted in salvation is from God, and that God works directly upon the soul in his saving operations. But upon the exact methods employed by God in bringing many sons into glory they differ much from one another. Some evangelicals have attained their evangelical position by a process of modification, in the way of correction, applied to a fundamental sacerdotalism, from which they have thus won their way out. Naturally elements of this underlying sacerdotalism have remained imbedded in their construction, and color their whole mode of conceiving evangelicalism. There are other evangelicals whose conceptions are similarly colored by an underlying naturalism, out of which they have formed their better confession by a like process of modification and correction. The former of these parties is represented by the evangelical Lutherans, who, accordingly delight to speak of themselves as adherents of a "conservative Reformation"; that is to say, as having formed their evangelicalism on the basis of the sacerdotalism of the Church of Rome, out of which they have, painfully perhaps, though not always perfectly, made their way. The other party is represented by the evangelical Arminians, whose evangelicalism is a correction in the

interest of evangelical feeling of the underlying semi-pelagianism of the Dutch Remonstrants. Over against all such forms there are still other evangelicals whose evangelicalism is more the pure expression of the fundamental evangelical principle, uncolored by intruding elements from without.

Amid this variety of types it is not easy to fix upon a principle of classification which will enable us to discriminate between the chief forms which evangelicalism takes by a clear line of demarcation. Such a principle, however, seems to be provided by the opposition between what we may call the Universalistic and the Particularistic conceptions of the plan of salvation. All evangelicals agree that all the power exerted in saving the soul is from God, and that this saving power is exerted immediately upon the soul. But they differ as to whether God exerts this saving power equally, or at least indiscriminately, upon all men, be they actually saved or not, or rather only upon particular men, namely upon those who are actually saved. The point of division here is whether God is conceived to have planned actually himself to save men by his almighty and certainly efficacious grace, or only so to pour out his grace upon men as to enable them to be saved, without actually securing, however, in any particular cases that they shall be saved.

The specific contention of those whom I have spoken of as universalistic is that, while all the power exerted in saving the soul is from God, and this power is exerted immediately from God upon the soul, yet all that God does, looking to the salvation of men, he does for and to all men alike, without discrimination. On the face of it this looks as if it must result in a doctrine of universal salvation. If it is God the Lord who saves the soul, and not man himself; and if God the Lord saves the soul by working directly upon it in his saving grace; and then if God the Lord so works in his saving grace upon all souls alike; it would surely seem inevitably to follow that therefore all are saved. Accordingly, there have sometimes appeared earnest evangelicals who have vigorously contended precisely on these grounds that all men are saved: salvation is wholly from God, and God is almighty, and as God works salvation by his almighty grace in all men, all men are saved. From this consistent universalism, however, the great mass of evangelical universalists have always drawn back, compelled by the clearness and emphasis of the Scriptural declaration that, in point of fact, all men are not saved. They have found themselves therefore face to face with a great problem; and various efforts have been made by them to construe the activities of God looking to salvation as all universalistic and the issue as nevertheless particularistic; while yet the fundamental evangelical principle is preserved that it is the grace of God alone which saves the soul. These efforts have given us especially the two great schemes of evangelical Lutheranism and evangelical Arminianism, the characteristic contention of both of which is that all salvation is in the hands of God alone, and all that God does, looking to salvation, is directed indiscriminately to all men, and yet not all but some men only are saved.

Over against this inconsistent universalism, other evangelicals contend that the particularism which attaches to the issue of the saving process, must, just because it is God and God alone who saves, belong also to the process itself. In the interests of their common evangelicalism, in the interests also of the underlying supernaturalism common to all Christians, neither of which comes to its rights otherwise-nay, in the interests of religion itself-they plead that God deals throughout the whole process of salvation not with men in the mass but with individual men one by one, upon each of whom he lays hold with his grace, and each of whom he by his grace brings to salvation. As it is he who saves men, and as he saves them by immediate operations on their hearts, and as his saving grace is his almighty power effecting salvation, men owe in each and every case their actual salvation, and not merely their general opportunity to be saved, to him. And therefore, to him and to him alone belongs in each instance all the glory, which none can share with him. Thus, they contend, in order that the right evangelical ascription, *Soli Deo gloria*, may be true and suffer no diminution in meaning or in force, it is necessary to understand that it is of God that each one who is saved has everything that enters into salvation and, most of all, the very fact that it is he who enters into salvation. The precise issue which divides the universalists and the particularists is, accordingly, just whether the saving grace of God, in which alone is salvation, actually saves. Does its presence mean salvation, or may it be present, and yet salvation fail?

4. Even the Particularists, however, have their differences. The most important of these differences divides between those who hold that God has in view not all but some men, namely those who are actually saved, in all his operations looking toward the salvation of men; and those who wish to discriminate among God's operations in this matter and to assign only to some of them a particularistic which they assign to others a universalistic reference. The latter view is, of course, an attempt to mediate between the particularistic and the universalistic conceptions, preserving particularism in the processes as well as in the issue of salvation sufficiently to hang salvation upon the grace of God alone and to give to him all the glory of the actual salvation; while yet yielding to universalism so much of the process of salvation as its adherents think can be made at all consistent with this fundamental particularism.

The special one of the saving operations which is yielded by them to universalism is the redemption of the sinner by Christ. This is supposed to have in the plan of God, not indeed an absolute, but a hypothetical reference to all men. All men are redeemed by Christ-that is, if they believe in him. Their believing in him is, however, dependent on the working of faith in their hearts by God, the Holy Spirit, in his saving operations designed to give effect to the redemption of Christ. The scheme is therefore known not merely by the name of its author, as Amyraldianism, but also, more descriptively, as Hypothetical Redemptionism, or, more commonly, as Hypothetical Universalism. It transfers the question which divides the particularist and the universalist with respect to the plan of salvation as a whole, to the more specific question of the reference of



the redeeming work of Christ. And the precise point at issue comes therefore to be whether the redemptive work of Christ actually saves those for whom it is wrought, or only opens a possibility of salvation to them. The hypothetical universalist, holding that its reference is to all men indifferently and that not all men are saved, cannot ascribe to it a specifically saving operation and are therefore accustomed to speak of it as rendering salvation possible to all, as opening the way of salvation to men, as removing all the obstacles to the salvation of men, or in some other similar way. On the other hand, the consistent particularist is able to look upon the redemption wrought by Christ as actually redemptive, and insists that it is in itself a saving act which actually saves, securing the salvation of those for whom it is wrought.

The debate comes thus to turn upon the nature of the redemptive work of Christ; and the particularists are able to make it very clear that whatever is added to it extensively is taken from it intensively. In other words, the issue remains here the same as in the debate with the general universalism of the Lutheran and the Arminian, namely, whether the saving operations of God actually save; though this issue is here concentrated upon a single one of these saving operations. If the saving operations of God actually save, then all those upon whom he savingly operates are saved, and particularism is given in the very nature of the case; unless we are prepared to go the whole way with universalism and declare that all men are saved. It is thus in the interests of the fundamental supernaturalistic postulate by which all organized Christianity separates itself from mere naturalism, that all the power exerted in saving the soul is from God-and of the great evangelical ascription, of *Soli Deo gloria*, as well-that the consistent particularist contends that the reference of the redemption of Christ cannot be extended beyond the body of those who are actually saved, but must be held to be only one of the operations by which God saves those whom he saves, and not they themselves. Not only, then, they contend, must we give a place to particularism in the process as well as in the issue of salvation, but a place must be vindicated for it in all the processes of salvation alike. It is God the Lord who saves; and in all the operations by which he works salvation alike, he operates for and upon, not all men indifferently, but some men only, those namely whom he saves. Thus only can we preserve to him his glory and ascribe to him and to him only the whole work of salvation.

5. The differences which have been enumerated exhaust the possibilities of differences of large moment within the limits of the plan of salvation. Men must be either Naturalists or Supernaturalists; Supernaturalists either Sacerdotalists or Evangelicals; Evangelicals either Universalistic or Particularistic; Particularists must be particularistic with respect to only some or with respect to all of God's saving operations. But the consistent particularists themselves find it still possible to differ among themselves, not indeed upon the terms of the plan of salvation itself, upon which they are all at one, but in the region of the presuppositions of that plan; and for the sake of completeness of enumeration it is desirable that this difference, too,

should be adverted to here. It does not concern what God has done in the course of his saving operations; but passing behind the matter of salvation, it asks how God had dealt in general with the human race, as a race, with respect to its destiny. The two parties here are known in the history of thought by the contrasting names of Supralapsarians and Sublapsarians or Infralapsarians. The point of difference between them is whether God, in his dealing with men with reference to their destiny, divides them into two classes merely as men, or as sinners. That is to say, whether God's decree of election and preterition concerns men contemplated merely as men, or contemplated as already sinful men, a massa corrupta.

The mere putting of the question seems to carry its answer with it. For the actual dealing with men which is in question, is, with respect to both classes alike, those who are elected and those who are passed by, conditioned on sin: we cannot speak of salvation any more than of reprobation without positing sin. Sin is necessarily precedent in thought, not indeed to the abstract idea of discrimination, but to the concrete instance of discrimination which is in question, a discrimination with regard to a destiny which involves either salvation or punishment. There must be sin in contemplation to ground a decree of salvation, as truly a decree of punishment. We cannot speak of a decree discriminating between men with reference to salvation and punishment, therefore, without positing the contemplation of men as sinners as its logical prius.

The fault of the division of opinion now in question is that it seeks to lift the question of the discrimination on God's part between men, by which they are divided into two classes, the one the recipients of his undeserved favor, and the other the objects of his just displeasure, out of the region of reality; and thus loses itself in mere abstractions. When we bring it back to earth we find that the question which is raised amounts to this: whether God discriminates between men in order that he may save some; or whether he saves some in order that he may discriminate between men. Is the proximate motive that moves him an abstract desire for discrimination, a wish that he may have some variety in his dealings with men; and he therefore determines to make some of the objects of his ineffable favor and to deal with others in strict accordance with their personal deserts, in order that he may thus exercise all his faculties? Or is it the proximate motive that moves him an unwillingness that all mankind should perish in their sins; and, therefore, in order to gratify the promptings of his compassion, he intervenes to rescue from their ruin and misery an innumerable multitude which no man can number-as many as under the pressure of his sense of right he can obtain the consent of his whole nature to relieve from the just penalties of their sin-by an expedient in which his justice and mercy meet and kiss each other? Whatever we may say of the former question, it surely is the latter which is oriented aright with respect to the tremendous realities of human existence.

One of the leading motives in the framing of the supralapsarian scheme, is the desire

to preserve the particularistic principle throughout the whole of God's dealings with men; not with respect to man's salvation only, but throughout the entire course of the divine action with respect to men. God from creation itself, it is therefore said, deals with men conceived as divided into two classes, the recipients respectively of his undeserved favor and of his well-merited reprobation. Accordingly, some supralapsarians place the decree of discrimination first in the order of thought, precedent even to the decree of creation. All of them place it in the order of thought precedent to the decree of the fall. It is in place therefore to point out that this attempt to particularize the whole dealing of God with men is not really carried out, and indeed cannot in the nature of the case be carried out. The decree to create man, and more particularly the decree to permit the man whose creation is contemplated to fall into sin, are of necessity universalistic. Not some men only are created, nor some men created differently from others; but all mankind is created in its first head, and all mankind alike. Not some men only are permitted to fall; but all men and all men alike. The attempt to push particularism out of the sphere of the plan of salvation, where the issue is diverse (because confessedly only some men are saved), into the sphere of creation or of the fall, where the issue is common (for all men are created and all men are fallen), fails of the very necessity of the case. Particularism can come into question only where the diverse issues call for the postulation of diverse dealings looking toward the differing issues. It cannot then be pushed into the region of the divine dealings with man prior to man's need of salvation and God's dealings with him with reference to a salvation which is not common to all. Supralapsarianism errs therefore as seriously on the one side as universalism does on the other. Infralapsarianism offers the only scheme which is either self-consistent or consistent with the facts.

It will scarcely have escaped notice that the several conceptions of the nature of the plan of salvation which we have passed in review do not stand simply side by side as varying conceptions of that plan, each making its appeal in opposition to all the rest. They are related to one another rather as a progressive series of corrections of a primal error, attaining ever more and more consistency in the embodiment of the one fundamental idea of salvation. If, then, we wish to find our way among them it must not be by pitting them indiscriminately against one another, but by following them regularly up the series. Supernaturalism must first be validated as against Naturalism, then Evangelicalism as against Sacerdotalism, then Particularism as against Universalism; and thus we shall arrive at length at the conception of the plan of salvation which does full justice to its specific character. It is to this survey that attention will be addressed in the succeeding lectures.

The accompanying diagram will exhibit in a synoptical view the several conceptions which have been enumerated in this lecture, and may facilitate the apprehension of their mutual relations.

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## Part II - Autosoterism

THERE ARE fundamentally only two doctrines of salvation: that salvation is from God, and that salvation is from ourselves. The former is the doctrine of common Christianity; the latter is the doctrine of universal heathenism. "The principle of heathenism," remarks Dr. Herman Bavinek, "is, negatively, the denial of the true God, and of the gift of his grace; and, positively, the notion that salvation can be secured by man's own power and wisdom. 'Come, let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name.' Gen. 11:4. Whether the works through which heathenism seeks the way of salvation bear a more ritual or a more ethical characteristic, whether they are of a more positive or of a more negative nature, in any case man remains his own saviour; all religions except the Christian are autosoteric. . . And philosophy has made no advance upon this: even Kant and Schopenhauer, who, with their eye on the inborn sinfulness of man recognize the necessity of a regeneration, come in the end to an appeal to the will, the wisdom and the power of man."

It was quite apposite, therefore, when Jerome pronounced Pelagianism, the first organized system of self-salvation taught in the Church, the "heresy of Pythagoras and Zeno." It was in effect the crystallization in Christian forms of the widely diffused Stoic ethics, by which the thought of men had been governed through the whole preceding history of the Church. Around the central principle of the plenary ability of the human will, held with complete confidence and proclaimed, not in the weak negative form that obligation is limited by ability, but in the exultant positive form that ability is fully competent to all obligation, Pelagius, no mean systematizer, built up a complete autosoteric system. On the one side this system was protected by the denial of any "fall" suffered by mankind in its first head, and accordingly of any entail of evil, whether of sin or mere weakness, derived from its past history. Every man is born in the same condition in which Adam was created; and every man continues throughout life in the same condition in which he is born. By his fall Adam at most has set us a bad example, which, however, we need not follow unless we choose; and our past sins, while of course we may be called to account for them and must endure righteous punishment on their account, cannot in any way abridge or contract our inherent power of doing what is right. "I say," declares Pelagius, "that man is able to be without sin, and that he is able to keep the commandments of God." And this ability remains intact after not only Adam's sin but any and every sin of our own. It is, says Julian of Eclanum, "just as complete after sins as it was before sins." At any moment he chooses, therefore, any man can cease all sinning and from that instant onward be and continue perfect. On the other hand, this round assertion of entire ability to fulfill every righteousness is protected by the denial of all "grace," in the sense of inward help from God. As such help from God is not needed, neither is it given; every man in the most absolute sense works out his own salvation: whether with fear and trembling or not, will depend solely on his particular temperament. To

be sure the term "grace" is too deeply imbedded in the Scriptural representations to be altogether discarded. The Pelagians therefore continued to employ it, but they explained it after a fashion which voided it of its Scriptural pregnancy. By "grace" they meant the fundamental endowment of man with his inalienable freedom of will, and along with that, the inducements which God has brought to bear on him to use his freedom for good.

The Pelagian scheme therefore embraces the following points. God has endowed man with an inalienable freedom of will, by virtue of which he is fully able to do all that can be required of him. To this great gift God has added the gifts of the law and the gospel to illuminate the way of righteousness and to persuade man to walk in it; and even the gift of Christ to supply an expiation for past sins for all who will do righteousness, and especially to set a good example. Those who, under these inducements and in the power of their ineradicable freedom, turn from their sins and do righteousness, will be accepted by the righteous God and rewarded according to their deeds.

This was the first purely autosoteric scheme published in the Church, and it is thoroughly typical of all that has succeeded it from that day to this.

In the providence of God the publication of this autosoteric scheme was met immediately by an equally clear and consistently worked-out assertion of the doctrine of "grace," so that the great conflict between grace and free will was fought out for the Church once for all in those opening years of the fifth century. The champion of grace in this controversy was Augustine, whose entire system revolved around the assertion of grace as the sole source of all good in man as truly and as completely as did that of Pelagius around the assertion of the plenary ability of the unaided will to work all righteousness. The reach of Augustine's assertion is fairly revealed by the demands of the Council of Carthage of A. D. 417-418, which refused to be satisfied by anything less than an unequivocal acknowledgment that "we are aided by the grace of God, through Christ, not only to know but also to do what is right, in each single act, so that without grace we are unable to have, think, speak, or do anything pertaining to piety." The opposition between the two systems was thus absolute. In the one, everything was attributed to man; in the other, everything was ascribed to God. In them, two religions, the only two possible religions at bottom, met in mortal combat: the religion of faith and the religion of works; the religion which despairs of self and casts all its hope on God the Saviour, and the religion which puts complete trust in self; or since religion is in its very nature utter dependence on God, religion in the purity of its conception and a mere quasi-religious moralism. The battle was sharp, but the issue was happily not doubtful. In the triumph of Augustinianism it was once for all settled that Christianity was to remain a religion, and a religion for sinful men, needing salvation, and not rot down into a mere ethical system, fitted only for the righteous who need no salvation.

But, as we have been told that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance, so the Church soon found that religion itself can be retained only at the cost of perpetual struggle. Pelagianism died hard; or rather it did not die at all, but only retired more or less out of sight and bided its time; meanwhile vexing the Church with modified forms of itself, modified just enough to escape the letter of the Church's condemnation. Into the place of Pelagianism there stepped at once Semi-pelagianism; and when the controversy with Semi-pelagianism had been fought and won, into the place of Semi-pelagianism there stepped that semi-semi-pelagianism which the Council of Orange betrayed the Church into, the genius of an Aquinas systematized for her, and the Council of Trent finally fastened with rivets of iron upon that portion of the church which obeyed it. The necessity of grace had been acknowledged as the result of the Pelagian controversy: its preveniency, as the result of the Semi-pelagian controversy: but its certain efficacy, its "irresistibility" men call it, was by the fatal compromise of Orange denied, and thus the conquering march of Augustinianism was checked and the pure confession of salvation by grace alone made forever impossible within that section of the Church whose proud boast is that it is *semper eadem*. It was no longer legally possible, indeed, within the limits of the Church to ascribe to man, with the Pelagian, the whole of salvation; nor even, with the Semi-pelagian, the initiation of salvation. But neither was it any longer legally possible to ascribe salvation so entirely to the grace of God that it could complete itself without the aid of the discredited human will-its aid only as empowered and moved by prevenient grace indeed, but not effectually moved, so that it could not hold back and defeat the operations of saving grace.

The gravitation of this Synergistic system is obviously downward, and therefore we cannot be surprised to learn that it easily fell away into that express Semi-pelagianism which, despite its official condemnation by the Church, seems to have formed the practical faith of most men throughout the Middle Ages, and in which the determining act in salvation is assigned, not to the grace of God conveying salvation, but to the consent of the will, giving to the almighty grace of God its efficacy. Here is a work-salvation as truly though not as grossly as in pure Pelagianism itself; and accordingly, throughout the Middle Ages, Legalism reigned supreme, a legalism which wrought precisely the same effects as are so vividly described by Heinrich Weinel, as manifesting themselves in the Jewish circles from which the Apostle Paul sprung. "He only can be happy under a dispensation of law," says Weinel, "who can live a life-long lie. . . . But proud, downright, consistent natures cannot be put off with a lie. If they are unable to resist, they die of the lie; if they are strong, it is the lie that dies. The lie inherent in the law was the presumption that it could be fulfilled. Every one of Paul's associates understood that the commandment could not be kept, but they did not own it to themselves. The elder behaved in presence of the younger as if it could be kept; one believed it on the strength of another, and did not acknowledge the impossibility to himself. They blinded themselves to their own sin by comparing themselves with

other just men, and had recourse to remote ages to Enoch and Noah and Daniel, in order to produce advocates for their souls. They hoped God would allow the good works of the saints to cover their deficiencies, and they did not forget occasionally to pray for mercy, yet, on the whole they kept up the lie and went on as if they were well."

This is a true picture of the Middle Ages. Men knew very well that they could not earn for themselves salvation even under the incitement of the grace of God; they knew very well that they failed in their "good works," at every stage; and yet they kept the ghastly fiction up. Were there no strong men "to kill the lie"? Strong men rose here and there, a Gottschalk in the ninth century, a Bradwardine, a Wyclif in the fourteenth, a Huss in the fifteenth, a belated Jansen in the seventeenth; but, despite their protests, the lie still lived on until at last the really strong man came in Martin Luther, and the lie died. The Augustinianism that had been repressed in the Church of Rome could not be suppressed. The Church had bound itself in that it might not contain it. There was nothing for it then but that it should burst the bounds of the Church and flow out from it. The explosion came in what we call the Reformation. For the Reformation is nothing other than Augustinianism come to its rights: the turning away from all that is human to rest on God alone for salvation.

Accordingly, nothing is more fundamental in the doctrine of the Reformers than the complete inability of man and his absolute need of divine grace;" and against nothing do the Reformers set their faces more firmly than the ascription to man of native power to good. To Luther, Pelagianism was the heresy of heresies, from the religious point of view equivalent to unbelief, from the ethical point of view to mere egotism. It was "for him the comprehensive term for all that which he particularly wishes to assault in the Catholic Church." His treatise *De Servo Arbitrio* written against Erasmus' Pelagianising exaltation of human ability, was esteemed by him the only one of his books, except the Catechism, in which he could find nothing to correct. "As to the doctrine of free will as preached before Luther and other Reformers appeared," writes Calvin, "What effect could it have but to fill men with an overweening opinion of their own virtue, swelling them out with vanity, and leaving no room for the grace and assistance of the Holy Spirit." "When we tell a man," he writes again, "to seek righteousness and life outside of himself, that is in Christ only, because he has nothing in himself but sin and death, a controversy immediately arises with reference to the freedom and power of the will. For if man has any ability of his own to serve God, he does not obtain salvation entirely by the grace of Christ, but in part bestows it on himself. Though we deny not that man acts spontaneously and of free will when he is guided by the Holy Spirit, we maintain that his whole nature is so imbued with depravity that of himself, he possesses no ability to act aright."

It was not long, however, before, even in these circles of realized Augustinianism, in which the ascription of salvation to God alone was something like a passion, the old

leaven of self-salvation began to work again. It was in no less a person than Philip Melanchthon that this new "falling from grace entered into the thought of the Reformation, though in his teaching it made but little progress. Three periods are distinguishable in the development of his doctrine. In the first of these he was as pure an Augustinian as Luther or Calvin himself. In the second, commencing in 1527, he begins to go to school to Aristotle in his general doctrine of the will. In the third, from 1532 on, he allows the will of man, though only as a purely formal power, some place in the very process of salvation: it can put the spiritual affections created solely by the Holy Spirit in chains or on the throne. From this beginning, synergism rapidly took form in the Lutheran Church. It met with opposition, it is true: the old Lutherans, an Amsdorf, a Flacius, a Wigand, a Brenz were all fully convinced Augustinians. But the opposition was not as hearty as it might have been had the controversy with the Calvinists not been at its height. Even Brenz permitted Strigel to taunt him at the Weimar Disputation with his predestinationism, without boldly taking the offensive. And so Andrea could corrupt Luther's doctrine at the Conference at Mompelgard, 1586, without rebuke; Aegidius Hunnius could teach openly the resistibility of grace; and John Gerhard could condition election on the foresight of faith. When Melanchthon toyed with such ambiguous phrases as "God draws the willing to him," "Free will is man's power to apply himself to grace, he was playing with fire. A hundred years later the Saxon theologians, Hoe van Hohenegg and Polycarp Leyser at the Leipzig Conference of March 1631 could confidently present as Lutheran doctrine the declaration that "God certainly chose us out of grace in Christ; but this took place according to his foresight of who would truly and constantly believe in Christ; and whom God foresaw that they would believe, those he predestined and elected to make blessed and glorious." The wonder-working grace of God which raises the dead that Luther so passionately proclaimed, was now put wholly at the disposal of that will of man which Luther declared to be utterly enslaved to sin and capable of moving in good part only as it is carried along and borne forward by grace.

Nor have things bettered with the passage of the years. It is one of the best esteemed Lutheran teachers of our own day Wilhelm Schmidt, Professor of Theology at Breslau, who tells us that "the divine purpose and love is able to realize itself only with and very precisely through the will of the being to whom it is directed;" and "in one word there exists over against God's holy decrees a freedom established by himself, against which they are often enough shattered, and may indeed in every individual case be shattered." Accordingly he is not content to reject the *praedestinatio stricte dicta* of the Calvinists, but equally repudiates the *praedestinatio late dicta* of the old Lutheran divines, that teaches a decree of God by which all men are designated to salvation by an antecedent will, while by a consequent will all those are set apart and ordained to salvation, who, God foresees, "will finally believe in Christ." For, says he, "with the divine, that is to say, the infallible foresight of them, the decisions of man cease to be free." Thus not only is the divine predestination but also the divine



foresight sacrificed on the altar of human freedom, and the conclusion of the whole matter is enunciated in the words: "All men are, so far as concerns God, written in the Book of Life (*benevolentia universalis*) but who of them all stays written in it, is finally determined only at the end of the day." The result cannot be known beforehand, even by God. It is not enough that redemption should engage the will, so that we may say that there is no redemption "except the sinner very energetically cooperate with it," even if this be interpreted to mean, "permits himself to be redeemed." We must go on and say that "redemption must fail of its end and remain without effect, however much the divine will of love and counsel of salvation might wish otherwise, if effect is not given it by man's inwardly bringing it to pass that, out of his own initiative, he grasps the rescuing hand and does repentance, breaks with his sin and leads a righteous life. "When Schmidt comes, therefore to speak of the Application of Salvation by the Holy Spirit, he is explicit in denying to the Holy Spirit any power to produce salvation in an unwilling soul. "Even the Holy Spirit," he tells us, "can in the presence of the free will that belongs to man as such by nature, compel no one to accept salvation. Even he can accomplish his saving purpose with us only if we do not obstruct, do not withdraw from, do not oppose his work for us. All this stands in our power and he is helpless (*ohnmachtig*) with respect to it if we misuse it. . . . He who wills not to be saved cannot be helped even by the Holy Spirit.

Self-assertion could scarcely go further; not even in those perhaps stirring but certainly somewhat blustering verses by W. E. Henley:

Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever Gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud,  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
Looms but the Horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishment the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate:  
I am the captain of my soul.

This is of course Pelagianism unashamed-unless we should prefer to call it sheer heathenism. And yet it is cited with warm approval by an esteemed minister of the Church of Scotland, writing in quite its spirit on the great subject of "Election." He uses it indeed immediately to support a cheerful assertion of the fundamental Pelagian principle that ability limits obligation: "That conscious life which speaks saying, 'Thou oughtest,' wakes a no less certain echo within, which says, 'Because I ought I can.' That 'can' abides forever, however enfeebled it may become. "Pelagius could ask nothing more.

It may be inferred from such a phenomenon as that which has been mentioned that the Reformed Churches, though retaining their Augustinian confession as the Lutheran could not, and sloughing off the Arminian Semi-pelagianism which rose in the early seventeenth century to vex them as the Lutherans could not their synergism, have yet in our own day become honeycombed with the same Pelagianizing conceptions. This is so far true that we are met on all hands to-day, even in the Reformed Churches, with the most unmeasured assertions of human independence, and of the uncontrollableness and indeed absolute unpredictableness of the action of the human will. The extremes to which this can go are fairly illustrated by certain, no doubt somewhat incidental, remarks made by Dr. David W. Forrest in the unhappy book which he calls, certainly very misleadingly, "The Authority of Christ" (1906). In his hands human freedom has grown so all-powerful as fairly to abolish not only the common principles of evangelical religion but all faith in divine providence itself. He has adopted in effect a view of free agency which reserves to man complete independence and excludes all divine control or even foresight of human action. Unable to govern the acts of free agents, God is reduced to the necessity of constantly adjusting himself to them. Accordingly God has to accept in his universe much that he would much prefer should not be there. There is, for example, the whole sphere of the accidental. If we cooperate with others in dangerous employments, or, say, go out seeking pleasure with a shooting party, we may be killed by an unskillful act of a fellow workman or by the random shot of a careless marksman. God is helpless in the matter, and there will be no use in appealing to him with regard to it. For, says

Dr. Forrest, God could only prevent the bad workman or marksman from causing death to others by depriving him of his freedom to shape his own course. There is in a word no providential control whatever of the acts of free agents. Accordingly, Dr. Forrest tells us, a wise man will not be surprised that tragic cruelties should occur in the world, which seem almost un-alleviatedly wrong: "he will recognize the possibilities of man's freedom in defying God's will, both by the infliction of suffering and by the refusal to be taught by suffering." Nor can God's grace intervene to cure the defects of his providence. Human free will interposes an effectual barrier to the working of his grace; and God has no power to overcome the opposition of the human heart. "There is no barrier to the entrance of the Holy Spirit into the heart," remarks Dr. Forrest with the air of making a great confession, "except that created by the

refusal of the heart to welcome him," obviously only another way of saying that the heart's refusal is an insuperable barrier to the entrance of the Holy Spirit into it. Accordingly, the progress of his kingdom in the world could not be forecast in its details by our Lord, but lay in his mind only as outlined in its general features. "He saw," says Dr. Forrest, "that 'conversion' had its human factor as well as its divine; and that the mighty works of God might be rendered impossible by man's perversities of unbelief. Hence the detailed course of the kingdom in the world was an inscrutable thing. . . . "Even in the Church itself the divine purpose may fail, despite the presence in the Church of the Spirit of God promised to it: for, though the Spirit will not fail to guide the Church, the Church may fail to "fulfill the conditions under which it could avail itself of the Spirit's guidance. "So zealous, in a word, is Dr. Forrest to emancipate man from the dominion of God that he goes near to placing God under the dominion of man. The world God has created has escaped beyond its tether; there is nothing for God to do but to accept it as he finds it and adjust himself as best he may to it. It was told to Thomas Carlyle once that Margaret Fuller had announced in her solemn way, "I accept the universe," "Gad, she'd better," was the simple comment of the sage. Is the Lord God Almighty in the same case?

If this be in any degree the case with God, why, of course there can be no talk of God's saving man. If man is to be saved at all, though it is questionable whether "saving" is the right word to use here, it is clear that he must "save" himself. If we can still speak of a plan of salvation on God's part, that plan must be reduced just to keeping the way of salvation open, that man, who is the master of his own destiny, may meet with no hindrance when he chooses to walk in it. In very truth, this is the conception of "salvation" which in the widest circles is now confidently proclaimed. This is the hinge, indeed, on which turns the entire thought of that New Protestantism which has arisen in our day, repudiating the Reformation and all its works as mere medievalism, and attaching itself rather to the Enlightenment, as the birth of a new world, a new world in which rules just Man, the Lord of all. "Rationalism" we have been accustomed to call the whole movement, and as phase of it follows phase of it, in the Rationalismus Vulgaris of Wegscheider, we will say; in Kant and his followers; in the post-Kantian Schools; and now in our "New Protestantism" we must at least accord it the praise of breeding marvelously true to type.

Profound thinkers like Kant and perhaps we may say, even more, spiritually minded thinkers like Rudolf Eucken, may be incapable of the shallow estimate of human nature which sees in it nothing but good. But even the perception of the radical evil of human nature cannot deliver them out of the fixed circle of thought which asserts human ability for the whole sphere of human obligation, however that ability be construed. "How it is possible for a naturally bad man to make himself a good" man, exclaims Kant; "entirely baffles our thought, for how can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit?" But he is, despite the perceived impossibility of it, able to rest in the solution, or rather no solution, of the weak, "It must be possible for us to become

better, even if that which we are able to do should be of itself insufficient, and all that we could do was to make ourselves receptive for a higher assistance of an inscrutable kind. "Beyond a similar appeal to an inscrutable mystical power flowing through the life of the man who strives to help himself, even a Rudolf Eucken does not get. And so our most modern thought only reproduces the ancient Pelagianism, with a less profound sense of the guilt and a little deeper sense of the difficulties which evil has brought upon man. Of expiation it will hear nothing; and while it makes a place for aid, it must be an aid which flows into the soul in response to and along the lines of its own creative efforts.

Outside the deeper philosophies even this falls away, and the shallowest forms of Pelagianism stalk abroad with utter freedom from all sense of insufficiency. The most characteristic expression of this general point of view is given, perhaps, in the current adduction of the parable of the Prodigal Son as embodying not merely the essence but the entirety of the gospel. Precious as this parable is for its great message that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents, when it is perverted from the purpose for which it was spoken and made to stand for the whole gospel (*corruptio optimi pessima*), it becomes the instrument for tearing down the entire fabric of Christianity. There is no atonement in this parable, and indeed no Christ in even the most attenuated function which could possibly be ascribed to a Christ. There is no creative grace in this parable; and indeed no Holy Spirit in any operation the most ineffective that could be attributed to him. There is no seeking love of God in this parable: the father in the parable pays absolutely no attention to his errant son, just lets him alone, and apparently feels no concern about him. Considered as a pictorial representation of the gospel, its teaching is just this, and nothing more: that when anyone, altogether of his own motion, chooses to get up and go back to God, he will be received with acclamation. It is certainly a very flattering gospel. It is flattering to be told that we can get up and go to God whenever we choose, and that nobody is going to pester us about it. It is flattering to be told that when we choose to go back to God we can command a handsome reception, and no questions asked. But is this the gospel of Jesus Christ? Is the whole teaching of Jesus Christ summed up in this: that the gates of heaven stand open and anybody can go in whenever he pleases? That is, however, what the entire body of modern Liberal theologians tell us: our Harnacks and Boussets and their innumerable disciples and imitators.

"Innumerable" disciples and imitators, I say: for surely this teaching has overspread the world. We are told by Erich Schader that during his professorial life no student has ever come before him on the mind of whom the presentation of the two parables of the Pharisee and the Publican praying in the temple and of the Lost Son, in the sense that the forgiveness of God is conditioned by nothing and no atonement is needed, has not made for a longer or shorter time a great and deep impression. It is a Pelagianism, you see, which out-pelagianizes Pelagius. For Pelagius had some recognition of the guilt of sin, and gave some acknowledgement of the atoning work of Christ in making

expiation for this guilt. And this theology does neither. With no real sense of guilt, and without the least feeling for the disabilities which come from sin, it complacently puts God's forgiveness at the disposal of whosoever will deign to take it from his hands. The view of God which is involved, some one has not inaptly if a little bitinglly called "the domestic animal conception of God." As you keep sheep to give you wool, and cows to give you milk, so you keep God to give you forgiveness. What is meant is grimly illustrated by the story of poor Heinrich Heine, writhing on his bed of agony, who, asked by an officious visitor if he had hope of the forgiveness of his sins, replied with a glance upwards of mocking bitterness, "Why, yes, certainly: that's what God is for." That's what God is for! It is thus that our modern Liberal theology thinks of God. He has but one function and comes into contact with man at but one point: he exists to forgive sins.

In somewhat the same spirit we hear ringing up and down the land the passionate proclamation of what its adherents love to call a "whosoever will gospel." It is no doubt the univer- sality of the gospel-offer which is intended to be emphasized. But do we not shoot beyond the mark when we seem to hang salvation purely on the human will? And should we not stop to consider that, if so we seem to open salvation to "whosoever will" on the one hand, on the other we open it only to "whosoever will"? And who, in this world of death and sin, I do not say merely will, but can, will the good? Is it not forever true that grapes are not gathered from thorns, nor figs from thistles; that it is only the good tree which brings forth good fruit while the evil tree brings forth always and everywhere only evil fruit? It is not only Hannah More's Black Giles the Poacher who may haply "find it difficult to repent when he will." It is useless to talk of salvation being for "whosoever will" in a world of universal "won't." Here is the real point of difficulty: how, where, can we obtain the will? Let others rejoice in a "whosoever will gospel": for the sinner who knows himself to be a sinner, and knows what it is to be a sinner, only a "God will" gospel will suffice. If the gospel is to be committed to the dead wills of sinful men, and there is nothing above and beyond, who then can be saved?

As a recent writer, who makes no great claims to special orthodoxy but has some philosophical insight points out, "the self that is to determine is the same as the self that is to be determined"; "the self which according to Pelagius is to make one good is the bad self that needs to be made good." "The disease is in the will, not in some part of ourselves other than the will which the will can control. How can the diseased will provide the cure?" "The seat of the problem is our wills; we could be good if we would, but we won't; and we can't begin to will it, unless we will so to begin, that is, unless we already will it. 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank my God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' I am told to repent if I would be forgiven; but how can I repent? I only do what is wrong because I like it, and I can't stop liking it or like something else better because I am told to do so, nor even because it is proved that it would be better for me. If I am to be changed, something must lay hold of me and

change me. " "Can peach renew lost bloom?" asks Christina G. Rossetti, more poetically, but with the same pungent point:

Can peach renew lost bloom,  
Or violet lost perfume,  
Or sullied snow tum white as over-night?  
Man cannot compass it, yet never fear;  
The leper Naaman  
Shows what God will and can.  
God who worked then is working here;  
Wherefore let shame, not gloom, betinge thy brow.  
God who worked then is working now.

It is only in the loving omnipotence and omnipotent love of God that a sinner can trust. "Christ" cries Charles H. Spurgeon, "is not 'mighty to save' those who repent, but is able to make men repent. He will carry those to heaven who believe; but he is moreover mighty to give men new hearts, and to work faith in them. He is mighty to make the man who hates holiness, love it, and to constrain the despiser of his name to bend the knee before him. Nay, this is not all the meaning, for the divine power is equally seen in the after-work. . . . He is mighty to keep his people holy after he has made them so, and to preserve them in fear and love, until he consummates their spiritual existence in heaven."

If it were not so, the case of the sinner were desperate. It is only in almighty grace that a sinner can hope; for it is only almighty grace that can raise the dead. What boots it to send the trumpeter crying amid the serried ranks of the dead: "The gates of heaven stand open: whosoever will may enter in"? The real question which presses is, Who will make these dry bones live? As over against all teaching that would tempt man to trust in himself for any, even the smallest part, of his salvation, Christianity casts him utterly on God. It is God and God alone who saves, and that in every element of the saving process. "If there be but one stitch," says Spurgeon aptly, "in the celestial garment of our righteousness which we ourselves are to put in, we are lost."

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### **Part III - Sacerdotalism**

IT IS THE consistent testimony of the universal Church that salvation is from God, and from God alone. The tendency constantly showing itself in all branches of the Church alike to conceive of salvation as, in one way or another, to a greater or less degree, from man, is thus branded by the entire Church in its official testimony as a heathen remainder not yet fully eliminated from the thinking and feeling of those who profess and call themselves Christians. The incessant reappearance of this

tendency in one or another form throughout the Church is evidence enough, however, of the difficulty which men feel in preserving in its purity the Christian ascription of salvation to God alone. And this difficulty obtrudes itself in another way in a great and far-reaching difference which has arisen in the organized testimony of the Church itself with respect to the mode of the divine operation in working salvation in men.

Though salvation is declared to be wholly of God, who alone can save, it has yet been taught in a large portion of the Church, (up to today in the larger portion of the Church), that God in working salvation does not operate upon the human soul directly but indirectly; that is to say, through instrumentalities which he has established as the means by which his saving grace is communicated to men. As these instrumentalities are committed to human hands for their administration, a human factor is thus intruded between the saving grace of God and its effective operation in the souls of men; and this human factor indeed, is made the determining factor in salvation. Against this Sacerdotal system, as it is appropriately called, the whole Protestant Church, in all its parts, Lutheran and Reformed, Calvinistic and Arminian, raises its passionate protest. In the interests of the pure supernaturalism of salvation it insists that God the Lord himself works by his grace immediately on the souls of men, and has not suspended any man's salvation upon the faithfulness or caprice of his fellows. In the words of old John Hooper, it condemns as "an ungodly opinion" the notion "that attributeth the salvation of man unto the receiving of an external sacrament," "as though God's Holy Spirit could not be carried by faith into the penitent and sorrowful conscience except it rid always in a chariot and external sacrament. "In opposition to this "ungodly opinion" Protestantism suspends the welfare of the soul directly, without any intermediaries at all, upon the grace of God alone.

The sacerdotal principle finds very complete expression in the thoroughly developed and logically compacted system of the Church of Rome. According to this system God the Lord does nothing looking to the salvation of men directly and immediately: all that he does for the salvation of men he does through the mediation of the Church, to which, having endowed it with powers adequate to the task, he has committed the whole work of salvation. "It is hardly incorrect to say," remarks Dr. W. P. Paterson in expounding the doctrine of the Church of Rome on this point, "that in the Roman Catholic conception the central feature of the Christian religion is the supernatural institution which represents Christ, which carries on his work, and which acts as the virtual mediator of the blessings of salvation. Its vocation or commission is nothing less than the perpetuation of the work of the Redeemer. It does not, of course, supersede the work of Christ. Its pre-supposition is that Christ, the Eternal Son of God, laid the foundation of its work in his incarnation and his atoning death; that from him come ultimately all power, authority and grace; and that as from him all spiritual blessing proceeds, so to him belongs all the glory. But in the present dispensation, the Church, in large measure, has taken over the work of Christ. It is in a real sense, a reincarnation of Christ to the end of the continuation and completion of

his redemptive mission. Through his Church he continues to execute the offices of a Prophet, of a Priest, and of a King. His prophetic office it perpetuates by witnessing to the truth once delivered to the saints, and by interpreting and determining doctrine with an infallible authority that carries the same weight and assurance as his own original revelation. It succeeds him on earth in the exercise of the priestly office. It represents him so completely in the priestly function of mediation between God and man, that even as there is none other name given among men than that of Jesus, whereby we must be saved, so there is no covenanted salvation outside the visible organization of which he is the unseen Head. It is further conceived that it represents him as sacrificing priest by the perpetual repetition in the Mass of the oblation which he once offered on the cross. In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, it is taught, 'that same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner on the altar of the cross; and this sacrifice is truly propitiatory.' And, finally, it administers the kingly power of Christ on earth. It has an absolute claim to the obedience of its members in all matters of faith and duty, with the right and duty to punish the disobedient for the breach of its laws, and to coerce the contumacious."

In one word, the Church in this system is conceived to be Jesus Christ himself in his earthly form, and it is therefore substituted for him as the proximate object of the faith of Christians. "The visible Church," says Mohler, "is the Son of God, as he continuously appears, ever repeats himself, and eternally renews his youth among men in human form. It is his perennial incarnation." It is to the Church, then, that men must look for their salvation; it is from the Church and its ordinances alone that salvation is communicated to men; in a word it is to the Church rather than to Christ or to the grace of God that the salvation of men is immediately ascribed. Only "through the most holy sacraments of the Church," it is declared plainly, is it, "that all true justice either begins; or being begun is increased; or being lost, is repaired." "The radical religious defect of the conception," comments Dr. Paterson justly, "is that it makes the sinner fall into the hand of man, rather than into the hand of the all-merciful God. We look to God for salvation, and we are referred to an institution, which in spite of its lofty claims, is too manifestly leavened and controlled by the thoughts of men like ourselves." And again: "The radical error of the Roman system was that the visible Church, which is human as much as it is divine, and which has become increasingly human, had largely thrust itself in the place of God and of the Saviour: and to the deeper religious insight it appeared that men were being invited and required to make the unsatisfactory venture of entrusting themselves to provisions and laws of human origin as the condition of attaining to the divine salvation. It was felt that the need of the soul was to press past the insecure earthly instrument, with its mediatorial claims and services, to the promises of God and to a finished work of the divine Saviour, and to look to God for the better assurance of truth and salvation which is given inwardly by the Holy Spirit of God. The Protestant revision, in short, was more than justified by the religious need of basing salvation on



a purely divine foundation, and of dispensing with ecclesiastical machinery which was largely human in its origin and conception." The question which is raised in sacerdotalism, in a word, is just whether it is God the Lord who saves us, or it is men, acting in the name and clothed with the powers of God, to whom we are to look for salvation. This is the issue which divides sacerdotalism and evangelical religion.

The essence of the sacerdotal scheme as it regards the actual salvation of individual men, may perhaps be fairly expressed by saying that, according to it, God truly desires (or, as the cant phrase puts it, wills by an antecedent conditional will) the salvation of all men, and has made adequate provision for their salvation in the Church with its sacramental system: but he commits the actual work of the Church and its sacramental system to the operation of the second causes through which the application of grace through the Church and its sacramental system is effected. As this system of second causes has not been instituted with a view to the conveying of the sacraments to particular men or to the withholding of them from particular men, but belongs to his general provision for the government of the world, the actual distribution of the grace of God through the Church and the sacraments lies outside the government of his gracious will. Those who are saved by obtaining the sacraments, and those who are lost by missing the sacraments, are saved or are lost therefore, not by the divine appointment, but by the natural working of second causes. God's antecedent conditional will that all should be saved, that is, on the condition of their receiving grace through the sacraments distributed under the government of second causes, is supplanted by a consequent absolute will of salvation, therefore, only in the case of those who, he foresees, will under the government of second causes, actually receive the sacraments and the grace which is conveyed by them. Thus, it is supposed, God is relieved from all responsibility with regard to the inequality of the distribution of saving grace. By his antecedent conditional will he wills the salvation of all. That all are not saved is due to the failure of some to receive the requisite grace through the sacraments. And their failure to receive the sacraments and the grace conveyed in them is due solely to the action of the second causes to which the distribution of the sacraments has been committed, that is, to the working of a general cause, quite independent of God's antecedent will of salvation. This seems to satisfy the minds of the sacerdotal reasoners. To the outsider it seems to mean only that God, having made certain general provisions for salvation, commits the salvation of men to the working of the general system of second causes; that is to say, he declines to be concerned personally about the salvation of men and leaves men to "nature" for the chances of their salvation.

The whole matter is very precisely expounded by an acute Jesuit writer, William Humphrey S. J. , with particular reference to the special case of infants dying unbaptized (and, therefore, inevitably lost), which is looked upon apparently as a peculiarly hard case, requiring very careful treatment. It will repay us to follow his exposition.

"The order of thought," he tells us, "is as follows. Consequent on prevision of original sin, and the infection of the whole human race therewith, through the free transgression of Adam, its progenitor and head, God in his mercy wills the restoration of the whole human race. To this end he destines from eternity, and promises, and sends in the fulness of time, his Incarnate Son, with nature assumed from the same human race. He wills that this Incarnate Son, who is the Christ, should exhibit full satisfaction for all sins. This satisfaction, as foreseen, he accepts. At the appointed time, the Christ actually offers it for all human sins. 'God sent his Son that the world should be saved by him.' 'He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.' In the restored human race all are comprehended, even those who die in infancy, before use of reason. In the will of redemption all these infants, therefore, are comprehended. In the divine will that accepts the satisfaction, and in the human will of Christ which offers satisfaction, for all human sins, there is also an acceptance and offering of satisfaction for the original sin wherewith all these infants are infected. Hence, in view and in virtue of the merits and blood-shedding of Christ, God institutes for all these infants a sacrament, by means of which there might be applied to every one of them the merits and satisfaction of Christ. All these provisions have, by their nature, been ordained by God for the salvation of infants.

"A will of salvation which is such as this is, is no mere complacence in the goodness of the object regarded by itself; and, in this case, complacence in the goodness of salvation. It is on the part of God, an active and operative will of the salvation of infants. To all and every one of them this will of redemption is related.

"God wills to effect application of the sacrament of baptism, not by himself immediately, but by means of second causes; and through these second causes not to all infants by absolute will, but to all infants in so far as second causes, disposed in accordance with his universal and ordinary providence, do act under it.

"Among these second causes are, in the first place, the free wills of human beings, on which application of the sacrament, in the case at least of very many infants, is dependent. These human wills God anticipates, excites and inclines by his precepts, counsels, and aids, both of the natural order and of the supernatural order. He thus provides that through the diligence and solicitude of those concerned; through their obedience and cooperation with grace received; through congruous merits and good works; through the alms-deeds and the prayers especially of the parents, and of those to whose guardianship the little ones have been confided, and through the apostolic labors of his ministers, the infants should be brought to the grace of baptism. As in the natural order, so also in the supernatural order of sanctification and eternal salvation, God wills to provide for infants through other human beings, and in accordance with the demands of the general laws of divine providence.

"In this way the divine will of salvation acts on the wills of men to procure the salvation of at least many infants who, nevertheless, by fault of men are not saved. With regard to these infants, the antecedent will of God is an active will, that they should be saved; although it is not absolute, but under condition, that men on their part should second the divine will, as they can and ought to do, and although, consequently on contrary action on the part of men, God permits death in original sin, and, on prevision of this, does not will with a consequent will the salvation of those infants.

"Besides the wills of the human beings, which are in the moral order, and are free; there are also second causes of the physical order, and these are not free. These causes contribute, in accordance with the common and ordinary laws of providence, to render bestowal of baptism either possible or impossible. The course of these causes, and the universal laws by which they are governed, God, consequently to original sin, wills to remain such as they now are. God has not restored the preternatural state of immortality, even after the redemption of the human race by Christ had been decreed and effected. Hence, in accordance with the ordinary course of these laws, there follows the death of many infants before use of reason; and this sometimes independently of all exercise of will, and free action, of human beings.

"With this natural course of events, there is thoroughly consistent an antecedent conditional will in God of the salvation of all these infants. The condition under which he wills the application to them of baptism is-so far as the general order, which has been justly and wisely instituted, permits.

"If God had willed this order of physical causes of itself to the end that infants should die in original sin he certainly could not be said to will the salvation of these infants. God has not however instituted that order to this end nor does he so direct it by his will. He wills it for other ends, and those most wise ends.

"Hence, God does not directly intend the consequent death of infants in sin. He only permits it, in as much as he does not will to hinder, for all infants, the natural demands of physical laws, by a change of the general order, or through continual miracles.

"Such a permission proves only, that there is not in God an absolute will of the salvation of these infants. It in no way proves that there is not in God a conditional will of the salvation of all of them.

"In short, God wills the salvation of all infants who die in original sin by an antecedent will, in accordance with his common providence. In his common providence God predefines for everything a certain end, he conceives and prepares sufficient means in order to the obtaining of that end, he leaves everything to use these means, in

accordance with the demand of its nature. That is to say, he leaves natural and necessary causes to act naturally and necessarily, contingent causes to act contingently, and free causes to act freely."

But enough! The whole scheme is now certainly before us; and the whole scheme (generalizing from the particular instance treated) obviously is just this: that God has made sufficient provision for the salvation of all men, placed this provision in the world under the government of the ordinary course of nature, and left the actual salvation of men to work itself out in accordance with this ordinary course of nature. It is a kind of Deistic conception of the plan of salvation: God introduces into the concourse of causes by which the world is governed a new set of causes, working confluentlly in with them, making for salvation, and then leaves to the inter-working of these two sets of causes the grinding out of the actual results. He will not "change the general order"; and he will not inwork in the general order by "continuous miracles." He just commits salvation to the general order as actually established. This obviously is at best to attribute the salvation of the individual to God, only in the sense in which you attribute to God every other event which befalls him; it takes place under the operation of general laws. There is no special supernaturalism in his salvation, though he be saved by the operation of specially supernatural instrumentalities inserted into the order of the world. God retires behind his works, and man, if he be saved at all, is saved by law.

If we ask therefore why, on this scheme, one man is saved rather than another, we must answer, Because the sacraments come to one and not to the other. If we ask why the sacraments come to one rather than to another, we must answer, Because the general order of providence, wisely and justly instituted for the government of the world, permits them to come to the one and not to the other; and the free agents involved, under the command of God, freely concur to that end in the one case and not in the other. If we ask whether it is not God who has so disposed providence as to produce these precise effects, we must answer, No, for the general order of providence was instituted for the general wise government of the world and these particular effects are merely incidental to it. If we press on and ask, Could not God have so arranged his general providence as to have produced better results, and could he not so govern the world as to secure all else he wished and yet the salvation of men in greater numbers and with more particularity of choice on his part, we are dumb. For there is a manifest subjection of God's activities here to the working of the instrumentalities which he has ordained; there is a manifest subordination of God in his operations to second causes; or, to put it in another way, there is a manifest removal of man in the matter of his salvation from the direct control of God and the commitment of him instead to the tender mercies of a mechanism.

The explanation of Christianity in terms of sacerdotalism is unfortunately not confined in our day to the old unreformed Church from which Protestantism broke

forth, precisely that it might escape from dependence on the Church rather than on God alone in the matter of salvation. A very influential, (perhaps presently the most influential, and certainly to the onlooker, the most conspicuous) party in the great Protestant Church of England, and, following it, large parties in its daughter Churches, have revived it in more or less completeness of expression and certainly with no hesitancy of assertion. It is common nowadays to hear men referred by Anglican writers to the Church rather than directly to God for salvation; and to have the Church defined for them as the "extension of the incarnation." "To anyone who thinks carefully, and believes in the Incarnation," we are told by an influential clergyman of the Church of England, with all the accent of conviction, "it is evident that the Church, the Body of Christ, ever united with her divine Head, holds in herself the forces of his life," and therefore is "equipped," not merely to speak for its Lord, but prevalently "to apply to the individual soul the grace won for his Church by our blessed Redeemer, and residing in that Body because ever united to the Head." The whole sacerdotal system is wrapped up in that statement. The Church, Mr. Darwell Stone tells us, is a visible society, the work of which is twofold, corresponding to the work of the Lord, as expressed in John 1:17: "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ": "the Church, as his mystical body and his organ in the world, is the teacher of truth and the storehouse of grace." "Since the day of Pentecost the day of creation of the Christian Church," he further explains, "the ordinary way in which God bestows grace on the souls of men is through the glorified humanity of our Lord, and the work of God the Holy Ghost. The closest means of union with the glorified humanity of Christ, and the most immediate mode of contact with God the Holy Ghost, are in the mystical body of Christ, that is the Church, and are open to men in the use of the sacraments. Thus the Christian Church is the channel of grace." From this beginning Mr. Stone goes on to expound the sacerdotal system in a manner indistinguishable from its ordinary exposition in the Church of Rome.

We will ask, however, an American divine to explain to us the sacerdotal system as it has come to be taught in the Protestant Episcopal Churches. "Man," we read in Dr. A. G. Mortimer's "Catholic Faith and Practice," "having fallen before God's loving purpose could be fulfilled, he must be redeemed, bought back from his bondage, delivered from his sin, reunited once more to God, so that the Divine Life might flow again in his weakened nature" (p. 65). "By his life and death Christ made satisfaction for the sins of all men, that is, sufficient for all mankind, for through the Atonement sufficient grace is given to every soul for its salvation; but grace, though sufficient, if neglected, becomes of no avail" (p. 82) "The Incarnation and the Atonement affected humanity as a race only. Some means, therefore, was needed to transmit the priceless gifts which flowed from them to the individuals of which the race was comprised, not only at the time when our Lord was on earth, but to the end of the world. For this need, therefore, our Lord founded the Church" (p.84). "Thus the Church became the living agent by which the graces and blessings, which flowed from Christ were

dispensed to each individual soul which would appropriate them" (p.84). "The Church claims not only to be the teacher of the truth and the guide in morals, but . . . the dispenser of that grace which enables us to fulfil her laws" (p. 100), "the dispenser of that grace which alone can enable man to believe what is true, to do what is right, and to attain his true end, to serve God acceptably here, and to live with God happily hereafter" (p. 114). "The chief means of grace are the Sacraments" (p. 120). "They are the channels by which the spiritual gift is conveyed to our souls. . . . The Christian Sacraments, therefore, do not merely signify grace; they actually confer it. Hence they are called 'effectual' signs of grace. Their action is *ex opere operato*" (p. 122). "Baptism is absolutely necessary to salvation, for a person can have no life who has not been born. This is called the '*necessitas medii*,' since Baptism is the means by which the supernatural life is given to the soul and the individual is incorporated into Christ." "Without the help of (the Eucharist), salvation would be so difficult to attain as to be practically impossible" (p. 127). Here obviously is as express a sacerdotalism as that of the Church of Rome itself, from which, indeed, it has been simply borrowed. The Church has completely taken the place of the Spirit of God as the proximate source of grace, and the action of the divine Spirit in applying salvation is postponed to and made subject to the operations of the Church through its ordinances. Thus the soul is removed from immediate dependence on God and taught rather to come to the Church and to expect all endowments of grace directly from it.

A modified and much milder form of sacerdotalism is inherent in Confessional Lutheranism, and is continually rising to more or less prominence in certain phases of Lutheran thought, thus creating a high church party in the Lutheran Church also. It has been the boast of Lutheranism that it represents, in distinction from Calvinism, a "conservative" reformation. The boast is justified, as on other grounds, so also on this, that it has incorporated into its confessional system the essence of the sacerdotalism which characterized the teaching of the old Church. Confessional Lutheranism, like Romanism, teaches that the grace of salvation is conveyed to men in the means of grace, otherwise not. But it makes certain modifications in the sacerdotal teaching which it took over from the old Church, and these modifications are of such a far-reaching character as to transform the whole system. We do not commonly hear in Lutheran sacerdotalism much of "the Church," which is the *cor cordis* of Roman sacerdotalism: what we hear of instead is "the means of grace." Among these means of grace" the main stress is not laid upon the sacraments, but on "the Word," which is defined as the chief "means of grace." And the means of grace are not represented as acting *ex opere operato* but it is constantly declared that they are effective only to faith. I do not say the scheme is a consistent one: in point of fact it is honeycombed with inconsistencies. But it remains sufficiently sacerdotal to confine the activities of saving grace to the means of grace, that is to say, to the Word and sacraments, and thus to interpose the means of grace between the sinner and his God. The central evil of sacerdotalism is therefore present in this scheme in its full manifestation, and

wherever it is fully operative we find men exalting the means of grace and more or less forgetting the true agent of all gracious operations, the Holy Spirit himself, in their absorption with the instrumentalities through which alone he is supposed to work. It is in a truly religious interest, therefore, that the Reformed, as over against the Lutherans, insist with energy that, important as are the means of grace, and honored as they must be by us because honored by God the Holy Spirit as the instruments by and through which he works grace in the hearts of men, yet after all the grace which he works by and through them he works himself not out of them but immediately out of himself, extrinsecus accedens.

There are three aspects of the working of the sacerdotal system which must be kept clearly in view, if we wish to appraise with any accuracy the injury to the religious interests which it inevitably works. These have been more or less expressly alluded to already, but it seems desirable to call particular attention to them formally and together.

In the first place, the sacerdotal system separates the soul from direct contact with and immediate dependence upon God the Holy Spirit as the source of all its gracious activities. It interposes between the soul and the source of all grace a body of instrumentalities, on which it tempts it to depend; and it thus betrays the soul into a mechanical conception of salvation. The Church, the means of grace, take the place of God the Holy Spirit in the thought of the Christian, and he thus loses all the joy and power which come from conscious direct communion with God. It makes every difference to the religious life, and every difference to the comfort and assurance of the religious hope, whether we are consciously dependent upon instrumentalities of grace, or upon God the Lord himself, experienced as personally present to our souls, working salvation in his loving grace. The two types of piety, fostered by dependence on instrumentalities of grace and by conscious communion with God the Holy Spirit as a personal Saviour, are utterly different, and the difference from the point of view of vital religion is not favorable to sacerdotalism. It is the interests of vital religion, therefore, that the Protestant spirit repudiates sacerdotalism. And it is this repudiation which constitutes the very essence of evangelicalism. Precisely what evangelical religion means is immediate dependence of the soul on God and on God alone for salvation.

In the second place, sacerdotalism deals with God the Holy Spirit, the source of all grace, in utter neglect of his personality, as if he were a natural force, operating, not when and where and how he pleases, but uniformly and regularly wherever his activities are released. It speaks of the Church as the "institute of salvation," or even as "the storehouse of salvation" with apparently complete unconsciousness that thus it is speaking of salvation as something which may be accumulated or stored for use as it may be needed. The conception is not essentially different from that of storing electricity, say, in a Leyden jar, whence it can be drawn upon for use. How dreadful the

conception is may be intimated by simply speaking of it with frankness under its true forms of expression: it is equivalent to saying that saving grace, God the Holy Spirit, is kept on tap, and released at the Church's will to do the work required of it. It would probably be no exaggeration to say that no heresy could be more gross than that heresy which conceives the operations of God the Holy Spirit under the forms of the action of an impersonal, natural force. And yet it is quite obvious that at bottom this is the conception which underlies the sacerdotal system. The Church, the means of grace, contain in them the Holy Spirit as a salvation-working power which operates whenever and wherever it, we can scarcely say he, is applied.

And this obviously involves, in the third place, the subjection of the Holy Spirit in his gracious operations to the control of men. Instead of the Church and the sacraments, the means of grace, being conceived, as they are represented in the Scriptures, and as they must be thought of in all healthful religious conceptions of them, as instrumentalities which the Holy Spirit uses in working salvation, the Holy Spirit is made an instrument which the Church, the means of grace, use in working salvation. The initiative is placed in the Church, the means of grace, and the Holy Spirit is placed at their disposal. He goes where they convey him; he works when they release him for work; his operations wait on their permission; and apart from their direction and control he can work no salvation. It ought to be unnecessary to say that this is a degrading conception of the modes of activity of the Holy Spirit. Its affinities are not with religion in any worthy sense of that word, which implies personal relations with a personal God, but with magic. At bottom, it conceives of the divine operations as at the disposal of man, who uses God for his own ends; and utterly forgets that rather God must be conceived as using man for his ends.

It is to break away from all this and to turn to God the Holy Spirit in humble dependence upon him as our gracious Saviour, our personal Lord and our holy Governor and Leader, that evangelicalism refuses to have anything to do with sacerdotalism and turns from all the instrumentalities of salvation to put its sole trust in the personal Saviour of the soul.

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## **Part IV - Universalism**

THE EVANGELICAL note is formally sounded by the entirety of organized Protestantism. That is to say, all the great Protestant bodies, in their formal official confessions, agree in confessing the utter dependence of sinful man upon the grace of God alone for salvation, and in conceiving this dependence as immediate and direct upon the Holy Spirit, acting as a person and operating directly on the heart of the sinner. It is this evangelical note which determines the peculiarity of the piety of the Protestant Churches. The characteristic feature of this piety is a profound consciousness of intimate personal communion with God the Saviour, on whom the



soul rests with immediate love and trust. Obviously this piety is individualistic to the core, and depends for its support on an intense conviction that God the Lord deals with each sinful soul directly and for itself. Nevertheless, in odd contradiction to this individualistic sentiment which informs all truly evangelical piety, there exists in Protestantism a widespread tendency to construe the activities of God looking to salvation not individualistically but universally, to assert, in one word, that all that God does looking toward the salvation of sinful man, he does not to or for individual men but to or for all men alike, making no distinctions. This is the characteristic contention of what we know as Evangelical Arminianism and of Evangelical Lutheranism and is the earnest conviction of large bodies of Protestants gathered in many communions, under many names.

On the face of it, it would seem that if it is God the Lord and he alone who works salvation, by an operation of his grace immediately upon the heart, (which is the core of the evangelical confession); and if all that God does looking to the salvation of men he does to and for all men alike, (which is the substance of the universalistic contention); why, then, all men without exception must be saved. This conclusion, it would seem, can be escaped only by relaxing in one way or another the stringency of one or the other of the assumed premises. It must either be held that it is not God and God alone who works salvation, but that the actual enjoyment of salvation hangs at a decisive point upon something in man, or something done by man (and then we have fallen out of our evangelicalism into the mere naturalism of autosoterism); or it must be held that God's gracious activities looking to salvation are not after all absolutely universal in their operation (and then we have fallen away from our asserted universalism); or else it would seem inevitable that we should allow that all men are saved. Consistent evangelicalism and consistent universalism can coexist only if we are prepared to assert the salvation by God's almighty grace of all men without exception.

Accordingly, there has always existed a tendency in those evangelical circles which draw back more or less decisively from ascribing a thoroughgoing particularism to God in the distribution of his grace, to assume the actual salvation of all men, provided, that is, that their sense of the complete dependence of the sinner upon God for salvation is strong and operative. Among the condemnations of errors included in the Summa Confessionis et Conclusionum of the Synod held at Debreezen on February 24, 1567, we find a clause directed against what are there called the "Holopraedestinani," which runs as follows: "The Holy Scripture refutes by these reasons also the Holopraedestinani, that is, those who imagine that the whole world is elected and that a universal predestination follows from the universal promise; and teaches that predestination is of a few, and is particular, and that the number of the elect is certain, and their catalogue extends to their very hairs. For the very hairs of your head are all numbered.' . . . But it does not at all follow from this doctrine that God is partial or a respecter of persons." Who these sixteenth century

Holopraedestinani were we have not been careful to inquire; but certainly, from that time to this, there have never lacked those who in the interest of protecting God from the charge of "partiality or respect of persons" have been inclined to hold that he has chosen all men to salvation and through his almighty grace brings them all to that blessed goal.

The most recent and perhaps the most instructive instances of this tendency are provided by two divines of the Church of Scotland of our own day, Dr. William Hastie, late Professor of Divinity in the University of Glasgow and Dr. William P. Paterson, now holding the Chair of Divinity, the Chair of Chalmers and Flint, in the University of Edinburgh. In his admirable Croall lectures on "The Theology of the Reformed Churches in its Fundamental Principles," Dr. Hastie announces that "the word of the eternal hope seems to me the latest message of the Reformed Theology;" and Dr. Paterson takes up the hint and enlarges on it in the excellent chapter on "The Testimony of the Reformed Churches" included in his Baird Lecture on "The Rule of Faith." "Dr. Paterson considers that Calvinism contains in itself elements "which are mutually repulsive," in its "doctrine of everlasting punishment" on the one hand, and its "doctrine of election and irresistible grace" on the other. Relief might no doubt be had, "when thought rebels against making God responsible" for the everlasting punishment of some "by a doctrine of reprobation," by taking refuge in "an Arminian or semi-Arminian type of thought." This relief would be purchased, however, at the too dear cost of abandonment of concinnity of thought, and of falling away from faithfulness to the evangelical principle, which is the core of Christianity. There remains, then, according to Dr. Paterson, no other way but to discard the doctrine of everlasting punishment, and to "resolve reprobation into a temporary lack of privilege and of spiritual attainment." And he somewhat complacently remarks that "it is a curious circumstance that, while Calvinism has become unpopular chiefly because of its identification with a grim and remorseless doctrine of eternal punishment, it is the only system which contains principles-in its doctrines of election and irresistible grace-that could make credible a theory of universal restoration."

What Dr. Paterson says in these last words is true enough: but it is true only because, when rightly considered, Calvinism, with its doctrines of election and irresistible grace, is the only system which can make credible the salvation of any sinner: since in these doctrines alone are embodied in its purity the evangelical principles that salvation is from God alone and from him only in the immediate working of his grace. Whether this grace in God's unspeakable mercy is granted to some men only or is poured out on all men alike, is a different question to be determined on its own grounds. And this question is certainly not to be facilely resolved by the simple assumption that God's mercy must be poured out on all alike, since otherwise not all men can be saved. The fundamental presupposition of such an assumption is no other than that God owes all men salvation, that is to say, that sin is not really sin and is to be envisaged rather as misfortune than as ill-desert.

That it is this low view of sin which is really determinative of the whole direction of Dr. Paterson's thought at this point becomes immediately apparent upon attending to the terms of his argument. "It has been customary to say," he reasons, "that as there would have been no injustice in the punishment of all guilty beings, there can be none in the punishment of some guilty beings out of the number. Those who are saved are saved because of the mercy of God, while those who are lost perish because of their sins. This is as true as to say that those sick persons who are saved by the skill and devotion of a physician owe their lives to him, and that those that die perish of their diseases; but in that case the physician does not escape censure if it can be shown that it was in his power to have treated and saved those who died. It is therefore impossible to say that the doctrine of the divine love is not affected, since on Calvinistic principle it is in the power of God to deal with all in the same way in which he has dealt with the rest. For ex hypothesi it is in the power of God, in virtue of the principle of irresistible grace, to save even the worst, and if nevertheless there is a part of the human race which is consigned to everlasting punishment, it seems to be only explicable on the assumption that the divine love is not perfect, because it is not an all-embracing and untiring love."

Is it, then, inconceivable that the divine hand might be held back from saving all by something other than lack of power? The whole matter of the ill-desert of sin and the justice of God responding in hot indignation to this ill-desert, is left out of Dr. Paterson's reasoning. If the case were really as he represents it and men in their mere misery, appealing solely to God's pity, lay before the divine mind, it would be inexplicable that he did not save all. The physician who, having the power to treat and cure all his patients, arbitrarily discriminates between them and contents himself with ministering to some of them only; would justly incur the reprobation of men. But may not the judge, having the mere power to release all his criminals, be held back by higher considerations from releasing them all? It may be inexplicable why a physician in the case supposed should not relieve all; while the wonder may be in the case of the judge rather how he can release any. The love of God is in its exercise necessarily under the control of his righteousness; and to plead that his love has suffered an eclipse because he does not do all that he has the bare power to do, is in effect to deny to him a moral nature. The real solution to the puzzle that is raised with respect to the distribution of the divine grace is, then, not to be sought along the lines either of the denial of the omnipotence of God's grace with the Arminians, or of the denial of the reality of his reprobation with our neo-universalists, but in the affirmation of his righteousness. The old answer is after all the only sufficient one: God in his love saves as many of the guilty race of man as he can get the consent of his whole nature to save. Being God and all that God is, he will not permit even his ineffable love to betray him into any action which is not right. And it is therefore that we praise him and trust him and love him. For he is not part God, a God here and there, with some but not all the attributes which belong to true God: he is God altogether, God through and

through, all that God is and all that God ought to be.

Meanwhile, it is not the consistent universalism that demands the actual salvation of all sinners, which has been embraced by the mass of universalizing Protestants. For one thing, the Scriptures are too clear to the contrary to permit the indulgence of this pleasant dream: it is all too certain that all men are not saved, but at the last day there remain the two classes of the saved and the lost, each of which is sent to the eternal destiny which belongs to it. The great problem requires to be faced by universalizing evangelicalism, therefore, of how it is God and God alone who saves the soul, and all that God does looking towards the saving of the soul he does to and for all men alike, and yet all men are not saved. Their attempts to solve this problem have given us the doctrinal constructions known as Evangelical Lutheranism and Evangelical Arminianism, both of which profess to combine an express evangelicalism and an express universalism, and yet to provide for the diverse issues of salvation and damnation. That these systems have succeeded in solving this (let us say it frankly, insoluble) problem, we of course do not believe; and the element in the problem which suffers in the forcible adjustments which they propose, is in both cases the evangelical element. But it is nevertheless to be frankly recognized that both systems profess to have found a solution and are therefore emphatic in their professions of both a pure evangelicalism and a complete universalism in the operation of God looking to salvation. It will be worth our while to make this clear to ourselves. In doing so, however, we shall choose statements from which we may learn something more of the spirit and points of view of these great systems than the particular facts which are more immediately engaging our attention.

How deeply embedded the evangelical conviction is in the consciousness of evangelical Arminianism we may learn from an instructive enunciation of it by Dr. Joseph Agar Beet. This enunciation occurs in a context in which Dr. Beet is with some heat repelling the doctrine of unconditional election. "This terrible error," he says, "prevalent a century ago, is but an overstatement of the important Gospel truth that salvation is, from the earliest turning to God to final salvation, altogether a work of God in man, and a merciful accomplishment of a purpose of God before the foundation of the world." "In our rejection of this doctrine of unconditional election and predestination, we must remember that salvation, from the earliest good desires to final salvation, is the accomplishment of a divine purpose of mercy formed before the foundation of the world." In rejecting the doctrine of unconditional election, Dr. Beet is thus careful to preserve the evangelicalism which, he recognizes, lies at its center; and thus he gives us a definition of evangelicalism from the Wesleyan standpoint. It proves to be just that all the saving process is from God, and that all the power exerted in saving the soul is God's. It may please us in passing to ask whether this evangelicalism is really separable from the doctrine of unconditional election from which Dr. Beet wishes to separate it; and to note that he himself appears to recognize that in the minds of some at least the two must go together. But what it

particularly behooves us to observe now is the emphasis with which, as a Wesleyan, Dr. Beet bears his testimony to the general evangelical postulate. Whether he gives validity to this postulate in all his thinking is of course a different matter.

From the Lutheran side the consciousness of the evangelical principle is equally prominent. Indeed the Evangelical Lutheran is very apt to look upon evangelicalism as his own peculiar possession, and to betray a certain measure of surprise when he finds it in the hands of others also. A. J. Haller, writing in Zahn and Burger's Magazine, expresses himself in the following emphatic language: "That salvation is not acquired by man by means of any activity of his own, but is given him by God's grace, that I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him of my own reason or power, but the Holy Spirit has called me, enlightened, sanctified and preserved me, this is assuredly the alpha and omega of all evangelical belief, and is not denied even by either Calvinists or Methodists." The purity of this evangelical confession must be frankly recognized, even though we cannot avoid cherishing misgivings whether it is permitted to condition all of the thought of its author, misgivings which are indeed immediately justified when we find him going on to speak of regeneration, and speaking of it after a fashion which is in spirit less evangelical than sacerdotal, and indeed is not untouched by the naturalism which usually accompanies this type of sacerdotalism. He is sure that regeneration is monergistic, but also that it is the effect of baptism as its producing cause; and he is very much concerned to defend this conception from the charge of magical working. "It might be called magical," he remarks, "if it were maintained that men were completely transformed in regeneration, with no subsequent demand made upon them for any ethical self-determination. That, however, an absolutely new power is created in them by God, the saving or condemning action of which depends on their subsequent or contemporary determination (*Entscheidung*), this has as little to do with magic as the belief that in the Lord's Supper Christ's body and blood are certainly and truly given for blessing to some, for judgement to others."

A passage like this reveals the difficulty a Lutheran who wishes to abide by his official confession has in giving effect to his evangelical profession. He may declare that all the power exerted in saving the soul is from God, but this is crossed by his sacerdotal consciousness that grace is conveyed by the means of grace, otherwise not. The grace of regeneration, for example, is conveyed ordinarily (some say only) by baptism. And this grace of regeneration is the monergistic operation of God. Even so, however, it cannot be said that the effect is all of God. For, in the first place, whether it takes effect at all, is dependent on the attitude of the recipient. He cannot cooperate with God in producing it; but he can fatally resist. And therefore Baier carefully defines: "God produces in the man who is baptized and who does not resist the divine grace, the work of regeneration or renovation through the Sacrament, in the very act itself (*hoc actu ipso*)." And then, in the second place, whether this gift of regeneration proves a blessing or a curse to the recipient depends on how he takes it and deals with

it. "An absolutely new power is created in him by God," says Haller, "the action of which, whether for blessing or cursing, is dependent on the subject's subsequent, or even already presently operative decision." This carries with it, naturally, what is here covered up, that this self-determination of the recipient is his natural self-determination. For if it were itself given in the new power communicated in regeneration, then it were inconceivable that it could act otherwise than for blessing. Whether man is saved or not, depends therefore in no sense on the monergistic regeneration wrought by God in his baptism. It depends on how man receives this "new power communicated to him and how he uses it. And thus we are back on the plane of pure naturalism.

We may more than question therefore whether the cherished evangelicalism of the Wesleyan and Lutheran constructions is not more theoretical than practical; though meanwhile we must recognize that they at least postulate the evangelical principle in theory.

It is, however, the universalistic note which is the characteristic note of these constructions. As Professor Henry C. Sheldon of Boston University declares: "Our contention is for the universality of the opportunity of salvation, as against an exclusive and unconditioned choice of individuals to eternal life." There is to be noted in this declaration, (1) the conscious stress on universalism as the characteristic note of Wesleyanism, and (2) the consequent recognition that all that God does looking toward salvation is to afford an opportunity of salvation; so that what is actually contended is not that God does not save some only but that he really saves none,-he only opens a way of salvation to all and if any are saved they must save themselves. So inevitable is it that if we assert that all that God does looking to salvation he does to and for all alike and yet that not all are saved, we make all that he does fall short of actual salvation: no one must receive more than he who receives the least.

Perhaps, however, the essential universalistic note of the whole Arminian construction never received a stronger assertion than in the creed of the Evangelical Union body, the so-called Morrisonians, the very reason of the existence of which is to raise protest against the unconditionality of election. Its positive creed in itself sums up in what it calls the "three universalities": "the love of God the Father in the gift and sacrifice of Jesus to all men everywhere without distinction, exception or respect of persons; the love of God the Son, in the gift and sacrifice of himself as a true propitiation for the sins of the world; the love of God the Holy Spirit, in his personal and continuous work of applying to the souls of all men the provisions of divine grace. "Certainly if God is to be declared to love all men alike, the Son to have made propitiation for the sins of all men alike, and the Holy Spirit to have applied the benefits of that propitiation to all men alike, nothing is left but to assert that therefore all men alike are saved; or else to assert that all that God can do for sinful man cannot avail to save him and he must just be left to save himself. And where then is our

evangelicalism, with its great affirmation that it is God the Lord and he alone with his almighty grace who saves the soul?

A lurid light is thrown upon the real origin of these vigorous assertions of the universalism of God's saving activities by some remarks of a sympathetic historian in accounting for the rise of the Morrisonian sect. "Of the movement now to engage our attention," he remarks, "nothing is truer than that it was the genuine offspring of its age. During the thirties of the last century the legislatures of our country were made to recognize the rights of man as they had never done before. In politics the long night of privilege was far spent, and the dawn of a new age was beginning to appear. Brotherhood, equality and fair play were clamoring loudly at every closed door, and refusing to be turned away. A corresponding claim, quite independent of politics, was being made in the name of Christian theology. Here also it has demanded that doors of privilege be thrown open. Freedom for all, food for all, education for all, and salvation for all were now coming to be the national watchwords." Words could scarce be chosen which could more sharply present the demand for "the three universalities" as the mere clamoring of the natural heart for the equal distribution of the goods of the other life as of this, as, in other words, but the religious aspect of the "leveling" demand which has filled our modern life. The cry, "Give us all an equal chance!" may have its relative justification when it is the expression of the need of men perishing under the heel of vested privilege. But what shall we say of it when it is but the turbulent self-assertion of a mob of criminals, assailing a court of justice, whence is dispensed not "chances" to escape just penalties, but wisely directed clemency, having in view all rights involved? Surely the evil desert of sin, the just government of God, and the unspeakable grace of salvation are all fatally out of mind when men reason as to the proper procedure of God in bringing sinners to salvation by the aid of analogies derived from the leveling politics of the day. Shall we not fix it once for all in our minds that salvation is the right of no man; that a "chance" to save himself is no "chance" of salvation for any; and that, if any of the sinful race of man is saved, it must be by a miracle of almighty grace, on which he has no claim, and, contemplating which as a fact, he can only be filled with wondering adoration of the marvels of the inexplicable love of God? To demand that all criminals shall be given a "chance" of escaping their penalties, and that all shall be given an "equal chance," is simply to mock at the very idea of justice, and no less, at the very idea of love.

The universalism of all the divine operations looking to salvation is as vigorously asserted in the Lutheran scheme as in the Arminian, but with, if possible, even less logical success-on the supposition, that is, that the evangelical principle of dependence on God alone for salvation is to be preserved. Indeed the leaven of sacerdotalism taken over by Lutheranism from the old church, in its doctrine of the means of grace, from the first fatally marred even the purity of its universalism, transmuting it into a mere indiscrimination, which is something very different; and has among the modern Lutherans given rise to very portentous developments.

The old Lutheranism, alleging that the honor of God required that he should do all that he does looking to the salvation of man to and for all men alike, asserted that therefore Christ has died to take away the sin of the whole world, and, provision having been made in the means of grace for the effective application of his sacrifice to all men, these means of grace (with the mind especially on the proclamation of the gospel in which they culminate), have actually been conveyed to all men without exception. Of course it is not in point of fact true that the gospel has been actually proclaimed to all men without exception; and an effort was accordingly made to cover up the manifest falsity of the assertion by substituting for it the essentially different proposition that at three historical stages (namely, at the time of Adam, at the time of Noah, and at the time of the apostles), the gospel has been made known to all men then living, "and," it is added, "if it became universal in those three generations then it has also come indirectly to their successors." The futility of this expedient to conceal the circumstance that in point of fact the gospel has not actually been conveyed to every single man who has ever lived (and nothing less than this can satisfy the demands of the case), is too manifest to require pointing out; and we cannot be surprised that the contention itself has ceased to be made. "More recent orthodox theologians in our church," the historian (the Norwegian divine, Lars Nielsen Dahle) goes on to tell us, "say simply that the universality of the call is a necessary presupposition, a postulate which must be assumed on the ground of the testimony of Scripture regarding God's universal saving-will on the one hand, and of the Scripturally established truth on the other that this saving will cannot be realized for the individual unless God's call actually reaches him; but how this happens, we cannot say, for it is a fact that at the present day it has only reached comparatively few, or at most a minority of mankind." Thus Professor Johnson writes: "The universality of this call of grace we must, in opposition to every particularistic view of it, maintain as a postulate of the faith, even if we are unable to show how it actually does reach every individual." It is an unsolved mystery.

The Lutherans, therefore, in attempting both to tie saving grace to the means of grace and to give it an actually universal diffusion, have brought themselves into a difficulty at this point from which the Wesleyans, who make the universality of the sacrificial work of Christ and the consequent gift of sufficient grace independent of all earthly transactions so that men are all born in a state of redemption and grace, are free. The ultimate solution which has been found by modern Lutheranism, in which Dahle himself concurs, consists in the invention of a doctrine of the extension of human probation into the next world, the famous doctrine miscalled that of a "second probation," for it is not a doctrine of a second probation for any man but only the doctrine that every man that lives must have the gospel presented winningly to him, if not in this life then in the life to come. By the invention of this doctrine the Lutherans have provided themselves for the first time with a true universalism of grace. There is confessionally no direct Biblical support for the doctrine: it is simply a postulate of the



universalism of God's will of salvation in connection with the confinement of grace to the means of grace. The Scriptures teach that no man can be saved without a knowledge of Jesus Christ in his saving work. This is transmuted into its opposite that no man can be lost without a knowledge of Christ in his saving work; and then in the interests of this proposition provision is made for every man to be brought face to face with the offer of the gospel under favorable circumstances, if not in this world, then in the next. No doubt some such invention was necessary if the Lutheran premises were to be sustained. But one would think that the necessity for such an invention in order to sustain these premises were a sufficient indication that these premises were best abandoned.

Having by this invention avoided the fact that the provision for salvation is in point of fact not universal, the Lutherans have by no means escaped from their difficulties. They are faced with the even greater difficulty, common to them and the Wesleyans, of accounting for the failure of God's grace, now safely conveyed to all men, to work the salvation of all men. And here there is no outlet but that of the Wesleyans, namely to bring in surreptitiously the discredited naturalism, and to attribute the difference in the effects of grace to men's differences in dealing with grace. The Lutherans have their own way, however, of introducing this naturalism. They are emphatic that man, being dead in sin, cannot cooperate with the grace of God, a difficulty got over by Arminianism by the postulation of a graciously restored ability for all men, earned for them by the sacrifice of Christ and applied to them automatically. But they suppose that, though dead in sin, man can resist, and successfully resist, almighty grace. Resistance is, however, itself an activity: and the successful resistance of an almighty recreative power, is a pretty considerable activity-for a dead man. It all comes back, therefore, to the Pelagian ground that, at the decisive point, the salvation of man is in his own power: men are saved, or men are not saved, according to natural differences in men. Thus the grace of God is fundamentally denied and salvation is committed, in the last analysis, to man himself.

The upshot of the whole matter is that the attempt to construe the gracious operations of God looking to salvation universally, inevitably leads by one path or another to the wreck of the evangelical principle, on the basis of which all Protestant Churches, (or rather, let us say, of the supernaturalistic principle, on the basis of which all Christian Churches,) professedly unite. Whether this universalism takes a sacerdotal form or a form which frees itself from all entanglement with earthly transactions, it ends always and everywhere by transferring the really decisive factor in salvation from God to man. This is not always clearly perceived or frankly admitted. Sometimes, however, it is. Professor W. F. Steele of the University of Denver, for example, clearly perceives and frankly admits it. To him there can be no talk of "almighty grace." Occupying a position which is practically (whatever we may say of it theoretically) indistinguishable from the bumptious naturalism of Mr. W. E. Henley, the first article of his creed is a hearty belief in the almightiness of man in his sphere of moral

choices. "When one says," he tells us, "'I believe in God, the Father Almighty,' he means it with reserve for in the domain of man's moral choices under grace, man himself is almighty, according to God's self-limitation in making man in his image and after his likeness." God himself, he goes on to declare, has a creed which begins: "I believe in man, almighty in his choices." Obviously a man in this mood is incapable of religion, the very essence of which is the sense of absolute dependence on God, and is altogether inhibited from evangelicalism, which consists in humble resting on God and God alone for salvation. Instead of the real Gloria Soli Deo ringing in his heart, he proudly himself seizes the helm and proclaims himself, apart from God, the master of his own destiny. Moralism has completely extruded religion. Did not Luther have precisely the like of this in mind when he satirically describes the moralist of his day in these striking words: "Here we are always wanting to turn the tables and do good of ourselves to that poor man, our Lord God, from whom we are rather to receive it"?

The antipathy which is widely felt to the fundamental evangelical postulate which brings the soul into immediate contact with God and suspends all its health on the immediate operations of God, finds an odd illustration in Albrecht Ritschl's teaching that the direct object even of justification is not the individual but the Christian society; and that "it is passed on to the individual only as the result of his taking place in the Christian fellowship and sharing in its life. "This is, of course, only another, and very much poorer way of asserting the principle of the general universalistic construction: God does not in any stage of the saving process deal directly with individuals: he has always and everywhere the mass in view: and it is the part of the individual himself by his own act to lay hold of the salvation thus put at the general disposal. How different Luther with his: "it is not needful for thee to do this or that. Only give the Lord God the glory, take what he gives thee, and believe what he tells thee." The issue is indeed a fundamental one and it is closely drawn. Is it God the Lord that saves us, or is it we ourselves? And does God the Lord save us, or does he merely open the way to salvation, and leave it according to our choice, to walk in it or not? The parting of the ways is the old parting of the ways between Christianity and autosoterism. Certainly only he can claim to be evangelical who with full consciousness rests entirely and directly on God and on God alone for his salvation.

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## **The Plan of Salvation - Part V - Calvinism**

AS OVER AGAINST all attempts to conceive the operations of God looking to salvation universalistically, that is as directed to mankind in the mass, Calvinism insists that the saving operations of God are directed in every case immediately to the individuals who are saved. Particularism in the processes of salvation becomes thus the mark of Calvinism. As supernaturalism is the mark of Christianity at large, and evangelicalism the mark of Protestantism, so particularism is the mark of Calvinism. The Calvinist is he who holds with full consciousness that God the Lord, in his saving operations,

deals not generally with mankind at large, but particularly with the individuals who are actually saved. Thus, and thus only, he contends, can either the supernaturalism of salvation which is the mark of Christianity at large and which ascribes all salvation to God, or the immediacy of the operations of saving grace which is the mark of evangelicalism and which ascribes salvation to the direct working of God upon the soul, come to its rights and have justice accorded it. Particularism in the saving processes, he contends, is already given in the supernaturalism of salvation and in the immediacy of the operations of the divine grace; and the denial of particularism is constructively the denial of the immediacy of saving grace, that is, of evangelicalism, and of the supernaturalism of salvation, that is, of Christianity itself. It is logically the total rejection of Christianity.

The particularism of the saving operations of God which is thus the mark of Calvinism, it is possible, however, to apply more or less fully (or, shall we say, with more or less discernment?) in our thought of the activities of God relatively to his sinful creatures (or shall we say, broadly, relatively to his creatures?). Thus differing varieties of Calvinism have emerged in the history of thought. As they are distinguishable from one another by the place they give to particularism in the operations of God, that is as much as to say they are distinguished from one another by the place they give to the decree of election in the order of the divine decrees.

Some are so zealous for particularism that they place discrimination at the root of all God's dealings with his creatures. That he has any creatures at all they suppose to be in the interest of discrimination, and all that he decrees concerning his creatures they suppose he decrees only that he may discriminate between them. They therefore place the decree of "election" by which men are made to differ, in the order of decrees, logically prior to the decree of creation itself, or at any rate prior to all that is decreed concerning man as man; that is to say, since man's history begins with the fall, prior to the decree of the fall itself. They are therefore called Supralapsarians, that is, those who place the decree of election in the order of thought prior to the decree of the fall."

Others, recognizing that election has to do specifically with salvation, (that is to say, that it is the logical prius, not of creation or of the providential government of the world, but of the salvation of sinful man), conceive that the principle of particularism, in the sense of discrimination, belongs in the sphere of God's soteriological, not in that of his cosmical creation. They therefore think of "election" as the logical prius not of creation, or of the fall, but of those operations of God which concern salvation. The place they give it in the order of decrees is therefore at the head of those decrees of God which look to salvation. This implies that it falls into position in the order of thought, consequently upon the decrees of creation and the fall, which refer to all men alike, since all men certainly are created and certainly have fallen; and precedently to the decrees of redemption and its application, since just as certainly all men are not redeemed and brought into the enjoyment of salvation. They are from this

circumstance called Sublapsarians or Infralapsarians, that is, those who, in the arrangement of the decrees in logical order, conceive the place of the decree of election to be logically after that of the fall.

There are others, however, who, affected by what they deem the Scriptural teaching concerning the universal reference of the redemption of Christ, and desirous of grounding the universal offer of salvation in an equally universal provision, conceive that they can safely postpone the introduction of the particularistic principle to a point within the saving operations of God themselves, so only they are careful to introduce it at a point sufficiently early to make it determinative of the actual issue of the saving work. They propose therefore to think of the provision of salvation in Christ as universal in its intent; but to represent it as given effect in its application to individuals by the Holy Spirit only particularistically. That is to say, they suppose that some, not all, of the divine operations looking to the salvation of men are universalistic in their reference, whereas salvation is not actually experienced unless not some but all of them are operative. As the particular saving operation to which they ascribe a universalistic reference is the redemption of Christ, their scheme is expressed by saying that it introduces the decree of election, in the order of thought, at a point subsequent to the decree of redemption in Christ. They may therefore be appropriately called Post-redemptionists, that is, those who conceive that the decree of election is logically postponed to the decree of redemption. In their view redemption has equal reference to all men, and it is only in the application of this redemption to men that God discriminates between men, and so acts, in this sense, particularistically.

It is obvious that this is the lowest point in the order of decrees at which the decree of election can be introduced and the particularistic principle be retained at all. If the application of the redemption of Christ by the Holy Spirit be also made universalistic, that is to say, if the introduction of the particularistic principle be postponed to the actual issue of the saving process, then there is obviously no particularism at all in the divine operations looking to salvation. "Election" drops out of the scheme of the divine decrees altogether, unless we prefer to say, as it has been cynically phrased, that God is careful to elect to salvation only those who, he foresees, will in the use of their own free will elect themselves. All Calvinists must therefore be either Supralapsarians or Sub- (or Infra-) lapsarians, or, at least, Post-redemptionists which is also to be Anteapplicationist.

Nevertheless, we do not reach in the Post-redemptionists, conceived purely from the point of view of this element of their thought, the lowest possible, or the lowest actual, variety of Calvinists. Post-redemptionists may differ among themselves, if not in the position in the order of decrees of the decree of election (for still further to depress its position in that order would be to desert the whole principle of particularism and to fall out of the category of Calvinists), yet in their mode of

conceiving the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit in applying redemption, under the government of the decree of election; and as to the role of the human spirit in receiving redemption. A party has always existed even among Calvinists which has had so large an interest in the autonomy of the human will, that it has been unwilling to conceive of it as "passive" with respect to that operation of God which we call regeneration, and has earnestly wished to look upon the reception of salvation as in a true sense dependent on the will's own unmoved action. They have, therefore, invented a variety of Calvinism which supposes that it is God indeed who selects those who shall savingly be brought to Christ, and that it is the Holy Spirit who, by his grace, brings them infallibly to Christ, (thus preserving the principle of particularism in the application of salvation), but which imagines that the Holy Spirit thus effectually brings them to Christ, not by an almighty, creative action on their souls, by which they are made new creatures, functioning subsequently as such, but purely by suasive operations, adapted in his infallible wisdom to the precise state of mind and heart of those whom he has selected for salvation, and so securing from their own free action, a voluntary coming to Christ and embracing of him for salvation. There is no universalism here; the particularism is express. But an expedient has been found to enable it to be said that men come voluntarily to Christ, and are joined to him by a free act of their own unrenewed wills, while only those come whom God has selected so to persuade to come (he who knows the heart through and through) that they certainly will come in the exercise of their own free will. This type of thought has received the appropriate name of "Congruism," because the principle of its contention is that grace wins those to whom it is "congruously" offered, that is to say, that the reason why some men are saved and some are not lies in the simple fact that God the Holy Spirit operates in his gracious suasion on some in a fashion that is carefully and infallibly adapted by him to secure their adhesion to the gospel, and does not operate on others with the same careful adaptation.

A warning must, however, be added to the effect that the designation "Congruists" is so ambiguous that there exists another class bearing this name, who are as definitely anti-Calvinistic as those we have in mind are, by intention, Calvinistic in their conception. The teaching of these is that God the Holy Spirit accords his suasive influences to all alike, making no distinction; but that this universalistically conceived grace of the Holy Spirit takes effect only according as it proves to be actually congruous or incongruous to the state of mind and heart of those to whom it equally is given. Here it is not the sovereign choice of God, but a native difference in men, which determines salvation, and we are on expressly autosoteric ground. The danger of confusing the Calvinistic "Congruists" with this larger, and definitely anti-Calvinistic party, has led to the habit of speaking of the Calvinistic Congruists rather by the name of their most distinguished representative, (who, indeed, introduced this mode of thinking into the Calvinistic churches), Claude Pajon, Professor in the Theological School at Saumur in France in the middle of the seventeenth century. It

was his predecessor and teacher in the same school, Moses Amyraut, who first formulated in the Reformed Churches the Post-redemptionist scheme, of which Pajonism is a debased form. Thus the school of Saumur has the bad eminence of having originated, and furnished from the names of its professors the current designations of, the two most reduced forms of Calvinism, Amyraldianism or Hypothetical Universalism as it is otherwise called, and Pajonism, or Congruism as it is designated according to its nature.

We have thus had brought before us four forms of Calvinism; and these, as we believe, exhaust the list of possible general types: Supralapsarianism, Sub- (or Infra-)lapsarianism, Post-redemptionism (otherwise called Amyraldianism, or Hypothetical Universalism), and Pajonism (otherwise called Congruism). These are all forms of Calvinism, because they give validity to the principle of particularism as ruling the divine dealings with man in the matter of salvation; and, as we have seen, the mark of Calvinism is particularism. If now, particularism were not only the mark of Calvinism but also the substance of Calvinism, all four of these types of Calvinism, preserving as they all do the principle of particularism, might claim to be not only alike Calvinistic, but equally Calvinistic, and might even demand to be arranged in the order of excellence according to the place accorded by each in its construction to the principle of particularism and the emphasis placed on it. Particularism, however, though the distinguishing mark of Calvinism, by which it may be identified as over against the other conceptions of the plan of salvation, in comparison with which we have brought it, does not constitute its substance; and indeed, although strenuously affirmed by Calvinism, is not affirmed by it altogether and solely for its own sake. The most consistent embodiment of the principle of particularism is not therefore necessarily the best form of Calvinism; and the bare affirmation of the principle of particularism though it may constitute one so far a Calvinist, does not necessarily constitute one a good Calvinist. No one can be a Calvinist who does not give validity to the principle of particularism in God's operations looking to the salvation of man; but the principle of particularism must not be permitted, as Pharaoh's lean kine devoured all the fat cattle of Egypt, to swallow up all else that is rich and succulent and good in Calvinism, nor can the bare affirmation of particularism be accepted as an adequate Calvinism.

Post-redemptionism, therefore (although it is a recognizable form of Calvinism, because it gives real validity to the principle of particularism), is not therefore necessarily a good form of Calvinism, an acceptable form of Calvinism, or even a tenable form of Calvinism. For one thing, it is a logically inconsistent form of Calvinism and therefore an unstable form of Calvinism. For another and far more important thing, it turns away from the substitutive atonement, which is as precious to the Calvinist as is his particularism, and for the safeguarding of which, indeed, much of his zeal for particularism is due. I say, Post-redemptionism is logically inconsistent Calvinism. For, how is it possible to contend that God gave his Son to die for all men, alike and equally; and at the same time to declare that when he gave his

Son to die, he already fully intended that his death should not avail for all men alike and equally, but only for some which he would select (which, that is, because he is God and there is no subsequence of time in his decrees, he had already selected) to be its beneficiaries? But as much as God is God, who knows all things which he intends from the beginning and all at once, and intends all things which he intends from the beginning and all at once, it is impossible to contend that God intends the gift of his Son for all men alike and equally and at the same time intends that it shall not actually save all but only a select body which he himself provides for it. The schematization of the order of decrees presented by the Amyraldians, in a word, necessarily implies a chronological relation of precedence and subsequence among the decrees, the assumption of which abolishes God, and this can be escaped only by altering the nature of the atonement. And therefore the nature of the atonement is altered by them, and Christianity is wounded at its very heart.

The Amyraldians "point with pride" to the purity of their confession of the doctrine of election, and wish to focus attention upon it as constituting them good Calvinists. But the real hinge of their system turns on their altered doctrine of the atonement, and here they strike at the very heart of Calvinism. A conditional substitution being an absurdity, because the condition is no condition to God, if you grant him even so much as the poor attribute of foreknowledge, they necessarily turn away from a substitutive atonement altogether. Christ did not die in the sinner's stead, it seems, to bear his penalties and purchase for him eternal life; he died rather to make the salvation of sinners possible, to open the way of salvation to sinners, to remove all the obstacles in the way of salvation of sinners. But what obstacle stands in the way of the salvation of sinners, except just their sin? And if this obstacle (their sin) is removed, are they not saved? Some other obstacles must be invented, therefore, which Christ may be said to have removed (since he cannot be said to have removed the obstacle of sin) that some function may be left to him and some kind of effect be attributed to his sacrificial death. He did not remove the obstacle of sin, for then all those for whom he died must be saved, and he cannot be allowed to have saved anyone. He removed, then, let us say, all that prevented God from saving men, except sin; and so he prepared the way for God to step in and with safety to his moral government to save men. The atonement lays no foundation for this saving of men: it merely opens the way for God safely to save them on other grounds.

We are now fairly on the basis of the Governmental Theory of the Atonement; and this is in very truth the highest form of doctrine of atonement to which we can on these premises attain. In other words, all the substance of the atonement is evaporated, that it may be given a universal reference. And, indeed, we may at once recognize it as an unavoidable effect of universalizing the atonement that it is by that very act eviscerated. If it does nothing for any man that it does not do for all men why, then, it is obvious that it saves no man; for clearly not all men are saved. The things that we have to choose between, are an atonement of high value, or an atonement of

wide extension. The two cannot go together. And this is the real objection of Calvinism to this compromise scheme which presents itself as an improvement on its system: it universalizes the atonement at the cost of its intrinsic value, and Calvinism demands a really substitutive atonement which actually saves. And as a really substitutive atonement which actually saves cannot be universal because obviously all men are not saved, in the interests of the integrity of the atonement it insists that particularism has entered into the saving process prior, in the order of thought, to the atonement.

As bad Calvinism as is Amyraldianism, Pajonism is, of course, just that much worse. Not content with destroying the whole substance of the atonement, by virtue of which it is precious, ("Who loved me, and gave himself up for me") it proceeds to destroy also the whole substance of that regeneration and renovation by which, in the creative work of the Spirit, we are made new creatures. Of what value is it that it should be confessed that it is God who determines who shall be saved, if the salvation that is wrought goes no deeper than what I can myself work, if I can only be persuaded to do it? Here there is lacking all provision not only for release from the guilt of sin, but also for relief from its corruption and power. There is no place left for any realizing sense of either guilt or corruption; there is no salvation offered from either the outraged wrath of a righteous God or the ingrained evil of our hearts: after all is over, we remain just what we were before. The prospect that is held out to us is nothing less than appalling; we are to remain to all eternity fundamentally just our old selves with only such amelioration of our manners as we can be persuaded to accomplish for ourselves. The whole substance of Christianity is evaporated, and we are invited to recognize the shallow remainder as genuine Calvinism, because, forsooth, it safeguards the sovereignty of God. Let it be understood once for all that the completest recognition of the sovereignty of God does not suffice to make a good Calvinist. Otherwise we should have to recognize every Mohammedan as a good Calvinist. There can be no Calvinism without a hearty confession of the sovereignty of God; but the acknowledgement of the sovereignty of God of itself goes only a very little way toward real Calvinism. Pajon himself, the author of Calvinistic Congruism, advanced in his fundamental thought but little beyond a high variety of Deism.

It seems particularly worth while to make these things explicit, because there is perhaps nothing which more prejudices Calvinism in the general mind than the current identification of it with an abstract doctrine of sovereignty, without regard to the concrete interests which this sovereignty safeguards. In point of fact the sovereignty of God for which Calvinism stands is not only the necessary implicate of that particularism without which a truly religious relation between the soul and its God cannot exist; but is equally the indispensable safeguard of that complementary universalism of redemption equally proclaimed in the Scripture in which the wideness of God's mercy comes to manifestation. It must be borne well in mind that particularism and parsimony in salvation are not equivalent conceptions; and it is a mere caricature of Calvinistic particularism to represent it as finding its center in the



proclamation that there are few that are saved." What particularism stands for in the Calvinistic system is the immediate dealing of God with the individual soul; what it sets itself against is the notion that in his saving processes God never comes directly into contact with the individual-is never to be contemplated as his God who saves him-but does all that he does looking to salvation only for and to men in the mass. Whether in dealing with the individual souls of men, he visits with his saving grace few or many, so many that in our imagination they may readily pass into all, does not lie in the question. So far as the principles of sovereignty and particularism are concerned, there is no reason why a Calvinist might not be a universalist in the most express meaning of that term, holding that each and every human soul shall be saved; and in point of fact some Calvinists (forgetful of Scripture here) have been universalists in this most express meaning of the term. The point of insistence in Calvinistic particularism is not that God saves out of the sinful mass of men only one here and there, a few brands snatched from the burning, but that God's method of saving men is to set upon them in his almighty grace, to purchase them to himself by the precious blood of his Son, to visit them in the inmost core of their being by the creative operations of his Spirit, and himself, the Lord God Almighty, to save them. How many, up to the whole human race in all its representatives, God has thus bought and will bring into eternal communion with himself by entering himself into personal communion with them, lies, I say, quite outside the question of particularism. Universalism in this sense of the term and particularism are so little inconsistent with one another that it is only the particularist who can logically be this kind of a universalist.

And something more needs to be said-Calvinism in point of fact has as important a mission in preserving the true universalism of the gospel (for there is a true universalism of the gospel) as it has in preserving the true particularism of grace. The same insistence upon the supernaturalistic and the evangelical principles, (that salvation is from God and from God alone, and that God saves the soul by dealing directly with it in his grace) which makes the Calvinist a particularist, makes him also a universalist in the scriptural sense of the word. In other words the sovereignty of God lays the sole foundation, for a living assurance of the salvation of the world. It is but a spurious universalism which the so-called universalistic systems offer: a universalism not of salvation but, at the most, of what is called the opportunity, the chance, of salvation. But what assurance can a universal opportunity, or a universal chance, of salvation (if we dare use such words) give you that all, that many, that any indeed, will be saved? This universal opportunity, chance, of salvation has, after two thousand years, been taken advantage of only by a pitiable minority of those to whom it has been supposed to be given. What reason is there to believe that, though the world should continue in existence for ten billions of billions of years, any greater approximation to a completely saved world will be reached than meets our eyes today, when Christianity, even in its nominal form, has conquered to itself, I do not say

merely a moiety of the human race, but I say merely a moiety of those to whom it has been preached? If you wish, as you lift your eyes to the far horizon of the future, to see looming on the edge of time the glory of a saved world, you can find warrant for so great a vision only in the high principles that it is God and God alone who saves men, that all their salvation is from him, and that in his own good time and way he will bring the world in its "entirety to the feet of him whom he has not hesitated to present to our adoring love not merely as the Saviour of our own souls, but as the Saviour of the world; and of whom he has himself declared that he has made propitiation not for our sins only, but for the sins of the world. Calvinism thus is the guardian not only of the particularism which assures me that God the Lord is the Saviour of my soul, but equally of the universalism by which I am assured that he is also the true and actual Saviour of the world. On no other ground can any assurance be had either of the one or of the other. But on this ground we can be assured with an assurance which is without flaw, that not only shall there be saved the individual whom God visits with his saving grace, but also the world which he enters with his saving purpose, in all the length and breadth of it.

The redemption of Christ, if it is to be worthily viewed, must be looked at not merely individualistically, but also in its social, or better in its cosmical relations. Men are not discrete particles standing off from one another as mutually isolated units. They are members of an organism, the human race; and this race itself is an element in a greater organism which is significantly termed a universe. Of course the plan of salvation as it lies in the divine mind cannot be supposed to be concerned, therefore, alone with individuals as such: it of necessity has its relations with the greater unities into which these individuals enter as elements. We have only partially understood the redemption in Christ, therefore, when we have thought of it only in its modes of operation and effects on the individual. We must ask also how and what it works in the organism of the human race, and what its effects are in the greater organism of the universe. Jesus Christ came to save men, but he did not come to save men each as a whole in himself out of relation to all other men. In saving men, he came to save mankind; and therefore the Scriptures are insistent that he came to save the world, and ascribe to him accordingly the great title of the Saviour of the world. They go indeed further than this: they do not pause in expanding their outlook until they proclaim that it was the good pleasure of God "to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth." We have not done justice to the Biblical doctrine of the plan of salvation therefore so long as we confine our attention to the modes of the divine operation in saving the individual, and insist accordingly on what we have called its particularism. There is a wider prospect on which we must feast our eyes if we are to view the whole land of ' salvation. It was because God loved the world, that he sent his only-begotten Son; it was for the sins of the world that Jesus Christ made propitiation; it was the world which he came to save; it is nothing less than the world that shall be saved by him.

What is chiefly of importance for us to bear in mind here, is that God's plan is to save, whether the individual or the world, by process. No doubt the whole salvation of the individual sinner enters into the full enjoyment of this accomplished salvation only by stages and in the course of time. Redeemed by Christ, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, justified through faith, received into the very household of God as his sons, led by the Spirit into the flowering and fruiting activities of the new life, our salvation is still only in process and not yet complete. We still are the prey of temptation; we still fall into sin; we still suffer sickness, sorrow, death itself. Our redeemed bodies can hope for nothing but to wear out in weakness and to break down in decay in the grave. Our redeemed souls only slowly enter into their heritage. Only when the last trump shall sound and we shall rise from our graves, and perfected souls and incorruptible bodies shall together enter into the glory prepared for God's children, is our salvation complete.

The redemption of the world is similarly a process. It, too, has its stages: it, too, advances only gradually to its completion. But it, too, will ultimately be complete; and then we shall see a wholly saved world. Of course it follows, that at any stage of the process, short of completeness, the world, as the individual, must present itself to observation as incompletely saved. We can no more object the incompleteness of the salvation of the world today to the completeness of the salvation of the world, than we can object the incompleteness of our personal salvation today (the remainders of sin in us, the weakness and death of our bodies) to the completeness of our personal salvation. Every thing in its own order: first the seed, then the blade, then the full corn in the ear. And as, when Christ comes, we shall each of us be like him, when we shall see him as he is, so also, when Christ comes, it will be to a fully saved world, and there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, in which dwells righteousness.

It does not concern us at the moment to enumerate the stages through which the world must pass to its complete redemption. We do not ask how long the process will be; we make no inquiry into the means by which its complete redemption shall be brought about. These are topics which belong to Eschatology and even the lightest allusion to them here would carry us beyond the scope of our present task. What concerns us now is only to make sure that the world will be completely saved; and that the accomplishment of this result through a long process, passing through many stages, with the involved incompleteness of the world's salvation through extended ages, introduces no difficulty to thought. This incompleteness of the world's salvation through numerous generations involves, of course, the loss of many souls in the course of the long process through which the world advances to its salvation. And therefore the Biblical doctrine of the salvation of the world is not "universalism" in the common sense of that term. It does not mean that all men without exception are saved. Many men are inevitably lost, throughout the whole course of the advance of the world to its complete salvation, just as the salvation of the individual by process means that much service is lost to Christ through all these lean years of incomplete

salvation. But as in the one case, so in the other, the end is attained at last: there is a completely saved man and there is a completely saved world. This may possibly be expressed by saying that the Scriptures teach an eschatological universalism, not an each- and-every universalism. When the Scriptures say that Christ came to save the world, that he does save the world, and that the world shall be saved by him, they do not mean that there is no human being whom he did not come to save, whom he does not save, who is not saved by him. They mean that he came to save and does save the human race; and that the human race is being led by God into a racial salvation: that in the age-long development of the race of men, it will attain at last to a complete salvation, and our eyes will be greeted with the glorious spectacle of a saved world. Thus the human race attains the goal for which it was created, and sin does not snatch it out of God's hands: the primal purpose of God with it is fulfilled; and through Christ the race of man, though fallen into sin, is recovered to God and fulfills its original destiny.

Now, it cannot be imagined that the development of the race to this, its destined end, is a matter of chance; or is committed to the uncertainties of its own determination. Were that so, no salvation would or could lie before it as its assured goal. The goal to which the race is advancing is set by God: it is salvation. And every stage in the advance to this goal is, of course, determined by God. The progress of the race is, in other words, a God-determined progress, to a God-determined end. That being true, every detail in every moment of the life of the race is God-determined; and is a stage in its God-determined advance to its God-determined end. Christ has been made in very truth Head over all things for his Church: and all that befalls his Church, everything his Church is at every moment of its existence, every "fortune," as we absurdly call it, through which his Church passes, is appointed by him. The rate of the Church's progress to its goal of perfection, the nature of its progress, the particular individuals who are brought into it through every stage of its progress: all this is in his divine hands. The Lord adds to the Church daily such as are being saved. And it is through the divine government of these things, which is in short the leading onwards of the race to salvation, that the great goal is at last attained. To say this is, of course, already to say election and reprobation. There is no antinomy, therefore, in saying that Christ died for his people and that Christ died for the world. His people may be few today: the world will be his people tomorrow. But it must be punctually observed that unless it is Christ who, not opens the way of salvation to all, but actually saves his people, there is no ground to believe that there will ever be a saved world. The salvation of the world is absolutely dependent (as is the salvation of the individual soul) on its salvation being the sole work of the Lord Christ himself, in his irresistible might. It is only the Calvinist that has warrant to believe in the salvation whether of the individual or of the world. Both alike rest utterly on the sovereign grace of God." All other ground, is shifting sand.

THE END

# A Defence of Calvinism

by C. H. Spurgeon

"The old truth that Calvin preached, that Augustine preached, that Paul preached, is the truth that I must preach to-day, or else be false to my conscience and my God. I cannot shape the truth; I know of no such thing as paring off the rough edges of a doctrine. John Knox's gospel is my gospel. That which thundered through Scotland must thunder through England again."—C. H. Spurgeon

IT IS A GREAT THING to begin the Christian life by believing good solid doctrine. Some people have received twenty different "gospels" in as many years; how many more they will accept before they get to their journey's end, it would be difficult to predict. I thank God that He early taught me *the* gospel, and I have been so perfectly satisfied with it, that I do not want to know any other. Constant change of creed is sure loss. If a tree has to be taken up two or three times a year, you will not need to build a very large loft in which to store the apples. When people are always shifting their doctrinal principles, they are not likely to bring forth much fruit to the glory of God. It is good for young believers to begin with a firm hold upon those great fundamental doctrines which the Lord has taught in His Word. Why, if I believed what some preach about the temporary, trumpery salvation which only lasts for a time, I would scarcely be at all grateful for it; but when I know that those whom God saves He saves with an everlasting salvation, when I know that He gives to them an everlasting righteousness, when I know that He settles them on an everlasting foundation of everlasting love, and that He will bring them to His everlasting kingdom, oh, then I do wonder, and I am astonished that such a blessing as this should ever have been given to me!

"Pause, my soul! adore, and wonder!  
Ask, 'Oh, why such love to me?'  
Grace hath put me in the number  
Of the Saviour's family:  
Hallelujah!  
Thanks, eternal thanks, to Thee!"

I suppose there are some persons whose minds naturally incline towards the doctrine of free-will. I can only say that mine inclines as naturally towards the doctrines of sovereign grace. Sometimes, when I see some of the worst characters in the street, I feel as if my heart must burst forth in tears of gratitude that God has never let me act as they have done! I have thought, if God had left me alone, and had not touched me

by His grace, what a great sinner I should have been! I should have run to the utmost lengths of sin, dived into the very depths of evil, nor should I have stopped at any vice or folly, if God had not restrained me. I feel that I should have been a very king of sinners, if God had let me alone. I cannot understand the reason why I am saved, except upon the ground that God would have it so. I cannot, if I look ever so earnestly, discover any kind of reason in myself why I should be a partaker of Divine grace. If I am not at this moment without Christ, it is only because Christ Jesus would have His will with me, and that will was that I should be with Him where He is, and should share His glory. I can put the crown nowhere but upon the head of Him whose mighty grace has saved me from going down into the pit. Looking back on my past life, I can see that the dawning of it all was of God; of God effectively. I took no torch with which to light the sun, but the sun enlightened me. I did not commence my spiritual life—no, I rather kicked, and struggled against the things of the Spirit: when He drew me, for a time I did not run after Him: there was a natural hatred in my soul of everything holy and good. Wooings were lost upon me—warnings were cast to the wind—thunders were despised; and as for the whispers of His love, they were rejected as being less than nothing and vanity. But, sure I am, I can say now, speaking on behalf of myself, "He only is my salvation." It was He who turned my heart, and brought me down on my knees before Him. I can in very deed, say with Doddridge and Toplady—

"Grace taught my soul to pray,  
And made my eyes o'erflow;"

and coming to this moment, I can add—

"'Tis grace *has* kept me to this day,  
And will not let me go."

Well can I remember the manner in which I learned the doctrines of grace in a single instant. Born, as all of us are by nature, an Arminian, I still believed the old things I had heard continually from the pulpit, and did not see the grace of God. When I was coming to Christ, I thought I was doing it all myself, and though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was seeking me. I do not think the young convert is at first aware of this. I can recall the very day and hour when first I received those truths in my own soul—when they were, as John Bunyan says, burnt into my heart as with a hot iron, and I can recollect how I felt that I had grown on a sudden from a babe into a man—that I had made progress in Scriptural knowledge, through having found, once for all, the clue to the truth of God. One week-night, when I was sitting in the house of God, I was not thinking much about the preacher's sermon, for I did not believe it. The thought struck me, *How did you come to be a Christian?* I sought the Lord. *But how did you come to seek the Lord?* The truth flashed across my mind in a moment—I should not have sought Him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to *make me* seek Him. I prayed, thought I, but then I asked myself, *How came I to pray?* I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. *How*

*came I to read the Scriptures?* I did read them, but what led me to do so? Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, and that He was the Author of my faith, and so the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me, and from that doctrine I have not departed to this day, and I desire to make this my constant confession, "I ascribe my change wholly to God."

I once attended a service where the text happened to be, "*He shall choose our inheritance for us;*" and the good man who occupied the pulpit was more than a little of an Arminian. Therefore, when he commenced, he said, "This passage refers entirely to our temporal inheritance, it has nothing whatever to do with our everlasting destiny, for," said he, "we do not want Christ to choose for us in the matter of Heaven or hell. It is so plain and easy, that every man who has a grain of common sense will choose Heaven, and any person would know better than to choose hell. We have no need of any superior intelligence, or any greater Being, to choose Heaven or hell for us. It is left to our own free-will, and we have enough wisdom given us, sufficiently correct means to judge for ourselves," and therefore, as he very logically inferred, there was no necessity for Jesus Christ, or anyone, to make a choice for us. We could choose the inheritance for ourselves without any assistance. "Ah!" I thought, "but, my good brother, it may be very true that we *could*, but I think we should want something more than common sense before we *should* choose aright."

First, let me ask, must we not all of us admit an over-ruling Providence, and the appointment of Jehovah's hand, as to the means whereby we came into this world? Those men who think that, afterwards, we are left to our own free-will to choose this one or the other to direct our steps, must admit that our entrance into the world was not of our own will, but that God had then to choose for us. What circumstances were those in our power which led us to elect certain persons to be our parents? Had we anything to do with it? Did not God Himself appoint our parents, native place, and friends? Could He not have caused me to be born with the skin of the Hottentot, brought forth by a filthy mother who would nurse me in her "kraal," and teach me to bow down to Pagan gods, quite as easily as to have given me a pious mother, who would each morning and night bend her knee in prayer on my behalf? Or, might He not, if He had pleased, have given me some profligate to have been my parent, from whose lips I might have early heard fearful, filthy, and obscene language? Might He not have placed me where I should have had a drunken father, who would have immured me in a very dungeon of ignorance, and brought me up in the chains of crime? Was it not God's Providence that I had so happy a lot, that both my parents were His children, and endeavoured to train me up in the fear of the Lord?

John Newton used to tell a whimsical story, and laugh at it, too, of a good woman who said, in order to prove the doctrine of election, "Ah! sir, the Lord must have loved me before I was born, or else He would not have seen anything in me to love afterwards."

I am sure it is true in my case; I believe the doctrine of election, because I am quite certain that, if God had not chosen me, I should never have chosen Him; and I am sure He chose me before I was born, or else He never would have chosen me afterwards; and He must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why He should have looked upon me with special love. So I am forced to accept that great Biblical doctrine. I recollect an Arminian brother telling me that he had read the Scriptures through a score or more times, and could never find the doctrine of election in them. He added that he was sure he would have done so if it had been there, for he read the Word on his knees. I said to him, "I think you read the Bible in a very uncomfortable posture, and if you had read it in your easy chair, you would have been more likely to understand it. Pray, by all means, and the more, the better, but it is a piece of superstition to think there is anything in the posture in which a man puts himself for reading: and as to reading through the Bible twenty times without having found anything about the doctrine of election, the wonder is that you found anything at all: you must have galloped through it at such a rate that you were not likely to have any intelligible idea of the meaning of the Scriptures."

If it would be marvelous to see one river leap up from the earth full-grown, what would it be to gaze upon a vast spring from which all the rivers of the earth should at once come bubbling up, a million of them born at a birth? What a vision would it be! Who can conceive it. And yet the love of God is that fountain, from which all the rivers of mercy, which have ever gladdened our race—all the rivers of grace in time, and of glory hereafter—take their rise. My soul, stand thou at that sacred fountain-head, and adore and magnify, for ever and ever, God, even our Father, who hath loved us! In the very beginning, when this great universe lay in the mind of God, like unborn forests in the acorn cup; long ere the echoes awoke the solitudes; before the mountains were brought forth; and long ere the light flashed through the sky, God loved His chosen creatures. Before there was any created being—when the ether was not fanned by an angel's wing, when space itself had not an existence, when there was nothing save God alone—even then, in that loneliness of Deity, and in that deep quiet and profundity, His bowels moved with love for His chosen. Their names were written on His heart, and then were they dear to His soul. Jesus loved His people before the foundation of the world—even from eternity! and when He called me by His grace, He said to me, "I have loved *thee* with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

Then, in the fulness of time, He purchased me with His blood; He let His heart run out in one deep gaping wound for me long ere I loved Him. Yea, when He first came to me, did I not spurn Him? When He knocked at the door, and asked for entrance, did I not drive Him away, and do despite to His grace? Ah, I can remember that I full often did so until, at last, by the power of His effectual grace, He said, "I must, I will come



in;" and then He turned my heart, and made me love Him. But even till now I should have resisted Him, had it not been for His grace. Well, then since He purchased me when I was dead in sins, does it not follow, as a consequence necessary and logical, that He must have loved me first? Did my Saviour die for me because I believed on Him? No; I was not then in existence; I had then no being. Could the Saviour, therefore, have died because I had faith, when I myself was not yet born? Could that have been possible? Could that have been the origin of the Saviour's love towards me? Oh! no; my Saviour died for me long before I believed. "But," says someone, "He foresaw that you would have faith; and, therefore, He loved you." What did He foresee about my faith? Did He foresee that I should get that faith myself, and that I should believe on Him of myself? No; Christ could not foresee that, because no Christian man will ever say that faith came of itself without the gift and without the working of the Holy Spirit. I have met with a great many believers, and talked with them about this matter; but I never knew one who could put his hand on his heart, and say, "I believed in Jesus without the assistance of the Holy Spirit."

I am bound to the doctrine of the depravity of the human heart, because I find myself depraved in heart, and have daily proofs that in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing. If God enters into covenant with unfallen man, man is so insignificant a creature that it must be an act of gracious condescension on the Lord's part; but if God enters into covenant with *sinful* man, he is then so offensive a creature that it must be, on God's part, an act of pure, free, rich, sovereign grace. When the Lord entered into covenant with me, I am sure that it was all of grace, nothing else but grace. When I remember what a den of unclean beasts and birds my heart was, and how strong was my unrenewed will, how obstinate and rebellious against the sovereignty of the Divine rule, I always feel inclined to take the very lowest room in my Father's house, and when I enter Heaven, it will be to go among the less than the least of all saints, and with the chief of sinners.

The late lamented Mr. Denham has put, at the foot of his portrait, a most admirable text, "Salvation is of the Lord." That is just an epitome of Calvinism; it is the sum and substance of it. If anyone should ask me what I mean by a Calvinist, I should reply, "He is one who says, *Salvation is of the Lord.*" I cannot find in Scripture any other doctrine than this. It is the essence of the Bible. "He *only* is my rock and my salvation." Tell me anything contrary to this truth, and it will be a heresy; tell me a heresy, and I shall find its essence here, that it has departed from this great, this fundamental, this rock-truth, "God is my rock and my salvation." What is the heresy of Rome, but the addition of something to the perfect merits of Jesus Christ—the bringing in of the works of the flesh, to assist in our justification? And what is the heresy of Arminianism but the addition of something to the work of the Redeemer? Every heresy, if brought to the touchstone, will discover itself here. I have my own private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified,

unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the gospel, if we do not preach justification by faith, without works; nor unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace; nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the gospel, unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the cross; nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called, and suffers the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation after having once believed in Jesus. Such a gospel I abhor.

"If ever it should come to pass,  
That sheep of Christ might fall away,  
My fickle, feeble soul, alas!  
Would fall a thousand times a day."

If one dear saint of God had perished, so might all; if one of the covenant ones be lost, so may all be; and then there is no gospel promise true, but the Bible is a lie, and there is nothing in it worth my acceptance. I will be an infidel at once when I can believe that a saint of God can ever fall finally. If God hath loved me once, then He will love me for ever. God has a master-mind; He arranged everything in His gigantic intellect long before He did it; and once having settled it, He never alters it, "This shall be done," saith He, and the iron hand of destiny marks it down, and it is brought to pass. "This is My purpose," and it stands, nor can earth or hell alter it. "This is My decree," saith He, "promulgate it, ye holy angels; rend it down from the gate of Heaven, ye devils, if ye can; but ye cannot alter the decree, it shall stand for ever." God altereth not His plans; why should He? He is Almighty, and therefore can perform His pleasure. Why should He? He is the All-wise, and therefore cannot have planned wrongly. Why should He? He is the everlasting God, and therefore cannot die before His plan is accomplished. Why should He change? Ye worthless atoms of earth, ephemera of a day, ye creeping insects upon this bay-leaf of existence, ye may change *your* plans, but He shall never, never change *His*. Has He told me that His plan is to save me? If so, I am for ever safe.

"My name from the palms of His hands  
Eternity will not erase;  
Impress'd on His heart it remains,  
In marks of indelible grace."

I do not know how some people, who believe that a Christian can fall from grace, manage to be happy. It must be a very commendable thing in them to be able to get through a day without despair. If I did not believe the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, I think I should be of all men the most miserable, because I should lack any ground of comfort. I could not say, whatever state of heart I came

into, that I should be like a well-spring of water, whose stream fails not; I should rather have to take the comparison of an intermittent spring, that might stop on a sudden, or a reservoir, which I had no reason to expect would always be full. I believe that the happiest of Christians and the truest of Christians are those who never dare to doubt God, but who take His Word simply as it stands, and believe it, and ask no questions, just feeling assured that if God has said it, it will be so. I bear my willing testimony that I have no reason, nor even the shadow of a reason, to doubt my Lord, and I challenge Heaven, and earth, and hell, to bring any proof that God is untrue. From the depths of hell I call the fiends, and from this earth I call the tried and afflicted believers, and to Heaven I appeal, and challenge the long experience of the blood-washed host, and there is not to be found in the three realms a single person who can bear witness to one fact which can disprove the faithfulness of God, or weaken His claim to be trusted by His servants. There are many things that may or may not happen, but this I know *shall* happen—

"He *shall* present my soul,  
Unblemish'd and complete,  
Before the glory of His face,  
With joys divinely great."

All the purposes of man have been defeated, but not the purposes of God. The promises of man may be broken—many of them are made to be broken—but the promises of God shall all be fulfilled. He is a promise-maker, but He never was a promise-breaker; He is a promise-keeping God, and every one of His people shall prove it to be so. This is my grateful, personal confidence, "The Lord *will* perfect that which concerneth *me*"—unworthy *me*, lost and ruined *me*. He will yet save me; and—

"I, among the blood-wash'd throng,  
Shall wave the palm, and wear the crown,  
And shout loud victory."

I go to a land which the plough of earth hath never upturned, where it is greener than earth's best pastures, and richer than her most abundant harvests ever saw. I go to a building of more gorgeous architecture than man hath ever builded; it is not of mortal design; it is "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens." All I shall know and enjoy in Heaven, will be given to me by the Lord, and I shall say, when at last I appear before Him—

"Grace all the work shall crown  
Through everlasting days;  
It lays in Heaven the topmost stone,  
And well deserves the praise."

I know there are some who think it necessary to their system of theology to limit the

merit of the blood of Jesus: if my theological system needed such a limitation, I would cast it to the winds. I cannot, I dare not allow the thought to find a lodging in my mind, it seems so near akin to blasphemy. In Christ's finished work I see an ocean of merit; my plummet finds no bottom, my eye discovers no shore. There must be sufficient efficacy in the blood of Christ, if God had so willed it, to have saved not only all in this world, but all in ten thousand worlds, had they transgressed their Maker's law. Once admit infinity into the matter, and limit is out of the question. Having a Divine Person for an offering, it is not consistent to conceive of limited value; bound and measure are terms inapplicable to the Divine sacrifice. The intent of the Divine purpose fixes the *application* of the infinite offering, but does not change it into a finite work. Think of the numbers upon whom God has bestowed His grace already. Think of the countless hosts in Heaven: if thou wert introduced there to-day, thou wouldst find it as easy to tell the stars, or the sands of the sea, as to count the multitudes that are before the throne even now. They have come from the East, and from the West, from the North, and from the South, and they are sitting down with Abraham, and with Isaac, and with Jacob in the Kingdom of God; and beside those in Heaven, think of the saved ones on earth. Blessed be God, His elect on earth are to be counted by millions, I believe, and the days are coming, brighter days than these, when there shall be multitudes upon multitudes brought to know the Saviour, and to rejoice in Him. The Father's love is not for a few only, but for an exceeding great company. "A great multitude, which no man could number," will be found in Heaven. A man can reckon up to very high figures; set to work your Newtons, your mightiest calculators, and they can count great numbers, but God and God alone can tell the multitude of His redeemed. I believe there will be more in Heaven than in hell. If anyone asks me why I think so, I answer, because Christ, in everything, is to "have the pre-eminence," and I cannot conceive how He could have the pre-eminence if there are to be more in the dominions of Satan than in Paradise. Moreover, I have never read that there is to be in hell a great multitude, which no man could number. I rejoice to know that the souls of all infants, as soon as they die, speed their way to Paradise. Think what a multitude there is of them! Then there are already in Heaven unnumbered myriads of the spirits of just men made perfect—the redeemed of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues up till now; and there are better times coming, when the religion of Christ shall be universal; when—

"He shall reign from pole to pole,  
With illimitable sway;"

when whole kingdoms shall bow down before Him, and nations shall be born in a day, and in the thousand years of the great millennial state there will be enough saved to make up all the deficiencies of the thousands of years that have gone before. Christ shall be Master everywhere, and His praise shall be sounded in every land. Christ shall have the pre-eminence at last; His train shall be far larger than that which shall attend

the chariot of the grim monarch of hell.

Some persons love the doctrine of universal atonement because they say, "It is so beautiful. It is a lovely idea that Christ should have died for all men; it commends itself," they say, "to the instincts of humanity; there is something in it full of joy and beauty." I admit there is, but beauty may be often associated with falsehood. There is much which I might admire in the theory of universal redemption, but I will just show what the supposition necessarily involves. If Christ on His cross intended to save every man, then He intended to save those who were lost before He died. If the doctrine be true, that He died for all men, then He died for some who were in hell before He came into this world, for doubtless there were even then myriads there who had been cast away because of their sins. Once again, if it was Christ's intention to save all men, how deplorably has He been disappointed, for we have His own testimony that there is a lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, and into that pit of woe have been cast some of the very persons who, according to the theory of universal redemption, were bought with His blood. That seems to me a conception a thousand times more repulsive than any of those consequences which are said to be associated with the Calvinistic and Christian doctrine of special and particular redemption. To think that my Saviour died for men who were or are in hell, seems a supposition too horrible for me to entertain. To imagine for a moment that He was the Substitute for all the sons of men, and that God, having first punished the Substitute, afterwards punished the sinners themselves, seems to conflict with all my ideas of Divine justice. That Christ should offer an atonement and satisfaction for the sins of all men, and that afterwards some of those very men should be punished for the sins for which Christ had already atoned, appears to me to be the most monstrous iniquity that could ever have been imputed to Saturn, to Janus, to the goddess of the Thugs, or to the most diabolical heathen deities. God forbid that we should ever think thus of Jehovah, the just and wise and good!

There is no soul living who holds more firmly to the doctrines of grace than I do, and if any man asks me whether I am ashamed to be called a Calvinist, I answer—I wish to be called nothing but a Christian; but if you ask me, do I hold the doctrinal views which were held by John Calvin, I reply, I do in the main hold them, and rejoice to avow it. But far be it from me even to imagine that Zion contains none but Calvinistic Christians within her walls, or that there are none saved who do not hold our views. Most atrocious things have been spoken about the character and spiritual condition of John Wesley, the modern prince of Arminians. I can only say concerning him that, while I detest many of the doctrines which he preached, yet for the man himself I have a reverence second to no Wesleyan; and if there were wanted two apostles to be added to the number of the twelve, I do not believe that there could be found two men more fit to be so added than George Whitefield and John Wesley. The character of John Wesley stands beyond all imputation for self-sacrifice, zeal, holiness, and

communion with God; he lived far above the ordinary level of common Christians, and was one "of whom the world was not worthy." I believe there are multitudes of men who cannot see these truths, or, at least, cannot see them in the way in which we put them, who nevertheless have received Christ as their Saviour, and are as dear to the heart of the God of grace as the soundest Calvinist in or out of Heaven.

I do not think I differ from any of my Hyper-Calvinistic brethren in what I do believe, but I differ from them in what they do not believe. I do not hold any less than they do, but I hold a little more, and, I think, a little more of the truth revealed in the Scriptures. Not only are there a few cardinal doctrines, by which we can steer our ship North, South, East, or West, but as we study the Word, we shall begin to learn something about the North-west and North-east, and all else that lies between the four cardinal points. The system of truth revealed in the Scriptures is not simply one straight line, but two; and no man will ever get a right view of the gospel until he knows how to look at the two lines at once. For instance, I read in one Book of the Bible, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Yet I am taught, in another part of the same inspired Word, that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." I see, in one place, God in providence presiding over all, and yet I see, and I cannot help seeing, that man acts as he pleases, and that God has left his actions, in a great measure, to his own free-will. Now, if I were to declare that man was so free to act that there was no control of God over his actions, I should be driven very near to atheism; and if, on the other hand, I should declare that God so over-rules all things that man is not free enough to be responsible, I should be driven at once into Antinomianism or fatalism. That God predestines, and yet that man is responsible, are two facts that few can see clearly. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory to each other. If, then, I find taught in one part of the Bible that everything is fore-ordained, *that is true*; and if I find, in another Scripture, that man is responsible for all his actions, *that is true*; and it is only my folly that leads me to imagine that these two truths can ever contradict each other. I do not believe they can ever be welded into one upon any earthly anvil, but they certainly shall be one in eternity. They are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the human mind which pursues them farthest will never discover that they converge, but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring.

It is often said that the doctrines we believe have a tendency to lead us to sin. I have heard it asserted most positively, that those high doctrines which we love, and which we find in the Scriptures, are licentious ones. I do not know who will have the hardihood to make that assertion, when they consider that the holiest of men have been believers in them. I ask the man who dares to say that Calvinism is a licentious religion, what he thinks of the character of Augustine, or Calvin, or Whitefield, who in

successive ages were the great exponents of the system of grace; or what will he say of the Puritans, whose works are full of them? Had a man been an Arminian in those days, he would have been accounted the vilest heretic breathing, but now *we* are looked upon as the heretics, and they as the orthodox. *We* have gone back to the old school; *we* can trace our descent from the apostles. It is that vein of free-grace, running through the sermonizing of Baptists, which has saved us as a denomination. Were it not for that, we should not stand where we are today. We can run a golden line up to Jesus Christ Himself, through a holy succession of mighty fathers, who all held these glorious truths; and we can ask concerning them, "Where will you find holier and better men in the world?" No doctrine is so calculated to preserve a man from sin as the doctrine of the grace of God. Those who have called it "a licentious doctrine" did not know anything at all about it. Poor ignorant things, they little knew that their own vile stuff was the most licentious doctrine under Heaven. If they knew the grace of God in truth, they would soon see that there was no preservative from lying like a knowledge that we are elect of God from the foundation of the world. There is nothing like a belief in my eternal perseverance, and the immutability of my Father's affection, which can keep me near to Him from a motive of simple gratitude. Nothing makes a man so virtuous as belief of the truth. A lying doctrine will soon beget a lying practice. A man cannot have an erroneous belief without by-and-by having an erroneous life. I believe the one thing naturally begets the other. Of all men, those have the most disinterested piety, the sublimest reverence, the most ardent devotion, who believe that they are saved by grace, without works, through faith, and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God. Christians should take heed, and see that it always is so, lest by any means Christ should be crucified afresh, and put to an open shame.

## **The Five Points of Calvinism**

**Robert L. Dabney**

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Historically, this title is of little accuracy or worth; I use it to denote certain points of doctrine, because custom has made it familiar. Early in the seventeenth century the Presbyterian Church of Holland, whose doctrinal confession is the same in substance with ours, was much troubled by a species of new-school minority, headed by one of its preachers and professors, James Harmensen, in Latin, Arminius (hence, ever since, Arminians). Church and state have always been united in Holland; hence the civil government took up the quarrel. Professor Harmensen (Arminius) and his party were required to appear before the State's General (what we would call Federal Congress) and say what their objections were against the doctrines of their own church, which they had freely promised in their ordination vows to teach. Arminius handed in a

writing in which he named five points of doctrine concerning which he and his friends either differed or doubted. These points were virtually: Original sin, unconditional predestination, invincible grace in conversion, particular redemption, and perseverance of saints. I may add, the result was: that the Federal legislature ordered the holding of a general council of all the Presbyterian churches then in the world, to discuss anew and settle these five doctrines. This was the famous Synod of Dort, or Dordrecht, where not only Holland ministers, but delegates from the French, German, Swiss, and British churches met in 1618. The Synod adopted the rule that every doctrine should be decided by the sole authority of the word of God, leaving out all human philosophies and opinions on both sides. The result was a short set of articles which were made a part thenceforward of the Confession of Faith of the Holland Presbyterian Church. They are clear, sound, and moderate, exactly the same in substance with those of our Westminster Confession, enacted twenty-seven years afterward.

I have always considered this paper handed in by Arminius as of little worth or importance. It is neither honest nor clear. On several points it seeks cunningly to insinuate doubts or to confuse the minds of opponents by using the language of pretended orthodoxy. But as the debate went on, the differences of the Arminians disclosed themselves as being, under a pretended new name nothing in the world but the old semi-pelagianism which had been plaguing the churches for a thousand years, the cousin-german of the Socinian or Unitarian creed. Virtually it denied that the fallen Adam had brought man's heart into an entire and decisive alienation from God; it asserted that his election of grace was not sovereign, but founded in his own foresight of the faith, repentance and perseverance of such as would choose to embrace the gospel. That grace in effectual calling is not efficacious and invincible, but resistible, so that all actual conversions are the joint result of this grace and the sinner's will working abreast. That Christ died equally for the non-elect and the elect, providing an indefinite, universal atonement for all; and that true converts may, and sometimes do, fall away totally and finally from the state of grace and salvation; their perseverance therein depending not on efficacious grace, but on their own free will to continue in gospel duties.

Let any plain mind review these five changes and perversions of Bible truth, and he will see two facts: One, that the debate about them all will hinge mainly upon the first question, whether man's original sin is or is not a complete and decisive enmity to godliness; and the other, that this whole plan is a contrivance to gratify human pride and self-righteousness and to escape that great humbling fact everywhere so prominent in the real gospel, that man's ruin of himself by sin is utter, and the whole credit of his redemption from it is God's.

We Presbyterians care very little about the name Calvinism. We are not ashamed of it; but we are not bound to it. Some opponents seem to harbor the ridiculous notion that



this set of doctrines was the new invention of the Frenchman John Calvin. They would represent us as in this thing followers of him instead of followers of the Bible. This is a stupid historical error. John Calvin no more invented these doctrines than he invented this world which God had created six thousand years before. We believe that he was a very gifted, learned, and, in the main, godly man, who still had his faults. He found substantially this system of doctrines just where we find them, in the faithful study of the Bible, where we see them taught by all the prophets, apostles, and the Messiah himself, from Genesis to Revelation.

Calvin also found the same doctrines handed down by the best, most learned, most godly, uninspired church fathers, as Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas, still running through the errors of popery. He wielded a wide influence over the Protestant churches; but the Westminster Assembly and the Presbyterian churches by no means adopted all Calvin's opinions. Like the Synod of Dort, we draw our doctrines, not from any mortal man or human philosophy, but from the Holy Ghost speaking in the Bible. Yet, we do find some inferior comfort in discovering these same doctrines of grace in the most learned and pious of all churches and ages; of the great fathers of Romanism, of Martin Luther, of Blaise Pascal, of the original Protestant churches, German, Swiss, French, Holland, English and Scotch, and far the largest part of the real scriptural churches of our own day. The object of this tractate is simply to enable all honest inquirers after truth to understand just what those doctrines really are which people style the peculiar "doctrines of Presbyterians," and thus to enable honest minds to answer all objections and perversions. I do not write because of any lack in our church of existing treatises well adapted to our purpose; nor because I think anyone can now add anything really new to the argument. But our pastors and missionaries think that some additional good may come from another short discussion suitable for unprofessional readers. To such I would earnestly recommend two little books, Dr. Mathews's on the Divine Purpose, and Dr. Nathan Rice's God Sovereign and Man Free. For those who wish to investigate these doctrines more extensively there are, in addition to their Bible, the standard works in the English language on doctrinal divinity, such as Calvin's Institutes (translated), Witsius on the Covenants, Dr. William Cunningham's, of Edinburgh, Hill's and Dicks's Theologies, and in the United States those of Hodge, Dabney, and Shedd. All these can be purchased from or through our Assembly's Committee of Publication, No. 1001 Main street Richmond, Va., and sent by mail.

## **I. WHAT PRESBYTERIANS REALLY MEAN BY "ORIGINAL SIN," "TOTAL DEPRAVITY," AND "INABILITY OF THE WILL"**

Confession of Faith, Chapter IX, Section iii. "Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto."

By original sin we mean the evil quality which characterizes man's natural disposition and will. We call this sin of nature original, because each fallen man is born with it, and because it is the source or origin in each man of his actual transgressions.

By calling it total, we do not mean that men are from their youth as bad as they can be. Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, "deceiving and being deceived." (2 Tim. 3:13) Nor do we mean that they have no social virtues towards their fellowmen in which they are sincere. We do not assert with extremists that because they are natural men, therefore all their friendship, honesty, truth, sympathy, patriotism, domestic love, are pretenses or hypocrisies. What our Confession says is, "That they have wholly lost ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation." The worst retain some, and the better much, ability of will for sundry moral goods accompanying social life. Christ teaches this (Mark 10:21) when, beholding the social virtues of the rich young man who came kneeling unto him, "He loved him," Christ could never love mere hypocrisies. What we teach is, that by the fall man's moral nature has undergone an utter change to sin, irreparable by himself. In this sense it is complete, decisive, or total. The state is as truly sinful as their actual transgressions, because it is as truly free and spontaneous. This original sin shows itself in all natural men in a fixed and utter opposition of heart to some forms of duty, and especially and always to spiritual duties, owing to God, and in a fixed and absolutely decisive purpose of heart to continue in some sins (even while practicing some social duties), and especially to continue in their sins of unbelief, impenitence, self-will, and practical godlessness. In this the most moral are as inflexibly determined by nature as the most immoral. The better part may sincerely respect sundry rights and duties regarding their fellowmen, but in the resolve that self-will shall be their rule, whenever they please, as against God's sovereign holy will, these are as inexorable as the most wicked. I suppose that a refined and genteelly reared young lady presents the least sinful specimen of unregenerate human nature. Examine such a one. Before she would be guilty of theft, profane swearing, drunkenness, or impurity, she would die. In her opposition to these sins she is truly sincere. But there are some forms of self-will, especially in sins of omission as against God, in which she is just as determined as the most brutal drunkard is in his sensuality. She has, we will suppose, a Christian mother. She is determined to pursue certain fashionable conformities and dissipations. She has a light novel under her pillow which she intends to read on the Sabbath. Though she may still sometimes repeat like a parrot her nursery prayers, her's is spiritually a prayerless life. Especially is her heart fully set in her not to forsake at this time her life of self-will and worldliness for Christ's service and her salvation. Tenderly and solemnly her Christian mother may ask her, "My daughter, do you not know that in these things you are wrong toward your heavenly Father" She is silent. She knows she is wrong. "My daughter, will you not therefore now relent, and choose for your Savior's sake, this very day, the life of faith and repentance, and especially begin tonight the life of regular, real, secret prayer. Will you?" Probably her answer is in a

tone of cold and bitter pain. "Mother, don't press me, I would rather not promise." No; she will not! Her refusal may be civil in form, because she is well-bred; but her heart is as inflexibly set in her as the hardened steel not at this time to turn truly from her self-will to her God. In that particular her stubbornness is just the same as that of the most hardened sinners. Such is the best type of unregenerate humanity.

Now, the soul's duties towards God are the highest, dearest, and most urgent of all duties; so that willful disobedience herein is the most express, most guilty, and most hardening of all the sins that the soul commits. God's perfections and will are the most supreme and perfect standard of moral right and truth. Therefore, he who sets himself obstinately against God's right is putting himself in the most fatal and deadly opposition to moral goodness. God's grace is the one fountain of holiness for rational creatures; hence, he who separates himself from this God by this hostile self-will, shuts himself in to ultimate spiritual death. This rooted, godless, self-will is the eating cancer of the soul. That soul may remain for a time like the body of a young person tainted with undeveloped cancer, apparently attractive and pretty. But the cancer is spreading the secret seeds of corruption through all the veins; it will break out at last in putrid ulcers, the blooming body will become a ghastly corpse. There is no human remedy. To drop the figure; when the sinful soul passes beyond the social restraints and natural affections of this life, and beyond hope, into the world of the lost, this fatal root, sin of willful godlessness will soon develop into all forms of malignity and wickedness; the soul will become finally and utterly dead to God and to good. This is what we mean by total depravity.

Once more, Presbyterians do not believe they lose their free-agency because of original sin. See our Confession, Chapter 9., Section 1: "God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined, to good or evil." We fully admit that where an agent is not free he is not morally responsible. A just God will never punish him for actions in which he is merely an instrument, impelled by the compulsion of external force or fate. But what is free agency? There is no need to call in any abstruse metaphysics to the sufficient answer. Let every man's consciousness and common sense tell him: I know that I am free whenever what I choose to do is the results of my own preference.

I choose and act so as to please myself, then I am free. That is to say, our responsible volitions are the expression and the result of our own rational preference. When I am free and responsible it is because I choose and do the thing which I do, not compelled by some other agents, but in accordance with my own inward preference. We all know self- evidently that this is so. But is rational preference in us a mere haphazard state? Do our reasonable souls contain no original principles regulative of their preferences and choices? Were this so, then would man's soul be indeed a miserable weathercock, wheeled about by every outward wind; not fit to be either free, rational or responsible. We all know that we have such first principles regulative of our preferences; and these

are own natural dispositions. They are inward, not external They are spontaneous, not compelled, and so as free as our choices. They are our own, not somebody else's. They are ourselves. They are essential attributes in any being possessed of personality. Every rational person must have some kind of natural disposition. We can conceive of one person as naturally disposed this way, and of another that way. It is impossible for us to think a rational free agent not disposed any way at all. Try it. We have capital illustrations of what native disposition is in the corporeal propensities of animals. It is the nature of a colt to like grass and hay. It is the nature of a bouncing schoolboy to like hot sausage. You may tole the colt with a bunch of nice hay, but not the boy; it is the hot sausage [that] will fetch him when he is hungry; offer the hot sausage to the colt and he will reject it and shudder at it. Now both the colt and the boy are free in choosing what they like; free be cause their choices follow their own natural likings, i. e., their own animal dispositions.

But rational man has mental dispositions which are better than illustrations, actual cases of native principles regulating natural choices. Thus, when happiness or misery may be chosen simply for their own sakes, every man's natural disposition is towards happiness and against misery. Again, man naturally loves property; all are naturally disposed to gain and to keep their own rather than to lose it for nothing. Once more, every man is naturally disposed to enjoy the approbation and praise of his fellow-men; and their contempt and abuse are naturally painful to him. In all these cases men choose according as they prefer, and they prefer according to their natural dispositions, happiness rather than misery, gain rather than loss, applause rather than abuse. They are free in these choices as they are sure to choose in the given way. And they are as certain to choose agreeably to these original dispositions as rivers are to run downwards; equally certain and equally free, because the dispositions which certainly regulate their preferences are their own, not some one else's, and are spontaneous in them, not compelled.

Let us apply one of these cases. I make this appeal to a company of aspiring young ladies and gentlemen: "Come and engage with me of your free choice in this given course of labor; it will be long and arduous; but I can assure you of a certain result. I promise you that, by this laborious effort, you shall make yourselves the most despised and abused set of young people in the State." Will this succeed in inducing them? Can it succeed? No; it will not, and we justly say, it cannot. But are not these young persons free when they answer me, as they certainly will, "No, Teacher, we will not, and we cannot commit the folly of working hard solely to earn contempt, because contempt is in itself contrary and painful to our nature." This is precisely parallel to what Presbyterians mean by inability of will to all spiritual good. It is just as real and certain as inability of faculty. These young people have the fingers therewith to perform the proposed labor, let us say of writing, by which I invite them to toil for the earning of contempt. They have eyes and fingers wherewith to do penmanship, but they cannot freely choose my offer, because it contradicts that principle of their

nature, love of applause, which infallibly regulates free human preference and choice. Here is an exact case of "inability of will." If, now, man's fall has brought into his nature a similar native principle or disposition against godliness for its own sake, and in favor of self-will as against God, then a parallel case of inability of will presents itself. The former case explains the latter. The natural man's choice in preferring his self-will to God's authority is equally free, and equally certain. But this total lack of ability of will toward God does not suspend man's responsibility, because it is the result of his own free disposition, not from any compulsion from without. If a master would require his servant to do a bodily act for which he naturally had not the bodily faculty, as, for instance, the pulling up of a healthy oak tree with his hands, it would be unjust to punish the servant's failure. But this is wholly another case than the sinner's. For, if his natural disposition towards God were what it ought to be, he would not find himself deprived of the natural faculties by which God is known, loved, and served. The sinner's case is not one of extinction of faculties, but of their thorough willful perversion. It is just like the case of Joseph's wicked brethren, of whom Moses says (Gen. 37:4): "That they hated their brother Joseph, so that they could not speak peaceably unto him." They had tongues in their heads? Yes. They could speak in words whatever they chose, but hatred, the wicked voluntary principle, ensured that they would not, and could not, speak kindly to their innocent brother.

Now, then, all the argument turns upon the question of fact: is it so that since Adam's fall the natural disposition of all men is in this state of fixed, decisive enmity against God's will, and fixed, inexorable preference for their own self-will, as against God? Is it true that man is in this lamentable state, that while still capable of being rightly disposed toward sundry virtues and duties, terminating on his fellow creatures, his heart is inexorably indisposed and willfully opposed to those duties which he owes to his heavenly Father directly? That is the question! Its best and shortest proof would be the direct appeal to every man's conscience. I know that it was just so with me for seventeen years, until God's almighty hand took away the heart of stone and gave me a heart of flesh. Every converted man confesses the same of himself. Every unconverted man well knows that it is now true of himself, if he would allow his judgment and conscience to look honestly within. Unbeliever, you may at times desire even earnestly the impunity, the safety from hell, and the other selfish advantages of the Christian life; but did you ever prefer and desire that life for its own sake? Did you ever see the moment when you really wished God to subjugate all your self-will to his holy will? No ! That is the very thing which the secret disposition of your soul utterly resents and rejects. The retention of that self-will is the very thing which you so obstinately prefer, that as long as you dare you mean to retain it and cherish it, even at the known risk of an unprepared death and a horrible perdition. But I will add other proofs of this awful fact, and especially the express testimony of the Holy Spirit.

There is the universal fact that all men sin more or less, and do it willfully. In the lives of most unrenewed men, sin reigns prevalently. The large majority are dishonest,

unjust, selfish, cruel, as far as they dare to be, even to their fellow creatures, not to say utterly godless to their heavenly Father. The cases like that of the well-bred young lady, described above, are relatively few, fatally defective as they are. This dreadful reign of sin in this world continues in spite of great obstacles, such as God's judgments and threatenings, and laborious efforts to curb it in the way of governments, restrictive laws and penalties, schools, family discipline, and churches. This sinning of human beings begins more or less as soon as the child's faculties are so developed as to qualify him for sinning intentionally. "The wicked go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." Now, a uniform result must proceed from a regular prior cause--there must be original sin in man's nature.

Even the great rationalistic philosopher, Emmanuel Kant, believed and taught this doctrine. His argument is, that when men act in the aggregate and in national masses, they show out their real native dispositions, because in these concurrent actions they are not restrained by public opinion and by human laws restricting individual actions, and they do not feel immediate personal responsibility for what they do. The actions of men in the aggregate, therefore, shows what man's heart really is. Now, then, what are the morals of the nations towards each other and towards God? Simply those of foxes, wolves, tigers, and atheists. What national senate really and humbly tries to please and obey God in its treatment of neighbor nations? What nation trusts its safety simply to the justice of its neighbors? Look at the great standing armies and fleets! Though the nation may include many God-fearing and righteous persons, when is that nation ever seen to forego a profitable aggression upon the weak, simply because it is unjust before God? These questions are unanswerable.

In the third place, all natural men, the decent and genteel just as much as the vile, show this absolute opposition of heart to God's will, and preference for self-will in some sinful acts and by rejecting the gospel. This they do invariably, knowingly, willfully, and with utter obstinacy, until they are made willing in the day of God's power. They know with Perfect clearness that the gospel requirements of faith, trust, repentance, endeavors after sincere obedience, God's righteous law, prayer, praise, and love to him, are reasonable and right. Outward objects or inducements are constantly presented to their souls, which are of infinite moment, and ought to be absolutely omnipotent over right hearts. These objects include the unspeakable love of God in Christ in giving his Son to die for his enemies, which ought to melt the heart to gratitude in an instant; the inexpressible advantages and blessings of an immortal heaven, secured by immediate faith, and the unutterable, infinite horrors of an everlasting hell, incurred by final unbelief, and risked to an awful degree, even by temporary hesitation. And these latter considerations appeal not only to moral conscience, but to that natural selfishness which remains in full force in unbelievers. Nor could doubts concerning these gospel truths, even if sincere and reasonably grounded to some extent, explain or excuse this neglect. For faith, and obedience, and the worship and the love of God, are self-evidently right and good for men, whether

these awful gospel facts be true or not. He who believes is acting on the safe side in that he loses nothing, but gains something whichever way the event may go; whereas neglect of the gospel will have incurred an infinite mischief, with no possible gain should Christianity turn out to be true.

In such cases reasonable men always act, as they are morally bound to do, upon the safe side, under the guidance of even a slight probability. Why do not doubting men act thus on the safe side, even if it were a doubtful case (which it is not)? Because their dispositions are absolutely fixed and determined against godliness. Now, what result do we see from the constant application of these immense persuasives to the hearts of natural men? They invariably put them off; sometimes at the cost of temporary uneasiness or agitation, but they infallibly put them off, preferring, as long as they dare, to gratify self-will at the known risk of plain duty and infinite blessedness. Usually they make this ghastly suicidal and wicked choice with complete coolness, quickness, and ease! They attempt to cover from their own consciences the folly and wickedness of their decision by the fact they can do it so coolly and unfeelingly. My common sense tells me that this very circumstance is the most awful and ghastly proof of the reality and power of original sin in them. If this had not blinded them, they would be horrified at the very coolness with which they can outrage themselves and their Savior. I see two men willfully murder each his enemy. One has given the fatal stab in great agitation, after agonizing hesitations, followed by pungent remorse. He is not yet an adept in murder. I see the other man drive his knife into the breast of his helpless victim promptly, coolly, calmly, jesting while he does it, and then cheerfully eat his food with his bloody knife. This is no longer a man, but a fiend.

But the great proof is the Scripture. The whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, asserts this original sin and decisive ungodliness of will of all fallen men. Gen. 6:3: "My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh (carnally minded)." Again, chap. 6:5: "God saw that every imagination of the man's heart was only evil continually." After the terrors of the flood, God's verdict on the survivors was still the same. Chap. 8:21: "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Job, probably the earliest sacred writer, asks, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." (Chap. 14:4.) David says: "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Ps. 51:5.) Prophet asks (Jer. 13:23), "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." Jeremiah says, chap. 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." What does desperately mean? In the New Testament Christ says (John 3:4 and 5), "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" and "Except ye be born again ye cannot see the kingdom of God." The Pharisees' hearts (decent moral men) are like unto whited sepulchres, which appear beautifully outwardly, but within are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Does Christ exaggerate, and slander decent people?

Peter tells us (Acts 8:23) that the spurious believer is "in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity." Paul (Romans 8:7): "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, "neither indeed can be," (inability of will). (Ephesians ii.): " All men are by nature children of wrath . . . and dead in trespasses and sins." Are not these enough?

## **II. THE NATURE AND AGENCY OF THE MORAL REVOLUTION, NAMED EFFECTUAL CALLING OR REGENERATION.**

This change must be more than an outer reformation of conduct, an inward revolution of first principles which regulate conduct. It must go deeper than a change of purpose as to sin and godliness; it must be a reversal of the original dispositions which hitherto prompted the soul to choose sin and reject godliness. Nothing less grounds a true conversion. As the gluttonous child maybe persuaded by the selfish fear of pain and death to forego the dainties he loves, and to swallow the nauseous drugs which his palate loathes so the ungodly man may be induced by his self-righteousness and selfish fear of hell to forbear the sins he still loves, and submit to the religious duties which his secret soul still detests. But, as the one practice is no real cure of the vice of gluttony in the child, so the other is no real conversion to godliness in the sinner. The child must not only forsake, but really dislike his unhealthy dainties; not only submit to swallow, but really love, the medicines naturally nauseous to him. Selfish fear can do the former; nothing but a physiological change of constitution can do the latter. The natural man must not only submit from selfish fear to the godliness which he detested, he must love it for its own sake, and hate the sins naturally sweet to him. No change can be permanent which does not go thus deep; nothing less is true conversion. God's call to the sinner is: "My son, give me thine heart." (Proverbs 23:26.) God requireth truth in the inward parts and in the hidden parts: "Thou shalt make me to know wisdom." (Psalm 51:6.) "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart." (Deut. 10:16.) But hear especially Christ: "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt." (Matt. 12:33) We call the inward revolution of principles regeneration; the change of life which immediately begins from the new principles conversion. Regeneration is a summary act, conversion a continuous process. Conversion begins in, and proceeds constantly out of, regeneration, as does the continuous growth of a plant out of the first sprouting or quickening of its dry seed. In conversion the renewed soul is an active agent: "God's people are willing in the day of his power." The converted man chooses and acts the new life of faith and obedience heartily and freely, as prompted by the Holy Ghost. In this sense, "He works out his own salvation" (Phil. 2:12.). But manifestly in regeneration, in the initial revolution of disposition, the soul does not act, but is a thing acted on. In this first point there can be no cooperation of the man's will with the divine power. The agency is wholly Gods, and not man's, even in part. The vital change must be affected by immediate direct divine power. God's touch here may be



mysterious; but it must be real, for it is proved by the seen results. The work must be sovereign and supernatural. Sovereign in this sense, that there is no will concerned in its effectuation except God's, because the sinner's will goes against it as invariably, as freely, until it is renewed; supernatural, because there is nothing at all in sinful human nature to begin it, man's whole natural disposition being to prefer and remain in a godless state. As soon as this doctrine is stated, it really proves itself. In our second section we showed beyond dispute that man's natural disposition and will are enmity against God. Does enmity ever turn itself into love? Can nature act above nature? Can the stream raise itself to a higher level than its own source? Nothing can be plainer than this, that since the native disposition and will of man are wholly and decisively against godliness, there is no source within the man out of which the new godly will can come; into the converted man it has come; then it must have come from without, solely from the divine will.

But men cheat themselves with the notion that what they call free-will may choose to respond to valid outward inducements placed before it, so that gospel truth and rational free-will cooperating with it may originate the great change instead of sovereign, efficacious divine grace. Now, any plain mind, if it will think, can see that this is delusive. Is any kind of an object actual inducement to any sort of agent? No, indeed. Is fresh grass an inducement to a tiger? Is bloody flesh an inducement to a lamb to eat? Is a nauseous drug an inducement to a child's palate; or ripe sweet fruit? Useless loss an inducement to the merchant; or useful gain? Are contempt and reproach inducements to aspiring youth; or honor and fame? Manifestly some kinds of objects only are inducements to given sorts of agents; and the opposite objects are repellants. Such is the answer of common sense. Now, what has decided which class of objects shall attract, and which shall repel? Obviously it is the agents' own original, subjective dispositions which have determined this. It is the lamb's nature which has determined that the fresh grass, and not the bloody flesh, shall be the attraction to it. It is human nature in the soul which has determined that useful gain, and not useless loss, shall be inducement to the merchant. Now, then, to influence a man by inducement you must select an object which his own natural disposition has made attractive to him; by pressing the opposite objects on him you only repel him; and the presentation of the objects can never reverse the man's natural disposition, because this has determined in advance which objects will be attractions and which repellants. Effects cannot reverse the very causes on which they themselves depend. The complexion of the child cannot Re-determine the complexion of the father. Now, facts and Scripture teach us (see 2d. Section) that man's original disposition is as freely, as entirely, against God's will and godliness and in favor of self-will and sin. Therefore, godliness can never be of itself inducement, but only repulsion, to the unregenerate soul. Men cheat themselves; they think they are induced by the selfish advantages of an imaginary heaven, an imaginary selfish escape from hell. But this is not regeneration; it is but the sorrows of the world that worketh death, and the hope of

the hypocrite that perisheth.

The different effects of the same preached gospel at the same time and place prove that regeneration is from sovereign grace: "Some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not." (Acts 28:24). This is because, "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." (Acts 13:48). Often those remain unchanged whose social virtues, good habits, and amiability should seem to offer least obstruction to the gospel; while some old, profane, sensual, and hardened sinners become truly converted, whose wickedness and long confirmed habits of sinning must have presented the greatest obstruction to gospel truth. Like causes should produce like effects. Had outward gospel inducements been the real causes, these results of preaching would be impossible. The facts show that the gospel inducements were only instruments, and that in the real conversion the agency was almighty grace.

The erroneous theory of conversion is again powerfully refuted by those cases, often seen, in which gospel truth has remained powerless over certain men for ten, twenty, or fifty years, and at last has seemed to prevail for their genuine conversion. The gospel, urged by the tender lips of a mother, proved too weak to overcome the self-will of the boy's heart. Fifty years afterwards that same gospel seemed to convert a hardened old man! There are two well-known laws of the human soul which show this to be impossible. One is, that facts and inducements often, but fruitlessly, presented to the soul, become weak and trite from vain repetition. The other is, that men's active appetences grow stronger continually by their own indulgence. Here, then, is the case: The gospel when presented to the sensitive boy must have had much more force than it could have to the old man after it had grown stale to him by fifty years of vain repetition. The old man's love of sin must have grown greatly stronger than the boy's by fifty years of constant indulgence. Now how comes it, that a given moral influence which was too weak to overcome the boy's sinfulness has overcome the old man's carnality when the influences had become so much weaker and the resistance to it so much stronger. This is impossible. It was the finger of God, and not the mere moral influence, which wrought the mighty change. Let us suppose that fifty years ago the reader had seen me visit his rural sanctuary, when the grand oaks which now shade it were but lithe saplings. He saw me make an effort to tear one of them with my hands from its seat; but it proved too strong for me. Fifty years after, he and I meet at the same sacred spot, and he sees me repeat my attempt upon the same tree, now grown to be a monarch of the grove. He will incline to laugh me to scorn: "He attempted that same tree fifty years ago, when he was in his youthful prime and it was but a sapling, but he could not move it. Does the old fool think to rend it from its seat now' when age has so diminished his muscle, and the sapling has grown to a mighty tree?" But let us suppose that the reader saw that giant of the grove come up in my aged hands. He would no longer laugh. He would stand awe-struck. He would conclude that this must be the hand of God, not of man. How vain is it to seek to break the force of this demonstration by saying that at last the moral influence of the gospel had received

sufficient accession from attendant circumstances, from clearness and eloquence of presentation, to enable it to do its work? What later eloquence of the pulpit can rival that of the Christian mother presenting the cross in the tender accents of love. Again, the story of the cross, the attractions of heaven, ought to be immense, even when stated in the simplest words of childhood. How trivial and paltry are any additions which mere human rhetoric can make to what ought to be the infinite force of the naked truth.

But the surest proof is that of Scripture. This everywhere asserts that the sinner's regeneration is by sovereign, almighty grace. One class of texts presents those which describe the sinner's prior condition as one of "blindness," Eph. 4:18; "of stony heartedness," Ezek. 36:26; "of impotency," Rom. 5:6; "of enmity," Rom. 8:7; "of inability, John 6:44, and Rom. 7:18; "of deadness," Eph. 2:1-5. Let no one exclaim that these are "figures of speech." Surely the Holy Spirit, when resorting to figures for the very purpose of giving a more forcible expression to truth, does not resort to a deceitful rhetoric! Surely he selects his figures because of the correct parallel between them and his truth!

Now, then, the blind man cannot take part in the very operation which is to open his eyes. The hard stone cannot be a source of softness. The helpless paralytic cannot begin his own restoration. Enmity against God cannot choose love for him, The dead corpse of Lazarus could have no agency in recalling the vital spirit into itself. After Christ's almighty power restored it, the living man could respond to the Savior's command and rise and come forth.

The figures which describe the almighty change prove the same truth. It is described (Ps. 119:18) as an opening of the blind eyes to the law; as a new creation; (Ps. 51:10; Eph. 2:5) as a new birth; (John 3:3) as a quickening or resurrection (making alive); Eph. 1:18, and 2:10). The man blind of cataract does not join the surgeon in couching his own eye; nor does the sunbeam begin and perform the surgical operation; that must take place in order for the light to enter and produce vision.

The timber is shaped by the carpenter; it does not shape itself, and does not become an implement until he gives it the desired shape.

The infant does not procreate itself, but must be born of its parents in order to become a living agent.

The corpse does not restore life to itself; after life is restored it becomes a living agent.

Express scriptures teach the same doctrine. in Jer. xxxi. 18, Ephraim is heard praying thus: "Turn thou to me and I shall be turned." In John 1:12, we are taught that believers are born "not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but

of God." In John 6:44, Christ assures us that "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." And in chap. 15:16, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit." In Eph. 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which Christ hath fore ordained that we should walk in them."

It is objected that this doctrine of almighty grace would destroy man's free-agency. This is not true. All men whom God does not regenerate retain their natural freedom unimpaired by anything which he does to them.

It is true that these use their freedom, as in variably, as voluntarily, by choosing their self-will and unregenerate state. But in doing this they choose in perfect accordance with their own preference, and this the only kind of free-agency known to men of common sense. The unregenerate choose just what they prefer, and therefore choose freely; but so long as not renewed by almighty grace, they always prefer to remain unregenerate, because it is fallen man's nature. The truly regenerate do not lose their free-agency by effectual calling, but regain a truer and higher freedom; for the almighty power which renews them does not force them into a new line of conduct contrary to their own preferences, but reverses the original disposition itself which regulates preference. Under this renewed disposition they now act just as freely as when they were voluntary sinners, but far more reasonably and happily. For they act the new and right preference, which almighty grace has put in place of the old one.

It is objected, again, that unless the agent has exercised his free-will in the very first choice or adoption of the new moral state, there could be no moral quality and no credit for the series of actions proceeding therefrom, because they would not be voluntary. This is expressly false. True, the new-born sinner can claim no merit for that sovereign change of will in which his conversion began, because it was not his own choosing, or doing, but God's; yet the cavil is untrue; the moral quality and merit of a series of actions does not depend on the question, whether the agent put himself into the moral state whence they flow, by a previous volition of his own starting from a moral indifference.

The only question is, whether his actions are sincere, and the free expressions of a right disposition, for:

1. Then Adam could have no morality; for we are expressly told that God "created him upright." (Eccles. vii. 29.)
2. Jesus could have had no meritorious morality, because being conceived of the Holy Ghost he was born that holy thing. (Matt. 1.20; Luke 1.35)
3. God himself could have no meritorious holiness, because he was and is eternally

and unchangeably holy. He never chose himself into a state of holiness, being eternally and necessarily holy. Here, then, this miserable objection runs into actual blasphemy. On this point John Wesley is as expressly with us as Jonathan Edwards. See Wesley, On Original Sin.

### **III. GOD'S ELECTION.**

In our Confession, Chapter III., Section iii., verses 4 and 7, we have this description of it: 3d. "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life and others foreordained to everlasting death." IV. "These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished."

VII. "The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice."

The first and second sections of this tract prove absolutely this sad but stubborn fact, that no sinner ever truly regenerates himself. One sufficient reason is, that none ever wish to do it, but always prefer, while left to themselves by God, to remain as they are, self-willed and worldly. That is to say, no sinner ever makes himself choose God and holiness, because every principle of his soul goes infallibly to decide the opposite preference. Therefore, whenever a sinner is truly regenerated, it must be God that has done it. Take notice, after God has done it, this new-born sinner will, in his subsequent course of repentance and conversion, freely put forth many choices for God and holiness; but it is impossible that this sinner can have put forth the first choice to reverse his own natural principles of choice. Can a child beget its own father? It must have been God that changed the sinner. Then, when he did it he meant to do it. When was this intention to do it born into the divine mind? That same day? The day that sinner was born? The day Adam was made? No! These answers are all foolish. Because God is omniscient and unchangeable he must have known from eternity his own intention to do it. This suggests, second, that no man can date any of God's purposes in time without virtually denying his perfections of omniscience, wisdom, omnipotence, and immutability. Being omniscient, it is impossible he should ever find out afterwards anything he did not know from the first. Being all-wise, it is impossible he should take up a purpose for which his knowledge does not see a reason. Being all-powerful, it is impossible he should ever fail in trying to effect one of his purposes. Hence, whatever God does in nature or grace, he intended to do that thing from eternity. Being unchangeable, it is impossible that he should change his mind to a different purpose after he had once made it up aright under the guidance of infinite knowledge, wisdom, and holiness. All the inferior wisdom of good men but illustrates

this. Here is a wise and righteous general conducting a defensive war to save his country. At mid-summer an observer says to him, "General, have you not changed your plan of campaign since you began it?" He replies, "I have." Says the observer, "Then you must be a fickle person?" He replies, "No, I have changed it not because I was fickle, but for these two reasons: because I have been unable and have failed in some of the necessary points of my first plan; and second, I have found out things I did not know when I began." We say that is perfect common sense, and clears the general from all charge of fickleness. But suppose he were, in fact, almighty and omniscient? Then he could not use those excuses, and if he changed his plan after the beginning he would be fickle. Reader, dare you charge God with fickleness? This is a sublime conception of God's nature and actions, as far above the wisest man's as the heavens above the earth. But it is the one taught us everywhere in Scripture. Let us beware how in our pride of self-will we blaspheme God by denying it. Third. Arminians themselves virtually admit the force of these views and scriptures; for their doctrinal books expressly admit God's particular personal election of every sinner that reaches heaven. A great many ignorant persons suppose that the Arminian theology denies all particular election. This is a stupid mistake. Nobody can deny it without attacking the Scripture, God's perfections, and common sense. The whole difference between Presbyterians and intelligent Arminians is this: We believe that God's election of individuals is unconditioned and sovereign. They believe that while eternal and particular, it is on account of God's eternal, omniscient foresight of the given sinner's future faith and repentance, and perseverance in holy living. But we Presbyterians must dissent for these reasons: It is inconsistent with the eternity, omnipotence, and sovereignty of the great first cause to represent his eternal purposes thus, as grounded in, or conditioned on, anything which one of his dependent creatures would hereafter contingently do or leave undone.

Will or will not that creature ever exist in the future to do or to leave undone any particular thing? That itself must depend on God's sovereign creative power. We must not make an independent God depend upon his own dependent creature. But does not Scripture often represent a salvation or ruin of sinners as conditioned on their own faith or unbelief? Yes. But do not confound two different things. The result ordained by God may depend for its rise upon the suitable means. But the acts of God's mind in ordaining it does not depend on these means, because God's very purpose is this, to bring about the means without fail and the result by the means.

Next, whether God's election of a given sinner, say, Saul of Tarsus, be conditioned or not upon the foresight of his faith, if it is an eternal and omniscient: foresight it must be a certain one. Common sense says: no cause, no effect; an uncertain cause can only give an uncertain effect. Says the Arminian: God certainly foresaw that Saul of Tarsus would believe and repent, and, therefore, elected him. But I say, that if God certainly foresaw Saul's faith, it must have been certain to take place, for the Omniscient cannot make mistakes. Then, if this sinner's faith was certain to take place, there must have

been some certain cause insuring that it would take place. Now, no certain cause could be in the "free-will" of this sinner, Saul, even as aided by "common sufficient grace." For Arminians say, that this makes and leaves the sinner's will contingent. Then, whatever made God think that this sinner, Saul, would ever be certain to believe and repent? Nothing but God's own sovereign eternal will to renew him unto faith and repentance.

This leads to the crowning argument. This Saul was by nature "dead in trespasses and in sins" (Eph. 2:1), and, therefore, would never have in him any faith or repentance to be foreseen, except as the result of God's purpose to put them in him. But the effect cannot be the cause of its own cause. The cart cannot pull the horse; why, it is the horse that pulls the cart. This is expressly confirmed by Scripture. Christ says (John 15:16): "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." Romans 9:11--13 : "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; It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated;" and verse 16: "So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." What is not? The connection shows that it is the election of the man that willeth and runneth, of which the apostle here speaks. Paul here goes so dead against the notion of conditional election, that learned Arminians see that they must find some evasion, or squarely take the ground of infidels. This is their evasion: that by the names Esau and Jacob the individual patriarchs are not meant, but the two nations, Edom and Israel, and that the predestination was only unto the privation or enjoyment of the means of grace. But this is utterly futile: First, Because certainly the individual patriarchs went along with the two posterities whom they represented. Second, Because Paul's discussion in this ninth chapter all relates to individuals and not to races, and to salvation or perdition, and not to mere church privileges. Third, Because the perdition of the Edomite race from all gospel means must have resulted in the perdition of the individuals. For, says Paul: "How could they believe on him of whom they have not heard?"

This is the right place to notice the frequent mistake when we say that God's election is sovereign and not conditioned on his foresight of the elected man's piety. Many pretend to think that we teach God has no reason at all for his choice; that we make it an instance of sovereign divine caprice! We teach no such thing. It would be impiety. Our God is too wise and righteous to have any caprices. He has a reasonable motive for every one of his purposes; and his omniscience shows him it is always the best reason. But he is not bound to publish it to us. God knew he had a reason for preferring the sinner, Jacob, to the sinner Esau. But this reason could not have been any foreseeing merit of Jacob's piety by two arguments: The choice was made before the children were born. There never was any piety in Jacob to foresee, except what was

to follow after as an effect of Jacob's election. Esau appears to have been an open, hard-mouthed, profane person. Jacob, by nature, a mean, sneaking hypocrite and supplanter. Probably God judged their personal merits as I do, that personally Jacob was a more detestable sinner than Esau. Therefore, on grounds of foreseen personal deserts, God could never have elected either of them. But his omniscience saw a separate, independent reason why it was wisest to make the worse man the object of his infinite mercy, while leaving the other to his own profane choice. Does the Arminian now say that I must tell him what that reason was? I answer, I do not know, God has not told me. But I know He had a good reason, because he is God. Will any man dare to say that because omniscience could not find its reason in the foreseen merits of Jacob, therefore it could find none at all in the whole infinite sweep of its Providence and wisdom ? This would be arrogance run mad and near to blasphemy.

One more argument for election remains: Many human beings have their salvation or ruin practically decided by providential events in their lives. The argument is, that since these events are sovereignly determined by God's providence, the election, or preterition of their souls is thereby virtually decided, Take two instances: Here is a willful, impenitent man who is down with fever and is already delirious. Will he die or get well? God's providence will decide that. " In his hands our breath is, and his are all our ways." (Dan. 5:23.) If he dies this time he is too delirious to believe and repent; if he recovers, he may attend revival meetings and return to God. The other instance is, that of dying infants. This is peculiarly deadly to the Arminian theory, because they say so positively that all humans who die in infancy are saved. (And they slander us Presbyterians by charging that we are not positive enough on that point, and that we believe in the "damnation of infants.") Well, here is a human infant three months old. Will it die of croup, or will it live to be a man? God's providence will decide that. If it dies, the Arminian is certain its soul is gone to heaven, and therefore was elected of God to go there. If it is to grow to be a man, the Arminian says he may exercise his freewill to be a Korah, Dalthan, Abiram, or Judas. But the election of the baby who dies cannot be grounded in God's foresight of its faith and repentance, because there was none to foresee before it entered glory; the little soul having redeemed by sovereign grace without these means.

But there is that sentence in our Confession, Chapter X., Section iii.: "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when and where and how he pleaseth." Our charitable accusers will have it that the antithesis which we imply to the words "elect infants dying in infancy" is, that there are non-elect infants dying in infancy are so damned. This we always deny. But they seem to know what we think better than we know ourselves. The implied antithesis we hold is this: There are elect infants not dying in infancy, and such must experience effectual calling through rational means, and freely believe and repent according to Chapter X. There were once two Jewish babies, John and Judas; John an elect infant, Judas a non-elect one. Had John the Baptist died of croup he would have been



redeemed without personal faith and repentance; but he was predestinated to live to man's estate, so he had to be saved through effectual calling. Judas, being a non-elect infant, was also predestinated to live to manhood and receive his own fate freely by his own contumacy. Presbyterians do not believe that the Bible or their Confession teaches that there are non-elect infants dying in infancy and so damned. Had they thought this of their Confession, they would have changed this section long ago.

When an intelligent being makes a selection of some out of a number of objects, he therein unavoidably makes a preterition (a passing by) of the others; we cannot deny this without imputing ignorance or inattention to the agent; but omniscience can neither be ignorant nor inattentive. Hence, God's preordination must: extend to the saved and the lost.

But here we must understand the difference between God's effective decree and his permissive decree, the latter is just as definite and certain as the former; but the distinction is this: The objects of God's effective decree are effects which he himself works, without employing or including the free-agency of any other rational responsible person, such as his creations, miracles, regenerations of souls, resurrections of bodies, and all those results which his providence brings to pass, through the blind, compulsory powers of second causes, brutish or material. The nature of his purpose here is by his own power to determine these results to come to pass.

But the nature of his permissive decree is this: He resolves to allow or permit some creature free-agent freely and certainly to do the thing decreed without impulsion from God's power. To this class of actions belong all the indifferent, and especially all the sinful, deeds of natural men, and all those final results where such persons throw away their own salvation by their own disobedience. In all these results God does not himself do the thing, nor help to do it, but intentionally lets it be done. Does one ask how then a permissive decree can have entire certainty? The answer is, because God knows that men's natural disposition certainly prompts them to evil; for instance, I know it is the nature of lambs to eat grass. If I intentionally leave open the gate between the fold and the pasture I know that the grass will be eaten, and I intend to allow it just as clearly as if I had myself driven them upon the pasture.

Now, it is vain for those to object that God's will cannot have anything to do with sinful results, even in this permissive sense, without making God an author of the sin, unless these cavilers mean to take the square infidel ground. For the Bible is full of assertions that God does thus foreordain sin without being an author of sin. He foreordained Pharaoh's tyranny and rebellion, and then punished him for it. In Isaiah 10 he foreordains Nebuchadnezzar's sack of Jerusalem, and then punishes him for it. In Acts 2:23 the wicked Judas betrays his Lord by the determinate purpose and foreknowledge of God. In Romans 9:18, "he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy,

and whom he will he hardeneth," so in many other places. But our Confession, Chapter X., Section vii., makes this express difference between God's decree of election and of preterition. The former is purely gracious, not grounded in any foresight of any piety in them because they have none to foresee, except as they are elected and called, and in consequence thereof. But the non-elect are passed by and foreordained to destruction "for their sins, and for the glory of God's justice."

We thus see that usual fiery denunciations of this preterition are nothing but absurd follies and falsehoods. These vain-talkers rant as though it was God's foreordination which makes these men go to perdition. In this there is not one word of truth. They alone make themselves go, and God's purpose concerning the wretched result never goes a particle further than this, that in his justice he resolves to let them have their own preferred way. These men talk as though God's decree of preterition was represented by us as a barrier preventing poor striving sinners from getting to heaven, no matter how they repent and pray and obey, only because they are not the secret pets of an unjust divine caprice.

The utter folly and wickedness of this cavil are made plain by this, that the Bible everywhere teaches none but the elect and effectually called ever work or try in earnest to get to heaven; that the lost never really wish nor try to be saints; that their whole souls are opposed to it, and they prefer freely to remain ungodly, and this is the sole cause of their ruin. If they would truly repent, believe, and obey, they would find no decree debarring them from grace and heaven, God can say this just as the shepherd might say of the wolves: if they will choose to eat my grass peaceably with my lambs they shall find no fence of mine keeping them from my grass. But the shepherd knows that it is always the nature of wolves to choose to devour the lambs instead of the grass, which former their own natures, and not the fence, assuredly prompts them to do, until almighty power new-creates them into lambs. The reason why godless men cavil so fiercely against this part of the doctrine, and so fully misrepresent it, is just this --that they hate to acknowledge to themselves that free yet stubborn godlessness of soul which leads them voluntarily to work their own ruin, and so they try to throw the blame on God or his doctrine instead of taking it on themselves.

In fine, unbelieving men are ever striving to paint the doctrine of election as the harsh, the exclusive, the terrible doctrine, erecting a hindrance between sinners and salvation. But properly viewed it is exactly the opposite. It is not the harsh doctrine, but the sweet one, not the exclusive doctrine, not the hindrance of our salvation, but the blessed inlet to all the salvation found in this universe. It is sin, man's voluntary sin, which excludes him from salvation; and in this sin God has no responsibility. It is God's grace alone which persuades men both to come in and remain within the region of salvation; and all this grace is the fruit of election. I repeat, then, it is our voluntary sin which is the source of all that is terrible in the fate of ruined men and angels. It is

God's election of grace which is the sweet and blessed source of all that is remedial, hopeful, and happy in earth and heaven. God can say to every angel and redeemed man in the universe: " I have chosen thee in everlasting love; therefore in loving kindness have I drawn thee." And every angel, and saint on this earth and in glory responds, in accordance with our hymn:

"Why was I made to hear his voice  
And enter while there's room,  
While others make a wretched choice  
And rather starve than come?  
'Twas the same love that spread the feast  
That sweetly drew me in;  
Else I had still refused to taste  
And perish in my sin."

And now dare any sinner insolently press the question, why the same electing love and power in God did not also include and save all lost sinners? This is the sufficient and the awful answer: "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" (Romans 9:20.) Hast thou any claim of right against God, O man, to force thee against thy preference and stubborn choice to embrace a redemption unto holiness which thou dost hate and willfully reject in all the secret powers of thy soul? And if thou destroyest thyself, while holy creatures may lament thy ruin, all will say that thou art the last being in this universe to complain of injustice, since this would be only complaining against the God whom thou dost daily insult, that he did not make thee do the things and live the life which thou didst thyself willfully and utterly refuse!

Others urge this captious objection: that this doctrine of election places a fatal obstacle between the anxious sinner and saving faith. They ask, How can I exercise a sincere, appropriating faith, unless I have ascertained that I am elected? For the reprobate soul is not entitled to believe that Christ died for him, and as his salvation is impossible, the truest faith could not save him even if he felt it. But how can man ascertain God's secret purpose of election toward him?

This cavil expressly falsifies God's teachings concerning salvation by faith. As concerning his election the sinner is neither commanded nor invited to embrace as the object of his faith the proposition "I am elected." There is no such command in the Bible. The proposition he is invited and commanded to embrace is this: " Whosoever believes shall be saved." (Rom. 9:11.) God has told this caviler expressly, "Secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to you and your children, that ye may do all the words of this law." (Deut. 29:29.) Let us not cavil, but obey. God's promises also assure us "that whosoever cometh unto God through Christ, he will in no wise cast off" (John 6:37). So that it is impossible that any sinner really wishing to be saved can be kept from salvation by uncertainty about his own election.

When we add that God's decree in no wise infringes man's free agency, our answer is complete. Confession, Chapter III., Section 1., by this decree, "No violence is offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

But it is stubbornly objected that those who are subject to a sovereign, immutable decree cannot be free agents; that the two propositions are contradictory, and the assertion of both an insult to reason. We explained that there are various means by which we see free agents prompted to action, which are not compulsory, and yet certain of effect, and that our God is a God of infinite wisdom and resources. God tells them that in governing his rational creatures according to his eternal purpose, he uses only such means as are consistent with their freedom. Still, the arrogant objectors are positive that it cannot be done, even by an infinite God! that if there is predestination, there cannot be free-agency. Surely the man who makes this denial should be himself infinite!

But, perhaps, the best answer to this folly is this: Mr. Arminian, you, a puny mortal, are actually doing, and that often, the very thing you say an almighty God cannot do! Predestining the acts of free-agents, certainly and efficiently, without their freedom. For instance : Mr. Arminian invites me to dine with him at one o'clock P. M. I reply, yes, provided dinner is punctual and certain, because I have to take a railroad train at two P. M. He promises positively that dinner shall be ready at one P. M. How so, will he cook it himself? Oh, no ! But he employs a steady cook, named Gretchen, and he has already instructed her that one P. M. must be the dinner hour.

That is predestination he tells me, certain and efficacious.

I now take up Mr. Arminian's argument, and apply it to Gretchen thus: He says predestination and free-agency are contradictory. He predestinated you, Gretchen, to prepare dinner for one o'clock, therefore you were not a free agent in getting dinner. Moreover, as there can be no moral desert where there is no freedom, you have not deserved your promised wages for cooking, and Mr. Arminian thinks he is not at all bound to pay you.

Gretchen's common sense replies thus: I know I am a free agent; I am no slave, no machine, but a free woman, and an honest woman, who got dinner at one o'clock because I chose to keep my word; and if Mr. Arminian robs me of my wages on this nasty pretext, I will know he is a rogue.

Gretchen's logic is perfectly good.

My argument is, that men are perpetually predestinating and efficiently procuring free acts of free agents. How much more may an infinite God do likewise. But this

reasoning need not, and does not, imply that God's ways of doing it are the same as ours.

His resources of wisdom and power are manifold, infinite. Thus this popular cavil is shown to be as silly and superficial as it is common. It is men's sinful pride of will which makes them repeat such shallow stuff.

Having exploded objections, I now close this argument for election with the strongest of all the testimonies, the Scriptures. The Bible is full of it; all of God's prophecies imply predestination, because, unless he had foreordained the predicted events, he could not be certain they would come to pass. The Bible doctrine of God's providence proves predestination, because the Bible says providence extends to everything, and is certain and omnipotent, and it only executes what predestination plans. Here are a few express texts among a hundred: Ps. 33:11 : "The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." Is. 46:10: God declareth "the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." God's election of Israel was unconditional. See Ezek. 16:6: "And when I passed by thee and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live." Acts 13:48: "When the Gentiles heard this . . . as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Rom. 8:29, 30: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate. . . 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." Eph. 1:4-7 : "He hath chosen us in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world," etc. I Thess. 1:4: "Knowing, brethren, beloved, your election of God." Rev. 21:27 ". . . They that are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Silly people try to say that election is the doctrine of that harsh apostle Paul. But the loving Savior teaches it more expressly if possible than Paul does. See, again, John 15:16: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," etc. John 6:37 : "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me," etc.; see also verses 39, 44; Matt. 24:22; Luke 18:7; John 10:14, 28; Mark 13:22; Matt. 20:16.

#### **IV. PARTICULAR REDEMPTION.**

"Did Christ die for the elect only, or for all men?" The answer has been much prejudiced by ambiguous terms, such as "particular atonement," "limited atonement," or "general atonement," "unlimited atonement," "indefinite atonement." What do they mean by atonement? The word (at-one-ment) is used but once in the New Testament (Rom. 5:11), and there it means expressly and exactly reconciliation. This is proved thus: the same Greek word in the next verse, carrying the very same meaning, is translated reconciliation. Now, people continually mix two ideas when they say atonement: One is, that of the expiation for guilt provided in Christ's sacrifice. The

other is, the individual reconciliation of a believer with his God, grounded on that sacrifice made by Christ once for all, but actually effectuated only when the sinner believes and by faith. The last is the true meaning of atonement, and in that sense every atonement (at-one-ment). Reconciliation, must be individual, particular, and limited to this sinner who now believes. There have already been just as many atonements as there are true believers in heaven and earth, each one individual.

But sacrifice, expiation, is one--the single, glorious, indivisible act of the divine Redeemer, infinite and inexhaustible in merit. Had there been but one sinner, Seth, elected of God, this whole divine sacrifice would have been needed to expiate his guilt. Had every sinner of Adam's race been elected, the same one sacrifice would be sufficient for all. We must absolutely get rid of the mistake that expiation is an aggregate of gifts to be divided and distributed out, one piece to each receiver, like pieces of money out of a bag to a multitude of paupers. Were the crowd of paupers greater, the bottom of the bag would be reached before every pauper got his alms, and more money would have to be provided. I repeat, this notion is utterly false as applied to Christ's expiation, because it is a divine act. It is indivisible, inexhaustible, sufficient in itself to cover the guilt of all the sins that will ever be committed on earth. This is the blessed sense in which the Apostle John says (1st Epistle 2:2): "Christ is the propitiation (the same word as expiation) for the sins of the whole world." But the question will be pressed, "Is Christ's sacrifice limited by the purpose and design of the Trinity"? The best answer for Presbyterians to make is this: In the purpose and design of the Godhead, Christ's sacrifice was intended to effect just the results, and all the results, which would be found flowing from it in the history of redemption. I say this is exactly the answer for us Presbyterians to make, because we believe in God's universal predestination as certain and efficacious; so that the whole final outcome of his plan must be the exact interpretation of what his plan was at first. And this statement the Arminian also is bound to adopt, unless he means to charge God with ignorance, weakness, or fickleness. Search and see.

Well, then, the realized results of Christ's sacrifice are not one, but many and various:

1. It makes a display of God's general benevolence and pity towards all lost sinners, to the glory of his infinite grace. For, blessed be his name, he says, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth."
2. Christ's sacrifice has certainly purchased for the whole human race a merciful postponement of the doom incurred by our sins, including all the temporal blessings of our earthly life, all the gospel restraints upon human depravity, and the sincere offer of heaven to all. For, but for Christ, man's doom would have followed instantly after his sin, as that of the fallen angels did.
3. Christ's sacrifice, willfully rejected by men, sets the stubbornness, wickedness and

guilt of their nature in a much stronger light, to the glory of God's final justice.

4. Christ's sacrifice has purchased and provided for the effectual calling of the elect, with all the graces which insure their faith, repentance, justification, perseverance, and glorification. Now, since the sacrifice actually results in all these different consequences, they are all included in God's design. This view satisfies all those texts quoted against us.

But we cannot admit that Christ died as fully and in the same sense for Judas as he did for Saul of Tarsus. Here we are bound to assert that, while the expiation is infinite, redemption is particular. The irrefragable grounds on which we prove that the redemption is particular are these: From the doctrines of unconditional election, and the covenant of grace. (The argument is one, for the covenant of grace is but one aspect of election.) The Scriptures tell us that those who are to be saved in Christ are a number definitely elected and given to him from eternity to be Redeemed by his mediation. How can anything be plainer from this than that there was a purpose in God's expiation, as to them, other than that it was as to the rest of mankind? See Scriptures. The immutability of God's purposes. (Isa. 46:10; 2 Tim. 2:19.) If God ever intended to save any soul in Christ (and he has a definite intention to save or not to save towards souls), that soul will certainly be saved. (John 10:27, 28; 6:37-40) Hence, all whom God ever intended to save in Christ will be saved. But some souls will never be saved; therefore some souls God never intended to be saved by Christ's atonement. The strength of this argument can scarcely be overrated. Here it is seen that a limit as to the intention of the expiation must be asserted to rescue God's power, purpose, and wisdom. The same fact is proved by this, that Christ's intercession is limited (See John 17:9, 20). We know that Christ's intercession is always prevalent. (Rom. 8:34; Jn 11:42.) If he interceded for all, all would be saved. But all will not be saved. Hence, there are some for whom he does not plead the merit of his expiation. But he is the "same yesterday and to-day and forever." Hence, there were some for whom, when he made expiation, he did not intend to plead it. Some sinners (i. e., elect) receive from God gifts of conviction, regeneration, faith, persuading and enabling them to embrace Christ, and thus make his expiation effectual to themselves, while other sinners do not. But these graces are a part of the purchased redemption, and bestowed through Christ. Hence his redemption was intended to effect some as it did not others. (See above.)

Experience proves the same. A large part of the human race were already in hell before the expiation was made. Another large part never hear of it. But "faith cometh by hearing" (Rom. 10.), and faith is the condition of its application. Since their condition is determined intentionally by God's providence, it could not be his intention that the expiation should avail for them equally with those who hear and believe. This view is destructive, particularly of the Arminian scheme.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." But the greater includes the less, whence it follows. That if God the Father and Christ cherished for a given soul the definite electing love which was strong enough to pay the sacrifice of Calvary, it is not credible that this love would then refuse the less costly gifts of effectual calling and sustaining grace. This is the very argument of Rom. 5:10, and 8:31-39. This inference would not be conclusive if drawn merely from the benevolence of God's nature, sometimes called in Scripture "his love," but in every case of his definite, electing love it is demonstrative.

Hence, it is absolutely impossible for us to retain the dogma that Christ in design died equally for all. We are compelled to hold that he died for Peter and Paul in some sense in which he did not for Judas. No consistent mind can hold the Calvinistic creed as to man's total depravity towards God, his inability of will, God's decree, God's immutable attributes of sovereignty and omnipotence over free agents, omniscience and wisdom, and stops short of this conclusion. So much every intelligent opponent admits, and in disputing particular redemption, to this extent at least, he always attacks these connected truths as falling along with the other.

In a word, Christ's work for the elect does not merely put them in a salvable state, but purchases for them a complete and assured salvation. To him who knows the depravity and bondage of his own heart, any less redemption than this would bring no comfort.

## **V. PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.**

Our Confession, in Chapter XVII., Sections i and ii., states this doctrine thus: "They whom God hath accepted in his beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved." "This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own their own will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ; the abiding of the Spirit and of the seed of God within them; and the nature of the covenant of grace from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof."

I beg the reader to weigh these statements with candor and close attention. He will find that we do not ascribe this stability of grace in the believer to any excellence in his own soul, even regenerate, as source and cause, but we ascribe it to the unchangeable purpose and efficacious grace of God dwelling and operating in them. All the angels, and Adam, received from their Creator holy natures; yet our first father and the fallen angels show that they could totally fall away into sin. No one in himself is absolutely incapable of sinning, except the unchangeable God. Converted men, who still have indwelling sin, must certainly be as capable of falling as Adam, who had



none. We believe that the saints will certainly stand, because the God who chose them will certainly hold them up.

We do not believe that all professed believers and church members will certainly preserve and reach heaven. It is to be feared that many such, even plausible pretenders, "have but a name to have while they are dead." They fall fatally because they never had true grace to fall from.

We do not teach that any man is entitled to believe that he is justified, and therefore shall not come again in condemnation on the proposition "once in grace always in grace," although he be now living in intentional, willful sin. This falsehood of Satan we abhor. We say, the fact that this deluded man can live in willful sin is the strongest possible proof that he never was justified, and never had any grace to fall from. And, once for all, no intelligent believer can possibly abuse this doctrine into a pretext for carnal security. It promises to true believers a perseverance in holiness. Who, except an idiot, could infer from that promise the privilege to be unholy?

Once more. We do not teach that genuine believers are secure from backsliding, but if they become unwatchful and prayerless, they may fall for a time into temptations, sins, and loss of hope and comfort, which may cause them much misery and shame, and out of which a covenant-keeping God will recover them by sharp chastisements and deep contrition. Hence, so far as lawful self-interests can be a proper motive for Christian effort, this will operate on the Presbyterian under this doctrinal perseverance, more than on the Arminian with his doctrine of falling from grace. The former cannot say, I need not be alarmed though I be backslidden; for if he is a true believer he has to be brought back by grievous and perhaps by terrible afflictions; he had better be alarm at these! But further, an enlightened self-love will alarm him more pungently than the Arminians' will. Here is an Arminian who finds himself backslidden. Does he feel a wholesome alarm, saying to himself, "Ah, me, I was in the right road to heaven, but I have gotten out of it; I must get back in to it?" Well, the Presbyterian similarly backslidden is taught by his doctrine to say: I thought I was in the right road to heaven, but now I see I was mistaken all the time, because God says, that if I had really been in that right road I could never have left it. Alas ! therefore, I must either perish or get back; not to that old deceitful road in which I was, but into a new one, essentially different, narrower and straighter. Which of the two men has the more pungent motive to strive?

As I have taken the definition of the doctrine from our Confession, I will take thence the heads of its Proofs :

(a), The immutability of God's election proves it. How came this given sinner to be now truly converted? Because God had elected him to salvation. But God says, "my purpose shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Since God is changeless and

almighty, this purpose to save him must certainly succeed. But no man can be saved in his sins, therefore this man will certainly be made to persevere in grace.

(b), The doctrine follows from the fact that God's election is sovereign and unconditional, not grounded in any foreseen merit in the sinner elected. God knew there was none in him to foresee. But God did foresee all the disobedience, unthankfulness, and provocation which that unworthy sinner was ever to perpetrate. Therefore, the future disclosure of this unthankfulness, disobedience, and provocation by this poor sinner, cannot become a motive with God to revoke his election of him. God knew all about it just as well when he first elected him, and yet, moved by his own motives of love, mercy, and wisdom, he did elect him, foreknowing all his possible meanness.

(c), The same conclusion follows from God's covenant of redemption with his Son the Messiah. This was a compact made from eternity between the Father and the Son. In this the Son freely bound himself to die for the sins of the world and to fulfill his other offices as Mediator for the redemption of God's people. God covenanted on this condition to give his Son this redeemed people as his recompense. In this covenant of redemption Christ furnished and fulfilled the whole conditions; his redeemed people none. So, when Christ died, saying "It is finished," the compact was finally closed; there is no room, without unfaithfulness in the Father, for the final falling away of a single star out of our Savior's purchased crown; read John 17. It is "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and is sure." (2 Sam. 23:5.)

(d), We must infer the same blessed truth from Christ's love in dying for his people while sinners, from the supreme merits of his imputed righteousness, and the power of his intercession: "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." (Rom. 5:8-10.) "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32.) Of Christ, the Intercessor, it is said: "Him the Father heareth always. But see John 17:20: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." If the all-prevailing High Priest prays for all believers, all of them will receive what he asks for. But what and how much does he for them? Some temporary, contingent and mutable grace, contingent on the changeable and fallible human will? See John 17:4: " Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given Me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given Me."

(e), If any man is converted, it is because the Holy Ghost is come into him ; if any sinner lives for a time the divine life, it is because the Holy Ghost is dwelling in him. But the Bible assures us that this Holy Ghost is the abiding seed of spiritual life, the earnest of heaven, and the seal of our redemption. Believers are "born by the word of

God, of a living and incorruptible seed, which abideth and liveth forever," The Apostle Paul declares that they receive the earnest of the Spirit, and that his indwelling is " the earnest of the purchased possession." The same apostle says (Eph. 4:30): "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." (See 1 Jn. 3.9).

An earnest, or earnest-money, is a smaller sum paid in cash when a contract is finally closed, as an unchangeable pledge that the future payments shall also be made in their due time. A seal is the final imprint added by the contracting parties to their names to signify that the contract is closed and binding. Such is the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit in every genuine believer; a deathless principle of perseverance therein, God's advanced pledge of his purpose to give heaven also, God's seal affixed to his covenant of grace. This, then, is the blessed assurance of hope which the true believer is privileged to attain: not only that God is pledged conditionally to give me heaven, provided I continue to stick to my gospel duty in the exercise of my weak, changeable, fallible will. A wretched consolation that to the believer who knows his own heart ! But the full assurance of hope is this: Let the Holy Spirit once touch this dead heart of mine with his quickening light, so that I embrace Christ with a real penitent faith; then I have the blessed certainty that "this God who hath begun the good work in me, will perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ" (his judgment day), (See Phil. 1.6) that the same divine love will infallibly continue with me notwithstanding subsequent sins and provocations, will chastise, restore, and uphold me, and give me the final victory over sin and death. This is the hope inexpressible and full of glory, a thousand-fold better adapted to stimulate in me obedience, the prayer, the watchfulness, the striving, which are the means of my victory, than the chilling doubts of possible falling from grace. Again, the Scriptures are our best argument. I append a few texts among many: See Jer. xxxii. 40: "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." My Sheep never perish, and none shall pluck them out of my hand (Jn.10.27 ff). 2 Tim. 2:9:" The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his." Christ himself implies that it is not possible to deceive his elect. 1 Peter 1:5 : Believers "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." The same apostle thus explains the apostasy of final backsliders. 2 Peter 2:22: "The sow that was washed returns to her wallowing in the mire." She is a sow still in her nature, though with the outer surface washed, but never changed into a lamb; for if she had been, she would never have chosen the mire. The apostle (1 John 2:19) explains final backslidings in the same way, and in words which simply close the debate: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

My affirmative argument virtually refutes all objections. But there are two to which I will give a word. Arminians urge always an objection drawn from their false

philosophy. They say that if God's grace in regeneration were efficient, certainly determining the convert's will away from sin to gospel duty, it would destroy his free agency. Then there would be no moral nor deserving quality in his subsequent evangelical obedience to please God, any more than in the natural color of his hair, which he could not help. My answer is, that their philosophy is false. The presence and operation of a right principle in a man, certainly determining him to right feelings and actions, does not infringe his free- agency but rather is essential to all right free-agency. My proofs are, that if this spurious philosophy were true, the saints and elect angels in heaven could not have any free- agency or praise-worthy character or conduct. For they are certain and forever determined to holiness. The man Jesus could not have had any free-agency or merit, for his human will was absolutely determined to holiness. God himself could not have had any freedom or praiseworthy holiness. He least of all! for his will is eternally, unchangeably, and necessarily determined to absolute holiness, If there is anything approaching blasphemy in this, take notice, it is not mine. I put this kind of philosophy from me with abhorrence.

It is objected, again, that the Bible is full of warnings to believers to watch against apostasy, like this in I Cor. 10:2: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." The sophism is, that if believers cannot fall from grace all these warnings are absurd. I reply, they are reasonable, because believers could fall from grace if were left to their own natural powers. In this sense, they naturally might fall, and therefore watchfulness is reasonably urged upon them, because God's unchangeable purpose of grace towards them is effectuated in them, not as if they were stocks or stones, or dumb beasts, but rational free agents, to be guided and governed by the almighty Spirit through the means of rational motives. Therefore, when we see God plying believers with these rational motives not to back slide, it is not to be inferred that he secretly intends to let them backslide fatally, but rather just the contrary. I will close with a little parable: I watch a wise, intelligent, watchful, and loving mother, who is busy about her household work. There is a bright little girl playing about the room, the mother's darling. I hear her say, "take care, baby dear, don't go near that bright fire, for you might get burned." Do I argue thus? Hear that woman's words ! I infer from them that that woman's mind is made up to let that darling child burn itself to death unless its own watchfulness shall suffice to keep it away from the fire, the caution of an ignorant, impulsive, fickle little child. What a heartless mother! But I do not infer thus, unless I am a heartless fool. I know that this mother knows the child is a rational creature, and that rational cautions are one species of means for keeping it at a safe distance from the fire; therefore she does right to address such cautions to the child; she would not speak thus if she thought it were a mere kitten or puppy dog, and would rely on nothing short of tying it by the neck to the table leg. But I also know that that watchful mother's mind is fully made up that the darling child shall not burn itself at this fire. If the little one's impulsiveness and short memory cause it to neglect the maternal cautions, I know that I shall see that good woman instantly drop her

instruments of labor and draw back her child with physical force from that fire, and then most rationally renew her cautions to the child as a reasonable agent with more emphasis. And if the little one proves still heedless and willful, I shall see her again rescued by physical force, and at last I shall see the mother impressing her cautions on the child's mind more effectually, perhaps by passionate caresses, or perhaps by a good switching, both alike the expressions of faithful love.

Such is the Bible system of grace which men call Calvinism, so often in disparagement. Its least merit is that it corresponds exactly with experience, common sense, and true philosophy. Its grand evidence is that it corresponds with Scripture. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." This doctrine exalts God, his power, his sovereign, unbought love and mercy. They are entitled to be supremely exalted. This doctrine humbles man in the dust. He ought to be humbled; he is a guilty, lost sinner, the sole, yet the certain architect of his own ruin. Helpless, yet guilty of all that makes him helpless, he ought to take his place in the deepest contrition, and give all the glory of his redemption to God. This doctrine, while it lays man's pride low, gives him an anchor of hope, sure and steadfast, drawing him to heaven; for his hope is founded not in the weakness, folly, and fickleness of his human will, but in the eternal love, wisdom, and power of almighty God. "O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord ! " " The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." (Deut. 33:29, 27.)

## **Calvinism Today**

**by Benjamin B. Warfield**

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THE subject of this address involves the determination of a matter of fact, about which it is not easy to feel fully assured. What is the present-day attitude towards Calvinism? The answer to this question is apt to vary with the point of sight of the observer, or rather with the horizon which his eye surveys.

Our learning today is "made in Germany", our culture comes to us largely from England. And the German learning of the day has a sadly rationalistic tendency; which is superimposed, moreover, on a Lutheran foundation that has an odd way of cropping up and protruding itself in unexpected places. Similarly, English culture is not merely shot through. but stained through and through with an Anglican colouring. Lutheranism was ever intolerant of Calvinism. Anglicanism was certainly never patient of it. Naturalism is its precise contradictory. He who breathes the atmosphere of books, therefore—whether books of erudition or books of pure literature—is apt to find it stifling to his Calvinism.

There is, of course, another side to the matter. There may very likely be more Calvinists in the world today than ever before, and even relatively, the professedly Calvinistic churches are no doubt holding their own. There are important tendencies of modern thought which play into the hands of this or that Calvinistic conception. Above all, there are to be found everywhere humble souls, who, in the quiet of retired lives, have caught a vision of God in His glory and are cherishing in their hearts that vital flame of complete dependence on Him which is the very essence of Calvinism.

On the whole, however, I think we must allow, especially when we are contemplating the trend of current thought, that the fortunes of Calvinism are certainly not at their flood. Those whose heritage it was, have in large numbers drifted away from it. Those who still formally profess it do not always illustrate it in life or proclaim it in word.

There remains, however, undoubtedly a remnant according to the election of grace. But the condition of a remnant, while it may well be a healthful one—bearing in it, as a fruitful seed, the promise and potency of future expansion—is little likely to be a happy one. Unfriendly faces meet it on every side; if doubt and hesitation are not engendered, at least an apologetical attitude is fostered, and an apologetical attitude is not becoming in Calvinists, whose trust is in the Lord God Almighty. In such a situation, Calvinism seems shorn of its strength and is tempted to stand fearful and half-ashamed in the marts of men. I have no wish to paint the situation in too dark colours; I fully believe that Calvinism, as it has supplied the sinew of evangelical Christianity in the past, so is it its strength in the present and its hope for the future. Meanwhile, does it not seem, in large circles at all events, to be thrown very much on the defensive? In the measure in which you feel this to be the case, in that measure you will be prepared to ask with me for the causes and significance of this state of things.

We should begin, I think, by recalling precisely what Calvinism is. It may be fairly summed up in these three propositions. Calvinism is (1) Theism come to its rights. Calvinism is (2) Religion at the height of its conception. Calvinism is (3) Evangelicalism in its purest and most stable expression.

(1) *Calvinism*, I say, is *Theism come to its rights*. For in what does Theism come to its rights but in a teleological view of the universe? For, though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth—as there are gods many and lords conceived by men—yet to the Theist there can be but one God, of whom are all things and unto whom are all things. You see, we have already slipped into the Calvinistic formula, “The will of God is the cause of things.” I do not say, you will observe, that Theism and Calvinism have points of affinity, lie close to one another; I say they are identical. I say that the Theism which is truly Theism, consistently Theism, all that Theism to be really Theism must be, is already in principle Calvinism; that Calvinism in its cosmological aspect is nothing more than Theism in its purity. To fall away from

Calvinism is to fall away, by just so much, from a truly theistic conception of the universe. Of course then, to fall away in any degree from a pure Theism in our conception of things is just by that much to fall away from Calvinism. Wherever in our view of the world an imperfect Theism has crept in, there Calvinism has become impossible.

(2) *Calvinism*, I have said, *is religion at the height of its conception*, for, whatever else may enter into the conscious religious relation,—a vague feeling of mystery, a struggling reaching out towards the infinite, a deep sentiment of reverence and awe, a keen recognition or dull apprehension of responsibility,—certainly its substance lies in a sense of absolute dependence upon a Supreme Being. I do not say, you will observe, an absolute feeling of dependence, which, in the Schleiermacherian meaning at least of a feeling without intellectual content, were an absurdity. What I say is, that religion in its substance is a sense of absolute dependence on God and reaches the height of its conception only when this sense of absolute dependence is complete and all-pervasive, in the thought and feeling and life. But when this stage is reached we have just Calvinism.

For what is Calvinism but the theistical expression of religion, conceived as absolute dependence on God? Wherever we find religion in its purity, therefore, there Calvinism is implicit. I do not say, observe again, that an approach to Calvinism is traceable there, in less or greater measure. I say, there Calvinism is—implicit indeed, but really present. Religion in its purity is Calvinism in life, and you can fall away from Calvinism only by just in that measure falling away from religion; and you do fall away from Calvinism just in proportion as you fall away from religion in its purity. It is, however, dreadfully easy to fall away from religion at the height of its conception. We may assume the truly religious attitude of heart and mind for a moment; it is hard to maintain it and give it unbroken dominance in our thought, feeling, and action. Our soul's attitude in prayer—that is the religious attitude at its height. But do we preserve the attitude we assume in prayer towards God, when we rise from our knees? Or does our Amen! cut it off at once, and do we go on about our affairs in an entirely different mood? Now, Calvinism means just the preservation, in all our thinking and feeling and action, of the attitude of utter dependence on God which we assume in prayer. It is the mood of religion made determinative of all our thinking and feeling and willing. It is therefore conterminous with religion in the height of its conception. Wherever religion in any measure loses hold of the reins of life and our immanent thought has slipped away from its control,—there Calvinism has become impossible.

(3) I have said too, that *Calvinism is evangelicalism in its pure and only stable expression*. When we say evangelicalism we say sin and salvation. Evangelicalism is a soteriological conception, it implies sin, and salvation from sin. There may be religion without evangelicalism. We may go further: religion might conceivably exist at the height of its conception and evangelicalism be lacking. But not in sinners.

Evangelicalism is religion at the height of its conception as it forms itself in the hearts of sinners. It means utter dependence on God for salvation. It implies, therefore, need of salvation and a profound sense of this need, along with an equally profound sense of helplessness in the presence of this need, *and* utter dependence on God for its satisfaction. Its type is found in the publican who smote his breast and cried, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" No question there of saving himself, or of helping God to save him, or of opening the way to God to save him. No question of anything but, "I am a sinner, and all my hope is in God my Saviour!" Now this is Calvinism; not, note once more, something like Calvinism or an approach to Calvinism, but just Calvinism in its vital manifestation. Wherever this attitude of heart is found and is given expression in direct and unambiguous terms, there is Calvinism. Wherever this attitude of mind and heart is fallen away from, in however small a measure, there Calvinism has become impossible.

For Calvinism, in this soteriological aspect of it, is just the perception and expression and defence of the utter dependence of the soul on the free grace of God for salvation. All its so-called hard features—its doctrine of original sin, yes, speak it right out, its doctrine of total depravity and the entire inability of the sinful will to good; its doctrine of election, or, to put it in the words everywhere spoken against, its doctrine of predestination and preterition, of reprobation itself—mean just this and nothing more. Calvinism will not play fast and loose with the free grace of God. It is set upon giving to God, and to God alone, the glory and all the glory of salvation. There are others than Calvinists, no doubt, who would fain make the same great confession. But they make it with reserves, or they painfully justify the making of it by some tenuous theory which confuses nature and grace. They leave logical pitfalls on this side or that, and the difference between logical pitfalls and other pitfalls is that the wayfarer may fall into the others, but the plain man, just because his is a simple mind, must fall into those. Calvinism will leave no logical pitfalls and will make no reserves. It will have nothing to do with theories whose function it is to explain away facts. It confesses, with a heart full of adoring gratitude, that to God, and to God alone, belongs salvation and the whole of salvation; that He it is, and He alone, who works salvation in its whole reach. Any falling away in the slightest measure from this great confession is to fall away from Calvinism. Any intrusion of any human merit, or act, or disposition, or power, as ground or cause or occasion, into the process of divine salvation,—whether in the way of power to resist or of ability to improve grace, of the opening of the soul to the reception of grace, or of the employment of grace already received—is a breach with Calvinism.

Calvinism is the casting of the soul wholly on the free grace of God alone, to whom alone belongs salvation. And, such being the nature of Calvinism, it seems scarcely necessary to inquire why its fortunes appear from time to time, and now again in our own time, to suffer some depression. It can no more perish out of the earth than the sense of sin can pass out of the heart of sinful humanity—than the sense of God can



fade out of the minds of dependent creatures—than God Himself can perish out of the heavens. Its fortunes are bound up with the fortunes of Theism, religion, evangelicalism; for it is just Theism, religion, evangelicalism in the purity of their conception and manifestation. In the *purity* of their conception and manifestation—there is the seat of the difficulty. It is proverbially hard to retain, much more to maintain, perfection. And how can precisely these things be maintained at their height? Consider the currents of thought flowing up and down in the world, tending—I do not now say to obliterate the perception of the God of all; atheistic naturalism, materialistic or pantheistic evolutionism—but to blunt or obscure our perception of the divine hand in the sequence of events and the issues of things. Consider the pride of man, his assertion of freedom, his boast of power, his refusal to acknowledge the sway of another's will. Consider the ingrained confidence of the sinner in his own fundamentally good nature and his full ability to perform all that can be justly demanded of him.

Is it strange that in this world, in this particular age of this world, it should prove difficult to preserve not only active, but vivid and dominant, the perception of the everywhere determining hand of God, the sense of absolute dependence on Him, the conviction of utter inability to do even the least thing to rescue ourselves from sin—at the height of their conceptions? Is it not enough to account for whatever depression Calvinism may be suffering in the world today, to point to the natural difficulty—in this materialistic age, conscious of its newly realized powers over against the forces of nature and filled with the pride of achievement and of material well-being—of guarding our perception of the governing hand of God in all things, in its perfection; of maintaining our sense of dependence on a higher power in full force; of preserving our feeling of sin, unworthiness, and helplessness in its profundity? Is not the depression of Calvinism, so far as it is real, significant merely of this, that to our age the vision of God has become somewhat obscured in the midst of abounding material triumphs, that the religious emotion has in some measure ceased to be the determining force in life, and that the evangelical attitude of complete dependence on God for salvation does not readily commend itself to men who are accustomed to lay forceful hands on everything else they wish, and who do not quite see why they may not take heaven also by storm?

Such suggestions may seem to you rather general, perhaps even somewhat indefinite. They nevertheless appear to me to embody the true, and the whole, account of whatever depression of fortunes Calvinism may be suffering today. In our current philosophies, whether monistic evolutionism or pluralistic pragmatism, Theism is far from coming to its rights. In the strenuous activities of our materialized life, religion has little opportunity to assert itself in its purity. In our restless assertion of our personal power and worth, evangelicalism easily falls back into the background. In an atmosphere created by such a state of things, how could Calvinism thrive?

We may, of course, press on to a more specific account of its depressed fortunes. But in attempting to be more specific, what can we do but single out particular aspects of the general situation for special remark? It is possible, indeed, that the singling out of one of these aspects may give clearness and point to the general fact, and it may be worth-while, therefore, to attend to one of these special aspects for a moment.

Let us observe then, that Calvinism is only another name for consistent supernaturalism in religion. The central fact of Calvinism is the vision of God. Its determining principle is zeal for the divine honour. What it sets itself to do is to render to God His rights in every sphere of life-activity. In this it begins, and centres, and ends. It is this that is said, when it is said that it is Theism come to its rights, since in that case everything that comes to pass is viewed as the direct outworking of the divine purpose—when it is said that it is religion at the height of its conception, since in that case God is consciously felt as Him in whom we live and move and have our being—when it is said that it is evangelicalism in its purity, since in that case we cast ourselves as sinners, without reserve, wholly on the mercy of the divine grace. It is this sense of God, of God's presence, of God's power, of God's all-pervading activity—most of all in the process of salvation—which constitutes Calvinism. When the Calvinist gazes into the mirror of the world, whether the world of nature or the, world of events, his attention is held not by the mirror itself (with. the cunning construction of which scientific investigations may no doubt very properly busy themselves), but by the Face of God which he sees reflected therein. When the Calvinist contemplates the religious life, he is less concerned with the psychological nature and relations of the emotions which surge through the soul (with which the votaries of the new science of the psychology of religion are perhaps not quite unfruitfully engaging themselves), than with the divine Source from which they spring, the divine Object on which they take hold. When the Calvinist considers the state of his soul and the possibility of its rescue from death and sin, he may not indeed be blind to the responses which it may by the grace of God be enabled to make to the divine grace, but he absorbs himself not in them but in it, and sees in every step of his recovery to good and to God the almighty working of God's grace.

The Calvinist, in a word, is the man who sees God. He has caught sight of the ineffable Vision, and he will not let it fade for a moment from his eyes—God in nature, God in history, God in grace. Everywhere he sees God in His mighty stepping, everywhere he feels the working of His mighty arm, the throbbing of His mighty heart. The Calvinist is therefore, by way of eminence, the supernaturalist in the world of thought. The world itself is to him a supernatural product. not merely in the sense that somewhere, away back before all time, God made it, but that God is making it now, and in every event that falls out. In every modification of what is, that takes place, His hand is visible, as through all occurrences His “one increasing purpose runs”. Man himself is His— created for His glory, and having as the one supreme end of his existence to glorify his Maker, and haply also to enjoy Him for ever. And salvation, in every step

and stage of it, is of God. Conceived in God's love, wrought out by God's own Son in a supernatural life and death in this world of sin, and applied by God's Spirit in a series of acts as supernatural as the virgin birth and the resurrection of the Son of God themselves—it is a supernatural work through and through. To the Calvinist, thus, the Church of God is as direct a creation of God as the first creation itself. In this supernaturalism, the whole thought and feeling and life of the Calvinist is steeped. Without it there can be no Calvinism, for it is just this that is Calvinism.

Now the age in which we live is anything but supernaturalistic; it is distinctly hostile to supernaturalism. Its most striking characteristic is precisely its deeply rooted and wide-reaching rationalism of thought and sentiment. We know the origin of this modern naturalism; we can trace its history. What it is of more importance to observe, however, is that we cannot escape its influence. On its rise in the latter part of the seventeenth century a new era began, an era in which men have had little thought for the rights of God in their absorption in the rights of man. English Deism, French Encyclopaedism, German Illuminism—these are some of the fruits it has borne in the progress of its development. And now it has at length run to seed in our own day in what arrogates to itself the name of the New Protestantism—that New Protestantism which repudiates Luther and all his fervid ways, and turns rather for its spiritual parentage to the religious indifferentism of Erasmus. It has invaded with its solvent every form of thought and every activity of life. It has given us a naturalistic philosophy (in which all “being” is evaporated into “becoming”), a naturalistic science (the single-minded zeal of which is to eliminate design from the universe); a naturalistic politics (whose first fruits was the French Revolution, and whose last may well be an atheistic socialism); a naturalistic history (which can scarcely find place for even human personality among the causes of events); and a naturalistic religion, which says, “Hands off” to God—if indeed it troubles itself to consider whether there be a God, if there be a God, whether He be a person, or if He be a person, whether He can or will concern Himself with men.

You, who are ministers of the gospel, have been greatly clogged by this naturalism of current thought in the prosecution of your calling. How many of those to whom you would carry the message of grace do you find preoccupied with a naturalistic prejudice? Who of your acquaintance really posits God as a factor in the development of the world? How often have you been exhorted to seek a “natural” progress for the course of events in history? Yes, even for the history of redemption. So, even in the region of your own theological science a new Bible has been given to you—not offered to you merely, but violently thrust upon you, as the only Bible a rational man can receive—a new Bible reconstructed on the principle of natural development, torn to pieces and rearranged under the overmastering impulse to find a “natural” order of sequence for its books, and a “natural” course of development for the religion whose records it preserves. But why stop with the Bible? Your divine Redeemer Himself has been reconstructed, on the same naturalistic lines. For a century and a half now—from

Reimarus to Wrede—all of the resolves of an age pre-eminent for scholarship have been bent to the task of giving you a “natural” Jesus. Why talk here of the miracles of the Old Testament or of the New? It is *the* Miracle of the Old Testament and of the New which is really brought into the question. Why dispute as to the virgin birth and the resurrection of Jesus? It is the elimination of Jesus Himself, as aught but a simple man of His day—in nothing, except perhaps an unusually vivid religious experience, differentiated from other Galilean peasants of His time—that the naturalistic frenzy of our age is set upon. And so furiously has the task been driven on, that the choice that is set before us at the end of the day is, practically, between no Jesus at all or a fanatic, not to say a paranoiac Jesus.

In this anti-supernaturalistic atmosphere, is it strange that men find the pure supernaturalism of the Calvinistic confession difficult—that they waver in their firm confidence that it is God who reigns in heaven and on earth, that in Him we all live and move and have our being—that it is He, and not ourselves, who creates in us every impulse to good—and that it is His almighty arm alone that can rescue us from sin and bring to our helpless souls salvation? Is it strange that here, too, men travel the broad road beaten smooth by many feet—that the Calvinistic gate seems narrow so that few there be that find it, and the Calvinistic way so straitened that few there be who go in thereat?

But let us make no mistake here. For here, too, Calvinism is just Christianity. The supernaturalism for which Calvinism stands is the very breath of the nostrils of Christianity; without it Christianity cannot exist. And let us not imagine that we can pick and choose with respect to the aspects of this supernaturalism which we acknowledge—that we may, for example, retain supernaturalism in the origination of Christianity, and forego the supernaturalism with which Calvinism is more immediately concerned, the supernaturalism of the application of Christianity. Men will not believe that a religion, the actual working of which in the world is natural, can have required to be ushered into the world with supernatural pomp and display. These supernaturals stand or fall together.

A supernatural Redeemer is not needed for a natural salvation. If we can, and do, save ourselves; it were grossly incongruous that God should come down from heaven `to save us, trailing clouds of glory with Him as He came. The logic of the Socinian system gave us at once a human Christ and an auto-soteric religion.. The same logic will work today, and, `every day till the end of time. It is only for a truly supernatural salvation that a truly supernatural redemption, or a truly supernatural Redeemer, is demanded,—or can be believed in. And this reveals to us the real place which Calvinism holds in the controversies of today, and the service it is to render in the preservation of Christianity for the future. Only the Calvinist is the consistent supernaturalist, and only consistent supernaturalism can save supernatural religion for the world.

The supernatural fact, which is God; the supernatural act, which is miracle; the supernatural work, which is the revealed will of God; the supernatural redemption, which is the divine deed of the divine Christ; the supernatural salvation which is the divine work of the divine Spirit,—these things form a system, and you cannot draw one item out without shaking the whole. What Calvinism particularly asserts is the supernaturalism of salvation, as the immediate work of God the Holy Spirit in the soul, by virtue of which we are made new creatures in Christ our Redeemer, and framed into the sons of God the Father. And it is only he who heartily believes in the supernaturalism of salvation who is not fatally handicapped in meeting the assaults of that anti-supernaturalistic worldview which flaunts itself so triumphantly about us. Conceal it from ourselves as we may, defeat here lies athwart the path of all half-hearted schemes and compromising constructions. This is what was meant by the late Dr. H. Boynton Smith, when he declared roundly: “One thing is certain,—that Infidel Science will rout everything excepting thoroughgoing Christian orthodoxy. . . . The fight will be between a stiff thoroughgoing orthodoxy and a stiff thoroughgoing infidelity. It will be, for example, Augustine or Comte, Athanasius or Hegel, Luther or Schopenhauer, J. S. Mill or John Calvin.” This witness is true.

We cannot be supernaturalistic in patches of our thinking and naturalistic in substance. We cannot be supernaturalistic with regard to the remote facts of history, and naturalistic with regard to the intimate events of experience. We cannot be supernaturalistic with regard to what occurred two thousand years ago in Palestine, and simply naturalistic with regard to what occurs today in our hearts. No form of Christian supernaturalism can be ultimately maintained in any department of life or thought, except it carry with it the supernaturalism of salvation. And a consistent supernaturalism of salvation is only another name for Calvinism.

Calvinism thus emerges to our sight as nothing more or less than the hope of the world.

## **More Than a "Calvinist"**

**by John Newton (1762)**

To be enabled to form a clear, consistent, and comprehensive judgment of the truths revealed in the Scripture, is a great privilege; but they who possess it are exposed to the temptation of thinking too highly of themselves, and too meanly of

others, especially of those who not only refuse to adopt their sentiments, but venture to oppose them. We see few controversial writings, however excellent in other respects, but are tinctured with this spirit of self-superiority; and they who are not called to this service (of writing) if they are attentive to what passes in their hearts, may feel it working within them, upon a thousand occasions; though so far as it prevails, it brings forcibly home to ourselves the charge of ignorance and inconsistency, which we are so ready to fix upon our opponents. I know nothing as a means more likely to correct this evil, than a serious consideration of the amazing difference between our acquired judgment, and our actual experience; or, in other words, how little influence our knowledge and judgment have upon our own conduct. This may confirm to us the truth and propriety of the apostle's observation, "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." Not that we are bound to be insensible that the Lord has taught us what we were once ignorant of; nor is it possible that we should be so; yet because, if we estimate our knowledge by its effects, and value it no farther than it is experimental and operative (which is the proper standard whereby to try it), we shall find it so faint and feeble as hardly to deserve the name.

How firmly, for instance, are we persuaded, that God Is omnipresent! Great as the difficulties may be which attend our conceptions of this point, the truth itself is controverted by few. It is generally acknowledged by unawakened persons and I may add, too frequently known even by believers, as if they knew it not. If the eyes of the Lord are in every place, how strong a guard should this thought be upon the conduct of those who profess to hear him! We know how we are often affected when in the presence of a fellow-worm; if he is one on whom we depend, or who is considerably our superior in life, how careful we are to compose our behaviour, and to avoid whatever might be deemed improper or offensive! Is it not strange that those who have taken their ideas of the divine majesty, holiness and purity, from the Scriptures, and are not wholly insensible of their inexpressible obligations to regulate all they say or do by his precepts, should upon many occasions be betrayed into improprieties of behaviour from which the presence of a nobleman, or prince, would have effectually restrained them, yea, sometimes perhaps even the presence of a child? Even in the exercise of prayer, by which we profess to draw near the Lord, the consideration that his eye is upon us has little power to engage our attention, or prevent our thoughts from wandering like the fool's eye, to the ends of the earth. What should we think of a person, who, being admitted into the king's presence, upon business of the greatest importance, should break off in the midst of his address, to pursue a butterfly? Could such an instance of weakness be met with, it would be but a faint emblem of the inconsistencies which they who are acquainted with their own hearts, can often charge themselves with in prayer. They are not wholly ignorant in what a frame of spirit it becomes a needy dependent sinner to approach that God, before whom the angels are represented as vailing their faces; yet, in defiance of their better judgment,

their attention is diverted from him with whom they have to do, to the merest trifles. They are not able to realize that presence with which they behave themselves to be surrounded, but speak as if they were speaking into the air. Farther, if our sense that God is always present was in any good measure answerable to the conviction of our judgment, would it not be an effectual preservative from the many importunate though groundless fears with which we are harassed! He says, "Fear not, I am with thee;" he promises to be a shield and a guard to those who put their trust in him, yet though we profess to believe his word, and to hope that he is our protector, we seldom think ourselves safe, even in the path of duty. a moment longer than danger is kept out of our view. Little reason have we to value ourselves upon our knowledge of this indisputable truth, when it has no more effective and habitual influence upon our conduct.

The doctrine of God's sovereignty likewise, though not so generally owned as the former, is no less fully assented to by those who are called Calvinists. We zealously contend for this point in our debates with the Arminians; and are ready to wonder that any should be hardy enough to dispute the Creator's right to do what he will with his own. While we are only engaged in defense of the election of grace, and have a comfortable hope that we are ourselves of that number, we seem so convinced, by the arguments the Scripture affords us in support of the truth, that we can hardly forbear charging our adversaries with perverse obstinacy and pride, for opposing it. Undoubtedly the ground of this opposition lies in the pride of the human heart, but this evil principle is not confined to any party: and occasions frequently arise, when they who contend for the divine sovereignty are little more practically influenced by it than their opponents. This humiliating doctrine concludes as strongly for submission to the will of God, under every circumstance of life, as it does for our acquiescing in his purpose to have mercy. But, alas! how often do we find ourselves utterly unable to apply it, so as to reconcile our spirits to those afflictions which he is pleased to allot us. So far as we are enabled to say, when we are exercised with poverty, or heavy losses or crosses, . 'I was dumb and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it," so far, and no farther, are we truly convinced, that God has a sovereign right to dispose of us and all our concerns as he pleases. How often, and how justly at such seasons, might the argument we offer to others, as sufficient to silence all their objections, be retorted upon ourselves, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" A plain proof that our knowledge is more notional than experimental. What an inconsistency, that while we think God is just and righteous in withholding from others the things which pertain to their everlasting peace, we should find it so hard to submit to his dispensations to ourselves in matters of unspeakably less importance!

But the Lord's appointments, to those who fear him, are not only sovereign, but wise and gracious. He has connected their good with his own glory, and is engaged, by promise, to make all things work together for their advantage. He chooses for his

people better than they could choose for themselves; if they are in 'heaviness, there is a need-be for it, and he withholds nothing from them but what upon the whole it is better they should be without. Thus the Scriptures teach, and thus we profess to believe. Furnished with these principles, we are at no loss to suggest motives of patience and consolation to our brethren that are afflicted; we can assure them, without hesitation, that if they are interested in the promises, their concerns are in safe hands; that the things which at present are not joyous but grievous, shall in due season yield the peaceful fruits of righteousness, and that their trials are as certainly mercies as their comforts. We can prove to them, from the history of Joseph, David, Job, and other instances recorded in Scriptures, that, notwithstanding any present dark appearances, it shall certainly be well with the righteous; that God can and will make crooked things straight; and that he often produces the greatest good from those events which we are apt to look upon as evil. From hence we can infer, not only the sinfulness, but the folly of finding fault with any of his dispensations. We can tell them, that at the worst the sufferings of the present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed; and that therefore, under, the greatest pressures, they should so weep as those who expect in a little time to have all their tears wiped away. But when the case is our own, when we are troubled on every side, or touched in the tenderest part, how difficult it is to feel the force of these reasonings, though we know they are true to a demonstration! Then, unless we are endued with fresh strength from on high, we are as liable to complain and despond as if we thought our afflictions sprang out of the ground, and the Lord had forgotten to be gracious.

I might proceed to show the difference between our judgment when most enlightened, and our actual experience, with respect to every spiritual truth. We know there is no proportion between time and eternity, between God and the creature, the favour of the Lord and the favour or the frowns of men; and yet often, when these things are brought into close competition, we are sorely put to it to keep steady in the path of duty; nay without new supplies of grace, we should certainly fail in the time of trial, and our knowledge would have no other effect than to render our guilt more inexcusable. We seem to be sure that we are weak, sinful, fallible creatures, as we are that we exist and yet we are prone to act as if we were wise and good. In a word, we cannot deny, that a great part of our knowledge is, as I have described it, like the light of the moon, destitute of heat and influence; and yet we can hardly help thinking of ourselves too highly upon the account of it.

May we not say with the Psalmist, "Lord, what is man!" yea, what an enigma, what a poor inconsistent creature is a believer! He knows the Lord; he knows himself. His understanding is enlightened to apprehend and contemplate the great mysteries of the gospel. He has just ideas of the evil of sin, the vanity of the world, the beauties of holiness, and the nature of true happiness. He was once "darkness, but now he is light in the Lord." He has access to God by Jesus Christ; to whom he is united, and in



whom he lives by faith. While the principles he has received are enlivened by the agency of the Holy Spirit, he can do all things. He is humble, gentle, patient, watchful, faithful. He rejoices in afflictions, triumphs over temptations, lives upon the foretastes of eternal glory, and counts not his life dear, so he may glorify God his Saviour, and finish his course with joy. But his strength is not his own; he is absolutely dependent, and is still encompassed with infirmities. and burdened with a depraved nature. If the Lord withdraws his power, he becomes weak as another man, and drops, as a stone sinks to the earth by its own weight. His inherent knowledge may be compared to the windows of a house, which can transmit the light, but cannot retain it. Without renewed and continual communications from the Spirit of grace, he is unable to withstand the smallest temptation, to endure the slightest trial, to perform the least service in a due manner, or even to think a good thought. He knows this, and yet he too often forgets it. But the Lord reminds him of it frequently, by suspending that assistance without which he can do nothing. Then he feels what he is, and is easily prevailed upon to act in contradiction to his better judgment. This repeated experience of his own weakness teaches him by degrees where his strength lies; that it is not in any thing he has already attained, or can call his own, but the grace, power, and faithfulness of his Saviour. He learns to cease from his own understanding, to be ashamed of his best endeavours, to abhor himself in dust and ashes, and to glory only in the Lord.

From hence we may observe, that believers who have most knowledge, are not therefore necessarily the most spiritual. Some may and do walk more honorably and more comfortably with two talents, than others with five. He who experimentally knows his own weakness, and depends simply upon the Lord, will surely thrive, though his acquired attainments and abilities may be but small; and he who has the greatest gifts, the clearest judgment, and the most extensive knowledge, if he indulges high thoughts of his advantages, is in imminent danger of mistaking, and falling at every step; for the Lord will suffer none whom he loves to boast in themselves. He will guide the meek with his eyes, and fill the hungry with good things; but the rich he sendeth empty away. It is an invariable maxim in his kingdom, that whosoever exalteth himself, shall be abased; but he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.

## **God's Sovereignty in the Salvation of Men (Romans 9:18)**

**by Jonathan Edwards**

Sermon IV of Seventeen Occasional Sermons

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*Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.* Romans 9:18.

THE apostle, in the beginning of this chapter, expresses his great concern and sorrow of heart for the nation of the Jews, who were rejected of God. This leads him to observe the difference which God made by election between some of the Jews and others, and between the bulk of that people and the christian Gentiles. In speaking of this he enters into a more minute discussion of the sovereignty of God in electing some to eternal life, and rejecting others, than is found in any other part of the Bible; in the course of which he quotes several passages from the Old Testament, confirming and illustrating this doctrine. In the ninth verse he refers us to what God said to Abraham, showing his election of Isaac before Ishmael - 'For this is the word of promise; At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son:' then to what God had said to Rebecca, showing his election of Jacob before Esau; 'The elder shall serve the younger:' in the thirteenth verse, to a passage from Malachi, 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated:' in the fifteenth verse, to what God said to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion:' and the verse preceding the text, to what God says to Pharaoh, 'For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.' In what the apostle says in the text, he seems to have respect especially to the two last-cited passages: to what God said to Moses in the fifteenth verse, and to what he said to Pharaoh in the verse immediately preceding. God said to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.' To this the apostle refers in the former part of the text. And we know how often it is said of Pharaoh, that God hardened his heart. And to this the apostle seems to have respect in the latter part of the text; 'and whom he will he hardeneth.' We may observe in the text,

1. God's different dealing with men. He hath mercy on some, and hardeneth others. When God is here spoken of as hardening some of the children of men, it is not to be understood that God by any positive efficiency hardens any man's heart. There is no positive act in God, as though he put forth any power to harden the heart. To suppose any such thing would be to make God the immediate author of sin. God is said to harden men in two ways: by withholding the powerful influences of his Spirit, without which their hearts will remain hardened, and grow harder and harder; in this sense he hardens them, as he leaves them to hardness. And again, by ordering those things in his providence which, through the abuse of their corruption, become the occasion of their hardening. Thus God sends his word and ordinances to men which, by their abuse, prove an occasion of their hardening. So the apostle said, that he was unto some 'a savour of death unto death.' So God is represented as sending Isaiah on this errand, to make the hearts of the people fat, and to make their ears heavy, and to shut their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Isa. 6:10. Isaiah's preaching

was, in itself, of a contrary tendency, to make them better. But their abuse of it rendered it an occasion of their hardening. As God is here said to harden men, so he is said to put a lying spirit in the mouth of the false prophets. 2 Chron. 18:22. That is, he suffered a lying spirit to enter into them. And thus he is said to have bid Shimei curse David. 2 Sam. 16:10. Not that he properly commanded him; for it is contrary to God's commands. God expressly forbids cursing the ruler of the people. Exod. 22:28. But he suffered corruption at that time so to work in Shimei, and ordered that occasion of stirring it up, as a manifestation of his displeasure against David.

2. The foundation of his different dealing with mankind; viz. his sovereign will and pleasure. 'He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.' This does not imply, merely, that God never shows mercy or denies it against his will, or that he is always willing to do it when he does it. A willing subject or servant, when he obeys his lord's commands, may never do any thing against his will, nothing but what he can do cheerfully and with delight; and yet he cannot be said to do what he wills in the sense of the text. But the expression implies that it is God's mere will and sovereign pleasure, which supremely orders this affair. It is the divine will without restraint, or constraint, or obligation.

Doctrine. God exercises his sovereignty in the eternal salvation of men.

He not only is sovereign, and has a sovereign right to dispose and order in that affair; and he not only might proceed in a sovereign way, if he would, and nobody could charge him with exceeding his right; but he actually does so; he exercises the right which he has. In the following discourse, I propose to show,

I. WHAT IS GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY.

II. WHAT GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IN THE SALVATION OF MEN IMPLIES.

III. THAT GOD ACTUALLY DOTHS EXERCISE HIS SOVEREIGNTY IN THIS MATTER.

IV. THE REASONS FOR THIS EXERCISE.

**I. I WOULD SHOW WHAT IS GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY.**

The sovereignty of God is his absolute, independent right of disposing of all creatures according to his own pleasure. I will consider this definition by the parts of it.

The will of God is called his mere pleasure,

1. In opposition to any constraint. Men may do things voluntarily, and yet there may be a degree of constraint. A man may be said to do a thing voluntarily, that is, he himself does it; and, all things considered, he may choose to do it; yet he may do it out of fear, and the thing in itself considered be irksome to him, and sorely against his inclination. When men do things thus, they cannot be said to do them according to their mere pleasure.

2. In opposition to its being under the will of another. A servant may fulfil his master's commands, and may do it willingly, and cheerfully, and may delight to do his master's will; yet when he does so, he does not do it of his own mere pleasure. The saints do the will of God freely. They choose to do it; it is their meat and drink. Yet they do not do it of their mere pleasure and arbitrary will; because their will is under the direction of a superior will.

3. In opposition to any proper obligation. A man may do a thing which he is obliged to do, very freely; but he cannot be said to act from his own mere will and pleasure. He who acts from his own mere pleasure, is at full liberty; but he who is under any proper obligation, is not at liberty, but is bound. Now the sovereignty of God supposes, that he has a right to dispose of all his creatures according to his mere pleasure in the sense explained. And his right is absolute and independent. Men may have a right to dispose of some things according to their pleasure. But their right is not absolute and unlimited. Men may be said to have a right to dispose of their own goods as they please. But their right is not absolute; it has limits and bounds. They have a right to dispose of their own goods as they please, provided they do not do it contrary to the law of the state to which they are subject, or contrary to the law of God. Men's right to dispose of their things as they will, is not absolute, because it is not independent. They have not an independent right to what they have, but in some things depend on the community to which they belong, for the right they have; and in every thing depend on God. They receive all the right they have to any thing from God. But the sovereignty of God imports that he has an absolute, and unlimited, and independent right of disposing of his creatures as he will. I proposed to inquire,

## **II. WHAT GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IN THE SALVATION OF MEN IMPLIES.**

In answer to this inquiry, I observe, it implies that God can either bestow salvation on any of the children of men, or refuse it, without any prejudice to the glory of any of his attributes, except where he has been pleased to declare, that he will or will not bestow it. It cannot be said absolutely, as the case now stands, that God can, without any prejudice to the honour of any of his attributes, bestow salvation on any of the children of men, or refuse it; because, concerning some, God has been pleased to declare either that he will or that he will not bestow salvation on them; and thus to bind himself by his own promise. And concerning some he has been pleased to declare, that he never will bestow salvation upon them; viz. those who have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. Hence, as the case now stands, he is obliged; he cannot bestow salvation in one case, or refuse it in the other, without prejudice to the honour of his truth. But God exercised his sovereignty in making these declarations. God was not obliged to promise that he would save all who believe in Christ; nor was he obliged to declare, that he who committed the sin against the Holy Ghost should never be forgiven. But it pleased him so to declare. And had it not

been so that God had been pleased to oblige himself in these cases, he might still have either bestowed salvation, or refused it, without prejudice to any of his attributes. If it would in itself be prejudicial to any of his attributes to bestow or refuse salvation, then God would not in that matter act as absolutely sovereign. Because it then ceases to be a merely arbitrary thing. It ceases to be a matter of absolute liberty, and is become a matter of necessity or obligation. For God cannot do any thing to the prejudice of any of his attributes, or contrary to what is in itself excellent and glorious. Therefore,

I. God can, without prejudice to the glory of any of his attributes, bestow salvation on any of the children of men, except on those who have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. The case was thus when man fell, and before God revealed his eternal purpose and plan for redeeming men by Jesus Christ. It was probably looked upon by the angels as a thing utterly inconsistent with God's attributes to save any of the children of men. It was utterly inconsistent with the honour of the divine attributes to save any one of the fallen children of men, as they were in themselves. It could not have been done had not God contrived a way consistent with the honour of his holiness, majesty, justice, and truth. But since God in the gospel has revealed that nothing is too hard for him to do, nothing beyond the reach of his power, and wisdom, and sufficiency; and since Christ has wrought out the work of redemption, and fulfilled the law by obeying, there is none of mankind whom he may not save without any prejudice to any of his attributes, excepting those who have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. And those he might have saved without going contrary to any of his attributes, had he not been pleased to declare that he would not. It was not because he could not have saved them consistently with his justice, and consistently with his law, or because his attribute of mercy was not great enough, or the blood of Christ not sufficient to cleanse from that sin. But it has pleased him for wise reasons to declare that that sin shall never be forgiven in this world, or in the world to come. And so now it is contrary to God's truth to save such. But otherwise there is no sinner, let him be ever so great, but God can save him without prejudice to any attribute; if he has been a murderer, adulterer, or perjurer, or idolater, or blasphemer, God may save him if he pleases, and in no respect injure his glory. Though persons have sinned long, have been obstinate, have committed heinous sins a thousand times, even till they have grown old in sin, and have sinned under great aggravations: let the aggravations be what they may; if they have sinned under ever so great light; if they have been backsliders, and have sinned against ever so numerous and solemn warnings and strivings of the Spirit, and mercies of his common providence: though the danger of such is much greater than of other sinners, yet God can save them if he pleases, for the sake of Christ, without any prejudice to any of his attributes. He may have mercy on whom he will have mercy. He may have mercy on the greatest of sinners, if he pleases, and the glory of none of his attributes will be in the least sullied. Such is the sufficiency of the satisfaction and righteousness of Christ, that none of the divine

attributes stand in the way of the salvation of any of them. Thus the glory of any attribute did not at all suffer by Christ's saving some of his crucifiers.

1. God may save any of them without prejudice to the honour of his holiness. God is an infinitely holy being. The heavens are not pure in his sight. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity. And if God should in any way countenance sin, and should not give proper testimonies of his hatred of it, and displeasure at it, it would be a prejudice to the honour of his holiness. But God can save the greatest sinner without giving the least countenance to sin. If he saves one, who for a long time has stood out under the calls of the gospel, and has sinned under dreadful aggravations; if he saves one who, against light, has been a pirate or blasphemer, he may do it without giving any countenance to their wickedness; because his abhorrence of it and displeasure against it have been already sufficiently manifested in the sufferings of Christ. It was a sufficient testimony of God's abhorrence against even the greatest wickedness, that Christ, the eternal Son of God, died for it. Nothing can show God's infinite abhorrence of any wickedness more than this. If the wicked man himself should be thrust into hell, and should endure the most extreme torments which are ever suffered there, it would not be a greater manifestation of God's abhorrence of it, than the sufferings of the Son of God for it.
2. God may save any of the children of men without prejudice to the honour of his majesty. If men have affronted God, and that ever so much, if they have cast ever so much contempt on his authority; yet God can save them, if he pleases, and the honour of his majesty not suffer in the least. If God should save those who have affronted him, without satisfaction, the honour of his majesty would suffer. For when contempt is cast upon infinite majesty, its honour suffers, and the contempt leaves an obscurity upon the honour of the divine majesty, if the injury is not repaired. But the sufferings of Christ do fully repair the injury. Let the contempt be ever so great, yet if so honourable a person as Christ undertakes to be a Mediator for the offender, and in the mediation suffer in his stead, it fully repairs the injury done to the majesty of heaven by the greatest sinner.
3. God may save any sinner whatsoever consistently with his justice. The justice of God requires the punishment of sin. God is the Supreme Judge of the world, and he is to judge the world according to the rules of justice. It is not the part of a judge to show favour to the person judged; but he is to determine according to a rule of justice without departing to the right hand or left. God does not show mercy as a judge, but as a sovereign. And therefore when mercy sought the salvation of sinners, the inquiry was how to make the exercise of the mercy of God as a sovereign, and of his strict justice as a judge, agree together. And this is done by the sufferings of Christ, in which sin is punished fully, and justice answered. Christ suffered enough for the punishment of the sins of the greatest sinner that ever lived. So that God, when he judges, may act according to a rule of

strict justice, and yet acquit the sinner, if he be in Christ. Justice cannot require any more for any man's sins, than those sufferings of one of the persons in the Trinity, which Christ suffered. Rom. 3:25,26. 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood; to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Christ.'

4. God can save any sinner whatsoever, without any prejudice to the honour of his truth. God passed his word, that sin should be punished with death, which is to be understood not only of the first, but of the second death. God can save the greatest sinner consistently with his truth in this threatening. For sin is punished in the sufferings of Christ, inasmuch as he is our surety, and so is legally the same person, and sustained our guilt, and in his sufferings bore our punishment. It may be objected, that God said, If thou eatest, thou shalt die; as though the same person that sinned must suffer; and therefore why does not God's truth oblige him to that? I answer, that the word then was not intended to be restrained to him, that in his own person sinned. Adam probably understood that his posterity were included, whether they sinned in their own person or not. If they sinned in Adam, their surety, those words, 'if thou eatest,' meant, if thou eatest in thyself, or in thy surety. And therefore, the latter words, 'thou shalt die,' do also fairly allow of such a construction as, thou shalt die in thyself, or in thy surety. Isa. 42:21. 'The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake, he will magnify the law and make it honourable.' But,

II. God may refuse salvation to any sinner whatsoever, without prejudice to the honour of any of his attributes.

There is no person whatever in a natural condition, upon whom God may not refuse to bestow salvation without prejudice to any part of his glory. Let a natural person be wise or unwise, of a good or ill natural temper, of mean or honourable parentage, whether born of wicked or godly parents; let him be a moral or immoral person, whatever good he may have done, however religious he has been, how many prayers soever he has made, and whatever pains he has taken that he may be saved; whatever concern and distress he may have for fear he shall be damned; or whatever circumstances he may be in; God can deny him salvation without the least disparagement to any of his perfections. His glory will not in any instance be the least obscured by it.

1. God may deny salvation to any natural person without any injury to the honour of his righteousness. If he does so, there is no injustice nor unfairness in it. There is no natural man living, let his case be what it will, but God may deny him salvation, and cast him down to hell, and yet not be chargeable with the least unrighteous or unfair dealing in any respect whatsoever. This is evident, because they all have deserved hell: and it is no injustice for a proper judge to inflict on any man what he deserves. And as he has deserved condemnation, so he has

never done any thing to remove the liability, or to atone for the sin. He never has done any thing whereby he has laid any obligations on God not to punish him as he deserved.

2. God may deny salvation to any unconverted person whatever without any prejudice to the honour of his goodness. Sinners are sometimes ready to flatter themselves, that though it may not be contrary to the justice of God to condemn them, yet it will not consist with the glory of his mercy. They think it will be dishonourable to God's mercy to cast them into hell, and have no pity or compassion upon them. They think it will be very hard and severe, and not becoming a God of infinite grace and tender compassion. But God can deny salvation to any natural person without any disparagement to his mercy and goodness. That, which is not contrary to God's justice, is not contrary to his mercy. If damnation be justice, then mercy may choose its own object. They mistake the nature of the mercy of God, who think that it is an attribute, which, in some cases, is contrary to justice. Nay, God's mercy is illustrated by it, as in the twenty-third verse of the context. 'That he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.'
3. It is in no way prejudicial to the honour of God's faithfulness. For God has in no way obliged himself to any natural man by his word to bestow salvation upon him. Men in a natural condition are not the children of promise; but lie open to the curse of the law, which would not be the case if they had any promise to lay hold of

### **III. GOD DOES ACTUALLY EXERCISE HIS SOVEREIGNTY IN MEN'S SALVATION.**

We shall show how he exercises this right in several particulars.

*1. In calling one people or nation, and giving them the means of grace, and leaving others without them.* According to the divine appointment, salvation is bestowed in connexion with the means of grace. God may sometimes make use of very unlikely means, and bestow salvation on men who are under very great disadvantages; but he does not bestow grace wholly without any means. But God exercises his sovereignty in bestowing those means. All mankind are by nature in like circumstances towards God. Yet God greatly distinguishes some from others by the means and advantages which he bestows upon them. The savages, who live in the remote parts of this continent, and are under the grossest heathenish darkness, as well as the inhabitants of Africa, are naturally in exactly similar circumstances towards God with us in this land. They are no more alienated or estranged from God in their natures than we; and God has no more to charge them with. And yet what a vast difference has God made between us and them! In this he has exercised his sovereignty. He did this of old, when he chose but one people, to make them his covenant people, and to give them the means of grace, and left all others, and gave them over to heathenish darkness and the tyranny



of the devil, to perish from generation to generation for many hundreds of years. The earth in that time was peopled with many great and mighty nations. There were the Egyptians, a people famed for their wisdom. There were also the Assyrians and Chaldeans, who were great, and wise, and powerful nations. There were the Persians, who by their strength and policy subdued a great part of the world. There were the renowned nations of the Greeks and Romans, who were famed over the whole world for their excellent civil governments, for their wisdom and skill in the arts of peace and war, and who by their military prowess in their turns subdued and reigned over the world. Those were rejected. God did not choose them for his people, but left them for many ages under gross heathenish darkness, to perish for lack of vision; and chose one only people, the posterity of Jacob, to be his own people, and to give them the means of grace. Psal. 147:19,20. 'He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments, they have not known them.' This nation were a small, inconsiderable people in comparison with many other people. Deut. 7:7. 'The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people.' So neither was it for their righteousness; for they had no more of that than other people. Deut. 9:6. 'Understand therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people.' God gives them to understand, that it was from no other cause but his free electing love, that he chose them to be his people. That reason is given why God loved them; it was because he loved them. Deut. 7:8. Which is as much as to say, it was agreeable to his sovereign pleasure, to set his love upon you.

God also showed his sovereignty in choosing that people, when other nations were rejected, who came of the same progenitors. Thus the children of Isaac were chosen, when the posterity of Ishmael and other sons of Abraham were rejected. So the children of Jacob were chosen, when the posterity of Esau were rejected: as the apostle observes in the seventh verse, 'Neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but in Isaac shall thy seed be called:' and again in verses 10, 11, 12, 13. 'And not only this; but when Rebekah also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; the children moreover being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the promise of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; 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 apostle has not respect merely to the election of the persons of Isaac and Jacob before Ishmael and Esau; but of their posterity. In the passage, already quoted from Malachi, God has respect to the nations, which were the posterity of Esau and Jacob; Mal. 1:2,3. 'I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob; and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.' God showed his sovereignty, when Christ came, in rejecting the Jews, and calling the Gentiles. God rejected that nation who

were the children of Abraham according to the flesh, and had been his peculiar people for so many ages, and who alone possessed the one true God, and chose idolatrous heathen before them, and called them to be his people. When the Messiah came, who was born of their nation, and whom they so much expected, he rejected them. He came to his own, and his own received him not. John 1:11. When the glorious dispensation of the gospel came, God passed by the Jews, and called those who had been heathens, to enjoy the privileges of it. They were broken off, that the Gentiles might be grafted on. Rom. 11:17. She is now called beloved, that was not beloved. And more are the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife. Isa. 54:1. The natural children of Abraham are rejected, and God raises up children to Abraham of stones. That nation, which was so honoured of God, have now been for many ages rejected, and remain dispersed all over the world, a remarkable monument of divine vengeance. And now God greatly distinguishes some Gentile nations from others, and all according to his sovereign pleasure.

*2. God exercises his sovereignty in the advantages he bestows upon particular persons.* All need salvation alike, and all are, naturally, alike undeserving of it; but he gives some vastly greater advantages for salvation than others. To some he assigns their place in pious and religious families, where they may be well instructed and educated, and have religious parents to dedicate them to God, and put up many prayers for them. God places some under a more powerful ministry than others, and in places where there are more of the outpourings of the Spirit of God. To some he gives much more of the strivings and the awakening influences of the Spirit, than to others. It is according to his mere sovereign pleasure.

*3. God exercises his sovereignty in sometimes bestowing salvation upon the low and mean, and denying it to the wise and great.* Christ in his sovereignty passes by the gates of princes and nobles, and enters some cottage and dwells there, and has communion with its obscure inhabitants. God in his sovereignty withheld salvation from the rich man, who fared sumptuously every day, and bestowed it on poor Lazarus, who sat begging at his gate. God in this way pours contempt on princes, and on all their glittering splendour. So God sometimes passes by wise men, men of great understanding, learned and great scholars, and bestows salvation on others of weak understanding, who only comprehend some of the plainer parts of Scripture, and the fundamental principles of the christian religion. Yea, there seem to be fewer great men called, than others. And God in ordering it thus manifests his sovereignty. 1 Cor. 1:26,27,28. 'For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.

4. *In bestowing salvation on some who have had few advantages.* God sometimes will bless weak means for producing astonishing effects, when more excellent means are not succeeded. God sometimes will withhold salvation from those who are the children of very pious parents, and bestow it on others, who have been brought up in wicked families. Thus we read of a good Abijah in the family of Jeroboam, and of a godly Hezekiah, the son of wicked Ahaz, and of a godly Josiah, the son of a wicked Amon. But on the contrary, of a wicked Amnon and Absalom, the sons of holy David, and that vile Manasseh, the son a good Hezekiah. Sometimes some, who have had eminent means of grace, are rejected, and left to perish, and others, under far less advantages, are saved. Thus the scribes and Pharisees, who had so much light and knowledge of the Scriptures, were mostly rejected, and the poor ignorant publicans saved. The greater part of those, among whom Christ was much conversant, and who heard him preach, and saw him work miracles from day to day, were left; and the woman of Samaria was taken, and many other Samaritans at the same time, who only heard Christ preach, as he occasionally passed through their city. So the woman of Canaan was taken, who was not of the country of the Jews, and but once saw Jesus Christ. So the Jews, who had seen and heard Christ, and saw his miracles, and with whom the apostles laboured so much, were not saved. But the Gentiles, many of them, who, as it were, but transiently heard the glad tidings of salvation, embraced them, and were converted.

5. *God exercises his sovereignty in calling some to salvation, who have been very heinously wicked, and leaving others, who have been moral and religious persons.* The Pharisees were a very strict sect among the Jews. Their religion was extraordinary. Luke 18:11. They were not as other men, extortioners, unjust, or adulterers. There was their morality. They fasted twice a week, and gave tithes of all that they possessed. There was their religion. But yet they were mostly rejected, and the publicans, and harlots, and openly vicious sort of people, entered into the kingdom of God before them. Matt. 21:31. The apostle describes his righteousness while a Pharisee. Philip. 3:6. 'Touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless.' The rich young man, who came kneeling to Christ, saying, Good Master, what shall I do, that I may have eternal life, was a moral person. When Christ bade him keep the commandments, he said, and in his own view with sincerity, 'All these have I kept from my youth up.' He had obviously been brought up in a good family, and was a youth of such amiable manners and correct deportment, that it is said, 'Jesus beholding him, loved him.' Still he was left; while the thief, that was crucified with Christ, was chosen and called, even on the cross. God sometimes shows his sovereignty by showing mercy to the chief of sinners, on those who have been murderers, and profaners, and blasphemers. And even when they are old, some are called at the eleventh hour. God sometimes shows the sovereignty of his grace by showing mercy to some, who have spent most of their lives in the service of Satan, and have little left to spend in the service of God.

6. *In saving some of those who seek salvation, and not others.* Some who seek salvation, as we know both from Scripture and observation, are soon converted; while others seek a long time, and do not obtain at last. God helps some over the mountains and difficulties which are in the way; he subdues Satan, and delivers them from his temptations: but others are ruined by the temptations with which they meet. Some are never thoroughly awakened; while to others God is pleased to give thorough convictions. Some are left to backsliding hearts; others God causes to hold out to the end. Some are brought off from a confidence in their own righteousness; others never get over that obstruction in their way, as long as they live. And some are converted and saved, who never had so great strivings as some who, notwithstanding, perish.

#### **IV. I COME NOW TO GIVE THE REASONS, WHY GOD DOES THUS EXERCISE HIS SOVEREIGNTY IN THE ETERNAL SALVATION OF THE CHILDREN OF MEN.**

1. *It is agreeable to God's design in the creation of the universe to exercise every attribute, and thus to manifest the glory of each of them.* God's design in the creation was to glorify himself, or to make a discovery of the essential glory of his nature. It was fit that infinite glory should shine forth; and it was God's original design to make a manifestation of his glory, as it is. Not that it was his design to manifest all his glory to the apprehension of creatures; for it is impossible that the minds of creatures should comprehend it. But it was his design to make a true manifestation of his glory, such as should represent every attribute. If God glorified one attribute, and not another, such manifestation of his glory would be defective; and the representation would not be complete. If all God's attributes are not manifested, the glory of none of them is manifested as it is: for the divine attributes reflect glory on one another. Thus if God's wisdom be manifested, and not his holiness, the glory of his wisdom would not be manifested as it is; for one part of the glory of the attribute of divine wisdom is, that it is a holy wisdom. So if his holiness were manifested, and not his wisdom, the glory of his holiness would not be manifested as it is; for one thing which belongs to the glory of God's holiness is, that it is a wise holiness. So it is with respect to the attributes of mercy and justice. The glory of God's mercy does not appear as it is, unless it is manifested as a just mercy, or as a mercy consistent with justice. And so with respect to God's sovereignty, it reflects glory on all his other attributes. It is part of the glory of God's mercy, that it is sovereign mercy. So all the attributes of God reflect glory on one another. The glory of one attribute cannot be manifested, as it is, without the manifestation of another. One attribute is defective without another, and therefore the manifestation will be defective. Hence it was the will of God to manifest all his attributes. The declarative glory of God in Scripture is often called God's name, because it declares his nature. But if his name does not signify his nature as it is, or does not declare any attribute, it is not a true name. The sovereignty of God is one of his attributes, and a part of his glory. The glory of God eminently appears in his absolute sovereignty over all creatures, great and small. If the glory of a prince be his

power and dominion, then the glory of God is his absolute sovereignty. Herein appear God's infinite greatness and highness above all creatures. Therefore it is the will of God to manifest his sovereignty. And his sovereignty, like his other attributes, is manifested in the exercises of it. He glorifies his power in the exercise of power. He glorifies his mercy in the exercise of mercy. So he glorifies his sovereignty in the exercise of sovereignty.

*2. The more excellent the creature is over whom God is sovereign, and the greater the matter in which he so appears, the more glorious is his sovereignty.* The sovereignty of God in his being sovereign over men, is more glorious than in his being sovereign over the inferior creatures. And his sovereignty over angels is yet more glorious than his sovereignty over men. For the nobler the creature is, still the greater and higher doth God appear in his sovereignty over it. It is a greater honour to a man to have dominion over men, than over beasts; and a still greater honour to have dominion over princes, nobles, and kings, than over ordinary men. So the glory of God's sovereignty appears in that he is sovereign over the souls of men, who are so noble and excellent creatures. God therefore will exercise his sovereignty over them. And the further the dominion of any one extends over another, the greater will be the honour. If a man has dominion over another only in some instances, he is not therein so much exalted, as in having absolute dominion over his life, and fortune, and all he has. So God's sovereignty over men appears glorious, that it extends to every thing which concerns them. He may dispose of them with respect to all that concerns them, according to his own pleasure. His sovereignty appears glorious, that it reaches their most important affairs, even the eternal state and condition of the souls of men. Herein it appears that the sovereignty of God is without bounds or limits, in that it reaches to an affair of such infinite importance. God, therefore, as it is his design to manifest his own glory, will and does exercise his sovereignty towards men, over their souls and bodies, even in this most important matter of their eternal salvation. He has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens.

## **APPLICATION.**

*1. Hence we learn how absolutely we are dependent on God in this great matter of the eternal salvation of our souls.* We are dependent not only on his wisdom to contrive a way to accomplish it, and on his power to bring it to pass, but we are dependent on his mere will and pleasure in the affair. We depend on the sovereign will of God for every thing belonging to it, from the foundation to the top-stone. It was of the sovereign pleasure of God, that he contrived a way to save any of mankind, and gave us Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son, to be our Redeemer. Why did he look on us, and send us a Saviour, and not the fallen angels? It was from the sovereign pleasure of God. It was of his sovereign pleasure what means to appoint. His giving us the Bible, and the ordinances of religion, is of his sovereign grace. His giving those means to us rather than to others, his giving the awakening influences of his Spirit, and his bestowing

saving grace, are all of his sovereign pleasure. When he says, 'Let there be light in the soul of such an one,' it is a word of infinite power and sovereign grace.

*2. Let us with the greatest humility adore the awful and absolute sovereignty of God.* As we have just shown, it is an eminent attribute of the Divine Being, that he is sovereign over such excellent beings as the souls of men, and that in every respect, even in that of their eternal salvation. The infinite greatness of God, and his exaltation above us, appears in nothing more, than in his sovereignty. It is spoken of in Scripture as a great part of his glory. Deut. 32:39. 'See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me. I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.' Psal. 115:3. 'Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he pleased.' Daniel 4:34,35. 'Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?' Our Lord Jesus Christ praised and glorified the Father for the exercise of his sovereignty in the salvation of men. Matt. 11:25,26. 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.' Let us therefore give God the glory of his sovereignty, as adoring him, whose sovereign will orders all things, beholding ourselves as nothing in comparison with him. Dominion and sovereignty require humble reverence and honour in the subject. The absolute, universal, and unlimited sovereignty of God requires, that we should adore him with all possible humility and reverence. It is impossible that we should go to excess in lowliness and reverence of that Being, who may dispose of us to all eternity, as he pleases.

*3. Those who are in a state of salvation are to attribute it to sovereign grace alone,* and to give all the praise to him, who maketh them to differ from others. Godliness is no cause for glorying, except it be in God. 1 Cor. 1:29,30,31. 'That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.' Such are not, by any means, in any degree to attribute their godliness, their safe and happy state and condition, to any natural difference between them and other men, or to any strength or righteousness of their own. They have no reason to exalt themselves in the least degree; but God is the being whom they should exalt. They should exalt God the Father, who chose them in Christ, who set his love upon them, and gave them salvation, before they were born, and even before the world was. If they inquire, why God set his love on them, and chose them rather than others, if they think they can see any cause out of God, they are greatly mistaken. They should exalt God the Son, who bore their names on his heart, when he came into the world, and hung on the cross, and in whom alone they have righteousness and strength. They should exalt God the Holy Ghost, who of

sovereign grace has called them out of darkness into marvellous light; who has by his own immediate and free operation, led them into an understanding of the evil and danger of sin, and brought them off from their own righteousness, and opened their eyes to discover the glory of God, and the wonderful riches of God in Jesus Christ, and has sanctified them, and made them new creatures. When they hear of the wickedness of others, or look upon vicious persons, they should think how wicked they once were, and how much they provoked God, and how they deserved for ever to be left by him to perish in sin, and that it is only sovereign grace which has made the difference. 1 Cor. 6:10. Many sorts of sinners are there enumerated; fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind. And then in the eleventh verse, the apostle tells them, 'Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.' The people of God have the greater cause of thankfulness, more reason to love God, who hath bestowed such great and unspeakable mercy upon them of his mere sovereign pleasure.

*4. Hence we learn what cause we have to admire the grace of God, that he should condescend to become bound to us by covenant; that he, who is naturally supreme in his dominion over us, who is our absolute proprietor, and may do with us as he pleases, and is under no obligation to us; that he should, as it were, relinquish his absolute freedom, and should cease to be merely sovereign in his dispensations towards believers, when once they have believed in Christ, and should, for their more abundant consolation, become bound. So that they can challenge salvation of this Sovereign; they can demand it through Christ, as a debt. And it would be prejudicial to the glory of God's attributes, to deny it to them; it would be contrary to his justice and faithfulness. What wonderful condescension is it in such a Being, thus to become bound to us, worms of the dust, for our consolation! He bound himself by his word, his promise. But he was not satisfied with that; but that we might have stronger consolation still, he hath bound himself by his oath. Heb. 6:13, etc. 'For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself; saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.'*

Let us, therefore, labour to submit to the sovereignty of God. God insists, that his sovereignty be acknowledged by us, and that even in this great matter, a matter which

so nearly and infinitely concerns us, as our own eternal salvation. This is the stumbling-block on which thousands fall and perish; and if we go on contending with God about his sovereignty, it will be our eternal ruin. It is absolutely necessary that we should submit to God, as our absolute sovereign, and the sovereign over our souls; as one who may have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and harden whom he will.

*5. And lastly. We may make use of this doctrine to guard those who seek salvation from two opposite extremes - presumption and discouragement.* Do not presume upon the mercy of God, and so encourage yourself in sin. Many hear that God's mercy is infinite, and therefore think, that if they delay seeking salvation for the present, and seek it hereafter, that God will bestow his grace upon them. But consider, that though God's grace is sufficient, yet he is sovereign, and will use his own pleasure whether he will save you or not. If you put off salvation till hereafter, salvation will not be in your power. It will be as a sovereign God pleases, whether you shall obtain it or not. Seeing, therefore, that in this affair you are so absolutely dependent on God, it is best to follow his direction in seeking it, which is to hear his voice to-day: 'To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.' Beware also of discouragement. Take heed of despairing thoughts, because you are a great sinner, because you have persevered so long in sin, have backslidden, and resisted the Holy Ghost. Remember that, let your case be what it may, and you ever so great a sinner, if you have not committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, God can bestow mercy upon you without the least prejudice to the honour of his holiness, which you have offended, or to the honour of his majesty, which you have insulted, or of his justice, which you have made your enemy, or of his truth, or of any of his attributes. Let you be what sinner you may, God can, if he pleases, greatly glorify himself in your salvation.

**THE SOLE CONSIDERATION, THAT GOD IS GOD,  
SUFFICIENT TO STILL ALL OBJECTIONS TO HIS  
SOVEREIGNTY.**

**by Jonathan Edwards**

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PSALM xlv. 10.

Be still, and know that I am God.

This Psalm seems to be a song of the church in a time of great revolutions and desolations in the world. Therefore the church glories in God as her refuge, and



strength, and present help, even in times of the greatest troubles and overturnings, ver. 1, 2, 3. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." The church makes her boast of God, not only as being her help, by defending her from the desolations and calamities in which the rest of the world were involved, but also by supplying her, as a never-failing river, with refreshment, comfort, and joy, in the times of public calamities. See ver. 4, 5. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early."

In the 6th and 8th verses. are set forth the terrible changes and calamities which were in the world: "The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. Come, behold the works of God, what desolations he hath made in the earth." In the verse preceding the text is elegantly set forth the manner in which God delivers the church from these calamities, and especially from the desolations of war, and the rage of their enemies: "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire;" i. e. he maketh wars to cease when they are against his people; he breaketh the bow when bent against his saints.

Then follow the words of the text: "Be still, and know that I am God." The great works of God, wherein his sovereignty appeared, had been described in the foregoing verses. In the awful desolations that he made, and by delivering his people by terrible things, he showed his greatness and dominion. Herein he manifested his power and sovereignty, and so commands all to be still, and know that he is God. For, says he, "I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth."

In the words may be observed,

1. A duty described, to be still before God, and under the dispensations of his providence; which implies that we must be still as to words; not speaking against the sovereign dispensations of Providence, or complaining of them; not darkening counsel by words without knowledge, or justifying ourselves, and speaking great swelling words of vanity. We must be still as to actions and outward behaviour, so as not to oppose God in his dispensations; and as to the inward frame of our hearts, cultivating a calm and quiet submission of soul to the sovereign pleasure of God, whatever it be.

2. We may observe the ground of this duty, viz. the divinity of God. His being God is a sufficient reason why we should be still before him, in no wise murmuring, or objecting, or opposing, but calmly and humbly submitting to him.

3. How we must fulfil this duty, of being still before God, viz. with a sense of his divinity, as seeing the ground of this duty, in that we know him to be God. Our submission is to be such as becomes rational creatures. God doth not require us to submit contrary to reason, but to submit as seeing the reason and ground of submission.—Hence, the bare consideration that God is God, may well be sufficient to still all objections and opposition against the divine sovereign dispensations.

This may appear by the following things.

1. In that he is God, he is an absolutely and infinitely perfect being; and it is impossible that he should do amiss. As he is eternal, and receives not his existence from any other, he cannot be limited in his being, or any attribute, to any certain determinate quantity. If any thing have bounds fixed to it, there must be some cause or reason why those bounds are fixed just where they are. Whence it will follow, that every limited thing must have some cause; and therefore that being which has no cause must be unlimited.

It is most evident by the works of God, that his understanding and power are infinite; for he that hath made all things out of nothing, and upholds, and governs, and manages all things every moment, in all ages, without growing weary, must be of infinite power. He must also be of infinite knowledge; for if he made all things, and upholds and governs all things continually, it will follow, that he knows and perfectly sees all things, great and small, in heaven and earth, continually at one view; which cannot be without infinite understanding.

Being thus infinite in understanding and power, he must also be perfectly holy; for unholiness always argues some defect, some blindness. Where there is no darkness or delusion, there can be no unholiness. It is impossible that wickedness should consist with infinite light. God being infinite in power and knowledge, he must be self-sufficient and all-sufficient; therefore it is impossible that he should be under any temptation to do any thing amiss; for he can have no end in doing it. When any are tempted to do amiss, it is for selfish ends. But how can an all-sufficient Being, who wants nothing, be tempted to do evil for selfish ends? So that God is essentially holy, and nothing is more impossible than that God should do amiss.

2. As he is God, he is so great, that he is infinitely above all comprehension; and therefore it is unreasonable in us to quarrel with his dispensations, because they are mysterious. If he were a being that we could comprehend, he would not be God. It would be unreasonable to suppose any other, than that there should be many things in the nature of God, and in his works and government, to us mysterious, and which we never can fully find out.

What are we? and what do we make of ourselves, when we expect that God and his

ways should be upon a level with our understandings? We are infinitely unequal to any such thing, as comprehending God. We may less unreasonably expect that a nut-shell should contain the ocean: Job xi. 7,. &c. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." If we were sensible of the distance which there is between God and us, we should see the reasonableness of that interrogation of the apostle, Rom. ix. 20. "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?"

If we find fault with God's government, we virtually suppose ourselves fit to be God's counsellors; whereas it becomes us rather, with great humility and adoration, to cry out with the apostle, Rom. ix. 33,. &c. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever." If little children should rise up and find fault with the supreme legislature of a nation, or quarrel with the mysterious administrations of the sovereign, would it not be looked upon that they meddled with things too high for them? And what are we but babes? Our understandings are infinitely less than those of babes, in comparison with the wisdom of God. It becomes us therefore to be sensible of it, and to behave ourselves accordingly. Psal. cxxxi. 1, 2. "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child." This consideration alone of the infinite distance between God and us, and between God's understanding and ours, should be enough to still and quiet us concerning all that God does, however mysterious and unintelligible to us.—Nor have we any right to expect, that God should particularly explain to us the reason of his dispensations. It is fit that God should not give any account of his matters to us, worms of the dust, that we may be sensible of our distance from him, and adore and submit to him in humble reverence.

Therefore we find, that when Job was so full of difficulty about the divine dispensations, God did not answer him by particularly explaining the reasons of his mysterious providence; but by showing him what a poor worm, what a nothing he was, and how much he himself was above him. This more became God than it would have done, to enter into a particular debate with him, or to unfold the mysterious difficulties. It became Job to submit to God in those things that he could not understand, and to this the reply tended to bring him. It is fit that God should dwell in thick darkness, or in light to which no man can approach, which no man hath seen nor can see. No wonder that a God of infinite glory shines with a brightness too strong and mighty for mortal eyes. For the angels themselves, those mighty spirits, are represented as covering their faces in this light; Isa. vi.

3. As he is God, all things are his own, and he hath a right to dispose of them according to his own pleasure. All things in this lower world are his; Job xli. 11. "Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine." Yea, the whole universe is God's; Deut. x. 14. "Behold the heaven, and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's; the earth also with all that is therein." All things are his, because all things are from him; they are wholly from him, and from him alone. Those things which are made by men, are not wholly from them. When a man builds a house, it is not wholly from him: nothing of which the house is made has its being from him. But all creatures are wholly and entirely the fruits of God's power, and therefore it is fit that they should be subject to, and for, his pleasure. Prov. xvi. 4.—And as all things are from God, so they are upheld in being by him, and would sink into nothing in a moment, if he did not uphold them. And all things are to him. Rom. xi. 36. "For by him, and through him, and to him are all things." Col. i. 16, 17. "For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, principalities or powers: all things were created by him and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." All mankind are his; their lives, and breath, and being; "for in him we live, and move, and have our being." Our souls and capacities are from him. Ezek. xviii. 4. "All souls are mine: as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son, is mine."

4. In that he is God, he is worthy to be sovereign over all things. Sometimes men are the owners of more than they are worthy of. But God is not only the owner of the whole world, as all is from and dependent on him; but such is his perfection, the excellency and dignity of his nature, that he is worthy of sovereignty over all. No man ought in the temper of his mind to be opposite to God's exercising the sovereignty of the universe, as if he were not worthy of it; for to be the absolute sovereign of the universe is not a glory or dignity too great for him. All things in heaven and earth, angels and men, are nothing in comparison with him; all are as the drop of the bucket, and as the light dust of the balance. It is therefore fit that every thing should be in his hands, to be disposed of according to his pleasure.—His will and pleasure are of infinitely greater importance than the will of creatures. It is fit that his will should take place, though contrary to the will of all other beings; that he should make himself his own end; and order all things for himself.—God is possessed of such perfections and excellencies as to qualify him to be the absolute sovereign of the world.—Certainly it is more fit that all things be under the guidance of a perfect unerring wisdom, than that they should be left to themselves to fall in confusion, or be brought to pass by blind causes. Yea, it is not fit that any affairs within the government of God should be left without the direction of his wise providence; least of all, things of the greatest importance.

It is absurd to suppose, that God is obliged to keep every creature from sinning and exposing himself to an adequate punishment. For if so, then it will follow, that there can be no such thing as a moral government of God over reasonable creatures; and it

would be an absurdity for God to give commands; for he himself would be the party bound to see to the performance, and there could be no use of promises or threatenings. But if God may leave a creature to sin, and to expose himself to punishment, then it is much fitter and better that the matter should be ordered by wisdom, who should justly lie exposed by sin to punishment, and who not; than that it be left to come to pass by confused chance. It is unworthy of the Governor of the world to leave things to chance; it belongs to him to govern all things by wisdom—And as God has wisdom to qualify him to be sovereign, so he has power also to enable him to execute the determination's of wisdom. And he is essentially and invariably holy and righteous, and infinitely good; whereby he is qualified to govern the world in the best manner.—Therefore, when he acts as sovereign of the world, it is fit that we should be still, and willingly submit, and in no wise oppose his having the glory of his sovereignty; but should in a sense of his worthiness, cheerfully ascribe it to him, and say, "Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever;" and say with those in Rev. v. 13. "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be to him that sitteth upon the throne."

5. In that he is God, he will be sovereign, and will act as such. He sits on the throne of his sovereignty, and his kingdom ruleth over all. He will be exalted in his sovereign power and dominion, as he himself declares; Ps xlv. 10. "I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." He will have all men to know, that he is most high over all the earth. He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand.—There is no such thing as frustrating, or baffling, or undermining his designs; for he is great in counsel, and wonderful in working. His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord; whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever; nothing shall be put to it, nor any thing taken from it. He will work, and who shall let it? He is able to dash in pieces the enemy. If men join hand in hand against him, to hinder or oppose his designs, he breaks the bow, he cuts the spear in sunder, he burneth the chariot in the fire.—He kills and he makes alive, he brings down and raises up just as he pleases. Isa. xlv. 6, 7. "That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is none else: I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things."

Great men, and rich men, and wise men cannot hinder God from doing his pleasure. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, he accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor. There are many devices in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord that shall stand, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations.—When he gives quietness, who can make trouble? When he hides his face, who can behold him? He breaketh down, and it cannot be built up again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening; when he purposeth, who shall disannul it? And when his hand is stretched out, who shall turn it back?—So there is

no hindering God from being sovereign, and acting as such. "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." "He hath the keys of hell and of death: he openeth, and no man shutteth: he shutteth, and no man openeth." This may show us the folly of opposing ourselves against the sovereign dispensations of God; and how much more wisely they act who quietly and sweetly submit to his sovereign will.

6. In that he is God, he is able to avenge himself on those who oppose his sovereignty. He is wise of heart, and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against God and prospered? He that will contend with God must answer it. And what a poor creature is man to fight against God! Is he able to make his part good with him? Whoever of God's enemies deal proudly, he will show that he is above them. They will be but as the chaff before the whirlwind, and shall be as the fat of lambs; they shall consume into smoke, they shall consume away. Isa. xxvii. 4. "Who would set the briers and thorns against him in battle? He would go through them, he would burn them together."

#### APPLICATION

A manifold improvement might be made of this doctrine, which a little reflection may suggest to each of us. But the improvement which I shall at this time make of it, shall be only in a use of reproof to such under convictions of sin, and fears of hell, as are not still, but oppose the sovereignty of God in the disposals of his grace. This doctrine shows the unreasonableness, and dreadful wickedness, of your refusing heartily to own the sovereignty of God in this matter. It shows that you know not that God is God. If you knew this, you would be inwardly still and quiet; you would humbly and calmly lie in the dust before a sovereign God, and would see sufficient reason for it.

In objecting and quarrelling about the righteousness of God's laws and threatenings, and his sovereign dispensations towards you and others, you oppose his divinity, you show your ignorance of his divine greatness and excellency, and that you cannot bear that he should have divine honour. It is from low, mean thoughts of God, that you do in your minds oppose his sovereignty, that you are not sensible how dangerous your conduct is; and what an audacious thing it is for such a creature as man to strive with his Maker.

What poor creatures are you, that you should set up yourselves for judges over the Most High; that you should take it upon you to call God to an account; that you should say to the great Jehovah, what dost thou? and that you should pass sentence against him! If you knew that he is God, you would not act in this manner; but this knowledge would be sufficient to still and calm you concerning all God's dispensations, and you would say with Eli, in 1 Sam. iii. 18. "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good in his sight."—But here I shall be more particular in several things.

1. It is from mean thoughts of God that you are not convinced that you have by your sins deserved his eternal wrath and curse. If you had any proper sense of the infinite majesty, greatness, and holiness of God, you would see, that to be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, and there to have no rest day nor night, is not a punishment more than equal to the demerit of sin.—You would not have so good a thought of yourselves; you would not be so clean and pure in your own eyes; you would see what vile, unworthy, hell-deserving creatures you are. If you had not little thoughts of God, and were to consider how you have set yourselves against him—how you have slighted him, his commandments and threatenings, and despised his goodness and mercy, how often you have disobeyed, how obstinate you have been, how your whole lives have been filled up with sin against God—you would not wonder that God threatens to destroy you for ever, but would wonder that he hath not actually done it before now.

If you had not mean thoughts of God, you would not find fault with him for not setting his love on you who never exercised any love to him. You would not think it unjust in God not to seek your interest and eternal welfare, who never would be persuaded at all to seek his glory; you would not think it unjust in him to slight and disregard you, who have so often and so long made light of God. If you had not mean thoughts of God, you never would think him obliged to bestow eternal salvation upon you, who have never been truly thankful for one mercy which you have already received of him.—What do you think of yourselves? what great ideas have you of yourselves? and what thoughts have you of God, that you think he is obliged to do so much for you though you treat him ever so ungratefully for the kindness which he hath already bestowed upon you all the days of your lives? It must be from little thoughts of God, that you think it unjust in him not to regard you when you call upon him; when he hath earnestly called to you, so long and so often, and you would not be persuaded to hearken to him. What thoughts have you of God, that you think he is more obliged to hear what you say to him, than you are to regard what he says to you?

It is from diminutive thoughts of God, that you think he is obliged to show mercy to you when you seek it, though you have been for a long time wilfully sinning against him, provoking him to anger, and presuming that he would show you mercy when you should seek it. What kind of thoughts have you of God, that you think he is obliged, as it were, to yield himself up to be abused by men, so that when they have done, his mercy and pardoning grace shall not be in his own power, but he must be obliged to dispense them at their call?

2. It is from little thoughts of God, that you quarrel against his justice in the condemnation of sinners, from the doctrine of original sin. It must be because you do not know him to be God, and will not allow him to be sovereign. It is for want of a sense how much God is above you, that those things in him which are above your comprehension, are such difficulties and stumbling-blocks to you: it is for want of a sense how much the wisdom and understanding of God are above yours, and what

poor, short-sighted, blind creatures you are, in comparison with him. If you were sensible what God is, you would see it most reasonable to expect that his ways should be far above the reason of man, and that he dwells in light which no man can approach unto, which no man hath seen, nor can see.—If men were sensible how excellent and perfect a Being he is, they would not be so apt to be jealous of him, and to suspect him in things which lie beyond their understandings. It would be no difficulty with them to trust God out of sight. What horrid arrogance in worms of the dust, that they should think they have wisdom enough to examine and determine concerning what God doth, and to pass sentence on it as unjust! If you were sensible how great and glorious a being God is, it would not be such a difficulty with you to allow him the dignity of such absolute sovereignty, as that he should order as he pleases, whether every single man should stand for himself, or whether a common father should stand for all.

3. It is from mean thoughts of God, that you trust in your own righteousness, and think that God ought to respect you for it. If you knew how great a Being he is, if you saw that he is God indeed, you would see how unworthy, how miserable a present it is to be offered to such a Being. It is because you are blind, and know not what a Being he is with whom you have to do, that you make so much of your own righteousness. If you had your eyes open to see that he is God indeed, you would wonder how you could think to commend yourselves to so great a Being by your gifts, by such poor affections, such broken prayers, wherein is so much hypocrisy, and so much selfishness.—If you had not very mean thoughts of God, you would wonder that ever you could think of purchasing the favour and love of so great a God by your services. You would see that it would be unworthy of God to bestow such a mercy upon you, as peace with him, and his everlasting love, and the enjoyment of himself, for such a price as you have to offer; and that he would exceedingly dishonour himself in so doing.—If you saw what God is, you would exclaim, as Job did, Job xlii. 5, 6. "Now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." And as Isaiah did, chap. vi. 5. "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

4. It is from mean thoughts of God, that you contend with him, because he bestows grace on some, and not on others. Thus God doth: he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; he takes one, and leaves another, of those who are in like circumstances; as it is said of Jacob and Esau, while they were not yet born, and had done neither good nor evil, Rom. ix. 10-13. With this sinners often quarrel; but they who upon this ground quarrel with God, suppose him to be bound to bestow his grace on sinners, for if he be bound to none, then he may take his choice, and bestow it on whom he pleases; and his bestowing it on some brings no obligation on him to bestow it on others. Has God no right to his own grace? is it not at his own disposal? and is God incapable of making a gift or present of it to any man? for a person cannot make a present of that which is not his own, or in his own right. It is impossible to give a debt.



But what a low thought of God does this argue! Consider what it is you would make of God. Must he be so tied up, that he cannot use his own pleasure in bestowing his own gifts? Is he obliged to bestow them on one, because it is his pleasure to bestow them on another? Is not God worthy to have the same right to dispose of his gifts, as a man has of his money? or is it because God is not so great, and therefore should be more subject, more under bounds, than men? Is not God worthy to have as absolute a propriety in his goods as man has in his? At this rate, God cannot make a present of any thing; he has nothing of his own to bestow. If he have a mind to show a peculiar favour to some, to lay some under special obligations, he cannot do it, on the supposition, because his favour is not at his own disposal! The truth is, men have low thoughts of God, or else they would willingly ascribe sovereignty to him in this matter. Matt. xx. 15. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?"

God is pleased to show mercy to his enemies, according to his own sovereign pleasure. And surely it is fit he should. How unreasonable is it to think that God stands bound to his enemies! Therefore consider what you do in quarrelling with God, and opposing his sovereignty. Consider with whom it is you contend. Let all who are sensible of their misery, and afraid of the wrath of God, consider these things. Those of you who have been long seeking salvation, but are in great terrors through fear that God will destroy you, consider what you have heard, be still, and know that he is God. When God seems to turn a deaf ear to your cries; when he seems to frown upon you; when he shows mercy to others, your equals, or those who are worse, and who have been seeking a less time than you;—be still. Consider who he is that disposes and orders these things. You shall consider it; you shall know it: he will make all men to know that he is God. You shall either know it for your good here, by submission, or to your cost hereafter.

## **The Sovereignty of God**

**John Murray**

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The sovereignty of God I take to be the absolute authority, rule, and government of God in the whole of that reality that exists distinct from Himself in the realms of nature and of grace. It is a concept that respects His relation to other beings and to all other being and existence. It is, therefore, a relative concept, or a concept of relation.

If God possesses and exercises this absolute authority, rule, and government, the necessary presupposition of it is the *oneness*, or *unity*, of God. It is a fact to which Scripture bears constant witness in a great variety of contexts because it is a truth that underlies and determines the whole superstructure of divine revelation.

An examination of this witness will show that it is not mere uniqueness or supremacy or even transcendence in the realm of Deity. It is not as if there were a host of lesser deities over whom God is supreme and therefore demands from us supreme worship and devotion. It is rather that He alone is God. “The Lord he is God; there is none else besides him.” “He is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else” (Deut. 4:35, 39). “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord” (Deut. 6:4). “See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me” (Deut. 32:39). “Thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth” (II Kings 19:15).

It is significant that it is precisely this line of Old Testament witness that is appealed to by our Lord as the answer to the question, “What commandment is the first of all?” “The first...is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord” (Mark 12:29). And the necessary consequence for us is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength” (Mark 12:30). “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4:10). The pivotal character of the oneness of God appears, for example, in Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, when it is made the hinge upon which turns and hangs no less important a doctrine than that of justification by faith. “Or is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith” (Rom. 3:29-31). And again in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, the foundation that “to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him” (I Cor. 8:6) is the first principle regulative of worship.

The concept of divine sovereignty presupposes also the fact of *creation*, that is, the origination of all other existence by the fiat of God. The moment we posit the existence of anything independent of God in its derivation of factual being, in that moment we have denied the divine sovereignty. For even should we grant that now or at some point God has assumed or gained absolute control over it, the moment we allow the existence of anything outside of His fiat as its principle or origination and outside of His government as the principle of its continued existence, then we have eviscerated the *absoluteness* of the divine authority and rule. Scripture is paramountly conscious of this fact, and so its witness to the absolutely originative activity of God is pervasive. It does not depend wholly upon a few well-known texts, however important these may be.

Perhaps no word expresses it more pointedly than that of the Psalm: “By the word of

the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth” (Ps. 33:6). The import is that the word, or breath of God, breath being the symbol of His almighty, creative will, is the antecedent, or prior cause, of all that is. “For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast” (vs. 9). This mode of statement harks back to the first chapter of Genesis, where on some eight occasions the successive steps of the creative drama are introduced with the formula, “and God said.”

God made heaven and earth; by His Spirit the havens were garnished; He laid the foundations of the earth; by wisdom He founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens; His hands stretched out the heavens, and all their host He commanded; heaven and earth, His hand made, and so all those things came to be; He made the sea and the dry land; He is the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega; He is the beginning of creation; by His will, heaven and earth were, and were created (II Kings 19:15; Job 26:13; 38:4; Prov. 3:19; Isa. 42:5; 44:6; 45:12; 66:2; Jonah 1:9; Rev. 1:8; 3:14; 4:8).

The piety on which the Scripture places its imprimatur is true piety; this, we find, rests upon, and is necessarily suffused with, the recognition of God’s creatorhood. The address to God in adoration, prayer, and praise begins with it; the address to men in law and gospel rests upon it. The faith that is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,” the faith through which the catalogue of saints had witness borne to them that they were righteous, is the faith through which “we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb. 11:3). And when Paul made his appeal to the idolatrous Athenians that God now commandeth men that they should all, everywhere repent, he began his address by saying, “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (Acts 17:24).

If the sovereignty of God rests upon the fact of His oneness and upon the fact of creation, it may be said to consist, first of all, in the right of dominion and rule over all and in the fact of universal possession. The Psalm sounds this note succinctly. “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof” (Ps. 24:1). The prophets do the same when they affirm that He is “the God of the whole earth” and as the “Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (Isa. 54:5; Dan. 4:17, 25). In the formula of Melchizedek and of Abraham, He is the “possessor of heaven and earth” (Gen. 14:19, 22), and in the words of Paul, “in him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

But, secondly, sovereignty, as the right of dominion and the fact of possession, comes to its full all-pervasive and efficient exercise in government. As such it is (1) sovereignty exercised in accordance with antecedent decree. What God decrees is

infallibly determined and accomplished. “Hast thou not heard,” He protests, “long ago, how I have done it, and of ancient times that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps” (II Kings 19:25). “Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand” (Isa. 14:24) “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isa. 26:10). In Job’s words, “He is in one mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doeth. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him” (Job 23:13-14). “I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee” (Job 42:1-2). It is that “the counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations,” that He “worketh all things according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Ps. 33:11; Eph. 1:11).

This purposive decree is not only stated positively but also negatively. No purpose of His can be restrained, and every creature purpose that is contrary must be frustrated. “For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?” (Isa. 14:27). “He maketh the devices of the people of none effect” (Ps. 33:10). “He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” (Dan. 4:35).

As sovereignty coming to all-pervasive and efficient exercise in government, it is (2) sovereignty exercised with omnipotent and undefeatable efficiency. The mighty hand of God is the executor of His will. He is the great, the mighty, the terrible. He rideth upon the heavens and, in His excellency, on the skies. There is none who can deliver out of His hand, for He frustrateth the devices of the crafty, and the counsel of the cunning is carried headlong. He breaketh down, and it cannot be built up again. There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against Him. None can stay His hand nor say unto Him, “What doest thou?” for human might is of one sort with that of the Egyptians, and they are men and not God, and their horses flesh and not spirit (Deut. 10:17; 13:26; Job 5:12-13; 12:14; Prov. 21:30; Dan. 3:35; Isa. 31:3).

It is (3) sovereignty that is all-pervasive. This all-pervasiveness rests upon His omnipresence. “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me” (Ps. 139:7-10).

We may illustrate this all-pervasiveness in three of the ways in which Scripture exhibits it:

(a) It respects the events of ordinary providence. It is God who gives rain upon the

earth and sends water upon the fields. He makes His sun to shine upon the evil and the good: and sends rain on the just and the unjust. He clothes the grass of the field, causing the grass to grow for cattle and herb for the service of man. He feeds the birds of heaven. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His knowledge and will. He gives us our daily bread. He gives wine that makes glad the heart of man oil that makes his face to shine, and bread that strengthens man's heart. He crowns the years with goodness and the paths drop fatness. He even gives that which is abused and used in the service of another god. He gave grain and new wine, and the oil, and multiplied silver and gold, which they used for Baal. He makes the wind His messengers and flames of fire His ministers. The whole earth is filled with His glory. So that the pious contemplation of His working brings forth the exclamation of adoration: "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches" (Job 5:10; Matt. 5:45; Ps. 104:4, 14-24; 63:11; Hos. 2:8).

(b) It respects the disposition of all earthly authority. He alone is God of all the kingdoms of the earth. He removes kings and sets up kings, for as the Most High, He rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whomsoever He will. He sets up over them even the lowest of men. It is He that gives even to ungodly men the kingdom, the power, the strength, and the glory. He overthrows the throne and strength of kingdoms (Deut. 4:35, 39; II Kings 5:15; 9:15; Isa. 37:16; Dan. 4:11; 5:18, 21; Hag. 2:22).

The very division of the kingdom of Israel fraught with dire consequences for the true worship of Jehovah was yet a thing brought about of the Lord that He might establish His word (I Kings 12-15). "Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from me" (I Kings 12:24). For He ordains kings for judgment and establishes them for correction, so that Assyria is the rod of His anger and the staff of His hand the divine indignation to perform the divine judgment upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem (Hab. 1:12; Isa. 10:5, 12).

It is not simply, then, that the powers of civil government are ordained by God to be the ministers of equity and good and peace, for the punishment of evil doers and for the praise of them that do well (Rom. 13:3; I Pet. 2:14), but it is also true that usurped and corrupt government that violates the very principles of government itself is within the government of God and fulfils His sovereign purpose. In perpetration of iniquity, they fill up the cup of divine indignation. "Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks" (Isa. 10:12).

(c) It respects good and evil, so that even the sins of men come within the scope of His rule and providence. "What," asks the oppressed and the afflicted Job, bereft of flocks

and herds and smitten with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto the crown, “shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?” (Job 2:10). For “with God,” he says again, “is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding. Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again; he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening” (Job 12:13-14). He forms the light and creates darkness; He makes peace and creates evil. He kills and He makes alive; He wounds and He heals (Isa. 45:7; Deut. 32:39). He “hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil” (Prov. 16:4). “Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?” (Amos 3:9).

I am not in the least forgetful of the very acute problems raised by such pronouncements of Scripture. It will be the task of other speakers at this conference to deal with these in more detail, and I have no doubt but they will be ably and judiciously handled. Nevertheless it does appear necessary to the topic assigned me to affirm that the teaching of Scripture on the divine sovereignty requires us to recognize with Calvin that all events are governed by the secret counsel and directed by the present hand of God and that God’s omnipotence is not the vain, idle possession of potency but the most vigilant, efficacious, and operative, “a power constantly exerted on every distinct and particular movement” (*Inst.* I, xvi. 3). “Whence we assert, that not only the heaven and the earth, and inanimate creatures, but also the deliberations and volitions of men, are so governed by His providence, as to be directed to the end appointed by it” (*Inst.* I, xvi. 8).

The problems raised come to their most acute expression in those instances where the agency of God is affirmed in connection with what is not only evil in the generic sense but evil in the specific sense of sin and wrongdoing. It appears to me that Calvin again is right when he contends that “nothing can be desired more explicit than His frequent declarations, that He blinds the minds of men, strikes them with giddiness, inebriates them with the spirit of slumber, fills them with infatuation, and hardens their hearts. These passages also many persons refer to for permission, as though, in abandoning the reprobate, God permitted them to be blinded by Satan. But that solution is too frivolous, since the Holy Spirit expressly declares that their blindness and infatuation are inflicted by the righteous judgment of God. He is said to have caused the obduracy of Pharaoh’s heart, and also to have aggravated and confirmed it. Some elude the force of these expressions with a foolish cavil—that since Pharaoh himself is elsewhere said to have hardened his own heart, his own will is stated as the cause of his obduracy; as though these two things were at all incompatible with each other, that man should be actuated by God, and yet at the same time be active himself. But I retort on them their own objection; for if *hardening* denotes a bare permission, Pharaoh cannot properly be charged with being the cause of his own obstinacy. Now, how weak and insipid would be such an interpretation, as though Pharaoh only permitted himself to be hardened! Besides the Scripture cuts off all occasion of such cavils. God says, ‘I will harden his heart’” (*Inst.* I. xviii. 2).

In this connection, it is noteworthy to observe that the prophet was commanded to go and tell the people, “Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed” (Isa. 6:9-10). In the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, we have allusion to this part of Isaiah’s prophecy (see Matt. 13:14-15; John 12:40; Acts 28:26-27). In Matthew and Acts, the blinding of the eyes is represented as the blinding on the part of the people of their own eyes; in John it is represented as blinding on the part of God. This variation should serve to remind us that the positive infliction on the part of God must not be abstracted from the sinful condition of the heart, the moral perversity and responsible action of those who are the subjects of the divine retribution. Paul tells us that, because men will not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved, “for this cause God shall send them strong delusion [working of error], that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (I Thess. 2:11-12 cf; I Kings 22:19-23). But while we may not abstract the divine infliction from the moral situation in which those concerned find themselves, we must frankly acknowledge the reality of the divine action and the sovereignty of His agency. “Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth” (Rom. 9:18).

Perhaps most familiar to us in the matter of the divine agency as it respects evil are Acts 2:23; 4:28, where the arch-crime of human history is referred to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God and the treatment meted out to Jesus. In the conspiracy devised against Him by Herod and Pontius Pilate and the Gentiles and the people of Israel is that which the divine hand and counsel foreordained to come to pass.

We are now attempting, only very briefly, to show some of the ways in which the witness of Scripture establishes the all-pervasiveness of the sovereignty of God. When we find this sovereignty coming to expression in the most unequivocal way even in those acts of subordinate agents where their moral responsibility is most intensely active in the perpetration of wrong, we can hardly go any farther in demonstrating the all-inclusiveness of it.

But just then we must ever remind ourselves that God contracts no defilement or criminality from such agency. He is just in all His ways and holy in all His works. While everything that occurs in God’s universe finds its account, as B. B. Warfield says, “in His positive ordering and active concurrence,” yet “the moral quality of the deed, considered in itself, is rooted in the moral character of the subordinate agent, acting in the circumstances and under the motives operative in each instance” (*Biblical Doctrines*, p. 20). God is not the author of sin. Sin is embraced in His decretive foreordination; it is accomplished in His providence. But it is embraced in

His decree and effected in His providence in such a way as to insure that blame and guilt attach to the perpetrators of wrong and to them alone.

And again there comes to us with renewed force the significance and even preciousness of the truth that inscrutable mystery surrounds the divine working. “As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all” (Eccl. 11:5). We cannot rationalize it; we cannot lay it bare so as to comprehend it. We bow in humble and intelligent ignorance and reiterate, “Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven: what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea” (Job 11:7-9). His way is in the sea and His path in the great waters. His footsteps are not known (Ps. 77:19). Clouds and darkness are round about Him. Yet, in accordance with His holiness, Scripture never permits us to forget that justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne (Ps. 89:14).

The sovereignty of God is in a unique and peculiar way exemplified in the election to saving grace. In the Old Testament one of the most significant episodes is the revelation of the redemptive name “Jehovah.” There have been various attempts to interpret the precise meaning of the name. The older view that it expresses the self-determination, the independence, in the soteric sphere, the sovereignty of God, appears to be the most acceptable and tenable. It finds the key to its meaning in the formula, “I am that I am” (Exod. 3:14). In all that God does for His people, He is determined from within Himself. Paraphrased, the formula would run, “What I am and what I shall be in relation to my people, I am and shall be in virtue of what I myself am. The rationale of my actions and relations, promises and purposes, is in myself, in my free self-determining will.”

The correlate of this sovereignty in the choice and salvation of His people is the faithfulness and unchangeableness of God. He consistently pursues the determinations that proceed from Himself, and so His self-consistency insures steadfastness and persistence in His covenant promises and purposes. “For I am Jehovah, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal. 3:6).[1]

Perhaps the most plausible and subtle attempt to eliminate the sovereignty of God in the election to saving grace is the interpretation that posits foreknowledge in the diluted sense of foresight or prescience as the prius, in the order of divine thought, in predestination to life. The *locus classicus* in the argument is Rom. 8:29. It is contended that the foreknowledge spoken of is the divine foresight of faith, or, more comprehensively, the divine foresight of the fulfilment on the part of men of the conditions of salvation. Those whom He foreknew, therefore, are those whom He foresaw as certain to fulfill the conditions of salvation.



It is thought that this removes the reason for the discrimination that exists among men in the matter of salvation from the sovereign discrimination and fore-ordination on the part of God to the sovereign volition on the part of man. Of the Pelagian or Arminian conception of the origin of faith, it must be understood that it makes no real difference that the matter concerns the eternal decree of God. The question really is, what is the crucial and determining factor in predestination to life? Is it a sovereign act on the part of God or is it an activity or exercise of will on the part of man? Once the predestinating decree of God is made contingent upon the divine foresight of an autonomous action or decision on the part of man, then it is that action on the part of man that accounts for discriminating foreordination on the part of God. And so the sovereignty of God in the election to life is eliminated at the crucial point. Predestination is made to rest upon a condition resident in, or fulfilled by, man.

If, for the sake of argument, we were to adopt this diluted interpretation of the verb “foreknow” in Rom. 8:29, we are not to readily conclude that what we call the particularistic exegesis would have to be abandoned and the absolute sovereignty of God in the matter of election to life be eliminated. If we say that the meaning of the verb “foreknow” in Rom. 8:29 is “whom He foresaw as believing and persevering,” we are not to think that we have ended the matter, for we are compelled to ask the further question: Whence this faith which God foresees?

The answer that Scripture itself affords is that faith itself is the gift of God, not of course gift in some mechanical sense, but gift in the sense of being graciously wrought in men by the operation and illumination of the Spirit (see e.g., John 3:3-8; 6:44, 45, 65; Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:21). Since faith is thus given to some and not to others, and given to those who are equally unworthy with those to whom it is not given, the ultimate reason is that God is pleased thus to operate in some and not in others. The divine foresight of faith, therefore, would presuppose an antecedent decree on the part of God to work this faith in some and not in others. The foresight of faith would have as its logical prius the sovereign determination to give faith to them. And so even foresight would, on a Biblical conception of the origin of faith, throw us back on the sovereign determination of God.

This exegesis, however, though really providing no escape from the sovereignty of God in the decree of salvation, is nevertheless not to be favored, and that for the following reasons: (1) It is extremely unlikely that Paul, in tracing our salvation to its source in the mind and will of God, would have omitted reference to the originative decree, namely, the decree to work faith.

(2) According to the teaching of Scripture in general and Paul in particular, faith is included in, or associated with, *klhsiV*, and *klhsiV* is in this very passage made the consequence of foreknowledge and predestination. It cannot be both the condition of predestination and the consequence of it. This consideration is confirmed by verse 28:

“All things work together for good to them that love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose.” If called according to His purpose, the purpose is antecedent to the calling, and if faith is embodied in or associated with calling, the purpose itself cannot be conditioned upon faith.

(3) This exegesis is in conflict with what is said to be the end of predestination—conformity to the image of His Son. Conformity of this kind is surely meant to include every phase of likeness to Christ. Conformity to the image of the Son, no doubt, points to the ultimate perfection to which the elect will attain. If so, then the whole process by which that conformity is secured and realized must be in subordination to this end. In other words, the end is surely prior in the order of thought to the process by which it is to be achieved. But the process by which the end is to be achieved includes faith and perseverance. Faith cannot then be the logical antecedent of predestination; it is rather that predestination is the logical antecedent of faith, even if faith is foreseen by God in His eternal counsel. That is just saying that faith is consequent, in the order of divine thought, upon the destined end of conformity to the image of the Son. But the antecedent of predestination faith would have to be if foreknowledge is the foreknowledge of faith.

Faith, therefore, is two removes in the order of divine thought from foreknowledge, and two removes posterior, not prior, two removes in the order of consequence, not of causation.

(4) This line of interpretation is in accord with Paul’s teaching elsewhere and particularly in that one passage which more than any other expands the very subject in debate. It is Eph. 1:4.

(a) Paul there affirms that God chose us in Christ “before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself.” The elect are chosen to holiness; in the divine love, they are predestinated to adoption.

(b) This election and predestination are according to the good pleasure of His will and according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things according to the purpose of His own will. Paul, it is to be noted, piles up expressions almost to the point of what might be, on superficial reading, considered redundancy, in order to emphasize the sovereign determination of the divine will and purpose: “proorisqenteV kata proqesin tou ta panta energountoV kata thn boulhn tou qelhmatoV autou” [Eph. 1:11]. To find the determining factor in this predestination in a human decision would be to wreck the whole intent of Paul’s eloquent multiplication of terms.

(c) The choice in Christ and the consequent union with Him is the antecedent or foundation of all the blessings bestowed. It is in the Beloved we were abundantly

avored with grace (vs. 6); it is in Him we have the redemption, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace (vs. 1); the making known of the mystery of His will was purposed in Christ (vs. 9); it is in Him that all things in heaven and earth will be summed up (vs. 10); it is in Him we are called (vs. 11); it is in Him that the Ephesians, when they had heard the word of truth and believed, were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (vss. 13, 14). It is obvious that the very exercise of grace, believing and persevering grace, is grace exercised in the sphere and on the basis of union with Christ, and so the union with Christ which has its genesis in the choice of Christ before the foundation of the world, must be regarded as the prius and basis of that rather than, by way of prescience, its conditioning cause.

If this exegesis, which takes the verb “foreknow” in the diluted sense of prescience, is not acceptable, what then, we may ask, is the meaning of foreknowledge? The answer, given repeatedly by the ablest commentators, is not difficult to find. The words *yādhā* in Hebrew and *ginosko* in Greek are used quite frequently in a pregnant sense, that is, with a fuller meaning than that of merely perceiving or taking cognizance of a fact. It often means to “take note of,” to “set regard upon,” to “know with peculiar interest delight, affection, and even action.” Indeed, it is the practical synonym of “to love” or “set affection upon.” “The compound *proginosko*,” as Sanday observes, “throws back this ‘taking note’ from the historic act in time to the eternal counsel which it expresses and executes” (Comm., *in loco*). So that we should paraphrase by saying, “Those whom He loved beforehand.”

This pregnant meaning of the word is in accord with contextual considerations. In every other link of this “golden chain of salvation,” as it has been called, it is a divine activity that is spoken of. God is intensely active in every other step. It is God Who predestinates; it is God Who calls; it is God Who justifies; it is God Who glorifies. It would be out of accord with this emphasis, a weakening at the point that can least afford it, to make the originative act of God less active and determinative. The notion of foresight has distinctly less of the active and distinctly more of the passive than the divinely monergistic emphasis of the whole passage appears to require. It is not a foresight of difference but a foreknowledge that makes difference to exist. It does not simply recognize existence; it determines existence. It expresses the volitional determinative counsel of God with reference to those who are the objects of it. It is sovereign distinguishing love.

If this is the meaning, the question may well be asked: What is the difference between foreknowledge and predestination in the text concerned? For, after all, some distinction there must be. The distinction is simple and significant. Foreknowledge is the setting of loving and knowing affection upon those concerned. It concentrates attention upon the love of God. But it does not of itself intimate the specific destiny to which the objects of love are appointed. That, in turn, predestination precisely does. It reveals to us the high and blessed destiny to which the objects of His distinguishing

and peculiar love are assigned. And it reveals, in so doing, the greatness of His love. It is love of such a sort that it assigns them to conformity to the image of Him Who is the eternal and only-begotten Son.

When we ask the reason for the love that foreknowledge intimates and the greatness and security of which predestination expresses, we are uniquely confronted with the grandeur of the divine sovereignty. It is love that is according to the counsel of the divine will. The reason is enveloped in the mystery of His good pleasure. We are face to face with an ultimate of divine revelation and, therefore, an ultimate of human thought. This love is not something that we can rationalize or analyze. We are in its presence, as nowhere else, overwhelmed with a sense of the divine sovereignty. We are struck with amazement. It is amazing, inexplicable love. But to faith it is a reality that constrains the deepest and highest adoration. It is love, the praise of which eternity will not exhaust. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen" (Rom. 11:33-36)

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1. Cf. Oehler, *Old Testament Theology*, Eng. trans., vol. I, pp. 139 ff., Geerhardus Vos, *Lectures on the Theology of the Old Testament*, ch. VIII.

## **The Doctrine of the Sovereignty of God**

**John Macleod**

*John Macleod (1872-1948) was Principal of the Free Church of Scotland College, Edinburgh. This address was published in The Evangelical Quarterly (1941).*

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The Lord is the true God and an everlasting King. He is the Maker of all things and as such He is their Lord. They are His work which He has made for Himself. They belong to His Lordship or Kingdom. They owe their being to His will and word. In the wide range of derived or created being which all belongs to His realm and is embraced in His decree there is not only the region of the inanimate or the merely sentient there is that also of animate and intelligent or spiritual being which was made to hold

fellowship with Him from Whom it has come. Angels that excel in strength belong to this realm. We also who are of an order that was made a little lower than they belong to it as well. And we have a closer and more personal concern with the truth that bears on our race and on ourselves than we have with what holds good of another, albeit a higher rank of being than our own.

We each of us as well as the whole race to which we belong are subject to the sceptre of the Blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Made in His likeness and for His glory we should have our blessedness in Him. In regard to this we are as much dependent on the Lord for our blessedness as we are for our very being; and this we are not only as creatures as our first father was before he fell, but very specially do we depend on Him for the recovery of blessedness as creatures that have sinned. Sinners have earned the wrath and curse of God and if they are to be freed from His righteous wrath it can be only as the outcome of His holy will in gracious intervention. The evil thing from which we need to be set free takes the shape of war with God. The very mind or thinking of man as fallen is enmity against Him. It is not subject to His law neither indeed can be, and so long as the reign of this evil principle remains unbroken those who are under its sway cannot please God. They have their wicked quarrel with Him; and cherishing the thought of rebels, they are not willing to own Him as King or to give Him the glory of His kingly supremacy. They will not submit to the revelation of His will in Law as the rule of their obedience. Their quarrel with His royal rights comes out directly in their self-will which casts off His yoke. They would still, like their first father, be a God to themselves. And they dare to set up what falls in with their own pleasure against what He is pleased to make known as His preceptive will. The intimation of His preceptive will is one of the ways in which the great King makes it known that He is King. Those that would dethrone or ignore Him by ruling His authority out of their lives set at nought His will. They say in effect that their tongues are their own. Who is Lord over them? Thus the virus that was injected into the race by the tempter at the first is still at work and men will not yield to the claims of God as He calls for a loyal response in obedience at the hand of a race that He made to be His subjects and His servants.

This is one side of God's sovereignty; and it is often overlooked and forgotten when we speak of the matter. And yet when our attention is drawn to it we see at once how it belongs to His Kingly glory that it should be His revealed will that ought to guide the outgoings of our soul in the varied obedience of life. As a rule among Christian people there is an acknowledgment of this Kingship even though the best of them have reason to mourn over how far they come short of the love and the loyalty that should be theirs as their answer to the righteous claims of God. We see however that even on this side in regard to the obedience due to his Maker by man as fallen there is a disposition shown by many to reduce the claim that God makes at the hand of the sinner as though the sinful disability that man has brought upon himself availed to exempt him from some share of the full tale of duty for which his Maker calls. This

perversion of truth may take more forms than one.

The plea may be put forward that man is responsible for only what is within the reach and compass of his present power. When this ground is taken we see how those who adopt it as their starting-point and yet acknowledge the right of God to call for repentance and faith stand out for a seriously weakened and watered-down doctrine of the disastrous results of the Fall on the race of mankind, and they reason that when men are called upon to repent and believe the Gospel they must have some reserve of power still inherent in their nature which lays a rational ground for asking such obedience at their hand. Along this line lies Pelagianism with its diluted varieties and modifications in Semi-Pelagian Synergism and Arminianism. Those who espouse this kind of teaching reason from "I must" to "I can." They infer that there is power when there is duty. The pride of unbroken and unhumbled human nature comes out in the Kantian ethic that deduces "I can" from "I ought." It forgets that the disability which comes in the train of sin does not take away from God the right to ask for the love and the service to yield which He made us in His likeness at the first. To take this away from Him would be as much as to say that sin has so far reached its goal as to spoil our Maker of His right to call for full and unabated obedience at the hand of men who have fallen away from Him. Now the teaching that finds a place for such a leaven joins issue with the truth that the Lord is King. It quarrels with the rightful authority that belongs to Him as Maker and Sovereign.

This, however, is not all. If there are left-hand defections there are right-hand extremes. For among those who own the truth of the spiritual bankruptcy of a fallen race there are some who reason that because man as a sinner is unable, until he is born again, to repent or to believe the Gospel he is not called upon to do either and it would not be reasonable that he should be called upon to yield such obedience. It is said to be a mockery of his misery or it is a suggestion that he is not so lost as not to be able to make his way back to God. Now it is neither the one thing nor the other. It is not a mockery of the wretchedness of the sinner which on the part of his fellow in sin would be a very heartless thing. It is the way that God Himself takes in His Word in dealing with the many that are called outwardly so many of whom hear and heed not. For many are called while few are chosen. He bids men make them a new heart and this is fitted, when they try to comply with the Word and find how wretchedly they fail to let them see the wickedness and stubbornness of hearts that will neither tremble nor obey. And at the same time it is fitted to produce the conviction that such is the grip of spiritual death that nothing else can loosen it than the new birth from above which gives life to the dead. Such a method conveys no suggestion that the thing a man ought to do he can do. He ought to do it and he has to learn that what he ought to do he cannot do and that this is the pit of hopeless ruin into which his sin has plunged him. It is a bitter thing to learn this truth but it is a wholesome truth to learn. It is not we, who are only called upon to echo His Word, but God Himself that bids the impenitent repent, the unbelieving believe and the dead to do what only the living can

do. In doing all this God is within His own right and He vindicates the wisdom of the way that He is pleased to take when He brings in sinners guilty in the court of conscience and makes them feel that they are quite consciously impotent by reason of the dominion of death over their nature. When He does this He teaches the truth of spiritual death in the hard school of a living experience. This is something more than acquaintance with doctrinal notions. God convinces those whom He thus teaches that they must depend on Him as God Who quickeneth the dead Who alone can give effect to His own Word of truth and Who alone can burst the bonds that lie on the person and his powers over which the apathy of death holds its sway. The subjects of this teaching can speak of things whose truth they have been made to feel.

That our race should be in such a sad plight is a mystery that we are bound to recognise to be one that we cannot fathom; and it is folly on our part to try to explain it away by our proud and empty reasonings. In his pride man the culprit would take as his own the seat of the Judge and arraign his Judge at his bar as though the roles of Judge and culprit were reversed. He forgets that He with Whom he has to do is One that giveth not account of His matters and is not amenable to the judgment of the creatures that owe their very being to His Kingly fiat. Well would it become each one of us in things of this kind to hearken to the Voice that spoke of old at the Bush — "Take off thy shoes from off thy feet for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

The truth of scripture has a catholicity of its own, an all-round fulness and symmetry that man with his nibbling cavils would mar and mutilate. The whole truth as to man's awful ruin is to be held and taught subject to no abatement and the full tale of God's unabridged rights and claims is at the same time to be held and taught along with it. And so the two-fold truth that man ought to obey and yet he cannot is to be maintained in its integrity. There is a lofty superiority to the whittling schemes of man to be seen in the way in which the Word of God sets forth both sides of this truth doing full justice to each alike. And in this respect our Reformed Faith in its fullest confession and expression as it sets forth standard Reformed teaching in such symbolic documents as the Canons of Dort and the Westminster Confession of Faith is a true echo of the doctrine of the Word which these notable symbols undertook to declare and to defend. The sacred rights of Law as an utterance of the holy will of God are guarded and at the same time unmistakable witness is borne to the need that there is for the saving operation of God so that man may be restored to the likeness he has lost. He will only in this way be enabled to answer the end of his being when he answers the end of his calling in wearing the yoke of his Redeeming Lord. We are thus brought up to face the question of what effects this precious result. And this is the other aspect of Sovereignty which is to be seen not in the authoritative proclamation of the preceptive will of God the Lawgiver and King but in His decisive will as He appoints things to be in His eternal decree.

This second aspect of His Sovereignty of which we are now to speak is what is oftenest indicated by the word when in doctrinal debates it is used of God. Stress is laid in historical and dogmatic discussions on the disposal of all things according to the purpose of God as that is wrought out in the field of universal providence. At times the word predestination may be used in a narrower and at other times in a wider sense. The stress of thought may be laid on the decree that bears in electing grace on the destiny of the people of God and its twin decree which bears on the appointed destiny of those that He is pleased to pass over and to ordain to wrath and to dishonour as the reward of their sin. In the wider sense of predestination it covers all events so that God is seen to have preordained whatsoever comes to pass and the regularity of natural law is due to His appointment as to the necessary action of second causes according to the nature that He has bestowed upon them and their consequent appropriate working. In the course of His government in providence He works out what He has decreed so that these second or subordinate cases have their field of a proper operation and activity according to the nature of each of them. Thus events that are contingent fall out contingently and what is necessary has its own necessity. In the range of this latter category, paradoxical as it may sound it is necessary that the functioning of the created will should be free so that if it is to be exercised at all there is a needs be that it should be free. Thus rational freedom and necessity are found to conspire sweetly in the production of the actions of free agents. Here there is a necessity that has in its nature nothing of the character of the compelling force that overbears rational freedom; and so the predestination of God does not clash with the responsible freedom with which He has endowed accountable creatures whom He has put under Law and laid under obligation to honour Him by obeying it.

When a free agent in the exercise of his personal natural spontaneity takes a course of action it was certain beforehand that he would take such a course and should be naturally free in doing so. For God Who appointed before that such a course should be taken, in doing so appointed that it should be taken by a free agent in the natural exercise of his proper freedom. Such an appointment does not mar the freedom of the agent or his responsibility for his act. So far is this from being the case that it made sure that without any compulsion the action should take place and that it should be free when it took place. And appointment of this kind lays no kind of blind or brute necessity upon a free agent which interferes with his native spontaneous freedom or binds the agent hand and foot to be or to do anything else than he sees fit to choose for himself. Thus the Sovereignty of God in His purpose of predestination or preordination is a guarantee beforehand that when the time and place come for rational accountable action such action shall be taken in the full tale of its rationality and responsibility. That God has appointed that a thing should be free is what secures and makes certain that it shall be so. It makes it certain beforehand; and this certainty does not come in conflict with the truth of the freedom of the willing agent when he in due course wills to act and acts as he has willed. It is a mere bugbear that is conjured



up when men say that the predestination of God with its attendant certainty prohibits the free eventuation of the acts of responsible agents. God has appointed that responsible action should be that of free agents in the exercise of their choice as it commends itself to them and as they shall answer for it.

To say that the purpose beforehand to make a being endowed with rational freedom is inconsistent with the true freedom of that being when made is as much as to say that no truly free and accountable creature can exist; for to be such a free creature is only the thought of the Creator Who designed to make such a being. The creature will is free as it chooses what the person sees to be good for choice. It was made to be free and the purpose to make it was a purpose to make it what it was meant to be. There is thus no quarrel between man's creation as a morally free being and his freedom, and there is no more of a quarrel between that freedom and God's purpose to make beings endowed with such a freedom. Man made in the likeness and for the service of his Maker was not meant to be a mere piece of automatic mechanism grinding out irresponsibly thought and desire and — shall we call it? — volition. In his own sphere he was meant to be an originating centre of spontaneous and voluntary acts and of an activity that is a reflection on the plane of created life and being of the supreme and controlling activity of the will of God our Maker. Thus the Sovereign counsel of God has effect given to it, and yet it not only does not impinge upon the entire freedom of the will of free agents, it has in its certainty of execution the pledge that each responsible creature of His hand shall have all the freedom that is needed for the responsibility for which He has given it being.

There is then a perfect harmony between the will of a Sovereign God, the blessed and only Potentate, as effectual and controlling and transcendent, and the will or freedom of His responsible creatures who take the way that commends itself to their choice. At one and the same time the will of God is sovereign and supreme and the will of man is naturally and morally free. Neither has a real quarrel with the other, though the perverse and rebel will of fallen man has its steady quarrel from day to day with the preceptive will of the Holy Sovereign of heaven and earth. The exercise then of the will of the creature leaves him open to the account that he has to give in. His responsibility is unimpaired. And it is altogether an oblique view that is taken of the supreme control and certainty of God's decretive will when it is seen as if it were in conflict with the fundamental and undeniable truth that we as a race are amenable to the judgment in righteousness of the great King Eternal, Immortal and Invisible.

There is no conflict at this point. In a word we may say that as surely as God is sovereign man is free, and as surely as man is free God is sovereign. In the sovereignty that belongs to Him He so controls the thoughts and desires and volitions of His creatures as to carry out through their free and responsible activity what He has Himself designed. His supremacy sets bounds to the activity of His creatures so that at the very time and in the very thing in which they please themselves they are giving

effect to His transcendent design. And this is so even should it be the thought of their heart that they are bent on frustrating His counsel by doing their own will and pleasure. When their self-will reaches its highest His controlling hand is above it.

There is of course an important distinction in the meaning we put upon the word free when we apply it to the ordinary rational choice and activity of every man in every day life which marks it out from the sense that attaches to it when we deny the spiritual freedom of the natural man and ascribe freedom in things spiritual to those only whose spiritual freedom of will has been given back to them by the touch of renewing grace. On such subjects as fall to be discussed in this connection we cannot be too careful as to the precise sense in which we and others use the words that are the coinage of thought. It is the failure to define our terms and to adhere to the definition if made and accepted that brings in the confusion that is found so often in the handling of topics in which ambiguity lurks at every corner, owing to the various shades of meaning that belong to the same words, as they are used in the dialect of the various schools of thought. It is one of the benefits that issue from dogmatic or theological conflict that the combatants are forced by the necessity of the case to clear their ground and to use their terms with a respectable amount of self-consistency. In the field of philosophy we may ascribe to man a freedom that in the contiguous field of theology we deny to him. And when we understand the terms that we use in these neighbouring realms of thought we see that it is quite consistent to ascribe to man as a moral agent an inalienable freedom, while in regard to spiritual service to God his Maker, we deny to him as fallen the true and holy freedom which was his glory in his unfallen state. Then to do God's will was man's true delight; and such delight he cannot again have in the will and Law of God until that Law is written on the fleshy tablets of a new heart as the promise of the New Covenant has been made good to him.

By the misuse of his natural freedom of will man lost both himself and his true liberty. He is thus without the power to yield the homage of a loyal heart to the will of God. This being so, he is often spoken of as being destitute of freedom of will in which usage power and freedom are almost convertible or interchangeable terms. He is in bondage as fallen to the depravity of his nature so as not to be able to choose or to will as he should. This inability is bondage which is the negation of freedom. Yet as he is in possession of spontaneity of action and makes his own choice, he has a natural freedom that is enough to leave him responsible for the choice that he makes and the course that he takes.

It is in regard to the bondage of the will to sin that on the field of history, discussion took place in the Pelagian controversy. For the Pelagians denied the truth of the teaching of the orthodox which laid stress on the spiritual bondage of man as a fallen being. In connection with this denial they had their quarrel with the sovereign will of God in regard to the dispensation of His grace; and this quarrel has passed on along

the line of their avowed successors such for instance as the Socinians. In a modified form we find the Semi-Pelagian strain taking up this teaching and so quarreling with the free and absolute sovereignty of God's will in the distribution of His saving favour and salvation. This holds of the earlier and later Semi-Pelagians so that the Arminians both of the early seventeenth century and of the Methodist movement, join hands with the first representatives of their tendency in raising opposition to the freedom and sovereignty of the love and will of God in the choice of a people who shall reap the good of His thoughts of saving grace. The criticism that Pelagianism in its several varieties makes on the truth of the sovereignty of grace, is rooted in the unhumiliated and self-righteous thoughts of men who fail to see that they are indeed sinners or who have no just or serious sense of the evil of sin and the righteousness of the doom that is out against it and that lies upon the sinner because of it. An uncircumcised heart is its source.

The objections that an Apostle had to face recur down the ages. Men will still say "Who hath resisted His will?" so that they have to be told that it does not belong to the thing that is made to say to its Maker, "Why hast Thou made me thus?" They need to be told that God our Maker is our Lord and King, being all that He is and all that the ideal Lord and King must be. If to be an ideal king among men one must be wise and just and true and good, these things raised to the height of full perfection and bearing the stamp of unending immutability belong to the Sovereign of heaven and earth. If a king to be a king indeed must be good, He is good. There is none good but one; that is God. If he must be true, He is true. If he must be just, He is just. If he must be wise He is wise. If he must be mighty He is mighty. And in all these things He is infinite, eternal and unchangeable while over and above His wisdom, power, justice, goodness and truth He is as perfect in the beauty of His holiness as He is in all His other attributes. Of such a One it is not to be thought that he should not be trusted even in the dark. Nor should we dare to think of Him and of His ways as though He were subject to our judgment while as a matter of fact we are subject to His judgment and not He to ours. Thus in the infinitude of His Being there are depths that no plumb line of ours can fathom so that it is sheer presumption on the side of man to take the measuring rod of his own creature mind to measure the thoughts and ways of One Whose judgments are unsearchable and Whose ways are past finding out. In these things it is our best wisdom to be clad with true lowliness of mind for we are dealing with things that are so high above us that we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. When such wisdom is shown as keeps man within his proper bounds he will sit as a little child at the footstool of God as He speaks in His Word and will say, "I will hear what the Lord will speak." It is to souls of such gracious docility that those things of the Kingdom are made known which are hid from the wise and prudent. They are of such a temper because they have been born from above and this new birth is the outflow and the token of the high sovereign and distinguishing love of Him Who in His counsel of peace and purpose of love set them apart from everlasting to be His

own.

It is a fruit of God's kingly choice that comes out in the efficacious gracious work of the Holy Ghost. For there is a bond that binds into one scheme or system the truths of the doctrines of grace. These doctrines are part of one whole. With God's sovereign choice goes hand in hand His kingly provision and destination of the redeeming work of His Son in the effectual working of His gracious call as He quickens His called ones to newness of life. It is this working that begets faith; and the conversion or the turning of the sinner to God is the result of the renewing of his will which has been wrought by the effectual call. The newness of life thus given is seen in an abiding inclination of the called ones to new obedience so that the renewal of their will prompts them willingly to abide in Him to Whom they have betaken themselves and thus they persevere in the faith and in new obedience. This willing abiding in the Vine or in the City of Refuge tells of the operation in real grace of the love that in the purpose of grace sets apart its objects to be vessels prepared unto glory. That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit, so that the new born have that in them that cleaves to the Lord and His good ways. The outflow of sovereign choice in electing love is found in the reality of the new life of the regenerate which beginning at their call shall reach its crown of completion in the achieved perfection of the subjects of grace here in the kingdom of glory hereafter.

Before the Pelagian controversy arose what was in substance the system that called forth the witness of Augustine to the doctrines of grace had been taught by men like Clement of Alexandria and other Church teachers in whose case their philosophy gave law to their theology. That philosophy had at its heart a pagan strain. Along with the earlier philosophic theologians we may take the general strain of the teachers of the Greek Church who were not given to an Augustinian type of teaching. The influence of Augustine as one of the recognised and accepted doctors of the Church told on the Western Churches in such a succession as we find in the names of outstanding teachers like Anselm and Bernard and so far as Aquinas, so that there was a definite Augustinian tradition which gave the Evangelical element to the mixed teaching of the Middle Ages. A Gottschalk might be condemned and a Semi-Pelagian strain might prevail among the Scotists and the Franciscans of pre-Reformation days. Yet so great was the authority that was recognised as belonging to Augustine that when the threads of Mediaeval Scholasticism were woven into one fabric at Trent, the Council aimed at avoiding any finding that would come in conflict with the teaching of the great bishop of Hippo while with equal care it sought to shun any form of words that would condemn the Semi-Pelagianism which was rampant in the current teaching of the Church and the Schools. So intellectual acrobats went through their gymnastic exercises of balancing themselves on the tight rope by coming to noncommittal findings which kept their doctrine from being too definite on the one side or the other of debated questions which were open in the Schools.

The Augustinian strain that came out in Jansenius and Baius was a much more emphatic utterance of the doctrine of grace than the teaching that found acceptance in Lutheran circles from the later days of Melancthon's life onward or in the beginnings of the Arminian movement in the Reformed Churches. The earlier stage of the Reformation showed the leading teachers of the Protestant world to be very much at one as to the gratuitous character of the Gospel salvation. Their movement was indeed a resurgence of the teaching of the Doctor of Grace. This marked them out to begin with from the half-way men of the Humanistic Reform. In the main features of their teaching the first Reformers were at one as to the gracious character of salvation. They were also at one with the teaching of the line of the Augustinian witnesses of earlier days except that in the sphere of relative grace they made a great advance in setting forth the truth as taught by the Apostles in regard to the free Justification by faith of the believing sinner. This advance made clear the distinction between grace as it renews the nature and grace as it rectifies the standing of those to whom it is shown. As things came about the defence of the truly gratuitous character of the provision of the Gospel fell to be made by the Reformed as distinct from the Lutheran Churches. They were in the Augustinian tradition on the subject.

In the Church of England in Post-Reformation days, the first uprising of a type of teaching that came in conflict with the true teaching of its Confession was firmly repressed and the Lambeth Articles made plain to the world the strict Reformed orthodoxy of the leaders of the Anglican Communion in the latter days of Queen Elizabeth. It was not then to be wondered at that the representatives of England at the Synod of Dort should join in the condemnation of Arminianism and in the profession of the Reformed Faith in regard to the decree of God which recognises His holy sovereignty in the dispensing of His saving favour.

The findings of the renowned ecumenical Synod of the Reformed Churches set forth their faith as it was held in the great theological age which followed the Reformation itself when the divines of Western Protestant Europe were thoroughly at home in the kind of questions that were at issue between their Churches and Rome and in particular were alive to the meaning of the marked Semi-Pelagian teaching of their Jesuit opponents who were the foremost champions of the Papacy as they were the keenest critics of the doctrine of the Reformers. It was no convention of novices or of weaklings that met at Dort in 1618. They had among their leaders and counselors some of the foremost divines of their day. And the conclusions at which they arrived in the avowal of their faith and in the condemnation of error were not hastily come to. They were the ripe decisions of a generation of Theologians who were at home in their subject, expert in wielding their weapons and temperate and restrained in the terms in which they set forth their judgment. Coming as they did in point of time after the National Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformed Churches, even after the Irish Articles of 1615, except the documents of the Westminster Assembly they with these documents of British origin are the culminating exhibition of our common Reformed

Faith when it was called upon to unfold its inmost genius and essence in self-defence against the revived Semi-Pelagianism of the early Arminians.

Their statements on these subjects put in short compass the dogmatic teaching of our Churches. Thus the Canons of Dort say:

Art. 1. "As all men have sinned in Adam, and have become exposed to the curse and eternal death, God would have done no injustice to anyone, if He had determined to leave the whole human race under sin and the curse, and to condemn them on account of sin . . . ."

Art. 2. But "in this is the love of God manifested, that He sent His only begotten Son into the world that everyone who believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life . . . ."

Art. 3. But that men may be brought to faith, God mercifully sends heralds of this most joyful message to whom He willeth, and when He willeth, by whose ministry men are called to repentance, and faith in Christ crucified.

Art. 4. They who believe not the Gospel on them the wrath of God remaineth, but those who receive it, and embrace the Saviour Jesus with a true and living faith are, through Him, delivered from the wrath of God and endowed with the gift of everlasting life.

Art. 5. The cause or fault of this unbelief as also of all other sins, is by no means in God, but in man. But faith in Jesus Christ and salvation by Him, is the free gift of God . . . ."

Art. 6. That some, in time, have faith given them by God and others have it not given, proceeds from His eternal decree . . . . according to which decree, He graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however hard, and He bends them to believe; but the non-elect He leaves, in just judgment, to their own perversity and hardness. And here, especially, a deep discrimination, at the same time both merciful and just, a discrimination of men equally lost opens itself to us; or that decree of Election and Reprobation which is revealed in the Word of God . . . ."

Art 7. But Election is the immutable purpose of God, by which before the foundations of the world were laid, He chose out of the whole human race, fallen by their own fault from their primeval integrity into sin and destruction, according to the most free good pleasure of His own will, and of mere grace, a certain number of men neither better nor worthier than others, but lying in the same misery with the rest, to salvation in Christ; Whom He had, even from eternity, constituted Mediator and Head of all the elect, and the foundation of salvation; and therefore He decreed to give them unto Him to be saved; and effectually to call and draw them into communion with

Him, by His own Word and Spirit; or He decreed Himself to give unto them true faith, to justify, to sanctify, and at length powerfully to glorify them, having kept them in the communion of His Son; to the demonstration of His mercy and the praise of the riches of His glorious grace . . . ."

Art. 9. This same Election is not made from any foreseen faith, obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality and disposition, as a pre-requisite cause or condition in the men who should be elected but unto faith, and unto the obedience of faith, holiness, &c. And therefore Election is the fountain of every saving benefit; whence faith, holiness, and the other salutary gifts and finally eternal life itself, flow as its fruit and effect . . . ."

Art. 10. Now the cause of this gratuitous Election, is the sole good pleasure of God, not consisting in this, that He elected into the condition of salvation certain qualities or human actions, from all that were possible; but in that out of the common multitude of sinners, He took to Himself certain persons as His peculiar property . . . ."

Art. 11. And as God Himself is most wise, immutable, omniscient and omnipotent; so, Election made by Him can neither be interrupted, changed, recalled, nor broken off; nor can the Elect be cast away, nor the number of them be diminished."

This teaching is but an exposition or expansion of the teaching of the Belgic Confession in what it has to say on the subject. So in brief compass the Second Helvetic Confession which found so wide an acceptance in the Reformed Churches says: "God hath from the beginning freely and of His mere grace without any respect of men predestinated or elected the saints whom He will save in Christ." So also we find in the Irish Articles which passed through the hands of James Ussher such words as these: "By the same eternal counsel, God hath predestinated some unto life, and reprobated some unto death, of both which there is a certain number known only to God which can neither be increased nor diminished." This choice these Articles go on to attribute only to the good pleasure of God Himself. There is no question as to the agreement of the Westminster documents with the common consensus of the Reformed Churches as they deal with this matter of Divine Sovereignty and Predestination.

## **God's Sovereignty Defined and Objections Answered**

**by A. W. Pink**

*"Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the*

kingdom, O LORD, and Thou art exalted as Head above all" (1 Chron. 29:11).

The Sovereignty of God is an expression that once was generally understood. It was a phrase commonly used in religious literature. It was a theme frequently expounded in the pulpit. It was a truth which brought comfort to many hearts, and gave virility and stability to Christian character. But, today, to make mention of God's Sovereignty is, in many quarters, to speak in an unknown tongue. Were we to announce from the average pulpit that the subject of our discourse would be the Sovereignty of God, it would sound very much as though we had borrowed a phrase from one of the dead languages. Alas! that it should be so. Alas! that the doctrine which is the key to history, the interpreter of Providence, the warp and woof of Scripture, and the foundation of Christian theology should be so sadly neglected and so little understood.

The Sovereignty of God. What do we mean by this expression? We mean the supremacy of God, the kingship of God, the god-hood of God. To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that God is God. To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the Most High, doing according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, so that none can stay His hand or say unto Him what doest Thou? (Dan. 4:35). To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the Almighty, the Possessor of all power in Heaven and earth, so that none can defeat His counsels, thwart His purpose, or resist His will (Psa. 115:3). To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is "The Governor among the nations" (Psa. 22:28), setting up kingdoms, overthrowing empires, and determining the course of dynasties as pleaseth Him best. To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the "Only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15). Such is the God of the Bible.

How different is the God of the Bible from the God of modern Christendom! The conception of Deity which prevails most widely today, even among those who profess to give heed to the Scriptures, is a miserable caricature, a blasphemous travesty of the Truth. The God of the twentieth century is a helpless, effeminate being who commands the respect of no really thoughtful man. The God of the popular mind is the creation of maudlin sentimentality. The God of many a present-day pulpit is an object of pity rather than of awe-inspiring reverence. To say that God the Father has purposed the salvation of all mankind, that God the Son died with the express intention of saving the whole human race, and that God the Holy Spirit is now seeking to win the world to Christ; when, as a matter of common observation, it is apparent that the great majority of our fellowmen are dying in sin, and passing into a hopeless eternity; is to say that God the Father is *disappointed*, that God the Son is *dissatisfied*, and that God the Holy Spirit is *defeated*. We have stated the issue baldly, but there is no escaping the conclusion. To argue that God is "trying His best" to save all mankind, but that the majority of men will not let Him save them, is to insist that the will of the Creator is impotent, and that the will of the creature is omnipotent. To throw the



blame, as many do, upon the Devil, does not remove the difficulty, for if Satan is defeating the purpose of God, then, Satan is Almighty and God is no longer the Supreme Being.

To declare that the Creator's original plan has been frustrated by sin, is to *dethrone* God. To suggest that God was taken by surprise in Eden and that He is now attempting to remedy an unforeseen calamity, is to *degrade* the Most High to the level of a finite, erring mortal. To argue that man is a free moral agent and the determiner of his own destiny, and that therefore he has the power to checkmate his Maker, is to *strip* God of the attribute of Omnipotence. To say that the creature has burst the bounds assigned by his Creator, and that God is now practically a helpless Spectator before the sin and suffering entailed by Adam's fall, is to *repudiate* the express declaration of Holy Writ, namely, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath *shalt* Thou restrain" (Psa. 76:10). In a word, to deny the Sovereignty of God is to enter upon a path which, if followed to its logical terminus, is to arrive at blank atheism.

The Sovereignty of the God of Scripture is absolute, irresistible, infinite. When we say that God is Sovereign we affirm His right to govern the universe which He has made for His own glory, just as He pleases. We affirm that *His right* is the right of the Potter over the clay, i. e., that He may mold that clay into whatsoever form He chooses, fashioning out of *the same lump* one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor. We affirm that He is under no rule or law outside of His own will and nature, *that God is a law* unto Himself, and that He is under no obligation to give an account of His matters to any.

Sovereignty characterizes the whole Being of God. He is Sovereign in all His attributes. *He is Sovereign in the exercise of His power.* His power is exercised as He wills, *when* He wills, *where* He wills. This fact is evidenced on every page of Scripture. For a long season that power appears to be dormant, and then it is put forth in irresistible might. Pharaoh dared to hinder Israel from going forth to worship Jehovah in the wilderness-what happened? God exercised His power, His people were delivered and their cruel task-masters slain. But a little later, the Amalekites dared to attack these same Israelites in the wilderness, and what happened? Did God put forth His power on this occasion and display His hand as He did at the Red Sea? Were these enemies of His people promptly overthrown and destroyed? No, on the contrary, the Lord swore that He would "have war with Amalek *from generation to generation*" (Exo. 17:16). Again, when Israel entered the land of Canaan, *God's* power was signally displayed. The city of Jericho barred their progress-what happened? Israel did not draw a bow nor strike a blow: the Lord stretched forth His hand and the walls fell down flat. But the miracle was never repeated! *No other city fell after this manner.* Every other city had to be captured by the sword!

Many other instances might be adduced illustrating the Sovereign exercise of God's power. Take one other example. God put forth His power and David was delivered from Goliath, the giant; the mouths of the lions were closed and Daniel escaped unhurt; the three Hebrew children were cast into the burning fiery furnace and came forth unharmed and unscorched. *But God's power did not always interpose for the deliverance of His people*, for we read: "And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented" (Heb. 11:36, 37). But why? Why were not these men of faith delivered like the others? Or, why were not the others suffered to be killed like these? Why should God's power interpose and rescue some and not the others? Why allow Stephen to be stoned to death, and then deliver Peter from prison?

*God is Sovereign in the delegation of His power to others.* Why did God endow Methuselah with a vitality which enabled him to outlive all his contemporaries? Why did God impart to Samson a physical strength which no other human has ever possessed? Again; it is written, "But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is He that *giveth thee power to get wealth*" (Deut. 8:18), but God does not bestow this power on all alike. Why not? Why has He given such power to men like Morgan, Carnegie, Rockefeller? The answer to all of these questions is, Because God is Sovereign, and being Sovereign He does as He pleases.

*God is Sovereign in the exercise of His mercy.* Necessarily so, for mercy is directed by the *will* of Him that showeth mercy. Mercy is not a *right* to which man is entitled. Mercy is that adorable attribute of God by which He pities and relieves the wretched. But under the righteous government of God no one is wretched who does not *deserve* to be so. The objects of mercy, then, are those who are miserable, and all misery is the result of *sin*, hence the miserable are deserving of punishment not mercy. To speak of *deserving mercy* is a contradiction of terms.

God bestows His mercies on whom He pleases and withholds them as seemeth good unto Himself. A remarkable illustration of this fact is seen in the manner that God responded to the prayers of two men offered under very similar circumstances. Sentence of death was passed upon Moses for one act of disobedience, and he besought the Lord for a reprieve. But was his desire gratified? No; he told Israel, "The LORD was wroth with me for your sakes, *and would not hear me*: and the LORD said unto me, Let it suffice thee" (Deut. 3:26). Now mark the second case: "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live. Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying, I beseech Thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight. And Hezekiah

wept sore. And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, *I have heard thy prayer*, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go unto the house of the LORD. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years" (2 Kings 20:1-6). Both of these men had the sentence of death in themselves, and both prayed earnestly unto the Lord for a reprieve: the one wrote: "The Lord would not hear me," and died; but to the other it was said, "I have heard thy prayer," and his life was spared. What an illustration and exemplification of the truth expressed in Romans 9:15!-"For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on *whom I will have mercy*, and I will have compassion on *whom I will have compassion*."

The Sovereign exercise of God's mercy-pity shown to the wretched-was displayed when Jehovah became flesh and tabernacled among men. Take one illustration. During one of the Feasts of the Jews, the Lord Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He came to the Pool of Bethesda where lay *"a great multitude* of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water." Among this "great multitude" there was "a certain man which had an infirmity thirty and eight years." What happened? "When Jesus saw *him* He, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto *him*, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answer Him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but when I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked" (John 5:3-9). Why was this one man singled out from all the others? We are not told that he cried "Lord, have mercy on me." There is not a word in the narrative which intimates that this man possessed any qualifications which entitled him to receive special favor. Here then was a case of the Sovereign exercise of Divine mercy, for it was just as easy for Christ to heal the whole of that "great multitude" as this one "certain man." But He did not. He put forth His power and relieved the wretchedness of this one particular sufferer, and for some reason known only to Himself, He declined to do the same for the others. Again, we say, what an illustration and exemplification of Romans 9:15!-"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

*God is Sovereign in the exercise of His love.* Ah! that is a hard saying, who then can receive it? It is written, "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from Heaven" (John 3:27). When we say that God is Sovereign in the exercise of His love, we mean that He loves whom He chooses. God does not love everybody\*; if He did, He would love the Devil. Why does not God love the Devil? Because there is nothing in him *to love*; because there is nothing in him to *attract* the heart of God. Nor is there anything to *attract* God's love in any of the fallen sons of Adam, for *all* of them are, by nature, "children of *wrath*" (Eph. 2:3). If then there is nothing in any member of the human race to attract God's love,[1] and if, notwithstanding, He *does* love *some*, then

it necessarily follows that the cause of His love must be found in Himself, which is only another way of saying that the exercise of God's love towards the fallen sons of men is according to His own good pleasure.

In the final analysis, the exercise of God's love *must* be traced back to His Sovereignty or, otherwise, He would *love by rule*; and if He loved by rule, then is He under a *law of love*, and if He is under a *law* of love then is He not supreme, but is Himself *ruled* by law. "But," it may be asked, "Surely you do not *deny* that God loves the entire human family?" We reply, it is written, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom. 9:13). If then God loved Jacob and hated Esau, and that before they were born or had done either good or evil, then the *reason* for His love was not in them, but in Himself.

That the exercise of God's love is according to His own Sovereign pleasure is also clear from the language of Ephesians 1:3-5, where we read, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him *in love*. *Having predestinated* us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself *according to the good pleasure of His will*." It was "*in love*" that God the Father predestined His chosen ones unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, "according"-according to what? According to *some excellency* He discovered in them? No. What then? According to what He *foresaw* they would become? No; mark carefully the inspired answer-"According to the good pleasure of *His will*."

We are not unmindful of the fact that men have invented the distinction between God's love of *complacency* and His love of *compassion*, but this is *an* invention pure and simple. *Scripture* terms the latter God's "pity" (see Matt. 18:33), and "He is *kind unto* the unthankful and the evil" (Luke 6:35)!

*God is Sovereign in the exercise of His grace*. This of necessity, for grace is favor shown to the *undeserving*, yea, to the Hell-deserving. Grace is the antithesis of justice. Justice demands the impartial enforcement of law. Justice requires that each shall receive his legitimate due, neither more nor less. Justice bestows no favors and is no respecter of persons. Justice, as such, shows no pity and knows no mercy. But after justice has been fully satisfied, grace flows forth. Divine grace is not exercised at the expense of justice, but "grace reigns through righteousness" (Rom. 5:21), and if grace "*reigns*," then is grace Sovereign.

Grace has been defined as the unmerited favor of God[2]; and if unmerited, then none can claim it as their inalienable *right*. If grace is unearned and undeserved, then none are *entitled* to it. If grace is a gift, then none can *demand* it. Therefore, as salvation is by grace, the free gift of God, then He bestows it on whom He pleases. Because

salvation is by grace, the very chief of sinners is not beyond the reach of Divine mercy. Because salvation is by grace, boasting is excluded and God gets all the glory.

The Sovereign exercise of grace is illustrated on nearly every page of Scripture. The Gentiles are left to walk in their own ways while Israel becomes the covenant people of Jehovah. Ishmael the firstborn is cast out comparatively unblest, while Isaac the son of his parents' old age is made the child of promise. Esau the generous-hearted and forgiving-spirited is denied the blessing, though he sought it carefully with tears, while the worm Jacob receives the inheritance and is fashioned into a vessel of honor. So in the New Testament. Divine Truth is hidden from the wise and prudent, but is revealed to babes. The Pharisees and Sadducees are left to go their own way, while publicans and harlots are drawn by the cords of love.

In a remarkable manner Divine grace was exercised at the time of the Saviour's birth. The incarnation of God's Son was one of the greatest events in the history of the universe, and yet its actual occurrence was not made known to all mankind; instead, it was specially revealed to the Bethlehem shepherds and wise men of the East. And this was prophetic and indicative of the entire course of this dispensation, for even today Christ is not made known to all. It would have been an easy matter for God to have sent a company of angels to *every nation* and to have announced the birth of His Son. But He did not. God could have readily attracted the attention of all mankind to the "star"; but He did not. Why? Because God is Sovereign and dispenses His favors as He pleases. Note particularly the two classes to whom the birth of the Saviour *was* made known, namely, the most *unlikely* classes-illiterate shepherds and heathen from a far country. No angel stood before the Sanhedrin and announced the advent of Israel's Messiah! No "star" appeared unto the scribes and lawyers as they, in their pride and self-righteousness, searched the Scriptures! They searched diligently to find out where He should be born, and yet it was not made known *to them* when He was actually come. What a display of Divine Sovereignty-the illiterate shepherds singled out for peculiar honor, and the learned and eminent passed by! And *why* was the birth of the Saviour revealed to these foreigners, and not to those in whose midst He was born? See in this a wonderful foreshadowing of God's dealings with our race throughout the entire Christian dispensation-Sovereign in the exercise of His grace, bestowing His favors on whom He pleases, often on the most unlikely and unworthy.

It has been pointed out to us that God's Sovereignty was signally displayed in His choice of *the place* where His Son was born. Not to Greece or Italy did the Lord of Glory come, but to the insignificant land of Palestine! Not in Jerusalem-the royal city-was Immanuel born, but in Bethlehem, which was "*little among the thousands (of towns and villages) in Judah*" (Micah 5:2)! And it was in despised *Nazareth* that He grew up!! Truly, God's ways are not ours.

## **Objections to God's Sovereignty Answered**

One of the most popular beliefs of the day is that God loves everybody, and the very fact that it is so popular with all classes ought to be enough to arouse the suspicious of those who are subject to the Word of Truth. God's love toward all His creatures is the fundamental and favorite tenet of Universalists, Unitarians, Theosophists, Christian Scientists, Spiritualists, Russellites, etc. No matter how a man may live -- in open defiance of Heaven, with no concern whatever for his soul's eternal interests, still less for God's glory, dying, perhaps with an oath on his lips -- notwithstanding, God loves him, we are told. So widely has this dogma been proclaimed, and so comforting is it to the heart which is at enmity with God, we have little hope of convincing many of their error. That God loves everybody, is, we may say, quite a modern belief. The writings of the church fathers, the Reformers or the Puritans will (we believe) be searched in vain for any such concept. Perhaps the late D.L. Moody -- Captivated by Drummond's "The Greatest Thing in the World" -- did more than anyone else in the last century to popularize this concept.

It has been customary to say God loves the sinner though He hates his sin. But that is a meaningless distinction. What is there in a sinner but sin? Is it not true that his "whole head is sick" and his "whole heart faint," and that "from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness" in him? (Isa. 1:5,6) Is it true that God loves the one who is despising and rejecting His blessed Son? God is Light as well as Love, and therefore His love must be a holy love. To tell the Christ-rejector that God loves him is to cauterize his conscience as well as to afford him a sense of security in his sins. The fact is, the love of God is a truth for the saints only, and to present it to the enemies of God is to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. With the exception of John 3:16, not once in the four Gospels do we read of the Lord Jesus, the perfect Teacher, telling sinners that God loves them! In the book of Acts, which records the evangelistic labors and messages of the apostles, God's love is never referred to at all! But when we come to the Epistles, which are addressed to the saints, we have a full presentation of this precious truth -- God's love for His own. Let us seek to rightly divide the Word of God and then we shall not be found taking truths which are addressed to believers and mis-applying them to unbelievers. That which sinners need to have brought before them is the ineffable holiness, the exacting wrath of God. Risking the danger of being misunderstood let us say -- and we wish we could say it to every evangelist and preacher in the country -- there is far too much presenting of Christ to sinners today (by those sound in the faith), and far too little showing sinners their need of Christ, i.e., their absolutely ruined and lost condition, their imminent and awful danger of suffering the wrath to come, the fearful guilt resting upon them in the sight of God: to present Christ to those who have never been shown their need of Him, seems to us to be guilty of casting pearls before swine.

If it be true that God loves every member of the human family, then why did our Lord tell His disciples "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father ... If a man love Me, he

will keep My words: and My Father will love him." (John 14:21,23)? Why say "he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father"? If the Father loves everybody? The same limitation is found in Prov. 8:17: "I love them that love Me." Again we read, "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity" -- not merely the works of iniquity. Here then is a flat repudiation of present teaching that, God hates sin but loves the sinner; Scripture says, "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity" (Psa. 5:5)! "God is angry with the wicked every day." (Psa. 7:11) "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God" -- not "shall abide," but even now -- "abideth on him." (John 3:36) Can God "love" the one on whom His "wrath" abides? Again, is it not evident that the words, "The love of God which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:39) marks a limitation, both in the sphere and objects of His love? Again, is it not plain from the words "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom. 9:13) that God does not love everybody? Again, it is written, "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." (Heb. 12:6) Does not this verse teach that God's love is restricted to the members of His own family? If He loves all men without exception, then the distinction and limitation here mentioned is quite meaningless. Finally, we would ask, Is it conceivable that God will love the damned in the Lake of Fire? Yet, if He loves them now He will do so then, seeing that His love knows no change -- He is "without variableness or shadow of turning"!

Turning now to John 3:16, it should be evident from the passages just quoted that this verse will not bear the construction usually put upon it, "God so loved the world." Many suppose that this means the entire human race. But "the entire human race" includes all mankind from Adam till the close of earth's history; it reaches backward as well as forward! Consider, then, the history of mankind before Christ was born. Unnumbered millions lived and died before the Savior came to the earth, lived here "having no hope and without God in the world," and therefore passed out into an eternity of woe. If God "loved" them, where is the slightest proof thereof? Scripture declares "Who (God) in times past (from the tower of Babel till after Pentecost) suffered all nations to walk in their own ways." (Acts 14:16) Scripture declares that "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." (Rom. 1:28) To Israel God said, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." (Amos 3:2) In view of these plain passages who will be so foolish as to insist that God in the past loved all mankind! The same applies with equal force to the future. Read through the book of Revelation, noting especially chapters 8 to 19, where we have described the judgments which will be poured out from Heaven on this earth. Read of the fearful woes, the frightful plagues, the vials of God's wrath, which shall be emptied on the wicked. Finally, read the twentieth chapter of Revelation, the great white throne judgment, and see if you can discover there the slightest trace of love.

But the objector comes back to John 3:16 and says, "World means world." True, but we have shown that "the world" does not mean the whole human family. The fact is that

"the world" is used in a general way. When the brethren of Christ said "Show thyself to the world" (John 7:4), did they mean "Shew Thyself to all mankind"? When the Pharisees said "Behold, the world is gone after Him" (John 12:19), did they mean that "all the human family" were flocking after Him? When the apostle wrote, "Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world" (Rom. 1:8), did he mean that the faith of the saints at Rome was the subject of conversation by every man, woman, and child on earth? When Rev. 13:3 informs us that "all the world wondered after the beast," are we to understand that there will be no exceptions? These, and other passages which might be quoted, show that the term "the world" often has a relative rather than an absolute force.

Now the first thing to note in connection with John 3:16 is that our Lord was there speaking to Nicodemis, a man who believed that God's mercies were confined to his own nation. Christ there announced that God's love in giving His Son had a larger object in view, that it flowed beyond the boundary of Palestine, reaching out to "regions beyond." In other words, this was Christ's announcement that God had a purpose of grace toward Gentiles as well as Jews. "God so loved the world," then, signifies God's love is international in its scope. But does this mean that God loves every individual among the Gentiles? Not necessarily, for as we have seen, the term "world" is general rather than specific, relative rather than absolute. The term "world" in itself is not conclusive. To ascertain who are the objects of God's love, other passages where His love is mentioned must be consulted.

In 2 Peter 2:5 we read of "the world of the ungodly." If then, there is a world of the ungodly, there must also be a world of the godly. It is the latter who are in view in the passages we shall now briefly consider. "For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." (John 6:33) Now mark it well, Christ did not say, "offereth life unto the world," but "giveth." What is the difference between the two terms? This: a thing which is "offered" may be refused, but a thing "given," necessarily implies its acceptance. If it is not accepted, it is not "given," it is simply proffered. Here, then, is a Scripture that positively states Christ giveth life (spiritual, eternal life) "unto the world." Now He does not give eternal life to the "world of the ungodly" for they will not have it, they do not want it. Hence, we are obliged to understand the reference in John 6:33 as being to "the world of the godly," i.e., God's own people.

One more: In 2 Cor. 5:19 we read, "To wit that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." What is meant by this is clearly defined in the words immediately following, "not imputing their trespasses unto them." Here again "the world" cannot mean "the world of the ungodly," for their "trespasses" are "imputed" to them, as the judgment of the Great White Throne will yet show. But 2 Cor. 5:19 plainly teaches there is a "world" which is "reconciled," reconciled unto God because their trespasses are not reckoned to their account, having been borne by their Substitute. Who then



are they? Only one answer is fairly possible -- the world of God's people!

In life manner, the "world" in John 3:16 must, in the final analysis refer to the world of God's people. Must, we say, for there is no other alternative solution. It cannot mean the whole human race, for one-half of the race was already in hell when Christ came to earth. It is unfair to insist that it means every human being now living, for every other passage in the New Testament where God's love is mentioned, limits it to His own people -- search and see! The objects of God's love in John 3:16 are precisely the same as the objects of Christ's love in John 13:1: "Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His time was come, that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world. He loved them unto the end." We may admit that our interpretation of John 3:16 is no novel one invented by us, but one almost uniformly given by the Reformers and Puritans, and many others since then.

It is strange, yet it is true, that many who acknowledge the sovereign rule of God over material things will cavil and quibble when we insist that God is also sovereign in the spiritual realm. But their quarrel is with God and not with us. We have given Scripture in support of everything advanced in these pages, and if that will not satisfy our readers, it is idle for us to seek to convince them. What we write now is designed for those who do bow to the authority of Holy Writ, and for their benefit we propose to examine several other Scriptures which have purposely been held for this chapter.

Perhaps the one passage which has presented the greatest difficulty to those who have seen that passage after passage in Holy Writ plainly teaches the election of a limited number unto salvation, is 2 Peter 3:9: "Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

The first thing to be said upon the above passage is that, like all other Scripture, it must be understood and interpreted in the light of its context. What we have quoted in the preceding paragraph is only part of the verse, and the last part of it at that! Surely it must be allowed by all that the first half of the verse needs to be taken into consideration. In order to establish what these words are supposed by many to mean, viz., that the words "any" and "all" are to be received without any qualification, it must be shown that the context is referring to the whole human race! If this cannot be shown, if there is no premise to justify this, then the conclusion also must be unwarranted. Let us then ponder the first part of the verse.

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise."

Note "promise" in the singular number, not "promises." What promise is in view? The promise of salvation? Where, in all Scripture, has God ever promised to save the whole human race! Where indeed? No, the "promise" here referred to, is not about

salvation. What then is it? The context tells us.

"Knowing this, first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming?" (vv. 3,4) The context then refers to God's promise to send back His beloved Son. But many long centuries have passed and this promise has not yet been fulfilled. True, but long as the delay may seem to us, the interval is short in the reckoning of God. As the proof of this we are reminded, "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (v. 8) In God's reckoning of time, less than two days have yet passed since He promised to send back Christ.

But more, the delay in the Father's sending back His beloved Son is not only due to no "slackness" on His part, but it is also occasioned by His "longsuffering." His longsuffering to whom? The verse we are now considering tells us: "but is longsuffering to usward." And who are the "usward"? -- the human race, or God's own people? In the light of the context this is not an open question upon which each of us is free to form an opinion. The Holy Spirit has defined it. The opening verse of the chapter says, "This second Epistle, beloved, I now write unto you." And again, the verse immediately preceding declares, "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing," etc. (v. 8) The "usward" then are the "beloved" of God. They to whom his Epistle is addressed are "them that have obtained (not "exercised," but "obtained" as God's sovereign gift) like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:11) Therefore we say there is no room for a doubt, a quibble or an argument -- the "usward" are the elect of God.

Let us now quote the verse as a whole: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Could anything be clearer? The "any" that God is not willing should perish are the "usward" to who God is "longsuffering," the "beloved" of the previous verses. 2 Peter 3:9 means, then, that God will not send back His Son until "the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." (Rom. 11:25) God will not send back Christ till that "people" whom He is now "taking out of the Gentiles" (Acts 15:14) are gathered in. God will not send back His Son till the Body of Christ is complete, and that will not be till the ones whom He has elected to be saved in this dispensation shall have been brought to Him. Thank God for His "longsuffering to usward." Had Christ come back twenty years ago the writer had been justify behind to perish in his sins. But that could not be, so God graciously delayed the Second Coming. For the same reason He is still delaying His advent. His decreed purpose is that all His elect will come to repentance, and repent they shall. The present interval of grace will not end until the last of the "other sheep" of John 10:16 are safely folded -- then will Christ return.

In expounding the sovereignty of God the Spirit in Salvation we have shown that His

power is irresistible, that, by His gracious operations upon; and within them He "compels" God's elect to come to Christ. The sovereignty of the Holy Spirit is set forth not only in John 3:8 where we are told "The wind bloweth where it pleaseth ... so is every one that is born of the Spirit," but is affirmed in other passages as well. In 1 Cor. 12:11 we read, "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." And again, we read in Acts 16:6,7: "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the Word in Asia. After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go to Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not." Thus we see how the Holy Spirit interposes His imperial will in opposition to the determination of the apostles.

But, it is objected against the assertion that the will and power of the Holy Spirit are irresistible, that there are two passages, one in the Old Testament and the other in the New, which appear to militate against such a conclusion. God said of old "My Spirit shall not always strive with man" (Gen. 6:3), and to the Jews Stephen declared, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" (Acts 7:51,52) If then the Jews "resisted" the Holy Spirit, how can we say His power is irresistible? The answer is found in Neh. 9:30, "Many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by Thy Spirit, in Thy prophets: yet would they not give ear." It was the external operations of the Spirit which Israel "resisted." It was the Spirit speaking by and through the prophets to which they "would not give ear." It was not anything which the Holy Spirit wrought in them that they "resisted" but the motives presented to them by the inspired messages of the prophets. Perhaps it will help the reader to catch our thought better if we compare Matt. 11:20-24: "Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee Chorazin," etc. Our Lord here pronounces woe upon these cities for their failure to repent because of the "mighty works" (miracles) which He had done in their sight, and not because of any internal operations of His grace! The same is true of Gen. 6:3. By comparing 1 Peter 3:18-20 it will be seen that it was by and through Noah that God's Spirit "strove" with the antediluvians. the distinction noted above was ably summarized by Andrew Fuller (another writer long deceased from whom our moderns might learn much) thus: "There are two kinds of influences by which God works on the minds of men. First, that which is common, and which is effected by the ordinary use of motives presented to the mind for consideration: Secondly, that which is special and supernatural. The one contains nothing mysterious, anymore than the influence of our words and actions on each other; the other is such a mystery that we know nothing of it but by its effects. The former ought to be effectual; the latter is so." The work of the Holy Spirit upon or towards men is always "resisted" by them; His work within is always successful. What saith the Scriptures? This: "He which hath begun a good work IN you, will finish it." (Phil. 1:6)

The next question to be considered is: Why preach the Gospel to every creature? If

God the Father has predestined only a limited number to be saved, if God the Son died to effect the salvation of only those given to Him by the Father, and if God the Spirit is seeking to quicken none save God's elect, then what is the use of giving the Gospel to the world at large, and where is the propriety of telling sinners that "Whosoever believeth in Christ shall not perish but have everlasting life"?

First, it is of great importance that we should be clear upon the nature of the Gospel itself. The Gospel is God's good news concerning Christ and not concerning sinners: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God ... concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 1:1,3) God would have proclaimed far and wide the amazing fact that His own blessed Son "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." A universal testimony must be borne to the matchless worth of the person and work of Christ. Note the word "witness" in Matt. 24:14. The Gospel is God's "witness" unto the perfections of His Son. Mark the words of the apostle: "For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, them that are saved, and in them that perish"! (2 Cor. 2:15)

Concerning the character and contents of the Gospel, the utmost confusion prevails today. The Gospel is not an "offer" to be bandied around by evangelical peddlers. The Gospel is no mere invitation, but a proclamation concerning Christ; true whether men believe it or not. No man is asked to believe that Christ died for him in particular. The Gospel, in brief, is this: Christ died for sinners, you are a sinner, believe in Christ, and you shall be saved. In the Gospel, God simply announced the terms which men may be saved (namely, repentance and faith) and, indiscriminately, all are commanded to fulfill them.

Second, repentance and remission of sins are to be preached in the name of the Lord Jesus "unto all the nations" (Luke 24:47), because God's elect are "scattered abroad" (John 11:52) among all nations, and it is by the preaching and hearing of the Gospel that they are called out of the world. The Gospel is the means which God uses in the saving of His own chosen ones. By nature God's elect are children of wrath "even as others"; they are lost sinners needing a Savior, and apart from Christ there is no solution for them. Hence, the Gospel must be believed by them before they can rejoice in the knowledge of sins forgiven. The Gospel is God's winnowing: it separates the chaff from the wheat, and gathers the latter into His garner.

Third, it is to be noted that God has other purposes in the preaching of the Gospel than the salvation of His own elect. The world exists for the elect's sake yet others have the benefit of it. So the Word is preached for the elect's sake yet others have the benefit of an external call. The sun shines though blind men see it not. The rain falls upon rocky mountains and waste deserts as well as on the fruitful valleys; so also, God suffers the Gospel to fall on the ears of the non-elect. The power of the Gospel is one of God's agencies for holding in check the wickedness of the world. Many who are

never saved by it are reformed, their lusts are bridled, and they are restrained from becoming worse. Moreover, the preaching of the Gospel to the non-elect is made an admirable test of their characters. It exhibits the inveteracy of their sin; it demonstrates that their hearts are enmity against God; it justified the declaration of Christ that "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John 3:19)

Finally, it is sufficient for us to know that we are bidden to preach the Gospel to every creature. It is not for us to reason about the consistency between this and the fact that "few are chosen." It is for us to obey. It is a simple matter to ask questions relating to the ways of God which no finite mind can fully fathom. We, too, might turn and remind the objector that our Lord declared, "Verily, I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme. But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness" (Mark 3:28,29), and there can be no doubt whatever but that certain of the Jews were guilty of this very sin (see Matt. 12:24, etc.) and hence their destruction was inevitable. Yet, notwithstanding, scarcely two months later, He commanded His disciples to preach the Gospel to every creature. When the objector can show us the consistency of these two things -- the fact that certain of the Jews had committed the sin for which there is never forgiveness, and the fact that to them the Gospel was to be preached -- we will undertake to furnish a more satisfactory solution than the one given above to the harmony between a universal proclamation of the Gospel and a limitation of its saving power to those only that God has predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Once more, we say, it is not for us to reason about the Gospel; it is our business to preach it. When God ordered Abraham to offer up his son as a burnt offering, he might have objected that this command was inconsistent with His promise, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." But instead of arguing he obeyed, and justify God to harmonize His promise and His precept. Jeremiah might have argued that God had bade him to do that which was altogether unreasonable when He said, "Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee; thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee" (Jer. 7:27), but instead, the prophet obeyed. Ezekiel too, might have complained that the Lord was asking of him a hard thing when He said, "Son of man, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, but to the house of Israel; Not to many people of a strange speech and of a hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee. But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me; for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted." (Ezek. 3:4-7)

"But, O my soul, if truth so bright

Should dazzle and confound thy sight,  
Yet, still His written Word obey,  
And wait the great decision day." -- Watts

It has been well said, "The Gospel has lost none of its ancient power. It is, as much today as when it was first preached, 'the power of God unto salvation.' It needs no pity, no help, and no handmaid. It can overcome all obstacles, and break down all barriers. No human device need be tried to prepare the sinner to receive it, for if God has sent it no power can hinder it; and if He has not sent it, no power can make it effectual." -- (Dr. Bullinger)

## **A Testimony to God's Free and Sovereign Grace**

**by C. H. Spurgeon**

"But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord."—Psalm xxxvii. 39.

Salvation is a blessing peculiar to the righteous. The ungodly do not, as a rule, believe that they have any need of salvation: therefore they do not desire it, or seek after it. The righteous know that they are born in a fallen state; they acknowledge that they have destroyed themselves by personal sin; and they are conscious of a thousand dangers which surround them. Hence they need salvation, and seek it, and find it. It is to them that salvation has come to make them righteous, for until they are saved they are unrighteous, even as others; but now that salvation has come to their house, they bring forth the fruits of righteousness to the glory of God their Saviour.

This may be used as a description of the believer's life: he lives a life of salvation. He is saved in Christ, who is his life, in whom he has forgiveness of sins, and every other covenant blessing. He is always being delivered, or saved; and from the moment in which he begins as a believer till that last moment on earth when he shall be about to depart out of the world unto the Father, his whole life is encompassed within the divine circle of salvation. God is working salvation for him, and salvation in him, and salvation by him, and is giving him to receive the fulness of salvation which he shall for ever enjoy in the world to come.

"Salvation is for ever nigh  
The souls that fear and trust the Lord;

And grace, descending from on high,  
Fresh hopes of glory shall afford.”

Beloved friends, we rejoice in that right royal word “salvation.” We would let its echo fly over the whole world. To us it is a word of great meaning. It does not signify alone salvation from the punishment of sin, though it comprehends that blessing, and we are glad that it does so; but it means complete and immediate salvation from the love of sin, conscious salvation from the power of sin, growing salvation from the propensity to sin, and ultimate salvation from all tendency to sin. When we have gained full salvation, we shall never, never sin again, but shall find ourselves before the throne of God as pure as that throne, made perfect by the work of the Holy Spirit, who will have sanctified us wholly, spirit, soul, and body. Men of the world think, when we talk of salvation, that we mean escaping from hell: this is all they would fear, and so it strikes them as the great matter: but we are not of their mind. Being delivered from the pains and penalties of evil is certainly a great boon, but it is by no means the greatest: it follows in the train of a grander blessing, even as the blaze of the comet follows the central light. The righteous dread sin more than hell, and wrong is more terrible to them than any punishment which awaits it. The joy of salvation to us is that we are delivered from this present evil world, delivered from the lusts of the flesh, delivered from the old death of natural corruption, delivered from the power of Satan, and from the dominion of evil. Our salvation will not be full till we are totally and finally delivered from every trace of sin, and are “with-out fault before the throne of God.” Sanctification completed is our salvation perfected: purity without spot will be our Paradise Regained.

“The salvation of the righteous “in the broadest sense of the word “is of the Lord”; and the more breadth of meaning we give to it, the more completely we shall see that it must be divine. At the same time, our life is made up of a series of salvations, and each of these is of the Lord. We are constantly being saved, saved from this and that form of danger and evil. As each daily trouble threatens to engulf us, we are saved from it. As each temptation, like a dragon, threatens to swallow us up, we are saved from it. Our God is the God of salvations, and unto him belong the issues from death. We escape from deaths oft; yea, and from the very belly of hell; and still we live to sing, as Jonah sang when he was in the depths of the sea, “Salvation is of the Lord.”

I have said that this glorious salvation, which is of the Lord, is the peculiar heritage of believers. They alone know their need of it, and they alone participate in it. Look at the ungodly man who is pic-tured in this psalm. He does not want salvation. He flourishes like the green bay-tree: he spreads his branches to overshadow everybody else. Such men need no salvation. “Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.” They want no salvation: their lands are abundant, their house is full of treasure, and they leave the rest of their substance to their babes. They put no trust in the name of the Lord: “They call their lands after their own names.” They want no

God: they have no sighs after him, they never cry, “As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God!” They have no trials in their lives, and “there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.” The rod of God’s children does not fall upon them. “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth;” but often those whom he loves not he leaves to indulge in such pleasure as they can find. He gives his swine good measure of husks, for he would not be unkind even to them; and there they lie and feed without fear, knowing nothing of another world, neither caring for it.

“Fools never raise their thoughts so high;  
Like brutes they live, like brutes they die;  
Like grass they flourish, till thy breath  
Blasts them in everlasting death.”

See the distinction between the righteous man who fears God, and him that fears him not: were it not for this word “salvation,” their ease and prosperity might make us envy the ungodly; but this turns the scale. Because “the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord,” we would take the worst portion that ever was meted out to them in preference to the best that was ever given to the ungodly. Taking all for all, God’s worst is better than the devil’s best, and the portion of God’s saints at the lowest ebb is better than the portion of the wicked, even when their joys are at the flood.

I am going to speak at this time upon our text as a statement by itself. It is complete and self-contained. It is a diamond of the first water. Its words are few, but its sense is precious. “The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.”

I. Our first head is this: this is the essence of sound doctrine. “The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.” There are several young men here who go forth to preach the gospel. I hope that they will speak with clear knowledge and attractive speech; but this is far from being the main object of my desire: I want them really to preach the gospel, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel. I reckon preaching to be gospel preaching, and sound preaching, in proportion as it is consistent with this statement: “The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.” It is not every preacher who proclaims this truth in bold terms, and in plain English. More or less I hope that all who preach Christ crucified would subscribe to this; but some are a little afraid of it in all its breadth and length. They must bring in man a little. They must have him do something, or be something. They are always afraid lest grace should be misunderstood, and should be turned into licentiousness; and, truly, I share in their fear, though I would not use their way of preventing the evil which I dread. I have known some of these timorous ones try to say “Free grace”; but they have had a little impediment in their speech, and the word has come out “free-will.” They have meant that it should be all of grace, but by some means or other there has been so much hesitancy, and such a deal of fencing, that one could hardly tell grace from works.



There will be no hesitancy on my part when I say that “the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord”; neither will you find me guarding the statement as if I thought it a lump of spiritual dynamite which might do infinite damage.

“The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord “ in the planning. Long before we were in existence, God had planned the way of salva-tion. Before the fall, he had ordained the covenant by which the fallen should be restored; and that plan shows, in every line of it, that consummate wisdom and infinite lore which can be found nowhere but in the Lord. He took counsel with none, and none instructed him: he alone fixed the eternal settlements of unchanging love.

“ The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord” as to the persons who are included in it, for God hath chosen from the beginning his people, and “whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be con-formed unto the image of his Son.” There is a choice somewhere, and I am persuaded we have not chosen him, but he hath chosen us. Did not the Lord Jesus say as much? He is first and foremost in salvation, and though we gladly run when he calls, yet his call comes first, and his choice comes before the call. The salvation of the righteous was determined on in the council chambers of eternity or ever the stars began to shine. It is of God, and of God only.

And as it is of the Lord in the planning, so it is of the Lord in the providing. It was he who gave his Son from his bosom, and truly our Lord Jesus Christ is the full purchase-price of our salvation. We do not add a penny to it. The mortgage upon lost humanity was paid off by Christ to the last farthing, without any contribution on our part to eke out the matchless price.

The Spirit of God, who is another great item in the provision of salvation, is of the Lord. God has given us the Spirit. The Holy Ghost comes, not according to our mind or will, but according to the gift and purpose of the Lord. Nothing is lacking for the salvation of men. God has provided all. He has not left the garment almost long enough, but needing that we should add a fringe; nor has he provided a feast almost sufficient for us if we bring at least another loaf; nor has he built a house of mercy, almost completed, but leaving us to add a few more tiles to the roof. No, no. The work is finished, and from top to bottom salvation is of the Lord. All covenant provisions are already in the Lord Jesus in full, and the salvation of the righteous is entirely of the Lord in the providing.

So, dear friends, it is of the Lord in the applying. The first applica-tion of the blessings of the covenant to us is of God. Of course, that first application is in regeneration, when the soul first begins to live. The first sense of need of mercy springs, not from nature, but is a work of grace. The first desire we have to be right, the first prayer we breathe towards God—all this is the movement of eternal grace upon our souls, which else would have lain as dead as the corpses in their graves. The Lord first deals with us

before we have any inclination whatsoever to deal with him. We do not see this truth at first. Possibly we discover it months after our conversion, when we come to sit down, and look over our experience. Then we cry, "Yes! Hadst thou not sought me, I had never sought thee. Hadst thou not drawn me, I had never run to thee. Hadst thou never looked on me in love, I had never looked to thee in faith. It is thy free grace which began with me. I own that the Alpha of my salvation is of the Lord." The knowledge of this truth usually comes to us as we advance in knowledge: the full understanding of it is a fruit of the Spirit, and belongs to our riper years rather than to our spiritual infancy.

As salvation is of the Lord at the commencement, so it is as to the carrying of it on. Rest assured, beloved, there is no true growth in grace except that which is of the Lord. Nay, there is no sustaining the position to which you have reached except by the Lord.

"And every virtue we possess, And every victory won, And every thought of holiness, Are his, and his alone."

He has wrought all our works in us, and if we have produced any fruit to the honour of his name, from him has our fruit come, for our Lord truly said, "Without me ye can do nothing." We must give him all the glory, for certainly he has given us all the grace; and as it has been, so will it be. Between here and heaven there will be nothing of our own in the matter. We shall work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, because he first works it in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. There is no working out our salvation unless the Lord works it in. We bring to the surface of our life what he works in the deep foundation of our inward nature; but both within and without the spiritual life is all of grace. When we put our foot upon the threshold of glory, and pass through the gate of pearl to the golden pavement of the heavenly city, the last step will be as much taken through the grace of God as was the first step when we turned unto our great Father in our rags and misery. Left by the grace of God for a single moment, we should perish. We are dependent as much upon grace for spiritual life as we are upon the air we breathe for this natural life. Take the atmosphere from us; put us under an exhausted receiver, and we die: take thy grace from us, O our God, and we perish at once. What else could happen to us?

Brethren, we must always believe this and preach it, for it is the sum of all true doctrine. If you do not make salvation to be wholly of the Lord, depend upon it you will have to clip salvation down, and make it a small matter. I have always desired to preach a great salvation, and I do not think that any other is worth preaching. If salvation is of man, then you do not wonder that man falls from grace. Of course he does. What man begins, man also soon ends in his own way with a failure. When God saves he saves eternally. Some one said to me the other day, "I do not quite know about that doctrine of final perseverance whether it is true or not." So I said to him,

“What kind of life does Jesus Christ give his sheep?” He answered very correctly— “He has said, ‘I give unto my sheep eternal life.’” Very well, does not that settle it? If he has given them eternal life, they have eternal life. “But,” he said, “might they not die?” I answered, “Is it not clear that those who die have not eternal life? If they had eternal life, how could they die? Does eternal life mean six months’ life?” “No.” “Does it only mean six hundred years’ life?” “No. It must mean nothing less than life which has no end.” Death is out of the question. I must live if I am one of those of whom the Great Shepherd says, “I give unto my sheep eternal life.” But what is next? If you cannot quite see the truth from that one expression, what follows? Will the sheep of Christ ever perish? Here is his answer. “They shall never perish.” Does not that secure them? What language could better describe their security? But another question is raised:— May it not mean that, if they get away from the Lord Jesus, they shall perish? Then comes the next sentence— “Neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.” Does not that answer it? Oh, but perhaps the Saviour might fail! We think not so: but listen again: “My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”

There are four great reasons why believers are and must be saved; neither can anything shake the force of any one of them. If words mean anything, those who are in Christ are safe. The Lord God Almighty has given unto them eternal life, they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of Christ’s hand, and over that first hand of Jesus is the Father’s hand to make assurance doubly sure. Salvation, then, is of the Lord. This is a doctrine to be believed. If you do not believe it, you are sure to minimize and make small the salvation, and specially are you likely to deprive it of its certainty, and immutability. It is a pity that you should attempt this, for thus you rob Christ of his power, God of his glory, and the saints of their comfort. That is the awkward point about a salvation which is of man: it is worth nothing when you get it. We want an eternal salva-tion. We want a salvation which does really save. We want something which is not made up of “ifs and ans,” and “buts,” and “peradventures,” and “may be,” and “if you do this,” and “if you do that.” We need sure, immutable, abiding, unchanging salvation; and this is what we get, and what we are not ashamed to preach, while we thunder out this truth, “The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.”

“All of grace’—from base to summit,  
Grace on every course and stone;  
Grace in planning, rearing, crowning,  
Sovereign grace, and grace alone!”

II. Secondly, this is not only the essence of sound doctrine, but this is a necessary fact. “The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.” Assuredly it must be so, or else they will never be saved. Look for a moment, you that love the Lord, to your own inward conflicts. Beloved, we are not all alike, tossed to and fro with the uprising of inbred

sin; but there are times with most of God's saints when they are hard put to it to withstand a certain raging temptation: they have to struggle hard to keep it down. And when they have mastered that evil, another form of sin comes on the sly, and attempts to stab them in the back. You were giving all your attention to one insidious foe, and at that terrible moment you were set upon by another; and you had to turn round, and bend all your strength in the name of God to resist this second adversary. Nor was this all, a third evil bent its bow against you, and a fourth prepared a net for your feet. Thus you were beset behind and before; and had it not been the Lord that was on your side, you would have been quickly swallowed up. Some of us know the truth of this in our experience if the rest of you do not.

Salvation must be of the Lord with me, I know, or else my inward lusts, my proud spirit, my rebellious will, and my natural despondency will surely ruin me. Do you not feel it to be so with you? If God does not save you, you are a lost man. You must feel that. I know that those who have no conflicts sing another song, and praise themselves. Your carpet-knights, who wear the regimentals of Christianity, but know nothing of battle with inbred sin, may talk about salvation by self, but he that is hard put to it to wrestle against all wrong-doing will tell another tale. He who grieves if he even utters a rash word, or allows an impure thought to cross his mind, feels that if God does not save him, saved he never can be; and he sees it to be a necessary fact that the salvation of the righteous must be of the Lord.

When you have looked within a sufficient time to convince you, just look at your outward temptations. Ah! we little know what many of our brethren and sisters have to endure in the form of temptation in their own houses from their own friends. Many have a very hard fight of it. I know some now present who will I believe persevere and hold on to the end, but almost every day they endure a martyrdom. Cruel words are spoken, and unkind actions are done, and a bitter spirit is shown towards them because they are the people of God. Salvation must be of the Lord to these poor persecuted ones, or they will faint under their oppressions. Outside in the world, what temptations abound! You cannot engage in any business without finding that it has its peculiar sins. Many things are done in the trade—many matters established by custom—which the scrupulously upright child of God cannot tolerate. He has to set his face against the general habit, and hence he has a battle. Need I go into particulars? Why, brethren, we are surrounded with snares! They are on the table: you may readily sin there. They are in your secret chamber: you are tempted there. They are in the counting-house, and on the study-table. You cannot sit down to read a book without being in danger; you cannot go among the crowd without risk. Depend upon it, if any man is saved in the midst of this wicked and ungodly generation, in which the very air smells of corruption, and the common talk is polluting—his salvation will be evidently of the Lord. If any believer remains steadfast in this day of philosophic doubt, verily, I say unto you, his salvation must be of the Lord. He cannot go through this Vanity Fair, he cannot pass through this horrible slough, this Stygian bog of modern society, and

be pure in heart, and lip, and life, unless God shall grant him his salvation.

Besides that, our salvation will certainly be of the Lord, because the world hates us. It cannot help it. If you are a genuine Christian, the world will not love you. There may be natural traits of kindness and goodness about you, which even the outside world may respect; but in proportion as you are definitely and thoroughly a Christian you will have the dogs at you. Worldlings will not see a little flaw in your character but what they will report it, and magnify it. Some of us cannot do anything but what we are misrepresented, so that we have become careless of what people say about us, so long as we know in our own conscience that we are clear. The act which we have done with the most transparent sincerity has been the very one which they have set upon as though it were a piece of trickery. Blessed be God, the world is crucified to us, and we are crucified unto the world! But if we are to escape its venom—especially those who stand in the front of the battle—if we are to hold on to the end with a stainless character, then we shall have to say and sing, “The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.”

We know, dear friends, that it must be so. It is a necessary fact, even if we only look at the contrary view. What professions some make, and how long they keep them up! We have said of such and such a man, “If he is not a child of God, who is?” We have even wished that our soul were in his soul’s stead when we have heard him pray, and marked the impressive devotion of his demeanour; and yet we have lived to see the very person we admired rolling in filth, character gone, and hope gone. This happens in the church sadly often. Whenever we see it, we may truly feel that “the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.” If ever you see a Christian man, professedly so, suddenly disappear and melt away, you will say to yourself, “Ah! had it not been for grace divine it would have happened just the same to me, and my fellow-professors also.” We should have gone out, like the snuff of a candle, if God had not preserved us, and kept us alight. The older we grow in the divine life, and the more earnestly we seek to exhibit the character of a Christian, the more we shall feel that, if we had to go to this warfare at our own charges, it would be better for us that we had never been born. The life of many modern professors might be lived without supernatural help, but the life of a genuine Christian is a perpetual miracle, which could be wrought by none but the Lord God. True Christian life is produced by God himself working mightily, even as when he made the world, or raised his Only-begotten Son from the dead. I say that this is a necessary fact, for there can be no salvation but that which is of the Lord.

III. In the third place, our text being true, that “the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord,” this is a sweet consolation; for if my salvation is of the Lord, then I shall be saved. If it had been of any-body else, I should be lost. Ah, Gabriel! if my salvation had to be accomplished by you, and all your fellow-angels, I should despair. Ah, my brethren, if all of you put together were sent into this world to try and help poor me to

heaven, you would never get me there. I should wear you all out. When it is written, "Salvation is of the Lord," I am comforted, for I am sure that the Lord will do it. He can, for he is omnipotent. He will, for he has promised to do it, and he is true and unchangeable. He will go through with what he has begun. If man began, he might leave off before he had finished, for want of stores to go on with it, or because he had made a mistake, and changed his fickle mind; but when God begins, as surely as ever he opens the war, he will push on till he has won the victory. As surely as he lays the first stone, he will not withdraw his right hand till he has brought forth the topstone, with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it!" "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord:" therefore it will be accomplished. Not all the temptations of life, nor all the terrors of death, nor all the furies of hell, shall prevent any soul upon whom God has begun his work of grace from reaching eternal salvation. What a blessing is this, and what a comfort it is!

"Things future, nor things that are now,  
Not all things below nor above,  
Can make him his purpose forego,  
Or sever my soul from his love."

This grand fact comforts us partly by leading us to believe in prayer. If the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord, then, whenever we get into any great trouble, we go to him, and cry, "O Lord, my salvation is of thee! I have come to thee for it." When strong temptation seems to catch us, like birds in a net, and we cannot break loose, then we cry, "O God, salvation is of thee alone! Help me. Thou canst. I look to thee for it!" When our soul lies dead, as it sometimes does, like this heavy weather—when there is little sun to brighten us, or air to enliven us, we feel inactive, and cannot stir. Oh, then it is most blessed in prayer to feel "all my fresh springs are in thee, my Lord! Thou canst quicken me. Thou canst give me vigour, and force of character, and energy to do thy work, or suffer thy will"! In drawing nigh unto God we are coming to the right place: we are only asking God to do what he undertakes to do, since "the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord."

This, in addition to increasing our hope in prayer, urges us at all times to look out of ourselves to God. "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord;" then I must not be always searching within my own heart to find some good thing within me; I must not be turning over evidences, and living upon past experiences; but I must remember that the salvation even of the righteous is of the Lord. I have often thrown all my evidences overboard—every one of them. I have felt that I would not give a farthing for the whole lot put together; and I have gone to Christ Jesus just as I went at first, singing my old ditty—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,  
But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

We are encouraged to do this by the fact that salvation is of the Lord. Go again to the cross, and read your pardon there. Suppose the devil tells you, or suppose it even to be true, that all your experience is a fiction, all your past profession a lie, all your faith presumption, all your enjoyments delirium, all that you have known and felt a day-dream; well, then, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and he can save you. O my Lord, I can boast nothing whatever of myself, but I come and cast myself on thee, and thou hast said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"! Frequent beginnings again are the very safest things; in fact, we should, in a sense, be always beginning, for the spiritual life begins with coming unto Jesus, and the continuance of that spiritual life is described thus: "To whom coming as unto a living stone." To whom coming, always coming: always trusting, always looking out of self, always looking to Christ. When evidences are bright, you know where you are; but at such a time you could tell that without them. It is easy to tell the time of day by a sun-dial, but then the sun must be shining; and when I am at home, and can see the sun, I know whereabouts the sun is at twelve o'clock, and therefore I do not want the sun-dial to tell me the time. Evidences are exceedingly good things when you do not want them, and they are of very little use when you do. Evidences are clear when Christ is present; but when Christ is present you do not want their help; and when Christ is not present, evidences fail to comfort you. It is better to live by a daily faith upon Christ than to live upon evidences. They most readily turn mouldy, and then they are most unwholesome food. Live upon Christ, who is the daily manna, and you will live well. You will be driven to such a life by the force of this blessed truth, that the salvation of the righteous, just as much as the salvation of the wicked, is of the Lord. A sinner cannot be saved by himself; neither can a righteous man. A sinner must look to the Lord for salvation; so must a righteous man. We are on one footing here—the rich saint as well as the poor sinner. Christ must be everything to one as well as to the other; and what a blessed thing it is that he is everything to us! Let us hourly make him so.

IV. Fourthly, and very briefly, this doctrine is a reason for humility. "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord." Are you saved, my dear brother? And do you know it? Then all idea of pride must vanish, for it is clear that you did not save yourself. That regeneration, of which you are a partaker, is the free gift of God to an undeserving one—a work of grace upon one who could not have wrought it upon himself. Pride is excluded. Has the Lord granted you such a salvation that you have remained fast in your integrity all these years? Do not get proud of it, for your salvation from any gross outward sin has been of the Lord. It is none of your doing. Above all, do not begin to censure others; and when you see a poor brother down—ay, when you see a child of God who has erred, and grossly sinned, do not begin censuring him in bitterness, and giving him over to despair. If you had been in his case, you might have done worse. Do I speak harshly? Any man who says, "If I had been in that brother's place I should have done better," is a fool. He does not know himself. The probabilities are that he

would have done worse. Ah, Sir Pharisee! you—yes, oh yes, you are a wonder! Marvellous is your purity! Splendidly you act! What a paragon you are! If you were to see yourself in God's light, you would see that you are a mass of corruption, smelling of pride. That is what you are. The man who begins to exult over his fallen brother is the likeliest man to fall himself. He who points at a rent in his brother's garment is in rags himself. If we have stood fast amid temptation, we may bless God that we have done so; but we must not find fault with others as though there was some good thing in our-selves. The salvation of the most righteous man that ever lived is of the Lord. If his sun has not been eclipsed—if his moon has not been turned into darkness—if his stars have not fallen like withered leaves from the tree, it is all owing to the grace of God, and the grace of God alone. It is needful to say this to keep us from being lifted up with foolish boasting.

So, dear friends, we shall have to sing to a grave, sweet melody as long as we are here, whenever we touch a matter that concerns ourselves. When we get to heaven, we shall see then much more than we do to-night that salvation is of the Lord. Mr. Bunyan represents his pilgrim as going through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and even while he was in the darkness and horror of that defile he knew that he needed the Lord to help him. He felt that he had a terrible walk of it that night, when there was a bog on this side, and a quagmire on that, and hobgoblins and all sorts of horrid creatures all around: he knew that he needed divine aid. He held on his way, with his sword in his hand, and grasping the weapon of All-prayer, till at last he quitted that horrible place; and then he knew better than before how great was his necessity. He looked back when the morning rose, and till then he had not fully known what a place he had been traversing, and how great was the power which upheld him in his night-march. When we get to heaven, and look back upon our life below, we shall then see the wonders of delivering grace which at this time we do not fully appreciate.

“When I stand before the throne  
Dress'd in beauty not my own,  
When I see thee as thou art,  
Love thee with unsinning heart,  
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—  
Not till then—how much I owe.”

I believe that in the day of our full deliverance we shall lift up, every one of us, such a song of praise as we are not capable of here. We shall sing with all our powers of heart and tongue at the sight of what we have been delivered from. Even then this will be the sum and substance of the song—“Salvation is of the Lord.” He has wrought it all, and brought us safely through. The hymn of Miriam, and of all the children of Israel at the Red Sea, when they had passed through it, and all the Egyptians were drowned, was a very exultant song, but what will ours be when the gates of hell shall have been overthrown, and all our enemies destroyed, and we shall find ourselves before the



eternal throne saved for ever! Shall we not exclaim, "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously"? Shall we not, each one, tell out his own ex-perience, and bid our fellow-believers sing yet more and more rapturously unto the God of salvation? Will not some of you take up that note which Miriam dwelt upon when she could not see a single Egyptian? Pharaoh's chariots and horses were all sunk in the sea, his chosen cap-tains also were drowned in the Red Sea; and so she struck her timbrel, and with all the maidens she danced right joyously as she sang, "The depths have covered them. There is not one, not one, not one of them left." Thus will we sing in heaven. "There is not one, not one of them left. Not one of all the sins, and all the trials, and all the temptations, and all the vexations of life: the Lord has removed them all. There is not one of them left. Salvation is of the Lord."

V. I close with one more remark, and it is this: this text gives us a comfortable ground of hope. "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord." Then I believe he will save me. I trust myself with him, and thus I become righteous by faith; and therefore he will save me from my trouble and care. Brother, draw the same conclusion. Sister, draw the same conclusion. You are in a terrible condition just now. Everything has been going wrong. You do not know what to do. But "the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord." He will bring you through. You are in good hands. The Great Pilot knows-the navigation of the river of life better than you do. You cannot see a channel for your boat: there are snags everywhere, or quicksands, or rocks, or shallows. He knows all about it. Rest. Trust. Wait. Commit your way unto the Lord. There is personal comfort in the fact that our salvation is of the Lord.

And there is comfort, next, with regard to all our tried brethren. It is my lot—my happy or unhappy lot—to be continually consulted by brothers and sisters in great trouble. They think I can help them, though I cannot. I hardly know what to say to them. I can only take their burden with my own unto the Lord. I often feel great pain in sympathizing with trials which I cannot remove; but then it is cheering to know that the Lord can help where we cannot, for "the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord." He can help the helpless, the forlorn, the impoverished, the dying. He will bring his people safely through floods and fires. Their straits are very great, and their burdens very heavy, but the Lord will put underneath them the everlasting arms. Pray for them; sympathize with them; help them as far as you can; and then, when you cast yourself on your Lord, cast them there also.

Next, this ought to give us hope about seekers. I see some brethren and sisters before me whose lives are spent in trying to encourage poor erring souls to return unto the Lord. Sometimes you are balked and defeated. Well, "the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord." Surely, if the salvation of the righteous is to come from the Lord, much more must the salvation of poor seekers. Have hope about the vilest and worst of men. If there [are any such here tonight, let them have hope, for if the Lord bids the righteous, in whom there is a measure of his grace, to look to him for salvation,

assuredly he bids you to do the same, for you have nothing of your own. If those who are righteous before God yet find their salvation in him alone, where are you to look? You must look to the Lord also. Look to Jesus on the cross, and find salvation in him; for the Lord Jesus redeemed with his precious blood all who trust in him. O my dear hearer, come and cast yourself upon him! "In due time Christ died for the ungodly:" so runs the word. Look to that wondrous death of the Son of God which redeems such as you are, and in your case too it shall be found that your salvation is of the Lord. May God bless you, and cause you to rejoice in his salvation!

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## **What Does the Term "Total Depravity" mean, and is it biblical?**

Although total depravity does not mean that all men will display evil to the fullest extent possible, or that one man may never be good relative to another, or "in the right" when it comes to a particular situation; yet it does mean that no man can ever do anything whatsoever that is completely acceptable in the sight of God. The very best acts of fallen man are tainted and imperfect, and thus loathsome before the altogether holy God of creation. Basically, the doctrine of total depravity, in a calvinistic soteriology, intends two things: first, that no act of man is ultimately good or perfectly acceptable to God; and second, that man is so corrupted by sin, that he is utterly unable to contribute anything to his regeneration, even the simplest act of seeking God, believing in him, or coming to him.

Both aspects of this reformed doctrine of total depravity find much scriptural support. The bible clearly teaches that man cannot do anything good, he cannot please God, he is utterly bound to sin and the devil, and even his best acts are as filthy rags before God (Gen. 6:5; Job 15:14-16; Psa. 130:3; 143:2; Prov. 20:9; Eccl. 7:20; Isa. 64:6; Jer. 13:23; John 3:19; 8:34, 44; Rom. 3:9-12; 6:20; 8:8; 2 Tim. 2:25-26; Tit. 3:3; 1 John 5:19; Jam. 3:8; 1 John 1:8; ); it also teaches that man cannot even seek God, come to him, or believe in him, unless God himself draws him, regenerates him, and gives him a living heart of flesh (John 3:3-8; 6:65; 10:26; 12:37-41; Rom. 3:10-11).

If natural man's condition is Total Depravity, How do we account for the apparent "good" in the unregenerate?

Good question because the meaning of total depravity is often misunderstood. It should first be pointed out what "total depravity" does not mean. The doctrine does not refer to man being as evil a creature as he can be. All fallen, unregenerate human beings are endowed with many of God's common graces. God has blessed all men with

a conscience and the capacity to promote virtue and civil righteousness. It is abundantly clear that many beautiful aspects of the world we live in have been brought forth by those which are unredeemed by God's regenerative grace. God has gifted natural men and women with the skill to create beautiful music, make profound works of art, to invent intricate machines and do countless things that are productive, excellent and praiseworthy. John Calvin said,

"Those men whom Scripture calls "natural men" were, indeed, sharp and penetrating in their investigation of inferior things. Let us, accordingly, learn by their example how many gifts the Lord left to human nature even after it was despoiled of its true good." (Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, 274-275).

It would be natural to ask, then, if man is totally depraved, how is it that he can bring forth so many good things? This question is indeed valid but misunderstands what is meant when we talk about man as being rendered depraved by the fall.

So what is meant, then, by the total depravity and spiritual inability of the natural man? It means that man's many good works, even though in accord with God's commands, are not well pleasing to God when weighed against His ultimate criteria and standard of perfection. The love of God and His law is not the unbelievers' deepest animating motive and principle (nor is it his motive at all), so it does not earn him the right to redemptive blessings from a holy God. The Scripture clearly implies this when it states "...without faith it is impossible to please Him." (Hebrews 11:6a, NASB) and "whatever is not from faith is sin." (Romans 14:23) So if man "is restrained from performing more evil acts by motives that are not owing to his glad submission to God, then even his "virtue" is evil in the sight of God." (John Piper) His purpose for doing good works are not from a heart that loves God. Being unspiritual, that is, without the Holy Spirit, "... men do not rise above themselves" (Calvin) But now through our justification and regeneration in Christ, we are enabled, for the first time, to be pleasing to God **on the basis of Christ's work** and, from this union, the work of the Holy Spirit renews our affections for God, giving us understanding of, and a delight in, spiritual things and turning our heart of stone to a heart of flesh.

Total depravity only means man is lost (Luke 19:10), unspiritual by nature, and thus he is utterly impotent to recover himself from his ruined estate (John 6:44, 65, Rom 8:7; Eph 2:1, 2:5; Rom 3:11; 2 Corinthians 4:4-6). In other words he is unable to do any redemptive good. Fallen man does not desire God, he loves darkness and hates the light (John 3:19,20) so he will not come into Christ at all except he be reborn by the Holy Spirit (John 1:13, 3:6, John 6:37, 39, 44, 63-66; Rom 9:16).

Calvin made an observation from Romans 1 that all men (regenerate and unregenerate) have a sense of the divine within them. Even unbelievers know God in a sense because God has impressed his image on all persons. The apostle Paul said,

"For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him..." (Rom 1:21) Since the Holy Spirit does not dwell with the fallen, the source of natural man's affections come from a polluted well. He has a sense of the divine and knows God, but only as an enemy, "and by their unrighteousness suppress the truth" (Rom 1:18). God has impressed humanity with a conscience and it restrains him from doing even more evil, but his heart cannot reach to the heavens to God unless the Spirit first pour His blessings down from heaven. God extends his love to man but since he is hostile to God by nature he will always reject Him. All are responsible to come to Him but inexcusable for their "knowing Him" but refusing to come to Him. "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse." It is our duty to repent but we will not do so unless God grants repentance (2 Tim 2:25) and give us new eyes to see the truth. Without Scripture and the Holy Spirit we only distort the true light God has given us in His creation. Since the Scripture declares that we suppress the truth and make idols of all things created (Rom 1:18), so if our blindness is to be removed, it is not just the light of God we need (Scripture), but also new eyes to see that light (the Holy Spirit).

**Even though a depraved person cannot do good works, he can still believe, can't he?**

Although Arminians object against the doctrines of Pelagius, the fifth-century British monk who taught that man was not corrupted in Adam, so that each person has the innate capacity to do righteous acts; yet they still like to maintain that man still has at least one tiny "island of righteousness" left in the sea of depravity; and that is, that all men can at least respond to God's offer in the gospel, and come to him in faith.

However, even this "island of righteousness" is unbiblical; the bible teaches that man cannot even believe in God or believe the words of Jesus, apart from God's sovereign grace (John 6:65; 8:43-45; 10:26; 12:37-41). Furthermore, this teaching of man's "free" will to believe in the gospel is a slight against God's power and grace, which saves us utterly apart from anything within ourselves, so that God alone may be glorified. Hence, the bible frequently indicates that even faith and repentance are God's gifts (John 3:27; Phil. 1:29; 2 Pet. 1:1; Acts 5:3; 11:18; 16:14; 18:27; Eph. 2:8-10; 2 Tim. 2:25-26). Even as the apostle said, "Who makes you to differ? or what do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7).

## **The Deceitfulness of the Heart**

## David Black (1762-1806)

from his Sermons on Important Subjects (Edinburgh 1808).

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"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Jeremiah 17:9.

True and faithful is the testimony of God. Men may amuse themselves and their fellow creatures with empty, high sounding descriptions of the dignity of human nature, and the all-sufficient powers of man; but every humble, every truly enlightened mind, will see and acknowledge the justness of the declaration in the text, that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.

This is a truth which, like many others in the word of God, can only be learned from experience. As long as we assent to it, merely because it is contained in the Scriptures, we are strangers to its nature, and cannot understand what it means: But, as in water face answereth to face, so doth the heart of man to man. Human nature in different ages and in different circumstances is still the same; and when, by means of the word, the secrets of our own hearts are made manifest, when we come to perceive the exact correspondence between the declarations of Scripture, and what passes within us, we are obliged to confess, that God is in it of a truth, since none but He who searcheth the hearts, and trieth the reins of the children of men, could know so perfectly the inward workings of our minds, and those numberless evils which are hidden from the view of all our fellow creatures.

I purpose at present to speak only of the deceitfulness of the heart, a subject sufficiently extensive, not merely for one, but for many discourses, and which, after all that can be said on it, must remain in a great measure unexhausted, for who can know it? The deceit that lodges in the heart is so complicated and so various, that it is impossible to trace it in all its windings. It is but comparatively a small part of it that any created mind can discover, and therefore, in the verse immediately following the text, God ascribes this knowledge to himself as his peculiar prerogative; I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

But, by the blessing of God, it may be useful to turn our attention to this deeply interesting subject, and point out some of the plainest and most decisive evidences of the deceitfulness of the human heart, which scripture, observation, and experience afford. It appears,

I. From men's general ignorance of their own character.

There is not any thing in the history of mankind more surprising, or at first view more

unaccountable, than the self-partiality which prevails in the world. One would be apt to imagine, that it should not be so difficult to arrive at the knowledge of our real character, possessing, as we do, every possible advantage for attaining it. We have constant access to our own breasts, and are more deeply interested in the discovery, than in the acquisition of any other knowledge. But we see, in fact, that of all knowledge this is the rarest and most uncommon. Nor is it difficult to account for this fact, since the heart is deceitful above all things. Self-love casts a veil over the understanding, the judgment is warped by various circumstances, and hence it is, that many seem to be almost entire strangers to their own character. They think, and reason, and judge quite differently in any thing relating to themselves, from what they do in those cases in which they have no personal interest. Accordingly, we often hear people exposing follies for which they themselves are remarkable, and talking with great severity against particular vices, of which, if all the world be not mistaken, they themselves are notoriously guilty. It is astounding to what a pitch this self-ignorance and self-partiality may be carried! How frequently do we see men, not only altogether blind to their own character, but insensible to every thing that can be said to convince them of their mistake. In vain do you tender to them instruction or reproof, for they turn away every thing from themselves, and never once imagine that they are the persons for whose benefit these counsels and admonitions are chiefly intended.

Of this we are every day furnished with frequent instances in common life. The sacred history affords us a remarkable example in the case of David on one particular occasion: I say on one particular occasion, for the description that we have been giving by no means applies to David's general character. Few were, in general, more accustomed to self-inquiry. But when Nathan the prophet was sent to him, in consequence of his grievous fall in the matter of Uriah, such was the insensibility, and self-ignorance which sin had produced, that he perceived not the application of the parable to himself, till the prophet declared, Thou art the man.

From this and similar instances, we are led to observe that, if we trace this self-ignorance to its source, we shall find that it is in general owing, not only to that partiality and fondness which we all have for ourselves, but to the prevalence of some particular passion or interest, which perverts the judgment in every case where that particular passion or interest is concerned. And hence it happens that some men can reason and judge fairly enough, even in cases in which they themselves are interested, provided it does not strike against their favourite passion or pursuit. Thus the covetous man will easily enough perceive the evil of intemperance, and perhaps condemn himself if he has been guilty of this sin in a particular instance. But he is altogether insensible to the dominion of his predominant passion, the love of money. It has become habitual to him. His mind is accustomed to it, so that in every case, where his interest is concerned, his judgment is warped, and in these instances he plainly discovers that he is totally unacquainted with his own character. The same observation applies to other particular vices.

Here then, is one striking evidence of the deceitfulness of the heart. It produces ignorance of ourselves; it keeps men strangers to their own character; and makes them fatally presume that they are in friendship with God, while they are enemies to him in their minds and by wicked works.

II. The deceitfulness of the heart appears from men's general disposition on all occasions to justify their own conduct.

This disposition our first parents discovered immediately upon their eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. When the Lord appeared to Adam and charged him with his guilt, he attempted to justify himself by saying, The woman whom thou gavest me to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And in like manner the woman replied, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. Something also of this disposition is common to all their sinful posterity. We are all extremely partial to ourselves, and apt to view our own conduct in a different light from that in which we are accustomed to regard the conduct of our fellow creatures. When we observe improper conduct in others, the impropriety strikes us at once. Sin appears to us in its true and genuine colours, and we are ready to judge and condemn, perhaps with too much severity. But in our own case, the action is seen through a deceitful medium. The judgment is perverted by self-love, and a thousand expedients are employed, if not to vindicate, at least to apologise for our conduct. If we cannot justify the action itself, we attempt to extenuate its guilt from the peculiar circumstances of the case. We were placed in such and such a particular situation, which we could not avoid; our temptations were strong: we did not go the lengths that many others would have gone in similar circumstances; and the general propriety of our conduct is more than sufficient to overbalance any little irregularities with which we may sometimes be chargeable. Thus, on all occasions, men endeavour to justify their own conduct. They even learn to call their favourite vices by softer names. With them, intemperance is only the desire of good fellowship; lewdness is gallantry, or the love of pleasure; pride, a just sense of our own dignity; and covetousness, or the love of money, a prudent regard to our worldly interest. Strange infatuation! to think that by changing the names of vices, it is possible to change their nature; and that what is base and detestable in others, should be pardonable only in ourselves!

But it may be farther observed on this part of the subject, that besides these single determinate acts of wickedness, of which we have now been speaking, there are numberless cases in which the wickedness cannot be exactly defined, but consists in a certain general temper and course of action, or in the habitual neglect of some duty, whose bounds are not precisely fixed. This is the peculiar province of self-deceit, and here, most of all, men are apt to justify their conduct, however plainly and palpably wrong. Whoever considers human life will see, that a great part, perhaps the greatest part of the intercourse amongst mankind cannot be reduced to fixed, determined

rules: yet in these cases there is a right and a wrong, and conduct that is sinful and immoral, and a conduct, on the other hand, that is virtuous and praise-worthy, though it may be difficult, nay, perhaps impossible to ascertain the precise limits of each.

To give an example: There is not a word in our language that expresses more detestable wickedness than oppression. Yet the nature of this vice cannot be so exactly stated, nor the bounds of it so determinately marked, as that we shall be able to say, in all instances, where rigid right and justice end, and oppression begins. In like manner, it is impossible to determine how much of every man's income ought to be devoted to pious and charitable purposes: the boundaries cannot be exactly marked; yet we are at no loss in the case of others to perceive the difference betwixt a liberal and generous man, and one of a hard-hearted and penurious disposition. In these cases, there is great latitude left for every man to determine in his own favour, and consequently to deceive himself; and it is chiefly in such instances as these, that men are ready to justify their conduct, however criminal. Because they are not chargeable with single determinate acts of wickedness, because you cannot precisely point out to them, in so many words, wherein they have done amiss, they falsely conclude, that their conduct is unexceptionable; though, perhaps, their general temper and behaviour may be uniformly wrong, inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel, and contrary to the plainest dictates of morality. I proceed to observe,

III. That the deceitfulness of the heart appears from the difficulty with which men are brought to acknowledge their faults, even when conscious that they have done wrong.

This necessarily follows from that disposition in human nature, to which I have already adverted, namely, the disposition on all occasions to justify our own conduct. Hence men in general are so backward to acknowledge their faults, and so displeased with those who are so faithful and friendly as to point them out. How few can bear to be told their faults! This is the sure and ready way to make most men your enemies, even though you administer the reproof in the gentlest, and most prudent manner. Instead of reflecting on their own conduct, which might convince them of the justice of what is laid to their charge, many, in these cases, set themselves immediately to discover the faults in their faithful reprovers, or in those, who, they suspect, may have informed them; and turning away their attention entirely from themselves, are only concerned to find equal, if not greater blemishes in others. Thus deceitful is the heart of man. We wish always to entertain a favourable opinion of ourselves and of our own conduct, and are displeased with those who endeavour in any instance to change this opinion, though it be done with the best, and most friendly intention.

But how unreasonable and preposterous is this degree of self-love! Were we alive to our true interests, we would wish to become better acquainted with our follies and our faults, and would esteem our faithful reprovers our best friends. Instead of feeling any resentment against them, we would turn all our resentment against ourselves; and



endeavour, in the strength of divine grace, to correct those evils which, were we not so blinded by self-love, we might easily discover. But through the deceitfulness of the heart, men are generally disposed to justify their own conduct, and ready to throw the blame of what is amiss on any thing sooner than on themselves.

IV. The deceitfulness of the heart appears from the disposition which men discover to rest in notions and forms of religion, while they are destitute of its power.

In the purest ages of the church, there have been persons of this character, men who, from selfish or worldly motives have assumed a profession of religion, without understanding its nature, or feeling its power; having a name to live, but being spiritually dead. It is not easy for persons whose minds are in any degree informed, to divest themselves entirely of religious impressions. The fears that naturally accompany guilt, will at times obtrude themselves on the most giddy and thoughtless. But the pure, the spiritual, the humbling doctrines and precepts of the gospel are by no means agreeable to the natural mind; and therefore it is not wonderful that persons who have some apprehension of the truth of religion, but no acquaintance with its power, should eagerly grasp at something which may give them hope beyond the grave, while at the same time it leaves them in the quiet possession of their beloved lusts.

Hence it is that so many are hearers of the word only, and not doers also, deceiving their ownselves. Hence it is that so many shew great zeal about small and unimportant matters in religion, who are shamefully deficient in some of its plainest and most essential duties; that so many are punctual in their observance of religious institutions, who are unjust and uncharitable in their conduct towards their fellow creatures; that so many can talk fluently and correctly on religious subjects, who are visibly under the dominion of evil tempers or evil habits; that so many are scrupulously exact in what regards the externals of religion, who are at no pains to cultivate its genuine spirit, or to perform its most substantial duties. Like the Pharisees of old, who paid tithes of anise, mint, and cummin, they neglect the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. Hypocrisy in all its forms and appearances flows from the deceitfulness of the heart; for in general men deceive themselves, before they attempt to deceive others. Few are so bold as to lay down a plan of imposing on the world, without endeavouring, in the first instance at least, to impose on their own minds. Nor is it difficult, when the mind is strongly biased by the love of any particular sin, or the pursuit of any particular interest, to persuade ourselves that our conduct is, at least, excusable, if not innocent. A dishonest mind is satisfied with the meanest shifts and evasions; and persons who wish to be deceived into a good opinion of their conduct, are seldom at a loss to accomplish their purpose.

Balaam was a remarkable instance of this. He was a man of extensive knowledge and superior gifts. He was not a stranger to the impressions of religion, for in his calm

reflecting moments, he desired to die the death of the righteous, nor could any consideration prevail with him to oppose the divine commandment, by cursing those whom God had blessed. But he loved the wages of unrighteousness. Covetousness was his ruling passion, and led him, by the advice which he gave to Balak, to contradict the whole spirit and design of the very prohibition, for the letter of which he professed so sacred a regard. It would be easy to multiply particulars on this subject, But I only add, in the

Fifth and last place, That the deceitfulness of the heart appears in the highest degree, when men overlook the real motives of their conduct, and mistake the workings of their own corruptions for the fruits of the Spirit of God.

That there is such deceitfulness in the world, none can doubt, who consider the dreadful enormities that have been committed under the sacred name of religion. In many cases, it must be acknowledged, these enormities have been committed by persons who were conscious of the motives from which they acted, and who employed religion merely as an engine to attain the objects of their avarice or ambition. But in other cases it is no less certain, that men have concealed from themselves the motive of their conduct, and even mistaken the workings of their corruptions for the fruits of the Spirit of God.

Of this we have several examples in scripture. A striking instance of it occurs in the conduct of Jehu, who, when shedding the blood of Jezreel to serve the purposes of his own ambition, said exultingly to Jehonadab, Come, see my zeal for the Lord! It is not improbable, that at the time he imagined himself to be influenced by zeal for God, though there cannot be a doubt, that in what he did he was actuated chiefly by the love of power. Our blessed Lord forewarns his disciples, that the time should come, when whosoever killed them, would think that he did God service; in like manner as the prophet Isaiah had declared concerning the persecuted people of God in his time, Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word. Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified.

We are greatly shocked when we read of the dreadful persecutions which in different ages have been carried on against the faithful servants of Christ, by the blood-thirsty votaries of Rome; yet these men pretended zeal for the glory of God: Nor is it improbable, but that many of them might so far deceive themselves, as to imagine, that they were doing God service, while shedding the blood of his saints. This is indeed the highest instance of the extreme deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart, and the most awful proof of being given up of God to a reprobate mind. But, in a lesser degree, men frequently practice this kind of deceit upon themselves, ascribing to the word and to the Spirit of God what is evidently the effect of their own ignorance, wickedness and depravity.

On the whole, since the ways in which men deceive themselves are so various, can we be too jealous over our own hearts? He that trusteth to his own heart, says the wise man, is a fool; and the reason is obvious, because the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Let us therefore, Brethren, accustom ourselves to self-examination. Instead of indulging a censorious disposition, and looking abroad to discover the faults of our neighbours, let us descend into our own breasts, and observe the plagues of our own hearts. Let us attend, not merely to our outward actions, but to the principles and motives from which these actions proceed. Let us consider our conduct, not in the light in which self-love and self-partiality would present it to our minds, but in the light in which any impartial spectator would view it, in the light in which God's word teaches us to consider it, and in the light in which it will be judged of at last, when God shall bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of all hearts.

We are all more or less liable to self-deceit; and they who think they have the least of it, are in general most of all under its dominion. Let us therefore distrust our own judgment, and, sensible of our own ignorance and liableness to mistake, let us pray to God for his divine teaching; saying, with Elihu in the book of job, That which I see not, teach thou me; and with the Psalmist, Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

## **Man's Utter Inability to Rescue Himself**

**Thomas Boston**

*The following article has been extracted from Boston's classic work Human Nature In Its Fourfold State (Chapter 3, pp. 183-197).*

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*For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*  
Romans 5:6

*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.* John 6.44

We have now had a view of the total corruption of man's nature, and that load of wrath which lies on him, that gulf of misery into which he is plunged in his natural state. But there is one part of his misery that deserves particular consideration; namely, his utter inability to recover himself, the knowledge of which is necessary for the due humiliation of a sinner. What I design here, is only to propose a few things, whereby to convince the unregenerate man of this his inability, that he may see an

absolute need of Christ and of the power of His grace.

A man that is fallen into a pit cannot be supposed to help himself out of it, but by one of two ways; either by doing all himself alone, or taking hold of, and improving, the help offered him by others. Likewise an unconverted man cannot be supposed to help himself out of his natural state, but either in the way of the law, or covenant of works, by doing all himself without Christ; or else in the way of the Gospel, or covenant of grace, by exerting his own strength to lay hold upon, and to make use of the help offered him by a Saviour. But, alas! the unconverted man is dead in the pit, and cannot help himself either of these ways; not the first way, for the first text tells us, that when our Lord came to help us, 'we were without strength,' unable to recover ourselves. We were ungodly, therefore under a burden of guilt and wrath, yet 'without strength,' unable to stand under it; and unable to throw it off, or get from under it: so that all mankind would have undoubtedly perished, had not 'Christ died for the ungodly,' and brought help to those who could never have recovered themselves. But when Christ comes and offers help to sinners, cannot they take it? Cannot they improve help when it comes to their hands? No, the second text tells, they cannot; 'No man can come unto me,' that is, believe in me (John 6.44), 'except the Father draw him.' This is a drawing which enables them to come, who till then could not come; and therefore could not help themselves by improving the help offered. It is a drawing which is always effectual; for it can be no less than 'hearing and learning of the Father,' which, whoever partakes of, come to Christ (verse 45). Therefore it is not drawing in the way of mere moral suasion, which may be, yea, and always is ineffectual. But it is drawing by mighty power (Eph. 1:9), absolutely necessary for those who have no power in themselves to come and take hold of the offered help.

Hearken then, O unregenerate man, and be convinced that as you are in a most miserable state by nature, so you are utterly unable to recover yourself any way. You are ruined; and what way will you go to work to recover yourself? Which of the two ways will you choose? Will you try it alone, or will you make use of help? Will you fall on the way of works, or on the way of the Gospel? I know very well that you will not so much as try the way of the Gospel, till once you have found the recovery impracticable in the way of the law. Therefore, we shall begin where corrupt nature teaches men to begin, namely, at the way of the law of works.

Sinner, I would have you believe that your working will never effect it. Work, and do your best; you will never be able to work yourself out of this state of corruption and wrath. You must have Christ, else you will perish eternally. It is only 'Christ in you' that can be the hope of glory. But if you will needs try it, then I must lay before you, from the unalterable Word of the living God, two things which you must do for yourself. If you can do them, it must be yielded that you are able to recover yourself; but if not, then you can do nothing this way for your recovery.

1. 'If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments' (Matthew 19:17). That is, if you will by doing enter into life, then perfectly keep the ten commandments; for the object of these words is to beat down the pride of the man's heart, and to let him see an absolute need of a Saviour, from the impossibility of keeping the law. The answer is given suitably to the address. Our Lord checks him for his compliment, 'Good Master' (Matthew 19:16), telling him, 'There is none good but one, that is God' (Matthew 19:17). As if he had said, You think yourself a good man, and me another; but where goodness is spoken of, men and angels may veil their faces before the good God. As to his question, wherein he revealed his legal disposition, Christ does not answer him, saying, 'Believe and thou shalt be saved;' that would not have been so seasonable in the case of one who thought he could do well enough for himself, if he but knew 'what good he should do;' but, suitable to the humor the man was in, He bids him 'keep the commandments;' keep them nicely and accurately, as those that watch malefactors in prison, lest any of them escape, and their life be taken for those which escape. See then, O unregenerate man, what you can do in this matter; for if you will recover yourself in this way, you must perfectly keep the commandments of God.

(1) Your obedience must be perfect, in respect of the principle of it; that is, your soul, the principle of action, must be perfectly pure, and altogether without sin. For the law requires all moral perfection; not only actual, but habitual: and so condemns original sin; impurity of nature, as well as of actions. Now, if you can bring this to pass you will be able to answer that question of Solomon, so as never one of Adam's posterity could yet answer it, 'Who can say, I have made my heart clean?' (Prov. 20:9). But if you cannot, the very want of this perfection is sin, and so lays you open to the curse and cuts you off from life. Yea, it makes all your actions, even your best actions, sinful: 'For who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' (Job 14:4). And do you think by sin to help yourself out of sin and misery?

(2) Your obedience must also be perfect in parts. It must be as broad as the whole law of God: if you lack one thing, you are undone; for the law denounces the curse on him that continues not in every thing written therein (Gal 3:10). You must give Internal and external obedience to the whole law, keep all the commands in heart and life. If you break any one of them, that will ensure your ruin. A vain thought, or idle word, will still shut you up under the curse.

(3) It must be perfect in respect of degrees, as was the obedience of Adam, while he stood in his innocence. This the law requires, and will accept of no less (Matthew 22:37), 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.' If one degree of that love, required by the law, be wanting, if each part of your obedience be not brought up to the greatest height commanded, that want is a breach of the law, and so leaves you still under the curse. A man may bring as many buckets of water to a house that is on fire, as he is able to carry, and yet it may be consumed, and will be so, if he bring not as many as will quench the fire. Even so,

although you should do what you are able, in keeping the commandments, if you fail in the least degree of obedience which the law enjoins, you are certainly ruined for ever, unless you take hold of Christ, renouncing all your righteousness as filthy rags. (See Rom 10:5; Gal. 3:10).

(4) It must be perpetual, as the man Christ's obedience was, who always did the things which pleased the Father, for the tenor of the law is, 'Cursed is he that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them! Hence, though Adam's obedience was, for a while, absolutely perfect; yet because at length he failed in one point, namely, in eating the forbidden fruit, he fell under the curse of the law. If a man were to live a dutiful subject to his prince till the close of his days, and then conspire against him, he must die for his treason. Even so, though you should, all the time of your life, live in perfect obedience to the law of God, and yet at the hour of death only entertain a vain thought, or pronounce an idle word, that idle word, or vain thought, would blot out all your former righteousness, and ruin you; namely, in this way in which you are seeking to recover yourself.

Now, such is the obedience which you must perform, if you would recover yourself in the way of the law. But though you would thus obey, the law stakes you down in the state of wrath, till another demand of it be satisfied.

2. You must pay what you owe. It is undeniable that you are a sinner; and whatever you may be in time to come, justice must be satisfied for your sins already committed. The honor of the law must be maintained, by your suffering the denounced wrath. It may be you have changed your course of life, or are now resolved to do it, and to set about keeping the commands of God: but what have you done, or what will you do, with the old debt? Your obedience to God, though it were perfect, is a debt due to him for the time wherein it is performed, and can no more satisfy for former sins, than a tenant's paying the current year's rent can satisfy the landlord for all arrears. Can the paying of new debts acquit a man from old accounts? Nay, deceive not yourselves; you will find these laid up in store with God, and sealed up among his treasures (Deut. 32:34). It remains then, that either you must bear that wrath, to which for your sin you are liable, according to the law; or else you must acknowledge that you cannot bear it, and thereupon have recourse to the Surety, the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me now ask you, Are you able to satisfy the justice of God? Can you pay your own debt? Surely not: for, as He is the infinite God, whom you have offended, the punishment, being suited to the quality of the offence, must be infinite. But your punishment, or sufferings for sin, cannot be infinite in value, for you are a finite creature: therefore, they must be infinite in duration or continuance; that is, they must be eternal. And so all your sufferings in this world are but an earnest of what you must suffer in the world to come.

Now, sinner, if you can answer these demands, you may recover yourself in the way of

the law. But are you not conscious of your inability to do any of these things, much more to do them all? yet if you do not all, you do nothing. Turn then to what course of life you will, you are still in a state of wrath. Screw up your obedience to the greatest height you can; suffer what God lays upon you; yea, add, if you will, to the burden, and walk under all without the least impatience: yet all this will not satisfy the demands of the law; therefore you are still a ruined creature. Alas, sinner I what are you doing, while you strive to help yourself, but do not receive, and unite with, Jesus Christ? You are laboring in the fire, wearying yourself for very vanity; laboring to enter into heaven by the door which Adam's sin so bolted, that neither he, nor any of his lost posterity, can ever enter by it. Do you not see the flaming sword of justice, keeping you off from the tree of life? Do you not hear the law denouncing a curse on you for all you are doing, even for your obedience, your prayers, your tears, your reformation of life, and so on; because, being under the law's dominion, your best works are not so good as—it requires them to be under the pain of the curse? Believe it, sirs, if you live and die out of Christ, without being actually united to Him as the second Adam, the life-giving Spirit, and without coming under the covert of His atoning blood, though you should do the utmost that any man can do, in keeping the commands of God, you will never see the face of God in peace. If you should, from this moment, bid an eternal farewell to this world's joys, and all the affairs thereof, and henceforth busy yourselves with nothing but the salvation of your souls; if you should go into some 'wilderness, live upon the grass of the field, and be companions to dragons and owls; if you should retire to some dark cavern of the earth, and weep there for your sins, until you had wept yourselves blind; if you should confess with your tongue, until it cleave to the roof of your mouth; pray, till your knees grow hard as horns; fast, till your body become like a skeleton, and, after all this, give it to be burnt; the word is gone out of the Lord's mouth in righteousness and cannot return, that you shall perish for ever, notwithstanding all this, as not being in Christ (John 14:6), 'No man cometh unto the Father, but by me (Acts 4:12), 'Neither is there salvation in any other.' (Mark 16:16), 'He that believeth not shall be damned!

**Objection:** But God is a merciful God, and He knows that we are not able to answer these demands; we hope therefore to be saved, if we do as well as we can, and keep the commands as well as we are able.

**Answer 1:** Though you are able to do many things, you are not able to do one thing right: you can do nothing acceptable to God, being out of Christ (John 1:5), 'Without me ye can do nothing.' An unrenewed man, as you are, can do nothing but sin, as we have already proved. Your best actions are sin, and so they increase your debt to justice: how then can it be expected they should lessen it?

**Answer 2:** Though God should offer to save men, upon condition that they did all they could do, in obedience to His commands, yet we have reason to think that those who should attempt it would never be saved: for where is the man that does as well as he

can? Who sees not many false steps he has made, which he might have avoided? There are so many things to be done, so many temptations to carry us out of the road of duty, and our nature is so very apt to be set on fire of hell, that we surely must fail, even in some point that is within the compass of our natural abilities. But,

Answer 3: Though you should do all you are able to do, in vain do you hope to be saved in that way. What word of God is this hope of yours founded on? It is founded on neither law nor Gospel; therefore it is but a delusion. It is not founded on the Gospel; for the Gospel leads the soul out of itself to Jesus Christ for all; and it establishes the law (Rom 3:31). Whereas this hope of yours cannot be established but on the ruins of the law, which God will magnify and make honorable. Hence it appears, that it is not founded on the law neither. When God set Adam working for happiness to himself and his posterity, perfect obedience was the 'condition required of him; and the curse was denounced in case of disobedience. The law being broken by him, he and his posterity were subjected to the penalty for sin committed; and withal were still bound to perfect obedience. For it is absurd to think, that man's sinning, and suffering for his sin, should free him from his duty of obedience to his Creator. When Christ came in the room of the elect, to purchase their salvation, the terms were the same. justice had the elect under arrest: if He is desirous to deliver them, the terms are known. He must satisfy for their sin, by suffering the punishment due to it; He must do what they cannot do, namely, obey the law perfectly, and so fulfill all righteousness. Accordingly, all this He did, and so became 'the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth' (Rom 10:4). And do you think that God will abate these terms as to you, when His own Son got no abatement of them? Expect it not, though you should beg it with tears of blood; for if they prevailed, they must prevail against the truth, justice, and honor of God (Gal 3:10). 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. (Gal. 3:12), 'And the law is not of faith: but the man that doeth them shall live in them.' It is true, that God is merciful: but cannot He be merciful unless He save you in a way that is neither consistent with His law nor His Gospel? Have not His goodness and mercy sufficiently appeared, in sending the Son of His love, to do 'what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh?' He has provided help for those who cannot help themselves: but you, insensible of your own weakness, must needs think to recover yourself by your own works, while you are no more able to do it than to remove mountains of brass out of their place.

Wherefore I conclude, that you are utterly unable to recover yourself, in the way of works, or by the law. O that you would conclude the same concerning yourself!

Let us try next what the sinner can do to recover himself, In the way of the Gospel. It may be you think that you cannot do all by yourself alone, yet Jesus Christ offering you help, you can of yourself embrace it, and use it for your recovery. But, O sinner, be convinced of your absolute need of the grace of Christ: for truly, there is help offered,



but you cannot accept it: there is a rope cast out to draw shipwrecked sinners to land, but, alas they have no hands to lay hold of it. They are like infants exposed in the open field, who must starve, though their food be lying by them, unless some one put it in their mouths. To convince natural men of this, let it be considered,

1. That although Christ is offered in the Gospel, yet they cannot believe in Him. Saving faith is the faith of God's elect, the special gift of God to them, wrought in them by His Spirit. Salvation is offered to them that will believe in Christ, but how can you believe? (John 5:44). It is offered to those that will come to Christ; but 'no man can come unto Him, except the Father draw him.' It is offered to those that will look to Him, as lifted on the pole of the Gospel (Isa. 45:22); but the natural man is spiritually blind (Rev. 3:17); and as to the things of the Spirit of God, he cannot know them, for they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14). Nay, whosoever will, he is welcome; let him come (Rev. 22:17); but there must be a day of power on the sinner, before he can be willing (Ps. 110:3).

2. Man naturally has nothing wherewithal to improve, for his recovery, the help brought in by the Gospel. He is cast away in a state of wrath, and is bound hand and foot, so that he cannot lay hold of the cords of love thrown out to him in the Gospel. The most cunning artificer cannot work without tools; neither can the most skilful musician play well on an instrument that is out of tune. How can anyone believe, or repent, whose understanding is darkness (Eph. 5:8), whose heart is a stony heart, inflexible, insensible (Ezek. 36:26), whose affections are wholly disordered and distempered, who is averse to good, and bent to evil? The arms of natural abilities are too short to reach supernatural help; hence those who most excel in them are often most estranged from spiritual things (Matthew 11:25), 'Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent!

3. Man cannot work a saving change on himself; but so changed he must be, else he can neither believe nor repent, nor ever see heaven. No action can be without a suitable principle. Believing, repenting, and the like, are the product of the new nature and can never be produced by the old corrupt nature. Now, what can the natural man do in this matter? He must be regenerate, begotten again unto a lively hope; but as the child cannot be active in his own generation, so a man cannot be active but passive only, in his own regeneration. The heart is shut against Christ: man cannot open it, only God can do it by His grace (Acts 16:14). He is dead in sin; he must be quickened, raised out of his grave; who can do this but God Himself? (Eph. 2:1-5). Nay, he must be 'created in Christ Jesus, unto good works' (Eph. 2:10). These are works of omnipotence, and can be done by no less a power.

4. Man, in his depraved state, is under an utter inability to do any thing truly good, as was proved before at large: how then can he obey the Gospel? His nature is the very reverse of the Gospel: how can he, of himself, fall in with that plan of salvation, and

accept the offered remedy? The corruption of man's nature infallibly includes his utter inability to recover himself in any way, and whoso is convinced of the one, must needs admit the other; for they stand and fall together. Were all the purchase of Christ offered to the unregenerate man for one good thought, he cannot command it (2 Cor. 3:5), 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves! Were it offered on condition of a good word, yet 'how can ye, being evil, speak good things?' (Matthew 12:35). Nay, were it left to yourselves to choose what is easiest, Christ Himself tells you (John 15:5), 'Without me, ye can do nothing'!

5. The natural man cannot but resist the Lord's offering to help him; yet that resistance is infallibly overcome in the elect, by converting grace. Can the stony heart choose but to resist the stroke? There is not only an inability, but an enmity and obstinacy in man's will by nature. God knows, O natural man, whether you know it or not, that 'thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass' (Isa. 48:4), and cannot be overcome, but by Him who hath 'broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.' Hence, humanly speaking, there is such hard work in converting a sinner. Sometimes he seems to be caught in the net of the Gospel; yet quickly he slips away again. The hook catches hold of him; but he struggles, tin, getting free of it, he goes away with a bleeding wound. When good hopes are conceived of him, by those that travail in birth for the forming of Christ in him., there is oft-times nothing brought forth but wind. The deceitful heart makes many contrivances to avoid a Saviour, and cheat the man of his eternal happiness. Thus the natural man lies sunk in a state of sin and wrath, utterly unable to recover himself.

Objection 1: If we be under an utter inability to do any good, how can God require us to do it? Answer: God making man upright (Eccl. 7:29), gave him a power to do everything that He should require of him; this power man lost by his own fault. We were bound to serve God, and do whatever He commanded us, as being His creatures; and also, we were under the superadded tie of a covenant, for that purpose. Now, we having, by our own fault, disabled ourselves, shall God lose His right of requiring our task, because we have thrown away the strength He gave us whereby to perform it? Has the creditor no right to require payment of his money because the debtor had squandered it away, and is not able to pay him? Truly, if God can require no more of us than we are able to do, we need no more to save us from wrath, but to make ourselves unable for every duty, and to incapacitate ourselves for serving God any manner of way, as profane men frequently do. So the deeper a man is plunged in sin, he will be the more secure from wrath, for where God can require no duty of us, we do not sin in omitting it; and where there is no sin there can be no wrath. As to what may be urged by the unhumiliated soul, against the putting our stock in Adam's hand, the righteousness of that dispensation was explained before. But moreover, the unrenewed man is daily throwing away the very remains of natural abilities, that rational light and strength which are to be found amongst the ruins of mankind. Nay, further, he will not believe his own utter inability to help himself; so that out of his

own mouth, he must be condemned. Even those who make their natural impotency to good a covert to their sloth, do, with others, delay the work of turning to God from time to time, and, under convictions, make large promises of reformation, which afterwards they never regard, and delay their repentance to a death-bed, as if they could help themselves in a moment; which shows them to be far from a due sense of their natural inability, whatever they pretend.

Now, if God can require of men the duty they are not able to do, He can in justice punish them for their not doing it, notwithstanding their inability. If He has power to exact the debt of obedience, He has also power to cast the insolvent debtor into prison, for his not paying it. Further, though unregenerate men have no gracious abilities, yet they want not natural abilities which nevertheless they will not improve. There are many things they can do, which they do not; they will not do them, and therefore their damnation will be just. Nay, all their inability to do good is voluntary; they will not come to Christ (John 5:40). They will not repent, they will die (Ezek. 18:31). So they will be justly condemned, because they will neither tam to God, nor come to Christ, but love their chains better than their liberty, and darkness rather than light (John 3:19)

Objection 2: Why do you then preach Christ to us, call us to come to Him, to believe, repent, and use the means of salvation? Answer: Because it is your duty so to do. It is your duty to accept of Christ, as He is offered in the Gospel, to repent of your sins, and to be holy in all manner of conversation; these things are commanded you of God; and His command, not your ability, is the measure of your duty. Moreover, these calls and exhortations are the means that God is pleased to make use of, for converting His elect, and working grace in their hearts: to them, 'faith cometh by hearing' (Rom 10:17), while they are as unable to help themselves as the rest of mankind are. Upon very good grounds may we, at the command of God, who raises the dead, go to their graves, and cry in His name, 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light' (Eph. 5:14). And seeing the elect are not to be known and distinguished from others before conversion, as the sun shines on the blind man's face, and the rain falls on the rocks as well as on the fruitful plains, so we preach Christ to all, and shoot the arrow at a venture, which God Himself directs as He sees fit. Moreover, these calls and exhortations are not altogether in vain, even to those who are not converted by them. Such persons may be convinced, though they be not converted: although they be not sanctified by these means, yet they may be restrained by them from running into that excess of wickedness, which otherwise they would arrive at. The means of grace serve, as it were, to embalm many dead souls, which are never quickened by them; though they do not restore them to life, yet they keep them from putrefying, as otherwise they would do. Finally, though you cannot recover yourselves, nor take hold of the saving help offered to you in the Gospel, yet even by the power of nature you may use the outward and ordinary means, whereby Christ communicates the benefit of redemption to ruined sinners, who are utterly unable to

recover themselves out of the state of sin and wrath. You may and can., if you please, do many things that would set you in a fair way for help from the Lord Jesus Christ. You may go so far on, as not to be far from the kingdom of God, as the discreet scribe had done (Mark 12:34), though, it should seem, he was destitute of supernatural abilities. Though you cannot cure yourselves, yet you may come to the pool, where many such diseased persons as you are have been cured; though you have none to put you into it, yet you may lie at the side of it:

‘Who knows but the Lord may return, and leave a blessing behind Him?’ as in the case of the impotent man (recorded in John 5:5-8). I hope Satan does not chain you to your houses, nor stake you down in your fields on the Lord’s day; but you are at liberty and can wait at the posts of wisdom’s doors if you will. When you come thither he does not beat drums at your ears, that you cannot hear what is said; there is no force upon you, obliging you to apply all you hear to others; you may apply to yourselves what belongs to your state and condition.. When you go home, you are not fettered in your houses) where perhaps no religious discourse is to be heard, but you may retire to some separate place, where you can meditate, and exercise your consciences with suitable questions upon what you have heard. You are not possessed with a dumb devil, that you cannot get your mouths opened in prayer to God. You are not so driven out of your beds to your worldly business, and from your worldly business to your beds again, but you might, if you would,, make some prayers to God upon the case of your perishing souls. You may examine yourselves as to the state of your souls, in a solemn manner, as in the presence of God; you may discern that you have no grace, and that you are lost and undone without it, and you may cry to God for it. These things are within the compass of natural abilities, and may be practiced where there is no grace. It must aggravate your guilt, that you will not be at so much pains about the state and case of your precious souls. If you do not what you can, you will be condemned, not only for your want of grace, but for your despising it.

Objection 3: But all this is needless, seeing we are utterly unable to help ourselves out of the state of sin and wrath. Answer: Give not place to that delusion, which puts asunder what God has joined, namely, the use of means and a sense of our own impotency. If ever the Spirit of God graciously influence your souls, you will become thoroughly sensible of your absolute inability, and yet enter upon a vigorous use of means. You will do for yourselves, as if you were to do all, and yet overlook all you do, as if you had done nothing. Will you do nothing for yourselves because you cannot do all? Lay down no such impious conclusion against your own souls. Do what you can; and, it may be, while you are doing what you can for yourselves, God will do for you what you cannot. ‘Understandest thou what thou readest?’ said Philip to the eunuch; ‘How can I,’ said he, ‘except some man should guide me?’ (Acts 8:30-31). He could not understand the Scripture he read, yet he could read it: he did what he could, he read; and while he was reading, God sent him an interpreter. The Israelites were in a great strait at the Red Sea; and how could they help themselves, when on the one hand were

mountains, and on the other the enemy in pursuit; when Pharaoh and his host were behind them, and the Red Sea before them? What could they do? 'Speak unto the children of Israel,' said the Lord to Moses, 'that they go forward' (Ex. 14:15). For what end should they go forward? Can they make a passage to themselves through the sea? No; but let them go forward, saith the Lord: though they cannot turn the sea to dry land, yet they can go forward to the shore. So they did; and when they did what they could) God did for them what they could not do.

Question 1: Has God promised to convert and save those who, in the use of means, do what they can towards their own relief? Answer: We may not speak wickedly for God; natural men, being strangers to the covenants of promise (Eph. 2:12), have no such promise made to them. Nevertheless they do not act rationally unless they exert the powers they have, and do what they can. For, I. It is possible this course may succeed with them. If you do what you can, it may be, God will do for you what you cannot do for yourselves. This is sufficient to determine a man in a matter of the utmost importance, such as this is (Acts 8:22), 'Pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee.' (Joel 2:14), 'Who knoweth if he will return?' If success may be, the trial should be. If, in a wreck at sea, all the sailors and passengers betake themselves each to a broken board for safety, and one of them should see all the rest perish, notwithstanding their utmost endeavor to save themselves, yet the very possibility of escaping by that means would determine that one still to do his best with his board. Why then do not you reason with yourselves, as the four lepers did who sat at the gate of Samaria? (2 Kings 7:3-4). Why do you not say, 'If we sit still,' not doing what we can, 'we die;' let us put it to a trial; if we be saved, 'we shall live;' if not, 'we shall but die?'

Question 2: It is probable this course may succeed; God is good and merciful; He loves to surprise men with His grace, and is often 'found of them that sought him not' (Isa. 65:1). If you do this, you are so far in the road of your duty, and you are using the means, which the Lord is wont to bless for men's spiritual recovery: you lay yourselves in the way of the great Physician, and so it is probable you may be healed. Lydia went, with others, to the place 'where prayer was wont to be made;' and 'the Lord opened her heart' (Acts 16:13-14). You plough and sow, though nobody can tell you for certain that you will get so much as your seed again: you use means for the recovery of your health, though you are not sure they will succeed. In these cases probability determines you; and why not in this also? Importunity, we see, does very much with men. Therefore pray, meditate, desire help of God, be much at the throne of grace, supplicating for grace, and do not faint. Though God regard you not, who in your present state are but one mass of sin, universally depraved, and vitiated in all the powers of your soul, yet He may regard prayer, meditation, and the like means of His own appointment, and He may bless them to you. Wherefore, if you will not do what you can, you are not only dead, but you declare yourselves unworthy of eternal life.

In conclusion then, let the saints admire the freedom and power of grace, which came to them in their helpless condition, made their chains fall off, the iron gate to open to them, raised the fallen creatures, and brought them out of the state of sin and wrath., wherein they would have lain and perished, had not they been mercifully visited. Let the natural man be sensible of his utter inability to recover himself. Know, that you are without strength: and cannot come to Christ, till you be drawn. You are lost, and cannot help yourself. This may shake the foundation of your hopes, if you never saw your absolute need of Christ and his grace, but think to contrive for yourself by your civility, morality, drowsy wishes, and duties, and by a faith and repentance which have sprung out of your natural powers, without the power and efficacy of the grace of Christ. O be convinced of your absolute need of Christ, and His overcoming grace, believe your utter inability to recover yourself, that so you may be humbled, shaken out of your self-confidence, and lie down in dust and ashes, groaning out your miserable case before the Lord. A proper sense of your natural impotence, the impotence of depraved human nature, would be a step towards a delivery.

Thus far of man's natural state, the state of entire depravity.

## **Root, Extent and Problem**

**by A. W. Pink**

### **Root**

As no heart can sufficiently conceive, so no voice or pen can adequately portray the awful state of wretchedness and woe into which sin has cast guilty man. It has separated him from God and so has severed him from the only Source of holiness and true happiness. It has ruined him in spirit and soul and body. By the fall man not only plunged himself into a state of infinite guilt from which there is no deliverance unless sovereign grace unites him with the Mediator; by his apostasy man also lost his holiness and is wholly corrupt and under the dominion of dispositions or lusts which are directly contrary to God and His law (Rom. 8:7). The fall has brought man into love of sin and hatred of God. The corruption of man's being is so great and so entire that he will never truly repent or even have any right responses toward God and His law unless and until he is supernaturally renewed by the Holy Spirit.

### **Corruption of Human Nature**

If any reader is inclined to think we have painted too dark a picture or have exaggerated the case of the fallen creature, we ask him to carefully ponder the second half of Romans 7 and note how human nature is there represented as so totally

depraved as to be utterly unable not merely to keep God's law perfectly, but to do anything agreeable with it. "The law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth *no* good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (vv. 14, 18, 23). How completely at variance is that language from the sentiments which prevail in Christendom today. Paul, that most eminent Christian, nothing behind the chief apostles, when he considered what he was in himself, confessed that he was "sold under sin."

The apostle's phrase "*in my flesh*," as may be seen by tracing it through the New Testament, means "in me by nature." He was saying, "There is nothing in me naturally good." But before proceeding further let us seek to carefully define what is signified by the term "the natural man," or "man by nature." It does not mean the human nature itself, or man as a tripartite being of spirit and soul and body, for then we should include the Lord Jesus Christ, who truly and really assumed human nature, becoming the Son of Man. No, this term connotes not man as *created*, but man as *corrupted*. God did not in creation plant in us a principle of contrariety to Himself, for He fashioned man after His own image and likeness. He made him upright, holy. It was our defection from Him which plunged us into such immeasurable wretchedness and woe, which polluted and defiled all the springs of our being and corrupted all our faculties.

As a result of the fall man is the inveterate enemy of God, not only because of what he does, but because of what he now is in himself. Stephen Charnock said:

What kind of enmity this is. First, I understand it of nature, not of actions only. Every action of a natural man is an enemy's action, but not an action of enmity. A toad doth not envenom every spire of grass it crawls upon nor poison every thing it toucheth, but its nature is poisonous. Certainly every man's nature is worse than his actions: as waters are purest at the fountain, and poison most pernicious in the mass, so is enmity in the heart. And as waters partake of the mineral vein they run through, so the actions of a wicked man are tintured with the enmity they spring from, but the mass and strength of this is lodged in his *nature*. There is in all our natures such a diabolical contrariety to God, that if God should leave a man to the current of his own heart, it would overflow in all kinds of wickedness.

It is quite true that their deep enmity against God is less openly displayed by some than others, but this is not because they are any better in themselves than those who cast off all pretenses of decency. Their moderation in wickedness is to be attributed to the greater restraints which God places upon them either by the secret workings of His Spirit upon their hopes and fears or by His external providences—such as education, religious instruction, the subduing influence of the pious. But none is born

into this world with the slightest spark of love to God in him. "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent" (Ps. 58:3-4). The poison of a serpent is radically the same in all of its species.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). These words make it clear that inherent corruption is imparted to us by birth. This is evident from the remainder of the verse: "and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The "spirit" which is begotten differs from the Spirit who is the Begetter, and signifies that new creation of holiness which is effected and inbred in the soul and therefore is called "the seed of God" (1 John 3:9). As the spirit here unquestionably denotes the new nature or principle of holiness, so the flesh in John 3:6 stands for the old nature or principle of sin. This is further established by Galatians 5:17: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Flesh and spirit are there put as two inherent qualities conveyed by two several births, and so are in that respect opposed. That the flesh refers to our very nature as corrupt is seen from the fact that it has works or fruits. The flesh is a principle from which operations issue, as buds from a root.

The *scope* of Christ in John 3 shows that flesh has reference to the corruption of our *nature*. His evident design in those verses was to show what imperative need there is for fallen man to be regenerated. Now regeneration is nothing else but a working of new spiritual dispositions in the whole man, called there "spirit," without which it is impossible that he should enter the kingdom of God. Christ said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (v. 6), by which statement He made it the direct opposite of the spirit of holiness which is wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit. Had we derived only guilt from Adam we would need only justification; but since we also derived corruption of nature we need regeneration too.

There is, then, in every man born into this world a mass of corruption which inheres in and clings to him and which is the principle and spring of all his activities. This may justly be termed his nature, for it is the predominant quality which is in all and which directs all that issues from him. Let us now proceed to *the proof* of this compound assertion. First, it is a mass of corruption, for that which our Lord called flesh in John 3:6 is called "the old *man*, which is corrupt" by His apostle in Ephesians 4:22. Observe carefully what is clearly implied by this term, and see again how perfectly one part of Scripture harmonizes with another. Corruption necessarily denotes something which was previously *good*, and so it is with man. God made him righteous; now he is defiled. Instead of having a holy soul, it is depraved; instead of an immortal body, it has within it even now the seeds of putrefaction.

Second, we have said that this corruption cleaves to man's very nature. It is expressly said to be within him: "Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that *dwelleth in me*."



For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:17-18). Man, then, has not only acts of sin which are transient, which come from him and go away, but he has a root and spring of sin dwelling with him, residing in him, not only adjacent to but actually inhabiting him. Not simply our ways and works are corrupt; "the *heart* is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9). Nor is this something which we acquire through association with the wicked; rather it is that which we bring with us into the world: "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child" (Prov. 22:15).

Third, we have stated that this indwelling corruption is the predominant principle of all the actions of unregenerate man, that from which all proceeds. Surely this is clear from "Now the *works of the flesh* are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife" (Gal. 5:19-21). The flesh is here said to have works or fruits, and this quality of fruit-bearing exists in man's nature. Note that hatred and wrath are not deeds of the body, but dispositions of the soul and affections of the heart; thus the flesh cannot be restricted to our physical structure. This evil principle or corruption is divinely labeled a root: "Lest there should be among you a *root* that beareth gall and wormwood" (Deut. 29:18; cf. Heb. 12:13). It is a root which brings forth "gall and wormwood," that is, the bitter fruits of sin; in fact, it is said to "bring forth fruit unto death" (Rom. 7:5).

Fourth, we have affirmed that there is a *mass* of this corruption which thoroughly affects and defiles man's being. This is confirmed by the fact that in Colossians 2:11 it is called a body, which has many members: "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off *the body* of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." This body of the sins of the flesh is of abounding dimensions, a body which has internal and external manifestations, gross and more secret lusts. Among these are atheism and contempt or hatred of God, which is not fully perceived by man until the Holy Spirit pierces him to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. That this corruption lies in the very nature of man appears from the psalmist's statement "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (51:5). David was there confessing the *spring* from which his great act of sin sprang. In essence he said, "I have not only committed the awful act of adultery, but there is sin even in my inward parts, defiling me from the moment I was conceived" (cf. v. 6).

Finally, we have declared that this corruption may in a very real sense be termed the *nature* of man. Once more we appeal to John 3:6 in proof, for there it is predicated in the abstract, which implies more than a simple quality, even that which explains the very definition and nature of man. The Lord Jesus did not say merely, "That which is born of the flesh is fleshly"; He said it "is flesh." In that statement Christ framed a new definition of man, beyond any the philosophers have framed. Philosophers define man as a rational animal; the Son of God announces him to be flesh, that is, sin and

corruption contrary to grace and holiness, this being his very nature as a fallen creature in the sight of God. The very fact that this definition of man's nature is, as it were, in the abstract argues that it is a thing *inherent* in us. But let us enlarge a little on this point.

Definitions are taken from things brought out in nature, and none but essential properties are ingredients in definitions. Definitions are taken from the most predominant qualities. Sinful corruption is a more predominant principle in man's nature than is reason itself, for it not only guides reason, but it resides in every part and faculty of man, while reason does not. This corruption is so inbred and predominant and so diffused through the whole man that there is mutual expression between man and it. In John 3:6 the whole of man's nature is designated flesh; in Ephesians 4:22 this corruption is called man: "Put off . . . the old man, which is corrupt." Obviously we cannot put off our essential substance or discard our very selves, only that which is sinful and foul. It is called the *old* man because it is inherited from Adam, and because it is contrasted with our new nature.

### **Bondage of Corruption**

Man's nature, then, which has become corrupt and termed flesh, is a bundle of foolishness and vileness, and it is this which renders him totally impotent to all that is good. Thus Scripture speaks of "the bondage of corruption" (Rom. 8:21) and declares men to be "the servants [Greek, 'slaves'] of corruption" (2 Pet. 2:19). Reluctant as any are to acknowledge this humbling truth, the solemn fact that the very nature of man is corrupt and that it defiles everything which issues from him is clearly and abundantly demonstrated. First, the human creature sins *from earliest years*. The first acts which evidence reason have sin also mingled with them. Take any child and observe him closely, and it will be found that the first dawnings of reason are corrupt. Children express reason selfishly—as in rebellion when thwarted, in readiness to please themselves, in doing harm to others, in excusing themselves by lying, in pride of apparel.

John Bunyan said:

To speak my mind freely: I do confess it is my opinion that children come polluted with sin into the world, and that oftentimes the sins of their youth—especially while they are very young—are rather by virtue of indwelling sin than by examples that are set before them by others: not but what they *learn* to sin by example too, but example is not the root but rather the *temptation* to wickedness.

How can we believe otherwise when our Lord has expressly affirmed, "For from within, out of the heart of .men [and not from association with degenerates], proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness,

deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23). It is true that evil habits may be acquired through contact with evildoers, but they are the occasion and not the radical cause of the habits.

This pollution of our very nature, this indwelling corruption, holds men in complete bondage, making them utterly impotent to do that which is good. In further proof of this, let us turn again to Romans 7. In his explanation of why he was unable to perform that obedience which God required, the apostle said, "I find then a *law*, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to *the law of sin* which is in my members" (vv. 21-23). Indwelling sin is here called a law. Literally, a law is a moral rule which directs and commands, which is enforced with rewards and penalties, which impels its subjects to do the things ordered and to avoid the things forbidden. Figuratively, law is an inward principle that moves and inclines constantly to action. As the law of gravity draws all objects to their center, so sin is an effectual principle and power inclining to actions according to its own evil nature.

When the apostle says, "I see another law in my members" (that is, in addition to the principle of grace and holiness communicated at the new birth), he refers to the presence and being of indwelling sin; when he adds "bringing me into captivity" he signifies its power and efficacy. Indwelling sin is a law even *in* believers, though not *to* them. Paul said, "I *find*, then. . . a law of sin." It was a discovery which he had made as a regenerate man. From painful experience he found there was that in him which hindered his communion with God, which thwarted his deepest longings to live a sinless life. The operations of divine grace preserve in believers a constant and ordinarily prevailing will to do good, notwithstanding the power and efficacy of indwelling sin to the contrary. But the will in unbelievers is completely under the power of sin—their *will* of sinning is never taken away. Education, religion and convictions of conscience may restrain unbelievers, but they have *no* spiritual inclinations of will to do that which is pleasing to God.

That the very nature of man is corrupt, that it defiles everything which issues from him, is apparent not only by his sinning from earliest youth. Second, it is apparent by his sinning *constantly*. Not only is his first act sinful; all his subsequent actions are such. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5)—nor has man improved the slightest since then. Not that everything done by the natural man is *in its own nature* sinful; but as the acts are those of a sinner, they cannot be anything else than sinful. The act itself may be the performance of duty; yet if there is no respect for the commandment of God, it is sinful. To provide food and raiment is a duty, but if this duty is done from no spiritual motive (out of subjection to God's

authority or the desire to please Him) or end (that God may be glorified), it is sinful. "The plowing of the wicked is sin" (Prov. 21:4); plowing is a duty in itself; nevertheless it is sinful as being the action of a sinner.

Third, it is not thus with a few, but with *every* member of Adam's fallen race. This further demonstrates that all evil proceeds from the very nature of man. "All flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth" (Gen. 6:12). "There is none righteous, no, not one. . . . They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is *none* that doeth good" (Rom. 3:10-12). All members of the human race sin thus of their own accord. "A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame" (Prov. 29:15). A child does not have to be taught to sin; he has only to be left to himself, and he will soon bring his parents to shame. Things which are not natural have to be taught us and diligently practiced before we learn them. Throw a child into the water, and it is helpless; throw an animal in, and it will at once begin to swim, for its nature teaches it to do so. "Train up a child in the way he should go" (Prov. 22:6). Much diligence and patience are required in those who would thus train the child; but no instructors are needed to inform him of the way in which he should *not* go. His depraved nature urges him into forbidden paths; indeed, it makes him delight in them.

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## **Chapter 5 - Extent**

When seeking to uphold some other great truths of Scripture by means of contemplating separately their component parts, we reminded the reader how very difficult it was to avoid some overlapping. The same thing needs to be pointed out here in connection with the subject we are now considering. A river has many tributaries and a surveyor must necessarily trace out each one separately, yet he does so with the knowledge that they all run out of or into the same main stream. A tree has many boughs which, though distinct members of it, often interweave. So it is with our present theme, and as we endeavor to trace its various branches there is of necessity a certain measure of repetition. Though in one way this is to be regretted, being apt to weary the impatient, yet it has its advantages, for it better fixes in our minds some of the principal features.

We began by showing the solemn *reality* of man's spiritual impotence, furnishing clear proofs from Holy Writ. Next, we endeavored to delineate in detail the precise *nature* of man's inability: that it is penal, moral, voluntary and criminal. Then we considered the *root* of the awful malady, evidencing that it lies in the corruption of our very nature. We now examine the *extent* of the spiritual paralysis which has attacked fallen man's being. Let us state it concisely before elaborating and offering confirmation. The spiritual impotence of the natural man is total and entire, irreparable and irremediable as far as all human efforts are concerned. Fallen man is utterly indisposed and disabled, thoroughly opposed to God and His law, wholly

inclined to evil. Sooner would thistles yield grapes than fallen man originate a spiritual volition.

## **Reign of Sin in Unregenerate**

We have supplied a number of proofs that man's nature is now thoroughly corrupt. This is seen in the fact that he is sinful from his earliest years; the first dawns of reason in a child are fouled by sin. It appears too in that men sin continually. As Jeremiah 13:23 expresses it, they are "accustomed to do evil." It is also evidenced by the universal prevalence of this disease; not only some, nor even the great majority, but all without exception are depraved. It is demonstrated by their freedom in this state. All sin continually of their own accord. A child has only to be left to himself and he will quickly put his mother to shame. Moreover, men cannot be restrained from their sin. Neither education nor religious instruction, neither expostulation nor threatening (human or divine) will deter them; that which is bred in the bone comes out in the flesh. Corruption can neither be eradicated nor moderated. The tongue is a little member, yet God Himself declares it is one which no man can tame (Jam. 3:8).

"The *law of sin* which is in my members" (Rom. 7:23). The first thing which attends every law as such is its rule or *sway*: "The law hath dominion over [literally 'lords it over'] a man as long as he liveth" (Rom. 7:1). The giving of law is the act of a superior, and in its very nature it exacts obedience by way of dominion. The law of sin possesses no moral authority over its subjects, but because it exerts a powerful and effectual dominion over its slaves it is rightly termed a law. Though it has no rightful government over men, yet it has the equivalent, for it dominates as a king: "Sin hath reigned unto death" (Rom. 5:21). Because believers have been delivered from the complete dominion of this evil monarch, they are exhorted, "Let not sin therefore *reign* in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Rom. 6:12). Here we learn the precise case with the unregenerate: Sin reigns undisputedly within them, and they yield ready and full obedience to it.

The second thing which attends all law as such is its *sanctions*, which have efficacy to move those who are under the law to do the things it requires. In other words, a law has rewards and penalties accompanying it, and these serve as inducements to obedience even though the things commanded are unpleasant. Speaking generally, all laws owe their efficacy to the rewards and punishments annexed to them. Nor is the "law of sin"—indwelling corruption—any exception. The pleasures and profits which sin promises its subjects are rewards which the vast majority of men lose their souls to obtain. A striking biblical illustration of this is the occasion when the law of sin contended against the law of grace in Moses, who chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb. 11:25-26).

In the above example we see the conflict in the mind of Moses between the law of sin and the law of grace. The motive on the part of the law of sin, by which it sought to influence him and with which it prevails over the majority, was the temporary reward which it set before him, namely, the present enjoyment of the pleasures of sin. By that it contended with the eternal reward annexed to the law of grace, called here "the recompense of the reward." By this wretched reward the law of sin keeps the whole world in obedience to its commands. Scripture, observation and personal experience teach us how powerful and potent this influence is. This was what induced our first parents to taste the forbidden fruit, Esau to sell his birthright, Balaam to hire himself to Balak, Judas to betray the Saviour. This is what now moves the vast majority of our fellowmen to prefer Mammon to God, Belial to Christ, the things of time and sense to spiritual and eternal realities.

The law of sin also has *penalties* with which it threatens any who are urged to cast off its yoke. These are the sneers, the ostracism, the persecutions of their peers. The law of sin announces to its votaries that nothing but unhappiness and suffering is the portion of those who would be in subjection to God, that His service is oppressive and joyless. It represents the yoke of Christ as a grievous burden, His gospel as quite unsuited to those who are young and healthy, the Christian life as a gloomy and miserable thing. Whatever troubles and tribulations come on the people of God because of their fidelity to Him, whatever hardships and self-denial the duties of mortification require, are represented by the law of sin as so many penalties following the neglect of its commands. By these it prevails over the "fearful, and unbelieving," who have no share in the life eternal (Rev. 21:8). It is hard to say where its greater strength lies: in its pretended rewards or in its pretended punishments.

The power and effect of this law of sin appears from its very *nature*. It is not an outward, inoperative, directing law, but an inbred, working, effectual law. A law which is proposed to us cannot be compared for efficacy with a law bred in us. God wrote the moral law on tables of stone, and now it is found in the Scriptures. But what is its efficacy? As it is external to men and proposed to them, does it enable them to perform the things which it requires? No indeed. The moral law is rendered "weak through the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). Indwelling corruption makes it impossible for man to meet its demands. And how does God deliver from this awful bondage? In this present life by making His law *internal* for His elect, for at their regeneration He makes good that promise "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts" (Jer. 31:33). Thus His law becomes an internal, living, operative and effectual principle within them.

Now the law of sin is an *indwelling* law. It is "sin that dwelleth in me"; it is "in my members." It is so deep in man that in one sense it is said to be the man himself: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) there dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18; cf. vv. 20, 23). From this reasoning we may perceive the full dominion it has over the

natural man. It always abides in the soul, and is never absent. It "dwelleth," has its constant residence, in us. It does not come upon the soul only at certain times; if that were so, much might be accomplished during its absence, and the soul might fortify itself against it. No, it never leaves. Wherever we are, whatever we are engaged in, this law of sin is present. Whether we are alone or in company, by night or by day, it is our constant companion. A ruthless enemy indwells our soul. How little this is considered by men! o the woeful security of the unregenerate: a fire is in their bones, fast consuming them. The watchfulness of most professing Christians corresponds little to the danger of their state.

Being an indwelling law, sin applies itself to its work with great facility and ease. It needs not force open any door nor use any stress whatever. The soul cannot apply itself to any duty except by those very faculties in which this law has its residence. Let the mind or understanding be directed to anything, and there are ignorance, darkness, madness to contend with. As for the will, in it are spiritual deadness, mulish stubbornness, devilish obstinacy. Shall the affections of the heart be set on divine objects? How can they be, when they are wholly inclined toward the world and present things and are prone to every vanity and defilement? Water never rises above its own level. How easy it is, then, for indwelling sin to inject itself into all we do, hindering whatever is good and furthering whatever is evil. Does conscience seek to assert itself? Then our corruptions soon teach us to turn a deaf ear to its voice.

The Scripture everywhere declares the seat of this law of sin to be *the heart*. "Out of the heart are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). It is there that indwelling corruption keeps its special residence; it is there this evil monarch holds court. It has invaded and possessed the throne of God within us. "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and *madness* is in their heart while they live" (Eccles. 9:3). Here is the source of all the madness which appears in men's lives. "All these evil things [mentioned in vv. 21-22] come from *within*, and defile the man" (Mark 7:23). There are many outward temptations and provocations which befall man, which excite and stir him up to many evils; yet they merely open the vessel and let out what is stored within it. "An evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh" (Luke 6:45). This "evil treasure" or store is the principle of all moral action on the part of the natural man. Temptations and occasions put nothing into men; they only draw out what was in them before. The root or spring of all wickedness lies in the center of our corrupt being.

### **Enmity of Carnal Mind Against God**

Let us next consider the outstanding property of indwelling sin. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). That which is here called the carnal mind is the same as the law of sin. It is to be solemnly noted that the carnal mind is not only an enemy, for as such there

would be a possibility of some reconciliation with God; it is enmity itself, thus not disposed to accept any terms of peace. Enemies may be reconciled, but enmity cannot. The only way to reconcile enemies is to destroy their enmity. So the apostle tells us, "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Rom. 5:10); that is, a supernatural work has been accomplished in the elect on the ground of the merits of Christ's sacrifice, which results in the reconciliation of those who were enemies. But when the apostle came to speak of enmity there was no other way but for it to be destroyed: "Having *abolished* in his flesh the enmity" (Eph. 2:15).

Let it also be duly considered that the apostle used a noun and not an adjective: "The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7). He did not say that it merely is opposed to God, but that it is positive opposition itself. It is not black but blackness; it is not an enemy but enmity; it is not corrupt but corruption itself; not rebellious but rebellion. As C. H. Spurgeon so succinctly expressed it, "The heart, though it be deceitful, is positively deceitful: it is evil in the concrete, sin in the essence: it is the distillation, the quintessence of all things that are vile; it is not envious against God, it is enmity itself—not at enmity, it is actual enmity." This is unspeakably dreadful. To the same effect are those fearful words of the psalmist: "Their inward part is very wickedness" (5:9). Beyond *that* human language cannot go.

This carnal mind is in every fallen creature, not even excluding the newborn infant. Many who have had the best of parents have turned out the worst of sons and daughters. This carnal mind is in each of us every moment of our lives. It is there just as truly when we are unconscious of its presence as when we are aware of the rising of opposition in us to God. The wolf may sleep, but it is a wolf still. The snake may rest among the flowers, and a boy may stroke its back, but it is a snake still. The sea is the house of storms even when it is placid as a lake. And the heart, when we do not see its seethings, when it does not spew out the hot lava of its corruption, is still the same dread volcano.

The extent of this fearful enmity appears in the fact that *the whole* of the carnal mind is opposed to God: every part, every power, every passion of it. Every faculty of man's being has been affected by the fall. Take the memory. Is it not a solemn fact that we retain evil things far more easily than those which are good? We can recollect a foolish song much more readily than we can a passage of Scripture. We grasp with an iron hand things which concern our temporal interests, but hold with feeble fingers those which respect our eternal welfare. Take the imagination. Why is it that when a man is given that which intoxicates him, or when he is drugged with opium, his imagination soars as on eagles' wings? Why does not the imagination work thus when the body is in a normal condition? Simply because it is depraved; and unless our body enters a sordid environment the fancy will not hold high carnival. Take the judgment. How vain—often mad—are its reasonings even in the wisest of men.



This fearful enmity is irremediable. "It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). Even though divine grace intervenes and subdues its force, yet it does not effect the slightest change in its nature. It may not be so powerful and effectual in operation as when it had more life and freedom, yet it is enmity still. As every drop of poison is poison and will infect, as every spark of fire is fire and will burn, so is every part and degree of the law of sin *enmity*—it will poison, it will burn. The Apostle Paul can surely be regarded as having made as much progress in the subduing of this enmity as any man on earth, yet he exclaimed, "O wretched man that I am!" (Rom. 7:24) and cried for deliverance from this irreconcilable enmity. Mortification abates its awful force, but it does not effect any reformation in it. Whatever effect divine grace may work *upon* it, no change is made in it; it is enmity still.

Not only is this awful enmity inbred in every one of Adam's fallen race, not only has it captured and dominated every faculty of our beings, not only is it present within us every moment of our lives, not only is it incapable of reconciliation. Most frightful of all, this indwelling sin is "enmity *against God*." In other passages it is exhibited as our own enemy: "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2:11): those indwelling corruptions are constantly seeking to destroy us. This deadly poison of sin, this ruinous law of indwelling evil, consistently opposes the new nature or law of grace and holiness in the believer: "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit" (Gal. 5:17); that is, the principle of sin fights against and seeks to vanquish the principle of spirituality. It is dreadful to relate that its proper formal object is God Himself. It is "enmity against God."

This frightful enmity has, as it were, received from Satan the same command which the Assyrians had from their monarch: "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king" (1 Kings 22:31). Sin sets itself not against men but against the King of heaven. This appears in the judgments which men form of God. What is the natural man's estimate of the Creator and Ruler of this world? For answer let us turn to the regions of heathendom. Consider the horrible superstitions, the disgusting rites, the hideous symbols of Deity, the cruel penances and gross immoralities which everywhere prevail in lands without the gospel. Consider the appalling abominations which for so long passed, and which in numerous instances still pass, under the sacred name of divine worship. These are not merely the products of ignorance of God; they are the immediate fruits of positive enmity against Him.

But we need not go so far afield as heathendom. The same terrible feature confronts us in so-called Christendom. Witness the multitudinous and horrible errors which prevail on every side in the religious realm today, the degrading and insulting views of the Most High held by the great majority of church members. And what of the vast multitudes who make no profession at all? Some think of and act toward the great Jehovah as One who is to be little regarded and respected. They consider Him as One

entitled to very little esteem, scarcely worthy of any notice at all. "Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" (Job 21:14-15). Such is the language of their hearts and lives, if not of their lips. Countless others flatly deny the existence of God.

The most solemn and dreadful aspect of the subject we are here contemplating is that the outstanding property of the "flesh" or indwelling sin consists of enmity against God Himself, such enmity that "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). This frightful and implacable enmity is entire and universal, being opposed to all of God. If there were anything of God—His nature, His character or His works—that indwelling corruption was not enmity against, then the soul might have a retreat within itself where it could shelter and apply itself to that which is of God. Unfortunately, such is the enmity of fallen man that it hates *all* that is of God, everything wherein or whereby we have to do with Him.

Sin is enmity against God, and therefore against all of God. It is enmity against His law and against His gospel alike, against every duty to Him, against any communion with Him. It is not only against His sovereignty, His holiness, His power, His grace, that sin rears its horrible head; it abhors everything of or pertaining to God. His commandments and His threatenings, His promises and His warnings, are equally disliked. His providences are reviled and His dealings with the world blasphemed. And the nearer anything approaches to God, the greater is man's enmity against it. The more of spirituality and holiness manifested in anything, the more the flesh rises up against it. That which is most of God meets with most opposition. "Ye have set at naught *all* my counsel and would *none* of my reproof" (Prov. 1:25) is the divine indictment. The wicked heart of man is opposed to not merely some parts of God's counsel but the whole of it.

Not only is this fearful enmity opposed to everything of God, but it is all-inclusive in the soul. Had indwelling sin been content with partial dominion, had it subjugated only a part of the soul, it might have been more easily and successfully opposed. But this enmity against God has invaded and captured the entire territory of man's being; it has not left a single faculty of the soul free from its tyrannical yoke; it has not exempted a single member from its cruel bondage. When the Spirit of God comes with His gracious power to conquer the soul, He finds nothing whatever in the sinner's soul which is in sympathy with His operations, nothing that will cooperate with Him. All within us alike opposes and strives against His working. There is not the faintest desire for deliverance within the unregenerate: "The *whole* head is sick, and the *whole* heart faint" (Isa. 1:5). Even when grace has made its entrance, sin still dwells in all its coasts.

Distasteful and humiliating as this truth may be, we must dwell further on it and

amplify what has been merely affirmed. We showed how this fearful enmity is evidenced by the *judgments* or concepts which men form of God. Sin has so perverted the human mind that distorted views and horrible ideas are entertained of the Deity. Nor is this all. Sin has so inflated the creature that he considers himself competent to comprehend the incomprehensible. Filled with pride, he refuses to acknowledge his limitations and dependence; and in his flight after things which are far beyond his reach, he indulges in the most impious speculations. When he cannot stretch himself to the infinite dimensions of truth, he deliberately contracts the truth to his own little measure. This is what the apostle meant by fallen man's "vanity of mind."

The natural man's enmity against God appears in his *affections*. As the superlatively excellent One, God has paramount claims on man's heart. He should be the supreme object of his delight. But is He? Far from it. The smallest trifles are held in greater esteem than is God, the fountain of all true joy. The unregenerate see in Him no beauty that they should desire Him. When they hear of His sublime attributes they dislike them. When they hear His Word quoted it is repugnant to them. When invited to draw near to His throne of grace they have no inclination to do so. They have no desire for fellowship with God; they would rather think and talk about anything other than the Lord and His government. They secretly hate His people, and will only tolerate their presence so long as they conform to their wishes. The pleasures and baubles of this world entirely fill their hearts. Corrupted nature can never give birth to a single affection which is really spiritual.

The natural man's enmity appears in his *will*. Inevitably so, for God's will directly crosses His. God is infinitely holy; man is thoroughly evil; therefore God commands the things which man hates and forbids the things man likes. Hence man despises His authority, refuses His yoke, rebels against His government and goes his own way. Men have no concern for God's glory and no respect for His will. They will not listen to His reproofs nor be checked in their defiant course by His most solemn threatenings. They are as intractable as a wild ass' colt. They are like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. They prate of the freedom of their wills, but their wills are active *against* God and never toward Him. They are determined to have their own way no matter what the cost. When Christ is presented to them they will not come to Him that they might have life. Sooner will water flow uphill of its own accord than the will of man incline itself to God.

The enmity of the natural man against God appears in his *conscience*. Because he is anxious to be at peace with himself in the reflections which he makes upon his own life and character, it is obvious that his conscience must be a perpetual source of false representations of God. When guilt rankles in his breast, man will blaspheme the justice of his Judge. And self-love prompts him to denounce the punishment of himself as remorseless cruelty. A guilty conscience, unwilling to relinquish its iniquities and yet desirous of being delivered from fears of punishment, prompts men

to represent Deity as subject to the weaknesses and follies of humanity. God is to be flattered and bribed with external marks of submission and esteem, or else insulted when the worshiper regards Him as cruel. Conscience fills the mind with prejudices against the nature and character of God, just as a human insult fills our heart with prejudice against the one who mortifies our self-respect. Conscience cannot judge rightly of one whom it hates and dreads.

The enmity of the natural man against God evidences itself in his *practice*. This dreadful hatred of God is not a passive thing, but an active principle. Sinners are involved in actual warfare against their Maker. They have enlisted under the banner of Satan and they deliberately oppose and defy the Lord. They scoff at His Word, disregard His precepts, flout His providences, resist His Spirit, and turn a deaf ear to the pleas of His servants. Their hearts are fully set to do wickedness. "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit: the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:13-18). There is in every sinner a deeply rooted aversion for God, a seed of malice. While God leaves sinners alone, their malice may not be clearly revealed; but let them feel a little of His wrath upon them, and their hatred is swiftly manifest.

The sinner's enmity against God is unmixed with *any* love at all. The natural man is utterly devoid of the principle of love for God. As Jonathan Edwards solemnly expressed it, "The heart of the sinner is as devoid of love for God as a corpse is of vital heat." As the Lord Jesus expressly declared, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you" (John 5:42). And remember, that fearful indictment was made by One who could infallibly read the human heart. Moreover that indictment was passed on not the openly vicious and profane but on the strictest religionists of His day. Reader, you may have a mild temper, an amiable disposition, a reputation for kindness and generosity; but if you have never been born again you have no more real love in your heart for God than Judas had for the Saviour. What a frightful character—the unmitigated enemy of God!

The power of man's enmity against God is so great that *nothing finite* can break it. The sinner cannot break it himself. Should an unregenerate person read this and be horrified at the hideous picture which it presents of himself, and should he earnestly resolve to cease his vile enmity against God, he cannot do so. He can no more change his nature than the Ethiopian can change the color of his skin. No preacher can persuade him to throw down the weapons of his rebellion and become a friend of God. One may set before him the excellence of the divine character and plead with him to be reconciled to God, but his heart will remain as steeled against Him as ever. Even though God Himself works miracles in the sight of sinners, no change is effected in their hearts. Pharaoh's enmity was not overcome by the most astonishing displays of

divine power, nor was that of the religionists of Palestine in Christ's day.

Indwelling sin may be likened to a powerful and swiftly flowing river. So long as its tributaries are open and waters are continually supplied to its streams, though a dam is set up, its waters rise and swell until it bears down on all and overflows the banks about it. Thus it is with the enmity of the carnal mind against God. While its springs and fountains remain open, it is utterly vain for man to set up a dam of his convictions and resolutions, promises and penances, vows and self-efforts. They may check it for a while, but it will rise up and rage until sooner or later it breaks down all those convictions and resolutions or makes itself an underground passage by some secret lust which will give full vent to it. The springs of that enmity must be subdued by regenerating grace, the streams abated by holiness, or the soul will be drowned and destroyed. Even after regeneration, indwelling sin gives the soul no rest, but constantly wages war upon it.

The Christian is, in fact, the only one who is conscious of the awful power and ragings of this principle of enmity. How often he is made aware that when he would do good, evil is present with him, opposing every effort he makes Godward. How often, when his soul is doing quite another thing, engaged in a totally different design, sin starts something in his heart or imagination which carries it away to that which is evil. Yes, the soul may be seriously engaged in the mortification of sin, when indwelling corruption will by some means or other lead the soul into trifling with the very sin which it is endeavoring to conquer. Such surprisals as these are proofs of the habitual propensity to evil of that principle of enmity against God from which they proceed. The ever abiding presence and continual operation of this principle prevent much communion with God, disturb holy meditations and defile the conscience.

But let us return to our consideration of the enmity of the unregenerate. This enmity in the heart of the sinner is so great that he is God's *mortal* enemy. Now a man may feel unfriendly toward another, or he may cherish ill will against him, yet not be his mortal enemy. That is, his enmity against the one he hates is not so great that nothing will satisfy him but his death. But it is far otherwise with sinners and God. They are His *mortal* enemies. True, it does not lie in their power to kill Him, yet the desire is there in the heart. There is a principle of enmity within fallen man which would rejoice if Deity could be annihilated. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Ps. 14:1). In the Bible the words "there is" are in italics—supplied by the translators for clarity. But the original has it, "The fool hath said in his heart, *No God*." It is not the denial of God's existence, but the affirmation that he desires no contact with Him: "I desire no God; I would that He did not exist."

Here is the frightful climax: The carnal mind is enmity with the very being of God. Sin is destructive of all being. Man is suicidal—he has destroyed himself. He is homicidal—his evil influence destroys his fellowmen. He is guilty of Deicide (the act of killing a

divine being)—he wishes he could annihilate the very being of God. But the sinner does not regard himself as being so vile. He does not consider himself to be the implacable and inveterate enemy of God. He has a far better opinion of himself than that. Consequently, if he hears or reads anything like this, he is filled with objections: "I do not believe I am such a dreadful creature as to hate God. I do not feel such enmity in my heart. I am not conscious that I harbor any ill will against Him. Who should know better than myself? If I hate a fellowman I am aware of it; how could I be totally unconscious of it if there is in my soul such enmity against God?"

Several answers may be given to these questions. First, if the objector would seriously examine his heart and contemplate himself, unless he were strangely blinded, he would certainly discover in himself those very elements in which enmity essentially consists. He loves and respects his friends, he is fond of their company, he is anxious to please them and promote their good. Is this his attitude toward God? If he is honest with himself, he knows it is not. He has no respect for His authority, no concern for His glory, no desire for fellowship with Him. He gives God none of his time, despises His Word, breaks His commandments, rejects His Son. He has been opposed to God all his life. These things are the very essence of enmity.

Second, the sinner's ignorance and unconsciousness of his enmity against God are due to the false conceptions which he entertains of His nature and character. If he were better acquainted with the God of Holy Writ, he would be more aware of his hatred of Him. But the God he believes in is merely a creation of his own fancy. The true God is ineffably holy, inflexibly just. His wrath burns against sin and He will by no means clear the guilty. If mankind likes the true God, why is it that they have set up so many false gods? If they admire the truth, why have they invented so many false systems of religion? The contrariety between the carnal mind and God is the contrariety between sin and holiness. The divine law requires man to love God supremely; instead, he loves himself supremely. It requires him to delight in God superlatively; instead, he wholly delights in all that is not of God. It requires him to love his neighbor as himself; instead, his heart is inordinately selfish.

Third, we have said that the enmity of the natural man against God is a mortal one. This the sinner will not admit. But indubitable proof of the assertion is found in man's treatment of God when, in the person of His Son, He became incarnate. When God brought Himself as near to man as Infinity could approach, man saw in Him "no beauty" that he should desire Him; rather was He despised and rejected by him. Not only did man dislike Him (Isa. 53:2-3), but he *hated* Him "without a cause" (John 15:25). So bitter and relentless was that hatred that man exclaimed, "This is the heir: come, let us kill him" (Luke 20:14). And what form of death did man select for Him? The most painful and shameful his malignity could devise. And the Son of God is still despised and rejected. Remember His words "He that hateth me hateth my Father also" (John 15:23). Our proof is complete.

What bearing on our subject has this lengthy discourse on man's enmity? Why take up the total depravity of fallen man when we are supposed to be considering his spiritual impotence? We have not wandered from our theme at all. Instead, while dealing with the root and extent of man's impotence, we have followed strictly the order of Scripture. What is the very next word of the apostle's after Romans 8:7? This: "So then they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God" (v. 8). It is just because man is corrupt at the very center of his being, because indwelling sin is a law over him, because his mind (the noblest part of his being) is enmity against God, that he is completely incapable of doing anything to meet with the divine approbation.

Here is inevitable inference, the inescapable conclusion: "*So then*"—because fallen man's mind is enmity with God and incapable of subordination to His law—"they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8). To be "in the flesh" is not necessarily to live immorally, for there is the religiousness as well as the irreligiousness of the flesh. So great, so entire, so irremediable is this impotence of fallen man that he is unable to effect any change in his nature, acquire any strength by his own efforts, prepare himself to receive divine grace, until the Spirit renews him and works in him both to will and to do of God's good pleasure. He is unable to discern spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14), incapable of believing (John 8:47), powerless to obey (Rom. 8:7). He cannot think a good thought of himself (2 Cor. 3:5), he cannot speak a good word; indeed, without Christ he "*can do nothing*" (John 15:5). Thus, the sinner is "without strength," wholly impotent and unable to turn himself to God.

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## **Chapter 6 - Problem**

We have now arrived at the most difficult part of our subject, and much wisdom from above is needed if we are to be preserved from error. It has been well said that truth is like a narrow path running between two precipices. The figure is an apt one, for fatal consequences await those who depart from the teaching of God's Word, no matter which direction that departure may take. It is so with the doctrine of man's impotence. It matters little whether the total bondage of the fallen creature and his utter inability to perform that which is good in the sight of God are repudiated and the freedom of the natural man is insisted on, or whether his complete spiritual impotence is affirmed and at the same time his responsibility to perform that which is pleasing to God is denied. In either case the effect is equally disastrous. In the former, the sinner is given a false confidence; in the latter, he is reduced to fatalistic inertia. In either case the *real* state of man is grossly misrepresented.

### **Man's Inability and God's Demands**

The careful reader must have felt the force of the difficulties which we shall now examine. May God's Spirit enable us to throw some light on them. If the carnal mind

is such fearful enmity against God that it is not subject to His law, "neither indeed can be," then why does He continue to press its demands on us and insist that we meet its requirements under pain of eternal death? If the fall has left man morally helpless and reduced him to the point where he is "without strength," then with what propriety can he be called on to obey the divine precepts? If man is so thoroughly depraved that he is the slave of sin, wherein lies his accountability to live for the glory of God? If man is born under "the bondage of corruption," how can he possibly be "without excuse" in connection with the sins he commits?

In seeking to answer these and similar questions we must of necessity confine ourselves to what is clearly revealed on them in Holy Writ. We say "of necessity," for unless we forsake our own thoughts (Isa. 55:7) and completely submit our minds to God's, we are certain to err. In theory this is granted by most professing Christians, yet in practice it is too often set aside. In general it is conceded, but in particular it is ignored. A highly trained intellect may draw what appear to be incontestable conclusions from a scriptural premise; yet, though logic cannot refute them, the practices of Christ and His apostles prove them to be false. On the one hand we may take the fact that the Lord has given orders for His gospel to be preached to every creature. Then must we not infer that the sinner has it in his own power to either accept or reject that gospel? Such an inference certainly appears reasonable, yet it is erroneous. On the other hand take the fact that the sinner is spiritually impotent. Then is it not a mockery to ask him to come to Christ? Such an inference certainly appears reasonable; yet it is false.

It is at this very point that most of Christendom has been deluged with a flood of errors. Most of the leading denominations began by taking the Word of God as the foundation and substance of their creed. But almost at once that foundation was turned into a platform on which the proud intellect of man was exercised, and in a very short time human reason—logical and plausible—supplanted divine revelation. Men attempted to work out theological systems and articles of faith that were thoroughly "consistent," theories which—unlike the workings of both nature and providence—contained in them no seeming "contradictions" or "absurdities," but which commended themselves to their fellowmen. But this was nothing less than a presumptuous attempt to compress the truth of God into man-made molds, to reduce that which issued from the Infinite to terms comprehensible to finite minds. It is another sad example of that egotism which refuses to receive what it cannot understand.

## **Biblical Harmony**

It is true that there is perfect harmony in all parts of divine truth. How can it be otherwise, since *God* is its Author? Yet men are so blind that they cannot perceive this perfect harmony. Some cannot discern the consistency between the infinite love and



grace of God and His requiring His own Son to pay such a costly satisfaction to His broken law. Some cannot see the consistency between the everlasting mercy of God and the eternal punishment of the wicked, insisting that if the former be true the latter is impossible. Some cannot see the congruity of Christ satisfying every requirement of God on behalf of His people and the imperative necessity of holiness and obedience in them if they are to benefit thereby; or between their divine preservation and the certainty of destruction were they to finally apostatize. Some cannot see the accord between the divine foreordination of our actions and our freedom in them. Some cannot see the agreement between efficacious grace in the conversion of sinners and the need for the exercise of their faculties by way of duty. Some cannot see the concurrence of the total depravity or spiritual impotence of man and his responsibility to be completely subject to God's will.

As a sample of what we have referred to in the last two paragraphs, note the following quotation:

We deny duty-faith, and duty-repentance—these terms signifying that it is every man's duty to spiritually and savingly repent and believe (Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Matt. 15:19; Jer. 17:9; John 6:44, 65). We deny also that there is any capability in man by nature to any spiritual good whatever. So that we reject the doctrine that men in a state of nature should be exhorted to believe in or turn to God (John 12:39, 40; Eph. 2:8; Rom. 8:7, 8; 1 Cor. 4:7). We believe that it would be unsafe, from the brief records we have of the way in which the apostles, under the immediate direction of the Lord, addressed their hearers in certain special cases and circumstances, to derive absolute and universal rules for ministerial addresses in the present day under widely-different circumstances. And we further believe that an assumption that others have been inspired as the apostles were has led to the grossest errors amongst both Romanists and professed Protestants. Therefore, that for ministers in the present day to address unconverted persons, or indiscriminately all in a mixed congregation, calling upon them to savingly repent, believe, and receive Christ, or perform any other acts dependent upon the new creative power of the Holy Ghost, is, on the one hand, to imply creature power and on the other, to deny the doctrine of special redemption.

It may come as a surprise to many of our readers to learn that the above is a verbatim quotation from the Articles of Faith of a Baptist group in England with a considerable membership, which will permit no man to enter their pulpits who does not solemnly subscribe to and sign his name to the same. Yet this is the case. These Articles of Faith accurately express the belief of the great majority of certain Baptist groups in the United States on this subject. In consequence, the gospel of Christ is deliberately withheld from the unsaved, and no appeals are addressed to them to accept the gospel offer and receive Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour. Need we wonder that fewer and fewer in their midst are testifying to a divine work of grace in their hearts, and that many of their churches have ceased to be.

It is a good thing that many of the Lord's people are sounder of heart than the creeds held in their heads, yet that does not excuse them for subscribing to what is definitely unscriptural. It is far from a pleasant task to expose the fallacy of these Articles of Faith, for we have some friends who are committed to them; yet we would fail in our duty to them if we made no effort to convince them of their errors. Let us briefly examine these Articles. First, they deny that it is the duty of every man who hears the gospel to spiritually and savingly repent and believe, notwithstanding the fact that practically all the true servants of Christ in every generation (including the Reformers and nine-tenths of the Puritans) have preached that duty. It is the plain teaching of Holy Writ. We will not quote from the writings of those used of the Spirit in the past, but confine ourselves to God's Word.

God Himself "now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). What could possibly be plainer than that? There is no room for any quibbling, misunderstanding or evasion. It means just what it says, and says just what it means. The framers of those Articles, then, are taking direct issue with the Most High. It is because of his "hardness and impenitence of heart" that the sinner treasures up to himself "wrath against the day of wrath" (Rom. 2:5). "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, *because* he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:18-19). Here too it is impossible to fairly evade the force of our Lord's language. He taught that it is the duty of all who hear the gospel to savingly believe on Him, and declared that rejecters are condemned because they do not believe. When He returns it will be "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that *obey not* the gospel" (2 Thess. 1:8).

Next, note that the framers of these Articles follow their denial by referring to six verses of Scripture, the first four of which deal with the desperate wickedness of the natural man's heart and the last two with his complete inability to turn to Christ until divinely enabled. These passages are manifestly alluded to in support of the contention made. Each reader must decide their pertinence for himself. The only relevance they can possess is on the supposition that they establish a premise which requires us to draw the conclusion so dogmatically expressed. We are asked to believe that since fallen man is totally depraved we must necessarily infer that he is not a fit subject to be exhorted to perform spiritual acts. Thus, when analyzed, this Article is seen to consist of nothing more than an expression of human *reasoning*.

Not only does the substance of this Article of Faith consist of nothing more substantial and reliable than a mental inference, but when weighed in the balances of the sanctuary it is found to clash with the Scriptures, that is, with the practice of God's own servants recorded in them. For example, we do not find the psalmist accommodating his exhortations to the sinful inability of the natural man. Far from it.

David called on the ungodly thus: "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him" (Ps. 2:10-12). David did not withhold these warnings because the people were such rebels that they would not and could not give their hearts' allegiance to the King of kings. He uncompromisingly and bluntly commanded them to do so whether they could or not.

It was the same with the prophets. If ever a man addressed an unregenerate congregation it was when Elijah the Tishbite spoke to the idolatrous Israelites: "Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). That exhortation was not restricted to the remnant of renewed souls, but was addressed to the nation indiscriminately. It was a plain call for them to perform a spiritual duty, for them to exercise their will and choose between God and the devil. In like manner Isaiah called on the debased generation of his day: "Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well" (1:16-17). One prophet went so far as to say to his hearers, "Make you a new heart and a new spirit" (Ezek. 18:31), yet he was in perfect accord with his fellow prophet Jeremiah who taught the helplessness of man in those memorable questions "Can the Ethiopian change his skin? Or the leopard his spots?" These men, then, did not decide they must preach only that which lay in the power of their hearers to comply with.

The words "We deny also that there is any capability in man by nature to any spiritual good whatever" will strike the vast majority of God's people as far too sweeping. They will readily agree that fallen man possesses no *power* at all to perform any spiritual acts; yet they will insist that nothing prevents the spiritual obedience of any sinner except his own unwillingness. Man by nature—that is, as he originally left the hands of his Creator—was endowed with full capability to meet his Maker's requirements. The fall did not rob him of a single faculty, and it is his retention of all his faculties which constitutes him still a responsible creature. Of the last four passages referred to in the Article (John 12:39, 40, etc.) two of them relate to the spiritual impotence of fallen man and the other two to divine enablement imparted to those who are saved.

With regard to the other Articles affirming that it "would be unsafe" for us now to derive rules for ministerial address from the way in which the apostles spoke to their hearers, this is their summary method of disposing of all those passages in the Old and New Testaments alike which are directly opposed to their theory. Since the Lord Jesus Himself did not hesitate to say to the people, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15), surely His servants today need not have the slightest hesitation in following His example. If ministers of the Word are not to find their guidance and rules from the practice of their Master and His apostles, then *where* shall they look for them? Must each one be a rule unto himself? Or must they necessarily place

themselves under the domination of self-made popes? These very men who are such sticklers for "consistency" are not consistent with themselves, for when it comes to matters of church polity they take the practice of the apostles for their guidance! Lack of space prevents further comment on this.

To human reason there appears to be a definite conflict between two distinct lines of divine truth. On the one hand, Scripture plainly affirms that fallen man is totally depraved, enslaved by sin, entirely destitute of spiritual strength, so that he is unable of himself to either truly repent or savingly believe in Christ. On the other hand, Scripture uniformly addresses fallen man as a being who is accountable to God, responsible to forsake his wickedness and serve and glorify his Maker. He is called on to lay down the weapons of his warfare and be reconciled to God. The Ruler of heaven and earth has not lowered the standard of holiness under which He placed man. He declares that notwithstanding man's ruined condition, he is "without excuse" for all his iniquities. The gospel depicts man in a lost state, "dead in trespasses and sins"; nevertheless it exhorts all who come under its sound to accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Such in brief is the problem presented by the doctrine we are here considering. The unregenerate are morally impotent, yet are they fully accountable beings. They are sold under sin, yet are they justly required to be holy as God is holy. They are unable to comply with the righteous requirements of their Sovereign, yet they are exhorted to do so under pain of eternal death. What, then, should be our attitude to this problem? First, we should carefully *test* it and thoroughly satisfy ourselves that both of these facts are plainly set forth in Holy Writ. Second, having done so, we must *accept* them both at their face value, assured that however contrary they may seem to us, yet there is perfect harmony between all parts of God's Word. Third, we must hold *firmly* to *both* these lines of truth, steadfastly refusing to relinquish either of them at the dictates of any theological party or denominational leader. Fourth, we should humbly *wait* on God for fuller light on the subject.

But such a course is just what the proud heart of man is disinclined to follow. Instead, he desires to reduce everything to a simple, consistent and coherent system, one which falls within the compass of his finite understanding. Notwithstanding the fact that he is surrounded by mystery on every side in the natural realm, notwithstanding the fact that so very much of God's providential dealings both with the world in general and with himself in particular are "past finding out," he is determined to philosophize and manipulate God's truth until it is compressed into a series of logical propositions which appear reasonable to him. He is like the disciples whom our Lord called "fools" because they were "slow of heart to believe *all* that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25). Those disciples were guilty of picking and choosing, believing what appealed to their inclination and rejecting that which was distasteful and which appeared to them to clash with what they had been taught.

## Antinomian-Pelagian Debate

The testimony of the prophets did not seem to the disciples to be harmonious; one part appeared to conflict with another. In fact, there were two distinct lines of Messianic prediction which looked as though they flatly contradicted each other. The one spoke of a suffering, humiliated and crucified Messiah; the other of an all-powerful, glorious and triumphant Messiah. And because the disciples could not see how *both* could be true, they held to the one and rejected the other. Precisely the same capricious course has been followed by theologians in Christendom. Conflicting schools or parties among them have, as it were, divided the truth among themselves, one party retaining this portion and jettisoning that, and another party rejecting this and maintaining that. They have ranged themselves into opposing groups, each holding some facets of the truth, each rejecting what the opponents contend for. Party spirit has been as rife and as ruinous in the religious world as in the political.

On the one side Arminians have maintained that men are responsible creatures, that the claims of God are to be pressed upon them, that they must be called on to discharge their duty, that they are fit subjects for exhortation. Yet while steadfastly adhering to this side of the truth, they have been guilty of repudiating other aspects which are equally necessary and important. They have denied—in effect if not in words—the total depravity of man, his complete spiritual helplessness, the bondage of his will under sin, and his utter inability to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the work of his salvation. On the other side Antinomians, while affirming all that the Arminians deny, are themselves guilty of repudiating what their opponents contend for, insisting that since the unregenerate have no power to perform spiritual acts it is useless and absurd to call on them to do so. Thus they aver that gospel offers should not be made unto the unregenerate.

These Antinomians consider themselves to be towers of orthodoxy, valiant defenders of the truth, sounder in the faith than any other section of Christendom. Many of them wish to be regarded as strict Calvinists; but whatever else they may be, they certainly are not *that*, for Calvin himself taught and practiced directly the contrary. In his work *The Eternal Predestination of God* the great Reformer wrote:

It is quite manifest that all men without difference or distinction are outwardly called or invited to repentance and faith; ... the mercy of God is offered to those who believe and to those who believe not, so that those who are not Divinely taught within are only rendered inexcusable, not saved.

In his *Secret Providence of God* he asked:

And what if God invites the whole mass of mankind to come unto Him, and yet knowingly and of His own will denies His Spirit to the greater part, "drawing" a few

only unto obedience unto Himself by His Spirit's secret inspiration and operation—is the adorable God to be charged, on that account, with inconsistency?

In the same work Calvin stated:

Nor is there any want of harmony or oneness of truth when the same Saviour, who invites all men unto Him without exception by His external voice, yet declares that "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from above:" John 19:11.

Many regarding themselves as Calvinists have departed far from the teaching and practice of that eminent servant of God.

There is no difference in principle between the unregenerate being called on to obey the gospel and accept its gracious overtures, and the whole heathen world being required to respond to the call of God *through nature* before His Son became incarnate. In his address to the Athenians the apostle declared on Mars Hill, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him" (Acts 17:24-27). The force of that statement is this: Seeing God is the Creator, the Governor of all, He cannot be supposed to inhabit temples made by men, nor can He be worshiped with the products of their hands; and seeing that He is the universal Benefactor and Source of life and all things to His creatures, He is on that account required to be adored and obeyed; and since He is sovereign Lord appointing the different ages of the world and allotting to the nations their territories, His favor is to be *sought after* and His will submitted to.

The voice of nature is clear and loud. It testifies to the being of God and tells of His wisdom, goodness and power. It addresses all alike, bidding men to believe in God, turn to Him and serve Him. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork" (Ps. 19:1). These are the preachers of nature to all nations alike. They are not silent, but vocal, speaking to those in every land: "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (vv. 2-4). In view of these and similar phenomena the apostle declares, "That which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:19-20).

Now why do not Antinomians object to nature addressing men indiscriminately? Why do not these hyper-Calvinists protest against what we may designate the theology of the sun and the moon? Why do they not exclaim that there is no proper basis for such a call as nature makes? This view not only mocks the unregenerate, but belittles God, seeing that it is certain to prove fruitless, for He has not purposed that either savage or sage should respond to nature's call. But with the sober and the spiritual this branch of the divine government needs no apology. It is in all respects worthy of Him who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. Those groups of mankind who do not have the sacred Scriptures are as truly rational and accountable beings as those who are reared with God's written Word. Their having lost the power to read God's character in His works, as well as the inclination to seek after and find Him, does not in the least divest the Lord of His right to require of them both that inclination and power, and to deal with them by various methods of providence according to their several advantages.

It is altogether reasonable that intelligent creatures who, by falling into apostasy, have become blind to God's excellences and enemies to Him in their minds, should yet be commanded to yield Him the homage which is His due and should be urged and exhorted by a thousand tongues, speaking from every quarter of the heaven and the earth, to turn to Him as their supreme good, although it is absolutely certain that without gifts they do not possess, without a supernatural work of grace being wrought in their hearts, not one of them will ever incline his ear. Who does not perceive that this is an unimpeachable arrangement of things, in every respect worthy of the character of Him who is "righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works" (Ps. 145:17)? The light of nature leaves all men without excuse, and God has a perfect right to require them to seek Him without vouchsafing the power of doing so, which power He is under no obligation to grant.

Exactly analogous to this is the case of those who come under the sound of the gospel, yet without being chosen to salvation or redemption by the precious blood of the Lamb. The love of God in Christ to sinners is proclaimed to them, and they are exhorted and entreated by all sorts of arguments to believe in Christ and be saved. Let it be clearly pointed out that no obstacle lies in the way of the reprobates' believing but what exists in their own evil hearts. Their minds are free to think and their wills to act. They do just as they please, unforced by anyone. They choose and refuse as seems good to themselves. The secret purpose of God in not appointing them to everlasting life or in withholding from them the renewing operations of His Spirit has no causal influence on the decision to which they come. Their advantages are vastly superior to the opportunities of those who enjoy only the light of nature.

The manifestation of the divine character granted to those living in Christendom is incomparably brighter and more impressive than that given to those born in heathendom, and consequently their responsibility is proportionately greater. Much

more is given the former, and, on the ground of equity, much more will certainly be required of them (Luke 12:48). What, then, shall we say of the conduct of the Most High in His dealings with such persons? Shall we presumptuously question His sincerity in exhorting them by His Word or His sincerity in urging them by the general operations of His Spirit (Gen. 6:3; Acts 7:51)? With equal propriety we might question the sincerity of nature, when it bears witness to God's power in the shaking of the earth and the kindling of the volcano; or we might doubt God's goodness in clothing the valleys with corn and filling the pastures with flocks, leaving Himself "not . . . without witness" (Acts 14:17), in order that men "should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him" (Acts 17:27).

We by no means affirm that what we have pointed out entirely removes the difficulty felt by those who do not perceive the justice in exhorting sinners to perform acts altogether beyond their power. But we do insist that, in the light of God's method of dealing with the vast majority of men in the past, withholding the gospel effectually blunts its point. Ministers err grievously if they allow their hands to be tied or their mouths muzzled, thus disobeying Christ. The only difference between those living under the gospel and those who have only the light of nature seems to be that the grace of the one allotment is far greater than that of the other, that the responsibility is higher in proportion, and that the condemnation which results from disobedience must therefore be more severe in the one case than in the other in the great day of accounts. To those divinely called to preach the gospel the course is clear. They are to go forth in obedience to their commission, appealing to "every creature," urging their hearers to be reconciled to God.

Speaking for himself, the writer (who for more than twenty years was active in oral ministry) never found any other consideration to deter him from sounding forth the universal call of the gospel. He knew there might well be some in his congregation who had sinned that sin for which there is no forgiveness (Matt. 12:31-32), others who had probably sinned away their day of grace, having quenched the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19) till it was no longer possible to renew them again to repentance (Luke 13:24-25; 19:48). Yet since this was mercifully concealed from him, he sought to cry aloud and spare not. He knew that the gospel was to be the savor of death unto death to some, and that God sometimes sends His servants forth with a commission similar to that of Isaiah's (6:9-10). Still that furnished no more reason why he should be silent than that the sun and moon should cease proclaiming their Creator's glory merely because the world is blind and deaf.

In this same connection it is pertinent to consider the striking and solemn case of Pharaoh. It indeed presents an awe-inspiring spectacle, yet that must not hinder us from looking at it and ascertaining what light it throws on the character and ways of the Most High. It is the case not merely of an isolated individual, but of a fearfully numerous class—the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. It is true that Pharaoh was



not called on to believe and be saved, he was not exhorted to yield himself to the constraining love of God as manifested in the gift of His Son; but he *was* required to submit himself to the authority of God and to accede to His revealed will. He was ordered to let Jehovah's people go that they might serve Him in the wilderness, and he was required to comply with the divine command not sullenly or reluctantly, not as a matter of necessity, but with his whole heart.

### **A Promise for Every Command of God**

Let it not be overlooked that every divine command virtually implies a promise, for our duty and our welfare are in every instance inseparably joined (Deut. 10:12-13). If God is truly obeyed He will be truly glorified, and if He is truly glorified He will be truly enjoyed. Had the king of Egypt obeyed, certainly his fate would have been different. He would have been regarded not with disapproval but with favor; he would have been the object not of punishment but rather of reward. Nevertheless, it was not intended that he should obey. The Most High had decreed otherwise. Before Moses entered the presence of Pharaoh and made known Jehovah's command, the Lord informed His servant, "I will harden his heart that he shall *not* let the people go" (Ex. 4:21). This is unspeakably awful, yet it need not surprise us. The same sun whose rays melt the wax hardens the clay—an example in the visible realm of what takes place in the hearts of the renewed and of the unregenerate.

Not only was it God's intention to harden Pharaoh's heart so that he should not obey His command, but He plainly declared, "In very deed for this cause have I raised thee up; for to show in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth" (Ex. 9:16). The connection in which that solemn verse is quoted in Romans 9:17 makes it unmistakably plain that God ordained that this haughty monarch should be an everlasting monument to His severity. Here we witness the Ruler of this world dealing with men—for Pharaoh was representative of a large class—dealing with them about what concerns their highest interests, their happiness or their woe throughout eternity, not intending their happiness, not determining to confer the grace which would enable them to comply with His will, yet issuing *commands* to them, denouncing their threatenings, working signs and wonders before them, enduring them with much long-suffering while they add sin to sin and ripen for destruction. Yet let it be remembered that there was nothing which hindered Pharaoh from obeying except his own depravity. Whatever objection may be brought against the Word calling on the non-elect to repent and believe may with equal propriety be brought against the whole procedure of God with Pharaoh.

In their Articles of Faith the hyper-Calvinists declare, "We deny duty-faith and duty-repentance—these terms signifying that it is every man's duty to spiritually and savingly repent and believe." Those who belong to this school of theology insist that it would be just as sensible to visit our cemeteries and call on the occupants of the

graves to come forth as to exhort those who are dead in trespasses and sins to throw down the weapons of their warfare and be reconciled to God. Such reasoning is unsound, for there is a vast and vital difference between a spiritually dead soul and a lifeless body. The soul of Adam became the subject of penal and spiritual death; nevertheless it retained all its natural powers. Adam did not lose all knowledge nor become incapable of volition; nor did the operations of conscience cease within him. He was still a rational being, a moral agent, a responsible creature, though he could no longer think or will, love or hate, in conformity to the law of righteousness.

It is far otherwise with physical dissolution. When the body dies it becomes as inactive, unintelligent and unfeeling as a piece of unorganized matter. A lifeless body has no responsibility, but a spiritually dead soul is accountable to God. A corpse in the cemetery will not "despise and reject" Christ (Isa. 53:3), will not "resist the Holy Ghost" (Acts 7:51), will not disobey the gospel (2 Thess. 1:8); but the sinner can and *does* do these very things, and is justly condemned for them. Are we, then, suggesting that fallen man is *not* "dead in trespasses and sins"? No indeed, but we do insist that those solemn words be rightly interpreted and that no false conclusions be drawn from them. Because the soul has been deranged by sin, because all its operations are unholy, it is correctly said to be in a state of spiritual death, for it no more fulfills the purpose of its being than does a dead body.

The fall of man, with its resultant spiritual death, did not dissolve our relation to God as the Creator, nor did it exempt us from His authority. But it forfeited His favor and suspended that communion with Him by which alone could be preserved that moral excellence with which the soul was originally endowed. Instead of attempting to draw analogies between spiritual and physical death and deriving inferences from them, we must stick very closely to the Scriptures and regulate all our thoughts by them. God's Word says, "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: *wherein* in times past ye *walked*" (Eph. 2:1-2). Thus the spiritual death of the sinner is a state of *active* opposition against God—a state for which he is responsible, the guilt and enormity of which the preacher should constantly press upon him. Why do we speak of active opposition against God as being *dead* in sins? Because in Scripture "death" does not mean cessation of being, but a condition of separation and alienation from God (Eph. 4:18).

The solemn and humbling fact that fallen man is fully incapable of anything spiritually good or of turning to God is clearly revealed and insisted on in His Word (John 6:44; 2 Cor. 3:5, etc.), yet the majority of professing Christians have rejected that fact. It is important to note that the grounds and reasons for which it has been opposed by some *are not scriptural*. They do not allege that there is any specific statement of Holy Writ which directly contradicts it. They do not affirm that any passage can be produced from the Word which expressly tells us that fallen man *has* the power of will to do anything spiritually good, or that he is able by his own strength

to turn to God, or even prepare himself to do so. Instead, they are obliged to fall back on a *process of reasoning*, making inferences and deductions from certain general principles which the Scriptures sanction. It is at once apparent that there is a vast difference in point of certainty between these two things.

### **Principle of Exhortation in Scripture**

The principal objection made against the doctrine of fallen man's inability is drawn from the supposed inconsistency between it and the principle of exhortation which runs all through Scripture. It is pointed out that commands and exhortations are addressed to the descendants of Adam, that they are manifestly responsible to comply with them, that they incur guilt by failure to obey. Then the conclusion is drawn that, therefore, these commandments would never have been given, that such responsibility could not belong to man, and such guilt could not be incurred, unless they were *able to will* and to do the things commanded. Thus their whole argument rests not on anything actually stated in Scripture, but on certain notions respecting the reasons why God issued these commands and exhortations, and respecting the ground upon which moral responsibility rests.

In like manner we find the hyper-Calvinists pursuing an identical course in their rejection of the exhortation principle. Though at the opposite pole in doctrine—for they contend for the spiritual impotence of fallen man—yet they concur with others in resorting to *a process of reasoning*. They cannot produce a single passage *from God's Word* which declares that the unregenerate must not be urged to perform spiritual duties. They cannot point to any occasion on which the Saviour Himself warned His apostles against such a procedure, not even when He commissioned them to go and preach His gospel. They cannot even discover a word from Paul cautioning either Timothy or Titus to be extremely careful when addressing the unsaved lest they leave their hearers with the impression that their case was far from being desperate.

Not only are the hyper-Calvinists unable to produce one verse of Scripture containing such prohibitions or warnings as we have mentioned above, but they are faced with scores of passages both in the Old and the New Testaments which show unmistakably that the servants of God in biblical times followed the very opposite course to that advocated by these twentieth century theorists. Neither the prophets, the Saviour, nor His apostles shaped their policy by the state of their hearers. They did not accommodate their message according to the spiritual impotence of sinners, but plainly enforced the just requirements of a holy God. How, then, do these men dispose of all those passages which speak directly against their theories? By what is called (in some law courts) a process of "special pleading." We quote again from their Articles of Faith:

We believe that it would be unsafe, from the brief records we have of the way in which

the apostles, under the immediate direction of the Lord, addressed their hearers in certain special cases and circumstances, to derive absolute and universal rules for ministerial addresses in the present day under widely-different circumstances.

Thus they naively attempt to neutralize and set aside the practice of our Lord and of His apostles. It is very much like the course followed by the Pharisees, who drew up their own rules and regulations, binding them upon the people, against whom Christ preferred the solemn charge of "making the word of God of none effect through your tradition" (Mark 7:13). The statement "We believe it would be unsafe" is lighter than chaff when weighed against the authority of Holy Writ. If God's servants today are not to be regulated by the recorded examples of their Master and His apostles, where shall they turn for guidance?

And why do the framers of these Articles of Faith consider it "unsafe" to follow the precedents furnished by the Gospels and the Acts? Their next Article supplies the answer:

Therefore, that for ministers in the present day to address unconverted persons, or indiscriminately all in a mixed congregation, calling upon them to savingly repent, believe, and receive Christ, or perform any other acts dependent upon the new-creative power of the Holy Ghost, is, on the one hand, to imply creature power, and, on the other, to deny the doctrine of special redemption.

Here they come out into the open and show their true colors, as mere rationalizers. They object to indiscriminate exhortations because *they* cannot see the consistency of such a policy with other doctrines. Just as extreme Arminians reject the truth of fallen man's moral impotence because they are unable to reconcile it with the exhortation principle, so Antinomians throw overboard human responsibility because they consider it out of harmony with the spiritual helplessness of the sinner.

Witness the consistency of man. As God Himself tells us, "Verily, every man at his best estate is altogether vanity" (Ps. 39:5). No wonder, then, that He bids us "*Cease ye from man*, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" (Isa. 2:22). Yes, "Cease ye from man"—religious man as much as irreligious man; cease placing any confidence in or dependence on him, especially in connection with spiritual and divine matters, for we cannot afford to be misdirected in these. Then what should the bewildered reader do? He must weigh everything he hears or reads in the balances of the Lord, testing it diligently by Holy Writ: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21). And what is the servant of Christ to do? He must execute the commission his Master has given him, declare all the counsel of God (not mangled bits of it), and leave the Lord to harmonize what may seem contradictory to him—just as Abraham proceeded to obediently sacrifice Isaac, even though he was quite incapable of harmonizing God's command with His promise "In Isaac shall thy

seed be called" (Gen. 21:12).

It will be no surprise to most of our readers that those ministers who are restricted from calling on the unsaved to repent and believe the gospel are also very slack in exhorting professing Christians. The divine commandments are almost entirely absent from their ministry. They preach a lot on doctrine, often on experience, but life conduct receives the scantiest notice. It is not too much to say that they seem to be afraid of the very word "duty." They preach soundly and beneficially on the obedience which Christ gave to God on behalf of His people, but they say next to nothing of that obedience which the Lord requires from those He has redeemed. They give many comforting addresses from God's promises, but they are woefully remiss in delivering searching messages on His *precepts*. If anyone thinks this charge is unfair, let him pick up a volume of sermons by any of these men and see if he can find a single sermon on one of the precepts.

As an example of what we have just mentioned we quote at some length from a series of "Meditations on the Preceptive part of the Word of God" by J. C. Philpot. Note that these were not the casual and careless utterances of the pulpit, but the deliberate and studied products of his pen. In his first article on the precepts of the Word of God, Mr. Philpot said:

It is a branch of Divine revelation which, without wishing to speak harshly or censoriously, has in our judgment been sadly perverted by many on the one hand, and we must say almost as sadly neglected, if not altogether ignored and passed by, by many on the other. . . . It is almost become a tradition in some churches professing the doctrines of grace to disregard the precepts and pass them by in a kind of general silence.

This declaration was sadly true, for the charge preferred characterized the greater part *of his own ministry* and applied to the preachers in his own denomination. That Mr. Philpot was fully aware of this sad state of affairs is clear from the following:

Consider this point, ye ministers, who Lord's day after Lord's day preach nothing but doctrine, doctrine, doctrine; and ask yourselves whether the same Holy Spirit who revealed the first three chapters of the epistle to the Ephesians did not also reveal the last three? Is not the whole epistle equally inspired, a part of that Scripture of which we read, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17)? How, then, can you be "a man of God perfect" (that is, complete as a minister) and "thoroughly furnished unto all good works," if you willfully neglect any part of that Scripture which God has given to be profitable to you, and to others by you? . . . Can it be right, can it be safe, can it be Scriptural, to treat all this fulness and weight of precept with

no more attention than an obsolete Act of Parliament?

To the same effect, he declared:

To despise, then, the precept, to call it legal and burdensome, is to despise not man, but God, who hath given unto us His Holy Spirit in the inspired Scriptures for our faith and obedience. . . . Nothing more detects hypocrites, purges out loose professors, and fans away that chaff and dust which now so thickly covers our barn floors than an experimental handling of the precept. A dry doctrinal ministry disturbs no consciences. The loosest professors may sit under it, nay, be highly delighted with it, for it gives them a hope, if not a dead confidence, that salvation being wholly of grace they shall be saved whatever be their walk of life. But the experimental handling of the precept cuts down all this and exposes their hypocrisy and deception.

In developing his theme Mr. Philpot rightly began by discussing its importance, and this at considerable length. First, he called attention to its "bulk," or the large place given to precepts in the Word:

The amount of precept in the epistles, measured only by the test of quantity would surprise a person whose attention had not been directed to that point, if he would but carefully examine it. But it is sad to see how little the Scriptures are read amongst us with that intelligent attention, that careful and prayerful studiousness, that earnest desire to understand, believe, and experimentally realize their Divine meaning, which they demand and deserve, and which the Word of God compares to seeking as for silver, and searching "as for hid treasure" (Prov. 2:4).

How much less are the Scriptures read today than they were in Mr. Philpot's time!

Next, he pointed out the following:

Were there no precepts in the New Testament we should be without an inspired rule of life, without an authoritative guide for our walk and conduct before the Church and the world. . . . But mark what would be the consequence if the preceptive part of the New Testament were taken out of its pages as so much useless matter. It would be like going on board of a ship bound on a long and perilous voyage, and taking out of her just before she sailed, all her charts, her compass, her sextants, her sounding line, her chronometer; in a word, all the instruments of navigation needful for her safely crossing the sea, or even leaving her port.

He disposed of the quibble that if there were no precepts, the church would still have the Holy Ghost to guide her by saying, "If God has mercifully and graciously given us rules and directions whereby to walk, let us thankfully accept them, not question and cavil how far we could have done without them."

Under his third reason for showing the *importance* of the precepts are some weighty remarks from which we select the following:

Without a special revelation of the precepts in the word of truth we should not know what was the will of God as regards all spiritual and practical obedience, so, without it as our guide and rule, we should not be able to live to His glory. . . . Be it, then, observed, and ever borne in mind that, as the glory of God is the end of all our obedience, it must be an obedience according to His own prescribed rule and pattern. In this point lies all the distinction between the obedience of a Christian to the glory of God and the self-imposed obedience of a Pharisee to the glory of self. . . . Thus we see that if there were no precepts as our guiding rule, we could not live to the glory of God, or yield to Him an acceptable obedience; and for this simple reason, that we should not know how to do so. We might wish to do so; we might attempt to do so; but we should and must fail.

This section on the importance of the precepts was denied by pointing out: "On its fulfillment turns *the main test of distinction* between the believer and the unbeliever, between the manifested vessel of mercy and the vessel of wrath fitted to destruction." At the close of this division he said, "Take one more test from the Lord's own lips. Read the solemn conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount—that grand code of Christian precepts."

After quoting Matthew 7:24-27 Mr. Philpot asks:

What is the Lord's own test of distinction between the wise man who builds on the rock, and the foolish man who builds on the sand? The rock, of course, is Christ, as the sand is self. But the test, the mark, the evidence, the proof of the two builders and the two buildings is the hearing of Christ's sayings and doing them, or the hearing of Christ's sayings and doing them not. We may twist and wriggle under such a text, and try all manner of explanations to parry off its keen, cutting edge; we may fly to arguments and deductions drawn from the doctrine of grace to shelter ourselves from its heavy stroke, and seek to prove that the Lord was there preaching the law and not the gospel, and that as we are saved by Christ's blood and righteousness, and not by our own obedience or our good works, either before or after calling, all such tests and all such texts are inapplicable to our state as believers. But after all our questionings and cavillings, our nice and subtle arguments, to quiet conscience and patch up a false peace, there the word of the Lord stands.

It is disastrous that such cogent arguments have carried little weight and that the precepts are still sadly neglected by many of the Lord's servants.

# Human Inability

Charles Spurgeon

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*"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him."* John 6:44.

Coming to Christ" is a very common phrase in Holy Scripture. It is used to express those acts of the soul wherein, leaving at once our self-righteousness, and our sins, we fly unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive his righteousness to be our covering, and his blood to be our atonement. Coming to Christ, then, embraces in it repentance, self-negation, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it sums within itself all those things which are the necessary attendants of these great states of heart, such as the belief of the truth, earnestness of prayer to God, the submission of the soul to the precepts of God's gospel, and all those things which accompany the dawn of salvation in the soul. Coming to Christ is just the one essential thing for a sinner's salvation. He that cometh not to Christ, do what he may, or think what he may, is yet in "the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." Coming to Christ is the very first effect of regeneration. No sooner is the soul quickened than it at once discovers its lost estate, is horrified thereat, looks out for a refuge, and believing Christ to be a suitable one, flies to him and reposes in him. Where there is not this coming to Christ, it is certain that there is as yet no quickening; where there is no quickening, the soul is dead in trespasses and sins, and being dead it cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. We have before us now an announcement very startling, some say very obnoxious. Coming to Christ, though described by some people as being the very easiest thing in all the world, is in our text declared to be a thing utterly and entirely impossible to any man, unless the Father shall draw him to Christ. It shall be our business, then, to enlarge upon this declaration. We doubt not that it will always be offensive to carnal nature, but, nevertheless, the offending of human nature is sometimes the first step towards bringing it to bow itself before God. And if this be the effect of a painful process, we can forget the pain and rejoice in the glorious consequences.

I shall endeavour this morning, first of all, to notice man's inability, wherein it consists. Secondly, the Father's drawings--what these are, and how they are exerted upon the soul. And then I shall conclude by noticing a sweet consolation which may be derived from this seemingly barren and terrible text.

## I. First, then, - MAN'S INABILITY.

The text says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw



him." Wherein does this inability lie?

First, it does not lie in any physical defect. If in coming to Christ, moving the body or walking with the feet should be of any assistance, certainly man has all physical power to come to Christ in that sense. I remember to have heard a very foolish Antinomian declare, that he did not believe any man had the power to walk to the house of God unless the Father drew him. Now the man was plainly foolish, because he must have seen that as long as a man was alive and had legs, it was as easy for him to walk to the house of God as to the house of Satan. If coming to Christ includes the utterance of a prayer, man has no physical defect in that respect, if he be not dumb, he can say a prayer as easily as he can utter blasphemy. It is as easy for a man to sing one of the songs of Zion as to sing a profane and libidinous song. There is no lack of physical power in coming to Christ. All that can be wanted with regard to the bodily strength man most assuredly has, and any part of salvation which consists in that is totally and entirely in the power of man without any assistance from the Spirit of God.

Nor, again, does this inability lie in any mental lack. I can believe this Bible to be true just as easily as I can believe any other book to be true. So far as believing on Christ is an act of the mind, I am just as able to believe on Christ as I am able to believe on anybody else. Let his statement be but true, it is idle to tell me I cannot believe it. I can believe the statement that Christ makes as well as I can believe the statement of any other person. There is no deficiency of faculty in the mind: it is as capable of appreciating as a mere mental act the guilt of sin, as it is of appreciating the guilt of assassination. It is just as possible for me to exercise the mental idea of seeking God, as it is to exercise the thought of ambition. I have all the mental strength and power that can possibly be needed, so far as mental power is needed in salvation at all. Nay, there is not any man so ignorant that he can plead a lack of intellect as an excuse for rejecting the gospel. The defect, then, does not lie either in the body, or, what we are bound to call, speaking theologically, the mind. It is not any lack or deficiency there, although it is the vitiation of the mind, the corruption or the ruin of it, which, after all, is the very essence of man's inability.

Permit me to show you wherein this inability of man really does lie. It lies deep in his nature. Through the fall, and through our own sin, the nature of man has become so debased, and depraved, and corrupt, that it is impossible for him to come to Christ without the assistance of God the Holy Spirit. Now, in trying to exhibit how the nature of man thus renders him unable to come to Christ, you must allow me just to take this figure. You see a sheep; how willingly it feeds upon the herbage! You never knew a sheep sigh after carrion; it could not live on lion's food. Now bring me a wolf; and you ask me whether a wolf cannot eat grass, whether it cannot be just as docile and as domesticated as the sheep. I answer, no; because its nature is contrary thereunto. You say, "Well, it has ears and legs; can it not hear the shepherd's voice, and follow him whithersoever he leadeth it?" I answer, certainly; there is no physical cause why it

cannot do so, but its nature forbids, and therefore I say it cannot do so. Can it not be tamed? Cannot its ferocity be removed? Probably it may so far be subdued that it may become apparently tame; but there will always be a marked distinction between it and the sheep, because there is a distinction in nature. Now, the reason why man cannot come to Christ, is not because he cannot come, so far as his body or his mere power of mind is concerned, but because his nature is so corrupt that he has neither the will nor the power to come to Christ unless drawn by the Spirit.

But let me give you a better illustration. You see a mother with her babe in her arms. You put a knife into her hand, and tell her to stab that babe to the heart. She replies, and very truthfully, "I cannot." Now, so far as her bodily power is concerned, she can, if she pleases; there is the knife, and there is the child. The child cannot resist, and she has quite sufficient strength in her hand immediately to stab it to its heart. But she is quite correct when she says she cannot do it. As a mere act of the mind, it is quite possible she might think of such a thing as killing the child, and yet she says she cannot think of such a thing; and she does not say falsely, for her nature as a mother forbids her doing a thing from which her soul revolts. Simply because she is that child's parent she feels she cannot kill it. It is even so with a sinner. Coming to Christ is so obnoxious to human nature that, although, so far as physical and mental forces are concerned, (and these have but a very narrow sphere in salvation) men could come if they would: it is strictly correct to say that they cannot and will not unless the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them. Let us enter a little more deeply into the subject, and try to show you wherein this inability of man consists, in its more minute particulars.

1. First, it lies in the obstinacy of the human will. "Oh!" saith the Arminian, "men may be saved if they will." We reply, "My dear sir, we all believe that; but it is just the if they will that is the difficulty. We assert that no man will come to Christ unless he be drawn; nay, we do not assert it, but Christ himself declares it--"Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;" and as long as that "ye will not come" stands on record in Holy Scripture, we shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will." It is strange how people, when talking about free-will, talk of things which they do not at all understand. "Now," says one, "I believe men can be saved if they will." My dear sir, that is not the question at all. The question is, are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the gospel of Christ? We declare, upon Scriptural authority, that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved, and so inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human will ever be constrained towards Christ. You reply, that men sometimes are willing, without the help of the Holy Spirit. I answer--Did you ever meet with any person who was? Scores and hundreds, nay, thousands of Christians have I conversed with, of different opinions, young and old, but it has never been my lot to meet with one who could affirm that he came to Christ of himself,

without being drawn. The universal confession of all true believers is this--"I know that unless Jesus Christ had sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God, I would to this very hour have been wandering far from him, at a distance from him, and loving that distance well." With common consent, all believers affirm the truth, that men will not come to Christ till the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them.

2. Again, not only is the will obstinate, but the understanding is darkened. Of that we have abundant Scriptural proof. I am not now making mere assertions, but stating doctrines authoritatively taught in the Holy Scriptures, and known in the conscience of every Christian man--that the understanding of man is so dark, that he cannot by any means understand the things of God until his understanding has been opened. Man is by nature blind within. The cross of Christ, so laden with glories, and glittering with attractions, never attracts him, because he is blind and cannot see its beauties. Talk to him of the wonders of the creation, show to him the many-coloured arch that spans the sky, let him behold the glories of a landscape, he is well able to see all these things; but talk to him of the wonders of the covenant of grace, speak to him of the security of the believer in Christ, tell him of the beauties of the person of the Redeemer, he is quite deaf to all your description; you are as one that playeth a goodly tune, it is true; but he regards not, he is deaf, he has no comprehension. Or, to return to the verse which we so specially marked in our reading, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned;" and inasmuch as he is a natural man, it is not in his power to discern the things of God. "Well," says one, "I think I have arrived at a very tolerable judgment in matters of theology; I think I understand almost every point." True, that you may do in the letter of it; but in the spirit of it, in the true reception thereof into the soul, and in the actual understanding of it, it is impossible for you to have attained, unless you have been drawn by the Spirit. For as long as that Scripture stands true, that carnal men cannot receive spiritual things, it must be true that you have not received them, unless you have been renewed and made a spiritual man in Christ Jesus. The will, then, and the understanding, are two great doors, both blocked up against our coming to Christ, and until these are opened by the sweet influences of the Divine Spirit, they must be for ever closed to anything like coming to Christ.

3. Again, the affections, which constitute a very great part of man, are depraved. Man, as he is, before he receives the grace of God, loves anything and everything above spiritual things. If ye want proof of this, look around you. There needs no monument to the depravity of the human affections. Cast your eyes everywhere--there is not a street, nor a house, nay, nor a heart, which doth not bear upon it sad evidence of this dreadful truth. Why is it that men are not found on the Sabbath Day universally flocking to the house of God? Why are we not more constantly found reading our Bibles? How is it that prayer is a duty almost universally neglected? Why is it that

Christ Jesus is so little beloved? Why are even his professed followers so cold in their affections to him? Whence arise these things? Assuredly, dear brethren, we can trace them to no other source than this, the corruption and vitiation of the affections. We love that which we ought to hate, and we hate that which we ought to love. It is but human nature, fallen human nature, that man should love this present life better than the life to come. It is but the effect of the fall, that man should love sin better than righteousness, and the ways of this world better than the ways of God. And again, we repeat it, until these affections be renewed, and turned into a fresh channel by the gracious drawings of the Father, it is not possible for any man to love the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Yet once more--conscience, too, has been overpowered by the fall. I believe there is no more egregious mistake made by divines, than when they tell people that conscience is the vicegerent of God within the soul, and that it is one of those powers which retains its ancient dignity, and stands erect amidst the fall of its compeers. My brethren, when man fell in the garden, manhood fell entirely; there was not one single pillar in the temple of manhood that stood erect. It is true, conscience was not destroyed. The pillar was not shattered; it fell, and it fell in one piece, and there it lies along, the mightiest remnant of God's once perfect work in man. But that conscience is fallen, I am sure. Look at men. Who among them is the possessor of a "good conscience toward God," but the regenerated man? Do you imagine that if men's consciences always spoke loudly and clearly to them, they would live in the daily commission of acts, which are as opposed to the right as darkness to light? No, beloved; conscience can tell me that I am a sinner, but conscience cannot make me feel that I am one. Conscience may tell me that such-and-such a thing is wrong, but how wrong it is conscience itself does not know. Did any man's conscience, unenlightened by the Spirit, ever tell him that his sins deserved damnation? Or if conscience did do that, did it ever lead any man to feel an abhorrence of sin as sin? In fact, did conscience ever bring a man to such a self-renunciation, that he did totally abhor himself and all his works and come to Christ? No, conscience, although it is not dead, is ruined, its power is impaired, it hath not that clearness of eye and that strength of hand, and that thunder of voice, which it had before the fall; but hath ceased to a great degree, to exert its supremacy in the town of Mansoul. Then, beloved, it becomes necessary for this very reason, because conscience is depraved, that the Holy Spirit should step in, to show us our need of a Saviour, and draw us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Still," says one, "as far as you have hitherto gone, it appears to me that you consider that the reason why men do not come to Christ is that they will not, rather than they cannot." True, most true. I believe the greatest reason of man's inability is the obstinacy of his will. That once overcome, I think the great stone is rolled away from the sepulchre, and the hardest part of the battle is already won. But allow me to go a little further. My text does not say, "No man will come," but it says, "No man can

come." Now, many interpreters believe that the can here, is but a strong expression conveying no more meaning than the word will. I feel assured that this is not correct. There is in man, not only unwillingness to be saved, but there is a spiritual powerlessness to come to Christ; and this I will prove to every Christian at any rate. Beloved, I speak to you who have already been quickened by the divine grace, does not your experience teach you that there are times when you have a will to serve God, and yet have not the power? Have you not sometimes been obliged to say that you have wished to believe. but you have had to pray, Lord, help mine unbelief?" Because, although willing enough to receive God's testimony, your own carnal nature was too strong for you, and you felt you needed supernatural help. Are you able to go into your room at any hour you choose, and to fall upon your knees and say, "Now, it is my will that I should be very earnest in prayer, and that I should draw near unto God ?" I ask, do you find your power equal to your will? You could say, even at the bar of God himself, that you are sure you are not mistaken in your willingness; you are willing to be wrapt up in devotion, it is your will that your soul should not wander from a pure contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ, but you find that you cannot do that, even when you are willing, without the help of the Spirit. Now, if the quickened child of God finds a spiritual inability, how much more the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sin? If even the advanced Christian, after thirty or forty years, finds himself sometimes willing and yet powerless--if such be his experience,--does it not seem more than likely that the poor sinner who has not yet believed, should find a need of strength as well as a want of will?

But, again, there is another argument. If the sinner has strength to come to Christ, I should like to know how we are to understand those continual descriptions of the sinner's state which we meet with in God's holy Word? Now, a sinner is said to be dead in trespasses and sins. Will you affirm that death implies nothing more than the absence of a will? Surely a corpse is quite as unable as unwilling. Or again, do not all men see that there is a distinction between will and power: might not that corpse be sufficiently quickened to get a will, and yet be so powerless that it could not lift as much as its hand or foot? Have we never seen cases in which persons have been just sufficiently re-animated to give evidence of life, and have yet been so near death that they could not have performed the slightest action? Is there not a clear difference between the giving of the will and the giving of power? It is quite certain, however, that where the will is given, the power will follow. Make a man willing, and he shall be made powerful; for when God gives the will, he does not tantalize man by giving him to wish for that which he is unable to do; nevertheless he makes such a division between the will and the power, that it shall be seen that both things are quite distinct gifts of the Lord God.

Then I must ask one more question: if all that were needed to make a man willing, do you not at once degrade the Holy Spirit? Are we not in the habit of giving all the glory of salvation wrought in us to God the Spirit? But now, if all that God the Spirit does

for me is to make me willing to do these things for myself, am I not in a great measure a sharer with the Holy Spirit in the glory? and may I not boldly stand up and say, "It is true the Spirit gave me the will to do it, but still I did it myself, and therein will I glory; for if I did these things myself without assistance from on high, I will not cast my crown at his feet; it is my own crown, I earned it, and I will keep it." Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is evermore in Scripture set forth as the person who worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure, we hold it to be a legitimate inference that he must do something more for us than the mere making of us willing, and that therefore there must be another thing besides want of will in a sinner--there must be absolute and actual want of power.

Now, before I leave this statement, let me address myself to you for a moment. I am often charged with preaching doctrines that may do a great deal of hurt. Well, I shall not deny the charge, for I am not careful to answer in this matter. I have my witnesses here present to prove that the things which I have preached have done a great deal of hurt, but they have not done hurt either to morality or to God's Church; the hurt has been on the side of Satan. There are not ones or twos but many hundreds who this morning rejoice that they have been brought near to God; from having been profane Sabbath-breakers, drunkards, or worldly persons, they have been brought to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ; and if this be any hurt may God of his infinite mercy send us a thousand times as much. But further, what truth is there in the world which will not hurt a man who chooses to make hurt of it? You who preach general redemption, are very fond of proclaiming the great truth of God's mercy to the last moment. But how dare you preach that? Many people make hurt of it by putting off the day of grace, and thinking that the last hour may do as well as the first. Why, if we never preached anything which man could misuse, and abuse, we must hold our tongues for ever.

Still says one, "Well then, if I cannot save myself, and cannot come to Christ, I must sit still and do nothing." If men do say so, on their own heads shall be their doom. We have very plainly told you that there are many things you can do. To be found continually in the house of God is in your power; to study the Word of God with diligence is in your power; to renounce your outward sin, to forsake the vices in which you indulge, to make your life honest, sober, and righteous, is in your power. For this you need no help from the Holy Spirit; all this you can do yourself; but to come to Christ truly is not in your power, until you are renewed by the Holy Ghost. But mark you, your want of power is no excuse, seeing that you have no desire to come, and are living in wilful rebellion against God. Your want of power lies mainly in the obstinacy of nature. Suppose a liar says that it is not in his power to speak the truth, that he has been a liar so long, that he cannot leave it off; is that an excuse for him? Suppose a man who has long indulged in lust should tell you that he finds his lusts have so girt about him like a great iron net that he cannot get rid of them, would you take that as an excuse? Truly it is none at all. If a drunkard has become so foully a drunkard, that he finds it impossible to pass a public-house without stepping in, do you therefore

excuse him? No, because his inability to reform, lies in his nature, which he has no desire to restrain or conquer. The thing that is done, and the thing that causes the thing that is done, being both from the root of sin, are two evils which cannot excuse each other, What though the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots? It is because you have learned to do evil that you cannot now learn to do well; and instead, therefore, of letting you sit down to excuse yourselves, let me put a thunderbolt beneath the seat of your sloth, that you may be startled by it and aroused. Remember, that to sit still is to be damned to all eternity. Oh! that God the Holy Spirit might make use of this truth in a very different manner! Before I have done I trust I shall be enabled to show you how it is that this truth, which apparently condemns men and shuts them out, is, after all, the great truth, which has been blessed to the conversion of men.

## II. Our second point is - THE FATHER'S DRAWINGS.

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." How then does the Father draw men? Arminian divines generally say that God draws men by the preaching of the gospel. Very true; the preaching of the gospel is the instrument of drawing men, but there must be some thing more than this. Let me ask to whom did Christ address these words? Why, to the people of Capernaum, where he had often preached, where he had uttered mournfully and plaintively the woes of the law and the invitations of the gospel. In that city he had done many mighty works and worked many miracles. In fact, such teaching and such miraculous attestation had he given to them, that he declared that Tyre and Sidon would have repented long ago in sack-cloth and ashes, if they had been blessed with such privileges. Now, if the preaching of Christ himself did not avail to the enabling these men to come to Christ, it cannot be possible that all that was intended by the drawing of the Father was simply preaching. No, brethren, you must note again, he does not say no man can come except the minister draw him, but except the Father draw him.

Now there is such a thing as being drawn by the gospel, and drawn by the minister, without being drawn by God. Clearly, it is a divine drawing that is meant, a drawing by the Most High God--the First Person of the most glorious Trinity sending out the Third Person, the Holy Spirit, to induce men to come to Christ. Another person turns round and says with a sneer, "Then do you think that Christ drags men to himself, seeing that they are unwilling!" I remember meeting once with a man who said to me, Sir, you preach that Christ takes people by the hair of their heads and drags them to himself" I asked him whether he could refer to the date of the sermon wherein I preached that extraordinary doctrine, for if he could, I should be very much obliged. However, he could not. But said I, while Christ does not drag people to himself by the hair of their heads, I believe that, he draws them by the heart quite as powerfully as your caricature would suggest. Mark that in the Father's drawing there is no compulsion whatever; Christ never compelled any man to come to him against his

will. If a man be unwilling to be saved, Christ does not save him against his will. How, then, does the Holy Spirit draw him? Why, by making him willing. It is true he does not use "moral suasion;" he knows a nearer method of reaching the heart. He goes to the secret fountain of the heart, and he knows how, by some mysterious operation, to turn the will in an opposite direction, so that, as Ralph Erskine paradoxically puts it, the man is saved "with full consent against his will;" that is, against his old will he is saved. But he is saved with full consent, for he is made willing in the day of God's power. Do not imagine that any man will go to heaven kicking and struggling all the way against the hand that draws him. Do not conceive that any man will be plunged in the bath of a Saviour's blood while he is striving to run away from the Saviour. Oh, no. It is quite true that first of all man is unwilling to be saved. When the Holy Spirit hath put his influence into the heart, the text is fulfilled--"draw me and I will run after thee." We follow on while he draws us, glad to obey the voice which once we had despised. But the gist of the matter lies in the turning of the will. How that is done no flesh knoweth; it is one of those mysteries that is clearly perceived as a fact, but the cause of which no tongue can tell, and no heart can guess.

The apparent way, however, in which the Holy Spirit operates, we can tell you. The first thing the Holy Spirit does when he comes into a man's heart is this: he finds him with a very good opinion of himself: and there is nothing which prevents a man coming to Christ like a good opinion of himself. Why, says man, "I don't want to come to Christ. I have as good a righteousness as anybody can desire. I feel I can walk into heaven on my own rights." The Holy Spirit lays bare his heart, lets him see the loathsome cancer that is there eating away his life, uncovers to him all the blackness and defilement of that sink of hell, the human heart, and then the man stands aghast. "I never thought I was like this. Oh! those sins I thought were little, have swelled out to an immense stature. What I thought was a mole-hill has grown into a mountain; it was but the hyssop on the wall before, but now it has become a cedar of Lebanon. Oh," saith the man within himself, "I will try and reform; I will do good deeds enough to wash these black deeds out." Then comes the Holy Spirit and shows him that he cannot do this, takes away all his fancied power and strength, so that the man falls down on his knees in agony, and cries, "Oh! once I thought I could save myself by my good works, but now I find that

"Could my tears for ever flow,  
Could my zeal no respite know  
All for sin could not atone,  
Thou must save and thou alone.

"Then the heart sinks, and the man is ready to despair. And saith he, "I never can be saved. Nothing can save me." Then, comes the Holy Spirit and shows the sinner the cross of Christ, gives him eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve, and says, "Look to yonder cross. that Man died to save sinners; you feel that you are a sinner; he died to



save you." And he enables the heart to believe, and to come to Christ. And when it comes to Christ, by this sweet drawing of the Spirit, it finds "a peace with God which passeth all understanding, which keeps his heart and mind through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now, you will plainly perceive that all this may be done without any compulsion. Man is as much drawn willingly, as if he were not drawn at all; and he comes to Christ with full consent, with as full a consent as if no secret influence had ever been exercised in his heart. But that influence must be exercised, or else there never has been and there never will be, any man who either can or will come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

**III.** And, now, we gather up our ends, and conclude by trying to make a practical application of the doctrine; and we trust a comfortable one.

"Well," says one, "if what this man preaches be true, what is to become of my religion? for do you know I have been a long while trying, and I do not like to hear you say a man cannot save himself. I believe he can, and I mean to persevere; but if I am to believe what you say, I must give it all up and begin again." My dear friends, it will be a very happy thing if you do. Do not think that I shall be at all alarmed if you do so. Remember, what you are doing is building your house upon the sand, and it is but an act of charity if I can shake it a little for you. Let me assure you, in God's name, if your religion has no better foundation than your own strength, it will not stand you at the bar of God. Nothing will last to eternity, but that which came from eternity. Unless the everlasting God has done a good work in your heart, all you may have done must be unravelled at the last day of account. It is all in vain for you to be a church-goer or chapel-goer, a good keeper of the Sabbath, an observer of your prayers: it is all in vain for you to be honest to your neighbours and reputable in your conversation; if you hope to be saved by these things, it is all in vain for you to trust in them. Go on; be as honest as you like, keep the Sabbath perpetually, be as holy as you can. I would not dissuade you from these things. God forbid; grow in them, but oh, do not trust in them, for if you rely upon these things you will find they will fail you when most you need them. And if there be anything else that you have found yourself able to do unassisted by divine grace, the sooner you can get rid of the hope that has been engendered by it the better for you, for it is a foul delusion to rely upon anything that flesh can do. A spiritual heaven must be inhabited by spiritual men, and preparation for it must be wrought by the Spirit of God.

"Well," cries another, "I have been sitting under a ministry where I have been told that I could, at my own option, repent and believe, and the consequence is that I have been putting it off from day to day. I thought I could come one day as well as another; that I had only to say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me,' and believe, and then I should be saved. Now you have taken all this hope away for me, sir; I feel amazement and horror taking hold upon me." Again, I say, "My dear friend, I am very glad of it. This was the effect which I hoped to produce. I pray that you may feel this a great deal more. When you

have no hope of saving yourself, I shall have hope that God has begun to save you. As soon as you say "Oh, I cannot come to Christ. Lord, draw me, help me," I shall rejoice over you. He who has got a will, though he has not power, has grace begun in his heart, and God will not leave him until the work is finished."

But, careless sinner, learn that thy salvation now hangs in God's hand. Oh, remember thou art entirely in the hand of God. Thou hast sinned against him, and if he wills to damn thee, damned thou art. Thou canst not resist his will nor thwart his purpose. Thou hast deserved his wrath, and if he chooses to pour the full shower of that wrath upon thy head, thou canst do nothing to avert it. If, on the other hand, he chooses to save thee, he is able to save thee to the very uttermost. But thou liest as much in his hand as the summer's moth beneath thine own finger. He is the God whom thou art grieving every day. Doth it not make thee tremble to think that thy eternal destiny now hangs upon the will of him whom thou hast angered and incensed? Dost not this make thy knees knock together, and thy blood curdle? If it does so I rejoice, inasmuch as this may be the first effect of the Spirit's drawing in thy soul. Oh, tremble to think that the God whom thou hast angered, is the God upon whom thy salvation or thy condemnation entirely depends. Tremble and "kiss the Son lest he be angry and ye perish from the way while his wrath is kindled but a little."

Now, the comfortable reflection is this:--Some of you this morning are conscious that you are coming to Christ. Have you not begun to weep the penitential tear? Did not your closet witness your prayerful preparation for the hearing of the Word of God? And during the service of this morning, has not your heart said within you, "Lord, save me, or I perish, for save myself I cannot?" And could you not now stand up in your seat, and sing.

"Oh, sovereign grace my heart subdue;  
I would be led in triumph, too,  
A willing captive of my Lord,  
To sing the triumph of his Word."

And have I not myself heard you say in your heart--"Jesus, Jesus, my whole trust Is in thee: I know that no righteousness of my own can save me, but only thou, O Christ--sink or swim, I cast myself on thee?" Oh, my brother, thou art drawn by the Father, for thou couldst not have come unless he had drawn thee. Sweet thought! And if he has drawn thee, dost thou know what is the delightful inference? Let me repeat one text, and may that comfort thee: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Yes, my poor weeping brother, inasmuch as thou art now coming to Christ, God has drawn thee; and inasmuch as he has drawn thee, it is a proof that he has loved thee from before the foundation of the world. Let thy heart leap within thee, thou art one of his. Thy name was written on the Saviour's hands when they were nailed to the

accursed tree. Thy name glitters on the breast-plate of the great High Priest to-day; ay, and it was there before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round. Rejoice in the Lord ye that have come to Christ, and shout for joy all ye that have been drawn of the Father. For this is your proof, your solemn testimony, that you from among men have been chosen in eternal election, and that you shall be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto the salvation which is ready to be revealed.

## **"I Don't Want Free Will"**

**by Martin Luther**

luther23.jpg "I frankly confess that, for myself, even if it could be, I should not want 'free-will' to be given me, nor anything to be left in my own hands to enable me to endeavour after salvation; not merely because in face of so many dangers, and adversities and assaults of devils, I could not stand my ground ...; but because even were there no dangers ... I should still be forced to labour with no guarantee of success ... But now that God has taken my salvation out of the control of my own will, and put it under the control of His, and promised to save me, not according to my working or running, but according to His own grace and mercy, I have the comfortable certainty that He is faithful and will not lie to me, and that He is also great and powerful, so that no devils or opposition can break Him or pluck me from Him. Furthermore, I have the comfortable certainty that I please God, not by reason of the merit of my works, but by reason of His merciful favour promised to me; so that, if I work too little, or badly, He does not impute it to me, but with fatherly compassion pardons me and makes me better. This is the glorying of all the saints in their God" - Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1957), 313-314.

## **What does the term “Unconditional Election” mean? is it biblical? What Are Some comon Objections?**

### **Monergism FAQs**

The term “unconditional election” simply means that God's election (or choice) of those who would be saved is not conditioned upon or influenced by anything outside of God himself. The doctrine of unconditional election was formulated in response to the teaching of the Remonstrance, composed by Jacobus Arminius and others, that

God's election of individuals to salvation was conditioned upon the faith which he foresaw that they would come to in time. In reaction to this teaching, the Synod of Dort affirmed the historic teaching of the Church that God elects us, not in response to any good or willingness to believe that he foresees in us, but according to his own good purposes alone.

The doctrine of unconditional election is very clearly upheld in the bible, which proclaims that God “saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began” (2 Tim. 1:9; cf. Eph. 1:3-6). Further biblical defense of this doctrine may be found in the questions below.

### **Doesn't the bible teach that God chooses those whose faith he foresees?**

Many Arminians believe the bible teaches that God elects those whose faith he foresees, based primarily upon two passages: Romans 8:30 and 1 Peter 1:1-2. Both of these passages speak of God's election or calling of those whom he foreknew. However, neither of these passages teach what Arminianism claims. God chooses the people whom he foreknows, not the people whose faith or works he foresees. But what does it mean to “foreknow” a people? Does it mean that God did not know anything about any of the non-elect, that their sudden appearance in history was a surprise to him? Of course not: the terminology of “knowing” someone, throughout the scriptures, means having an intimate personal relationship with that person, which is different from his relationship with anyone else (see Genesis 4:1, for example). Hence, God tells Israel that he has “known” them alone of all the families on the earth – not that he was unaware that other tribes existed, but because he had a unique, special relationship with them (Amos 3:2). In the same vein, Christ declared that he would one day tell all religious imposters, “I never knew you,” which means, not that he was intellectually unaware of them, but that he did not have a relationship with them (Mat. 7:22-23). Thus, biblically, God's foreknowledge of the elect simply means that he loved and desired them uniquely, and considered them different from all others, before they were ever born or had done anything good or bad.

Furthermore, the bible could not mean “foreseeing faith” when it speaks of “foreknowing individuals” simply because other passages tell us very clearly that God definitely did not choose us because he foresaw our faith. God's election does not depend on “the one who wills or the one who runs, but on God, who shows mercy; [for] he has mercy upon whom he will and he hardens whom he will” (Rom. 9:16, 18). They who are saved are regenerated “neither of bloodline, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13). That God's election of the saints is not conditioned upon any power, nobility, choice, seeking, etc., that he foresees in them is

clearly taught in such passages as Deut. 7:7; Rom. 9:11-13; 10:20; 1 Cor. 1:27-29; 4:7.

So then, if God does not choose us according to his foreseeing in us faith or any good thing, does the bible say why he does choose those whom he chooses? Yes, in fact, the bible is clear that God chooses whom he chooses entirely according to his own good pleasure (Eph. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:9), for the display of his glory (Isa. 43:6-7; Rom. 9:22-24; Eph. 2:4-7), because of his unmerited love (Deut. 7:6-8; 2 Thes. 2:13), and so that no flesh may boast before him, as if a person had some cause within himself for his election unto salvation (1 Cor. 1:27-31).

### **Doesn't the doctrine of unconditional election make God an arbitrary tyrant?**

In Romans 9, when Paul is speaking very clearly of God's unconditional election of some, and not others, to eternal salvation, a hypothetical objector to this doctrine raises that very question: "If it is as you say, Paul, and God loved Jacob and hated Esau before they were born, or had done anything good or bad, just so that his own purposes might stand in election, does that not mean he is arbitrary and unjust?" (see Rom. 9:14). Paul's response to this is a resounding, "Of course not! May it never be!" God is not arbitrary or unjust – but he does elect individuals to mercy and hardens others as he sees fit, and for no good will or exertion that he sees in anyone (Rom. 9:15-16). He hardened Pharaoh according to his purpose of displaying his glory in all the earth, and he sovereignly chooses to have mercy on whomever he will, to display the glory of his grace (Rom. 9:17; cf. Rom. 9:22-24). In sum, "Therefore, he has mercy on whom he will and he hardens whom he will" (Rom. 9:18).

We would do well to heed Christ's parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16): just because God chooses to have mercy upon some does not make him unjust or arbitrary for giving to others their just deserts. It is his free, undeserved mercy and grace that he holds forth in salvation, and he may do with it as he will. We may not fathom the deep and mysterious ways of God (Rom. 11:33-36); but woe to that one who foolishly says, "I see no reason for why God chooses some and not others, so he must be arbitrary and unjust". On the contrary, O foolish man, you would do well to say with Job, "Behold, I am of little worth; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand upon my mouth" (Job 40:4).

We would challenge you to wrestle with the following verses. Paul encountered this very same argument against election in Romans 9:18-23; that it would make God unjust and arbitrary:

18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

19 **You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who**

## **resists His will?"**

20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?

21 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

23 And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

To begin with, Paul would not ask this hypothetical question unless He believed the ultimate determination of one's salvation to be in the hands of God alone. Paul is saying that God has the sovereign right to do with us whatever He wants. Will you deny Him this right? This points to an even greater truth: that there is no higher principle in the universe than God Himself. The Hebrew God of the Bible is nothing like the Greek gods which must yield to some greater truth. God is the ultimate Truth and therefore, if He determines something it is, by definition, not arbitrary. In other words, there is no better reason for anything than the fact that God determines it. We should draw no comfort from the theology that promotes a god who must yield to something greater than Himself. Further, since we know the character of God we must not think that, on His side, God had no internal reasons or causes for saving some and not others - - "since the divine purpose always conspires with His wisdom and does nothing without reason or rashly; although these reasons and causes have not been revealed to us. In His counsels and works no cause is apparent, it is yet hidden with Him, so that He has decreed nothing except justly and wisely according to His good pleasure founded on His gracious love towards us." (Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics) **Just because we don't know His internal reason for choosing some to faith and not others is not reason enough to reject it.** In the absence of relevant data, we, therefore, have no reason whatsoever to assume the worse, so there are no legitimate grounds for doubting the goodness of God here. Therefore, to doubt that God can choose us based solely on his good pleasure, is to doubt the goodness of God. The "foreseen faith" people are, in effect, saying that they cannot trust God in making this choice and prefer it to be left up to the fallen individual, as if he would make a better choice than God. This would also make God's love toward us conditional and based on some inherent talent, wisdom or strength found in the individual rather than in God Himself.

## **Doesn't the doctrine of unconditional election take away human responsibility?**

In Romans 9, when Paul is declaring very certainly and indisputably the sovereign

choice of God in election, according to his own good pleasure and purposes alone, he raises up a hypothetical objection: If it is as you say, and salvation depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who elects, then how can he hold anyone responsible? Or in other words, “Why does he still find fault? for who has resisted his will?” (Rom. 9:19). Paul's response is very simple: “On the contrary, who are you, O man, to reply back to God? Shall the thing formed say to the one who formed it, 'Why have you made me thus'? Or does not the Potter have authority over the clay, out of the same lump to make one a vessel for honor and another a vessel for dishonor?” (Rom. 9:20-21). In other words, the God who made us has the right to use us either for the display of his just wrath or the display of his free mercy, and we have no grounds to object. He is our Creator and he does hold us responsible, whether we like it or not.

To help us understand the folly of this objection, let's consider a scenario: a foolish prodigal borrows millions of dollars from a bank; then, he squanders all the money in riotous living and is unable to repay his debt. So the bank hauls him to court, and is about to send him to debtor's prison. Now, another man had done the same thing before, and a goodhearted philanthropist decided to pay off that prodigal's debt entirely, but in this case, he does nothing. Now, if the foolish prodigal told the court, “I'm not responsible to pay you back! The philanthropist freely paid off the debt of the other prodigal, but he has clearly chosen not to pay off my debt, and I can't do it myself – I'm not at fault!”; would he therefore be right? He is unable to pay his own debt, and the philanthropist has sovereignly chosen not to help, so is the philanthropist the one at fault? Of course not: although the prodigal is unable to repay his debt, and although the philanthropist could pay it but chooses not to, even though he had chosen freely to repay the debt of the other, the fact remains that this foolish prodigal is still responsible for his own actions. How much more are we responsible for our sin debt to our Creator and Lawgiver, whether he chooses us for mercy or not?

### **Doesn't the doctrine of unconditional election make people into robots?**

The objection that God's absolute sovereignty in his choice of individuals for salvation or condemnation makes them into mere robots misunderstands and minimizes the glory of his power. God does not need to “put a gun to someone's head” or truss someone up with puppet strings to get his will done. He is so glorious a Creator and so wise in his providence that, as difficult a time as we have comprehending it, he can work all of his flawless and righteous designs through the willful choices of the wicked; and he can likewise perform his powerful work of sanctification through the freed and re-created wills of weak and sinful recipients of mercy.

Examples of the former truth appear all throughout the bible, for example in the case of Joseph and his brothers (Gen. 50:20); Haman, whose evil construction of a gallows

God sovereignly used to deliver the people for whom it was prepared by destroying their enemy (the book of Esther); Job, who was purified by the willfully antagonistic actions of the devil, etc.; yet the clearest example is the cross, where “there were gathered together in truth, against your holy child Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, to do as many things as your hand and your decree predestined to take place” (Acts 4:27-28). In other words, God is sovereign to accomplish his will through those whom he has predestined for judgment; but his purpose is accomplished through their willfully wicked actions (see also Acts 2:22-24).

The latter truth, that God does not mechanically force anyone to receive his grace, but works upon him to embrace free mercy in Christ with all his heart and will, is equally clear in the bible: when God chooses persons for salvation, he does not mechanically make their heart of stone acknowledge him with forced and empty words; he instead regenerates them, gives them a heart of flesh, creates in them a willingness to believe and embrace the Savior (see Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26-27; 37:3-6, 11-14; John 1:11-13; 3:3-8; 5:21; Eph. 2:1-5; Jam. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:3; 1 John 2:29; 5:1). His power is greater than the makers of computers and robots – he makes willing hearts, creates anew souls of fervent praise, calls forth the dead and makes them alive. We cannot accomplish our wills through another agent without coercion or forced constraint; but God is greater than we, and he can accomplish his eternal purpose through agents who work willfully and are morally responsible for all their actions. His people will not be forced to praise him; but as the psalmist says, “Your people will offer themselves up willingly in the day of your power” (Psalm 110:3). What power that is!

### **Doesn't the doctrine of unconditional election hinder evangelism and missions?**

Another objection that is often raised against the doctrine of unconditional election is that it hinders evangelism and missions. After all, if only the elect will come to faith, why should we evangelize everyone? In fact, if we cannot change anyone's heart, why evangelize at all? Should we not just repeat what John Ryland supposedly said to the zealous (and Calvinistic!) missionary William Carey: “Sit down, young man; when God wants to convert the heathen, he'll do it without your help and mine.”?

This objection has a twofold response: first, and most fundamentally, Christ has commanded us to evangelize all the nations (e.g. Mat. 28:18-20), and we do not have the option to refuse to obey our Lord because of our lack of understanding of his ways. And besides, the scriptures assure us that, even though God will certainly call out all his elect (and only his elect) from every nation, he will always do so only through the gospel-proclamation of his word (Rom. 10:13-17). He is not only sovereign over the end (the salvation of the elect), but also over the means to that end (the preaching of



the word).

But even beyond this, the fact is that, apart from God's unconditional election, evangelism and missions would be utterly hopeless. Naturally, there is none who is capable of obeying the gospel, believing in Christ, understanding the things of the Spirit, or seeking God (John 3:3, 27; 6:44, 65; 8:43-45; 10:26; 12:37-41; 14:17; 1 Cor 2:14; Rom. 3:10-11); so then, the doctrine of God's sovereign election, which overcomes those impossible barriers, is a necessary foundation for missions. Thus, when Paul was discouraged by opposition in Corinth, God comforted him by reminding him that he had already chosen many people in that city (Acts 18:9-10). The truth that with men salvation is impossible would be a hindrance to evangelism were it not for the truth of God's unconditional election, which does the impossible (see Matthew 19:26).

### **What is “double predestination,” and does the bible teach it?**

The term “double predestination” simply means that, just as God predestines some, but not all, to eternal salvation, so he predestines others to eternal punishment; this second part of “double” predestination, God's appointment of all but the elect unto eternal destruction, is sometimes called “reprobation”; and those who are not the elect are thus called the “reprobate”. Logically, the doctrine of reprobation is necessarily true if the following premises can be established: 1) God sovereignly chooses some men for salvation; 2) God does not choose all men for salvation; 3) there is no possibility of obtaining salvation apart from God's sovereign election thereunto. In other words, if God has chosen infallibly to save some, and has cut off any other means of salvation for all others, he has effectively made a choice concerning every person that has lived; he has chosen either to save him or to cut him off from all hope of salvation. Each of these premises may certainly be found in the bible; and so, it is manifest that God's eternal choice involves the salvation of some and the damnation of others.

The doctrine of double predestination is frequently argued against in the most passionate of terms, in large part because of a gross misunderstanding of what the doctrine actually asserts. Opponents of the doctrine often operate under the assumption that the way in which God brings the elect to salvation must be precisely the same as the way in which he brings the reprobate to damnation. Of course, salvation has its beginnings in the sovereign, monergistic work of God in regeneration, so that all credit is due to him. If double predestination is true, some people suppose, then God must also be sovereignly responsible for the beginnings of damnation in the reprobate: he must monergistically produce sin in the hearts of the non-elect, which will ultimately end in eternal judgment. This understanding of double predestination makes God the author of sin, and is utterly unbiblical.

However, even if we must reject the distortion of double predestination that sees God as monergistically producing sin unto condemnation just as he monergistically produces faith unto salvation, we must also reject the denial of double predestination in any sense. God is not the author of sin, but he does harden sinful men for his own righteous purposes of judgment. The bible is clear that just as God chooses some for mercy and salvation, he chooses others for judicial hardening and reprobation: when he loved Jacob, even before his birth, he also hated Esau at the same time (Rom. 9:10-13); when he chose to save Israel from Egypt for the glory of his grace, he also chose to raise up Pharaoh in hardened rebellion, for the glory of his wrath (Rom. 9:17-18); and in fact, he does this with all men, choosing from the same lump of human clay some to make into vessels of honor and some to make into vessels of dishonor, in order to show by the one class the glory of his mercy and by the other class the glory of his judgment and wrath (Rom. 9:21-23). Nor is it just the apostle Paul who speaks to this issue so clearly: Peter also speaks of those to whom Christ is the precious Cornerstone of salvation and those who stumble against him to their eternal destruction; and of those who are reprobate, he says clearly that they were “predestined” to disobey the word and so to perish (1 Pet. 2:6-8).

The great reformed confessions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries deal wisely and biblically with this question, on the one hand affirming the doctrine of double predestination, but on the other hand guarding against the error of charging God with culpability for sin. A good example comes from the Westminster Confession of Faith:

“As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected . . . are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power, through faith, unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only. The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as He pleaseth, for the glory of His Sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by; and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.” (Chap. III — Art. VI and VII)

**What do the terms “supralapsarianism,” and “infralapsarianism” mean, and does the bible teach one or the other?**

The terms “supralapsarianism,” and “infralapsarianism” (sometimes called “sublapsarianism”) have to do with the logical order of God's eternal decrees of salvation. The question, basically, is this: did God's decree to save a certain people come before (supra) or after (infra) his decree to permit the fall (laps). Infralapsarians argue that, in order not to charge God with injustice or sin, it is necessary that God's

election of men to salvation be made from a field of men who are sinners already; hence, the decree to ordain the fall must logically come before the decree to elect men to salvation. Otherwise, in ordaining to destruction men who had not yet fallen, the charge could be made against God that he was responsible for their sin and rebellion, which his eternal plan demanded of them. But no, the supralapsarian responds, God's eternal plan to redeem some and not others from the outset, while requiring sin and the Fall, does not logically make God culpable, and furthermore, it better fits the biblical evidence of God's prerogative to use evil for the accomplishment of his prior designs. God's ultimate purpose for creation and redemptive history is the triumph of the Lamb both in the destruction of his enemies and the salvation of his people; and this plan logically requires the existence of sin, and also of God's triumph over that sin through righteous judgment and sovereign mercy. If God's ultimate purpose in history is the display of his glory in the person and work of Christ; and if the manifold glory of Christ includes righteous wrath against sin; then God's eternal purpose of redemption necessitated the Fall, and did not just respond to it.

The basic schema of infralapsarianism and supralapsarianism may be displayed as follows:

### **Infralapsarianism**

1. the decree to create the world and (all) men
2. the decree that (all) men would fall
3. the election of some fallen men to salvation in Christ (and the reprobation of the others)
4. the decree to redeem the elect by the cross work of Christ
5. the decree to apply Christ's redemptive benefits to the elect

### **Supralapsarianism (historical)**

1. the election of some men to salvation in Christ (and the reprobation of the others)
2. the decree to create the world and both kinds of men
3. the decree that all men would fall
4. the decree to redeem the elect, who are now sinners, by the cross work of Christ
5. the decree to apply Christ's redemptive benefits to these elect sinners

These lists display the traditional understandings of the lapsarian question. However, recent theologians have noted that neither list accurately depicts the logical way in which all reasonable creatures pursue their goals: first, they determine what they ultimately and primarily want, and then they walk backwards, as it were, through all the steps necessary to get there. If God's ultimate goal is the glory of the Lamb in sovereign mercy and righteous judgment, then there is a need for sinners; if there are to be sinners, there must be a fall; if there is a fall, there must be a world created in

righteousness; hence, the logical order of God's decrees would be a modified supralapsarianism, as follows:

### **Supralapsarianism (modified)**

1. the election of some men to salvation in Christ (and the reprobation of the rest of sinful mankind in order to make known the riches of God's gracious mercy to the elect)
2. the decree to apply Christ's redemptive benefits to the elect sinners
3. the decree to redeem the elect sinners by the cross work of Christ
4. the decree that men should fall
5. the decree to create the world and men

In any discussion of the lapsarian debate, it should be emphasized what all the views have in common: and that is, that God decreed all the events of his eternal redemption from before the creation of the world. Logically, perhaps, the last scheme is the most defensible; however, no position should be so heartily embraced as to be made binding upon men's consciences; the scriptures do not address the topic clearly enough for so firm an adherence. Perhaps a story from the life of Martin Luther would be instructive here: when some inquisitive theologian asked him what God was doing before he created the world, Luther quipped, "He was busy creating hell for foolish theologians who pry into such questions". The response is a little tongue-in-cheek, of course, but perhaps there is some wisdom in it, particularly when we are addressing the lapsarian question.

## **Election**

**J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)**

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"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."— 1 Thessalonians i. 4

"Give diligence to make your calling and election sure."— 2 Peter i. 10

The texts which head this page contain a word of peculiar interest. It is a word which is often in men's minds, and on men's tongues, from one end of Great Britain to the other. That word is "Election."

There are few Englishmen who do not know something of a general election to Parliament. Many are the evils which come to the surface at such a time. Bad passions are called out. Old quarrels are dug up, and new ones are planted. Promises are made, like piecrust, only to be broken. False profession, lying, drunkenness, intimidation,

oppression, flattery, abound on every side. At no time perhaps does human nature make such a poor exhibition of itself as at a general election!

Yet, it is only fair to look at all sides of an election to Parliament. There is nothing new, or peculiarly English, about its evils. In every age, and in every part of the world, the heart of man is pretty much the same. There have never been wanting men ready to persuade others that they are not so well governed as they ought to be, and that they themselves are the fittest rulers that can be found. A thousand years before Christ was born the following picture was drawn by the unerring hand of the Holy Ghost: —

Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel.

And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee.

Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which bath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!

And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him." (2 Sam. xv. 2-5.)

When we read this passage we must learn not to judge our own times too harshly. The evils that we see are neither peculiar nor new.

After all, we must never forget that popular election, with all its evils, is far better than an absolute form of government. To live under the dominion of an absolute tyrant, who allows no one to think, speak, or act for himself, is miserable slavery. For the sake of liberty we must put up with all the evils which accompany the return of members to Parliament. We must each do our duty conscientiously, and learn to expect little from any party. If those we support succeed, we must not think that all they do will be right. If those we oppose succeed, we must not think that all they do will be wrong. To expect little from any earthly ruler is one great secret of contentment. To pray for all who are in authority, and to judge all their actions charitably, is one of the principal duties of a Christian.

But there is another Election, which is of far higher importance than any election to Parliament, — an Election whose consequences will abide, when Queen, Lords, and Commons have passed away, — an Election which concerns all classes, the lowest as well as the highest, the women as well as the men. It is the Election which the Scriptures call "the Election of God."

I ask the readers of this paper to give me their attention for a few minutes, while I try to set before them the subject of this Election. Believe me, it affects your eternal happiness most deeply. Whether you are in Parliament or not, whether you vote or not, whether you are on the winning side or not, all this will matter very little a hundred years hence. But it will matter greatly whether you are in the number of "God's Elect."

In handling the subject of Election, there are only two things which I propose to do.

- I. Firstly, I will state the doctrine of Election, and show what it is.
- II. Secondly, I will fence the subject with cautions, and guard it against abuse.

If I can make these two points clear and plain to the mind of all who read these pages, I think I shall have done their souls a great and essential service.

I. I have firstly to state the doctrine of Election. What is it? What does it mean?

Accurate statements on this point are of great importance. No doctrine of Scripture perhaps has suffered so much damage from the erroneous conceptions of foes, and the incorrect descriptions of friends, as that which is now before us.

The true doctrine of Election I believe to be as follows. God has been pleased from all eternity to choose certain men and women out of mankind, whom by His counsel secret to us, He has decreed to save by Jesus Christ. None are finally saved except those who are thus chosen. Hence, the Scripture gives to God's people in several places the names of "God's Elect," and the choice or appointment of them to eternal life is called "God's election."

Those men and women whom God has been pleased to choose from all eternity, He calls in time, by His Spirit working in due season. He convinces them of sin. He leads them to Christ. He works in them repentance and faith. He converts, renews, and sanctifies them. He keeps them by His grace from falling away entirely, and finally brings them safe to glory. In short, God's eternal Election is the first link in that chain of a sinner's salvation of which heavenly glory is the end. None ever repent, believe, and are born again, except the Elect. The primary and original cause of a saint's being what he is, is eternal God's election.

The doctrine here stated, no doubt, is peculiarly deep, mysterious, and hard to understand. We have no eyes to see it fully. We have no line to fathom it thoroughly. No part of the Christian religion has been so much disputed, rejected, and reviled as this. None has called forth so much of that enmity against God which is the grand mark of the carnal mind. Thousands of so-called Christians profess to believe the Atonement, salvation by grace, and justification by faith, and yet refuse to look at the

doctrine of Election. The very mention of the word to some persons is enough to call forth expressions of anger, ill-temper, and passion.

But, after all, is the doctrine of Election plainly stated in Scripture? This is the whole question which an honest Christian has to do with. If it is not in the Book of God, let it be forever discarded, refused, and rejected by man, no matter who propounds it. If it is there, let us receive it with reverence, as a part of Divine revelation, and humbly believe, even where we are not able to understand completely or explain fully. What then is written in the Scriptures? "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isaiah. viii. 20.) Is Election in the Bible, or is it not? Does the Bible speak of certain persons as God's Elect, or not?

Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ says: —

"For the Elect's sake the days shall be shortened." (Matt. xxiv. 22.)

"If it were possible they should deceive even the Elect." (Mark xiii. 22.)

"He shall send His angels, and they shall gather together His Elect." (Matt. xxiv. 31.)

"Shall not God avenge His own Elect?" (Luke xviii. 7.)

Hear what St. Paul says: —

"Whom He did foreknow, 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." (Rom. viii. 29, 30.)

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's Elect?" (Rom. viii. 33.)

"God hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." (Ephes. i. 4.)

"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim. i. 9.)

"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (2 Thess. ii. 13.)

Hear what St. Peter says —

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter i. 2.)

"Give diligence to make your calling and Election sure." (2 Peter i. 10.)

I place these eleven texts before my readers, and I ask them to consider them well. If words have any meaning at all, they appear to me to teach most plainly the doctrine of personal Election. In the face of such texts I dare not refuse to believe that it is a Scriptural doctrine. I dare not, as an honest man, shut my eyes against the plain, obvious sense of Bible language. If I once began to do so, I should have no ground to stand on in pressing the Gospel on an unconverted man. I could not expect him to believe one set of texts to be true, if I did not believe another set. The eleven texts above quoted seem to my mind to prove conclusively that personal Election is a doctrine of Scripture. As such I must receive it, and I must believe it, however difficult it may be. As such I ask my readers this day to look at it calmly, weigh it seriously, and receive it as God's truth.

After all, whatever men may please to say, there is no denying that the Election of some men and women to salvation is a simple matter of fact. That all professing Christians are not finally saved, but only some, — that those who are saved owe their salvation entirely to the free grace of God and the calling of His Spirit, — that no man can at all explain why some are called unto salvation and others are not called, — all these are things which no Christian who looks around him can pretend for a moment to deny. Yet what does all this come to but the doctrine of Election?

Right views of human nature are certain to lead us to the same conclusion. Once admit that we are all naturally dead in trespasses and sins, and have no power to turn to God, — once admit that all spiritual life in the heart of man must begin with God, — once admit that He who created the world by saying, "Let there be light," must shine into man's heart, and create light within him, — once admit that God does not enlighten all professing Christians in this manner, but only some, and that He acts in this matter entirely as a Sovereign, giving no account of His matters, — once admit all this, and then see where you are. Whether you know it or not, you admit the whole doctrine of Election!

Right views of God's nature and character, as revealed in the Bible, appear to me to bring us to the same position. Do we believe that God knows all things from all eternity, — that He governs all things by His providence, and that not even a sparrow falleth to the ground without Him? Do we believe that He works all His works by a plan, like an architect of perfect knowledge, and that nothing concerning His saints, as His choicest and most excellent work, is left to chance, accident, and luck? — Well, if we believe all this, we believe the whole doctrine which this paper is meant to support. This is the doctrine of Election.

Now what can be said in reply to these things? What are the principal weapons of



argument with which Election is assailed? Let us see.

Some tell us that there is no such thing in Scripture as an Election of persons and individuals. Such an Election, they say, would be arbitrary, unjust, unfair, partial, and unkind. The only Election they admit is one of nations, churches, communities, — such as Israel in ancient times, and Christian nations, as compared to heathen nations, in our own day. Now is there anything in this objection that will stand? I believe there is nothing at all. — For one thing, the Election spoken of in Scripture is an Election attended by the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost. This certainly is not the Election of nations. For another thing St. Paul himself draws a clear and sharply-cut distinction between Israel itself and the Election. "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the Election hath obtained it." (Rom. xi. 7.) — Last, but not least, the advocates of the theory of national Election gain nothing whatever by it. How can they account for God withholding the knowledge of Christianity from 350 millions of Chinese for 1800 years, and yet spreading it over the continent of Europe? They cannot, except on the ground of God's sovereign will and His free Election! So that, in fact, they are driven to take up the very same position which they blame us for defending, and denounce as arbitrary and uncharitable.

Some tell us that at any rate Election is not the doctrine of the Church of England. It may do very well for dissenters and Presbyterians, but not for churchmen. "It is a mere piece of Calvinism," they say, — "an extravagant notion which came from Geneva, and deserves no credit among those who love the Prayer-book." Such people would do well to look at the end of their Prayer books, and to read the Thirty-nine Articles. Let them turn to the 17th Article, and mark the following words:

Predestination to Life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) He hath constantly decreed by His counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom He hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore, they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God be called according to God's purpose by His Spirit working in due season: they through grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.

I commend that Article to the special attention of all English Churchmen. It is one of the sheet-anchors of sound doctrine in the present day. It never can be reconciled with baptismal regeneration! A wiser statement of the true doctrine of personal Election was never penned by the hand of uninspired man. It is thoroughly well-balanced and judiciously proportioned. In the face of such an Article it is simply ridiculous to say that the Church of England does not hold the doctrine of this paper.

In controverted matters I desire to speak courteously and cautiously. I wish to make allowance for the many varieties of men's temperaments, which insensibly affect our religious opinions, and for the lasting effect of early prejudices. I freely concede that Wesley, Fletcher, and a whole host of excellent Methodists and Arminians, have always denied Election, and that many deny it to this day. I do not say that to hold Election is absolutely necessary to salvation, though to be one of God's Elect undoubtedly is necessary. But I cannot call any man my master in theological matters. My own eyes see the doctrine of personal Election most clearly stated both in Scripture and the 17th Article of the Church of England. I cannot give it up. I believe firmly that it is an important part of God's truth, and one which to godly persons is "full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort."

II. The next thing that I wish to do is to fence the doctrine of Election with cautions, and to guard it against abuse.

This is a branch of the subject which I hold to be of vast importance. All revealed truth is liable to be wrested and perverted. It is one of Satan's chief devices to make the Gospel odious by tempting men to distort it. Perhaps no part of Christian theology has suffered so much damage in this way as the doctrine of personal Election. Let me proceed to explain what I mean.

"I am not one of God's Elect," says one man. "It is no use for me to do anything at all in religion. It is waste of time for me to keep the Sabbath, attend the public worship of God, read my Bible, say my prayers. If I am to be saved, I shall be saved. If I am to be lost, I shall be lost. In the mean time I sit still and wait." This is a sore disease of soul. But I fear it is a very common one!

"I am one of God's Elect," says another man. "I am sure to be saved and go to heaven at last, no matter how I may live and go on. Exhortations to holiness are legal. Recommendations to watch, and crucify self, are bondage. Though I fall, God sees no sin in me and loves me all the same. Though I often give way to temptation, God will not let me be altogether lost. Where is the use of doubts and fears and anxieties? I am confident I am one of the Elect, and as such I shall be found in glory." This again, is a sore disease. But I fear it is not altogether uncommon.

Now what shall he said to men who talk in this way? They need to be told very plainly that they are wresting a truth of the Bible to their own destruction, and turning meat into poison. They need to be reminded that their notion of Election is a miserably unscriptural one. Election according to the Bible is a very different thing from what they suppose it to be. It is most intimately connected with other truths of equal importance with itself, and from these truths it ought never to be separated. Truths which God has joined together no man should ever dare to put asunder.

(a) For one thing, the doctrine of Election was never meant to destroy man's responsibility for the state of his own soul. The Bible everywhere addresses men as free-agents, as beings accountable to God, and not as mere logs, and bricks, and stones. It is false to say that it is useless to tell men to cease to do evil, to learn to do well, to repent, to believe, to turn to God, to pray. Everywhere in Scripture it is a leading principle that man can lose his own soul, that if he is lost at last it will be his own fault, and his blood will be on his own head. The same inspired Bible which reveals this doctrine of Election is the Bible which contains the words, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" — "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life." — "This is the condemnation, that light is come into this world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (Ezek. xviii. 31; John v. 40; iii. 19.) The Bible never says that sinners miss heaven because they are not Elect, but because they "neglect the great salvation," and because they will not repent and believe. The last judgment will abundantly prove that it is not the want of God's Election, so much as laziness, the love of sin, unbelief, and unwillingness to come to Christ, which ruins the souls that are lost.

(b) For another thing, the doctrine of Election was never meant to prevent the fullest, freest offer of salvation to every sinner. In preaching and trying to do good we are warranted and commanded to set an open door before every man, woman, and child, and to invite every one to come in. We know not who are God's Elect, and whom he means to call and convert. Our duty is to invite all. To every unconverted soul without exception we ought to say, "God loves you, and Christ has died for you." To everyone we ought to say, "Awake, — repent, — believe, — come to Christ, — be converted, — turn, — call upon God, — strive to enter in, — come, for all things are ready." To tell us that none will hear and be saved except God's Elect, is quite needless. We know it very well. But to tell us that on that account it is useless to offer salvation to any at all, is simply absurd. Who are we that we should pretend to know who will be found God's Elect at last? No! indeed. Those who now seem first may prove last, and those who seem last may prove first in the judgment day. We will invite all, in the firm belief that the invitation will do good to some. We will prophesy to the dry bones, if God commands us. We will offer life to all, though many reject the offer. In so doing we believe that we walk in the steps of our Master and His Apostles.

(c) For another thing, Election can only be known by its fruits. The Elect of God can only be discerned from those who are not Elect by their faith and life. We cannot climb up into the secret of God's eternal counsels. We cannot read the book of life. The fruits of the Spirit, seen and manifested in a man's conversation, are the only grounds on which we can ascertain that he is one of God's Elect. Where the marks of God's Elect can be seen, there, and there only, have we any warrant for saying "this is one of the Elect." — How do I know that yon distant ship on the horizon of the sea has any pilot or steersman on board? I cannot with the best telescope discern anything but her masts and sails. Yet I see her steadily moving in one direction. That is enough

for me. I know by this that there is a guiding hand on board, though I cannot see it. Just so it is with God's Election. The eternal decree we cannot possibly see. But the result of that decree cannot be hid. It was when St. Paul remembered the faith and hope and love of the Thessalonians, that he cried, I "know your Election of God." (1 Thess. i. 4.) For ever let us hold fast this principle in considering the subject before us. To talk of any one being Elect when he is living in sin, is nothing better than blasphemous folly. The Bible knows of no Election except through "sanctification," — no eternal choosing except that we should be "holy," — no predestination except to be "conformed to the image of God's Son." When these things are lacking, it is mere waste of time to talk of Election. (1 Pet. i. 2; Ephes. i. 4; Rom. viii. 29.)

(d) Last, but not least, Election was never intended to prevent men making a diligent use of all means of grace. On the contrary, the neglect of means is a most suspicious symptom, and should make us very doubtful about the state of a man's soul. Those whom the Holy Ghost draws He always draws to the written Word of God and to prayer. When there is the real grace of God in a heart, there will always be love to the means of grace. What saith the Scripture? The very Christians at Rome to whom St. Paul wrote about foreknowledge and predestination, are the same to whom Ire says, "Continue instant in prayer." (Rom. xii. 12.) The very Ephesians who were "chosen before the foundation of the world:" are the same to whom it is said, "Put on the whole armour of God — take the sword of the Spirit — pray always with all prayer." (Ephes. vi. 18.) The very Thessalonians whose Election Paul said he "knew," are the Christians to whom he cries in the same Epistle, "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thess. v. 17.) The very Christians whom Peter calls "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," are the same to whom he says, "Desire the sincere milk of the Word — watch unto prayer." (1 Pet. ii. 2; iv. 7.) The evidence of texts like these is simply unanswerable and overwhelming. I shall not waste time by making any comment on them. An Election to salvation which teaches men to dispense with the use of all means of grace, may please ignorant people, fanatics, and Antinomians. But I take leave to say that it is an Election of which I can find no mention in God's Word.

I know not that I can wind up this part of my subject better than by quoting the latter part of the Seventeenth Article of the Church of England. I commend it to the special attention of all my readers, and particularly the last paragraph. — "As the godly consideration of Predestnation, and our Election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things, as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal Salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God: so, for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's Predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living, no hem

perilous than desperation.

"Furthermore, we must receive God's promises in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in holy Scripture: and, in our doings, that will of God is to be followed which we have expressly declared unto us in the Word of God."

These are wise words. This is sound speech that cannot be condemned. For ever let us cling to the principle contained in this statement. Well would it have been for the Church of Christ, if the doctrine of Election had always been handled in this fashion. Well would it be for all Christians who feel puzzled by the heights and depths of this mighty doctrine, if they would remember the words of Scripture, — "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this Law." (Deut. xxix. 29.)

I will now conclude the whole subject with a few plain words of personal application.

(1) First of all let me entreat every reader of this paper not to refuse this doctrine of Election, merely because it is high, mysterious, and hard to be understood. Is it reverent to do so? Is it treating God's Word with the respect due to revelation? Is it right to reject anything written for our learning, and to give it hard names, merely because some misguided men have misused it, and turned it to a bad purpose? These are serious questions. They deserve serious consideration. If men begin rejecting a truth of Scripture merely because they do not like it, they are on slippery ground. There is no saying how far they may fall.

What after all do men gain by refusing the doctrine of Election? Does the system of those who deny Election save one soul more than that of those who hold it? Certainly not. — Do those who hold Election narrow the way to heaven, and make salvation more difficult than those who deny it? Certainly not. — The opponents of Election maintain that none will be saved except those who repent and believe. Well: the advocates of Election say just the same! — The opponents of Election proclaim loudly that none but holy people go to heaven. Well: the advocates of Election proclaim the same doctrine just as loudly! — What then, I ask once more, is gained by denying the truth of Election? I answer, Nothing whatever. And yet, while nothing is gained, a great deal of comfort seems to be lost. It is cold comfort to be told that God never thought on me before I repented and believed. But to know and feel that God had purposes of mercy toward me before the foundation of the world, and that all the work of grace in my heart is the result of an everlasting covenant and an eternal Election, is a thought full of sweet and unspeakable consolation. A work that was planned before the foundation of the world, by an Architect of almighty power and perfect wisdom, is a work which will never be allowed to fail and be overthrown.

(2) In the next place, let me entreat every reader of this paper to approach this

doctrine of Election from the right end, and not to confuse his mind by inverting the order of truth. Let him begin with the first elements of Christianity, — with simple repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and so work his way toward Election. Let him not waste his time by beginning with inquiries about his own Election. Let him rather attend first to the plain marks of an Elect man, and never rest till these marks are his own. Let him break off from all known sin, and flee to Christ for pardon, peace, mercy, and grace. Let him cry mightily to God in prayer, and give the Lord no rest till he feels within him the real witness of the Spirit. He that begins in this fashion will thank God one day for His electing grace, in eternity if not in time. It is an old and quaint saying, but a very true one: "A man must first go to the little Grammar-school of Repentance and Faith, before he enters the great University of Election and Predestination."

The plain truth is, that God's scheme of salvation is like a ladder let down from heaven to earth, to bring together the holy God, and the sinful creature, man. God is at the top of the ladder and man is at the bottom. — The top of the ladder is far above, out of our sight, and we have no eyes to see it. There, at the top of that ladder, are God's eternal purposes, — His everlasting covenant, His Election, His predestination of a people to be saved by Christ. From the top of that ladder comes down that full and rich provision of mercy for sinners which is revealed to us in the Gospel. — The bottom of that ladder is close to sinful man on earth, and consists of the simple steps of repentance and faith. By them he must begin to climb upwards. In the humble use of them he shall mount higher and higher every year, and get clearer glimpses of good things yet to come. — What can be more plain than the duty of using the steps which are close to our hands? What can be more foolish than to say, I will not put my foot on the steps at the bottom, until I clearly understand the steps at the top? Away with such perverse and childish reasonings! Common sense alone might tell us the path of duty, if we would only make use of it. That duty is to use simple truths honestly, and then to believe that higher truths will one day be made plain to our eyes. How, and in what manner the love of the eternal God comes down to us, may have much about it which is hard for poor worms like us to understand. But how we poor sinners are to draw near to God is clear and plain as the sun at noon-day. Jesus Christ stands before us, saying, "Come unto Me!" Let us not waste time in doubting, quibbling, and disputing. Let us come to Christ at once, just as we are. Let us lay hold and believe!

(3) In the last place, let me entreat every true Christian who reads this paper to remember the exhortation of St Peter, — "Give diligence, to make your calling and Election sure." (2 Pet. i. 10.)

Surer in the sight of God than your Election has been from all eternity, you cannot make it. With Him there is no uncertainty. Nothing that God does for His people is left to chance, or liable to change. But surer and more evident to yourself and to the Church, your Election can be made; and this is the point that I wish to press on your

attention. Strive to obtain such well-grounded assurance of hope that, as St. John says, you may "know that you know Christ." (1 John ii. 3.) Strive so to live and walk in this world that all may take knowledge of you as one of God's children, and feel no doubt that you are going to heaven.

Listen not for a moment to those who tell you that in this life we can never be sure of our own spiritual state, and must always be in doubt. The Roman Catholics say so. The ignorant world says so. The devil says so. But the Bible says nothing of the kind. There is such a thing as strong assurance of our acceptance in Christ, and a Christian should never rest till he has obtained it. That a man may be saved without this strong assurance I do not deny. But that without it he misses a great privilege, and much comfort, I am quite sure.

Strive, then, with all diligence, "to make your calling and Election sure." — "Lay aside every weight and the sins that most easily beset you." (Heb. xii. 2.) Be ready to cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye, if need be. Settle it firmly in your mind, that it is the highest privilege on this side the grave to know that you are one of the children of God.

They that contend for place and office in this world are sure to be disappointed. When they have done all and succeeded to the uttermost, their honours are thoroughly unsatisfying, and their rewards are short-lived. Seats in Parliament and places in Cabinets must all be vacated one day. At best they can only be held for a few years. But he that is one of God's Elect has a treasure which can never be taken from him, and a place from which he can never be removed. Blessed is that man who sets his heart on this Election. There is no election like the Election of God!

## **Unconditional Election**

**by Loraine Boettner**

1. Statement of the Doctrine. 2. Proof from Scripture. 3. Proof from Reason. 4. Faith and Good Works are the Fruits and Proof, not the Basis, of Election. 5. Reprobation. 6. Infralapsarianism and Supralapsarianism. 7. Many are Chosen. 8. A Redeemed World or Race. 9. Vastness of the Redeemed Multitude. 10. The World is Growing Better. 11. Infant Salvation. 12. Summary.

### **1. STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE**

The doctrine of Election is to be looked upon as only a particular application of the general doctrine of Predestination or Foreordination as it relates to the salvation of

sinners; and since the Scriptures are concerned mainly with the redemption of sinners, this part of the doctrine is naturally thrown up into a place of special prominence. It partakes of all the elements of the general doctrine; and since it is the act of an infinite moral Person, it is represented as being the eternal, absolute, immutable, effective determination by His will of the objects of His saving operations. And no aspect of this elective choice is more constantly emphasized than that of its absolute sovereignty.

The Reformed Faith has held to the existence of an eternal, divine decree which, antecedently to any difference or desert in men themselves separates the human race into two portions and ordains one to everlasting life and the other to everlasting death. So far as this decree relates to men it designates the counsel of God concerning those who had a supremely favorable chance in Adam to earn salvation, but who lost that chance. As a result of the fall they are guilty and corrupted; their motives are wrong and they cannot work out their own salvation. They have forfeited all claim upon God's mercy, and might justly have been left to suffer the penalty of their disobedience as all of the fallen angels were left. But instead the elect members of this race are rescued from this state of guilt and sin and are brought into a state of blessedness and holiness. The non-elect are simply left in their previous state of ruin, and are condemned for their sins. They suffer no unmerited punishment, for God is dealing with them not merely as men but as sinners.

The Westminster Confession states the doctrine thus: "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated to everlasting life, and others are foreordained to everlasting death.

"These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

"Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of His mere grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto; and all to the praise of His glorious grace.

"As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Whereby they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power through faith unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.



"The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice." [Ch. III, sections III-VII. ]

It is important that we shall have a clear understanding of this doctrine of divine Election, for our views in regard to it determine our views of God, man, the world, and redemption. As Calvin rightly says, "We shall never be clearly convinced as we ought to be that our salvation flows from the fountain of God's free mercy, till we are acquainted with this eternal election, which illustrates the grace of God by this comparison, that He adopts not all promiscuously to the hope of salvation but gives to some what he refuses to others. Ignorance of this principle evidently detracts from the divine glory, and diminishes real humility." [*Institutes*, Book III, Ch. XXI, sec. I.] Calvin admits that this doctrine arouses very perplexing questions in the minds of some, for, says he, "they consider nothing more unreasonable than that of the common mass of mankind, some should be predestinated to salvation; and others to destruction."

The Reformed theologians consistently applied this principle to the actual experience of spiritual phenomena which they themselves felt and saw in others about them. The divine purpose, or Predestination, alone could explain the distinction between good and evil, between the saint and the sinner.

## **2. PROOF FROM SCRIPTURE**

The first question which we need to ask ourselves then, is, Do we find this doctrine taught in the Scriptures? Let us turn to Paul's letter to the Ephesians. There we read: "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love; having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will," 1:4, 5. In Romans 8:29, 30 we read of that golden chain of redemption which stretches from the eternity that is past to the eternity that is to come, "For whom He foreknew, He o foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He foreordained, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Foreknown, foreordained, called, justified, glorified, with always the same people included in each group; and where one of these factors is present, all the others are in principle present with it.

Paul has cast the verse in the past tense because with God the purpose is in principle executed when formed, so certain is it of fulfillment. "These five golden links," says Dr. Warfield, "are welded together in one unbreakable chain, so that all who are set upon in God's gracious distinguishing view are carried on by His grace, step by step,

up to the great consummation of that glorification which realizes the promised conformity to the image of God's own Son. It is 'election,' you see, that does all this; for 'whom He foreknew, . . . . them He also glorified'." [Pamphlet, *Election*, p. 10.]

The Scriptures represent election as occurring in past time, irrespective of personal merit, and altogether sovereign, "The children being not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth, it was said to her, The elder shall serve the younger. Even as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated," Romans 9:11, 12. Now if the doctrine of election is not true, we may safely challenge any man to tell us what the apostle means by such language. "We are pointed illustratively to the sovereign acceptance of Isaac and rejection of Ishmael, and to the choice of Jacob and not of Esau before their birth and therefore before either had done good or bad; we are explicitly told that in the matter of salvation it is not of him that wills, or of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy, and that He has mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardens; we are pointedly directed to behold in God the potter who makes the vessels which proceed from His hand each for an end of His appointment, that He may work out His will upon them. It is safe to say that language cannot be chosen better adapted to teach Predestination at its height." [Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines*, p. 50.]

Even if we were without any other inspired utterances than those quoted from Paul, so clear and unambiguous are those that we should be constrained to admit that the doctrine of Election finds a place in Scripture. By looking at the Scripture references in the Confession of Faith, we find that it is abundantly sustained in the Bible. If we admit the inspiration of the Bible; if we admit that the writings of the prophets and apostles were breathed by the Spirit of God, and are thus infallible, then what we find there will be sufficient; and thus on the irrefutable testimony of the Scriptures we must acknowledge Election, or Predestination, to be an established truth, and one which we must receive if we are to possess the whole counsel of God. 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.

Christ explicitly declared to His disciples, "Ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit," John 15:16, by which He made God's choice primary and man's choice only secondary and a result of the former. The Arminian, however, in making salvation depend upon man's choice to use or abuse proffered grace reverses this order and makes man's choice the primary and decisive one. There is no place in the Scriptures for an election which is carefully adjusted to the foreseen actions of the creature. The divine will is never made dependent on the creaturely will for its determinations.

Again the sovereignty of this choice is clearly taught when Paul declares that God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (Romans 5:8), and that Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6). Here we see that His love was not extended toward us because we were good, but in spite of the fact that we were bad. It is God who chooses the person and causes him to approach unto Him (Psalm 65:4). Arminianism takes this choice out of the hands of God and places it in the hands of man. Any system which substitutes a man-made election falls below the Scripture teaching on this subject.

In the darkest days of Israel's apostasy, as in every other age, it was this principle of election which made a difference between mankind and kept a remnant secure. "Yet will I leave me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him," 1 Kings 19:18. These seven thousand did not stand by their own strength; it is expressly said that God reserved them to Himself, that they might be a remnant.

It is for the sake of the elect that God governs the course of all history (Mark 13:20). They are "the salt of the earth," and "the light of the world;" and so far at least in the world's history they are the few through whom the many are blessed, God blessed the household of Potiphar for Joseph's sake; and ten righteous people would have saved the city of Sodom. Their election, of course, includes the opportunity of hearing the gospel and receiving the gifts of grace, for without these means the great end of election would not be attained. They are, in fact, elected to all that is included in the idea of eternal life.

Apart from this election of individuals to life, there has been what we may call a national election, or a divine predestination of nations and communities to a knowledge of true religion and to the external privileges of the Gospel. God undoubtedly does choose some nations to receive much greater spiritual and temporal blessings than others. This form of election has been well illustrated in the Jewish nation, in certain European nations and communities, and in America. The contrast is very striking when we compare these with other nations such as China, Japan, India, etc.

Throughout the Old Testament it is repeatedly stated that the Jews were a chosen people. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth," Amos 3:2. "He hath not dealt so with any (other) nation; And as for His ordinances, they have not known them," Psalm 147:20. "For thou art a holy people unto Jehovah thy God: Jehovah thy God hath chosen thee to be a people for His own possession, above all the peoples that are upon the face of the earth," Deuteronomy 7:6. It is made equally plain that God found no merit or dignity in the Jews themselves which moved Him to choose them above others. "Jehovah did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any other people; for ye were the fewest of all peoples: but

because Jehovah loveth you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore unto your fathers, hath Jehovah brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." Deuteronomy 7:7, 8. And again, "Only Jehovah had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them, even above all peoples," Deuteronomy 10:15. Here it is carefully explained, that Israel was honored with the divine choice in contrast with the treatment accorded all the other peoples of the earth, that the choice rested solely on the unmerited love of God, and that It had no foundation in Israel itself.

When Paul was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel in the province of Asia, and was given the vision of a man in Europe calling across the waters, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us," one section of the world was sovereignly excluded from, and another section was sovereignly given, the privileges of the Gospel. Had the divinely directed call been rather from the shores of India, Europe and America might today have been less civilized than the natives of Tibet. It was the sovereign choice of God which brought the Gospel to the people of Europe and later to America, while the people of the east, and north, and south were left in darkness. We can assign no reason, for instance, why it should have been Abraham's seed, and not the Egyptians or the Assyrians, who were chosen; or why Great Britain and America, which at the time of Christ's appearance on earth were in a state of such complete ignorance, should today possess so largely for themselves, and be disseminating so widely to others, these most important spiritual privileges. The diversities in regard to religious privileges in the different nations is to be ascribed to nothing else than the good pleasure of God.

A third form of election taught in Scripture is that of individuals to the external means of grace, such as hearing and reading the Gospel, association with the people of God, and sharing the benefits of the civilization which has arisen where the Gospel has gone. No one ever had the chance to say at what particular time in the world's history, or in what country, he would be born, whether or not he would be a member of the white race, or of some other. One child is born with health, wealth, and honor, in a favored land, in a Christian home, and grows up with all the blessings which attend the full light of the Gospel. Another is born in poverty and dishonor, of sinful and dissipated parents, and destitute of Christian influences. All of these things are sovereignly decided for them. Surely no one would insist that the favored child has any personal merit which could be the ground for this difference. Furthermore, was it not of God's own choosing that He created us human beings, in His own image, when He might have created us cattle or horses or dogs? Or who would allow the dumb brutes to revile God for their condition in life as though the distinction was unjust? All of these things are due to God's overruling providence, and not to human choice. "Arminians have labored to reconcile all this, as a matter of fact, with their defective and erroneous views of the Divine sovereignty, and with their unscriptural doctrines

of universal grace and universal redemption; but they have not usually been satisfied themselves with their own attempts at explanation, and have commonly at last admitted, that there were mysteries in this matter which could not be explained, and which must just be resolved into the sovereignty of God and the unsearchableness of His counsels." [Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, II, p. 398.]

We may perhaps mention a fourth kind of election, that of individuals to certain vocations, the gifts of special talents which fit one to be a statesman, another to be a doctor, or lawyer, or farmer, or musician, or artisan, gifts of personal beauty, intelligence, disposition, etc. These four kinds of election are in principle the same. Arminians escape no real difficulty in admitting the second, third, and fourth, while denying the first. In each instance God gives to some what He withholds from others. Conditions in the world at large and our own experiences in every day life show us that the blessings bestowed are sovereign and unconditional, irrespective of any previous merit or action on the part of those so chosen. If we are highly favored, we can only be thankful for His blessings; if not highly favored, we have no grounds for complaint. Why precisely this or that one is placed in circumstances which lead to saving faith, while others are not so placed, is indeed, a mystery. We cannot explain the workings of Providence; but we do know that the Judge of all the earth shall do right, and that when we attain to perfect knowledge we shall see that He has sufficient reasons for all His acts.

Furthermore, it may be said that in general the outward conditions with which the individual is surrounded do determine his destiny, at least to this extent, that those from whom the Gospel is withheld have no chance for salvation. Cunningham has stated this very well in the following paragraph: "There is an invariable connection established in Gods ernment of the world, between the enjoyment of outward privileges, or the means of grace, on the one hand, and faith and salvation on the other; in this sense, and to this extent, that the negation of the first implies the negation of the second. We are warranted by the whole tenor of Scripture, in maintaining that where God, in His sovereignty, withholds from men the enjoyment of the means of grace, an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the only way of salvation, He at the same time, and by the same means, or ordination, withholds from them the opportunity and power of believing and being saved." [*Historical Theology*, II, p. 467.]

Calvinists maintain that God deals not only with mankind in the mass but with the individuals who are actually saved, that He has elected particular persons to eternal life and to all the means necessary for attaining that life. They admit that some of the passages in which election is mentioned teach only an election of nations, or an election to outward privileges, but they maintain that many other passages teach exclusively and only an election of individuals to eternal life.

There are some, of course, who deny that there has been any such thing as an election at all. They start at the very word as though it were a spectre just come from the shades and never seen before. And yet, in the New Testament alone, the words *eklektos*, *ekloga*, and *eklego*, elect, election, choose, are found some forty-seven or forty-eight times (see Young's Analytical Concordance for complete lists). Others accept the word but attempt to explain away the thing. They profess to believe in a "conditional election," based, as they suppose, upon foreseen faith and evangelical obedience in its objects. This, of course, destroys election in any intelligible sense of the term, and reduces it to a mere recognition or prophecy that at some future time certain persons will be possessed of those qualities. If based on faith and evangelical obedience, then, as it has been cynically phrased, God is careful to elect only those whom He foresees will elect themselves. In the Arminian system election is reduced to a mere word or name, the use of which only tends to involve the subject in greater obscurity and confusion. A mere recognition that those qualities will be present at some future time is, of course, an election falsely so-called, or simply no election at all. And some Arminians, consistently carrying out their own doctrine that the person may or may not accept, and that if he does accept he may fall away again, identify the time of this decree of election with the death of the believer, as if only then his salvation became certain.

Election extends not only to men but also and equally to the angels since they also are a part of God's creation and are under His government. Some of these are holy and happy, others are sinful and miserable. The same reasons which lead us to believe in a predestination of men also lead us to believe in a predestination of angels. The Scriptures confirm this view by references to "elect angels," 1 Timothy 5:21, and "holy angels," Mark 8:38, which are contrasted with wicked angels or demons. We read that God "spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness to be reserved unto judgment," 2 Peter 2:4; of the "eternal fire which is prepared for the Devil and his angels," Matthew 25:41; of "angels that kept not their own principality, but left their former habitation, He hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the Judgment of the great day," Jude 6; and of "Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels," Revelation 12:7. A study of these passages shows us that, as Dabney says, "there are two kinds of spirits of that order; holy and sinful angels, servants of Christ and servants of Satan; that they were created in an estate of holiness and happiness, and abode in the region called Heaven (God's holiness and goodness are sufficient proof that He would never have created them otherwise); that the evil angels voluntarily forfeited their estate by sinning, and were excluded forever from heaven and holiness; that those who maintained their estate were elected thereto by God, and that their estate of holiness and blessedness is now forever assured." [*Theology*, p. 230.]

Paul makes no attempt to explain how God can be just in showing mercy to whom He

will and in passing by whom He will. In answer to the objector's question, "Why doth He still find fault?" (with those to whom He has not extended saving mercy), he (Paul) simply resolves the whole thing into the sovereignty of God, by replying, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Or hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" Romans 9:19-21. (And let it be noticed here that Paul says that it is not from different kinds of clay, but "from the same lump," that God, as the potter, makes one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor.) Paul does not drag God from His throne and set Him before our human reason to be questioned and examined. These secret counsels of His, which even the angels adore with trembling and desire to look into, are left unexplained, except that they are said to be according to His own good pleasure. And after Paul has stated this, he puts forth his hand, as it were, to forbid us from going any further. Had the Arminian assumption been true, namely, that all men are given sufficient grace and that each one is rewarded or punished according to his own use or abuse of this grace, there would have been no difficulty for which to account.

## **FURTHER SCRIPTURE PROOF**

2 Thessalonians 2:13: God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

Matthew 24:24: There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.

Matthew 24:31: And they (the angels) shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Mark 13:20: For the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened those days (at the destruction of Jerusalem).

1 Thessalonians 1:4: Knowing, brethren, beloved of God, your election.

Romans 11:7: The election obtained it, and the rest were hardened.

1 Timothy 5:21: I charge thee in the sight of God, and Jesus Christ, and the elect angels.

Romans 8:33: Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?

Romans 11:5: (In comparison with Elijah's time) Even so at the present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

2 Timothy 2:10: I endure all things for the elect's sake.

Titus 1:1: Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect.

1 Peter 1:1: Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect.

1 Peter 5:13: She that is in Babylon, elect together with you.

1 Peter 2:9: But ye are an elect race.

1 Thessalonians 5:9: For God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 18:48: And as the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of God; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

John 17:9: I (Jesus) pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me; for they are thine.

John 6:37: All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me.

John 6:65: No man can come unto me. except it be given unto him of the Father.

John 13:18: I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen.

John 15:16: Ye did not choose me, but I chose you.

Romans 9:23: Vessels of mercy, which He afore prepared unto glory.

Psalms 105:6: Ye children of Jacob, His chosen ones.

(See also references already quoted in this chapter; Ephesians 1:4, 5, 11; Romans 9:11-13; 8:29, 30; etc.)

### **3. PROOF FROM REASON**

If the doctrine of Total Inability or Original Sin be admitted, the doctrine of unconditional Election follows by the most inescapable logic. If, as the Scriptures and experience tell us, all men are by nature in a state of guilt and depravity from which they are wholly unable to deliver themselves and have no claim whatever on God for deliverance, it follows that if any are saved God must choose out those who shall be the objects of His grace. His love for fallen men expressed itself in the choice of an innumerable multitude of them for salvation, and in the provision of a redeemer, who, acting as their federal head and representative, assumed their guilt, paid their penalty,



and earned their salvation. It is always to the love of God that the Scriptures ascribe the elective decree, and they are never weary of raising our eyes from the decree itself to the motive which lay behind it. The doctrine that men are saved only through the unmerited love and grace of God finds its full and honest expression only in the doctrines of Calvinism.

Through the election of individuals the truly gracious character of salvation is most clearly shown. Those who declare that salvation is entirely by the grace of God, and yet deny the doctrine of election, hold an inconsistent position. The inspired writers leave no means unused to drive home the fact that God's election of men is an absolutely sovereign one, founded solely upon His unmerited love, and designed to exhibit before men and angels His grace and saving mercy.

As Ruler and Judge, God is at liberty to deal with a world of sinners according to His own good pleasure. He can rightfully pardon some and condemn others; can rightfully give His saving grace to one and not to another. Since all have sinned and come short of His glory, He is free to have mercy on whom He will have mercy. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God who showeth mercy; and the reason why any are saved, and why one rather than another is saved, is to be found alone in the good pleasure of Him who ordereth all things after the counsel of His own will. It is for this reason that before God created the world He chose all those to whom He would freely give the inheritance of eternal blessedness, and the Biblical writers take special pains to give each individual believer in all the enormous multitude of the saved the assurance that from all eternity he has been the peculiar object of the divine choice, and is only now fulfilling the high destiny designed for him from the foundation of the world.

This doctrine of eternal and unconditional election has sometimes been called the "heart" of the Reformed Faith. It emphasizes the sovereignty and grace of God in salvation, while the Arminian view emphasizes the work of faith and obedience in the man who decides to accept the offered grace. In the Calvinistic system it is God alone who chooses those who are to be the heirs of heaven, those with whom He will share His riches in glory; while in the Arminian system it is, in the ultimate analysis, man who determines this, a principle somewhat lacking in humility to say the least.

It may be asked, Why does God save some and not others? But that belongs to His secret counsels. Precisely why this man receives, and that man does not receive, when neither deserves to receive, we are not told. That God was pleased to set upon us in this His electing grace must ever remain for us a matter of adoring wonder. Certainly there was nothing in us, whether of quality or deed, which could attract His favorable notice or make Him partial to us; for we were dead in trespasses and sins and children of wrath even as others (Ephesians 2:1-3). We can only admire, and wonder, and exclaim with Paul, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of

God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out!" The marvel of marvels is not that God, in His infinite love and justice, has not elected all of this guilty race to be saved, but that He has elected any. When we consider, on the one hand, what a heinous thing sin is, together with its desert of punishment, and on the other, what holiness is, together with God's perfect hatred for sin, the marvel is that God could get the consent of His holy nature to save a single sinner. Furthermore, the reason that God did not choose all to eternal life was not because He did not wish to save all, but that for reasons which we cannot fully explain a universal choice would have been inconsistent with His perfect righteousness.

Nor may any one object that this view represents God as acting arbitrarily and without reason. To assert that is to assert more than any man knows. His reasons for saving particular ones while passing others by have not been revealed to us. "He doeth according to His will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth," Daniel 4:35. Some are foreordained as sons, "according to the good pleasure of His will," Ephesians 1:5; but that does not mean that He has no reasons for choosing one and leaving another. When a regiment is decimated for insubordination, the fact that every tenth man is chosen for death is for reasons; but the reasons are not in the men.

Undoubtedly God has the best of reasons for choosing one and rejecting another, although He has not told what they are.

"May not the Sov'reign Lord on high Dispense His favors as He will; Choose some to life, while others die, And yet be just and gracious still? Shall man reply against the Lord, And call his Maker's ways unjust? The thunder whose dread word Can crush a thousand worlds to dust.

But, O my soul, if truths so bright Should dazzle and confound thy sight, 'Yet still His written will obey, And wait the great decisive day!" [quoted by Ness, *Antidote Against Arminianism*, p. 34.]

#### **4. FAITH AND GOOD WORKS ARE THE FRUITS AND PROOF, NOT THE BASIS, OF ELECTION**

Neither predestination in general, nor the election of those who are to be saved, is based on God's foresight of any action in the creature. This tenet of the Reformed Faith has been well stated in the Westminster Confession, where we read: "Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions; yet hath He not decreed any thing because He foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions." And again, "These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith; and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and

glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto; that, having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end, eternal life.

"Their ability to do good works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ. And that they may be enabled thereunto, besides the graces they already received, there is required an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit to work in them to will and to do of His good pleasure; yet are they not hereupon to grow negligent, as if they were not bound to perform any duty unless upon a special motion of the Spirit; but they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them." [Ch. III:2: XVI:2, 3. ]

Foreseen faith and good works, then, are never to be looked upon as the cause of the Divine election. They are rather its fruits and proof. They show that the person has been chosen and regenerated. To make them the basis of election involves us again in a covenant of works, and places God's purposes in time rather than in eternity. This would not be pre-destination but post-destination, an inversion of the Scripture account which makes faith and holiness to be the consequents, and not the antecedents, of election (Ephesians 1:4; John 15:16; Titus 3:5). The statement that we were chosen in Christ "before the foundation of the world," excludes any consideration of merit in us; for the Hebrew idiom, "before the foundation of the world," means that the thing was done in eternity. And when to Paul's statement that it is "not of works, but of Him that calleth," the Arminian replies that it is of future works, he flatly contradicts the apostle's own words.

That the decree of election was in any way based on foreknowledge is refuted by Paul when he says that its purpose was "that we should be holy," Ephesians 1:4. He insists that salvation is "not of works, that no man should glory." In 2 Timothy 1:9 we read that it is God "who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal." Calvinists therefore hold that election precedes, and is not based upon, any good works which the person does. The very essence of the doctrine is that in redemption God is moved by no consideration of merit or goodness in the objects of His saving mercy. "That it is not of him that runs, nor of him that wills, but of God who shows mercy, that the sinner obtains salvation, is the steadfast witnesses of the whole body of Scripture, urged with such reiteration and in such varied connections as exclude the possibility that there may lurk behind the act of election consideration of foreseen characters or acts or circumstances all of which appear as results of election." [Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines*, art. "Predestination", p. 63.]

Foreordination in general cannot rest on foreknowledge; for only that which is certain can be foreknown, and only that which is predetermined can be certain. The Almighty and all-sovereign Ruler of the universe does not govern Himself on the basis of a foreknowledge of things which might haply come to pass. Through the Scriptures the

divine foreknowledge is ever thought of as dependent on the divine purpose, and God foreknows only because He has pre-determined. His foreknowledge is but a transcript of His will as to what shall come to pass in the future, and the course which the world takes under His providential control is but the execution of His all-embracing plan. His foreknowledge of what is yet to be, whether it be in regard to the world as a whole or in regard to the, detailed life of every individual, rests upon His pre-arranged plan (Jeremiah 1:5; Psalm 139:14-16; Job 23:13, 14; 28:26, 27; Amos 3:7).

There is, however, one Scripture passage which is often pointed out as teaching that election or even fore-ordination in general is based on foreknowledge, and we shall now give our attention to it. In Romans 8:29, 30 we read: "For whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren; and whom He foreordained, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified." The word "know" is sometimes used in a sense other than that of having merely an intellectual perception of the thing mentioned. It occasionally means that the persons so "known" are the special and peculiar objects of God's favor, as when it was said of the Jews, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth," Amos 3:2. Paul wrote, "If any man loveth God, the same is known of Him," 1 Corinthians 8:3. Jesus is said to "know" His sheep, John 10:14, 27; and to the wicked He is to say, "I never knew you," Matthew 7:23. In the first Psalm we read, "Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked shall perish."

In all of these passages more than a mental recognition is involved, for God has that of the wicked as well as of the righteous. It is a knowing which has as its objects the elect only, and it is connected with, or is rather the same as love, favor, and approbation. Those in Romans 8:29 are foreknown in the sense that they are fore-appointed to be the special objects of His favor. This is shown more plainly in Romans 11:2-5, where we read, "God did not cast off His people whom He foreknew." A comparison is made with the time of Elijah when God "left for Himself" seven thousand who did not bow the knee to Baal. And then in the fifth verse he adds, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." Those who were foreknown in verse two and those who are of the election of grace are the same people; hence they were foreknown in the sense that they were fore-appointed to be the objects of His gracious purposes. Notice especially that Romans 8:29 does not say that they were foreknown as doers of good works, but that they were foreknown as individuals to whom God would extend the grace of election. And let it be noticed further that if Paul had here used the term "foreknow" in the sense that election was based on mere foreknowledge, it would have contradicted his statement elsewhere that it is according to the good pleasure of God.

The Arminian view takes election out of the hands of God and puts it into the hands of man. This makes the purposes of Almighty God to be conditioned by the precarious

wills of apostate men and makes temporal events to be the cause of His eternal acts. It means further that He has created a set of sovereign beings upon whom to a certain extent His will and actions are dependent. It represents God as a good old father who endeavors to get his children to do right, but who is usually defeated because of their perverse wills; nay, it represents Him as having evolved a plan which through the ages has been so generally defeated that it has sent innumerable more persons to hell than to heaven. A doctrine which leads to such absurdities is not only un-Scriptural but unreasonable and dishonoring to God. In contrast to all this, Calvinism offers us a great God who is infinite in His perfections, who dispenses mercy and justice as He sees best, and who actually rules in the affairs of men.

The Scriptures and Christian experience teach us that the very faith and repentance through which we are saved are themselves the gifts of God. "By grace have ye been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," Ephesians 2:8. The Christians in Achaia had "believed through grace," Acts 18:27. A man is not saved because he believes in Christ; he believes in Christ because he is saved. Even the beginning of faith, the disposition to seek salvation, is itself a work of grace and the gift of God. Paul often says that we are saved "through" faith (that is, as the instrumental cause), but never once does he say that we are saved "on account of" faith (that is, as the meritorious cause). And to the same effect we may say that the redeemed shall be rewarded in proportion to their good works, but not on account of them. And in accordance with this, Augustine says that "The elect of God are chosen by Him to be His children, in order that they might be made to believe, not because He foresaw that they would believe."

Repentance is equally declared to be a gift. "Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life," Acts 11:18. "Him did God exalt with His right hand to be a Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins," Acts 5:31. Paul rebuked those who did not realize that it was the goodness of God which led them to repentance, Romans 2:4. Jeremiah cried, "Turn thou me and I shall be turned; for thou art Jehovah my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed," Jeremiah 31:18, 19. What, for instance, had the infant John the Baptist to do with his being "filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb?" Luke 1:15. Jesus told His disciples that to them it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but that to others it was not given (Matthew 13:11). To base election on foreseen faith is to say that we are ordained to eternal life because we believe, whereas the Scriptures declare the contrary: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed," Acts 13:48.

Our salvation is "not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves. but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit," Titus 3:5. We are encouraged to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in us, both to will and to

do of His good pleasure. And just because God is working in us, we strive to develop and to work out our own salvation (Philippians 2:12, 13). The Psalmist tells us that the Lord's people offer themselves willingly in the day of His power (110:3). Hence conversion is a peculiar and sovereign gift of God. The sinner has no power to turn himself unto God, but is turned or renewed by divine grace before he can do anything spiritually good. In accordance with this Paul teaches that love, joy, peace, goodness, faithfulness, self-control, etc., are not the meritorious basis of salvation, but rather "the fruits of the Spirit," Galatians 5:22, 23. Paul himself was chosen that he might know and do the will of God, not because it was foreseen that he would do it, Acts 22:14, 15. Augustine tells us that, "The grace of God does not find men fit to be elected, but makes them so"; and again, "The nature of the Divine goodness is not only to open to those that knock, but also to cause them to knock and ask." Luther expressed the same truth when he said, "God alone by His Spirit works in us the merit and reward." John tells us that, "We love because He first loved us," 1 John 4:19. These passages unmistakably teach that faith and good works are the fruits of God's work in us. We were not chosen because we were good, but in order that we might become good.

But while good works are not the ground of salvation, they are absolutely essential to it as its fruits and evidences. They are produced by faith as naturally as grapes are produced by the grape vine. And while they do not make us righteous before God, yet they are so united with faith that true faith cannot be found without them. Nor can good works, in the strict sense, be found anywhere without faith. Our salvation is not "of works," but "for good works," Ephesians 2:9, 10; and the genuinely saved Christian will feel himself in his natural element only when producing good works, James points out that a man's faith is spurious if it does not issue in good works. This is the same principle which Jesus set forth when He declared that the character of a tree is shown by its fruits, and that a good tree could not bear evil fruits. Good works are as natural for the Christian as is breathing; he does not breathe to get life; he breathes because he has life, and for that reason cannot help breathing. Good works are his glory; hence Jesus says, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify (not you, but) your Father who is in heaven," to whom the credit is really due.

The Calvinistic view is the only logical one if we accept the Scriptural declaration that salvation is by grace. Any other involves us in a hopeless chaos of views which are contradictory to the Scriptures. There are, of course, mysteries connected with this view; and it is certainly not the view which the natural man would have hit upon if he had been called upon to suggest a plan. But to throw overboard the Scripture doctrine of Predestination simply because it does not fit in with our prejudices and preconceived notions is to act foolishly. To do this is to arraign the Creator at the bar of human reason, to deny the wisdom and righteousness of His dealings just because we cannot fathom them, and then to declare His revelation to be false and deceptive.

"It is a dangerous presumption for men to take upon themselves, with unwashed hands, to unriddle the deep mysteries of God with their carnal reason, where the great apostle stands at the gaze, crying, 'O the depth, how unsearchable' and, 'Who knoweth the mind of the Lord!' Had Paul been of the Arminian persuasion he would have answered, 'Those are elected that are foreseen to believe and persevere!'" [Ness, *Antidote Against Arminianism*, p. 31.] There would have been no mystery at all if salvation had been based on their good works.

Here we have a system in which all boasting is excluded, and in which salvation in all of its parts is seen to be the product of unalloyed grace, not founded on, but issuing in, good works.

## **5. REPROBATION**

The doctrine of absolute Predestination of course logically holds that some are foreordained to death as truly as others are foreordained to life. The very terms "elect" and "election" imply the terms "non-elect" and "reprobation." When some are chosen out others are left not chosen. The high privileges and glorious destiny of the former are not shared with the latter. This, too, is of God. We believe that from all eternity God has intended to leave some of Adam's posterity in their sins, and that the decisive factor in the life of each is to be found only in God's will. As Mozley has said, the whole race after the fall was "one mass of perdition," and "it pleased God of His sovereign mercy to rescue some and to leave others where they were; to raise some to glory, giving them such grace as necessarily qualified them for it, and abandon the rest, from whom He withheld such grace, to eternal punishments." [*The Augustinian Doctrine of Predestination*, p. 297.]

The chief difficulty with the doctrine of Election of course arises in regard to the unsaved; and the Scriptures have given us no extended explanation of their state. Since the mission of Jesus in the world was to save the world rather than to judge it, this side of the matter is less dwelt upon.

In all of the Reformed creeds in which the doctrine of Reprobation is dealt with at all it is treated as an essential part of the doctrine of Predestination. The Westminster Confession, after stating the doctrine of election, adds: "The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the inscrutable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice." [Ch. III: Sec. 7 ]

Those who hold the doctrine of Election but deny that of Reprobation can lay but little claim to consistency. To affirm the former while denying the latter makes the decree of predestination an illogical and lop-sided decree. The creed which states the former

but denies the latter will resemble a wounded eagle attempting to fly with but one wing. In the interests of a "mild Calvinism" some have been inclined to give up the doctrine of Reprobation, and this term (in itself a very innocent term) has been the entering wedge for harmful attacks upon Calvinism pure and simple. "Mild Calvinism" is synonymous with sickly Calvinism, and sickness, if not cured, is the beginning of the end.

### **Comments by Calvin, Luther, and Warfield**

Calvin did not hesitate to base the reprobation of the lost, as well as the election of the saved, on the eternal purpose of God. We have already quoted him to the effect that "not all men are created with a similar destiny but eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say, he is predestinated either to life or to death." And again he says, "There can be no election without its opposite, reprobation." [*Institutes*, Book III, Ch. 23.] That the latter raises problems which are not easy to solve, he readily admits, but advocates it as the only intelligent and Scriptural explanation of the facts.

Luther also as certainly as Calvin attributes the eternal perdition of the wicked, as well as the eternal salvation of the righteous, to the plan of God. "This mightily offends our rational nature," he says, "that God should, of His own mere unbiased will, leave some men to themselves, harden them and condemn them; but He gives abundant demonstration, and does continually, that this is really the case; namely, that the sole cause why some are saved, and others perish, proceeds from His willing the salvation of the former, and the perdition of the latter, according to that of St. Paul, 'He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.'" And again, "It may seem absurd to human wisdom that God should harden, blind, and deliver up some men to a reprobate sense; that He should first deliver them over to evil, and condemn them for that evil; but the believing, spiritual man sees no absurdity at all in this; knowing that God would be never a whit less good, even though He should destroy all men." He then goes on to say that this must not be understood to mean that God finds men good, wise, obedient, and makes them evil, foolish, and obdurate, but that they are already depraved and fallen and that those who are not regenerated, instead of becoming better under the divine commands and influences, only react to become worse. In reference to Romans IX, X, XI, Luther says that "all things whatever arise from and depend upon the Divine appointment, whereby it was preordained who should receive the word of life and who should disbelieve it, who should be delivered from their sins and who should be hardened in them, who should be justified and who condemned." [In *Praefat, and Epist. ad Rom.*, quoted by Zanchius, *Predestination*, p. 92.]

"The Biblical writers," says Dr. Warfield, "are as far as possible from obscuring the



doctrine of election because of any seemingly unpleasant corollaries that flow from it. On the contrary, they expressly draw the corollaries which have often been so designated, and make them a part of their explicit teaching. Their doctrine of election, they are free to tell us, for example, does certainly involve a corresponding doctrine of preterition. The very term adopted in the New Testament to express it *eklegomai*, which, as Meyer justly says (Ephesians 1:4), 'always has, and must of logical necessity have, a reference to others to whom the chosen would, without the *ekloga*, still belong' embodies a declaration of the fact that in their election others are passed by and left without the gift of salvation; the whole presentation of the doctrine is such as either to imply or openly to assert, on its very emergence, the removal of the elect by the pure grace of God, not merely from a state of condemnation, but out of the company of the condemned a company on whom the grace of God has no saving effect, and who are therefore left without hope in their sins; and the positive just reprobation of the impenitent for their sins is repeatedly explicitly taught in sharp contrast with the gratuitous salvation of the elect despite their sins." [*Biblical Doctrines*, art., "Predestination", p. 64.]

And again he says: "The difficulty which is felt by some in following the apostle's argument here (Romans 11 f), we may suspect, has its roots in part in a shrinking from what appears to them an arbitrary assignment of men to diverse destinies without consideration of their desert. Certainly St. Paul as explicitly affirms the sovereignty of reprobation as election, if these twin ideas are, indeed, separable even in thought; if he represents God as sovereignly loving Jacob, he represents Him equally as sovereignly hating Esau; if he declares that He has mercy on whom He will, He equally declares that He hardens whom He will. Doubtless the difficulty often felt here is, in part, an outgrowth of an insufficient realization of St. Paul's basal conception of the state of men at large as condemned sinners before an angry God. It is with a world of lost sinners that he represents God as dealing; and out of that world building up a Kingdom of Grace. Were not all men sinners, there might still be an election, as sovereign as now; and there being an election, there would still be as sovereign a rejection; but the rejection would not be a rejection to punishment, to destruction, to eternal death, but to some other destiny consonant to the state in which those passed by should be left. It is not indeed, then, because men are sinners that men are left unelected; election is free, and its obverse of rejection must be equally free; but it is solely because men are sinners that what they are left to is destruction. And it is in this universalism of ruin rather than in a universalism of salvation that St. Paul really roots his theodicy. When all deserve death it is a marvel of pure grace that any receive life; and who shall gainsay the right of Him who shows this miraculous mercy, to have mercy on whom He will, and whom He will to harden?" [*Biblical Doctrines*, p. 54.]

## **Proof from Scripture**

This is admittedly an unpleasant doctrine. It is not taught to gain favor with men, but only because it is the plain teaching of the Scriptures and the logical counterpart of the doctrine of Election. We shall find that some Scripture passages do teach the doctrine with unmistakable clearness. These should be sufficient for any one who accepts the Bible as the word of God. "Jehovah hath made everything for its own end; Yea, even the wicked for the day of evil," Proverbs 16:4. Christ is said to be to the wicked, "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence; for they stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed," 1 Peter 2:8. "For there are certain men crept in privily, even they who were of old written of beforehand to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ," Jude 4. "But these, as creatures without reason, born mere animals to be taken and destroyed, railing in matters whereof they are ignorant, shall in their destroying surely be destroyed," 2 Peter 2:12. "For God did put in their heart to do His mind, and to come to one mind, and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the word of God should be accomplished," Revelation 17:17. Concerning the beast of St. John's vision it is said, "All that dwell on the earth shall worship him, every one whose name hath not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the lamb that hath been slain," Revelation 13:8. and we may contrast these with the disciples whom Jesus told to rejoice because their names were written in heaven (Luke 10:20), and with Paul's fellow workers. "whose names are in the book of life," Philippians 4:3.

Paul declares that the "vessels of wrath" which by the Lord were "fitted unto destruction," were "endured with much long suffering" in order that He might "show His wrath, and make His power known"; and with these are contrasted the "vessels of mercy, which He afore prepared unto glory" in order "that He might make known the riches of His glory" upon them (Romans 9:22, 23). Concerning the heathen it is said that "God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting," Romans 1:28; and the wicked, "after his hardness and impenitent heart treasures up for himself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God," Romans 2:5.

In regard to those who perish Paul says, "God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie," 2 Thessalonians 2:11. They are called upon to behold these things in an external way, to wonder at them, and to go on perishing in their sins. Hear the words of Paul in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia: "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; For I work a work in your days, A work which ye shall in no wise believe, if one declare it unto you," Acts 13:41.

The apostle John, after narrating that the people still disbelieved although Jesus had done so many signs before them, adds, "For this cause they could not believe, for that Isaiah said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and He hardened their heart; Lest they should see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, And should turn, And I

should heal them," John 12:39, 40.

Christ's command to the wicked in the final judgment, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the Devil and his angels," Matthew 25:41, is the strongest possible decree of reprobation; and it is the same in principle whether issued in time or eternity. What is right for God to do in time it is not wrong for Him to include in His eternal plan.

On one occasion Jesus Himself declared: "For judgment came I into this world, that they that see not may see; and that they that see may become blind," John 9:39. On another occasion He said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes," Matthew 11:25. It is hard for us to realize that the adorable Redeemer and only Savior of men is, to some, a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence; yet that is what the Scriptures declare Him to be. Even before His birth it was said that He was set (that is, appointed) for the falling, as well as for the rising, of many in Israel (Luke 2:34). And when, in His intercessory prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, He said, "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me," the non-elect were repudiated in so many words.

Jesus Himself declared that one of the reasons why He spoke in parables was that the truth might be concealed from those for whom it was not intended. We shall let the sacred history speak for itself: "And the disciples came, and said unto Him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? And He answered and said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but unto them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath. Therefore speak I unto them in parables; because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith,

"By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand;  
And seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive;  
For this people's heart is waxed gross.  
And their ears are dull of hearing.  
And their eyes they have closed;  
Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes,  
And hear with their ears,  
And understand with their heart,  
And, should turn again,  
And I should heal them." - Matthew 13:10-15; Isaiah 6:9, 10.

In these words we have an application of Jesus' words, "Give not that which is holy

unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine," Matthew 7:6. He who affirms that Christ designed to give His saving truth to every one flatly contradicts Christ Himself. To the non-elect, the Bible is a sealed book; and only to the true Christian is it "given" to see and understand these things. So important is this truth that the Holy Spirit has been pleased to repeat six times over in the New Testament this passage from Isaiah (Matthew 13:14, 15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40; Acts 28:27; Romans 11:9, 10). Paul tells us that through grace the "election" received salvation, and that the rest were hardened; then he adds, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear." And further, he quotes the words of David to the same effect:

"Let their table be made a snare and a trap,  
And a stumbling-block, and a recompense unto them;  
Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see,  
And bow down their backs always," - Romans 11:8-10.

Hence as regards some, the evangelical proclamations were designed to harden, and not to heal.

This same doctrine finds expression in numerous other parts of Scripture. Moses said to the children of Israel, "But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let you pass by him; for Jehovah thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that He might deliver him into thy hand, as at this day," Deuteronomy 2:30. In regard to the Canaanitish tribes who came against Joshua it is written, "For it was of Jehovah to harden their hearts, to come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them, as Jehovah commanded Moses." Joshua 11:20. Hophni and Phinebas, the sons of Eli, when reprov'd for their wickedness, "hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because Jehovah was minded to slay them," 1 Samuel 2:25. Though Pharaoh acted very arrogantly and wickedly toward the Israelites, Paul assigns no other reason than that he was one of the reprobate whose evil actions were to be overruled for good: "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might show in thee my power, and that my name might be published abroad in all the earth," Romans 9:17 (see also Exodus 9:16). In all the reprobate there is a blindness and an obstinate hardness of heart; and when any, like Pharaoh, are said to have been hardened of God we may be sure that they were already in themselves worthy of being delivered over to Satan. The hearts of the wicked are, of course, never hardened by the direct influence of God, He simply permits some men to follow out the evil impulses which are already in their hearts, so that, as a result of their own choices, they become more and more calloused and obstinate. And while it is said, for instance, that God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, it is also said that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 8:15; 8:32; 9:34). One description is given from the divine view-point, the other is given from the human view-point. God is ultimately responsible for the hardening of the heart in that He permits it to occur, and the

inspired writer in graphic language simply says that God does it; but never are we to understand that God is the immediate and efficient cause.

Although this doctrine is harsh, it is, nevertheless, Scriptural. And since it is so plainly taught in Scripture, we can assign no reason for the opposition which it has met other than the pure ignorance and unreasoned prejudice with which men's minds have been filled when they come to study it. How applicable here are the words of Rice: "Happily would it be for the Church of Christ and for the world, if Christian ministers and Christian people could be contented to be disciples, LEARNERS; if, conscious of their limited faculties, their ignorance of divine things, and their proneness to err through depravity and prejudice, they could be induced to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of Him. The Church has been corrupted and cursed in almost every age by the undue confidence of men in their reasoning powers. They have undertaken to pronounce upon the reasonableness or unreasonableness of doctrines infinitely above their reason, which are necessarily matters of pure revelation. In their presumption they have sought to comprehend 'the deep things of God,' and have interpreted the Scriptures, not according to their obvious meaning, but according to the decisions of the finite reason." And again he says, "No one ever studied the works of Nature or the Book of Revelation without finding himself encompassed on every side by difficulties he could not solve. The philosopher is obliged to be satisfied with facts; and the theologian must content himself with God's declarations." [Rice, *God Sovereign and Man Free*, pp. 3, 4.]

Strange to say, many of those who insist that when people come to study the doctrine of the Trinity they should put aside all preconceived notions and should not rely simply upon the unaided human reason to decide what can or cannot be true of God, and who insist that the Scriptures should be accepted here as the unquestioned and authoritative guide, are not willing to follow those rules in the study of the doctrine of Predestination.

### **The Doctrine of Reprobation is Based on the Doctrine of Original Sin; No Injustice is Done to the Non-elect**

It is obvious that this part of the doctrine of Predestination which affirms that God has, by a sovereign and eternal decree, chosen one portion of mankind to salvation while leaving the other portion to destruction, strikes us at first as being opposed to our common ideas of justice and hence needs a defence. The defence of the doctrine of Reprobation rests upon the preceding doctrine of Original Sin or Total Inability. This decree finds the whole race fallen. None have any claim on God's grace. But instead of leaving all to their just punishment, God gratuitously confers undeserved happiness upon one portion of mankind, an act of pure mercy and grace to which no one can object, while the other portion is simply passed by. No undeserved misery is inflicted upon this latter group. Hence no one has any right to object to this part of the decree.

If the decree dealt simply with innocent men, it would be unjust to assign one portion to condemnation; but since it deals with men in a particular state, which is a state of guilt and sin, it is not unjust. "The conception of the world as lying in the evil one and therefore judged already (John 8:18), so that upon those who are not removed from the evil of the world the wrath of God is not so much to be poured out but simply abides (John 3:36, cf. 1 John 3:14), is fundamental to this whole presentation. It is therefore, on the one hand, that Jesus represents Himself as having come not to condemn the world, but to save the world (John 8:17; 8:12; 9:5; 12:47; cf. 4:42), and all that He does as having for its end the introduction of life into the world (John 6:33, 51) ; the already condemned world needs no further condemnation, it needs saving." [Warfield, *Biblical Doctrine*, p. 35.]

Guilty man has lost his rights and falls under the will of God. God's absolute sovereignty now comes in and when He shows mercy in some cases we cannot object to His justice in others unless we would call in question His government of the universe. Viewed in this light the decree of Predestination finds mankind one mass of perdition and allows only a portion of it to remain such. When all antecedently deserved punishment it was not unjust for some to be antecedently consigned to it; otherwise the execution of a just sentence would be unjust.

"When the Arminian says that faith and works constitute the ground of election we dissent," says Clark. "But if he says that foreseen unbelief and disobedience constitute the ground of reprobation we assent readily enough. A man is not saved on the ground of his virtues but he is condemned on the ground of his sin. As strict Calvinists we insist that while some men are saved from their unbelief and disobedience, in which all are involved, and others are not, it is still the sinner's sinfulness that constitutes the ground of his reprobation. Election and reprobation proceed on different grounds; one the grace of God, the other the sin of man. It is a travesty on Calvinism to say that because God elects to save a man irrespective of his character or deserts, that therefore He elects to damn a man irrespective of his character or deserts." [A syllabus of *Systematic Theology*, pp. 219, 220.]

This reprobation or passing by of the non-elect is not founded merely upon a foresight of their continuance in sin; for if that had been a proper cause, reprobation would have been the fate of all men, for all were foreseen as sinners. Nor can it be said that those who were passed by were in all cases worse sinners than those who were brought to eternal life. The Scriptures always ascribe faith and repentance to the good pleasure of God and to the special gracious operation of His Spirit. Those who conceive of mankind as innocent and deserving of salvation are naturally scandalized when any portion of the race is antecedently consigned to punishment. But when the doctrine of Original Sin, which is taught so clearly and repeatedly in the Scriptures, is seen in its proper setting, the objections to predestination disappear and the condemnation of the wicked seems only just and natural. Thus salvation is of the Lord

alone, and damnation wholly from ourselves. Men perish because they will not come to Christ; yet if they have a will to come, it is God who works the will in them. Grace, electing grace, both draws the will and keeps it steady; and to grace be all the praise.

Furthermore, out of a world of sinful and rebellious subjects, none of whom were in themselves worthy of saving, God has graciously chosen some when he might have passed by all as He did the fallen angels (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). He has taken it altogether upon Himself to provide the redemption through which His people are saved. The atonement, therefore, is His own property; and He certainly may, as He most assuredly will, do what He pleases with His own. Grace is given to one and withheld from another as He sees best. It is to be noticed also that the withholding of His grace from the non-elect is but the negative cause of their perishing, just as the absence of a physician from the sick man is the occasion, not the efficient cause, of his death. "In the sight of an infinitely good and merciful God," says Dr. Charles Hodge, "it was necessary that some of the rebellious race of man should suffer the penalty of the law which all have broken. It is God's prerogative to determine who shall be vessels of mercy, and who shall be left to the just recompense of their sins." [*Systematic Theology*, II, p. 652.]

Since man has brought himself into this state of sin, his condemnation is just, and every demand of justice would be met in his punishment. Conscience tells us that man perishes justly, since he chooses to follow Satan rather than God. "Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life," said Jesus (John 5:40). And in this connection the words of Prof. F. E. Hamilton are very appropriate: "All God does is to let him (the unregenerate) alone and allow him to go his own way without interference. It is his nature to be evil, and God simply has foreordained to leave that nature unchanged. The picture often painted by opponents of Calvinism, of a cruel God refusing to save those who long to be saved, is a gross caricature. God saves all who want to be saved, but no one whose nature is unchanged wants to be saved." Those who are lost are lost because they deliberately choose to walk in the ways of sin; and this will be the very hell of hells, that men have been self destroyers.

Many people talk as if salvation were a matter of human birthright. And, forgetful of the fact that man had and lost his supremely favorable chance in Adam, they inform us that God would be unjust if He did not give all guilty creatures an opportunity to be saved. In regard to the idea that salvation is given in return for something done by the person, Luther says, "But let us, I pray you, suppose that God ought to be such a one, who should have respect unto merit in those who are damned. Must we not, in like manner, also require and grant that He ought to have respect unto merit in those who are to be saved? For if we are to follow reason, it is equally unjust, that the undeserving should be crowned, as that the deserving should be damned." [*Bondage of the Will*, p. 252.]

No one with proper ideas of God supposes that He suddenly does something which He had not thought of before. Since His is an eternal purpose, what He does in time is what He purposed from eternity to do. Those whom He saves are those whom He purposed from eternity to save, and those whom He leaves to perish are those whom He purposed from eternity to leave. If it is just for God to do a certain thing in time, it is, by parity of argument, just for Him to resolve upon and decree it from eternity, for the principle of the action is the same in either case. And if we are justified in saying that from all eternity God has intended to display His mercy in pardoning a vast multitude of sinners why do some people object so strenuously when we say that from all eternity God has intended to display His justice in punishing other sinners?

Hence if it is just for God to forbear saving some persons after they are born, it was just for Him to form that purpose before they were born, or in eternity. And since the determining will of God is omnipotent, it cannot be obstructed or made void. This being true, it follows that He never did, nor does He now, will that every individual of mankind should be saved. If He willed this, not one single soul could ever be lost, "for who hath resisted His will?" If He willed that none should be lost, He would surely give to all men those effectual means of salvation without which it cannot be had. Now, God could give those means as easily to all mankind as to some only, but experience proves that He does not. Hence it logically follows that it is not His secret purpose or decretive will that all should be saved. In fact, the two truths, that what God does He does from eternity, and that only a portion of the human race is saved, is enough to complete the doctrines of Election and Reprobation.

## **State of the Heathens**

The fact that, in the providential working of God, some men are left without the Gospel and the other means of grace virtually involves the principle set forth in the Calvinistic doctrine of Predestination. We see that in all ages the greater portion of mankind has been left destitute even of the external means of grace. For centuries the Jews, who were very few in number, were the only people to whom God was pleased to make any special revelation of Himself. Jesus confined His public ministry almost exclusively to them and forbade his disciples to go among others until after the day of Pentecost (Matthew 10:5, 6; 28:19; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:4). Multitudes were left with no chance to hear the Gospel, and consequently died in their sins. If God had intended to save them undoubtedly he would have sent them the means of salvation. If he had chosen to Christianize India and China a thousand years ago, He most certainly could have accomplished His purpose. Instead, they were left in gross darkness and unbelief. The past and present state of the world with all its sin, misery, and death, can have no other explanation than that given in Scripture, namely, that the race fell in Adam and that mercy God has sovereignly chosen to bring an innumerable multitude to salvation through a redemption which He has Himself provided. It is a perverted and dishonoring view of God to imagine Him struggling along with disobedient men,



doing the best He can to convert them, but not able to accomplish His purpose.

If the Arminian theory were true, namely, that Christ died for all men and that the benefits of His death are actually applied to all men we would expect to find that God had made some provision for the Gospel to be communicated to all men. The problem of the heathens, who live and die without the Gospel, has always been a thorny one for the Arminians who insist that all men have sufficient grace if they will but make use of it. Few will deny that salvation is conditioned on the person hearing and accepting the Gospel. The Christian Church has been practically of one mind in declaring that the heathens as a class are lost. That such is the clear teaching of the Bible we can easily show:

"And in none other is there salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved," Acts 4:12. "As many as have sinned without the law shall also perish without the law: and as many as have sinned under the law shall be judged by the law," Romans 2:12. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1 Corinthians 3:11. "I am the vine, ye are the branches; apart from me ye can do nothing," John 15:5. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me," John 14:6. "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him," John 3:36. "He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life," 1 John 5:12, "And this is eternal life, that they should know thee the only true God, and Him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ," John 17:3. "Without faith it is Impossible to be well-pleasing to God," Hebrews 11: 6. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Romans 10:13, 14 (or, in other words, how can the heathens possibly be saved when they have never even heard of Christ who is the only means of salvation?). "Jesus therefore said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, ye have not life in yourselves," John 6:53. When the watchman sees danger coming but does not give the people warning they perish in their iniquity, Ezekiel 33:8, true, the watchman will be held responsible, yet that does not change the fate of the people. Jesus declared that even the Samaritans who had far higher privileges than the nations outside of Palestine, worshipped they knew not what, and that salvation was of the Jews. See also the first and second chapters of Romans. The Scriptures, then, are plain in declaring that under ordinary conditions those who have not Christ and the Gospel are lost.

And in accordance with this the Westminster Confession, after stating that those who reject Christ cannot be saved, adds: "Much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess . . ."

(X:4).

In fact the belief that the heathens without the Gospel are lost has been one of the strongest arguments in favor of foreign missions. If we believe that their own religions contain enough light and truth to save them, the importance of preaching the Gospel to them is greatly lessened. Our attitude toward foreign missions is determined pretty largely by the answer which we give to this question.

We do not deny that God can save some even of the adult heathen people if He chooses to do so, for His Spirit works when and where and how He pleases, with means or without means. If any such are saved, however, it is by a miracle of pure grace. Certainly God's ordinary method is to gather His elect from the evangelized portion of mankind, although we must admit the possibility that by an extraordinary method some few of His elect may be gathered from the unevangelized portion. (The fate of those who die in infancy in heathen lands will be discussed under the subject, "Infant Salvation.")

It is unreasonable to suppose that people can appropriate to themselves something concerning which they know nothing. We readily see that so far as the pleasures and joys and opportunities in this world are concerned the heathens are largely passed by; and on the same principle we would expect them to be passed by in the next world also. Those who are providentially placed in the pagan darkness of western China can no more accept Christ as Savior than they can accept the radio, the airplane, or the Copernican system of astronomy, things concerning which they are totally ignorant. When God places people in such conditions we may be sure that He has no more intention that they shall be saved than He has that the soil of northern Siberia, which is frozen all the year round, shall produce crops of wheat. Had he intended otherwise He would have supplied the means leading to the designed end. There are also multitudes in the nominally Christian lands to whom the Gospel has never been presented in any adequate way, who have not even the outward means of salvation, to say nothing of the helpless state of their heart.

This, of course, does not mean that all of the lost shall suffer the same degree of punishment. We believe that from a common zero point there will be all degrees of reward and all degrees of punishment, and that a person's reward or punishment will, to a certain extent, be based on the opportunity that he has had in this world. Jesus Himself declared that in the day of judgment it would be more tolerable for the heathen city of Sodom than for those cities of Palestine which had heard and rejected His message (Luke 10:12-14); and He closed the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants with the words: "And that servant, who knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom they commit

much, of him will they ask the more," Luke 12:47, 48. So while the heathens are lost, they shall suffer relatively less than those who have heard and rejected the Gospel.

Hence in regard to this problem of the heathen races, Arminians are, at the very outset, involved in difficulties which subvert their whole scheme, difficulties from which they have never been able to extricate themselves. They admit that only in Christ is there salvation; yet they see that multitudes die without ever having heard of Christ or the Gospel. Holding that sufficient grace or opportunity must be given to every man before he can be condemned, many of them have been led to postulate a future probation, this however is not only without Scripture support, but is contrary to Scripture. As Cunningham says, "Calvinists have always regarded it as a strong argument against the Arminian doctrines of universal grace and universal redemption, and in favor of their own views of the sovereign purposes of God, that, in point of fact, so large a portion of the human race have been always left in entire ignorance of God's mercy, and of the way of salvation revealed in the Gospel; nay, in such circumstances as, to all appearances, throw insuperable obstacles in the way of their attaining to that knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, which is eternal life." [*Historical Theology*, II, p. 397.]

Only in Calvinism, with its doctrine of the guilt and corruption of all mankind through the fall, and its doctrine of grace through which some are sovereignly rescued and brought to salvation while others are passed by, do we find an adequate explanation of the phenomenon of the heathen world.

### **Purposes of the Decree of Reprobation**

The condemnation of the non-elect is designed primarily to furnish an eternal exhibition, before men and angels, of God's hatred for sin, or, in other words, it is to be an eternal manifestation of the justice of God. (Let it be remembered that God's justice as certainly demands the punishment of sin as it demands the rewarding of righteousness.) This decree displays one of the divine attributes which apart from it could never have been adequately appreciated. The salvation of some through a redeemer is designed to display the attributes of love, mercy, and holiness. The attributes of wisdom, power and sovereignty are displayed in the treatment accorded both groups. Hence the truth of the Scripture statement that, "Jehovah hath made everything for its own end; Yea, even the wicked for the day of evil," Proverbs 16:4; and also the statement of Paul that this arrangement was intended on the one hand, to "make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He afore prepared unto glory," and on the other, "to show His wrath, and to make His power known" upon "vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction," Romans 9:22, 23.

This decree of reprobation also serves subordinate purposes in regard to the elect; for, in beholding the rejection and final state of the wicked, (1) they learn what they too

would have suffered had not grace stepped in to their relief, and they appreciate more deeply the riches of divine love which raised them from sin and brought them into eternal life while others no more guilty or unworthy than they were left to eternal destruction. (2) It furnishes a most powerful motive for thankfulness that they have received such high blessings. (3) They are led to a deeper trust of their heavenly Father who supplies all their needs in this life and the next. (4) The sense of what they have received furnishes the strongest possible motive for them to love their heavenly Father, and to live as pure lives as possible. (5) It leads them to a greater abhorrence of sin. (6) It leads them to a closer walk with God and with each other as specially chosen heirs of the kingdom of heaven. (7) In regard to the sovereign rejection of the Jews, Paul destroys at the source any accusation that they were cast off without reason. "Did they stumble that they might fall? God forbid: for by their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy," Romans 11:11. Thus we see that God's rejection of the Jews was for a very wise and definite purpose; namely, that salvation might be given to the Gentiles, and that in such a way that it would react for the salvation of the Jews themselves. Historically we see that the Christian Church has been almost exclusively a Gentile Church. But in every age some Jews have been converted to Christianity, and we believe that as time goes on much larger numbers will be "provoked to jealousy" and caused to turn to God. Several verses in the eleventh chapter of Romans indicate that considerable numbers are to be converted and that they will be extremely zealous for righteousness.

### **Arminians Center Attack on This Doctrine**

This doctrine of Reprobation is one upon which the Arminians are very fond of dwelling. They often single it out and emphasize it as though it was the sum and substance of Calvinism, while the other doctrines such as the Sovereignty of God, the purely gracious character of Election, the Perseverance of the saints, etc., which give so much glory to God, are passed by with little or no comment. At the Synod of Dort the Arminians insisted on first discussing the subject of Reprobation, and complained of it as a great hardship when the Synod refused to concede this. To the present day they have generally pursued this same policy. Their object is plain, for they know that it is easy to misrepresent this doctrine and to set it forth in a light that will prejudice men's feelings against it. They often distort the views which are held by Calvinists, then after alleging all that they can against it, they argue that since there can be no such thing as Reprobation, neither can there be any such thing as Election. The unfair over-emphasis on this doctrine indicates anything but an unprejudiced and sincere search for truth. Let them turn rather to the positive side of the system; let them answer and dispose of the large amount of evidence which has been collected in favor of this system.

On the other hand Calvinists usually produce first the evidence in favor of the doctrine of Election and then, having established this, they show that what they hold

concerning the doctrine of Reprobation naturally follows. They do not, indeed, regard the latter as wholly dependent on the former for its proof. They believe that it is sustained by independent Scripture proof ; yet they do believe that if what they hold concerning the doctrine of Election is proven true, then what they hold concerning the doctrine of Reprobation will follow of logical necessity. Since the Scriptures give us much fuller information about what God does in producing faith and repentance in those who are saved than they give us in regard to His procedure with those who continue in impenitence and unbelief, reason demands that we shall first investigate the doctrine of Election, and then consider the doctrine of Reprobation. This last consideration shows the utter unfairness of Arminians in giving such prominence to the doctrine of Reprobation. As has been said before, this is admittedly an unpleasant doctrine. Calvinists do not shrink from discussing it; yet naturally, because of its awful character, they find no satisfaction in dwelling upon it. They also realize that here men must be particularly careful not to attempt to be wise above what is written, as many are inclined to do when they indulge in presumptuous speculations about matters which are too high for them.

### **Under No Obligation to Explain All These Things**

Let it be remembered that we are under no obligation to explain all the mysteries connected with these doctrines. We are only under obligation to set forth what the Scriptures teach concerning them, and to vindicate this teaching so far as possible from the objections which are alleged against it. The "yea, Father, for so it was well pleasing in thy sight," (Matthew 11:26; Luke 10:21, was, to our Lord, an all-sufficient theodicy in the face of all God's diverse dealings with men. The sufficient and only answer which Paul gives to vain reasoners who would penetrate more deeply into these mysteries is that they are to be resolved into the divine wisdom and sovereignty. The words of Toplady are especially appropriate here: "Say not, therefore, as the opposers of these doctrines did in St. Paul's days: 'Why doth God find fault with the wicked? for who bath resisted His will? If He, who only can convert them, refrains from doing it, what room is there for blaming them that perish, seeing it is impossible to resist the will of the Almighty?' Be satisfied with St. Paul's answer, 'Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?' The apostle hinges the whole matter entirely on God's absolute sovereignty. There he rests it, and there we ought to leave it." [Zanchius', *Predestination*, Introduction, p. 19.]

Man cannot measure the justice of God by his own comprehension, and our modesty should be such that when the reason for some of God's works lies hidden we nevertheless believe Him to be just. If any one thinks that this doctrine represents God as unjust, it is only because he does not realize what the Scripture doctrine of Original Sin is, nor to what it commits him. Let him fix his mind upon the existence of real ill-desert antecedent to actual sin, and the condemnation will appear just and natural. The first step mastered, the second presents no real difficulty.

It is hard for us to realize that many of those right around us (in some cases our close friends and relatives) are probably foreordained to eternal punishment; and so far as we do realize it we are inclined to have a certain sympathy for them. Yet when seen in the light of eternity our sympathy for the lost will be found to have been an undeserved and a misplaced sympathy. Those who are finally lost shall then be seen as they really are, enemies of God, enemies of all righteousness, and lovers of sin, with no desire for salvation or the presence of the Lord. We may add further that, since God is perfectly just, none shall be sent to hell except those who deserve to go there; and when we see their real characters we shall be fully satisfied with the disposition that God has made.

As a matter of fact the Arminians do not escape any real difficulty here. For since they admit that God has foreknowledge of all things they must explain why He creates those who He foresees will lead sinful lives, reject the Gospel, die impenitent, and suffer eternally in hell. The Arminians really have a more difficult problem here than do the Calvinists; for the Calvinists maintain that the ones whom God thus creates, knowing that they will be lost, are the non-elect who voluntarily choose sin and in whose merited punishment God designs to manifest His justice, while the Arminians must say that God deliberately creates those who He foresees will be such poor, miserable creatures that without serving any good purpose they will bring destruction upon themselves and will spend eternity in hell in spite of the fact that God Himself earnestly wishes to bring them to heaven, and that God shall be forever grieved in seeing them where He wishes they were not. Does not this represent God as acting most foolishly in bringing upon Himself such dissatisfaction and upon some of His creatures such misery when He could at least have refrained from creating those who, He foresaw, would be lost?

Perhaps there are some who, upon hearing of this doctrine of Predestination, will account themselves reprobate and will be inclined to go into further sin with the excuse that they are to be damned anyway. But to do so is to suck poison out of a sweet flower, to dash one's self against the Rock of Ages. No one has the right to judge himself reprobate in this life, and hence to grow desperate; for final disobedience (the only infallible sign of reprobation) cannot be discovered until death. No unconverted person in this life knows for certain that God will not yet convert him and save him, even though he is aware that no such change has yet taken place. Hence he has no right to number himself definitely among the non-elect. God has not told us who among the unconverted He yet proposes to regenerate and save. If any man feels the pangs of conscience working in him, these may be the very means which God is using to draw him.

We have given considerable space to the discussion of the doctrine of Reprobation because it has been the great stumbling block for most of those who have rejected the Calvinistic system. We believe that if this doctrine can be shown to be Scriptural and

reasonable the other parts of the system will be readily accepted.

## **6. INFRALAPSARIANISM AND SUPRALAPSARIANISM**

Among those who call themselves Calvinists there has been some difference of opinion as to the order of events in the Divine plan. The question here is, When the decrees of election and reprobation came into existence were men considered as fallen or as unfallen? Were the objects of these decrees contemplated as members of a sinful, corrupt mass, or were they contemplated merely as men whom God would create? According to the infralapsarian view the order of events was as follows: God proposed (1) to create; (2) to permit the fall; (3) to elect to eternal life and blessedness a great multitude out of this mass of fallen men, and to leave the others, as He left the Devil and the fallen angels, to suffer the just punishment of their sins; (4) to give His Son, Jesus Christ, for the redemption of the elect; and (5) to send the Holy Spirit to apply to the elect the redemption which was purchased by Christ. According to the supralapsarian view the order of events was: (1) to elect some creatable men (that is, men who were to be created) to life and to condemn others to destruction; (2) to create; (3) to permit the fall; (4) to send Christ to redeem the elect; and (5) to send the Holy Spirit to apply this redemption to the elect. The question then is as to whether election precedes or follows the fall.

One of the leading motives in the supralapsarian scheme is to emphasize the idea of discrimination and to push this idea into the whole of God's dealings with men. We believe, however, that supralapsarianism over-emphasizes this idea. In the very nature of the case this idea cannot be consistently carried out, e.g., in creation, and especially in the fall. It was not merely some of the members of the human race who were objects of the decree to create, but all mankind, and that with the same nature. And it was not merely some men, but the entire race, which was permitted to fall. Supralapsarianism goes to as great an extreme on the one side as does universalism on the other. Only the infralapsarian scheme is self-consistent or consistent with other facts.

In regard to this difference Dr. Warfield writes: "The mere putting of the question seems to carry its answer with it. For the actual dealing with men which is in question, is, with respect to both classes alike, those who are elected and those who are passed by, conditioned on sin; we cannot speak of salvation any more than of reprobation without positing sin. Sin is necessarily precedent in thought, not indeed to the abstract idea of discrimination, but to the concrete instance of discrimination which is in question, a discrimination with regard to a destiny which involves either salvation or punishment. There must be sin in contemplation to ground a decree of salvation, as truly as a decree of punishment. We cannot speak of a decree discriminating between men with reference to salvation and punishment, therefore, without positing the contemplation of men as sinners as its logical prius." [*The Plan of Salvation*, p. 28.]

And to the same effect Dr. Charles Hodge says: "It is a clearly revealed Scriptural principle that where there is no sin there is no condemnation ... He hath mercy upon one and not on another, according to His own good pleasure, because all are equally unworthy and guilty. . . Everywhere, as in Romans 1:24, 26, 28, reprobation is declared to be judicial, founded upon the sinfulness of its object. Otherwise it could not be a manifestation of the justice of God." [*Systematic Theology*, II, p. 318.]

It is not in harmony with the Scripture ideas of God that innocent men, men who are not contemplated as sinners, should be foreordained to eternal misery and death. The decrees concerning the saved and the lost should not be looked upon as based merely on abstract sovereignty. God is truly sovereign, but this sovereignty is not exercised in an arbitrary way. Rather it is a sovereignty exercised in harmony with His other attributes, especially His justice, holiness, and wisdom. God cannot commit sin; and in that respect He is limited, although it would be more accurate to speak of His inability to commit sin as a perfection. There is, of course, mystery in connection with either system; but the supralapsarian system seems to pass beyond mystery and into contradiction.

The Scriptures are practically infralapsarian, Christians are said to have been chosen "out of" the world, John 15:19; the potter has a right over the clay, "from the same lump," to make one part a vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor, Romans 9:21; and the elect and the non-elect are regarded as being originally in a common state of misery. Suffering and death are uniformly represented as the wages of sin. The infralapsarian scheme naturally commends itself to our ideas of justice and mercy; and it is at least free from the Arminian objection that God simply creates some men in order to damn them. Augustine and the great majority of those who have held the doctrine of Election since that time have been and are infralapsarians, that is, they believe that it was from the mass of fallen men that some were elected to eternal life while others were sentenced to eternal death for their sins. There is no Reformed confession which teaches the supralapsarian view; but on the other hand a considerable number do explicitly teach the infralapsarian view, which thus emerges as the typical form of Calvinism. At the present day it is probably safe to say that not more than one Calvinist in a hundred holds the supralapsarian view. We are Calvinists strongly enough, but not "high Calvinists." By a "high Calvinist" we mean one who holds the supralapsarian view.

It is of course true that in either system the sovereign choice of God in election is strewed and salvation in its whole course is the work of God. Opponents usually stress the supralapsarian system since it is the one which without explanation is more likely to conflict with man's natural feelings and impressions. It is also true that there are some things here which cannot be put into the time mould, that these events are not in the Divine mind as they are in ours, by a succession of acts, one after another, but that by one single act God has at once ordained all these things. In the Divine mind



the plan is a unit, each part of which is designed with reference to a state of facts which God intended should result from the other parts. All of the decrees are eternal. They have a logical, but not a chronological, relationship. Yet in order for us to reason intelligently about them we must have a certain order of thought. We very naturally think of the gift of Christ in sancification and glorification as following the decrees of the creation and the fall.

In regard to the teaching of the Westminster Confession, Dr. Charles Hodge makes the following comment: "Twiss, the Prolocutor of that venerable body (the Westminster Assembly), was a zealous supralapsarian; the great majority of its members, however, were on the other side. The symbols of that Assembly, while they clearly imply the infralapsarian view, were yet so framed as to avoid offence to those who adopted the supralapsarian theory. In the 'Westminster Confession,' it is said that God appointed the elect unto eternal life, and the rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice: It is here taught that those whom God passes by are 'the rest of mankind; not the rest of ideal or possible men, but the rest of those human beings who constitute mankind, or the human race. In the second place, the passage quoted teaches that the non-elect are passed by and ordained to wrath 'for their sin.' This implies that they were contemplated as sinful before this foreordination to judgment. The infralapsarian view is still more obviously assumed in the answer to the 19th and 20th questions in the 'Shorter Catechism.' It is there taught that all mankind by the fall lost communion with God, and are under His wrath and curse, and that God out of His mere good pleasure elected some (some of those under His wrath and curse), unto everlasting life. Such has been the doctrine of the great body of Augustinians from the time of Augustine to the present day." [*Systematic Theology*, II, p. 317.]

## **7. MANY ARE CHOSEN**

When the doctrine of Election is mentioned many people immediately assume that this means that the great majority of mankind will be lost. But why should any one draw that conclusion? God is free in election to choose as many as I He pleases, and we believe that He who is infinitely merciful and benevolent and holy will elect the great majority to life. There is no good reason why He should be limited to only a few. We are told that Christ is to have the preeminence in all things, and we do not believe that the Devil will be permitted to emerge victor even in numbers.

Our position in this respect has been very ably stated by Dr. W. G. T. Shedd in the following words: "Let it be noticed that the question, how many are elected and how many are reprobated, has nothing to do with the question whether God may either

elect or reprobate sinners. If it is intrinsically right for Him either to elect or not to elect, either to save or not to save free moral agents who by their own fault have plunged themselves into sin and ruin, numbers are of no account in establishing the rightness. And if it is intrinsically wrong, numbers are of no account in establishing wrongness. Neither is there any necessity that the number of the elect should be small, and that of the nonelect great; or the converse. The election and the non-election, and also the numbers of the elect and the non-elect, are all alike a matter of sovereignty and optional decision. At the same time it relieves the solemnity and awfulness which overhangs the decree of reprobation, to remember that the Scriptures teach that the number of the elect is much greater than that of the non-elect. The kingdom of the Redeemer in this fallen world is always described as far greater and grander than that of Satan. The operation of grace on earth is uniformly represented as mightier than that of sin. 'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.' And the final number of the redeemed is said to be a 'number which no man can number,' but that of the lost is not so magnified and emphasized." [*Calvinism, Pure and Mixed*, p. 84.]

There is, however, a very common practice among Arminian writers to represent Calvinists as tending to consign to everlasting misery a large portion of the human race whom they would admit to the enjoyment of heaven. It is a mere caricature of Calvinism to represent it as based on the principle that the saved will be a mere handful, or only a few brands plucked from the burning. When the Calvinist insists upon the doctrine of Election, his emphasis is upon the fact that God deals personally with each individual soul instead of dealing merely with mankind in the mass; and this is a thing altogether apart from the relative proportion which shall exist between the saved and the lost. In answer to those who are inclined to say, "According to this doctrine God alone can save the soul; there will be few saved," we can reply that they might as well reason, "Since God alone can create stars, there can be but few stars." The objection is not well taken. The doctrine of Election taken in itself tells us nothing about what the ultimate ratio shall be. The only limit set is that not all will be saved.

So far as the principles of sovereignty and personal election are concerned there is no reason why a Calvinist might not hold that all men will finally be saved; and some Calvinists have actually held this view. "Calvinism," wrote W. P. Patterson, of the University of Edinburgh, "is the only system which contains principles in its doctrines of election and irresistible grace that could make credible a theory of universal salvation." And Dr. S. G. Craig, Editor of CHRISTIANITY TODAY, and one of the outstanding men in the Presbyterian Church at the present time, says: "No doubt many Calvinists, like many not Calvinists, have, in obedience to the supposed teachings of the Scriptures, held that few will be saved, but there is no good reason why Calvinists may not believe that the saved will ultimately embrace the immensely greater portion of the human race. At any rate, our leading theologians Charles Hodge, Robert L. Dabney, W. G. T. Shedd, and B. B. Warfield have so held."

As stated by Patterson, Calvinism, with its emphasis on the intimate personal relation between God and each individual soul, is the only system which would offer a logical basis for universalism if that view were not contradicted by the Scriptures. And in contrast with this, must not the Arminian admit that on his principles only comparatively few actually are saved? He must admit that so far in human history the great proportion of adults, even in nominally Christian lands, exercising their "free will" with a "graciously restored ability" have died without accepting Christ. And unless God is bringing the world to an appointed goal, what grounds are there to suppose that, so long as human nature remains as it is, the situation would be materially different even if the world lasted a billion years?

## **8. A REDEEMED WORLD OR RACE**

Since it was the world, or the race, which fell in Adam, it was the world, or the race, which was redeemed by Christ. This, however, does not mean that every individual will be saved, but that the race as a race will be saved. Jehovah is no mere tribal deity, but is "the God of the whole earth"; and the salvation which He had in view cannot be limited to that of a little select group or favored few. The Gospel was not merely local news for a few villages in Palestine, but was a world message; and the abundant and continuous testimony of Scripture is that the kingdom of God is to fill the earth, "from sea to sea, and from the River unto the ends of the earth." Zechariah 9:10.

Early in the Old Testament we have the promise that "all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Jehovah," Numbers 14:21; and Isaiah repeats the promise that all flesh shall see the glory of Jehovah (40:5). Israel was set as "a light to the Gentiles," and "for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth," Isaiah 49:6; Acts 13:47. Joel made the clear declaration that in the coming days of blessing, the Spirit hitherto given only to Israel would be poured out upon the whole earth. "And it shall come to pass afterward," said the Lord through His prophet, "that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh," 2:28; and Peter applied that prophecy to the outpouring which was begun at Pentecost (Acts 2:16).

Ezekiel gives us the picture of the increasing flow of the healing waters which issue from under the threshold of the temple; waters which were first only to the ankles, then to the knees, then to the loins, then a great river, waters which could not be passed through (47:1-5). Daniel's interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream taught this same truth. The king saw a great image, with various parts of gold, silver, brass, iron, and clay. Then he saw a stone cut out without bands, which stone smote the image so that the gold, silver, brass, iron, and clay were carried away like the chaff of the summer threshing floor. These various elements represented great world empires which were to be broken in pieces and completely carried away, while the stone cut out without bands represented a spiritual kingdom which God Himself

would set up and which would become a great mountain and fill the whole earth. "And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever," Daniel 2:44. In the light of the New Testament we see that this kingdom was the one which Christ set up. In the vision which Daniel saw, the beast made war with the saints and prevailed against them for a time, but, "the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom," 7:22.

Jeremiah gives the promise that the time is coming when it will no longer be necessary for a man to say to his brother or to his neighbors "Know Jehovah"; "for they shall all know Him, from the least to the greatest of them," 31:34. "Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possessions," said the psalmist (2:8). The last book of the Old Testament contains a promise that 'from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles, saith Jehovah of hosts,' Malachi 1:11.

In the New Testament we find the same teaching. When the Lord does finally shower spiritual blessings on His people, "the residue of men," and "all the Gentiles," are to "seek after the Lord," Acts 15:17. "Christ is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world," 1 John 2:2. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him" John 3:16, 17. "The Father hath sent the Son to be the Savior of the world," 1 John 4:14. "Behold the lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" John 1:29. "We have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world" John 4:42. "I am the light of the world," John 8:12. "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world," John 12:47. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," John 12:32. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself," 2 Corinthians 5:19. The kingdom of heaven is said to be "like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened," Matthew 13:33.

In the eleventh chapter of Romans we are told that the acceptance of the Gospel by the Jews shall be as "life from the dead" in its spiritual blessings to the world. By their fall the Gospel was given to the Gentiles "now if their fall is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? .... For if the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" The universal and complete dominion of Christ is taught again when we are told that He is to sit at the right hand of the Father until all enemies have been placed under His feet.

Thus a strong emphasis is thrown on the universality of Christ's work of redemption,

and we are taught that our eyes are yet to behold a Christianized world. And since nothing is told us as to how long the earth shall continue after this goal is reached, possibly we may look forward to a great "golden age" of spiritual prosperity, continuing for centuries, or even millenniums, during which time Christianity shall be triumphant over all the earth, and during which time the great proportion even of adults shall be saved. It seems that the number of the redeemed shall then be swelled until it far surpasses that of the lost.

We cannot, of course, fix even an approximate date for the end of the world. In several places in Scripture we are told that Christ is to return at the end of this present world order; that His coming will be personal, visible, and with great power and glory; that the general resurrection and the general judgment shall then take place; and that heaven and hell shall then be ushered in in their fulness. But it has been expressly revealed that the time of our Lord's coming is "among the secret things that belong unto the Lord our God." "For of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only," said Jesus before His crucifixion; and after the resurrection He said, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath set within His own authority," Acts 1:7. Hence those who presume to tell us when the end of the world is coming are simply speaking without knowledge. In view of the fact that it has now been nearly 2,000 years since Christ came the first time, it may, for all we know, be another 2,000 years before He comes again perhaps much longer, perhaps a much shorter, time.

In this connection Dr. S. G. Craig has well said: "We are told that certain events, such as the preaching of the Gospel among all the nations (Matthew 24:14), the conversion of the Jews (Romans 11:25-27), the overthrow of 'every rulership and every authority and power' opposed to Christ (1 Corinthians 15:24), are to take place before the return of our Lord. It seems clear, therefore, that while the time of our Lord's return is unknown, yet it still lies some distance in the future. Just how far in the future we have no means of knowing. No doubt, if events move as slowly in the future as in the past, the coming of our Lord lies far in the future. In view of the fact, however, that events move so much more swiftly than formerly, so that what formerly was accomplished in centuries is now accomplished in a few years, it is quite possible that the return of Christ lies in the comparatively near future. Whether it comes in the near or remote future as measured in the scale of human lives, we may be certain that it lies in the near future as measured in the scales of God according to whom a thousand years is as one day. In view of present conditions, however, there seems to be little or nothing in the Scriptures to warrant the notion that Jesus will return within the lifetime of the present generation." [*Jesus as He Was and Is*, p. 276.]

The world is perhaps yet young. Certainly God has not yet given any adequate exhibition of what He can do with a world truly converted to righteousness. What we have seen so far appears to be only the preliminary stage, a temporary triumph of the

Devil, whose work is to be completely overthrown. God's work spans the centuries. Even the millenniums are insignificant to Him who inhabits eternity. When we associate our theology with our astronomy we find that God works on an unbelievably vast scale. He has spaced millions, perhaps even billions, of fiery suns throughout the universe, something like ten million have already been catalogued. Astronomers tell us, for instance, that the earth is 92,000,000 miles from the sun and that the light traveling at the rate of 186,000 miles per second requires only eight minutes to traverse that distance. They go on to tell us that the nearest fixed star is so far away that four years are required for its light to reach us; that the light which we now see coming from the North Star has been on its journey for 450 years; and that the light from some of the most distant stars has been on its way for millions of years. In view of what modern science reveals we find that the period during which man has lived on earth has been comparatively insignificant. God may have developments in store for the race which shall be quite startling, developments of which we have scarcely dreamed.

## **9. THE VASTNESS OF THE REDEEMED MULTITUDE**

The decree of God's electing and predestinating love, though discriminating and particular, is, nevertheless, very extensive. "I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cried with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb," Revelation 7:9, 10. God the Father has elected untold millions of the human race to everlasting salvation and eternal happiness. Just what proportion of the human family He has included in His purpose of mercy, we have not been informed; but, in view of the future days of prosperity which are promised to the Church, it may be inferred that much the greater part will eventually be found among the number of His elect.

In the nineteenth chapter of John's Revelation a vision is recorded setting forth in figurative terms the struggle between the forces of good and evil in the world. Concerning the description there given Dr. Warfield says: "The section opens with a vision of the victory of the Word of God, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords over all His enemies. We see Him come forth from heaven girt for war, followed by the armies of heaven; the birds of the air are summoned to the feast of corpses that shall be prepared for them; the armies of the enemy the beasts and the kings of the earth are gathered against Him and are totally destroyed; and 'all the birds are filled with their flesh' (19:11-21). It is a vivid picture of a complete victory, an entire conquest, that we have here; and all the imagery of war and battle is employed to give it life. This is the symbol. The thing symbolized is obviously the complete victory of the Son of God over all the hosts of wickedness. Only a single hint of this signification is afforded by the language of the description, but that is enough. On two occasions we are carefully told

that the sword by which the victory is won proceeds out of the mouth of the conqueror (verses 15 and 21). We are not to think, as we read, of any literal war or manual fighting, therefore; the conquest is wrought by the spoken word in short, by the preaching of the Gospel. In fine, we have before us here a picture of the victorious career of the Gospel of Christ in the world. All the imagery of the dread battle and its hideous details are but to give us the impression of the completeness of the victory. Christ's Gospel is to conquer the earth; He is to overcome all His enemies." [*Biblical Doctrines*, Art. "The Millenium and The Apocalypse, p. 647.]

To us who live between the first and second coming of Christ it is given to see the conquest taking place. As to how long the conquest continues before it is crowned with victory, or as to how long the converted world is to await her coming Lord, we are not told. Today we are living in a period that is relatively golden as compared with the first century of the Christian era, and this progress is to go on until those on this earth shall see a practical fulfillment of the prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." As we get the broader view of God's gracious dealings with the sinful world, we see that He has not distributed His electing grace with niggard hand, but that His purpose has been the restoration to Himself of the whole world.

The promise was given to Abraham that his posterity should be a vast multitude, "In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore," Genesis 22:17; "I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth; so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then may thy seed also be numbered," Genesis 13:16. And in the New Testament we discover that this promise refers not merely to the Jews as a separate people, but that those who are Christians are in the highest sense the true "sons of Abraham." "Know therefore, that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham"; and again, "If ye are Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise," Galatians 3:7, 29.

Isaiah declared that the pleasure of Jehovah should prosper in the hands of the Messiah, that He should see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. And in view of what He suffered on Calvary we know that He will not be easily satisfied.

The idea that the saved shall far outnumber the lost is also carried out in the contrasts drawn in Scripture language. Heaven is uniformly pictured as the next world, as a great kingdom, a country, a city; while on the other hand hell is uniformly represented as a comparatively small place, a prison, a lake (of fire and brimstone), a pit (perhaps deep, but narrow), (Luke 20:35; 1 Timothy 6:17; Revelation 21:1; Matthew 5:3; Hebrews 11:16; 1 Peter 3:19; Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 14, 15; 21:8-27). When the angels and saints are mentioned in Scripture they are said to be hosts, myriads, an innumerable multitude, ten thousand times ten thousand and many more thousands of thousands; but no such language is ever used in regard to the lost, and by contrast their number appears to be relatively insignificant (Luke 2:13; Isaiah 6:3; Revelation

5:11). "The circle of God's election," says Shedd, "is a great circle of the heavens and not that of a treadmill. The kingdom of Satan is insignificant in contrast with the kingdom of Christ. In the immense range of God's dominion, good is the rule, and evil is the exception. Sin is a speck upon the azure of eternity; a spot upon the sun. Hell is only a corner of the universe."

Judging from these considerations it thus appears (if we may hazard a guess) that the number of those who are saved may eventually bear some such proportion to those who are lost as the number of free citizens in our commonwealth today bears to those who are in the prisons and penitentiaries; or that the company of the saved may be likened to the main stalk of the tree which grows and flourishes, while the lost are but as the small limbs and prunings which are cut off and which perish in the fires. Who even among non-Calvinists would not wish that this were true?

But, it may be asked, do not the verses, "Narrow is the gate, and straightened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it," and, "Many are called, but few chosen," Matthew 7:14; 22:14, teach that many more are lost than saved? We believe these verses are meant to be understood in a temporal sense, as describing the conditions which Jesus and His disciples saw existing in Palestine in their day. The great majority of the people about them were not walking in the ways of righteousness, and the words are spoken from the standpoint of the moment rather than from the standpoint of the distant Judgment Day. In these words we have presented to us a picture which was true to life as they saw it, and which would, for that matter, describe the world as it has been even up to the present time. But, asks Dr. Warfield, "As the years and centuries and ages flow on, can it never be is it not to be that the proportion following 'the two ways' ll be reversed?"

These verses are also designed to teach us that the way of salvation is a way of difficulty and of sacrifice, and that it is our duty to address ourselves to it with diligence and persistence. No one is to assume his salvation as a matter of course. Those who enter into the kingdom of heaven do so through many tribulations; hence the command, "Strive to enter in by the narrow door," Luke 13:24. The choice in life is represented as a choice between two roads, one is broad, smooth, and easy to travel, but leads to destruction. The other is narrow and difficult, and leads to life. "There is no more reason to suppose that this similitude teaches that the saved shall be fewer than the lost than there is to suppose that the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1ff) teaches that they shall be precisely equal in number; and there is far less reason to suppose that this similitude teaches that the saved shall be few comparatively to the lost than there is to suppose that the parable of the Tares in the corn (Matthew 13:24ff) teaches that the lost shall be inconsiderable in number in comparison with the saved for that, indeed, is an important part of the teaching of that parable." [Warfield, article, "Are They Few That Be Saved?"] And we may add that there is no more reason to suppose that this reference to the two ways teaches that



the number of the saved shall be fewer than the number of the lost than there is to suppose that the parable of the lost sheep teaches that only one out of a hundred goes astray and that even it shall eventually be brought back, which would indeed be absolute restorationism.

## **10. THE WORLD IS GROWING BETTER**

The redemption of the world is a long, slow process, extending through the centuries, yet surely approaching an appointed goal. We live in the day of advancing victory and see the conquest taking place.

There are periods of spiritual prosperity and periods of depression; yet over all there is progress. Looking back across the two thousand years since Christ came, we can see that there has been marvelous progress. This course shall ultimately be completed, and before Christ comes again we shall see a Christianized world. This does not mean that all sin shall ever be eradicated there shall always be some tares among the wheat until the time of the harvest, and even the righteous, while they remain in this world, sometimes fall victims to sin and temptation. But it does mean that as today we see some Christianized groups and communities, so eventually we shall see a Christianized world.

"The true way of judging the world is to compare its present with its past condition and note in which direction it is moving. Is it going backward, or forward, is it getting worse or better? It may be wrapped in gloomy twilight, but is it the twilight of the evening, or of the morning? Are the shadows deepening into starless night, or are they fleeing before the rising sun? ... One glance at the world as it is today compared with what it was ten or twenty centuries ago shows us that it has swept through a wide arc and is moving toward the morning." [*The Coming of the Lord*, P. 250. For a very excellent discussion of the question, "Is the World Growing Better?" see Snowden's book, Chap. VIII.]

Today there is much more wealth consecrated to the service of the Church than ever before; and, in spite of the sad defection toward Modernism in many places, we believe there is far more really earnest evangelistic and missionary activity than has ever been known before. The number of Bible schools, Christian colleges, and seminaries in which the Bible is systematically studied is growing much more rapidly than the population. Last year over 11,000,000 copies or portions of the Bible in various languages were distributed in the home and foreign lands by the American Bible Society alone a fact which means that the Bible is being broadcast over the earth as never before.

The Christian Church has made great progress in many parts of the world, and especially during the last two or three centuries it has developed thousands upon

thousands of individual churches and has been a powerful influence for good in the lives of millions of people. It has established innumerable schools and hospitals. Under its benign influence ethical culture and social service have greatly advanced in the world, and the moral standards of the nations are much higher today than when the Church was first planted here.

"Already the Church has penetrated every continent and planted itself on every island and flung its outposts around the equator and from pole to pole. It is now the greatest organization on earth, the one world enterprise. And it has results to show that are not unpromising. In our own country Christianity has grown at least five times faster than the population. One hundred years ago there was one professing Christian in every fifteen of the population, and there now is one in every three, and excluding children, one in every two. In the world at large the results are astonishing. In 1500 AD. there were 100,000,000 nominal Christians in the world; in 1800 there were 200,000,000, and the latest statistics show that, out of a total world population of 1,646,491,000 there are now 564,510,000 nominal Christians, or about one-third of the population of the globe. Christianity has grown more in the last one hundred years than in the preceding eighteen hundred." [Snowden, *The Coming of Our Lord*, p. 265.]

The statement that Christianity has grown more in the last one hundred years than in the preceding eighteen hundred seems to be approximately correct. According to late statistics, 1950, Christianity has a considerably larger number of nominal adherents than the combined total of any other two world religions. These figures state that there are approximately 640,000,000 Christians, 300,000,000 Confucianists (including Taoists), 230,000,000 Hindus, 220,000,000 Mohammedans, 150,000,000 Buddhists, 125,000,000 Animists, 20,000,000 Shintoists, and 15,000,000 Jews. (And while many of those who are listed as Christians are only "nominally" such, the proportion of true Christians is probably as great or greater than is the proportion in any of the pagan religions). All of these other religions, with the exception of Mohammedanism, are much older than Christianity. Furthermore, Christianity alone is able to grow and flourish under modern civilization, while all of the other religions soon disintegrate when brought under its glaring light.

Only within the last one hundred years have foreign missions really come into their own. As they have recently been developed, with great church organizations behind them, they are in position to carry on a work of evangelism in heathen lands such as the world has never yet seen. It is safe to say that the present generation living in India, China, Korea, and Japan, has seen greater changes in religion, society, and government than occurred in the preceding two thousand years. And when we contrast the rapid spread of Christianity in recent years with the rapid disintegration that is taking place in all of the other world religions, it appears very plain that Christianity is the future world religion. In the light of these facts we face the future confident that the best is yet to be.

## 11. INFANT SALVATION

Most Calvinistic theologians have held that those who die in infancy are saved. The Scriptures seem to teach plainly enough that the children of believers are saved; but they are silent or practically so in regard to those of the heathens. The Westminster Confession does not pass judgment on the children of heathens who die before coming to years of accountability. Where the Scriptures are silent, the Confession, too, preserves silence. Our outstanding theologians, however, mindful of the fact that God's "tender mercies are over all His works," and depending on His mercy widened as broadly as possible, have entertained a charitable hope that since these infants have never committed any actual sin themselves, their inherited sin would be pardoned and they would be saved on wholly evangelical principles.

Such, for instance, was the position held by Charles Hodge, W. G. T. Shedd, and B. B. Warfield. Concerning those who die in infancy, Dr. Warfield says: "Their destiny is determined irrespective of their choice, by an unconditional decree of God, suspended for its execution on no act of their own; and their salvation is wrought by an unconditional application of the grace of Christ to their souls, through the immediate and irresistible operation of the Holy Spirit prior to and apart from any action of their own proper wills . . . And if death in infancy does depend on God's providence, it is assuredly God in His providence who selects this vast multitude to be made participants of His unconditional salvation . . . This is but to say that they are unconditionally predestinated to salvation from the foundation of the world. If only a single infant dying in irresponsible infancy be saved, the whole Arminian principle is traversed. If all infants dying such are saved, not only the majority of the saved, but doubtless the majority of the human race hitherto, have entered into life by a non-Arminian pathway." [*Two Studies in the History of Doctrine*, p. 230.]

Certainly there is nothing in the Calvinistic system which would prevent us from believing this; and until it is proven that God could not predestinate to eternal life all those whom He is pleased to call in infancy we may be permitted to hold this view.

Calvinists, of course, hold that the doctrine of original sin applies to infants as well as to adults. Like all other sons of Adam, infants are truly culpable because of race sin and might be justly punished for it. Their "salvation" is real. It is possible only through the grace of Christ and is as truly unmerited as is that of adults. Instead of minimizing the demerit and punishment due to them for original sin, Calvinism magnifies the mercy of God in their salvation. Their salvation means something, for it is the deliverance of guilty souls from eternal woe. And it is costly, for it was paid for by the suffering of Christ on the cross. Those who take the other view of original sin, namely, that it is not properly sin and does not deserve eternal punishment, make the evil from which infants are "saved" to be very small and consequently the love and gratitude which they owe to God to be small also.

The doctrine of infant salvation finds a logical place in the Calvinistic system; for the redemption of the soul is thus infallibly determined irrespective of any faith, repentance or good works, whether actual or foreseen. It does not, however, find a logical place in Arminianism or any other system. Furthermore, it would seem that a system such as Arminianism, which suspends salvation on a personal act of rational choice, would logically demand that those dying in infancy must either be given another period of probation after death, in order that their destiny may be fixed, or that they must be annihilated.

In regard to this question Dr. S. G. Craig has written: "We take it that no doctrine of infant salvation is Christian that does not assume that infants are lost members of a lost race for whom there is no salvation apart from Christ. It must be obvious to all, therefore, that the doctrine that all dying in infancy are saved will not fit into the Roman Catholic or Anglo-Catholic system of thought with their teaching of baptismal regeneration; as clearly most of those who have died in infancy have not been baptized. It is obvious also that the Lutheran system of thought provides no place for the notion that all dying in infancy are saved because of the necessity it attaches to the means of grace, especially the Word and the Sacraments. If grace is only in the means of grace in the case of infants in baptism it seems clear that most of those who have died in infancy have not been the recipients of grace. Equally clear is it that the Arminian has no right to believe in the salvation of all dying in infancy; in fact, it is not so clear that he has any right to believe in the salvation of any dying in infancy. For according to the Arminians, even the evangelical Arminians, God in His grace has merely provided men with an opportunity for salvation. It does not appear, however, that a mere opportunity for salvation can be of any avail for those dying in infancy." [*Christianity Today*, Jan. 1931, p. 14.]

Though rejecting the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, and turning the baptism of the non-elect into an empty form, Calvinism, on the other hand, extends saving grace far beyond the boundaries of the visible Church. If it is true that all of those who die in infancy, in heathen as well as in Christian lands, are saved, then more than half of the human race even up to the present time has been among the elect. Furthermore, it may be said that since Calvinists hold that saving faith in Christ is the only requirement for salvation on the part of adults, they never make membership in the external Church to be either a requirement or a guarantee of salvation. They believe that many adults who have no connection with the external Church are nevertheless saved. Every consistent Christian will, of course, submit himself for baptism in accordance with the plain Scripture command and will become a member of the external Church; yet many others, either because of weakness of faith or because they lack the opportunity, do not carry out that command.

It has often been charged that the Westminster Confession in stating that "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ" (Chap. X. Sec. 3),

implies that there are non-elect infants, who, dying in infancy, are lost, and that the Presbyterian Church has taught that some dying in infancy are lost. Concerning this Dr. Craig says: "The history of the phrase 'Elect infants dying in infancy' makes clear that the contrast implied was not between 'elect infants dying in infancy' and 'non-elect infants dying in infancy,' but rather between 'elect infants dying in infancy' and 'elect infants living to grow up.' " However, in order to guard against misunderstanding, furthered by unfriendly controversialists, the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. adopted in 1903 a Declaratory Statement which reads as follows: "With reference to Chapter X, Section 3, of the Confession of Faith, that it is not to be regarded as teaching that any who die in infancy are lost. We believe that all dying in infancy are included in the election of grace, and are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who works when and where and how He pleases."

Concerning this Declaratory Statement Dr. Craig says: "It is obvious that the Declaratory Statement goes beyond the teaching of Chapter X, Section 3 of the Confession of Faith inasmuch as it states positively that all who die in infancy are saved. Some hold that the Declaratory Statement goes beyond the Scripture in teaching that all those dying in infancy are saved; but, be that as it may, it makes it impossible for any person to even plausibly maintain that Presbyterians teach that there are non-elect infants who die in infancy. No doubt there have been individual Presbyterians who held that some of those who die in infancy have been lost; but such was never the official teaching of the Presbyterian Church and as matters now stand such a position is contradicted by the Church's creed." [*Christianity Today*, Jan. 1931. p. 14. ]

It is sometimes charged that Calvin taught the actual damnation of some of those who die in infancy. A careful examination of his writings, however, does not bear out that charge. He explicitly taught that some of the elect die in infancy and that they are saved as infants. He also taught that there were reprobate infants; for he held that reprobation as well as election was eternal, and that the non-elect come into this life reprobate. But nowhere did he teach that the reprobate die and are lost as infants. He of course rejected the Pelagian view which denied original sin and grounded the salvation of those who die in infancy on their supposed innocence and sinlessness. Calvin's views in this respect have been quite thoroughly investigated by Dr. R. A. Webb and his findings are summarized in the following paragraph: "Calvin teaches that all the reprobate 'procure' (that is his own word) 'procure' their own destruction; and they procure their destruction by their own personal and conscious acts of 'impiety,' 'wickedness,' and 'rebellion.' Now reprobate infants, though guilty of original sin and under condemnation, cannot, while they are infants, thus 'procure' their own destruction by their personal acts of impiety, wickedness, and rebellion. They must, therefore, live to the years of moral responsibility in order to perpetrate the acts of impiety, wickedness and rebellion, which Calvin defines as the mode through which they procure their destruction. While, therefore, Calvin teaches that there are

reprobate infants, and that these will be finally lost, he nowhere teaches that they will be lost as infants, and while they are infants; but, on the contrary, he declares that all the reprobate 'procure' their own destruction by personal acts of impiety, wickedness and rebellion. Consequently, his own reasoning compels him to hold (to be consistent with himself), that no reprobate child can die in infancy; but all such must live to the age of moral accountability, and translate original sin into actual sin." [*Calvin Memorial Addresses*, p. 112.]

In none of Calvin's writings does he say, either directly or by good and necessary inference, that any dying in infancy are lost. Most of the passages which are brought forth by opponents to prove this point are merely assertions of his well known doctrine of original sin, in which he taught the universal guilt and depravity of the entire race. Most of these are from highly controversial sections where he is discussing other doctrines and where he speaks unguardedly; but when taken in their context the meaning is not often in doubt. Calvin simply says of all infants what David specifically said of himself: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity; And in sin did my mother conceive me," Psalm 51:5; or what Paul said, "In Adam all die," 1 Corinthians 15:22; or again, that all are "by nature, the children of wrath," Ephesians 2:3.

We believe that we have now shown that the doctrine of election is in every point Scriptural and a plain dictate of common sense. Those who oppose this doctrine do so because they neither understand nor consider the majesty and holiness of God, nor the corruption and guilt of their own nature. They forget that they stand before their Maker not as those who may justly claim His mercy, but as condemned criminals who deserve only punishment. Furthermore, they want to be independent to work out their own scheme of salvation rather than to accept God's plan which is by grace. This doctrine of election will not harmonize with any covenant of works, nor with a mongrel covenant of works and grace; but it is the only possible outcome of a covenant of pure grace.

## **12.SUMMARY OF THE REFORMED DOCTRINE OF ELECTION**

Election is a sovereign free act of God, through which He determines who shall be made heirs of heaven.

The elective decree was made in eternity.

The elective decree contemplates the race as already fallen.

The elect are brought from a state of sin and into a state of blessedness and happiness.

Election is personal determining what particular individuals shall be saved.

Election includes both means and ends, election to eternal life includes election to

righteous living here in this world.

The elective decree is made effective by the efficient work of the Holy Spirit, who works when, and where, and how He pleases.

God's common grace would incline all men to good if not resisted.

The elective decree leaves others who are not elected others who suffer the just consequences of their sin.

Some men are permitted to follow the evil which they freely choose, to their own destruction.

God, in His sovereignty, could regenerate all men if He chose to do so.

The Judge of all the earth will do right, and will extend His saving grace to multitudes who are undeserving.

Election is not based on foreseen faith or good works, but only on God's sovereign good pleasure.

Much the larger portion of the human race has been elected to life.

All of those dying in infancy are among the elect.

There has also been an election of individuals and of nations to external and temporal favors and privileges an election which falls short of salvation.

The doctrine of election is repeatedly taught and emphasized throughout the Scriptures.

## **Jacob and Esau**

**Charles Spurgeon**

A Sermon (No. 241)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 16th, 1859

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

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*"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."* Romans 9:15.

DO NOT IMAGINE for an instant that I pretend to be able thoroughly to elucidate the great mysteries of predestination. There are some men who claim to know all about the matter. They twist it round their fingers as easily as if it were an everyday thing; but depend upon it, he who thinks he knows all about this mystery, knows but very little. It is but the shallowness of his mind that permits him to see the bottom of his knowledge; he who dives deep, finds that there is in the lowest depth to which he can attain a deeper depth still. The fact is, that the great questions about man's responsibility, free-will, and predestination, have been fought over, and over, and over again, and have been answered in ten thousand different ways; and the result has been, that we know just as much about the matter as when we first began. The combatants have thrown dust into each other's eyes, and have hindered each other from seeing; and then they have concluded, that because they put other people's eyes out, they could therefore see.

Now, it is one thing to refute another man's doctrine, but a very different matter to establish my own views. It is very easy to knock over one man's hypothesis concerning these truths, not quite so easy to make my own stand on a firm footing. I shall try to-night, if I can, to go safely, if I do not go very fast; for I shall endeavour to keep simply to the letter of God's Word. I think that if we kept more simply to the teachings of the Bible, we should be wiser than we are; for by turning from the heavenly light of revelation, and trusting to the deceitful will-o'-the-wisps of our own imagination, we thrust ourselves into quags and bogs where there is no sure footing, and we begin to sink; and instead of making progress, we find ourselves sticking fast. The truth is, neither you nor I have any right to want to know more about predestination than what God tells us. That is enough for us. If it were worth while for us to know more, God would have revealed more. What God has told us, we are to believe, but to the knowledge thus gained, we are too apt to add our own vague notions, and then we are sure to go wrong. It would be better, if in all controversies, men had simply stood hard and fast by "Thus saith the Lord," instead of having it said, "Thus and thus I think." I shall now endeavour, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to throw the light of God's Word upon this great doctrine of divine sovereignty, and give you what I think to be a Scriptural statement of the fact, that some men are chosen, other men are left,—the great fact that is declared in this text,—"*Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*"

It is a terrible text, and I will be honest with it if I can. One man says the word "hate" does not mean hate; it means "love less:"—"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I loved less." It may be so: but I don't believe it is. At any rate, it says "hate" here; and until you give me another version of the Bible, I shall keep to this one. I believe that the term is correctly and properly translated; that the word "hate" is not stronger than the original; but even if it be a little stronger, it is nearer the mark than the other translation which is offered to us in those meaningless words, "love less." I like to take



it and let it stand just as it is. The fact is, God loved Jacob, and he did not love Esau; he did choose Jacob, but he did not choose Esau; he did bless Jacob, but he never blessed Esau; his mercy followed Jacob all the way of his life, even to the last, but his mercy never followed Esau; he permitted him still to go on in his sins, and to prove that dreadful truth, "Esau have I hated." Others, in order to get rid of this ugly text, say, it does not mean Esau and Jacob; it means the nation; it means Jacob's children and Esau's children; it means the children of Israel and Edom. I should like to know where the difference lies. Is the difficulty removed by extending it? Some of the Wesleyan brethren say, that there is a national election; God has chosen one nation and not another. They turn round and tell us it is unjust in God to choose one man and not another. Now, we ask them by everything reasonable, is it not equally unjust of God to choose one nation and leave another? The argument which they imagine overthrows us overthrows them also. There never was a more foolish subterfuge than that of trying to bring out national election. What is the election of a nation but the election of so many units, of so many people? and it is tantamount to the same thing as the particular election of individuals. In thinking, men cannot see clearly that if—which we do not for a moment believe—that if there be any injustice in God choosing one man and not another, how much more must there be injustice in his choosing one nation and not another. No! the difficulty cannot be got rid of thus, but is greatly increased by this foolish wresting of God's Word. Besides, here is the proof that that is not correct; read the verse preceding it. It does not say anything at all about nations, it says, "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; It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger,"—referring to the children, not to the nations. Of course the threatening was afterwards fulfilled in the position of the two nations; Edom was made to serve Israel. But this text means just what it says; it does not mean nations, but it means the persons mentioned. "Jacob,"—that is the man whose name was Jacob—"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Take care my dear friends, how any of you meddle with God's Word. I have heard of folks altering passages they did not like. It will not do, you know, you cannot alter them; they are really just the same. Our only power with the Word of God is simply to let it stand as it is, and to endeavour by God's grace to accommodate ourselves to that. We must never try to make the Bible bow to us, in fact we cannot, for the truths of divine revelation are as sure and fast as the throne of God. If a man wants to enjoy a delightful prospect, and a mighty mountain lies in his path, does he commence cutting away at its base, in the vain hope that ultimately it will become a level plain before him? No, on the contrary, he diligently uses it for the accomplishment of his purpose by ascending it, well knowing this to be the only means of obtaining the end in view. So must we do; we cannot bring down the truths of God to our poor finite understandings; the mountain will never fall before us, but we can seek strength to rise higher and higher in our perception of divine things, and in this way only may we hope to obtain the blessing.

Now, I shall have two things to notice to-night. I have explained this text to mean just what it says, and I do not want it to be altered—"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." To take off the edge of this terrible doctrine that makes real some people bite their lips so, I must just notice that this is a fact; and, after that, I shall try to answer the question,—Why was it that God loved Jacob and hated Esau?

"God is his own interpreter,  
And he will make it plain;"

but there stands the fact. Before you begin to argue upon the doctrine, just recollect, that whatever you may think about it, you cannot alter it; and however much you may object to it, it is actually true that God did love Jacob, and did not love Esau.

For now look at Jacob's life and read his history; you are compelled to say that, from the first hour that he left his father's house, even to the last, God loved him. Why, he has not gone far from his father's house before he is weary, and he lies down with a stone for his pillow, and the hedges for his curtain, and the sky for his canopy; and he goes to sleep, and God comes and talks to him in his sleep; he sees a ladder, whereof the top reaches to heaven, and a company of angels ascending and descending upon it; and he goes on his journey to Laban. Laban tries to cheat him, and as often as Laban tries to wrong him, God suffers it not, but multiplies the different cattle that Laban gives him. Afterwards, you remember, when he fled unawares from Laban, and was pursued, that God appears to Laban in a dream, and charges him not to speak to Jacob either good or bad. And more memorable still, when his sons Levi and Simeon have committed murder in Shethem, and Jacob is afraid that he will be overtaken and destroyed by the inhabitants who were rising against him, God puts a fear upon the the people, and says to them, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophet no harm." And when a famine comes over the land, God has sent Joseph into Egypt, to provide corn in Goshen for his brethren, that they should live and not die. And see the happy end of Jacob—"I shall see my son Joseph before I die." Behold the tears streaming down his aged cheeks, as he clasps his own Joseph to his bosom! See how magnificently he goes into the presence of Pharaoh, and blesses him. It is said, "Jacob blessed Pharaoh." He had God's love so much in him, that he was free to bless the mightiest monarch of his times. At last he gave up the ghost, and it was said at once, "This was a man that God loved." There is the fact that God did love Jacob.

On the other hand, there is the fact that God did not love Esau. He permitted Esau to become the father of princes, but he has not blessed his generation. Where is the house of Esau now? Edom has perished. She built her chambers in the rock, and cut out her cities in the flinty rock; but God has abandoned the inhabitants thereof, and Edom is not to be found. They became the bond-slaves of Israel; and the kings of Edom had to furnish a yearly tribute of wool to Solomon and his successors; and now the name of Esau is erased from the book of history. Now, then, I must say, again, this

ought to take off at least some of the bitterness of controversy, when we recollect that it is the fact, let men say what they will, that God did love Jacob, and he did not love Esau.

II. But now the second point of my subject is, WHY IS THIS? Why did God love Jacob? why did he hate Esau? Now, I am not going to undertake too much at once. You say to me, “Why did God love Jacob? and why did he hate Esau?” We will take one question at a time; for the reason why some people get into a muddle in theology is, because they try to give an answer to two questions. Now, I shall not do that; I will tell you one thing at a time. I will tell you why God loved Jacob; and, then, I will tell you why he hated Esau. But I cannot give you the same reason for two contradictory things. That is wherein a great many have failed. They have sat down and seen these facts, that God loved Jacob and hated Esau, that God has an elect people, and that there are others who are not elect. If, then, they try to give the same reason for election and non-election, they make sad work of it. If they will pause and take one thing at a time, and look to God’s Word, they will not go wrong.

The first question is, why did God love Jacob? I am not at all puzzled to answer this, because when I turn to the Word of God, I read this text;—“Not for your sakes, do I this saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways O house of Israel.” I am not at a loss to tell you that it could not be for any good thing in Jacob, that God loved him, because I am told that “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.” I can tell you the reason why God loved Jacob; It is sovereign grace. There was nothing in Jacob that could make God love him; there was everything about him, that might have made God hate him, as much as he did Esau, and a great deal more. But it was because God was infinitely gracious, that he loved Jacob, and because he was sovereign in his dispensation of this grace, that he chose Jacob as the object of that love. Now, I am not going to deal with Esau, until I have answered the question on the side of Jacob. I want just to notice this, that Jacob was loved of God, simply on the footing of free grace. For, come now, let us look at Jacob’s character; I have already said in the exposition, what I think of him. I do think the very smallest things of Jacob’s character. As a natural man, he was always a bargain-maker.

I was struck the other day with that vision that Jacob had at Bethel: it seemed to me a most extraordinary development of Jacob’s bargain-making spirit. You know he lay down, and God was pleased to open the doors of heaven to him, so that he saw God sitting at the top of the ladder, and the angels ascending and descending upon it. What do you suppose he said as soon as he awoke? Well, he said, “Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” Why, if Jacob had had faith, he would not have been afraid of God: on the contrary, he would have

rejoiced that God had thus permitted him to hold fellowship with him. Now, hear Jacob's bargain. God had simply said to him, "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed." He did not say anything about what Jacob was to do: God only said, I will do it,—“Behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.” Now, can you believe, that after God had spoken face to face with Jacob, that he would have had the impudence to try and make a bargain with God? But he did. He begins and says, “If—“ There now, the man has had a vision, and an absolute promise from God, and yet he begins with an “If.” That is bargain-making with a vengeance! “If God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my Father's house in peace, then”—not without—mark, he is going to hold God to his bargain—“then shall, the Lord be my God: and this stone which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.” I marvel at this! If I did not know something about my own nature, I should be utterly unable to understand it. What! a man that has talked with God, then begin to make a bargain with him! that has seen the only way of access between heaven and earth, the ladder Christ Jesus, and has had a covenant made between himself and God, a covenant that is all on God's part—all a promise—and yet wants after that to hold God to the bargain: as if he were afraid God would break his promise! Oh! this was vile indeed!

Then notice his whole life. While he lived with Laban, what miserable work it was. He had got into the hands of a man of the world; and whenever a covetous Christian gets into such company, a terrible scene ensues! There are the two together, greedy and grasping. If an angel could look down upon them, how would he weep to see the man of God fallen from his high place, and become as bad as the other. Then, the device that Jacob used, when he endeavoured to get his wages was most extraordinary. Why did he not leave it to God, instead of adopting such systems as that? The whole way through we are ashamed of Jacob; we cannot help it. And then, there is that grand period in his life, the turning point, when we are told, that “Jacob wrestled with God, and prevailed.” We will look at that—I have carefully studied the subject, and I do not think so much of him as I did. I thought Jacob wrestled with God, but I find it is the contrary; he did not wrestle with God; God wrestled with him. I had always set Jacob up, in my mind, as the very model of a man wrestling in prayer; I do not think so now. He divided his family, and put a person in front to appease Esau. He did not go in front himself, with the holy trust that a patriarch should have felt; guarded with all the omnipotence of heaven, he might boldly have gone to meet his brother, but no! he did not feel certain that the latter would bow at his feet, although the promise said, “The elder shall serve the younger.” He did not rest on that promise; it was not big enough for him. Then he went at night to the brook Jabbok. I do not know what for,

unless he went to pray; but I am afraid it was not so. The text says, “And Jacob was left alone: and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.” There is a great deal of difference between a man wrestling with me, and my wrestling with him. When I strive with anyone, I want to gain something from him, and when a man wrestles with me, he wants to get something out of me. Therefore, I take it, when the man wrestled with Jacob, he wanted to get his cunning and deceit out of him, and prove what a poor sinful creature he was, but he could not do it. Jacob’s craft was so strong, that he could not be overcome; at last, the angel touched his thigh, and showed him his own hollowness. And Jacob turned round and said, “Thou hast taken away my strength, now I will wrestle with thee;” and when his thigh was out of joint, when he fully felt his own weakness, then, and not till then, is he brought to say, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.” He had had full confidence in his own strength, but God at last humbled him, and when all his boasted power was gone, then it was that Jacob became a prevailing prince. But, even after that, his life is not clear. Then you find him an unbelieving creature; and we have all been as bad. Though we are blaming Jacob, brethren, we blame ourselves. We are hard with him, but we shall be harder with ourselves. Do you not remember the memorable speech of the patriarch, when he said, “Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me?” Ah, Jacob, why cannot you believe the promise? All other promises have been fulfilled. But no! he could not think of the promise; he was always wanting to live by sight.

Now, I say if the character of Jacob, be as I have described it, and I am sure it is—we have got it in God’s word—there was, there could have been nothing in Jacob, that made God love him; and the only reason why God loved him, must have been because of his own grace, because “he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy.” And rest assured, the only reason why any of us can hope to be saved is this, the sovereign grace of God. There is no reason why I should be saved, or why you should be saved, but God’s own merciful heart, and God’s own omnipotent will. Now that is the doctrine; it is taught not only in this passage, but in multitudes of other passages of God’s Word. Dear friends, receive it, hold fast by it, and never let it go.

Now, the next question is a different one: Why did God hate Esau? I am not going to mix this question up with the other, they are entirely distinct, and I intend to keep them so, one answer will not do for two questions, they must be taken separately, and then can be answered satisfactorily. Why does God hate any man? I defy anyone to give any answer but this, because that man deserves it; no reply but that can ever be true. There are some who answer, divine sovereignty; but I challenge them to look that doctrine in the face. Do you believe that God created man and arbitrarily, sovereignly—it is the same thing—created that man, with no other intention, than that of damning him? Made him, and yet, for no other reason than that of destroying him for ever? Well, if you can believe it, I pity you, that is all I can say: you deserve pity, that you should think so meanly of God, whose mercy endureth for ever. You are quite

right when you say the reason why God loves a man, is because God does do so; there is no reason in the man. But do not give the same answer as to why God hates a man. If God deals with any man severely, it is because that man deserves all he gets. In hell there will not be a solitary soul that will say to God, O Lord, thou hast treated me worse than I deserve! But every lost spirit will be made to feel that he has got his deserts, that his destruction lies at his own door and not at the door of God; that God had nothing to do with his condemnation, except as the Judge condemns the criminal, but that he himself brought damnation upon his own head, as the result of his own evil works. Justice is that which damns a man; it is mercy, it is free grace, that saves; sovereignty holds the scale of love; it is justice holds the other scale. Who can put that into the hand of sovereignty? That were to libel God and to dishonour him;

Now, let us look at Esau's character, says one, "did he deserve that God should cast him away?" I answer, he did. What we know of Esau's character, clearly proves it. Esau lost his birthright. Do not sit down and weep about that, and blame God. Esau sold it himself; he sold it for a mess of pottage. Oh, Esau, it is in vain for thee to say, "I lost my birthright by decree." No, no. Jacob got it by decree, but you lost it because you sold it yourself—didn't you? Was it not your own bargain? Did you not take the mess of red pottage of your own voluntary will, in lieu of the birthright? Your destruction lies at your own door, because you sold your own soul at your own bargain, and you did it yourself. Did God influence Esau to do that? God forbid, God is not the author of sin. Esau voluntarily gave up his own birthright. And the doctrine is, that every man who loses heaven gives it up himself. Every man who loses everlasting life rejects it himself. God denies it not to him—he will not come that he may have life. Why is it that a man remains ungodly and does not fear God? It is because he says, "I like this drink, I like this pleasure, I like this sabbath-breaking, better than I do the things of God." No man is saved by his own free-will, but every man is damned by it that is damned. He does it of his own will; no one constrains him. You know, sinner, that when you go away from here, and put down the cries of conscience, that you do it yourself. You know that, when after a sermon you say, "I do not care about believing in Christ," you say it yourself—You are quite conscious of it, and if not conscious of it, it is notwithstanding a dreadful fact, that the reason why you are what you are, is because you will to be what you are. It is your own will that keeps you where you are, the blame lies at your own door, your being still in a state of sin is voluntary. You are a captive, but you are a voluntary captive. You will never be willing to get free until God makes you willing. But you are willing to be a bond slave. There is no disguising the fact, that man loves sin, loves evil, and does not love God. You know, though heaven is preached to you through the blood of Christ, and though hell is threatened to you as the result of your sins, that still you cleave to your iniquities; you will not leave them, and will not fly to Christ. And when you are cast away, at last it will be said of you, "you have lost your birthright." But you sold it yourself. You know that the ball-room suits you better than the house of God: you know that the pot-

house suits you better than the prayer-meeting; you know you trust yourself rather than trust Christ; you know you prefer the joys of the resent time to the joys of the future. It is your own choice—keep it Your damnation is your own election, not God's; you richly deserve it.

But, says one, "Esau repented." Yes, he did, but what sort of a repentance was it? Did you ever notice his repentance? Every man who repents and believes will be saved. But what sort of a repentance was his? As soon as he found that his brother had got the birthright, he sought it again with repentance, he sought it with tears, but he did not get it back. You know he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage; and he thought he would buy it back by giving his father a mess of pottage. "There," he says, "I will go and hunt venison for my father. I have got over him with my savoury meat, and he will readily give me my birthright again." That is what sinners say: "I have lost heaven by my evil works: I will easily get it again by reforming. Did I not lose it by sin? I will get it back by giving up my sins." "I have been a drunkard," says one, "I will give up drinking, and I will now be a teetotaller." Another says, "I have been an awful swearer; I am very sorry for it, indeed; I will not swear any more." So all he gives to his father is a mess of pottage, the same as that for which he sold it. No, sinner, you may sell heaven for a few carnal pleasures, but you cannot buy heaven by merely giving them up. You can get heaven only on another ground, viz., the ground of free-grace. You lose your soul justly, but you cannot get it back by good works, or by the renunciation of your sins.

You think that Esau was a sincere penitent. Just let me tell you another thing. This blessed penitent, when he failed to get the blessing, what did he say? "The days of mourning for my father are at hand: then will I slay my brother Jacob." There is a penitent for you. That is not the repentance that comes from God the Holy Spirit. But there are some men like that. They say they are very sorry they should have been such sinners as that, very sorry that they should have been brought into such a sad condition as that; and then they go and do the same that they did before. Their penitence does not bring them out of their sin, but it leaves them in it, and, perhaps, plunges them still deeper into guilt. Now, look at the character of Esau. The only redeeming trait in it was that he did begin with repentance, but that repentance was even an aggravation of his sin, because it was without the effects of evangelical repentance. And I say, if Esau sold his birthright he did deserve to lose it; and, therefore, am I not right in saying, that if God hated Esau, it was because he deserved to be hated. Do you observe how Scripture always guards this conclusion? Turn to the ninth chapter of Romans, where we have selected our text, see how careful the Holy Spirit is here, in the 22nd verse. "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." But it does not say anything about fitting men for destruction; they fitted themselves. They did that: God had nothing to

do with it. But when men are saved, God fits them for that. All the glory to God in salvation; all the blame to men in damnation.

If any of you want to know what I preach every day, and any stranger should say, "Give me a summary of his doctrine," say this, "He preaches salvation all of grace, and damnation all of sin. He gives God all the glory for every soul that is saved, but he won't have it that God is to blame for any man that is damned." That teaching I cannot understand. My soul revolts at the idea of a doctrine that lays the blood of man's soul at God's door. I cannot conceive how any human mind, at least any Christian mind, can hold any such blasphemy as that. I delight to preach this blessed truth—salvation of God, from first to last—the Alpha and the Omega; but when I come to preach damnation, I say, damnation of man, not of God; and if you perish, at your own hands must your blood be required. There is another passage. At the last great day, when all the world shall come before Jesus to be judged, have you noticed, when the righteous go on the right side, Jesus says, "Come, ye blessed of my father,"—"of my father," mark,)—"inherit the kingdom prepared"—(mark the next word)—"for you, from before the foundation of the world." What does he say to those on the left? "Depart, ye cursed." He does not say, "ye cursed of my father, but, ye cursed. "And what else does he say?" into everlasting fire, prepared"—(not for you, but)—"for the devil and his angels." Do you see how it is guarded, here is the salvation side of the question. It is all of God. "Come, ye blessed of my father." It is a kingdom prepared for them. There you have election, free grace in all its length and breadth. But, on the other hand, you have nothing said about the father—nothing about that at all. "Depart, ye cursed." Even the flames are said not to be prepared for sinners, but for the devil and his angels. There is no language that I can possibly conceive that could more forcibly express this idea, supposing it to be the mind of the Holy Spirit, that the glory should be to God, and that the blame should be laid at man's door.

Now, have I not answered these two questions honestly? I have endeavoured to give a scriptural reason for the dealings of God with man. He saves man by grace, and if men perish they perish justly by their own fault. "How," says some one, "do you reconcile these two doctrines?" My dear brethren, I never reconcile two friends, never. These two doctrines are friends with one another; for they are both in God's Word, and I shall not attempt to reconcile them. If you show me that they are enemies, then I will reconcile them. "But," says one, "there is a great deal of difficulty about them." Will you tell me what truth there is that has not difficulty about it? "But," he says, "I do not see it." Well, I do not ask you to see it; I ask you to believe it. There are many things in God's Word that are difficult, and that I cannot see, but they are there, and I believe them. I cannot see how God can be omnipotent and man be free; but it is so, and I believe it. "Well," says one, "I cannot understand it. My answer is, I am bound to make it as plain as I can, but if you have not any understanding, I cannot give you any; there I must leave it. But then, again, it is not a matter of understanding; it is a matter of faith. These two things are true; I do not see that they at all differ. However, if they



did, I should say, if they appear to contradict one another, they do not really do so, because God never contradicts himself. And I should think in this I exhibited the power of my faith in God, that I could believe him, even when his word seemed to be contradictory. That is faith. Did not Abraham believe in God even when God's promise seemed to contradict his providence? Abraham was old, and Sarah was old, but God said Sarah should have a child. How can that be? said Abraham, for Sarah is old; and yet Abraham believed the promise, and Sarah had a son. There was a reconciliation between providence and promise; and if God can bring providence and promise together, he can bring doctrine and promise together. If I cannot do it, God can even in the world to come.

Now, let me just practically preach this for one minute. Oh, sinners, if ye perish, on your own head must be your doom. Conscience tells you this, and the Word of God confirms it. You shall not be able to lay your condemnation at any man's door but your own. If you perish you perish by suicide. You are your own destroyers, because you reject Christ, because you despise the birthright and sell it for that miserable mess of pottage—the pleasures of the world. It is a doctrine that thrills through me. Like a two-edged sword, I would make it pierce to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow. If you are damned it shall be your own fault. If you are found in hell, your blood shall be on your own head. You shall bring the faggots to your own burning; you shall dig the iron for your own chains; and on your own head will be your doom. But if you are saved, it cannot be by your merits, it must be by grace—free, sovereign grace. The gospel is preached to you; it is this: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”

May grace now be given to you to bring you to yield to this glorious command. May you now believe in him who came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Free grace, who shall tell thy glories? who shall narrate thy achievements, or write thy victories? Thou hast carried the cunning Jacob into glory, and made him white as the angels of heaven, and thou shalt carry many a black sinner there also, and make him glorious as the glorified. May God prove this doctrine to be true in your own experience! If there still remains any difficulty upon your minds about any of these points, search the Word of God, and seek the illumination of his Spirit to teach you. But recollect after all, these are not the most important points in Scripture. That which concerns you most, is to know whether you have an interest in the blood of Christ? whether you really believe in the Lord Jesus. I have only touched upon these, because they cause a great many people a world of trouble, and I thought I might be the means of helping some of you to tread upon the neck of the dragon. May God grant that it may be so for Christ's sake.

## **Of Election to Everlasting Life**

## by Thomas Boston

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excerpted from his Commentary on the Shorter Catechism

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EPH. 1.3-5.—*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.*

THE answer to the question, 'Did God leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery?' contains two heads of doctrine of great importance in the Christian system, viz. the doctrine of election, and the covenant of grace, each of which I shall speak to distinctly. I shall discourse of the first from the text now read. In which we have,

1. A party brought out of their natural state into a state of salvation, ver. 3.—*Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.* For whereas by nature they were under the curse, now they are blessed, and that plentifully, with all blessings, not temporal only, but spiritual and heavenly, coming from heaven, and to be consummated there.

2. The person by whom they are brought into this state. It is by the Redeemer, as the purchaser. God the Father bestows them, as the Father of Christ, viz. for his sake. And they are blessed *in Christ*, upon account of his merit, and coming from him as their Head.

3. Who those are whom God brings out of their natural state into a state of grace; the elect, ver. 4,5. *According as he hath chosen us in him, &c.* Where consider,

(1.) Election itself, *he hath chosen us*, separated us from others in his purpose and decree, selected us from among the rest of mankind, whom he passed by and left to perish in their natural state.

(2.) That to which they are elected: that is, to salvation, and the means leading thereto. The means are, sanctification, *that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love*; and adoption, ver. 5. that whereas they are by nature children of the devil, they should be children of God. The end is everlasting life in heaven; for that is imported in adoption, Rom. 8.23. as the inheritance of the children of God.

(3.) Through whom this decree is to be executed, *in him*; that is, Christ, whom the

Father chose to be the head of the elect, through whom he would save them.

(4.) When God elected them, *before the foundation of the world*, ere they were created; that is, from eternity; as appears from what our Lord says to his Father, John 17.24. 'Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world;' which can denote nothing else than from eternity.

(5.) That which moved him to elect them, *according to the good pleasure of his will*; that is, his mere good pleasure, so he would do it; and there was nothing without himself to move him thereto. The words afford a foundation for the following doctrine.

Doctrine. 'God left not all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery, but having from all eternity elected some to everlasting life, brings them into a state of salvation by a Redeemer.' In illustrating this doctrine, I shall shew,

1. What election is.
2. Who are elected.
3. What they are chosen to.
4. The properties of this election.
5. That all the elect, and only they, are in time brought out of a state of sin and misery into a state of salvation.
6. By whom they are saved.
7. *Lastly*, Conclude with some improvement.

## **I. What Election Is.**

I. Our first business is, to shew what election is. It is that decree of God whereby some men are chosen out from among the rest of mankind, and appointed to obtain eternal life by Jesus Christ, flowing from the mere good pleasure of God; as appears from the text. So the elect are they whom God has chosen to everlasting life, Acts 13.48. God seeing all mankind lost in Adam from all eternity, in his decree separated some from among them, to be redeemed by his Son, sanctified by his Spirit, and brought to glory.

## **II. Who Are Elected.**

II. I proceed to shew who are elected. Who they are in particular, God only knows; but in general we say,

That it is not all men, but some only. For where all are taken, there is no choice made. To say that God has made choice, plainly imports that others are not chosen, but passed by. And so there is another party of men who are reprobated; that is, whom God has not chosen to life, but has decreed to let them lie in their natural state, and to damn them for their sins, Jude 4; whom he shews not saving mercy unto, but hardens,

they first hardening themselves, Rom. 9.18. Here is no injustice in God, seeing he might have left all to perish as well as some. This is also clear from plain scripture, Mat. 20.16. 'Many are called, but few chosen.' Whence also it is plain, that the elect are the lesser number of the world, Mat. 7.13,14. 'Enter ye in at the strait gate (says Christ); for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' They are a *little flock*, Luke 12.32. Yet the efficacy of the Lord's love and Christ's death is more and greater than that of Adam's sin, seeing it is greater to save one soul than to ruin all. And further, the scripture teaches, that though God has his own of all sorts, yet this blessed company, God does not make up, chiefly of the highest and most honourable among men. 1 Cor. 1.26-28. 'Ye see your calling; how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.'

### **III. What The Elect Are Chosen To.**

III. The next head is, to shew what they are chosen to.

1. They are chosen to be partakers of everlasting life. Hence the scripture speaks of some being 'ordained to eternal life,' Acts 13.48. and of 'appointing them to obtain salvation,' 1 Thess. 5.9. God appoints some to be rich, great, and honourable, some to be low and mean in the world; and others to be in a middle station, objects neither of envy nor contempt; but electing love appoints those on whom it fails to be saved from sin, and all the ruins of the fall; its great view is to eternal glory in heaven. To this they were appointed before they had a being.

2. They are chosen also to grace as the mean, as well as to glory as the end. God's predestinating them to eternal blessedness includes both, as in the text; and it further appears from 2 Thess. 2.13. 'God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.' Hence faith is held out as a certain consequent of election, Acts 13.48. 'As many as were ordained unto eternal life, believed.' The man who intends to dwell in a house yet unbuilt, intends also the means by which it may be made a fit habitation. So God having from eternity pitched on a select number of the ruined race of mankind as objects of his love, and having predestinated them to everlasting life, intended also the means necessary and proper for obtaining that glorious end. And therefore there is no ground from the decree of election to slight the means of salvation. God has so joined the end and the means, that none can put them asunder.

## IV. The Properties of Election.

IV. Let us consider the properties of election.

1. It is altogether free, without any moving cause, but God's mere good pleasure. No reason can be found for this but only in the bosom of God. There is nothing before, or above, or without his purpose, that can be pitched upon as the cause of all that grace and goodness that he bestows upon his chosen ones. There was no merit or motive in them, as Christ told his disciples, John 15.16. 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.' His choice is antecedent to ours. The persons who are singled out to be the objects of his special grace, were a part of lost mankind, the same by nature with others who were passed by, and left to perish in their sin. When God had all Adam's numerous progeny under the view of his all-seeing eye, he chose some, and passed by others. He found nothing in the creature to cast the balance of his choice, or to determine it to one more than another. Those that were rejected were as eligible as those that were chosen. They were all his creatures, and all alike obnoxious to his wrath by sin. It was grace alone that made the difference. So the prophet argues, Mal. 1.2,3. 'I have loved you, saith the Lord: yet ye say, wherein hast thou loved us? was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau.' And this is abundantly clear in the text. Why doth God write some men's names in the book of life, and leave out others? why doth he enrol some whom he intends to make citizens of Zion, and heirs of immortal glory, and refuse to put others in his register? The text tells us, it is the *good pleasure of his will*.

You may, says an eminent divine, render a reason for many of God's actions, till you come to this, which is the top and foundation of all; and this act can be reduced to no other head of reason, but to that of his royal prerogative. If you inquire, why doth God save some, and condemn others at last? the reason is, because of the faith of the one, and the unbelief of the other. But why do some men believe? It is because God hath not only given them the means of grace, but accompanied these means with the power and efficacy of the Spirit. But why did God accompany these means with the efficacy of his Spirit in some, and not in others? It is because he decreed by his grace to prepare them for glory. But why did he decree and chuse some to glory, and not others? Into what can you resolve this, but only into his sovereign pleasure? Salvation and damnation at the last upshot are acts of God as the righteous Judge and Governor of the world, giving life and eternal happiness to believers, and inflicting death and eternal misery upon unbelievers, conformable to his own law. Men may render a reason for these proceedings. But the choice of some and the preterition of others, is an act of God as he is a sovereign monarch, before any law was actually transgressed, because not actually given. What reason can be given for his advancing one part of matter to the noble dignity of a star, and leaving another part to make up the dark body of the earth? to compact one part into a glorious sun, and another part into a hard rock, but his royal prerogative? What is the reason that a prince subjects one

malefactor to condign punishment, and lifts up another to a place of profit and trust? it is merely because he will, Rom. 9.18. Hence we may infer,

(1.) That God did not chuse men to everlasting life and happiness for any moral perfection that he saw in them; because he converts those, and changes them by his grace, who are most sinful and profligate, as the Gentiles, who were soaked in idolatry and superstition. He found more faith among the Romans, who were Pagan idolaters, than among the Jews, who were the peculiar people of God, and to whom his heavenly oracles were committed. He planted a saintship at Corinth, a place notorious for the infamous worship of Venus, a superstition attended with the grossest uncleanness; and at Ephesus, that presented the world with a cup of fornication in the temple of Diana. And what character had the Cretians from one of their own poets, mentioned by the apostle in his epistle to Titus, whom he had placed among them to further the progress of the gospel, but the vilest and most abominable liars, and not to be credited; evil beasts, not to be associated with; slow bellies, fit for no service. Now what merit and attractive was here? What invitements could he have from lying, beastliness, and gluttony, but only from his own sovereignty? By this he plucked firebrands out of the burning, while he left straiter and more comely sticks to consume to ashes.

(2.) God doth not chuse men to grace and glory for any civil perfection that is in them; because he calls and renews the most despicable. He doth not elevate nature to grace on account of wealth or honour, or any civil station or dignities in the world, 1 Cor. 1.26. forecited. A purple robe is very seldom decked and adorned with the jewel of grace. He takes more of the mouldy clay, than of refined dust, to cast into his image, and lodges his treasures more in the earthly vessels, than in the world's golden ones. Should God impart his grace most to those who abound in wealth and honour, it had laid a foundation for men to think, that he had been moved by those vulgarly esteemed excellencies, and to indulge them more than others. But such a conceit languisheth, and falls to the ground, when we behold the subjects of divine grace as void originally of any allurements as they are full of provocations.

(3.) Their foreseen faith and good works, or perseverance in either of them, are not the cause of election; because these are the fruits and effects, and therefore cannot be the causes of election, Rom. 8.29. Acts. 13.48. It is clear also from this text, where it is said, they are chosen to be holy, and to adoption, and therefore to faith, by which we obtain it, John. 1.12. God did not chuse and elect men to grace and glory because they were holy, or because he did foresee that they would be so, but that he might purify and make them holy. And let it be observed, that the scripture attributes election only to God's good pleasure, Rom. 9.11,13,16. Mat. 11.25. And indeed, if it depended on foreseen faith or good works, we should rather be said to chuse God than he to chuse us.

(4.) God did not chuse some to life and happiness, because he was under any obligation to do so. He is indebted to none, and he is disobliged by all. He was under no tie to pity man's misery, and repair the ruins of the fall. He owes no more debt to fallen man than to fallen angels, to restore them to their first station by a superlative grace. God as a Sovereign gave laws to man, and strength sufficient to observe them. Now, what obligation is upon God to repair that strength which man hath wilfully lost, and to pull him out of that miserable pit into which he had voluntarily plunged himself? None at all. So then there was nothing in the elect more than others to move God to chuse them either to grace or glory. It was, and must be, the gracious issue and result of his sovereign will and mere good pleasure.

2. Election is eternal. They are elected from all eternity, Eph. 1.4. *chosen before the foundation of the world*, 2 Tim. 1.9. 'He hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.' All God's decrees are eternal, Eph. 1.11. 'We are predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.' God takes no new counsels, to do which would be inconsistent with his infinite perfection. Because God is eternal, his purposes must be of equal duration with his existence. And to imagine that an infinitely wise and sovereign Being existed from eternity, without any forethought, or resolution what to do, would be to suppose him to be undetermined or unresolved, at the time of his giving being to all things. And to suppose that the divine will is capable of new determinations, is to argue him to be imperfect; which would be as much an instance of mutability in him, as for him to alter his purpose. Election to everlasting life, must therefore be eternal.

3. It is particular and definite. God has chosen a certain number of the children of men to life, whom he knows by name, so as they can neither be more nor fewer. Hence their names are said to be written in the book of life, Luke 10.20. Phil. 4.3. and others are said not to be written there, Rev. 17.8. Though they are known to none, yet God knows them all, 2 Tim. 2.19. And they are given to Christ, John 17.9. Therefore God's decree of election is not a general decree only to save all that shall believe and persevere in the faith; for that way it might happen that none at all might be saved.

4. It is secret, or cannot be known, till God be pleased to discover it. Hence it is called 'the mystery of his will,' Eph. 1.9. as being hid in God from before the foundation of the world, and would for ever have been so, had he not discovered it in his word.

It is unchangeable. Mutability is an imperfection peculiar to creatures. As the least change in God's understanding, so as to know more or less than that hid from eternity, would be an instance of imperfection; the same must be said with respect to his holy will, which cannot be susceptible of new determinations. Though there are many changes in the external dispensations of his providence, which are the result of his

will, as well as the effects of his power; yet there is no shadow of change in his purpose. No unforeseen occurrence can render it expedient for God to change his mind, nor can any higher power oblige him to do it; nor can any defect of power to accomplish his design, induce him to alter his purpose. Those who are once elected can never be reprobated. All that are elected shall most certainly be saved. None of them can be left to perish. For all the divine purposes are unchangeable, and must be fulfilled, Isa. 46.10.; and this in particular, 2 Tim. 2.19. Election is the foundation of God's house, laid by his own hand, which cannot be shaken, but stands sure; and a sealed foundation, as men seal what they will have; a seal of two parts securing it; on God's part, God loves and keeps them that are his, that they fall not away; on our part, the same God takes care that his elect depart from iniquity. It is not possible they can be totally and finally deceived, Matth. 24.24, and whom God has chosen he glorifies, Rom. 8.29,30. When we are bid make our election sure, it is meant of certainty and assurance as to our knowledge of it, and by no means of God's purpose.

## **V. All of The Elect, & They Alone, Saved In Time.**

V. The next thing is to shew, that all the elect, and they only, are in time brought out of a state of sin and misery into a state of salvation.

1. All the elect are redeemed by Christ, John 10.15. 'I lay down my life for the sheep,' says he. They are all in due time, by the power of the Spirit, regenerated, converted, and brought to Christ, and get faith to lay hold on him, John 6.37. 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.' Acts 13.48. 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' Everlasting love at length breaks forth in bringing them to grace, Jer. 31.3. 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.' They are all justified, adopted and sanctified, Rom. 8.30.; and all of them persevere in grace, John 17.12. 1 Pet. 1.5. And all this by virtue of their election, Tit. 2.14.

2. None other but the elect are brought into a state of salvation; none but they are redeemed, sanctified, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, John 17.9. Christ prays not for them. Those that perish were never redeemed, nor experienced a saving change passing upon them, as appears from Rom. 8.29,30. and 1 John 2.19. God has passed them by, and suffers them to perish in their sin and guilt.

## **VI. By Whom The Elect Are Saved.**

VI. I come to shew by whom the elect are saved. It is by Christ the Redeemer. Hence the apostle says, Tit. 3.4-6. 'After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.' There is



no other way of salvation but by him, Acts 4.12. By him is all grace and glory purchased, and by his satisfaction there is a way opened for the venting of mercy with the good leave of justice. More particularly,

1. Before the elect could be delivered from that state of sin and misery into which they had brought themselves, a valuable satisfaction behoved to be given to the justice of God for the injury done by sin. It is evident from scripture, that God stood upon full satisfaction, and would not remit one sin without it. Several things plead strongly for this:

As, (1.) The infinite purity and holiness of God. There is a contrariety in sin to the holiness of his nature, which is his peculiar glory; and from thence his hatred of it doth arise, which is as essential to him as his love to himself. The infinite purity and rectitude of his nature infers the most perfect abhorrence of whatever is opposite to it. Hence says the Psalmist, Psalm 5.4,5. 'Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.' God cannot but hate all the workers of iniquity, and he cannot but punish them. His holiness is not only voluntary, but by necessity of nature. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity.

(2.) The justice of God pleads for a valuable satisfaction for sin. And here we are not to consider God as a private person wronged, but as the righteous Judge and Governor of the world, and the sovereign Protector of those sacred laws by which the reasonable creature is to be directed. Now, as it was most reasonable and convenient, that at the first giving of the law he should lay the strongest restraint upon man for preventing sin by the threatening of death; so it was most just and congruous, when the law was broken by man's rebellion, that the penalty should be inflicted either upon the person of the offender, according to the immediate intent of the law, or that satisfaction equivalent to the offence should be made, that the majesty and purity of God might appear in his justice. He is the Judge of all the earth, and cannot but do right.

(3.) The wisdom of God, by which he governs the rational world, admits not of a dispensation or relaxation of the threatening without a valuable satisfaction. For it is as good to have no king as no laws for government, and as good to have no law as no penalty, and as good that no penalty be annexed to the law as no execution of it. Hence, says a learned divine, It is altogether indecent, especially to the wisdom and righteousness of God, that that which provoketh the execution of the law, should procure the abrogation of it, as that should supplant and undermine the law, for the alone prevention of which the law was made. How could it be expected, that men should fear and tremble before God, when they should find themselves more scared and hurt by his threatenings against sin?

(4.) The truth and veracity of God required a satisfaction for sin. The word had gone

out of God's mouth, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;' and again it is said, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' Now, this sentence was immutable, and the word that had gone out of his mouth must stand. Had God violated his truth by dispensing with the punishment threatened, he had rendered himself an unfit object of trust; he had exposed all the promises or threatenings which he should have made after man's impunity, to the mockery and contempt of the offender, and excluded his word from any credit with man for the future. And therefore God's word could not fall to the ground without an accomplishment. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall stand firm. He will be true to his threatenings, though thousands and millions should perish.

2. As satisfaction to justice was necessary, and that which God insisted upon, so the elect could not give it themselves, neither was there any creature in heaven and earth that could do it for them. Heaven and earth were at an infinite loss to find out a ransom for their souls. We may apply to this purpose what we have, Isa. 63.5. 'I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold.' This is the desperate and forlorn condition of the elect by nature as well as others.

3. God pitched upon Christ in his infinite grace and wisdom as the fittest person for managing this grand design. Hence it is said, 'I have laid help upon one that is mighty.' And the apostle saith, he 'hath set him forth to be a propitiation for sin.' On this account he is called 'his servant whom he hath chosen, and his elect in whom his soul delighteth.' God speaks to them, as Job 33.24. 'Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.'

4. Christ accepted the office of a Redeemer, and engaged to make his soul an offering for sin. He cheerfully undertook this work in that eternal transaction that was between the Father and him. He was content to stand in the elect's room, and to submit himself to the terrible strokes of vindictive justice. He is brought in by the Psalmist offering himself as a Surety in their stead, Psalm 40.6,7. 'Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, &c. Then said I, Lo, I come,' &c. He willingly yielded to all the conditions requisite for the accomplishment of our redemption. He was content to take a body, that he might be capable to suffer. The debt could not be paid, nor the articles of the covenant performed, but in the human nature. He was therefore to have a nature capable of and prepared for sufferings. Hence it is said, Heb. 10.5. 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not; but a body hast thou prepared me.' It behoved him to have a body to suffer that which was represented by these legal sacrifices wherein God took no pleasure. And he took a body of flesh, surrounded with the infirmities of our fallen nature, sin only excepted. He condescended to lay aside the robes of his glory, to make himself of no reputation, to take upon him the form of a servant, and be found in the likeness of men.

5. Christ satisfied offended justice in the room of the elect, and purchased eternal redemption for them. 'He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,' Phil. 2.8. This was the prime article in the covenant of grace, 'When he shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, Isa, 53.10. God required this sacrifice exclusive of all others in the first treaty. 'Sacrifice and burnt-offerings thou wouldst not; in them thou hadst no pleasure: then said I, Lo, I come,' &c. These sacrifices were entirely useless for the satisfaction of justice, though fit to prefigure the grand sacrifice that God intended. It was by the death of Christ alone that redemption was purchased for men, Rom. 5.10. Eph. 2.13. Col. 1.21. And when he was upon the cross, he cried, 'It is finished;' that is, the work of redemption is accomplished; I have done all that was appointed for me to do; the articles on my part are now fulfilled; there remain no more deaths for me to suffer.

Thus the elect are saved by the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **VII. Inferences.**

I shall conclude all with a few *inferences*.

1. Behold here the freedom and glory of sovereign grace, which is the sole cause why God did not leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery, as he did the fallen angels. He was no more obliged to the one than the other. Why did he chuse any of the fallen race of men to grace and glory? It was his mere good pleasure to pitch on some, and pass by others. He could have been without them all, without any spot either on his happiness or justice; but out of his mere good pleasure he pitched his love on a select number, in whom he will display the invincible efficacy of his sovereign grace, and thereby bring them to the fruition of glory. This proceeds from his absolute sovereignty. Justice or injustice comes not into consideration here. If he had pleased, he might have made all the objects of his love; and if he had pleased he might have chosen none, but have suffered Adam and all his numerous offspring to sink eternally into the pit of perdition. It was in his supreme power to have left all mankind under the rack of his justice; and, by the same right of dominion, he may pick out some men from the common mass, and lay aside others to bear the punishment of their crimes. There is no cause in the creature but all in God. It must be resolved into his sovereign will. So it is said, Rom. 9.15,16. He saith to Moses, 'I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.' And yet God did not will without wisdom. He did not chuse hand over head, and act by mere will without reason and understanding. An infinite wisdom is far from such a kind of procedure. But the reason of God's proceedings is inscrutable to us, unless we could understand God as well as he understands himself. The rays of his infinite wisdom are too bright and dazzling for our weak and shallow capacities. The apostle acknowledges not only a wisdom in his proceeding, but riches

and a treasure of wisdom; and not only that, but a depth and vastness of these riches of wisdom; but was wholly incapable to give a scheme and inventory of it. Hence he cries out, Rom. 11.33. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' Let us humbly adore the divine sovereignty. We should cast ourselves down at God's feet, with a full resignation of ourselves to his sovereign pleasure. This is a more becoming carriage in a Christian, than contentious endeavours to measure God by our line.

2. This doctrine should stop men's murmurings and silence all their pleadings with or against God. O what strivings are there sometimes in the hearts of men about God's absolute sovereignty in electing some and rejecting others? The apostle insists much upon this in Rom. 9. where, having represented the Lord speaking thus by Moses, ver. 15. 'I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion;' he presently prevents an objection, or the strife of man with God about that saying, ver. 19. 'Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?' This is man's plea against the sovereign will of God. But what saith the Lord by the apostle to such a pleader? We have his reproof of him for an answer, in ver. 20. 'Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?' The apostle brings in this argument as to man's eternal state, He must not strive with God about that. He must not say, Why doth God find fault with man? His absolute power is his reason why he disposeth thus or thus of thee, or any other man. He will give thee no account why it is so; but his own will to have it so. He may chuse some for the glory of his rich, free, and sovereign grace, and leave others to perish in their sins for the glory of his power and justice. This should stop men's mouths, and make them sit down quietly under all God's dealings.

3. This is ground of humility and admiration to the elect of God, and shows them to what they owe the difference that is between them and others, even to free grace. Those who are passed by were as eligible as those that were chosen. Though God hath dignified them, and raised them to be heirs of glory, yet they were heirs of wrath, and no better than others by nature, Eph. 2.3. Well may they say with David in another case, 'Lord, what am I, or what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?' All were in the same corrupt mass, and nothing but free grace made the difference between the elected and the non-elected.

4. Then the elect shall not persist in their infidelity and natural state, but shall all be effectually called and brought in to Christ. Whatever good things God hath purposed for them shall surely be conferred upon and wrought in them by the irresistible efficacy of his powerful grace. God's counsel shall stand and he will do all his pleasure.

5. Then people may know that they are elected. Hence is that exhortation, 2 Pet. 1.10. 'Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.' Though we cannot break in at

the first hand upon the secrets of God, yet if we do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, receive him as our only Saviour, and submit to him as our Lord and Sovereign, we may know that we are elected, seeing the elect and they only are brought to believe. Others may be elected, but they cannot know it till they actually believe.

6. The Lord will never cast off his elect people. He that chose them from eternity, while he saw no good in them, will not afterwards cast them off. God's decree of election is the best security they can have for life and salvation, and a foundation that standeth absolutely sure. Whatever faults and follies they may be guilty of, yet the Lord will never cast them off. They shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

7. *Lastly*, This doctrine may teach us to form our judgment aright concerning the success of the gospel. The gospel and the ministrations thereof are designed for the bringing in of God's chosen ones. All never did nor ever will believe: but one thing is sure, that all who are ordained to eternal life shall believe and obey the gospel, Rom. 11.7.

## **Electing Love**

**Robert Murray M'Cheyne**

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### **SERMON XII**

John 15:16. *"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain."*

This is a very humbling, and at the same time, a very blessed word to the true disciple. It was very humbling to the disciples to be told that they had not chosen Christ. Your wants were so many, your hearts were so hard, that ye have not chosen me. And yet it was exceedingly comforting to the disciples to be told that he had chosen them: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." This showed them that his love was first with them — that he had a love for them when they were dead. And then he showed them that it was love that would make them holy: "Ye have; not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

Let us take up the truths in this verse as they occur:

I. Men naturally do not choose Christ, "Ye have not chosen me." This was true of the apostles; this is true of all that will ever believe to the end of the world. "Ye have not chosen me." The natural ear is so deaf that it cannot hear; the natural eye is so blind that it cannot see Christ. It is true in one sense that every disciple chooses Christ; but it is when God opens the eye to see him — it is when God gives strength to the withered arm to embrace him. But Christ's meaning is, You would never have chosen me, if I had not chosen you. It is quite true that when God opens a sinner's heart, he chooses Christ and none but Christ. It is quite true that a heart that is quickened by the Spirit, ever chooses Christ and none but Christ, and will forego all the world for Christ. But, brethren, the truth here taught us is this that every awakened sinner is willing to embrace Christ, but not till made willing. Those of you who have been awakened, you did not choose Christ. If a physician were to come into your house, and say he had come to cure you of your disease, if you felt that you were not diseased, you would say, I have no need of you, go to my neighbour. This is the way you do with Christ; he offers to cure you, but you say you are not diseased; he offers to cover your naked soul with his obedience, you say I have no need of that covering.

Another reason why you do not choose Christ is, you see no beauty in him. He is a root out of a dry ground, in which there is no beauty nor comeliness. You see no beauty in his person, no beauty in his obedience, no glory in his cross. You see him not, and, therefore, you do not choose him.

Another reason why you do not choose Christ is, you do not want to be made holy by him: "He shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." But you love your sin, you love your pleasure, therefore when the Son of God comes and says, he will save you from your sin, you say, I love my sin, I love my pleasure. So you can never come to terms with Christ: "ye have not chosen me"; although I died, yet you have not chosen me. I have spoken to you many years, and yet you have not chosen me. I have sent you my Bible to instruct you, and yet you have not chosen me. Brethren, this accusation will meet you in the judgment — I would have covered you with my obedience, but ye would not have me.

II. Christ chooses his own disciples: "I have chosen you." Christ: looked upon them with a look of divine benignity, and said, "I have chosen you." Every one whom he brings to glory, he chooses.

1. The time when he chooses them. I observe that it was before they believed: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," as much as to say, I began with you, you did not begin with me. You will notice this in Acts 18:9, 10, "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city." Paul was at this time at Corinth, the most lascivious and wicked city in the ancient world; they were given over to banqueting and grievous idolatry, and yet Christ said to

Paul, "I have much people in this city." They had not chosen Christ, but he had chosen them; they had not repented, yet Christ fixed his eye on them. This plainly shows you that Christ chooses his own before they seek him.

2. But further, Christ chooses his own from the beginning; 2 Thess. 2:13: "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth," Eph. 1:4, "According as he had chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." So, brethren, it was before the foundation of the world that Christ chose his own; when there was neither sun nor moon; when there was neither sea nor land — it was from the beginning. Ah, he might well say, you have not chosen me. It was before man loved man, or angel loved angel, that Christ chose his own. Now, I know the meaning of Paul when he says, That you may be able to know the length and breadth, the height and the depth of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. Now, I am not surprised at the death of Christ! It was a love so great that it broke over the banks that held it in; a love that broke over a Calvary and a Gethsemane. O brethren! do you know this love?

But I come now to the reason of his love — "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." Now, it is a very natural question, Why did he choose me? I answer, that the reason why he choose you was, the good pleasure of his will. You will see this illustrated in Mark 3:13: "And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him." There was a great crowd round about him; he called some, he did not call all. The reason here given why he did it is, "He called whom he would." There is no reason in the creature; the reason is in him who chooses. You will see this in Malachi 1:2: "I have loved you, saith the Lord; yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau." Were they not of the same mother? yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau. The only reason given, you see, is, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." You will see this also in Rom. 9:15, 16. The only reason given in the Bible why Christ loved us — and if you study till you die you will not find another — is, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." This is evident from all those that Christ chooses. We read of two great apostacies — one on earth, the other in heaven. First of all, one in heaven; Lucifer, the son of the morning, through pride, sinned, and God cast him, and those that sinned with him, into hell. The second was on earth; Adam sinned, and was driven out of paradise. They were both deserving of punishment. God had a purpose of love; which is it for? Perhaps angels pleaded for their fellow-angels; yet Christ passed them by, and died for man. Why did he die for man? The answer is, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." The same thing is evident in the individuals Christ chooses. You would think Christ would choose the rich, and yet what says James? "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him?"

Again, you would think Christ would choose the noble; they have not the prejudices that the poor have; but what says the Scripture, "Not many rich, not many noble are called."

Again, you would think he would choose those that are learned. The Bible is written in difficult language; its doctrines are hard to be understood; yet what says Christ? "I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

Again, you would think he would have chosen the virtuous. Though there are none righteous, yet there are some more virtuous than others; yet what says Christ? The publicans and the harlots enter the kingdom of heaven while the Pharisee is shut out. "O the depth both of the riches and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Why did he take the most vile? Here is the only reason I have been able to find ever since I read my Bible — "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

Christ chooses some that seek him, and not others. There was a young ruler came to Christ, and said, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" He was in earnest, yet something came in the way, and he went back. A woman that was a sinner came behind Christ weeping, she also was in earnest, Christ said unto her, "Thy sins which are many are forgiven thee." What made the difference? — "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." "He called unto him whom he would." O my brethren, be humbled under the sovereignty of God! If he will have compassion, then he will have compassion.

III. But I hasten to the third and last point: "I have ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." Christ not only chooses who are to be saved, but he chooses the way; and he not only chooses the beginning and the end, he chooses the middle also. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love," Eph. 1:4. And in the eighth chapter of Romans it is said, "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he glorified." Salvation is like a golden chain let down from heaven to earth; two links are in the hand of God — election and final salvation; but some of the links are on earth — conversion, adoption, etc. Brethren, Christ never chooses a man to believe, and then leap into glory. Ah, my brethren, how this takes away the feet from all objections raised against this holy doctrine of election. Some here perhaps say, If I am elected, I will be saved, live as I like. No; if you live an unholy life, you will not be saved. Some may say, If I am not



elected, I will not be saved, do as I like. Whether you are elected or not, I know not, but this I know — if you believe on Christ you will be saved.

Let me ask you, Have you believed on Christ? Let me ask you another question, Do you bear his whole image? Then you are elected, and will be saved. But if there are any here who have not believed on Christ, and who do not live a holy life, then, whatever you think now, you will find it true that you were among those who were passed by.

Ah! my brethren, those who deny election, deny that God can have mercy. O it is a sweet truth that God can have mercy! There is nothing in the hardness of your hearts that will keep God from having mercy on you. Go away home with this truth, that God can have mercy. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," etc. Amen.

## **The Doctrine of Election**

### **John Calvin**

*Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. — 2 TIMOTHY 1:9, 10.*

WE HAVE SHOWN THIS MORNING, according to the text of St. Paul, that if we will know the free mercy of our God in saving us, we must come to His everlasting counsel: whereby He chose us before the world began. For there we see, He had no regard to our persons, neither to our worthiness, nor to any deserts that we could possibly bring. Before we were born, we were enrolled in His register; He had already adopted us for His children. Therefore let us yield the whole to His mercy, knowing that we cannot boast of ourselves, unless we rob Him of the honor which belongs to Him.

Men have endeavored to invent cavils, to darken the grace of God. For they have said, although God chose men before the world began, yet it was according as He foresaw that one would be diverse from another. The Scripture showeth plainly that God did not wait to see whether men were worthy or not when He chose them: but the sophisters thought they might darken the grace of God by saying, though He regarded not the deserts that were passed, He had an eye to those that were to come. For, say they, though Jacob and his brother Esau had done neither good nor evil, and God chose one and refused the other, yet notwithstanding He foresaw, (as all things are present with Him) that Esau would be a vicious man, and that Jacob would be as he

afterwards showed himself.

But these are foolish speculations: for they plainly make St. Paul a liar who saith, God rendered no reward to our works when He chose us, because He did it before the world began. But though the authority of St. Paul were abolished, yet the matter is very plain and open, not only in the Holy Scripture, but in reason; insomuch that those who would make an escape after this sort, show themselves to be men void of all skill. For if we search ourselves to the bottom, what good can we find? Are not all mankind cursed? What do we bring from our mother's womb, except sin?

Therefore we differ not one whit, one from another; but it pleaseth God to take those to Himself whom He would. And for this cause, St. Paul useth these words in another place, when he saith, men have not whereof to rejoyce, for no man finds himself better than his fellows, unless it be because God discerneth him. So then, if we confess that God chose us before the world began, it necessarily follows, that God prepared us to receive His grace; that He bestowed upon us that goodness, which was not in us before; that He not only chose us to be heirs of the kingdom of heaven, but He likewise justifies us, and governs us by His Holy Spirit. The Christian ought to be so well resolved in this doctrine, that he is beyond doubt.

There are some men at this day, that would be glad if the truth of God were destroyed. Such men fight against the Holy Ghost, like mad beasts, and endeavor to abolish the Holy Scripture. There is more honesty in the papists, than in these men: for the doctrine of the papists is a great deal better, more holy, and more agreeable to the sacred Scripture, than the doctrine of those vile and wicked men, who cast down God's holy election; these dogs that bark at it, and swine that root it up.

However, let us hold fast that which is here taught us: God having chosen us before the world had its course, we must attribute the cause of our salvation to His free goodness; we must confess that He did not take us to be His children, for any deserts of our own; for we had nothing to recommend ourselves into His favor. Therefore, we must put the cause and fountain of our salvation in Him only. and ground ourselves upon it: otherwise, whatsoever and howsoever we build, it will come to nought.

We must here notice what St. Paul joineth together; to wit, the grace of Jesus Christ, with the everlasting counsel of God the Father: and then he bringeth us to our calling, that we may be assured of God's goodness. and of His will, that would have remained hid from us, unless we had a witness of it. St. Paul saith in the first place, that the grace which hangeth upon the purpose of God, and is comprehended in it, is given in our Lord Jesus Christ. As if he said, seeing we deserve to be cast away, and hated as God's mortal enemies, it was needful for us to be grafted, as it were, into Jesus Christ; that God might acknowledge, and allow us for His children. Otherwise, God could not look upon us, only to hate us; because there is nothing but wretchedness in us; we are

full of sin, and stuffed up as it were with all kinds of iniquity.

God, who is justice itself, can have no agreement with us, while He considereth our sinful nature. Therefore, when He would adopt us before the world began, it was requisite that Jesus Christ should stand between us and Him; that we should be chosen in His person, for He is the well beloved Son: when God joineth us to Him, He maketh us such as pleaseth Him. Let us learn to come directly to Jesus Christ. if we will not doubt God's election: for He is the true looking glass, wherein we must behold our adoption.

If Jesus Christ be taken from us, then is God a judge of sinners; so that we cannot hope for any goodness or favor at His hands, but look rather for vengeance: for without Jesus Christ. His majesty will always be terrible and fearful to us. If we hear mention made of His ever-lasting purpose, we cannot but be afraid, as though He were already armed to plunge us into misery. But when we know that all grace resteth in Jesus Christ, then we may be assured that God loved us, although we were unworthy.

In the second place, we must notice that St. Paul speaketh not simply of God's election, for that would not put us beyond doubt; but we should rather remain in perplexity and anguish: but he adds, *the calling*; whereby God hath opened His counsel, which before was unknown to us, and which we could not reach. How shall we know then that God hath chosen us, that we may rejoice in Him, and boast of the goodness that He hath bestowed upon us? They that speak against God's election, leave the gospel alone; they leave all that God layeth before us, to bring us to Him; all the means that He hath appointed for us, and knoweth to be fit and proper for our use. We must not go on so; but according to St. Paul's rule, we must join the calling with God's everlasting election.

It is said, we are called; and thus we have this second word, calling. Therefore God calleth us: and how? Surely, when it pleaseth Him to certify us of our election; which we could by no other means attain unto. For who can enter into God's counsel? as saith the prophet Isaiah; and also the apostle Paul. But when it pleaseth God to communicate Himself to us familiarly, then we receive that which surmounteth the knowledge of all men: for we have a good and faithful witness, which is the Holy Ghost; that raiseth us above the world, and bringeth us even into the wonderful secrets of God.

We must not speak rashly of God's election, and say, we are predestinate; but if we will be thoroughly assured of our salvation, we must not speak lightly of it; whether God hath taken us to be His children or not. What then? Let us look at what is set forth in the gospel. There God showeth us that He is our Father; and that He will bring us to the inheritance of life, having marked us with the seal of the Holy Ghost in our hearts, which is an undoubted witness of our salvation, if we receive it by faith.

The gospel is preached to a great number, which notwithstanding, are reprobate; yea, and God discovereth and showeth that He hath cursed them: that they have no part nor portion in His kingdom, because they resist the gospel, and cast away the grace that is offered them. But when we receive the doctrine of God with obedience and faith, and rest ourselves upon His promises, and accept this offer that He maketh us, to take us for His children, this, I say, is a certainty of our election. But we must here remark, that when we have knowledge of our salvation, when God hath called us and enlightened us in the faith of His gospel, it is not to bring to nought the everlasting predestination that went before.

There are a great many in these days that will say, who are they whom God hath chosen, but only the faithful? I grant it; but they make an evil consequence of it; and say faith is the cause, yea, and the first cause of our salvation. If they called it a middle cause, it would indeed be true; for the Scripture saith, "By grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). But we must go up higher; for if they attribute faith to men's free will, they blaspheme wickedly against God, and commit sacrilege. We must come to that which the Scripture showeth; to wit, when God giveth us faith, we must know that we are not capable of receiving the gospel, only as He hath framed us by the Holy Ghost.

It is not enough for us to hear the voice of man, unless God work within, and speak to us in a secret manner by the Holy Ghost; and from hence cometh faith. But what is the cause of it? Why is faith given to one and not to another? St. Luke showeth us: saying, "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13 :48). There were a great number of hearers, and yet but few of them received the promise of salvation. And what few were they? Those that were appointed to salvation. Again, St. Paul speaketh so largely upon this subject, in his epistle to the Ephesians, that it cannot be but the enemies of God's predestination are stupid and ignorant, and that the devil hath plucked out their eyes; and that they have become void of all reason, if they cannot see a thing so plain and evident.

St. Paul saith, God hath called us, and made us partakers of His treasures and infinite riches, which were given us through our Lord Jesus Christ: according as He had chosen us before the world began. When we say that we are called to salvation because God hath given us faith, it is not because there is no higher cause; and whosoever cannot come to the everlasting election of God, taketh somewhat from Him, and lesseneth His honor. This is found in almost every part of the Holy Scripture.

That we may make a short conclusion of this matter, let us see in what manner we ought to keep ourselves. When we inquire about our salvation, we must not begin to say, Are we chosen? No, we can never climb so high; we shall be confounded a thousand times, and have our eyes dazzled, before we can come to God's counsel.

What then shall we do? Let us hear what is said in the gospel: when God hath been so gracious, as to make us receive the promise offered, know we not that it is as much as if He had opened His whole heart to us, and had registered our election in our consciences!

We must be certified that God hath taken us for His children, and that the kingdom of heaven is ours; because we are called in Jesus Christ. How may we know this? How shall we stay ourselves upon the doctrine that God hath set before us? We must magnify the grace of God, and know that we can bring nothing to recommend ourselves to His favor; we must become nothing in our own eyes, that we may not claim any praise; but know that God hath called us to the gospel, having chosen us before the world began. This election of God is, as it were, a sealed letter; because it consisteth in itself, and in its own nature: but we may read it, for God giveth a witness of it, when He called us to Himself by the gospel and by faith.

For even as the original or first copy taketh nothing from the letter or writing that is read, even so must we be out of doubt of our salvation. When God certifieth us by the gospel that He taketh us for His children, this testimony carries peace with it; being signed by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and sealed by the Holy Ghost. When we have this witness, have we not enough to content our minds? Therefore, God's election is so far from being against this, that it confirmeth the witness which we have in the gospel. We must not doubt but what God hath registered our names before the world was made, among His chosen children: but the knowledge thereof He reserved to Himself.

We must always come to our Lord Jesus Christ, when we talk of our election; for without Him (as we have already shown), we cannot come nigh to God. When we talk of His decree, well may we be astonished, as men worthy of death. But if Jesus Christ be our guide, we may with cheerfulness depend upon Him; knowing that He hath worthiness enough in Him to make all His members beloved of God the Father; it being sufficient for us that we are grafted into His body, and made one with Him. Thus we must muse upon this doctrine, if we will profit by it aright: as it is set forth by St. Paul; when he saith, this grace of salvation was given us *before the world began*. We must go beyond the order of nature, if we will know how we are saved, and by what cause, and from whence our salvation cometh.

God would not leave us in doubt, neither would He hide His counsel, that we might not know how our salvation was secured; but hath called us to Him by His gospel, and hath sealed the witness of His goodness and fatherly love in our hearts. So then, having such a certainty, let us glorify God, that He hath called us of His free mercy. Let us rest ourselves upon our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that He hath not deceived us, when He caused it to be preached that He gave Himself for us, and witnessed it by the Holy Ghost. For faith is an undoubted token that God taketh us for His children;

and thereby we are led to the everlasting election, according as He had chosen us before.

He saith not that God hath chosen us because we have heard the gospel, but on the other hand, he attributes the faith that is given us to the highest cause; to wit, because God hath fore-ordained that He would save us; seeing we were lost and cast away in Adam. There are certain dolts, who, to blind the eyes of the simple and such as are like themselves, say, the grace of salvation was given us because God ordained that His Son should redeem mankind, and therefore this is common to all.

But St. Paul spake after another sort; and men cannot by such childish arguments mar the doctrine of the gospel: for it is said plainly, that God hath saved us. Does this refer to all without exception? No; he speaketh only of the faithful. Again, does St. Paul include all the world? Some were called by preaching, and yet they made themselves unworthy of the salvation which was offered them: therefore they were reprobate. God left others in their unbelief, who never heard the gospel preached.

Therefore St. Paul directed himself plainly and precisely to those whom God had chosen and reserved to Himself. God's goodness will never be viewed in its true light, nor honored as it deserveth, unless we know that He would not have us remain in the general destruction of mankind; wherein He hath left those that were like unto us: from whom we do not differ; for we are no better than they: but so it pleased God. Therefore all mouths must be stopped; men must presume to take nothing upon themselves, except to praise God, confessing themselves debtors to Him for all their salvation.

We shall now make some remarks upon the other words used by St. Paul in this place. It is true that God's election could never be profitable to us, neither could it come to us, unless we knew it by means of the gospel; for this cause it pleased God to reveal that which He had kept secret before all ages. But to declare His meaning more plainly, he adds, that this grace is revealed to us now. And how? "By the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ." When he saith that this grace is revealed to us by the appearing of Jesus Christ, he showeth that we should be too unthankful, if we could not content and rest ourselves upon the grace of the Son of God. What can we look for more? If we could climb up beyond the clouds, and search out the secrets of God, what would be the result of it? Would it not be to ascertain that we are His children and heirs?

Now we know these things, for they are clearly set forth in Jesus Christ. For it is said, that all who believe in Him shall enjoy the privilege of being God's children. Therefore we must not swerve from these things one jot, if we will be certified of our election. St. Paul hath already shown us, that God never loved us, nor chose us, only in the person of His beloved Son. When Jesus Christ appeared He revealed life to us, otherwise we

should never have been the partakers of it. He hath made us acquainted with the everlasting counsel of God. But it is presumption for men to attempt to know more than God would have them know.

If we walk soberly and reverently in obedience to God, hearing and receiving what He saith in the Holy Scripture, the way will be made plain before us. St. Paul saith, when the Son of God appeared in the world, He opened our eyes, that we might know that He was gracious to us before the world was made. We were received as His children, and accounted just; so that we need not doubt but that the kingdom of heaven is prepared for us. Not that we have it by our deserts, but because it belongs to Jesus Christ, who makes us partakers with Himself.

When St. Paul speaketh of the appearing of Jesus Christ, he saith, "He hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." It is not only said that Jesus Christ is our Savior, but that He is sent to be a mediator, to reconcile us by the sacrifice of His death; He is sent to us as a lamb without blemish; to purge us and make satisfaction for all our trespasses; He is our pledge, to deliver us from the condemnation of death; He is our righteousness; He is our advocate, who maketh intercession with God that He would hear our prayers.

We must allow, all these qualities to belong to Jesus Christ, if we will know aright how He appeared. We must look at the substance contained in the gospel. We must know that Jesus Christ appeared as our Savior, and that He suffered for our salvation; and that we were reconciled to God the Father through His means; that we have been cleansed from all our blemishes, and freed from everlasting death. If we know not that He is our advocate, that He heareth us when we pray to God, to the end that our prayers may be answered, what will become of us; what confidence can we have to call upon God's name, who is the fountain of our salvation? But St. Paul saith, Jesus Christ hath fulfilled all things that were requisite for the redemption of mankind.

If the gospel were taken away, of what advantage would it be to us that the Son of God had suffered death, and risen again the third day for our justification? All this would be unprofitable to us. So then, the gospel putteth us in possession of the benefits that Jesus Christ hath purchased for us. And therefore, though He be absent from us in body, and is not conversant with us here on earth, it is not that He hath withdrawn Himself, as though we could not find Him; for the sun that shineth doth no more enlighten the world, than Jesus Christ showeth Himself openly to those that have the eyes of faith to look upon Him, when the gospel is preached. Therefore St. Paul saith, Jesus Christ hath brought *life to light*, yea, everlasting life.

He saith, the Son of God hath abolished death. And how did He abolish it? If He had not offered an everlasting sacrifice to appease the wrath of God, if He had not entered even to the bottomless pit to draw us from thence; if He had not taken our curse upon

Himself, if He had not taken away the burden wherewith we were crushed down, where should we have been? Would death have been destroyed? Nay, sin would reign in us, and death likewise. And indeed, let every one examine himself, and we shall find that we are slaves to Satan, who is the prince of death. So that we are shut up in this miserable slavery, unless God destroy the devil, sin, and death. And this is done: but how? He hath taken away our sins by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, though we be poor sinners, and in danger of God's judgment, yet sin cannot hurt us; the sting, which is venomous, is so blunted that it cannot wound us, because Jesus Christ has gained the victory over it. He suffered not the shedding of His blood in vain; but it was a washing wherewith we were washed through the Holy Ghost, as is shown by St. Peter. And thus we see plainly that when St. Paul speaketh of the gospel, wherein Jesus Christ appeared, and appeareth daily to us, he forgetteth not His death and passion, nor the things that pertain to the salvation of mankind.

We may be certified that in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ we have all that we can desire; we have full and perfect trust in the goodness of God, and the love He beareth us. But we see that our sins separate us from God, and cause a warfare in our members; yet we have an atonement through our Lord Jesus Christ. And why so? Because He hath shed His blood to wash away our sins; He hath offered a sacrifice whereby God hath become reconciled to us; to be short, He hath taken away the curse, that we may be blessed of God. Moreover, He hath conquered death, and triumphed over it; that He might deliver us from the tyranny thereof; which otherwise would entirely overwhelm us.

Thus we see that all things that belong to our salvation are accomplished in our Lord Jesus Christ. And that we may enter into full possession of all these benefits we most know that He appeareth to us daily by His gospel. Although He dwelleth in His heavenly glory, if we open the eyes of our faith we shall behold Him. We must learn not to separate that which the Holy Ghost hath joined together. Let us observe what St. Paul meant by a comparison to amplify the grace that God showed to the world after the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; as if He said, the old fathers had not this advantage, to have Jesus Christ appear to them, as He appeared to us.

It is true, they had the self-same faith; and the inheritance of heaven is theirs, as well as ours; God having revealed His grace to them as well as us, but not in like measure, for they saw Jesus Christ afar off, under the figures of the law, as St. Paul saith to the Corinthians. The veil of the temple was as yet stretched out, that the Jews could not come near the sanctuary, that is, the material sanctuary. But now, the veil of the temple being removed, we draw nigh to the majesty of our God: we come most familiarly to Him, in whom dwelleth all perfection and glory. In short, we have the body, whereas they had but the shadow (Col. 2:17).



The ancient fathers submitted themselves wholly to bear the affliction of Jesus Christ; as it is said in the 11th chapter of the Hebrews; for it is not said, Moses bore the shame of Abraham, but of Jesus Christ. Thus the ancient fathers, though they lived under the law, offered themselves to God in sacrifices, to bear most patiently the afflictions of Christ. And now, Jesus Christ having risen from the dead, hath brought *life to light*. If we are so delicate that we cannot bear the afflictions of the gospel, are we not worthy to be blotted from the book of God, and cast off? Therefore, we must be constant in the faith, and ready to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ, whatsoever God will; because life is set before us, and we have a more familiar knowledge of it than the ancient fathers had.

We know how the ancient fathers were tormented by tyrants, and enemies of the truth, and how they suffered constantly. The condition of the church is not more grievous in these days, than it was then. For now hath Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. As often as the grace of God is preached to us, it is as much as if the kingdom of heaven were opened to us; as if God reached out His hand, and certified us that life was nigh; and that He will make us partakers of His heavenly inheritance. But when we look to this life, which was purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ, we should not hesitate to forsake all that we have in this world, to come to the treasure above, which is in heaven.

Therefore, let us not be willingly blind; seeing Jesus Christ layeth daily before us the life and immortality here spoken of. When St. Paul speaketh of life, and addeth immortality, it is as much as if he said, we already enter into the kingdom of heaven by faith. Though we be as strangers here below, the life and grace of which we are made partakers through our Lord Jesus Christ shall bring its fruit in convenient time; to wit, when He shall be sent of God the Father to show us the effect of things that are daily preached, which were fulfilled in His person when He was clad in humanity.

## **Whitefield's Letter to Wesley**

**George Whitefield**

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Bethesda in Georgia, Dec. 24, 1740

Reverend and very dear Brother,

God only knows what unspeakable sorrow of heart I have felt on your account since I

left England last. Whether it be my infirmity or not, I frankly confess, that Jonah could not go with more reluctance against Nineveh, than I now take pen in hand to write against you. Was nature to speak, I had rather die than do it; and yet if I am faithful to God, and to my own and others' souls, I must not stand neutral any longer. I am very apprehensive that our common adversaries will rejoice to see us differing among ourselves. But what can I say? The children of God are in danger of falling into error. Nay, numbers have been misled, whom God has been pleased to work upon by my ministry, and a greater number are still calling aloud upon me to show also my opinion. I must then show that I know no man after the flesh, and that I have no respect to persons, any further than is consistent with my duty to my Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

This letter, no doubt, will lose me many friends: and for this cause perhaps God has laid this difficult task upon me, even to see whether I am willing to forsake all for him, or not. From such considerations as these, I think it my duty to bear an humble testimony, and earnestly to plead for the truths which, I am convinced, are clearly revealed in the Word of God. In the defence whereof I must use great plainness of speech, and treat my dearest friends upon earth with the greatest simplicity, faithfulness, and freedom, leaving the consequences of all to God.

For some time before, and especially since my last departure from England, both in public and private, by preaching and printing, you have been propagating the doctrine of universal redemption. And when I remember how Paul reprov'd Peter for his dissimulation, I fear I have been sinfully silent too long. O then be not angry with me, dear and honoured Sir, if now I deliver my soul, by telling you that I think in this you greatly err.

'Tis not my design to enter into a long debate on God's decrees. I refer you to Dr. Edwards his *Veritas Redux*, which, I think is unanswerable—except in a certain point, concerning a middle sort between elect and reprobate, which he himself in effect afterwards condemns.

I shall only make a few remarks upon your sermon, entitled [Free Grace](#). And before I enter upon the discourse itself, give me leave to take a little notice of what in your Preface you term an indispensable obligation to make it public to all the world. I must own, that I always thought you were quite mistaken upon that head.

The case (you know) stands thus: When you were at Bristol, I think you received a letter from a private hand, charging you with not preaching the gospel, because you did not preach up election. Upon this you drew a lot: the answer was "preach and print." I have often questioned, as I do now, whether in so doing, you did not tempt the Lord. A due exercise of religious prudence, without [the drawing of] a lot, would have directed you in that matter. Besides, I never heard that you enquired of God,

whether or not election was a gospel doctrine.

But, I fear, taking it for granted [that election was not a biblical truth], you only enquired whether you should be silent or preach and print against it.

However this be, the lot came out "preach and print"; accordingly you preached and printed against election. At my desire, you suppressed the publishing of the sermon whilst I was in England; but you soon sent it into the world after my departure. O that you had kept it in! However, if that sermon was printed in answer to a lot, I am apt to think, one reason why God should so suffer you to be deceived, was, that hereby a special obligation might be laid upon me, faithfully to declare the Scripture doctrine of election, that thus the Lord might give me a fresh opportunity of seeing what was in my heart, and whether I would be true to his cause or not; as you could not but grant, he did once before, by giving you such another lot at Deal.

The morning I sailed from Deal for Gibraltar [2 February 1738], you arrived from Georgia. Instead of giving me an opportunity to converse with you, though the ship was not far off the shore, you drew a lot, and immediately set forward to London. You left a letter behind you, in which were words to this effect: "When I saw [that] God, by the wind which was carrying you out, brought me in, I asked counsel of God. His answer you have enclosed." This was a piece of paper, in which were written these words, "Let him return to London."

When I received this, I was somewhat surprised. Here was a good man telling me he had cast a lot, and that God would have me return to London. On the other hand, I knew my call was to Georgia, and that I had taken leave of London, and could not justly go from the soldiers, who were committed to my charge. I betook myself with a friend to prayer. That passage in 1 Kings 13 was powerfully impressed upon my soul, where we are told that the Prophet was slain by a lion when he was tempted to go back (contrary to God's express order) upon another Prophet's telling him God would have him do so. I wrote you word that I could not return to London. We sailed immediately.

Some months after, I received a letter from you at Georgia, wherein you wrote words to this effect: "Though God never before gave me a wrong lot, yet, perhaps, he suffered me to have such a lot at that time, to try what was in your heart." I should never have published this private transaction to the world, did not the glory of God call me to it. It is plain you had a wrong lot given you here, and justly, because you tempted God in drawing one. And thus I believe it is in the present case. And if so, let not the children of God who are mine and your intimate friends, and also advocates for universal redemption, think that doctrine true—because you preached it up in compliance with a lot given out from God.

This, I think, may serve as an answer to that part of the Preface to your printed

sermon, wherein you say, "Nothing but the strongest conviction, not only that what is here advanced is the truth as it is in Jesus, but also that I am indispensably obliged to declare this truth to all the world." That you believe what you have written to be truth, and that you honestly aim at God's glory in writing, I do not in the least doubt. But then, honoured Sir, I cannot but think you have been much mistaken in imagining that your tempting God, by casting a lot in the manner you did could lay you under an indispensable obligation to any action, much less to publish your sermon against the doctrine of predestination to life.

I must next observe, that as you have been unhappy in printing at all upon such an imaginary warrant, so you have been as unhappy in the choice of your text. Honoured Sir, how could it enter into your heart to choose a text to disprove the doctrine of election out of Romans 8, where this doctrine is so plainly asserted? Once I spoke with a Quaker upon this subject, and he had no other way of evading the force of the Apostle's assertion than by saying, "I believe Paul was in the wrong." And another friend lately, who was once highly prejudiced against election, ingenuously confessed that he used to think St. Paul himself was mistaken, or that he was not truly translated.

Indeed, honoured Sir, it is plain beyond all contradiction that St. Paul, through the whole of Romans 8, is speaking of the privileges of those only who are really in Christ. And let any unprejudiced person read what goes before and what follows your text, and he must confess the word "all" only signifies those that are in Christ. And the latter part of the text plainly proves, what, I find, dear Mr. Wesley will, by no means, grant. I mean the final perseverance of the children of God: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, [i.e., all Saints] how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32). [He shall give us] grace, in particular, to enable us to persevere, and every thing else necessary to carry us home to our Father's heavenly kingdom.

Had any one a mind to prove the doctrine of election, as well as of final perseverance, he could hardly wish for a text more fit for his purpose than that which you have chosen to disprove it! One who did not know you would suspect that you were aware of this, for after the first paragraph, I scarce know whether you have mentioned [the text] so much as once through your whole sermon.

But your discourse, in my opinion, is as little to the purpose as your text, and instead of warping, does but more and more confirm me in the belief of the doctrine of God's eternal election.

I shall not mention how illogically you have proceeded. Had you written clearly, you should first, honoured Sir, have proved your proposition: "God's grace is free to all." And then by way of inference [you might have] exclaimed against what you call the

horrible decree. But you knew that people (because Arminianism, of late, has so much abounded among us) were generally prejudiced against the doctrine of reprobation, and therefore thought if you kept up their dislike of that, you could overthrow the doctrine of election entirely. For, without doubt, the doctrine of election and reprobation must stand or fall together.

But passing by this, as also your equivocal definition of the word grace, and your false definition of the word free, and that I may be as short as possible, I frankly acknowledge: I believe the doctrine of reprobation, in this view, that God intends to give saving grace, through Jesus Christ, only to a certain number, and that the rest of mankind, after the fall of Adam, being justly left of God to continue in sin, will at last suffer that eternal death which is its proper wages.

This is the established doctrine of Scripture, and acknowledged as such in the 17th article of the Church of England, as Bishop Burnet himself confesses. Yet dear Mr. Wesley absolutely denies it.

But the most important objections you have urged against this doctrine as reasons why you reject it, being seriously considered, and faithfully tried by the Word of God, will appear to be of no force at all. Let the matter be humbly and calmly reviewed, as to the following heads:

First, you say that if this be so (i.e., if there be an election) then is all preaching vain: it is needless to them that are elected; for they, whether with preaching or without, will infallibly be saved. Therefore, the end of preaching to save souls is void with regard to them. And it is useless to them that are not elected, for they cannot possibly be saved. They, whether with preaching or without, will infallibly be damned. The end of preaching is therefore void with regard to them likewise. So that in either case our preaching is vain, and your hearing also vain. Page 10, paragraph 9.

O dear Sir, what kind of reasoning—or rather sophistry—is this! Hath not God, who hath appointed salvation for a certain number, appointed also the preaching of the Word as a means to bring them to it? Does anyone hold election in any other sense? And if so, how is preaching needless to them that are elected, when the gospel is designated by God himself to be the power of God unto their eternal salvation? And since we know not who are elect and who reprobate, we are to preach promiscuously to all. For the Word may be useful, even to the non-elect, in restraining them from much wickedness and sin. However, it is enough to excite to the utmost diligence in preaching and hearing, when we consider that by these means, some, even as many as the Lord hath ordained to eternal life, shall certainly be quickened and enabled to believe. And who that attends, especially with reverence and care, can tell but he may be found of that happy number?

Second, you say that the doctrine of election and reprobation directly tends to destroy holiness, which is the end of all the ordinances of God. For (says the dear mistaken Mr. Wesley) "it wholly takes away those first motives to follow after it, so frequently proposed in Scripture. The hope of future reward, and fear of punishment, the hope of heaven, and the fear of hell, et cetera."

I thought that one who carries perfection to such an exalted pitch as dear Mr. Wesley does, would know that a true lover of the Lord Jesus Christ would strive to be holy for the sake of being holy, and work for Christ out of love and gratitude, without any regard to the rewards of heaven, or fear of hell. You remember, dear Sir, what Scougal says, "Love's a more powerful motive that does them move." But passing by this, and granting that rewards and punishments (as they certainly are) may be motives from which a Christian may be honestly stirred up to act for God, how does the doctrine of election destroy these motives? Do not the elect know that the more good works they do, the greater will be their reward? And is not that encouragement enough to set them upon, and cause them to persevere in working for Jesus Christ? And how does the doctrine of election destroy holiness? Who ever preached any other election than what the Apostle preached, when he said, "Chosen . . . through sanctification of the Spirit?" (2 Thess. 2:13). Nay, is not holiness made a mark of our election by all that preach it? And how then can the doctrine of election destroy holiness?

The instance which you bring to illustrate your assertion, indeed, dear Sir, is quite impertinent. For you say, "If a sick man knows that he must unavoidably die or unavoidably recover, though he knows not which, it is not reasonable to take any physic at all." Dear Sir, what absurd reasoning is here? Were you ever sick in your life? If so, did not the bare probability or possibility of your recovering, though you knew it was unalterably fixed that you must live or die, encourage you to take physic? For how did you know but that very physic might be the means God intended to recover you by?

Just thus it is as to the doctrine of election. I know that it is unalterably fixed (one may say) that I must be damned or saved; but since I know not which for a certainty, why should I not strive, though at present in a state of nature, since I know not but this striving may be the means God has intended to bless, in order to bring me into a state of grace?

Dear Sir, consider these things. Make an impartial application, and then judge what little reason you had to conclude the 10th paragraph, page 12, with these words: "So directly does this doctrine tend to shut the very gate of holiness in general, to hinder unholy men from ever approaching thereto, or striving to enter in thereat."

"As directly," you say, "does the doctrine tend to destroy several particular branches of holiness, such as meekness, love, et cetera." I shall say little, dear Sir, in answer to this

paragraph. Dear Mr. Wesley perhaps has been disputing with some warm narrow-spirited men that held election, and then he infers that their warmth and narrowness of spirit was owing to their principles? But does not dear Mr. Wesley know many dear children of God, who are predestinarians, and yet are meek, lowly, pitiful, courteous, tender-hearted, kind, of a catholic spirit, and hope to see the most vile and profligate of men converted? And why? because they know God saved themselves by an act of his electing love, and they know not but he may have elected those who now seem to be the most abandoned.

But, dear Sir, we must not judge of the truth of principles in general, nor of this of election in particular, entirely from the practice of some that profess to hold them. If so, I am sure much might be said against your own. For I appeal to your own heart, whether or not you have not felt in yourself, or observed in others, a narrow-spiritedness, and some disunion of soul respecting those that hold universal redemption. If so, then according to your own rule, universal redemption is wrong, because it destroys several branches of holiness, such as meekness, love, et cetera. But not to insist upon this, I beg you would observe that your inference is entirely set aside by the force of the Apostle's argument, and the language which he expressly uses in Colossians 3:12-13: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

Here we see that the Apostle exhorts them to put on bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, et cetera, upon this consideration: namely, because they were elect of God. And all who have experientially felt this doctrine in their hearts feel that these graces are the genuine effects of their being elected of God.

But perhaps dear Mr. Wesley may be mistaken in this point, and call that passion which is only zeal for God's truths. You know, dear Sir, the Apostle exhorts us to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Therefore you must not condemn all that appear zealous for the doctrine of election as narrow-spirited, or persecutors, just because they think it their duty to oppose you. I am sure, I love you in the bowels of Jesus Christ, and think I could lay down my life for your sake; but yet, dear Sir, I cannot help strenuously opposing your errors upon this important subject, because I think you warmly, though not designedly, oppose the truth, as it is in Jesus. May the Lord remove the scales of prejudice from off the eyes of your mind and give you a zeal according to true Christian knowledge!

Third, says your sermon, "This doctrine tends to destroy the comforts of religion, the happiness of Christianity, et cetera."

But how does Mr. Wesley know this, who never believed election? I believe they who have experienced it will agree with our 17th article, that "the godly consideration of predestination, and election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing their minds to high and heavenly things, as well because it does greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation, to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God," et cetera.

This plainly shows that our godly reformers did not think election destroyed holiness or the comforts of religion. As for my own part, this doctrine is my daily support. I should utterly sink under a dread of my impending trials, were I not firmly persuaded that God has chosen me in Christ from before the foundation of the world, and that now being effectually called, he will allow no one to pluck me out of his almighty hand.

You proceed thus: "This is evident as to all those who believe themselves to be reprobate, or only suspect or fear it; all the great and precious promises are lost to them; they afford them no ray of comfort."

In answer to this, let me observe that none living, especially none who are desirous of salvation, can know that they are not of the number of God's elect. None but the unconverted, can have any just reason so much as to fear it. And would dear Mr. Wesley give comfort, or dare you apply the precious promises of the gospel, being children's bread, to men in a natural state, while they continue so? God forbid! What if the doctrine of election and reprobation does put some upon doubting? So does that of regeneration. But, is not this doubting a good means to put them upon searching and striving; and that striving, a good means to make their calling and their election sure?

This is one reason among many others why I admire the doctrine of election and am convinced that it should have a place in gospel ministrations and should be insisted on with faithfulness and care. It has a natural tendency to rouse the soul out of its carnal security. And therefore many carnal men cry out against it. Whereas universal redemption is a notion sadly adapted to keep the soul in its lethargic sleepy condition, and therefore so many natural men admire and applaud it.

Your 13th, 14th and 15th paragraphs come next to be considered. "The witness of the Spirit," you say, "experience shows to be much obstructed by this doctrine."

But, dear Sir, whose experience? Not your own; for in your journal, from your embarking for Georgia, to your return to London, you seem to acknowledge that you have it not, and therefore you are no competent judge in this matter. You must mean



then the experience of others. For you say in the same paragraph, "Even in those who have tasted of that good gift, who yet have soon lost it again," (I suppose you mean lost the sense of it again) "and fallen back into doubts and fears and darkness, even horrible darkness that might be felt, et cetera." Now, as to the darkness of desertion, was not this the case of Jesus Christ himself, after he had received an unmeasurable unction of the Holy Ghost? Was not his soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, in the garden? And was he not surrounded with an horrible darkness, even a darkness that might be felt, when on the cross he cried out, "My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

And that all his followers are liable to the same, is it not evident from Scripture? For, says the Apostle, "He was tempted in all things like as we are" (Heb 4:15) so that he himself might be able to succour those that are tempted (Heb. 2:18). And is not their liableness thereunto consistent with that conformity to him in suffering, which his members are to bear (Phil. 3:10)? Why then should persons falling into darkness, after they have received the witness of the Spirit, be any argument against the doctrine of election?

"Yet," you say, "many, very many of those that hold it not, in all parts of the earth, have enjoyed the uninterrupted witness of the Spirit, the continual light of God's countenance, from the moment wherein they first believed, for many months or years, to this very day." But how does dear Mr. Wesley know this? Has he consulted the experience of many, very many in all parts of the earth? Or could he be sure of what he hath advanced without sufficient grounds, would it follow that their being kept in this light is owing to their not believing the doctrine of election? No, this [doctrine], according to the sentiments of our church, "greatly confirms and establishes a true Christian's faith of eternal salvation through Christ," and is an anchor of hope, both sure and steadfast, when he walks in darkness and sees no light; as certainly he may, even after he hath received the witness of the Spirit, whatever you or others may unadvisedly assert to the contrary.

Then, to have respect to God's everlasting covenant, and to throw himself upon the free distinguishing love of that God who changeth not, will make him lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.

But without the belief of the doctrine of election, and the immutability of the free love of God, I cannot see how it is possible that any should have a comfortable assurance of eternal salvation. What could it signify to a man whose conscience is thoroughly awakened, and who is warned in good earnest to seek deliverance from the wrath to come, though he should be assured that all his past sins be forgiven, and that he is now a child of God; if notwithstanding this, he may hereafter become a child of the devil, and be cast into hell at last? Could such an assurance yield any solid, lasting comfort to a person convinced of the corruption and treachery of his own heart, and of

the malice, subtlety, and power of Satan? No! That which alone deserves the name of a full assurance of faith is such an assurance as emboldens the believer, under the sense of his interest in distinguishing love, to give the challenge to all his adversaries, whether men or devils, and that with regard to all their future, as well as present, attempts to destroy—saying with the Apostle,

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:33-39).

This, dear Sir, is the triumphant language of every soul that has attained a full assurance of faith. And this assurance can only arise from a belief of God's electing everlasting love. That many have an assurance they are in Christ today, but take no thought for, or are not assured they shall be in him tomorrow—nay to all eternity—is rather their imperfection and unhappiness than their privilege. I pray God to bring all such to a sense of his eternal love, that they may no longer build upon their own faithfulness, but on the unchangeableness of that God whose gifts and callings are without repentance. For those whom God has once justified, he also will glorify.

I observed before, dear Sir, it is not always a safe rule to judge of the truth of principles from people's practice. And therefore, supposing that all who hold universal redemption in your way of explaining it, after they received faith, enjoyed the continual uninterrupted sight of God's countenance, it does not follow that this is a fruit of their principle. For that I am sure has a natural tendency to keep the soul in darkness for ever, because the creature thereby is taught that his being kept in a state of salvation is owing to his own free will. And what a sandy foundation is that for a poor creature to build his hopes of perseverance upon? Every relapse into sin, every surprise by temptation, must throw him "into doubts and fears, into horrible darkness, even darkness that may be felt."

Hence it is that the letters which have been lately sent me by those who hold universal redemption are dead and lifeless, dry and inconsistent, in comparison of those I receive from persons on the contrary side. Those who settle in the universal scheme, though they might begin in the Spirit, (whatever they may say to the contrary) are ending in the flesh, and building up a righteousness founded on their own free will: whilst the others triumph in hope of the glory of God, and build upon God's never-

failing promise and unchangeable love, even when his sensible presence is withdrawn from them.

But I would not judge of the truth of election by the experience of any particular persons: if I did (O bear with me in this foolishness of boasting) I think I myself might glory in election. For these five or six years I have received the witness of God's Spirit; since that, blessed be God, I have not doubted a quarter of an hour of a saving interest in Jesus Christ: but with grief and humble shame I do acknowledge, I have fallen into sin often since that. Though I do not—dare not—allow of any one transgression, yet hitherto I have not been (nor do I expect that while I am in this present world I ever shall be) able to live one day perfectly free from all defects and sin. And since the Scriptures declare that there is not a just man upon earth (no, not among those of the highest attainments in grace) that doeth good and sinneth not (Eccl. 7:20), we are sure that this will be the case of all the children of God.

The universal experience and acknowledgement of this among the godly in every age is abundantly sufficient to confute the error of those who hold in an absolute sense that after a man is born again he cannot commit sin. Especially since the Holy Spirit condemns the persons who say they have no sin as deceiving themselves, as being destitute of the truth, and as making God a liar (1 Jn. 1:8, 10). I have been also in heaviness through manifold temptations, and expect to be often so before I die. Thus were the Apostles and primitive Christians themselves. Thus was Luther, that man of God, who, as far as I can find, did not peremptorily, at least, hold election; and the great John Arndt was in the utmost perplexity, but a quarter of an hour before he died, and yet he was no predestinarian.

And if I must speak freely, I believe your fighting so strenuously against the doctrine of election and pleading so vehemently for a sinless perfection are among the reasons or culpable causes, why you are kept out of the liberties of the gospel, and from that full assurance of faith which they enjoy, who have experimentally tasted, and daily feed upon God's electing, everlasting love.

But perhaps you may say, that Luther and Arndt were no Christians, at least very weak ones. I know you think meanly of Abraham, though he was eminently called the friend of God: and, I believe, also of David, the man after God's own heart. No wonder, therefore, that in a letter you sent me not long since, you should tell me that no Baptist or Presbyterian writer whom you have read knew anything of the liberties of Christ. What? Neither Bunyan, Henry, Flavel, Halyburton, nor any of the New England and Scots divines? See, dear Sir, what narrow-spiritedness and want of charity arise from your principles, and then do not cry out against election any more on account of its being "destructive of meekness and love."

Fourth, I shall now proceed to another head. Says the dear Mr. Wesley, "How

uncomfortable a thought is this, that thousands and millions of men, without any preceding offence or fault of theirs, were unchangeably doomed to everlasting burnings?"

But who ever asserted, that thousands and millions of men, without any preceding offence or fault of theirs, were unchangeably doomed to everlasting burnings? Do not they who believe God's dooming men to everlasting burnings, also believe, that God looked upon them as men fallen in Adam? And that the decree which ordained the punishment first regarded the crime by which it was deserved? How then are they doomed without any preceding fault? Surely Mr. Wesley will own God's justice in imputing Adam's sin to his posterity. And also, after Adam fell, and his posterity in him, God might justly have passed them all by, without sending his own Son to be a saviour for any one. Unless you heartily agree to both these points, you do not believe original sin aright. If you do own them, then you must acknowledge the doctrine of election and reprobation to be highly just and reasonable. For if God might justly impute Adam's sin to all, and afterwards have passed by all, then he might justly pass by some. Turn on the right hand, or on the left; you are reduced to an inextricable dilemma. And, if you would be consistent, you must either give up the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin, or receive the amiable doctrine of election, with a holy and righteous reprobation as its consequent. For whether you can believe it or not, the Word of God abides faithful: "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" (Rom. 11:7).

Your 17th paragraph, page 16, I pass over. What has been said on the 9th and 10th paragraphs, with a little alteration, will answer it. I shall only say, it is the doctrine of election that most presses me to abound in good works. I am willing to suffer all things for the elect's sake. This makes me to preach with comfort, because I know salvation does not depend on man's free will, but the Lord makes willing in the day of his power, and can make use of me to bring some of his elect home, when and where he pleases.

But, Fifth, you say, "This doctrine has a direct manifest tendency to overthrow the whole Christian religion. For," say you, "supposing that eternal, unchangeable decree, one part of mankind must be saved, though the Christian revelation were not in being."

But, dear Sir, how does that follow? Since it is only by the Christian revelation that we are acquainted with God's design of saving his church by the death of his Son. Yea, it is settled in the everlasting covenant that this salvation shall be applied to the elect through the knowledge and faith of him. As the prophet says in Isaiah 53:11, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." How then has the doctrine of election a direct tendency to overthrow the whole Christian revelation? Who ever thought that God's declaration to Noah, that seed-time and harvest should never

cease, could afford an argument for the neglect of plowing or sowing? Or that the unchangeable purpose of God, that harvest should not fail, rendered the heat of the sun, or the influence of the heavenly bodies unnecessary to produce it? No more does God's absolute purpose of saving his chosen preclude the necessity of the gospel revelation, or the use of any of the means through which he has determined the decree shall take effect. Nor will the right understanding, or the reverent belief of God's decree, ever allow or suffer a Christian in any case to separate the means from the end, or the end from the means.

And since we are taught by the revelation itself that this was intended and given by God as a means of bringing home his elect, we therefore receive it with joy, prize it highly, use it in faith, and endeavour to spread it through all the world, in the full assurance, that wherever God sends it, sooner or later, it shall be savingly useful to all the elect within its call.

How then, in holding this doctrine, do we join with modern unbelievers in making the Christian revelation unnecessary? No, dear Sir, you mistake. Infidels of all kinds are on your side of the question. Deists, Arians, and Socinians arraign God's sovereignty and stand up for universal redemption. I pray God that dear Mr. Wesley's sermon, as it has grieved the hearts of many of God's children, may not also strengthen the hands of many of his most avowed enemies!

Here I could almost lie down and weep. "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph" (2 Sam. 1:20).

Further, you say, "This doctrine makes revelation contradict itself." For instance, say you, "The assertors of this doctrine interpret that text of Scripture, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated, as implying that God, in a literal sense, hated Esau and all the reprobates from eternity!" And, when considered as fallen in Adam, were they not objects of his hatred? And might not God, of his own good pleasure, love or show mercy to Jacob and the elect—and yet at the same time do the reprobate no wrong? But you say, "God is love." And cannot God be love, unless he shows the same mercy to all?

Again, says dear Mr. Wesley, "They infer from that text, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,' that God is merciful only to some men, viz the elect; and that he has mercy for those only, flatly contrary to which is the whole tenor of the Scripture, as is that express declaration in particular, 'The Lord is loving to every man, and his mercy is over all his works.'"

And so it is, but not his saving mercy. God is loving to every man: he sends his rain upon the evil and upon the good. But you say, "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts

10:34). No! For every one, whether Jew or Gentile, that believeth on Jesus, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him. "But he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk. 16:16). For God is no respecter of persons, upon the account of any outward condition or circumstance in life whatever; nor does the doctrine of election in the least suppose him to be so. But as the sovereign Lord of all, who is debtor to none, he has a right to do what he will with his own, and to dispense his favours to what objects he sees fit, merely at his pleasure. And his supreme right herein is clearly and strongly asserted in those passages of Scripture, where he says, "Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Rom. 9:15, Exod. 33:19).

Further, from the text, "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; it was said unto her [Rebekah], The elder shall serve the younger" (Rom. 9:11-12)—you represent us as inferring that our predestination to life in no way depends on the foreknowledge of God.

But who infers this, dear Sir? For if foreknowledge signifies approbation, as it does in several parts of Scripture, then we confess that predestination and election do depend on God's foreknowledge. But if by God's foreknowledge you understand God's foreseeing some good works done by his creatures as the foundation or reason of choosing them and therefore electing them, then we say that in this sense predestination does not any way depend on God's foreknowledge.

But I referred you, at the beginning of this letter, to Dr. Edwards's *Veritas Redux*, which I recommended to you also in a late letter, with Elisha Coles on God's Sovereignty. Be pleased to read these, and also the excellent sermons of Mr. Cooper of Boston in New England (which I also sent you) and I doubt not but you will see all your objections answered. Though I would observe, that after all our reading on both sides the question, we shall never in this life be able to search out God's decrees to perfection. No, we must humbly adore what we cannot comprehend, and with the great Apostle at the end of our enquiries cry out, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" (Rom. 11:33-34)—or with our Lord, when he was admiring God's sovereignty, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Matt. 11:26).

However, it may not be amiss to take notice, that if those texts, "The Lord is . . . not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9) and "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezek. 33:11)—and such like—be taken in their strictest sense, then no one will be damned.

But here's the distinction. God taketh no pleasure in the death of sinners, so as to delight simply in their death; but he delights to magnify his justice, by inflicting the punishment which their iniquities have deserved. As a righteous judge who takes no pleasure in condemning a criminal, may yet justly command him to be executed, that law and justice may be satisfied, even though it be in his power to procure him a reprieve.

I would hint further, that you unjustly charge the doctrine of reprobation with blasphemy, whereas the doctrine of universal redemption, as you set it forth, is really the highest reproach upon the dignity of the Son of God, and the merit of his blood. Consider whether it be not rather blasphemy to say as you do, "Christ not only died for those that are saved, but also for those that perish."

The text you have misapplied to gloss over this, see explained by Ridgely, Edwards, Henry; and I purposely omit answering your texts myself so that you may be brought to read such treatises, which, under God, would show you your error. You cannot make good the assertion that Christ died for them that perish without holding (as Peter Bohler, one of the Moravian brethren, in order to make out universal redemption, lately frankly confessed in a letter) that all the damned souls would hereafter be brought out of hell. I cannot think Mr. Wesley is thus minded. And yet unless this can be proved, universal redemption, taken in a literal sense, falls entirely to the ground. For how can all be universally redeemed, if all are not finally saved?

Dear Sir, for Jesus Christ's sake, consider how you dishonour God by denying election. You plainly make salvation depend not on God's free grace, but on man's free-will. And if thus, it is more than probable, Jesus Christ would not have had the satisfaction of seeing the fruit of his death in the eternal salvation of one soul. Our preaching would then be vain, and all invitations for people to believe in him would also be in vain.

But, blessed be God, our Lord knew for whom he died. There was an eternal compact between the Father and the Son. A certain number was then given him as the purchase and reward of his obedience and death. For these he prayed (Jn. 17:9), and not for the world. For these elect ones, and these only, he is now interceding, and with their salvation he will be fully satisfied.

I purposely omit making any further particular remarks on the several last pages of your sermon. Indeed had not your name, dear Sir, been prefixed to the sermon, I could not have been so uncharitable as to think you were the author of such sophistry. You beg the question, in saying that God has declared, (notwithstanding you own, I suppose, some will be damned) that he will save all— i.e., every individual person. You take it for granted (for solid proof you have none) that God is unjust, if he passes by any, and then you exclaim against the "horrible decree": and yet, as I before hinted, in

holding the doctrine of original sin, you profess to believe that he might justly have passed by all.

Dear, dear Sir, O be not offended! For Christ's sake be not rash! Give yourself to reading. Study the covenant of grace. Down with your carnal reasoning. Be a little child; and then, instead of pawning your salvation, as you have done in a late hymn book, if the doctrine of universal redemption be not true; instead of talking of sinless perfection, as you have done in the preface to that hymn book, and making man's salvation to depend on his own free will, as you have in this sermon; you will compose a hymn in praise of sovereign distinguishing love. You will caution believers against striving to work a perfection out of their own hearts, and print another sermon the reverse of this, and entitle it "Free Grace Indeed." Free, not because free to all; but free, because God may withhold or give it to whom and when he pleases.

Till you do this, I must doubt whether or not you know yourself. In the meanwhile, I cannot but blame you for censuring the clergy of our church for not keeping to their articles, when you yourself by your principles, positively deny the 9th, 10th and 17th.

Dear Sir, these things ought not so to be. God knows my heart, as I told you before, so I declare again, nothing but a single regard to the honour of Christ has forced this letter from me. I love and honour you for his sake; and when I come to judgment, will thank you before men and angels, for what you have, under God, done for my soul.

There, I am persuaded, I shall see dear Mr. Wesley convinced of election and everlasting love. And it often fills me with pleasure to think how I shall behold you casting your crown down at the feet of the Lamb, and as it were filled with a holy blushing for opposing the divine sovereignty in the manner you have done.

But I hope the Lord will show you this before you go hence. O how do I long for that day! If the Lord should be pleased to make use of this letter for that purpose, it would abundantly rejoice the heart of, dear and honoured Sir,

Yours affectionate, though unworthy brother and servant in Christ,

GEORGE WHITEFIELD

## ***Predestination of the Elect of God***

**by Dr. Francis Turretin**



Ought predestination *to be* publicly taught and preached? We affirm.

Some of the brethren of France in the time of Augustine started this question. Since, in his books against the Pelagians, he had inserted and inculcated many things concerning predestination, so as in this way to defend the truth against their impious doctrines, many were disturbed by it (as appears from the two letters of Prosper, a disciple of Augustine, and of Hilary, the presbyter\*; cf. "Letters 225 and 226 to Augustine" [FC 32:119-29 and 129-391]). The reason was not that they judged it to be at all false, but because they thought the preaching of it was dangerous and invidious, better to be suppressed than brought into prominence.

There are some of the same opinion at the present day. Wearied with the contentions arising from this doctrine in almost every age, they think that it is best for the peace of the church and the tranquility of conscience to let these questions alone (since by them scruples are suggested and doubts generated which are calculated to weaken the faith of the weak and to drive men to desperation or into carnal security). But this opinion is more honest than true and cannot be readily received by those who have known the richest fruits of consolation and sanctification to redound to believers from this doctrine properly understood. Hence we think that this doctrine should be neither wholly suppressed from a preposterous modesty nor curiously pried into by a rash presumption.

Rather it should be taught soberly and prudently from the word of God so that two dangerous rocks may be avoided: on the one hand, that of "affected ignorance" which wishes to see nothing and blinds itself purposely in things revealed; on the other hand, that of "unwarrantable curiosity" which busies itself to see and understand everything even in mysteries. They strike upon the first who (sinning in defect) think that we should abstain from the proposition of this doctrine; and upon the latter who (sinning in excess) wish to make everything in this mystery scrupulously accurate (exonychizein) and hold that nothing should be left undiscovered (anexereunifton) in it. Against both, we maintain (with the orthodox) that predestination can be taught with profit, provided this is done soberly from the word of God.

The reasons are (1) Christ and the apostles frequently taught it (as appears from the Gospel, Matthew 11:20, 25; 13:11; 25:34; Luke 10:20; 12:32; John 8:47; 15:16 and in other places; and from the epistles of Paul (the whole of Rom. 9 and Rom. 8:29, 30; Eph. 1:4, 5; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Thess. 5:9; 2 Thess. 2:13). Nor otherwise do Peter, James and John express themselves who speak repeatedly of this mystery whenever occasion offered. Now if it was proper for them to teach it, why is it not proper for us to learn it? Why should God teach what would have been better (arrifton) unspoken (ameinon)? Why did he wish to proclaim those things which it would be better not to know? Do we wish to be more prudent than God or to prescribe rules to him?

(2) It is one of the primary gospel doctrines a foundations of our faith. It cannot be ignored without great injury to the church and to believers. For it is the fountain of our gratitude to God, the root of humility, the foundation and most firm anchor of confidence in all temptations, the fulcrum of the sweetest consolation and the most powerful spur (incitamentum) to piety and holiness.

(3) The importunity of the adversaries (who have corrupted this primary head of faith by deadly errors and infamous calumnies which they are accustomed to heap upon our doctrine) imposes upon us the necessity of handling it so that the truth may be fairly exhibited and freed from the most false and iniquitous criminations of evilly disposed men. As if we introduced a fatal and Stoical necessity; as if we would extinguish all religion in the minds of men by it, to soothe them on the bed of security and profanity or hurl them into the abyss of despair; as if we made God cruel, hypocritical and the author of sin-I shudder to relate it. Now as all these things are perfectly false, they ought unquestionably to be refuted by a sober and healthy exhibition doctrine from the word of God.

Although wicked men often abuse this doctrine (improperly understood), its lawful use towards the pious ought not therefore to be denied (unless we wish to have more regard for wicked men than believers). (2) If, on account of the abuse of some persons, we should abstain from the proposition of this mystery, we must equally abstain from most of the mysteries of the Christian religion which the wicked abuse or laugh at and satirize (such as the mystery of the Trinity, the incarnation, the resurrection and the like). (3) The calumnies launched against the doctrine of Paul by the false apostles could not cause him to suppress it; yea, he thoroughly discussed it in his inspired way so that he might shut the mouths of adversaries. Why then should we refrain from its presentation? Let us only follow in the footsteps of Paul and, with him, speak and be silent.

If some abuse this doctrine either to licentiousness or to desperation, this happens not perse from the doctrine itself, but accidentally, from the vice of men who most wickedly wrest it to their own destruction. Indeed there is no doctrine from which more powerful incitements to piety can be drawn and richer streams of confidence and consolation flow (as will be seen in the proper place).

The mystery of predestination is too sublime to be comprehended by us as to the why (to *diod*) (as he is rash who would attempt to find out or to assign the reasons and the causes of it). But this does not hinder it from being taught in Scripture as to the fact (to *hoti*) and from being firmly held by us. To things therefore must be distinguished here: the one, what God has revealed in his word; the other, what he has concealed. The former we cannot despise (unless rashly). "The secret things," says Scripture, 'belong unto God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children' (Dr. 29:29). To neglect things revealed argues ingratitude, but to search into

I things concealed argues pride. "We must not therefore deny what is plain because we cannot comprehend what is hidden," as Augustine expresses it (On *the Gift of Perseverance* 37 [NPNF1, 5:540; PL 45.10161]).

The fathers before Augustine spoke more sparingly concerning this mystery not because they judged it best to ignore it, but because there was no occasion presented for discussing it more largely (the Pelagian heresy not having as yet sprung up). Indeed it is true that they sometimes expressed themselves without sufficient caution. Nevertheless Augustine (On *the Gift of Perseverance*) proves that they did not pass over this truth in utter silence (for who could be ignorant of that which is so clearly set forth in sacred Scriptures?) –the testimony of Abrose, Cyprian and Gregory Nazianzus being adduced for this purpose.

While we think that predestination should be taught, we do not further suppose that human curiosity should be enlarged, but believe there is need here of be taught, but believe there is a need here for great sobriety and prudence; both that we may remain within the bounds prescribed by Scripture, not endeavoring to be wise beyond what is written (*par'ho geg-raptai*), and that we may prudently have a regard for the persons, places and times to regulate the proposition of it. For it ought not to be delivered immediately and in the first instance, but gradually and slowly. Nor ought it to be delivered equally as to all its parts, for some ought to be more frequently inculcated as more useful and better suited to the consolation of the pious (as the doctrine of election), but others ought to be handled more sparingly (as reprobation). Nor ought it to be set forth so much to the people in the church as to the initiated (tois mystais) in the school. Again, predestination must be considered not so much a priori as a posteriori. Not that we may descend from causes to effects, but ascend from effects to causes. Not that we should curiously unroll "the book of life" in order to see if our names are written therein (which is forbidden to us), but that we should diligently consult "the book of conscience" which we are not only permitted, but also commanded to do, that we may know whether the seal of God is stamped upon our hearts and whether the fruits of election (viz., faith and repentance) may be found in us (which is the safest way of proceeding to the saving knowledge of that doctrine). In one word, all curious and fruitless questions must be avoided here, and what Paul calls 'foolish and unlearned questions' (*apaidetous zetesis kai aperantous*, 2 Tim. 2:23)-which usually engender strifes and contentions. Our only object should be to increase our faith, not to feed curiosity; to labor for edification, not to strive for our glory.

Question: In what sense are the words 'predestination,' *prognseos*, *ekloges* and *protheseos* used in this mystery?

Since the Scriptures (whose genuine signification throws great light upon the knowledge of the thing itself) use various words in explaining this mystery, we must

premise certain things concerning them.

First the word "predestination" occurs here, and it must not be passed over lightly. For although the word *proorismou* does not exist in the Scriptures, yet the verb

from which it comes is often read (Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29, 30 Ephesians 1:5) Moreover to predestinate (or *proorizein* from the force of the verb) signifies to determine something concerning things before they take place and to direct them to a certain end.

However, it is understood by authors in three ways. (1) More widely for every decree of God about creatures and most especially about intelligent creatures in order to their ultimate end. Thus it is frequently employed by the fathers for providence itself. (2) More specially for the counsel of God concerning men as fallen either to be saved by grace or to be damned by justice (which is commonly called "election" and "reprobation"). (3) Most specially for the decree of election, which is called "the predestination of the saints." Again according to the latter, it can be taken in two senses (*schesis*): not only for the destination to the end, but particularly for the "destination to the means" (in which sense it is used by Paul when he says that God predestinated those whom he foreknew to be "conformed to the image of his Son," Rom. 8:29, 30). Here it is plain that predestination is distinguished from foreknowledge and refers most especially to the end. Thus after saying that God hath chosen us in Christ, the having predestinated us unto the adoption of children' (*proorisas* *ian*, Eph. 1:5) to mark the destination of means ordained for obtaining the salvation destined by election.

About this word, moreover, it is asked whether it is to be referred only to election or whether it embraces reprobation also. This controversy was formerly vehemently urged in the matter of Gottschalk in the ninth century, John Erigena Scotus maintaining that **it** suited election alone (De Divina Praedestinatione liber\* [PL 122.355,4401). On the other hand, Gottschalk, the Lyonians and Remigius, the bishop (in their name), extended it to reprobation. The same question now lies between us and the papists. For the papists (to whom the term reprobation is hateful) contend that it must be used in the first sense. Hence they are accustomed to call reprobates not predestinated, but "foreknown"; and do not subordinate but oppose reprobation to predestination (as Bellarmine, Gregory de Valentia and Pighius, De libero hominis arbitrio 8.2 [1642], p. 137). With them even some of the orthodox appear to agree, though not with the same object in view. But we (although willing to confess that the term predestination is according to Scripture usage often restricted to election; yet not only from the proper signification of the word but also from Scripture usage and received custom) that think it is rightly extended to reprobation so as to embrace both parts of the divine counsel (election and reprobation), in which sense it is taken by us here.

The reasons are: (1) the Scripture extends the word *proorizein* to the wicked acts of those reprobates who procured the crucifixion of Christ—"the son of man goeth kata to horismenon" (Luke 22:22; Acts 4:28) Herod and Pontius Pilate did nothing but what the hand of God *proorise* to be done." Nor ought the objection to be made that it does not treat of their reprobation, but of the ordination of the crucifixion to a good end. These things are not to be opposed, but composed. The crucifixion of Christ (which is to us the means of salvation) was to the crucifiers the means of damnation (which depended on the most just decree of God).

Second, the Scripture uses equivalent phrases when it says that certain persons are appointed to wrath (1 Thess. 5:9; 1 Peter 2:8), fitted to destruction (Rom. 9:22), ordained to condemnation (Jude 4), made unto dishonor (Romans 9:21) and for the day of evil (Proverbs 16:4). If reprobation is described in these phrases, why can it not be expressed by the word "predestination"? Third, because the definition of predestination (viz., the ordination of a thing to its end by means before it comes to pass) is no less suitable to reprobation than to election. Fourth, the fathers frequently thus speak: "We confess the elect to life and the predestination of the wicked to death" (Council of Valence, Mansi, 15:4). "He fulfills what he wills, properly using even evil things as if the very best to the damnation of those whom he has justly predestinated to punishment' (Augustine, Enchiridion 26 [100] [FC 3:454; PL 40.2791; cf. also his "Treatise on the Merits and the Forgiveness of Sins," 2.26 [171 [NPNFI, 5:551; CG 21.24 [FC 24:387-941; Fulgentius, Ad Monimum I [PL 65.153-781). "Predestination is twofold: either of the elect to rest or of the reprobate to death' (Isidore of Seville, Sententiarum Libri tres 2.6 [PL 83.6061).

Although in truth predestination is sometimes taken strictly in the Scriptures for the predestination of saints or the election to life, it does not follow that it cannot be used more broadly. Nor if the objects of reprobation and election are opposite are the acts themselves, therefore (on the part of God), mutually opposed to one another. Indeed, they can proceed from the same course acting most freely.

The second word which occurs more frequently is *prognosis*. Paul speaks of it more than once: "whom he did foreknow" (*hous proegno*), Rom. 8:29); "he hath not cast away his people which *proegna*" (Rom. 11:2); and they are called elect "according to foreknowledge" (*kata prognosin*, 1 Peter 1:2). Because the ancient and more modern Pelagians falsely abuse this word to establish the foresight of faith and works, we must observe that *prognosin* can be taken in two ways: either theoretically or practically. In the former way, it is taken for God's simple knowledge of future things, which is called prescience and belongs to the intellect. In the latter, it is taken for the practical love and decree which God formed concerning the salvation of particular persons and pertains to the will. In this sense, knowledge is often put for delight and approbation (Psalm 1:6); John 10:14; 2 Timothy 2:19). Thus *ginoskein* signifies not only to know but also to know and to judge concerning a thing (as the *Plebiscitum* is

not the knowledge of the people, but the sentence-from the verb *scisco*, which means "to decree and determine"). Therefore when the Scripture uses the word *prognoseos* in the doctrine of predestination, it is not in the former sense for the bare foreknowledge of God by which he foresaw the faith or works of men. (1) Because by that, He foreknew those also whom he reprobated, while here it treats of the foreknowledge proper to the effect. (2) Bare foreknowledge is not the cause of things, nor does it impose method or order upon them, but finds it out (as happens here in the chain of salvation). (3) Because nothing could be foreseen by God but what he himself had granted and which would so follow predestination as the effect, not indeed precede it as a cause, as will be proved hereafter. But it is taken in the latter sense for "practical foreknowledge" (i.e., the love and election of God) that we may not suppose it to be without reason (alogen), although the reasons of his wisdom may escape us (in which manner Christ is said to have been foreknown [proegnsmenos], i.e., foreordained by God "before the foundation of the world,' 1 Pet. 1:20).

Again, in that benevolence and practical foreknowledge of God we distinguish: (1) the love and benevolence with which he pursues us; (2) the decree itself by which he determined to unfold his love to us by the communication of salvation. Hence it happens that prognosis is at one time taken broader for both (viz., love and election, as in Rom. 8:29 and Rom. 11:2); at another, more strictly for love and favor which is the fountain and foundation of election. Thus Peter speaks of it when he says that believers are "elect according to the foreknowledge" (*kata prognosin*), i.e. the love of God (1 Peter 1:2).

Third, we must explain the word *ekloges* ("election") which ow and then occurs, but not always with the same signification. Sometimes it denotes a call to some political or sacred office (as Saul is "elected" [1 Samuel 10:24]; Judas "elected", viz., to the Apostleship, John 6:70). Sometimes it designates an external election and separation of a certain people to the covenant of God (in which sense the people of Israel are said to be elected of God, Deut. 4:37). But here it is taken objectively for the elect themselves (as *ekloge epetychen*- "the election" [i.e., the elect] "hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded," Romans 11:7); or formally for the act of God electing (which is called *ekloge charitos*, Romans 9:11). Again the latter may be considered either in the antecedent decree (as it were from eternity) or in the subsequent execution (as it takes place only in time by calling). Christ refers to this in John 15:16: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you"; and "Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world' (v. 19). Augustine joins both forms (schesis): "We are elected before the foundation of the world by that predestination in which God foresaw his future things would take place; we are chosen out of the world however by that calling by which God fulfills what he has predestinated" (On the Predestination of the Saints).

Election then by the force of the word is stricter than predestination. For all can

predestined, but all cannot be elected because he who elects does not take all, but chooses some out of many. The election of some necessarily implies the passing and rejecting of others: "Many are called," said Christ, "but few chosen" (Matthew 20:16); and Paul, "The election hath obtained, and the rest were blinded" (Romans 11:7). Hence Paul uses the verb *heilto* to designate election, which implies the separation of some from others: "God from the beginning *heilto*, i.e., hath taken out and separated you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth: (2 Thess. 2:13).

Fourth, prothesis is often used by Paul in the matter of election to denote that this counsel of God is not an empty and inefficacious act of willing, but the constant, determined and immutable purpose of God (Romans 8:28; 9:11; Ephesians 1:11). For the word is of the highest efficacy (as the old grammarians tell us) and is called distinctly by Paul *prothesis tou ta energountos*—"the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Ephesians 1:11). Sometimes it is applied to election as *prothesis kat' eklogen*—"the purpose of God according to election" (Romans 9:11); and we are said "to be predestinated" (*kata prothesin*, Ephesians 1:11). Sometimes it is joined with calling—"who are the called according to his purpose" (*tois kata prothesin kletois*, Romans 8:28). For both election and calling depend and are built upon this purpose of God.

Now although these words are often employed promiscuously, yet they are frequently distinguished; not without reason are they used by the Holy Spirit to denote the various conditions (*scheseis*) of that decree which could not so fitly be explained by a single word. For the decree can be conceived in relation to the principle from which it arises, or to the object about which it is concerned, or to the means by which it is fulfilled. With regard to the former, *protheseos* or *eudokias* (which denotes the counsel and good pleasure of God) is mentioned as the first cause of that work. With regard to the next, it is called *prognosis* or *ekloge* (which is occupied with the separation of certain persons from others unto salvation). With regard to the last, the word *proorismou* is used according to which God prepared the means necessary to the obtainment of salvation. *Prothesis* refers to the end; *prognosis* refers to the objects; *proorismos* to the means; *prodiesis* to the certainty of the event; *prognosis* and *ekloge* to the singleness and distinction of persons; *proorismos* to the order of means. Thus election is certain and immutable by *prothesin*; determinate and definite by *prognosin*; and ordinate by *proorismos*.

These three degrees (if we may so speak to answer to three acts in the temporal execution: for as we will be glorified with the Father, redeemed by the Son and called through the Holy Spirit, so the Father determined from eternity to glorify us with himself. This is *prothesis*. He elected us in his Son. This is *prognosis*. He predestinated us to grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit (who seals the image of the Son in us through his holiness and the suffering on the cross). This is *proorismos*. For

as the Father sends the Son, the Son with the Father sends the Holy Spirit. And vice versa, the Holy Spirit leads us to the Son, and the Son at length conducts us to the Father.

The words by which the predestination of the members is described are employed also to express the predestination of the head. For concerning him equally *prothesis* is predicated when Paul says *hon proetheto hilastion* (Rom. 3:25); *prognosis* where we have *proegnesmenos* (1 Pet. 1:20); and *proorismos*, not only when he is said to be *horistheis* to be the Son of God (Rom. 1:4), but also when his death is said to have happened by the determinate counsel of God and by his predestination, who *proorise* to be done whatever was done by Herod and Pontius Pilate (Acts 2:23).

## **Predestination**

**A. A. Hodge**

THIS is a subject which is very little understood, even by those Christians who profess to embrace it in their creed. This is due in part to the nature of the subject, to its profundity, and to the infinite range of its complications with other important truths. But it is also in large measure due to inattention, and to the general prevalence of a natural though an unfounded and ignorant prejudice. This prejudice has become in many quarters an epidemic irresistible to persons of more zeal than judgment. Now, I wish to urge a plea in favour of an earnest, frank, patient study of the subject. Vague prejudice unsupported by definite knowledge has no value. It is unquestionable that the Scriptures do teach some doctrine of predestination, and a very strict doctrine of unconditional election has been held by the greatest and most thoroughly biblical theologians, and by whole denominations of Christians most conspicuous for their evangelical character and fruitfulness. It will not do for any of us to dismiss such a subject with supercilious impatience. We should at the very least do our best to secure a clear conception of the doctrine, and of its relation to other doctrines, before we make ourselves sure that it is not true.

I. In the first place, it should be clearly understood that this great principle of divine predestination is held in two entirely different connections and interests. It has by a great many been discussed simply as a question of transcendental theology, as concerning the acts of God enacted in eternity in a sphere above and behind the external phenomena which are obvious to our senses. If there be a God, he necessarily



exists in eternity, while the creation exists in the successions and limitations of time. The universe as a whole and all the parts of it originate in him and depend upon him, and therefore are determined by him. According to the precise language of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, Ques. 7, "The decrees of God are, his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he bath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." This sweeps the whole universe, and is a proposition of the highest and most general speculative importance. This position is unquestionably, in this form, true and logically involved in all scriptural views of the doctrine of grace in all its elements. It is therefore rightly embraced in our Confession of Faith, and the present writer with all his heart believes it to be true. It is in this spirit and from this speculative point of view that Zwingli discusses this subject in his *De Providentia*. And it is this aspect of the question which is habitually considered by the general Christian public in their hostile criticisms of this doctrine. Now, I am perfectly free to confess that however true this view of the general principle of predestination is, and however much it is logically implicated in the essentials of the Christian doctrines of grace, nevertheless this transcendental way of conceiving of the matter is more speculative than practical. Although I heartily accord with the view in my own mind, I feel no disposition to insist upon the assent of any Christian brother as a matter of loyalty to the Christian faith. No element of the Creed is essential unless it practically determines the attitude of the soul in its relations to God through Christ. And only those aspects and modes of conceiving Christian truth should be insisted upon and imposed upon others as obligatory which do directly determine this Godward attitude of our souls, or, in other words, which directly enter into and give form to our religious experience.

On the other hand, Calvin presents his characteristic doctrine of eternal election in living connection with the great practical experimental questions of personal salvation and of divine grace. If we are sinners, it is evident that the practically essential thing in religious experience is to appreciate truly our guilt, unworthiness, and helplessness before God, and God's free grace toward us to its full extent. If God is infinitely gracious and just, if at measureless expense he redeemed us at the cost of the pain, shame, and death of his Son, it follows that any failure in our appreciation of our own unworthiness and helplessness, or of God's gracious activity in our salvation, would be absolutely insufferable. To claim more for ourselves or to ascribe less to God than the facts of the case justify would be the greatest of all sins, and would be the very thing to make salvation impossible. The sense of our own guilt, pollution, and impotence, and of the absolute unconditioned freeness of the grace which saves us, is involved in every case of genuine religious experience.

The expiatory work of Christ which is sufficient for, adapted to, and freely offered to all men, being presupposed, the question of questions is, How — by what agencies and on what conditions — is it effectually applied to any individual? The Scriptures make it plain that the condition of its effectual application is an act of faith, involving real

spiritual repentance and the turning from sin and the acceptance and self-appropriation of Christ and of his redemption as the only remedy. But what will prompt a sinner in love with his sin, spiritually blind and callous, thus to repent and accept Christ as the cure of the sin he loves? The first movement cannot begin with man. The sinner of himself cannot really desire deliverance from sin; of himself he cannot appreciate the attractive beauty, loveliness, or saving power of Christ. The dead man cannot spontaneously originate his own quickening, nor the creature his own creating, nor the infant his own begetting. Whatever man may do after regeneration, the first quickening of the dead must originate in the first instance with God. All Christians feel this as the most intimate conviction of their souls. Yet it involves necessarily this very doctrine of eternal predestination or election. If God begins the work, if our believing follows his quickening, then it is God, not man, who makes the difference between the quickened and the unquickened. If we believe, it is because we have been first quickened. If any man does not believe, it is because he is yet dead in his natural sin. God's eternal choice therefore cannot depend upon foreseen faith, but, on the contrary, faith must depend upon God's eternal choice.

As between the man who believes in Christ and the man who finally rejects him, the source of the difference is put by the Pelagian entirely in the inalienable, unassisted power of the human will. All that can be said in the case is that the one man has accepted Christ because he chose to do so, and the other man has rejected Christ because he chose to do so. Each has acted as he has done in the unfettered and unfetterable exercise of the human will. But Pelagianism makes no room for original sin nor for the necessity of divine grace. It is diametrically opposed to the Scriptures, to the religious experience of all Christians, and it has been rejected as anti-Christian by the unanimous consent of the whole historic Church.

The semi-Pelagian, admitting that man is morally sick, holds that every sinner must make the first movement Godward spontaneously in his own strength, after which, if his effort is sincere, however ineffectual, God will co-operate by his grace with him and make his effort successful. The Arminian, on the other hand, admitting that all men, being dead in trespasses and sins, are absolutely incapable of spontaneously originating any good desire or effort, yet holds that God gives the same sufficient grace to all men; and he makes the difference between the believer and the unbeliever to lie in the fact that the former co-operates, and thus renders the grace in his case effectual, and the other fails to co-operate with it, and thus renders it ineffectual. The Lutheran, who maintains that men are in such sense dead in sin that they are utterly unable to co-operate with grace before they have been themselves quickened to life by grace, yet makes the difference between the believer and the unbeliever to consist in the fact, that while no man can co-operate with grace previous to regeneration, every man is free to resist it. With the Lutheran, therefore, the believer is the non-resistant, the unbeliever is the resistant, subject of a common universal grace. The Calvinist, on the other hand, glorifies the free and sovereign grace of God by attributing to it alone

all the efficiency in saving the believing sinner. It is God's grace which makes the believer all he is. He feels this; of this at least he is absolutely sure. He is nothing more than a poor wandering sheep. The Good Shepherd has sought him out, found him, and carried him back on his breast. In himself and of himself in his entire history he is no better than his fellowmen who are lost. It is only God's free grace, therefore, which has made the difference. The faith he has cannot have been the precondition of God's choice, but God's choice must have been the precedent cause of his faith.

In this form of the doctrine, we did not first choose him, but he first chose us. This truth enters into all genuine Christian experience. It is of the essence of the universal Christian sentiment. It finds its expression in the sacred hymns and in the prayers of our fellow-Christians who call themselves Arminians, as it does in the prayers and hymns of those commonly styled Calvinists. All alike wrestle in prayer as if God's grace determined the decision. All alike cry, "Make them willing, O God, in the day of thy power!" It is the common confession of all alike that it is God who in all things works in us to do, by "working in us to will, of his good pleasure." All alike ascribe to him the prerogative of turning the hearts of men even as rivers of water are turned. All Christians with one voice cry, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake." In the theology of the heart all Christians are Calvinists — that is, all Christians ascribe all their salvation unto God. And this is the only form in which the doctrine of sovereign predestination should be insisted upon as of vital religious interest.

II. The real question remains, What does the Word of God say upon the subject? In all matters of controversy between Christians the Scriptures constitute the single court of last resort. This is an historical principle. To-day it remains as true as ever, no matter what crude theories of inspiration some parties may proclaim. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments have been for eighteen centuries, are to-day, and always will remain, the only common authority of Christendom, acknowledged by all alike.

These Scriptures do certainly teach a divine election of persons and foreordination of events. This fact all educated persons acknowledge. The only controversy among Christians relates to the range of the foreordination, whether it comprehends all events or is limited to certain classes; and to the subjects, the objects, and the conditions of the election which the Scriptures teach.

1st. All Christians of course admit that the eternal Creator of the world, in the very act of creation, intelligently comprehending the end from the beginning, really, immutably, and unconditionally determined all classes of events subsequently brought about by the necessary sequences of natural forces and laws. As far as the universe is a machine, God, in bringing it into being, and in implanting its forces, and in ordaining its laws, necessarily determined all movements of the machine and its results from the beginning to the end. But there has been a natural shrinking from

attributing to the foreordination of God all the free acts of men and angels, and especially the sinful acts of men and devils.

Nevertheless, the Scriptures are very explicit upon these points. (1.) The foreordination of God does include the free actions of men and angels, as it does all other classes of events whatsoever. God works in man freely and spontaneously *to will* according to his good pleasure (Phil. ii. 13). Men and nations are the mere instruments (the axe, saw, rod) in the hand of God to do his will (Isa. x. 15). God definitely predicts the free actions of men ages before the men themselves exist (Isa. xlv. 28; xlv. 1-4). All prophecy implies foreknowledge; and all foreknowledge on the part of a God who has intelligently and of purpose created all things out of nothing, of course implies the foreordination of all the foreseen results of that creation. If even one so limited in knowledge and power as you or I should place in the hands of a dependant a horse that we certainly knew would run away on that road and in the hands of that man, beyond question we would predetermine that runaway and all of its foreseen results. (2.) The Scriptures go even further, and declare that even the sinful acts of men are foreordained by God. This does not mean that God regards the wicked acts with complacency, or that he will condone them, or that we are in any degree excusable for acting them, much less that God is their author or cause, directly or indirectly. It means, simply, that these wicked actions were a clearly foreknown part of a system of things which God freely chose, and the future existence of which he freely and righteously determined for good and sufficient reasons, the evil never being ordained as an end in itself, but always as a means to an infinitely greater and better end. Thus, in the history of Joseph (compare Gen. xxxvii. 28 with Gen. xlv. 7, 8; l. 20), Joseph said to his treacherous brethren who sold him into slavery, “So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God ;” “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good.” (Ps. xvii. 13, 14, and Isa. x. 5—1 5.) The greatest crime ever committed in the universe was the crucifixion of the Son of God. To accomplish this, Gentiles and Jews in vast numbers and of all classes freely conspired. Yet their wicked act was “determined beforehand to be done” by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God: “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain” (Acts ii. 23). “For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done” (Acts iv. 27, 28 ; xiii. 29 1 Pet. ii. 8; Jude iv.; Rev. xvii. 17).

2nd. As to the doctrine of election, and of the confessedly various “elections” which are asserted in Scripture, there have been very different opinions held among Christians. Those who lay emphasis upon what has been entitled the “theory of national election,” as eminently the late Archbishop Sumner, maintain that the only election taught in Scripture concerning human salvation consists in the divine predestination of communities and nations to the knowledge of the true religion, and

to the external privileges of the gospel. This form of election is an unquestionable biblical fact, and has been pre-eminently illustrated in the people of Israel, in the ancient world, and in the great English-speaking nations of modern times.

Those who, like Mr. Stanley Faber and Archbishop Whately, emphasize what they call the “theory of ecclesiastical individualism,” hold that the only personal election taught in the Bible respects the election of individual men to membership in the external Church and the means of grace. This also is an unquestionable scriptural fact, realized in the experience of all the members of the Christian community.

Both these types of election, both of nations and of individuals, to the external means of grace are obviously sovereign and unconditioned. Both men and nations are born to these privileges, irrespective of any previous merits or actions of their own. And as to these forms of God’s sovereign election, there is no difference of opinion between Arminians and Calvinists or other Christians of whatever name.

But students of the Scriptures see that they do moreover teach explicitly that God does elect some individuals to eternal blessedness and to all the means thereof. Here the precise point of difference between Arminians and Calvinists comes in. The old Arminian statement was that God graciously elected the class of believers to everlasting life, and that if any individual man was included in the election it was because he was included in the class of believers. The more modern Arminian statement is to the same effect; in other words, that God elected certain individuals to eternal life, on the ground of their faith as foreseen by him. But the question necessarily arises, Where did these individuals come by their faith? If they got the faith of themselves, then their salvation is not entirely of grace and of God. If God gave them their faith, then it was in his purpose; and if it was embraced in his purpose, it could not have been the condition on which it was suspended. But the Scriptures and Christian experience unite in affirming that “faith is the gift of God” (Eph. ii. 8; Acts v. 31; 1 Cor. iv. 7). The designed effect of this eternal election is “that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love” (Eph. i. 4; ii. 10; 2 Thess. ii. 13; 1 Pet. i. 2), and therefore that holy state could not have been the foreseen condition of his choice. The very gist of the election is that of the children who “neither had done good or evil,” “that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.” God chose one and rejected the other. The very gist was that “the potter hath power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour “ (Rom. ix. 11-21). The order in which the Holy Spirit puts the matter is very clear: “As many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Acts xiii. 48). It was the personal foreordination to eternal life which determined the believing, and not the foreseen believing which conditioned the foreordination.

The true comprehensive statement of the scriptural teaching as to election includes all

those just stated. The purpose of God is sovereign, absolute, and all-comprehensive, relating to all classes of events whatsoever. All nations and communities and individuals have been predestined precisely to all the relations and means of grace they experience, and to all the results thereof. But besides this, the Scriptures explicitly teach an election (a) of individuals (b) to salvation, and to all the means and conditions thereof, (c) founded, not upon the foreseen faith of the persons elected, but upon the infinitely wise and sovereign purpose of God alone (Eph. i. 5-11; 2 Tim. i. 9; John xv. 16-19; Matt. xi. 25, 26; Rom. ix. 10-18).

III. The difficulty which all feel in attempting to receive this unquestionable truth of revelation, and assimilate it to the whole mass of our own thinking, respects (1) the freedom and responsibility of man, and (2) the holiness of God. How can man be free if from eternity all his actions have been certainly determined? And if God by his decree makes the future occurrence of each sin absolutely certain, how can he be holy? These combinations doubtless present puzzles of considerable difficulty to our minds in their present state of enlightenment. But these do not in any degree differ from a large class of problems which the imperfection and narrowness of our knowledge prevent us from solving. God's decree, it is obvious, is not an immediate efficient cause which interferes with natural causes or which brings anything into being. It is simply an immanent plan or purpose in the divine mind which determines the certain occurrence of the events to which it relates. The same precisely is true with respect to the divine foreknowledge. All Christians believe that God eternally foreknows whatsoever shall be in the future. If his knowledge is real knowledge, it is certain; and if it is certain as knowledge, the events to which it relates must be certainly future. If the difficulty of reconciling certainty with the freedom of man or with the holiness of God does not move us to abandon his foreknowledge, it cannot be a rational motive for our denying the truth of his universal predestination. A God without foreknowledge would be only a blind force. Every argument which establishes theism on the evident teleology of the universe by equal cogency establishes the divine foreknowledge. Without the foreknowledge of God there would be no intelligent creation, no wise moral government, no ground for religious trust, no confidence for the future, no basis for either the prophecies or the promises of God. The foreknowledge admitted, there is no logical reason for excepting to his foreordination.

1st. As to the bearing of this doctrine upon the freedom of man's will. It must be remembered that uncertainty is never essential to liberty. The essence of liberty is that the free act shall be self-originated and self-directed. The self-determination of an undeveloped child is uncertain. It is swayed every moment by external influences; and in just that proportion the child's action is uncertain, and lacks the highest quality of moral freedom. But the choices of the educated and thoroughly developed man in his ripe maturity are far more certain both to himself and to others. He is not open to external influence or liable to internal whim or change; and exactly in that proportion

does he rise to the highest level of moral freedom. He thoroughly understands himself and his permanent needs and wishes. His character is formed, and freedom is the genuine and adequate expression of character. God's purposes and self-decisions are the most certain, and at the same time the most free, of any actions that are conceivable. A drifting boat at sea, swept hither and thither by the winds and waves, is an admirable type of action utterly devoid of freedom and of certainty. It has no self-control, and therefore its action is equally unfree and uncertain. But a great steamship, at the same time self-propelled and self-steered, is an admirable type both of freedom and of certainty. Its action is predetermined, foreseen, and may confidently be relied upon, because it is free — that is, in the intelligent will of its navigator, acting through its powerful machinery, it possesses in the highest degree self-control and intelligent self-direction.

The eternal foreordination of God, which determines at once the certainty and the freedom of man's free actions, can in no way interfere with man's freedom. The action is not free if it is determined from without, but it is free if determined from within a rational will. Now, this is precisely what God's foreordination of man's free action effects. The decree at the same time determines that man shall be a free agent, shall possess a certain character, shall be surrounded by a certain environment, shall be specifically solicited by certain external influences, shall he internally moved by certain spontaneous affections, shall deliberately canvass certain reasons, and shall freely make a certain choice. The man thus is, as far as a finite creature may be, entirely self-moved and self-determined, and therefore he is free. The fact that his act is also certain is, as we have seen, and as Richard Watson, the great theologian of the Wesleyan Arminians, admits, no ground of presumption that it is not also absolutely free.

2nd. As to the consistency of God's foreordination of sin with his holiness, we have nothing to say except to admit the mystery, and to affirm that there is no possible escape except in denying the fact either of the existence of God on the one hand, or of the existence of sin on the other. If the cause which produced the universe did not foresee the sin which the present system embraces, then that cause was a blind, unintelligent force, and not God. If he did foresee it, and notwithstanding proceeded to bring that system, involving these sins, into existence, then he made their occurrence certain; he foreordained them. God did with his eyes open choose, out of a myriad of other possible systems, this actual system involving sin. He nevertheless is holy. He hates, forbids, punishes, restrains, and overrules the sin for good. In the light of the cross of Christ, on which God lays upon his Son the penalty of human sin, in the light of the great white throne and of the Lamb which irradiates the eternal city, the mystery of the divine permission of sin loses its overwhelming force. We have no complete solution of the problem, and it is not to be expected in our present stage of education. But we do see the light underneath the curtain. We do possess pledges for the immaculate holiness of God, and for the future moral perfection of his realm, and

for the moral vindication of his reign, which suffice for the perfect assurance of our faith.

IV. Everything depends, in all departments of human thought, upon the point of view. Every one knows that, when traversing the scenes of a great battle, what appears to be inextricable confusion to us while we are passing along the outskirts and through the lower grounds, falls into complete order and appears as clear as light when we overlook the whole field from the strategic centre from which the eye and mind of the fieldmarshal beheld and controlled the contest. We all know that the heavens continued through all past ages to be an insoluble riddle to all looking upon them from the exterior and shifting standpoint of the earth. The movements of the sun and moon and of the wandering planets could be reduced to no intelligible plan. But the moment that in imagination the great Copernicus transferred the point of view from the earth to the central sun, all the hosts of heaven fell into rank, and have ever since been seen to march onward in a symmetrical order absolutely divine. In the morning, if we look eastward over a vast landscape with the sun before us, we see all things obscurely on their shadowed side. But if we look from the same point eastward in the evening, with the sun behind us, we see all the objects contained in the vast panorama glorified on the sunlit side.

In like manner must it be with all men when looking over the vast reaches of Jehovah's plans or works from below. No matter how intellectual they may be personally, no matter how vast their knowledge otherwise, it is just a matter of course that, from their human, changing outlook, as they are themselves swept along in the current of events, the relations of all objects should be confused. And especially must the relation of the several parts to God be misconceived, seen as they are on their shadowed side.

But, on the contrary, if we take our mental stand at the centre, and from God's point of view look down upon the events of time from their common centre, with their eternal side illumined, as far as our vision goes we shall see then fall into perfect order, and especially will we discern their symmetrical relation as a whole to the Source from which they issue, and the presiding Authority by which they are marshalled on their way.

It is self-evident that if we look out at any time and from any point upon our environment, we must see things in the accidental relations in which they happen to group themselves along our line of vision as we sweep past on our course. We must also, by the same necessity, see things in partial groups detached from their surroundings. If we conceive of any one event being caused by any other single event, we are led to confusion, because all things that exist constitute one articulated system, and every event is determined not by one single antecedent cause, but by the whole system of things, the entire equilibrium of the universe, that precedes it. So if we



conceive of God as absolutely foreordaining individual events disconnected from the entire system of causes, conditions, and consequents of which they form a part, we shall necessarily be embarrassed by contradictions. God could not certainly foreordain one event without foreordaining every event, without tearing the system to pieces and bringing utter confusion into natural law and human thought. For instance, a chronometer is a whole consisting of many parts rigidly articulated and exquisitely adjusted to each other. It would, evidently, be impossible for the most skilful mechanic to run his fingers into the plexus of the wheels and springs, with the intent of controlling the action of one part irrespective of the rest, without working confusion and ruin. Nevertheless, the chronometer as a whole, with all its contents freely working according to their law, undisturbed, may be lifted and carried round the world without changing the relation of interdependence of part on part. In like manner, if we will only make the effort to look upon the universe from God's point of view, as one all-comprehensive, complete system in itself, much of the apparent difficulty attending the principle of eternal predestination will disappear.

We can possibly conceive of the intelligence of God only so far forth as its laws are analogous to those of the intellect of man. We can only think of his mind as eternally teeming with all possible systems, embracing all possible creatures, grouped in all possible relations, and subject to all possible laws. By the "possible" we mean every existence that can be under the limits of God's infinitely wise and righteous nature. Out of all possible systems as wholes God chose the existing system of the universe, including all existence, spiritual and material, that has been, is, or will be, constituted as it is, with all its parts mutually interdependent as they are, as one whole. Viewed in this way, there is no conflict. The cause produces its effects, the event depends on its conditions; necessary agents act according to their nature, and free agents exercise spontaneously their perfect freedom: all the parts of the system act according to their several kinds; nevertheless, the system as a whole, including all its parts, has been from eternity made certain by the sovereign choice of God.

The point of view from which all difficulty disappears is infinitely higher and commands infinitely wider reaches of thought than the point of view from which foreordination and free-will are seen to be inconsistent. The new theology, asserting the narrowness of the old, is discarding the foreordination of Jehovah as a worn-out figment of the schools discredited by the advanced culture of to-day. This is not the first time that the owls, mistaking the shadow of a passing eclipse for their native night, have prematurely hooted at the eagles, convinced that what is invisible to them cannot possibly exist.

V. It is often objected to the biblical doctrine of predestination that, however much it may be apparently supported by the language of Scripture, it is utterly antagonized by all established truth in every other department of human thought — by all the united testimonies of philosophy and science. This preposterous claim is loudly voiced, even

by some of the professed advocates of progress in theology. But the facts are all absolutely to the contrary. So much is this the case, so universally do all the real governing currents of modern thought outside of Christian theology run in the direction of universal determinism, rather than in that of the admission of the indeterminate, the contingent, the spontaneous and free, that many of us who are the staunchest Calvinists feel that the need of the hour is not to emphasize a foreordination, which no clear, comprehensive thinker doubts, but to unite with our Arminian brethren in putting all emphasis and concentrating all attention on the vital fact of human freedom. That our consciousness of personal freedom is reliable, that we in a true sense stand outside of the current of necessary causation and do truly originate and give direction to our own actions, is a principle fundamental to all morals and all religion. Its permanent vindication is the one only and effectual solvent of all pantheism and all materialism. So strong does the current set on all sides throughout the sphere of human speculation, in favour of the conviction of universal preordination, that we can afford to leave its vindication to others, while we support with our suffrages the neglected though essential counter-truth of the real freedom of the human soul.

All the philosophy and science of the century is deterministic. The great argument of Jonathan Edwards against the liberty of contingency and in favour of the liberty of certainty has been taken up and intensified by John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer to support the doctrine of necessity. The universally received scientific principle of continuity involves this principle of foreordination. The now almost universally prevalent scientific doctrine of evolution, in all its infinite variety of forms, and in every form alike, involves this principle of foreordination. The funniest reading accessible even in this humorous age is that in which a progressive theologian, committing himself everywhere to the evolution method, yet declares that the doctrine of divine foreordination is false because unscientific. All philosophies which are either materialistic in tendency or pantheistic or purely theistic necessarily involve the principle of foreordination.

Every conceivable philosophy must ultimately found the universe upon mechanism, chance, or upon personal intelligence and will. If mechanism be the ultimate self-existent principle out of which the universe is developed and operated, then fatalism is true. If chance be the ultimate principle, then accident, contingency, uncertainty must be in the method, and chaos the ultimate goal. If a personal, intelligent will be the ultimate principle, then Providence is the executive in time of an eternal purpose. All philosophies may be classified under these heads. All the possibilities of speculation must lie within these limits. Instead of our doctrine of foreordination being the same with the heathen doctrine of fate, it is its absolute opposite and only alternative. We are shut up to a choice between the two — either a fatalism which results from mechanical co-action, or a fatalism which results from a mindless and purposeless chance, or an all-controlling providence of a heavenly Father who, in the

exercise of his own personal freedom, has made room for ours. All thinkers who understand themselves know that they run along one or other of these lines. The wiseacres who plead the authority of philosophy and science as inconsistent with the scriptural doctrine of predestination may be safely left to themselves. They will not be found to be dangerous enemies even behind our backs.

VI. Here, as everywhere else, there is essential truth on both sides of every controversy, and the real truth is time whole truth, its entire catholic body. Arminianism in the abstract as an historical scheme is a heresy, holding half the truth. Calvinism is an historical scheme which in its best representatives comprehends the whole truth with considerable completeness. But the case is essentially different when we come to consider the great co-existing bodies of Christian people calling themselves respectively Calvinists and Arminians. Each of these parties holds all essential truth, and therefore they hold actually very much the same truth. The Arminians think and speak very much like Calvinists when they come to talk with God in either the confession of sin or the supplication for grace. They both alike in that attitude recognize the sovereignty of God and the guilt and helplessness of men. Indeed, how could it be otherwise? What room is there for anything other than essential Calvinism on one's knees? On the other hand, the Calvinist thinks and speaks like the better class of Arminians when he addresses the consciences of men, and pleads with them, as free, responsible agents, to repent and believe in Christ. The difference between the best of either class is one of emphasis rather than of essential principle. Each is time complement of the other. Each is necessary to restrain, correct, and supply the one-sided strain of the other. They together give origin to the blended strain from which issues the perfect music which utters the perfect truth.

VII. It is now-a-days frequently predicted by men in high places that the distinctive doctrines of Calvinism are doomed. The future is uncertain; the role of prophet is unprofitable and unbecoming. But the history of the past stands fast. The doctrine of predestination, with its associated system of truths, has had a wonderful history. All world-movers have believed it surely and have taught it clearly — Paul, Augustine, all the Reformers without exception. During the eleven hundred years which elapsed from the time of Augustine to that of Luther, all the best of time schoolmen, all the great missionary movements, the revivals of true religion, the extension of popular education, and all great healthy political reforms, had their common inspiration in Augustinian theology. All time great national movements in France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and Britain in the era of the Reformation, and all the great national leaders, as Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Cranmer, and Knox, were distinctively Augustinian, and were rooted in predestination. The most moral people of all history, the Puritans, Pietists, Huguenots, Reformed Dutch of Holland and German of the Palatinate, and the Scotch and the Scotch-Irish of Ulster and the United States, were all Calvinists. Calvin, William of Orange, Cromwell, and the Presbyterian and Congregational founders of the government of the United States, and all the great

creators of modern civil liberty, were Calvinists. All modern provision for universal education sprang from time Scotch parochial school and the New England college. The patriots, free-state makers, martyrs, missionaries of all the modern era, have been, in nine hundred and ninety-nine parts out of the thousand, distinctively Calvinist.

This history is glorious and secure past all contradiction. It is natural also — a natural outgrowth of consequences out of principles. Predestination exalts God, and abases man before God. It makes all men low before God, but high and strong before kings. It founds on a basis of eternal rock one absolute Sovereign, to whose will there is no limit, but it levels all other sovereigns in the dust. It renders Christ great, and the believing sinner infinitely secure in him. It establishes the highest conceivable standard of righteousness, and secures the operation of the most effective motives to obedience. It extinguishes fear, it makes victory certain, it inspires with enthusiasm, it makes both the heart and the arm strong. The Ironsides of Cromwell made the decree of predestination their base; hence they never lost a battle, and always began the swelling chorus of victory from the first moment that the ranks were formed. The man to whom in all the universe there is no God is an atheist. The man to whom God is distant, and to whom the influence of God is vague and uncertain, is an Arminian. But he who altogether lives and moves and has all his being in the immanent Jehovah is a Calvinist.

## **What Does the Term “Limited Atonement” Mean, and Does the Bible Teach it?**

The term “limited atonement,” in its broadest sense, simply means the view that the atonement Christ provided for sins is in some way limited from the greatest possible extent it could have in theory; however, virtually every theologian believes in an atonement which is limited in some manner — all except those who believe that every person who ever lived will be finally saved and glorified. So in reality, it is an unhelpful and misleading term. In common parlance, however, it is a term used to describe the Calvinistic belief that Christ's atonement was fully effective to accomplish its design of redemption for all those for whom it was intended; but its intention was limited to the elect. This point of view is in opposition to what is commonly called “unlimited atonement,” which teaches that the intention of Christ's death was to provide redemption for everyone in the same way without exception; but the **efficacy** of his redemptive act is limited in its power to ensure everyone's final salvation. Christ's death, in other words, provided everything necessary for anyone's salvation besides the one conditional element of faith; but this faith was not provided by his death for anyone at all.

The scriptural passages in support of the Calvinistic variety of limited atonement are

numerous and varied: from the beginning, the bible teaches that God has always had a definite intention to redeem a certain people and not to redeem others (e.g. 1Ch 17:20-21; Mat 22:14; 1Pe 2:8-9; Ezek 36); and consistently, the bible portrays Jesus as offering himself up and likewise interceding for these people in particular, whom the Father has chosen and given to him ( Isa 53:10-11; Mat 1:21; Joh 6:35-40; 10:3-4, 11, 14-15, 17; Acts 20:28; Eph 5:25; Joh 17:1-2; 6-12; 20-21; 24-26; Rom 8:34). So the question "For whom did Christ die?" is answered by "the ones whom He represented" in his high priestly prayer in John chapter 17. Furthermore, the bible speaks of Christ's death as fully effective in securing justification ( Isa 53:11; Rom. 8:34), redemption and cleansing ( Eph 5:25-27; Tit 2:14), propitiation (that is, the complete satisfaction of the Father's wrath; 1 Jn 2:2; 4:10), and resurrection to new life ( 2Co 5:14-15). The bible does not teach that Jesus' death made these things possible, but that it actually secured these things. The bible also teaches quite clearly that the death of Jesus provided the very faith necessary to apprehend the eternal blessings of the covenant. Jesus died in order to establish the New Covenant (Mt. 26:26-29, etc.); the New Covenant in Christ promised faith, repentance and knowledge of God (Jer. 31:33-34, Ez. 36:26-27, etc.); therefore, Jesus died in order to provide faith, repentance, and knowledge of God, as the fulfillment of a unilateral promise. In other words, the **internal call** and the atonement are coextensive, but the **external call** and the atonement are not. The command to repent and believe is extended, but not the internal grace to comply. They are left to their own natures, and, as a result,, do not believe, because they comply with the decree to reprobate from their own natures. This means that Christ's death had a definite purpose which was intended for some and not others. His death effectively purchased faith; not all have faith; and so his death had an effective intent that was limited to certain persons. That faith itself is provided as a covenant gift is also taught in many other passages, such as Deu 30:6; Eze 11:19-20; 36:26-27; Joh 3:27; Phi 1:29; 2Pe 1:1; Act 16:14; 18:27; Eph 2:8-10; Act 5:31; 11:18; 2Ti 2:25-26; 1Co 4:7.

A survey of all these biblical teachings makes it clear that the death of Jesus had a redemptive intent limited to the elect, and that it was fully sufficient to provide them with all things necessary for their eternal salvation, including faith and repentance. Although certain blessings may have been purchased for the non-elect at the cross, blessings of temporal forbearance, common grace, a free gospel offer, and so on, the redemptive blessings were intended only for the elect, and they were powerful enough to be fully accomplished in all of their intended subjects.

Therefore, we affirm that Christians are joined to Christ by the sovereign, merciful work of God Himself and all redemptive benefits come to us only because of our union with Christ. All these spiritual blessings flow from Christ (Eph 1:3) including regeneration, justification, sanctification, glorification --- and these benefits cannot be separated from the Benefactor.

## **What does union with Christ have to do with limited atonement?**

Everything. Because if regeneration itself is a redemptive benefit given only to the elect, then Christ died in a way for the elect (redemptively, to procure the benefit of regeneration), that he did not for the non-elect. Faith presupposes the existence of spiritual life in the same way that heat presupposes the existence of fire. The redemptive benefit of regeneration gives rise to faith.

There is an economy of the Trinity behind each step of salvation. In this the Trinity works harmoniously. The Father elects a particular people in Christ, the Son redeems them and the Holy Spirit regenerates and unites them to Christ. Think about this: Unconditional election is in Christ (Eph 1:3,4). Perseverance is IN CHRIST (1 Thess 5:23, 34) and Irresistible grace is IN CHRIST (John 6:63-65; John 17). In other words, the Trinity works in harmony in saving His people. The intent the Father has for electing His people is the same the Son has in redeeming them and the Spirit has in regenerating them. To reject limited atonement, by definition therefore, is to believe that the intention of the Persons of the Trinity are at odds with one another. It also makes the doctrines of grace into an abstraction for if irresistible grace (a benefit given to the elect only) does not come from the work of Christ, then where does the grace come from? If you believe it does it does then you just embraced limited atonement.

The REDEMPTIVE INTENT of God in the atonement is what is at issue in this debate. This means God not only justifies the elect for Christ's sake when people come to faith, but also raises them from the death of sin by His quickening Spirit in order to bring them to faith. This raising from spiritual death (Eph 2:5) is also a redemptive benefit of being joined to Christ - and benefit which Christ died to procure for His people. This means the REDEMPTIVE benefits of the atonement are particular, that is, given only to the elect. That is why we oftentimes (perhaps more properly) call this the doctrine of "particular redemption" rather than limited atonement. While there may very well have been some non-redemptive benefits for the non-elect but this doctrine is only interested in to whom God grants the redemptive benefits. Taking the "L" out of the TULIP is therefore like taking "Solus Christus" out of the Five Solas. It effectually removes all the redemptive benefits of the doctrines of grace from the work of Christ.

In his monumental work on the atonement, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, John Owen made the following assessment, which has yet to be satisfactorily answered by any proponent of so-called unlimited atonement:

The Father imposed His wrath due unto, and the Son underwent punishment for either:

- 1) All the sins of all men;
- 2) All the sins of some men; or
- 3) Some of the sins of all men.

In which case it may be said:

- 1) If the last be true all men have some sins to answer for, and so none are saved;
- 2) That if the second be true, then Christ, in their stead suffered for all the sins of the elect in the whole world, and this is the truth;
- 3) But if the first is the case, why are not all men free from the punishment due unto their sins? You answer, Because of unbelief. I ask, Is this unbelief a sin, or is it not? If it be, then Christ suffered the punishment due unto it, or He did not. If He did, why must that hinder them more than their other sins for which He died? If He did not, He did not die for all their sins!

### **What about the passages that speak of Christ's work being for the whole world?**

Proponents of what is (misleadingly) called “unlimited atonement” are quick to point out the many passages that speak of Christ's death as being for “all the world,” and other similar phrases. The bible is, in fact, clear that Christ's death was intended to save “all” in a variety of contexts: it was intended to save “all” who believe (John 3:16); it was intended to save people from “all” kindreds, tribes, tongues, and nations (Rev. 5:9); it was intended to save persons from “all” classes, rich or poor, slave or free, king or peasant, man or woman, Jew or Greek (Gal. 3:28; 1 Tim. 2:1-6). Thus, his death is spoken of in a variety of places as being intended for “all,” or “the world”. For example, John 1:29; Tit 2:11-14 [in the context of “all men” is the delimiting concept of a peculiar people, zealous of good works]; Heb 2:9-10 [notice that the many sons whom Christ brings to glory gives a contextual delimiter to the term “every”]; 2Pe 3:9 [note that this desire is explicitly limited to “us” (Peter was writing to fellow-believers) in the context]; 1Jo 2:2 [propitiation means “appeasement of wrath”; either Jesus appeases God's wrath against all, and therefore hell (which is the place where God's wrath resides) is non-existent; or the “whole world” means something different than “every individual who ever lived”. See John 11:51-52 for a clear verbal parallel that gives strong support of the Johannine emphasis on Christ's death being, not just for ethnic Jews, but for people across the whole world].

In sum, yes, the bible often speaks of Christ's death as being for the whole world; and that is because of the paradigm-shattering reality that, when Christ came to redeem a

people, he intended to redeem that people from every nation under heaven, quite out of keeping with the expectations of the majority of the Jewish people.

As a final note, it is instructive to look at other ways in which the terms “world,” “all,” etc., are used throughout the New Testament. The word “all” is often used to indicate all of a set, or even many representatives of a set (Mat 10:22; 1Co 6:12; 15:22; Mat 2:3; Joh 4:29; Act 10:39; 17:21; 21:28; 26:4); or, to indicate all “classes” or “nations,” not all individuals (Mat 5:11; Act 2:17; 10:12). The word “world” is often used in the sense of “many,” or “all of a set” (Luk 2:1-2; Joh 6:33; 12:19; Act 19:27; Rom 1:8).

### **What about the passages that speak of God's desire for all to be saved?**

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## Scriptural Particularism

### R.B. Kuiper

R.B. Kuiper (1886-1966) taught theology at Westminster Theological Seminary for twenty years, served Calvin Theological Seminary as president for seven, and pastored churches for seventeen. He was the author of nine books and innumerable articles. This particular article is taken from his book, *For Whom Did Christ Die? A Study of the Divine Design of the Atonement* (Baker: Grand Rapids, MI, 1959).

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The particularist view of the divine design of the atonement was taught by such great theologians and preachers, among others, as Augustine, Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Jonathan Edwards, Whitefield, Spurgeon, Charles Hodge, Archibald Alexander Hodge, Caspar Wistar Hodge, Thornwell, Kuyper, Bavinck, Warfield and Machen. It was upheld over against Arminianism by the Synod of Dort, which was constituted by representatives of most of the Reformed churches in Europe, and it is taught in all the Reformed creeds, notably in the greatest of them all, the Westminster Confession of Faith, as an essential element of that system of doctrine which is known as the Reformed faith. Today it is upheld by all consistently Reformed theologians and by those churches which are Reformed or Presbyterian not only in name but in reality.

Briefly stated, the particularist view of the divine design of the atonement is that God purposed by the atonement to save only the elect and that consequently all the elect, and they alone, are saved. Says the Westminster Confession: "As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by his Spirit working in time in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved but the elect only."<sup>1</sup> Again it says: "The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he through the eternal Spirit once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father; and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto him . . . . To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same."<sup>2</sup> The Canons of Dort teach: "This was the sovereign counsel and most gracious will of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of His Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon

them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation: that is, it was the will of God that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby he confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation and language all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to Him by the Father; that He should confirm upon them faith, which, together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, He purchased for them by His death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them, free from spot and blemish, to the enjoyment of glory in his own presence forever.”<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter that doctrine will be set forth primarily and positively in the light of the Word of God and incidentally by way of comparison with both unrestricted and inconsistent universalism. It will be argued that the glory of the Reformed doctrine of the divine design of the atonement is twofold. It does justice to all the Scriptural data bearing on the subject and, in doing that, it highly exalts the intrinsic value of the atonement. An elucidation of these claims is in order.

### **The Word of God Honors the Particular Atonement**

It was already shown that the particularistic view of the design of the atonement is in harmony with the universalistic passages of Holy Scripture. It remains to be shown that this view’ is expressly taught by Scripture. When an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph of Nazareth and told him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife, that which was conceived in her being of the Holy Ghost, the angel added: “And she shall bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save *his people* from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). In the allegory of the good shepherd Christ foretold that He would give and lay down His life for *His sheep* (John 10: 11, 15). Speaking to His disciples and referring to them He said: “Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for *his friends*” (John 15:13). Paul declared to the Ephesian elders that Christ purchased *the church* with His own blood (Acts 20:28), and he reminded all the believers at Ephesus that Christ “loved *the church* and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25). And when Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome that God “spared not his own Son but delivered him up for *us all*” (Rom. 8:32), he was referring, according to both the immediately preceding and the immediately following context specifically to *the elect*. All of the statements just quoted are explicit in character. In another passage Christ teaches by inescapable implication that He gave His life for none other than those whom the Father had given Him. In His high-priestly prayer He said: “I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me” (John 17:9). Indisputably Christ’s sacrificial work and His intercessory work are both priestly activities and therefore simply two aspects of His atoning work. Therefore the scope of the one cannot be wider than the scope of the other. If Christ prayed exclusively for those whom the Father had given Him, He also bought only these with His blood.

Both unrestricted universalism and inconsistent universalism deny certain unequivocal teachings of Scripture. For example, the former denies the plain Scriptural teaching of the eternal punishment of the wicked, and the latter denies, whether admittedly or unadmittedly, the equally plain Scriptural teaching of the sure efficacy of the divine purposes. These views stand or fall with those denials. No such thing can be said of particularism. In order to maintain itself it does not need to deny any truth of Scripture. Positively expressed, the particularistic view of the design of the atonement fits perfectly into the system of doctrine contained in Holy Writ. Reference to a few of the outstanding teachings of Scripture will illustrate that fact.

The particularistic view of the design of the atonement does full justice to the sovereignty of God. God's purposes cannot be thwarted by man. God's plans are not contingent on the consent of man. God's counsel is sure to stand and He is certain to do all His pleasure. Therefore all those whom He designed to save by the death of His Son will be saved, not one excepted. Those whom God designed to save and those who will be saved are identical. Speaking of God's purpose to save the elect by the blood of the cross, the Canons of Dort assert: "This purpose proceeding from everlasting love toward the elect, has from the beginning of the world to this day been powerfully accomplished, and will henceforth continue to be accomplished, notwithstanding all the ineffectual opposition of the gates of hell."<sup>4</sup>

The particularistic view of the design of the atonement harmonizes perfectly with the Scriptural teaching of the covenant of redemption. From eternity the persons of the Holy Trinity planned the salvation of a multitude whom no man can number. An essential element in that plan was the giving by the Father to the Son of all who ultimately would be saved. Repeatedly the Saviour spoke of those whom the Father had given Him. In His high-priestly prayer He distinguished sharply between them and the world and clearly identified them with the heirs of eternal life. Said He: "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me . . . . I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine . . . . Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those whom thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, save the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:6, 9, 11, 12). At this point Calvin comments: "Judas is excepted, and not without reason; for, though he was not one of the elect and of the true flock of God, yet the dignity of his office gave him the appearance of it; and, indeed, no one would have formed a different opinion of him, so long as he held that exalted office." He substantiates this comment with the fact that Judas is here called "the son of perdition." "By these words," says Calvin, "Christ means that his ruin, which took place suddenly before the eyes of men, had been known to God long before; for *the son of perdition*, according to the Hebrew idiom, denotes a man who is ruined, or devoted to destruction."<sup>5</sup> That Calvin's point is well taken appears from the unmistakable and most emphatic teaching of Christ elsewhere that not one of those

whom the Father has given Him can possibly perish. Speaking of the sheep for whom He would give His life, the Saviour said: "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. *My* Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 12:28, 29). Again the Saviour declared: "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:39). The Son as the Servant of Jehovah (Isa. 53: 11) was commissioned by the Father to bear the iniquities of those whom the Father had given Him, to lay down His life for them, and to accomplish fully for them the work of salvation which the Father had given Him to do (John 10:18; 17:4).

The particularistic view of the design of the atonement is a necessary corollary of the Scriptural doctrine of election. If God chose out of the lost race of humanity certain persons in Christ before the foundation of the world and predestined them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself (Eph. 1:4, 5), it cannot but follow that God designed that those whom He had chosen in Christ would be saved by Christ. In his *Systematic Theology* Charles Hedge brings the history of Christian doctrine strongly to bear on this point. Says he: "It never was denied that Christ died specially for the elect until the doctrine of election itself was rejected. Augustine, the follower and expounder of St. Paul, taught that God out of his mere good pleasure had elected some to everlasting life, and held that Christ came into the world to suffer and die for their salvation. He purchased them with his own precious blood. The Semi-Pelagians, in denying the doctrine of election, of course denied that Christ's death had more reference to one class of men than to another. The Latin Church, so long as it held to the Augustinian doctrine of election, held also to Augustine's doctrine concerning the design and objects of Christ's death. All through the Middle Ages this was one of the distinctive doctrines of those who resisted the progress of the Semi-Pelagian party in the Western Church. At the time of the Reformation the Lutherans, so long as they held to the one doctrine held also to the other. The Reformed, in holding fast the doctrine of election, remained faithful to their denial of the doctrine that the work of Christ had equal reference to all mankind. It was not until the Remonstrants in Holland, under the teaching of Arminius, rejected the Church doctrine of original sin, of the inability of fallen man to anything spiritually good, the sovereignty of God in election and the perseverance of the saints, that the doctrine that the atonement had a special reference to the people of God was rejected. It is, therefore, a matter of history that the doctrine of election and the Augustinian doctrine as to the design of the work of Christ have been inseparably united." Hodge goes on to say: "As this connection is historical, so also is it logical. The one doctrine necessarily involves the other. If God from eternity determined to save one portion of the human race and not another, it seems to be a 'contradiction to say that the plan of salvation had equal reference to both portions; that the Father sent his Son to die for those whom He had predetermined not to save, as truly as, and in the same sense that He gave Him up for

those whom He had chosen to make the heirs of salvation.”<sup>6</sup>

The particularistic view of the design of the atonement is in perfect agreement with the Scriptural teaching of the special love of God. Occasionally one hears it said by Calvinists that God is good and benevolent to all the children of men but that He loves only the elect. According to Scripture, however, it may be said without the slightest hesitation that God loves all men. Did not Jesus say: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven . . . . Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:44, 45, 48)? But what Scripture does not teach is that God loves all men equally. On the contrary, it tells us that His love for the elect differs qualitatively from His love for others. Now it is to “that peculiar, mysterious, sovereign, immeasurable love which passes knowledge, of which his own people, the Church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven, are the objects”<sup>7</sup> that the gift of Christ as Redeemer is time and again referred. “Greater love hath no man,” said Jesus, “than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15: 13). “God commendeth his love toward us,” said Paul, “in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). Speaking specifically of the elect, the same apostle said: “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not *with* him also freely give us all things?” And in almost the next breath he exclaimed: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (Rom. 8:32, 35) The apostle of love said: “Hereby perceive we the love of God because he laid down his life for us” (I John 3:16), and “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (I John 4:10).

The particularistic view of the design of the atonement is an integral part of that teaching which constitutes the very heart of special revelation — salvation by grace. The five points of Calvinism are often ridiculed as expressions of the narrowest kind of dogmatism. The truth is that they are nothing else than an undiluted presentation of the precious Scriptural doctrine of salvation by grace. Nothing is taught more emphatically in Holy Writ than that salvation is by the grace of God and by it alone. And yet there is no doctrine of Scripture which the church in the course of its history has found more difficult to maintain. Always there were influential leaders in the church who in one way or another sought to compromise this doctrine, and times without number the church gave heed to their siren songs. But beyond all doubt salvation by grace is the teaching of Isaiah, of Jesus, of Paul, of Peter, of the whole of Scripture. When the early church lost sight of it, Augustine rediscovered it. When the church of the Middle Ages lost sight of it, Luther and Calvin rediscovered it. When the churches of the Reformation were sorely tempted by Arminianism to depart from it, the Synod of Dort and the Westminster Assembly again confirmed it. And when more recently several Reformed and Presbyterian churches relegated it to the limbus of outdated and outmoded dogmas, God raised up such men as the Hodges, James H.

Thornwell, Benjamin B. Warfield, Abraham Kuyper, and Herman Bavinck, not merely to defend it, but to exalt it. The doctrine of salvation by grace is the heart not only of Calvinism, but of Scripture and of Christianity. With it Christianity stands or falls. Every departure from it, no matter how small, is a departure from Christianity. Next to the Bible itself the clearest and purest expression of this doctrine is found in the five points of Calvinism. And they are just so many links of a chain, dependent on one another and supporting one another. God in His sovereign good pleasure from eternity elected certain persons in Christ to everlasting life. By nature the elect, like all other men, are totally depraved sinners who cannot save themselves. In order to save the elect God sent His Son into the world to purchase redemption for them by His precious blood and perfect obedience. By the atonement Christ merited for the elect the Holy Spirit, who effectually regenerates them and works the gift of saving faith in their hearts. That God's chosen, whom Christ has redeemed and to whom the Holy Spirit has applied redemption, should perish is entirely out of the question. Those are the five points of Calvinism. Together they constitute one doctrine — that of salvation by sovereign grace.

### **The Particular Atonement Exalts the Saving Work of Christ**

The glory of the particularistic doctrine of the divine design of the atonement lies in its consistently Scriptural character. Small wonder that its glory also lies in its exaltation of the value of the atonement. For the value which Scripture ascribes to the atonement is high indeed.

Inconsistent universalism, like unrestricted universalism, seeks to convey the impression that it exalts the atonement far more than does Calvinism. It boasts of having an atonement for all while Calvinism is said to have an atonement for some only. It glories in a universal, a limitless, atonement in contrast with the limited atonement of the Reformed faith. But such boasting and glorying are vain.

The notion is prevalent that, while according to inconsistent universalism a great many will be saved, according to Calvinism few will enter through the gates into the eternal city. But that notion is absurd. According to both Calvinism and inconsistent universalism, whether represented by Barth or by Arminianism, all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved and no others. On this point there is no difference. No less absurd is the charge, sometimes brought against Calvinism, that it teaches by implication, if not explicitly, that a truly repentant sinner may fail of salvation because he does not happen to be numbered among the elect, whose redemption Christ purchased on Calvary. It goes altogether without saying that all the elect, and only the elect, will truly repent of their sins and seek salvation in Christ, for repentance is a fruit of election as well as a benefit of the atonement. And it is the unqualified teaching of Calvinism that genuine repentance never comes too late. The Saviour's assurance, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37) is a favorite

text with Calvinistic preachers. The Calvinist rejoices in the Biblical attestation that, when all the elect shall have been gathered in, they will constitute a throng which no man can number and which will be as countless as the grains of sand on the seashore and as the stars that sparkle in the black-blue firmament of night. Says Shedd in his *Dogmatic Theology*: “In saying that Christ’s atonement is limited in its application . . . it is meant that the number of persons to whom it is effectually applied is a fixed and definite number. The notion of definiteness, not of smallness, is intended . . . . The circle of election and redemption must indeed be a circumference, but not necessarily a small one. No man is redeemed outside of the circle. All the sheep must be within the fold. But the circle is that of the heavens, not of the earth.”<sup>8</sup>

In his sermon, already referred to, on II Corinthians 5:14, 15, Machen calls attention in his own inimitably tender way to the comforting character of the Reformed doctrine of the design of the atonement and contrasts it with the gloominess of the teaching of Arminianism on the same subject. He begins: “People say that Calvinism is a dour, hard creed. How broad and comforting, they say, is the doctrine of a universal atonement, the doctrine that Christ died equally for all men there upon the cross! How narrow and harsh, they say, is this Calvinistic doctrine — one of the ‘five points’ of Calvinism — this doctrine of the ‘limited atonement,’ this doctrine that Christ died for the elect of God in a sense in which He did not die for the unsaved!” He continues: “But do you know, my friends, it is surprising that men say that. It is surprising that they regard the doctrine of a universal atonement as being a comforting doctrine. In reality it is a very gloomy doctrine indeed . . . Ah, if it were only a doctrine of a universal salvation, instead of a doctrine of a universal atonement, then it would no doubt be a very comforting doctrine; then no doubt it would conform wonderfully well to what we in our puny wisdom might have thought the course of the world should have been. But a universal atonement without a universal salvation is a cold, gloomy doctrine indeed. To say that Christ died for all men alike and that then not all men are saved, to say that Christ died for humanity simply in the mass, and that the choice of those who out of that mass are saved depends upon the greater receptivity of some as compared with others — that is a doctrine that takes from the gospel much of its sweetness and much of its joy. From the cold universalism of that Arminian creed we turn ever again with a new thankfulness to the warm and tender individualism of our Reformed Faith, which we believe to be in accord with God’s holy Word. Thank God we can say every one, as we contemplate Christ upon the Cross, not just: ‘He died for the mass of humanity, and how glad I am that I am amid that mass,’ but: ‘He loved me and gave Himself for me; my name was written from all eternity upon His heart, and when He hung and suffered there on the Cross He thought of me, even me, as one for whom in His grace He was willing to die.’”<sup>9</sup>

Calvinism does indeed hold that the number of those whom God designed to save by the death of His Son is limited, but it does not limit the intrinsic value of the atonement. This is a fact of the greatest moment. Inconsistent universalism seriously

restricts the efficacy of the atonement. Arminianism teaches that the atonement does no more than make salvation possible; and, as was already pointed out, by unashamedly making the realization of salvation contingent on the will of man, it teaches in effect that the atonement makes salvation an unrealizable possibility. Calvinism, on the contrary, insists that the atonement actually saves all whom it was intended to save. Their doctrine of the divine design of the atonement being what it is, neither the Arminian nor Barth can take that position without concluding that all men will be saved. Therefore the evangelical Arminian rejects that position without hesitation. And Barth, leaning heavily toward unqualified universalism and yet not ready to embrace it, cannot accept that position. The conclusion is inescapable that of the three only the Calvinist teaches a truly effective atonement.

What does Calvinism mean when it insists that the atonement actually saves? By His passive obedience, that is to say, by His obedience manifest in His suffering,<sup>10</sup> particularly in His death on the cross, Christ fully atoned for the sins of the elect; consequently there is no condemnation for them, nor will there be in the future. Not only that, but by His active obedience, His life in perfect harmony with the law of God, He merited for the elect the positive benefit of eternal life. Thus by His passive and active obedience, which are inseparable and together may be said to constitute the atonement, Christ wrought full salvation for the elect. It must not be thought, however, that the elect are saved automatically. In bringing them to salvation God deals with them, not as so many things, but as rational and moral beings; that is, as free agents. Therefore He requires of them faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. However, the atonement guarantees that they will receive the gift of faith. Such ethical benefits of salvation as regeneration and faith are fruits of the atonement as well as is the forensic benefit of justification. In other words, by the atonement Christ merited for the elect the Holy Spirit, who imparts to them the new birth and saving faith. Still further, also the ethical benefits of sanctification and perseverance are guaranteed by the atonement and flow directly from it as their fountainhead. The same is true of ultimate glorification. All that is implied in the Pauline asseveration: “Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified . . . . He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:30, 32). The expression “all things” does not embrace everything in the universe but, in harmony with the context, “the whole of what He has to bestow in accordance with the aim of the surrender of Jesus, . . . the collective saving blessings of His love shown to us in Christ.”<sup>11</sup> In brief, the atonement not only renders the salvation of all the elect completely certain, but the realization of their salvation in all its parts was *procured* by the atonement. Says the Westminster Larger Catechism: “Christ, by his mediation, hath procured redemption, with all other benefits of the covenant of grace.”<sup>12</sup>

Commenting on the statement by Arminian Henry C. Sheldon of Boston University:



“Our contention is for the universality of the opportunity of salvation, as against an exclusive and unconditional choice of individuals to eternal life,”<sup>13</sup> Warfield remarks: “There is to be noted in this declaration, 1) the conscious stress on universalism as the characteristic note of Wesleyanism and 2) the consequent recognition that all that God does looking toward salvation is to afford an opportunity of salvation; so that what is actually contended for is not that God does not save some only but that he really saves none, — he only opens a way of salvation to all and if any are saved they must save themselves. So inevitable is it that, if we assert that all that God does looking to salvation he does to and for all alike and yet that not all are saved, we make all that he does fall short of actual salvation: no one must receive more than he who receives the least.”<sup>14</sup> In sharp contrast with that view of the design of the atonement stands the Reformed view that God by the atonement designed to save and actually does save all who ultimately are saved.

In reference to the popular notion that all men are entitled to “an equal chance” at salvation, Warfield says: “Shall we not fix it once for all in our minds that salvation is the right of no man; that a ‘chance’ to save himself is no ‘chance’ of salvation for any; and that, if any of the sinful race of man is saved, it must be by a miracle of almighty grace, on which he has no claim, and, contemplating which as a fact, he can only be filled with wondering adoration of the marvels of the inexplicable love of God?”<sup>15</sup> That miracle of almighty grace is the atonement.

The same scholarly divine draws the line of demarcation between Calvinism and Arminianism sharply when he asserts: “The issue is indeed a fundamental one and it is closely drawn. Is it God the Lord that saves us, or is it we ourselves? And does God the Lord save us, or does he merely open the way of salvation, and leave it, according to our choice, to walk in it or not? The parting of the ways is the old parting of the ways between Christianity and autosoterism. Certainly only he can claim to be evangelical who with full consciousness rests entirely and directly on God and on God alone for his salvation.”<sup>16</sup> According to the particularistic view of the design of the atonement, the atonement not merely makes salvation possible but actual; and that is another way of saying that the sinner is not saved by himself but by God, and by God alone. That is Calvinism not only, but that is of the very essence of Christianity. Arminian universalism is a departure, and a serious one, from Christianity. Particularism is consistent Christianity.

In the foregoing paragraphs the particular design of the atonement was contrasted primarily with Arminian universalism. There was good reason for so doing, for historically the Reformed doctrine of the design of the atonement acquired its most precise formulation in the crucible of the Arminian controversy in Holland. Not everything that was said is applicable to Barthian universalism. For instance, the charge of “autosoterism” does not apply to Barthianism as it does to Arminianism. According to Arminianism saving faith is not a gift of God but an act of the free will of

man of which even the unregenerate is capable. That makes man his own saviour. According to Barth faith is indeed a human act but, prior to that, a gift sovereignly bestowed by the Holy Spirit.<sup>17</sup> Salvation, then, belongs to the Lord. At this precise point Barth subscribes to the Biblical doctrine of salvation by grace, and that, no doubt, is one reason for his speaking repeatedly of “the triumph of grace” in his theology. Yet the fact remains that Barthianism, like Arminianism, does violence to the sovereign love and the loving sovereignty of God manifest in the atonement, by withholding assent to the proposition that the atonement saves all without exception whom God purposed to save by it. That, too, is a significant departure from the Reformed faith and, it must be said, from Christianity.

Nor may it be forgotten that in important respects Barth departs much farther from the Scriptural doctrine of the atonement than does evangelical Arminianism. Beyond all doubt, evangelical Arminianism teaches a vicarious atonement; whether the atonement according to Barth is vicarious in the historic sense of that term is, as was already pointed out, highly questionable. Evangelical Arminianism teaches that Christ’s sacrifice on the cross appeased the wrath of God against sin; Barth holds, as does theological liberalism, that God did not need to be, and was not, reconciled to sinners by the death of His Son, but they were reconciled to God. Evangelical Arminianism is completely certain that not all men will be saved and therefore it definitely rejects unqualified universalism; Barth has strong leanings toward unqualified universalism and admits with reluctance that some will be lost. And Barth’s rejection of the Arminian error of foreseen faith as the ground of election does not prove that he holds a higher view of election than does Arminianism. In a most important respect his view is lower. For, although according to both Barth and Arminianism not all will be saved whom God designed to save by the death of His Son, yet Arminianism insists that all whom God *predestined* to eternal life will be saved, and to that position Barth does not hold consistently. In other words, historic Arminianism teaches an election which is not universal but unalterable; Barth teaches an election which is universal but not unalterable. Here Arminianism is on Scriptural ground, Barth is not.

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## Notes

1. III, 6.
2. VIII, 5, 8.
3. Second Head of Doctrine, 8.
4. Second Head of Doctrine, 9.
5. *Commentary on the Gospel according to John, loc. cit.*
6. II. 547f.
7. *Ibid.*, II, 549.
8. II, 474.

9. *God Transcendent and Other Sermons*, p. 136.
10. When theologians describe Christ's obedience manifest in His suffering as "passive," they have in mind the Latin *pati*, to suffer, and do not mean to convey the thought that in His suffering Christ was merely acted upon and was not active. He was active in His very death, for He "laid down His life" (I John 3:16).
11. *Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament*, *loc. cit.*
12. Question 57.
13. *System of Christian Doctrine*, 1903, p. 417.
14. *The Plan of Salvation*, p. 99.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 101f.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
17. *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV, I, 826ff.

## The Atonement

by John Owen

The *title* [The title here referred to is *The Universality of God's Free Grace . . .*, a book written by Thomas More and published in 1643. —*Ed.*] pretends satisfaction to them who desire to have reason satisfied: which, that it is a great undertaking, I easily grant; but for the performance of it, "hic labor, hoc opus." That ever Christian reason, rightly informed by the word of God, should be satisfied with any doctrine so *discrepant* from the word, so full of contradiction in itself and to its own principles, as the doctrine of universal redemption is, I should much marvel. Therefore, I am persuaded that the author of the arguments following (which, lest you should mistake them for others, he calleth *reasons*), will fail of his intention with all that have so much reason as to know how to make use of reason, and so much grace as not to love darkness more than light. The only reason, as far as I can conceive, why he calls this collection of all the arguments and texts of Scripture which he had before cited and produced at large so many *reasons*, being a supposal that he hath given them a logical, argumentative form in this place, I shall briefly consider them; and, by the way, take notice of his skill in a regular framing of arguments, to which here he evidently pretends. His first reason, then, is as followeth:—

I. "That which the Scripture oft and plainly affirmeth in plain words is certainly true and to be believed, Prov. 22:20, 21; Isa. 8:20; II Peter 1: 19, 20;

"But that Jesus Christ gave himself a ransom, and by the grace of God tasted death for every man, is oft and plainly affirmed in Scripture, as is before shown, chap. 7-13: "Therefore, the same is certainly a truth to be believed, John 20:31; Acts 26:27."

First, the proposition of this argument is clear, evident, and acknowledged by all professing the name of Christ; but yet universally with this caution and proviso, that by *the Scripture affirming any thing in plain words that is to be believed*, you understand the plain sense of those words, which is clear by rules of interpretation so to be. It is the thing signified that is to be believed, and not the words only, which are the sign thereof; and, therefore, the *plain sense and meaning* is that which we must inquire after, and is intended when we speak of believing plain words of the Scripture. But now if by *plain words* you understand the literal importance of the words, which may perhaps be *figurative*, or at least of *various signification*, and capable of extension or restriction in the interpretation, then there is nothing more false than this assertion; for how can you then avoid the blasphemous folly of the Anthropomorphites, assigning a body and human shape unto God, the *plain words of the Scripture* often mentioning his eyes, hands, ears, etc., it being apparent to every child that the true importance of those expressions answers not at all their gross carnal conception? Will not also transubstantiation, or its younger brother consubstantiation, be an article of our creed? With this limitation, then, we pass the proposition, with the places of Scripture brought to confirm it; only with this observation, that there is not one of them to the purpose in hand,—which, because they do not relate to the argument in consideration, we only leave to men's silent judgments.

Secondly, The assumption, or minor proposition, we absolutely deny as to some part of it; as that Christ should be said to give himself a ransom for every man, it being neither often, nor once, nor plainly, nor obscurely affirmed in the Scripture, nor at all proved in the place referred unto: so that this is but an empty flourishing. For the other expression, of “tasting death for every man,” we grant that the words are found Heb. 2:9; but we deny that *every man* doth always necessarily signify *all and every man in the world*. *Nouqetounte" panta anqrupon didaskonte" panta anqrupon*, Col. 1:28—“Warning every man, and teaching every man.” *Every man* is not there every man in the world; neither are we to believe that Paul warned and taught every particular man, for it is false and impossible. So that *every man*, in the Scripture, is not universally collective of all of all sorts, but either distributive, for some of all sorts, or collective, with a restriction to all of some sort; as in that of Paul, *every man*, was only of those to whom he had preached the gospel. Secondly, in the original there is only *uper panto"*, *for every*, without the substantive *man*, which might be supplied by other words as well as man,—as elect, or believer.

Thirdly, That *every one* is there clearly restrained to all the members of Christ, and the children by him brought to glory, we have before declared. So that this place is no way useful for the confirmation of the assumption, which we deny in the sense intended; and are sure we shall never see a clear, or so much as a probable, testimony for the confirming of it.

To the conclusion of the syllogism, the author, to manifest his skill in disputing in such an argumentative way as he undertaketh, addeth some farther proofs. Conscious, it seems, he was to himself that it had little strength from the propositions from which it is enforced; and, therefore, thought to give some new supportments to it, although with very ill success, as will easily appear to any one that shall but consult the places quoted, and consider the business in hand. In the meantime, this new logic, of filing proofs to the conclusion which are suitable to neither proposition, and striving to give strength to that by new testimony which it hath not from the premises, deserves our notice in this age of learned writers. “Heu quantum est sapere.” Such logic is fit to maintain such divinity. And so much for the first argument.

II. “Those whom Jesus Christ and his apostles, in plain terms, without any exception or restraint, affirm that Christ came to save, and to that end died, and gave himself a ransom for, and is a propitiation for their sin, he certainly did come to save, and gave himself a ransom for them, and is the propitiation for their sins, Matt. 26:24; John 6:38; I Cor. 15:3, 4; Heb. 10:7; John 8:38, 45; II Peter 1:16; Heb. 2:3,4;

“But Jesus Christ and his apostles have, in plain terms, affirmed that ‘Christ came to save sinners,’ I Tim. 1 15; the ‘world,’ John 3:17; that he died for the ‘unjust,’ I Peter 3:18; the ‘ungodly,’ Rom. 5:6; for ‘every man,’ Heb. 2:9; ‘gave himself a ransom for all men,’ I Tim 2:6; and is the ‘propitiation for the sins of the whole world,’ I John 2:2; and every one of these affirmations without any exception or restraint, all being unjust, ungodly, sinners, and men, and of the world, Rom. 3:10, 19, 20, 23; Eph. 2:1-3; Titus 3:3; John 3:4, 6: “Therefore, Jesus Christ came to save, died, and gave himself a ransom for all men, and is the propitiation for their sins, John 1:29.”

To the proposition of this argument I desire only to observe, that we do not affirm that the Scripture doth, in any place, lay an exception or restraint upon those persons for whom Christ is said to die, as though in one place it should be affirmed he died for all men, and in another some exception against it, as though some of those *all men* were excluded,—which were to feign a repugnancy and contradiction in the word of God; only, we say, one place of Scripture interprets another, and declares that sense which before in one place was ambiguous and doubtful. For instance: when the Scripture showeth that Christ died or gave himself a ransom for *all*, we believe it; and when, in another place, he declares that *all* to be his *church*, his *elect*, his *sheep*, all *believers*,—*some of all sorts, out of all kindreds, and nations, and tongues, under heaven*; this is not to lay an exception or restraint upon what was said of *all* before, but only to declare that the *all* for which he gave himself a ransom were all his church, all his elect, all his sheep, some of all sorts: and so we believe that he died for all. With this observation we let pass the proposition, taking out its meaning as well as the phrase whereby it is expressed will afford it, together with the vain flourish and pompous show of many texts of Scripture brought to confirm it, whereof not one is any thing to the purpose; so that I am persuaded he put down names and figures at a venture,

without once consulting the texts, having no small cause to be confident that none would trace him in his flourish, and yet that some eyes might dazzle at his super-numerary quotations. Let me desire the reader to turn to those places, and if any one of them be any thing to the purpose or business in hand, let the author's credit be of weight with him another time. O let us not be as many, who corrupt the word of God! But perhaps it is a mistake in the impression, and for Matt. 26:24, he intends verse 28, where Christ is said to shed his blood for many. In John 6, he mistook verse 38 for 39, where our Saviour affirms that he came to save that which his Father gave him,—that none should be lost; which certainly are the elect. In I Cor. 15:3, 4, he was not much amiss, the apostle conjoining in those verses the death and resurrection of Christ, which he saith was for us; and how far this advantageth his cause in hand, we have before declared. By Heb. 10:7, I suppose he meant verse 10 of the chapter, affirming that by the will of God, which Christ came to do, we are sanctified, even through the offering of the body of Jesus,—ascribing our sanctification to his death, which is not effected in all and every one; though perhaps he may suppose the last clause of the verse, “once for all,” to make for him. But some charitable man, I hope, will undeceive him, by letting him know the meaning of the word *efapax*. The like may be observed of the other places,—that in them is nothing at all to the proposition in hand, and nigh them at least is enough to evert it. And so his proposition in sum is:—“All those for whom the Scripture affirms that Christ did die, for them he died”; which is true, and doubtless granted.

The assumption affirms that Christ and his apostles in the Scriptures say that he died to save *sinner*s, *unjust*, *ungodly*, the *world*, *all*; whereupon the conclusion ought barely to be, “Therefore Christ died for sinners, unjust, ungodly, the world, and the like.” To which we say,—First, That this is the very same argument, for substance, with that which went before, as also are some of those that follow; only some words are varied, to change the outward appearance, and so to make show of a number. Secondly, That the whole strength of this argument lies in turning indefinite propositions into universals, concluding that because Christ died for sinners, therefore he died for all sinners; because he died for the unjust, ungodly, and the world, that therefore he died for every one that is unjust, or ungodly, and for every one in the world; because he died for all, therefore for all and every one of all sorts of men. Now, if this be good arguing, I will furnish you with some more such arguments against you have occasion to use *them*:—*First*, God “justifieth the ungodly,” Rom. 4:5; therefore, he justifieth every one that is ungodly. Now, “whom he justifieth, them he also glorifieth”; and therefore every ungodly person shall be glorified. *Secondly*, When Christ came, “men loved darkness rather than light,” John 3:19; therefore, all men did so, and so none believed. *Thirdly*, “The world knew not Christ,” John 1:10; therefore, no man in the world knew him. *Fourthly*, “The whole world lieth in wickedness,” I John 5:19; therefore, every one in the world doth so. Such arguments as these, by turning indefinite propositions into universals, I could easily furnish you withal, for

any purpose that you will use them to. Thirdly, If you extend the words in the conclusion no farther than the intention of them in the places of Scripture recited in the assumption, we may safely grant the whole,— namely, that Christ died for sinners and the world, for sinful men in their several generations living therein; but if you intend a universality collective of all in the conclusion, then the syllogism is sophistical and false, no place of Scripture affirming so much that is produced, the assignation of the object of the death of Christ in them being in terms indefinite, receiving light and clearness for a more restrained sense in those places where they are expounded to be meant of all his own people, and the children of God scattered throughout the world. Fourthly, For particular places of Scripture urged, I Tim. 1:15; I Peter 3:18; Rom. 5:6, in the beginning of the assumption, are not at all to the purpose in hand. John 3:17; Heb. 2:9; I John 2:2, have been already considered. Rom. 3:10, 19, 20, 23; Eph. 2:1-3; Titus 3:3; John 3:4, 6, added in the close of the same proposition, prove that all are sinners and children of wrath; but of Christ’s dying for all sinners, or for all those children of wrath, there is not the least intimation. And this may suffice in answer to the first two arguments, which might easily be retorted upon the author of them, the Scripture being full and plain to the confirmation of the position which he intends to oppose.

**III.** “That which the Scripture layeth forth as one end of the death of Christ, and one ground and cause of God’s exalting Christ to be the Lord and Judge of all, and of the equity of his judging, that is certainly to be believed, Ps. 12:6; 18:130; 119:4;

“But the Scripture layeth forth this for one end of the death and resurrection of Christ, that he might be the Lord of all, Rom. 14:9; II Cor. 5:14, 15. And for that cause (even his death and resurrection) hath God exalted him to be the Lord and Judge of all men, and his judgments shall be just, Rom. 14:9, 11, 12; II Cor. 5:10; Phil. 2:7-11; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:16:

“Therefore, that Christ so died, and rose again for all, is a truth to be believed, I Tim. 2:6.”

First, The unlearned framing of this argument, the uncouth expressions of the thing intended, and failing in particulars, by the by, being to be ascribed to the person and not the cause, I shall not much trouble myself withal; *as,—First*, To his artificial regularity in bringing his minor proposition, namely, Christ being made Lord and Judge of all, into the major; so continuing one term in all three propositions, and making the whole almost unintelligible. *Secondly*, His interpreting, “For this cause God exalted Christ,” to be his death and resurrection, when his resurrection, wherein he was “declared to be the Son of God with power,” Rom. 1:4, was a glorious part of his exaltation. To examine and lay open the weakness and folly of innumerable such things as these, which everywhere occur, were to be lavish of precious moments. Those that have the least taste of learning or the way of reasoning do easily see their

vanity; and for the rest, especially the poor admirers of these foggy sophisms, I shall not say, “*Quoniam hic populus vult decipi, decipiatur,*” but, “God give them understanding and repentance, to the acknowledgment of the truth.”

Secondly, To this whole argument, as it lies before us, I have nothing to say but only to entreat Mr. More, that if the misery of our times should be calling upon him to be writing again, he would cease expressing his mind by syllogisms, and speak in his own manner; which, by its own confusion in innumerable tautologies, may a little puzzle his reader. For, truly, this kind of arguing here used,—for want of logic, whereby he is himself deceived, and delight in sophistry, whereby he deceiveth others,—is exceedingly ridiculous; for none can be so blind but that, at first reading of the argument, he will see that he asserts and infers that in the conclusion, strengthening it with a new testimony, which was not once dreamed of in either of the premises; they speaking of the exaltation of Christ to be judge of all, which refers to his own glory; the conclusion, of his dying for all, which necessarily aims at and intends their good.

Were it not a noble design to banish all human learning, and to establish such a way of arguing in the room thereof? “*Hoc Ithacus velit et magno mercetur Atridae.*”

Thirdly, The force and sum of the argument is this:—“Christ died and rose again that he might be Lord and Judge of all; therefore, Christ died for all.” Now, ask what he means by dying for all, and the whole treatise answers that it is a paying a ransom for them all, that they might be saved. Now, how this can be extorted out of Christ’s dominion over all, with his power of judging all committed to him, which also is extended to the angels for whom he died not, let them that can understand it rejoice in their quick apprehension; I confess it flies my thoughts.

Fourthly, The manner of arguing being so vain, let us see a little whether there be any more weight in the matter of the argument. Many texts of Scripture are heaped up and distributed to the several propositions. In those out of Ps. 12:6; 18:30 (as I suppose it should be, not 130, as it is printed); 119:4, there is some mention of the precepts of God, with the purity of his word and perfection of his word; which that they are any thing to the business in hand I cannot perceive. That of II Tim. 2:6, added to the conclusion, is one of those places which are brought forth upon every occasion, as being the supposed foundation of the whole assertion, but causelessly, as hath been showed oft. [Among] those which are annexed to the minor proposition, [is] II Cor. 5:14, 15: as I have already cleared the mind of the Holy Ghost in it, and made it manifest that no such thing as universal redemption can be wrested from it, so unto this present argument it hath no reference at all, not containing any one syllable concerning the judging of Christ and his power over all, which was the medium insisted on. Phil. 2:7-11; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:16, mention, indeed, Christ’s exaltation, and his judging all at the last day; but because he shall judge all at the last day,



therefore he died for all, will ask more pains to prove than our adversary intends to take in this cause.

The weight, on the whole, must depend on Rom. 14:9, 11, 12; which being the only place that gives any colour to this kind of arguing, shall a little be considered. It is the lordship and dominion of Christ over all which the apostle, in that place, at large insists on and evidenceth to believers, that they might thereby be provoked to walk blameless, and without offence one towards another, knowing the terror of the Lord, and how that all men, even themselves and others, must come to appear before his judgment-seat, when it will be but a sad thing to have an account to make of scandals and offences.

Farther to ingraft and fasten this upon them, he declares unto them the way whereby the Lord Christ attained and came to this dominion and power of judging, all things being put under his feet, together with what design he had, as to this particular, in undertaking the office of mediation, there expressed by “dying, rising, and reviving,”—to wit, that he might have the execution of judging over all committed to him, that being part of the “glory set before him,” which caused him to “endure the cross and despise the shame,” Heb. 12:2.

So that all which here is intimated concerning the death of Christ is about the end, effects, and issue that it had towards himself, not any thing of what was his intention towards them for whom he died. To die for others does at least denote to die for their good, and in the Scripture always to die in their stead. Now, that any such thing can be hence deducted as that Christ died for all, because by his death himself made way for the enjoyment of that power whereby he is Lord over all, and will judge them all, casting the greatest part of men into hell by the sentence of his righteous judgment, I profess sincerely that I am no way able to perceive. If men will contend and have it so, that Christ must be said to die for all, because by his death and resurrection he attained the power of judging all, then I shall only leave with them these three things:—First, That innumerable souls shall be judged by him for not walking according to the light of nature left unto them, directing them to seek after the eternal power and Godhead of their Creator, without the least rumour of the gospel to direct them to a Redeemer once arriving at their ears, Rom. 2:12; and what good will it be for such that Christ so died for them? *Secondly*, That he also died for the devils, because he hath, by his death and resurrection, attained a power of judging them also. *Thirdly*, That the whole assertion is nothing to the business in hand; our inquiry being about them whom our Saviour intended to redeem and save by his blood; this return, about those he will one day judge: “quaestio est de alliis, responsio de cepis.”

**IV.** “That which the Scripture so sets forth in general for the world of mankind, as a truth for them all, that whosoever of the particulars so believe as to come to Christ and receive the same shall not perish, but have everlasting life, is certainly a truth to

be believed, Acts 5:20;

“But that God sent forth his Son to be the Saviour of the world is in Scripture so set forth in general for all men, that whosoever of the particulars so believe as they come to Christ and receive the same, they shall not perish, but have everlasting life, John 3:16-18, 36; 1:4, 11, 12:

“Therefore, that God sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world is a certain truth, I John 4:14.”

I hope no ingenuous man, that knows any thing of the controversy in hand, and to what head it is driven between us and our adversary, or is in any measure acquainted with the way of arguing, will expect that we should spend many words about such poor flourishes, vain repetitions, confused expressions, and illogical deductions and argumentations, as this pretended new argument (indeed the same with the first two, and with almost all that follow), will expect that I should cast away much time or pains about them. For my own part, I were no way able to undergo the tediousness of the review of such things as these, but that “eundum est quo trahunt fata ecclesiae.” Not, then, any more to trouble the reader with a declaration of that in particulars which he cannot but be sufficiently convinced of by a bare overlooking of these reasons,—namely, that this author is utterly ignorant of the way of reasoning, and knows not how tolerably to express his own conceptions, nor to infer one thing from another in any regular way, I answer,—First, That whatsoever the Scripture holds forth as a truth to be believed is certainly so, and to be embraced. Secondly, That the Scripture sets forth the death of Christ, to all whom the gospel is preached [unto], as an all-sufficient means for the bringing of sinners unto God, so as that whosoever believe it and come in unto him shall certainly be saved. Thirdly, What can be concluded hence, but that the death of Christ is of such infinite value as that it is able to save to the utmost every one to whom it is made known, if by true faith they obtain an interest therein and a right thereunto, we cannot perceive. This truth we have formerly confirmed by many testimonies of Scripture, and do conceive that this innate sufficiency of the death of Christ is the foundation of its promiscuous proposal to elect and reprobate. Fourthly, That the conclusion, if he would have the reason to have any colour or show of an argument, should at least include and express the whole and entire assertion contained in the proposition,—namely, “That Christ is so set forth to be the Saviour of the world, that whosoever of the particulars believe,” etc. And then it is by us fully granted, as making nothing at all for the universality of redemption, but only for the fulness and sufficiency of his satisfaction. Of the word *world* enough hath been said before.

V. “That which God will one day cause every man confess to the glory of God is certainly a truth, for God will own no lie for his glory, John 3:33; Rom. 3:3, 4;

“But God will one day cause every man to confess Jesus (by virtue of his death and ransom given) to be the Lord, even to the glory of God, Phil. 2:7-11; Isa. 45:22, 23; Rom. 14:9, 11, 12; Ps. 86:9:

“Therefore, it is certainly a truth that Jesus Christ hath given himself a ransom for all men, and hath thereby the right of lordship over them; and if any will not believe and come into this government, yet he abideth faithful, and cannot deny himself, but will one day bring them before him, and cause them to confess him Lord, to the glory of God; when they shall be denied by him, for denying him in the days of his patience, II Tim. 2:12-14; Matt. 10:32, 33; II Cor. 5: 10.”

**Ans.** The conclusion of this argument ought to be thus, and no otherwise, if you intend it should receive any strength from the premises: “Therefore, that Jesus Christ is the Lord, and to be confessed to the glory of God, is certainly a truth.” This, I say, is all the conclusion that this argument ought to have had, unless, instead of a syllogism, you intend three independent propositions, every one standing upon his own strength. That which is inserted concerning his giving himself a ransom for all, and that which follows of the conviction and condemnation of them who believe not nor obey the gospel, confirmed from II Cor. 5:10; II Tim. 2:12-14, is altogether heterogeneous to the business in hand. Now, this being the conclusion intended, if our author suppose that the deniers of universal redemption do question the truth of it. I wonder not at all why he left all other employment to fall a-writing controversies, having such apparent advantages against his adversaries as such small mistakes as this are able to furnish his conceit withal. But it may be an act of charity to part him and his own shadow,—so terribly at variance as here and in other places; wherefore, I beseech him to hear a word in his heat, and to take notice,—[First,] That though we do not ascribe a fruitless, ineffectual redemption to Jesus Christ, nor say that he loved any with that entire love which moved him to lay down his life, but his own church, and that all his elect are effectually redeemed by him, yet we deny not but that he shall also judge the reprobates,—namely, even all them that know not, that deny, that disobey and corrupt the truth of his gospel,—and that all shall be convinced that he is Lord of all at the last day: so that he may spare his pains of proving such unquestionable things. Something else is extremely desirous to follow, but indignation must be bridled. Secondly, For that clause in the second proposition, “By virtue of his death and ransom given,” we deny that it is anywhere in the Scripture once intimated that the ransom paid by Christ in his death for us was the cause of his exaltation to be Lord of all: it was his obedience to his Father in his death, and not his satisfaction for us, that is proposed as the antecedent of this exaltation; as is apparent, Phil. 2:7-11.

**VI.** “That which may be proved in and by the Scripture, both by plain sentences therein and necessary consequences imported thereby, without wresting, wrangling, adding to, taking from, or altering the sentences and words of Scripture, is a truth to be believed, Matt. 22:29, 32; Rom. 11:2, 5,6;

“But that Jesus Christ gave himself a ransom for all men, and by the grace of God tasted death for every man, may be proved in and by the Scripture, both by plain sentences therein and necessary consequences imported thereby, without wresting, wrangling, adding, or taking away, or altering the words and sentences, as is already showed, chap. 7, 13., which will be now ordered into several proofs:

“Therefore, that Jesus Christ gave himself for all men, and by the grace of God tasted death for every man, is a truth to be believed, Mark 1:15; 16:15, 18; I John 4:14.

**Ans.** First, The meaning of this argument is, that universal redemption may be proved by the Scripture; which, being the very thing in question, and the thesis undertaken to be proved, there is no reason why itself should make an argument, but only to make up a number: and, for my part, they should pass without any other answer, namely, that they are a number, but that those *who are the* number are to be considered.

Secondly, Concerning the argument itself (seeing it must go for one), we *say*,—*First*, To the first proposition, that laying aside the unnecessary expressions, the meaning of it I take to be this: “That which is affirmed in the Scripture, or may be deduced from thence by just consequence, following such ways of interpretation, of affirmation, and consequences, as by which the Spirit of God leadeth us into the knowledge of the truth, is certainly to be believed”; which is granted of all, though not proved by the places he quoteth, Matt. 22:29, 32; Rom. 11:2, 5, 6, and is the only foundation of that article of faith which you seek to oppose. *Secondly*, To the second, that Christ gave himself a ransom *uper panton* for all, and tasted death *uper panto* for all, is the very word of Scripture, and was never denied by any. The making of *all* to be all men and every man, in both the places aimed at, is your addition, and not the Scripture’s assertion. If you intend, then, to prove that Christ gave himself a ransom for all, and tasted death for all, you may save your labours; it is confessed on all hands, none ever denied it. But if you intend to prove those *all* to be all and every man, of all ages and kinds, elect and reprobate, and not all his children, all his elect, all his sheep, all his people, all the children given him of God,—some of all sorts, nations, tongues, and languages only, I will, by the Lord’s assistance, willingly join issue with you, or any man breathing, to search out the meaning of the word and mind of God in it; holding ourselves to the proportion of faith, essentiality of the doctrine of redemption, scope of the places where such assertions are, comparing them with other places, and the like ways,—labouring in all humility to find the mind of the Lord, according to his own appointment. And of the success of such a trial, laying aside such failings as will adhere to my personal weakness, I am, by the grace of God, exceedingly confident; having, by his goodness, received some strength and opportunity to search into and seriously to weigh whatever the most famous assertors of universal redemption, whether Lutherans or Arminians, have been able to say in this cause. For the present, I address myself to what is before me; only desiring the reader to observe, that the assertion to be proved is, “That Jesus Christ, according to the counsel and will of his

Father, suitable to his purpose of salvation in his own mind and intention, did, by his death and oblation, pay a ransom for all and every man, elect and reprobate,— both those that are saved and those that perish,—to redeem them from sin, death, and hell, [and] to recover salvation, life, and immortality for them; and not only for his elect, or church, chosen to an inheritance before the foundation of the world.” To confirm this we have divers proofs produced; which, by the Lord’s assistance, we shall consider in order.

**Proof 1 of argument 6.** “God so loved the world, that he gave his Son to be the Saviour of the world, I John 4:14; and sends his servant to bear witness of his Son, that all men through him might believe, John 1:4, 7; that whosoever believes on him might have everlasting life, John 3:16, 17. And he is willing that all should come to the knowledge of the truth, I Tim. 2:4, and be saved, I Tim. 1:15. Nor will he be wanting in the sufficiency of helpfulness to them, if, as light comes, they will suffer themselves to be wrought on and to receive it, Prov. 1:23; 8:4, 5. And is not this plain in Scripture?”

**Ans.** First, The main, yea, indeed, only thing to be proved, as we before observed, is, that those indefinite propositions which we find in the Scripture concerning the death of Christ are to be understood universally,—that the terms *all* and *world* do signify in this business, when they denote the object of the death of Christ, all and every man in the world. Unless this be done, all other labour is altogether useless and fruitless. Now, to this there is nothing at all urged in this pretended proof, but only a few ambiguous places barely recited, with a false collection from them or observation upon them, which they give no colour to.

Secondly, I John 4:14, God’s sending his Son to be the “Saviour of the world,” and his servant to testify it, is nothing but to be the Saviour of men living in the world; which his elect are. A hundred such places as these, so clearly interpreted as they are in other places, would make nought at all to the purpose. The next thing is from John 1:4, 7. Verse 4 is, that Christ was the “life of men”; which is most true, no life being to be had for any man but only in and through him. This not being at all to the question, the next words of verse 7[are], “That all men through him might believe”; which words being thrust in, to piece-up a sense with another fraction of Scripture, seem to have some weight, as though Christ were sent that all men through him might believe. A goodly show! seeming no less to make for universal redemption than the Scripture cited by the devil, after he had cut off part of *it*, did for our Saviour’s casting himself from the pinnacle of the temple. But if you cast aside the sophistry of the old serpent, the expression of this place is not a little available to invalidate the thesis sought to be maintained by it. The words are, “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe.” Now, who do you think is there meant by *di autou* “through him”? Is it Christ, think you, the light? or John, the witness of the light? Certainly John, as almost all expositors do agree, except certain among the Papists, and Grotius,— that

Ishmael. So the Syriac interpreter, reading, "By his hand or ministry." So the word infers; for we are not said to believe *dia Cristou* "by Christ," or, as it should be here, *dia tou foto* "by the light"; but *eis to fw* John 12:36, "in the light," not by it. And *epi ton Kurion* Acts 9:42, "believed in the Lord"; so also, Rom. 9:33, *Kai pas o pisteuwn ep' autw*, "Every one that believeth on him." So *env Cristw* in divers places, in him; but no mention of believing by him, which rather denotes the instrument of believing, as is the ministry of the word, than the object of faith, as Christ is. This being apparent, let us see what is affirmed of John, why he was sent "that all through him might believe." Now, this word all here hath all the qualifications which our author requireth for it, to be always esteemed a certain expression of a collective universality, that it is spoken of God, etc. And who, I pray you, were these all, that were intended to be brought to the faith by the ministry of John? Were they not only all those that lived throughout the world in his days, who preached (a few years) in Judea only, but also all those that were dead before his nativity, and that were born after his death, and shall be to the end of the world in any place under heaven? Let them that can believe it enjoy their persuasion, with this assurance that I will never be their rival; being fully persuaded that by *all men* here is meant only some of all sorts, to whom his word did come. So that the necessary sense of the word *all* here is wholly destructive to the proposition.

For what, thirdly, is urged from John 3:16, 17, that God so sent his Son, that "whosoever believeth on him might have everlasting life," as far as I know is not under debate, as to the sense of it, among Christians.

Fourthly, For God's willingness that all should be saved, from I Tim. 2:4 (to which a word is needlessly added to make a show, the text being quite to another purpose, from I Tim. 1:15), taking *all men* there for the universality of individuals, then I ask,—First, What act it is of God wherein this his willingness doth consist? Is it in the eternal purpose of his will that all should be saved? Why is it not accomplished? "Who hath resisted his will?" Is it in an antecedent desire that it should be so, though he fail in the end? Then is the blessed God most miserable, it being not in him to accomplish his just and holy desires. Is it some temporary act of his, whereby he hath declared himself unto them? Then, I say, Grant that salvation is only to be had in a Redeemer, in Jesus Christ, and give me an instance how God, in any act whatsoever, hath declared his mind and revealed himself to all men, of all times and places, concerning his willingness of their salvation by Jesus Christ, a Redeemer, and I will never more trouble you in this cause. *Secondly*, Doth this will equally respect the *all* intended, or doth it not? If it doth, why hath it not equal effects towards all? what reason can be assigned? If it doth not, whence shall that appear? There is nothing in the text to intimate any such diversity. For our parts, by *all men* we understand some of all sorts throughout the world, not doubting but that, to the equal reader, we have made it so appear from the context and circumstances of the place, the will of God there being that mentioned by our Saviour, John 6:40. That which follows in the close of this

proof, of God's "not being wanting in the sufficiency of helpfulness to them who, as light comes, suffer themselves to be wrought upon and receive it," is a poisonous sting in the tail of the serpent, wherein is couched the whole Pelagian poison of free-will and Popish merit of congruity, with Arminian sufficient grace, in its whole extent and universality; to neither of which there is the least witness given in the place produced.

The sum and meaning of the whole assertion is, that there is a universality of sufficient grace granted to all, even of grace subjective, enabling them to obedience, which receives addition, increase, degrees, and augmentation, according as they who have it do make use of what they presently enjoy; which is a position so contradictory to innumerable places of Scripture, so derogatory to the free grace of God, so destructive to the efficacy of it, such a clear exaltation of the old idol free-will into the throne of God, as any thing that the decaying estate of Christianity hath invented and broached. So far is it from being "plain and clear in Scripture," that it is universally repugnant to the whole dispensation of the new covenant revealed to us therein; which, if ever the Lord call me to, I hope very clearly to demonstrate: for the present, it belongs not immediately to the business in hand, and therefore I leave it, coming to —

**Proof 2.** "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world to save the world, John 12:47; to save sinners, I Tim. 1:15; to take away our sins, and destroy the works of the devil, I John 3:5, 8; to take away the sins of the world, John 1:29; and therefore died for all, II Cor. 5:14, 15; and gave himself a ransom for all, I Tim. 2:6; to save that which was lost, Matt. 18:11. And so his propitiation was made for the world, II Cor. 5:19; the whole world, I John 2:2. And all this is full and plain in Scripture."

**Ans.** Those places of this proof where there is mention of *all* or *world*, as John 12:47; 1:29; II Cor. 5:14, 15; I Tim. 2:6; II Cor. 5:19; I John 2:2, have been all already considered, and I am unwilling to trouble the reader with repetitions. See the places, and I doubt not but you will find that they are so far from giving any strength to the thing intended to be proved by him, that they much rather evert it. For the rest, I Tim. 1:15; Matt. 18:11; I John 3:5, 8, how any thing can be extracted from them to give colour to the universality of redemption I cannot see; what they make against it hath been declared. Pass we then to—

**Proof 3.** "God in Christ doth, in some means or other of his appointment, give some witness to all men of his mercy and goodness procured by Christ, Ps. 19:4; Rom. 10:18; Acts 14:17; and there-through, at one time or other, sendeth forth some stirrings of his Spirit, to move in and knock at the hearts of men, to invite them to repentance and seeking God, and so to lay hold on the grace and salvation offered: and this not in a show or pretence, but in truth and good-will, ready to bestow it on them. And this is all fully testified in Scripture, Gen. 6:3; Isa. 45:22; Acts 17:30, 31; John 1:19."

**Ans.** First, “Parvas habet spes Troja, si tales habet.” If the universality of redemption have need of such proofs as these, it hath indeed great need and little hope of supportment. *Universal vocation* is here asserted, to maintain *universal redemption*. “Manus manum fricat,” or rather, “Muli se mutuo scabiunt”; this being called in of ten-times to support the other; and they are both the two legs of that idol free-will, which is set up for men to worship, and when one stumbles the other steps forward to uphold the Babel. Of *universal vocation* (a gross figment) I shall not now treat; but only say, for the present, that it is true that God at all times, ever since the creation, hath called men to the knowledge of himself as the great Creator, in those things which of him, by the means of the visible creation, might be known, “even his eternal power and Godhead,” Rom. 1:19, 20; Ps. 19:1, 2; Acts 14:17. Secondly, That after the death of Christ, he did, by the preaching of the gospel extended far and wide, call home to himself the children of God, scattered abroad in the world, whereas his elect were before confined almost to one nation; giving a right to the gospel to be preached to “every creature,” Mark 16:15; Rom. 10:18; Isa. 45:22; Acts 17:30, 31. But, thirdly, That God should at all times, in all places, in all ages, grant means of grace or call to Christ as a redeemer, or to a participation of his mercy and goodness in him manifested, with strivings and motions of his Spirit for men to close with those invitations, is so gross and groundless an imagination, so opposite to God’s distinguishing mercy, so contradictory to express places of Scripture and the experience of all ages, as I wonder how any man hath the boldness to assert it, much more to produce it as a proof of an untruth more gross than itself. Were I not resolved to tie myself to the present controversy, I should not hold from producing some reasons to evert this fancy; something may be done hereafter, if the Lord prevent not. In the meantime, let the reader consult Ps. 147:19, 20; Matt. 11:25; 22:14; Acts 14:16; 16:7; Rom. 10:14, 15. We pass to—

**Proof 4.** “The Holy Ghost, that cometh from the Father and the Son, shall reprove the world of sin (even that part of the world that refuseth now to believe that they are under sin), because they believe not on Christ, and that it is their sin that they have not believed on him. And how could it be their sin not to believe in Christ, and they for that cause [be] under sin, if there were neither enough in the atonement made by Christ for them, nor truth in God’s offer of mercy to them, nor will nor power in the Spirit’s moving in any sort sufficient to have brought them to believe, at one time or other? And yet is this evident in Scripture, and shall be by the Holy Spirit, to be their great sin, that fastens all other sins on them, John 3:18, 19; 8:24; 12:48; 15:22, 24; 16:7-11.

**Ans.** The intention of this proof is, to show that men shall be condemned for their unbelief, for not believing in Christ; which, saith the author, cannot be unless three things be granted,—First, That there be enough in the atonement made by Christ for them. Secondly, That there be truth in God’s offer of mercy to them. Thirdly, That there be sufficient will and power given them by the Spirit, at some time or other, to



believe. Now, though I believe no man can perceive what may be concluded hence for the universality of redemption, yet I shall observe some few things: and to the first thing required do say, That if, by “Enough in the atonement for them,” you understand that the atonement, which was made for them, hath enough in it, we deny it; not because the atonement hath not enough in it for them, but because the atonement was not for them. If you mean that there is a sufficiency in the merit of Christ to save them if they should believe, we grant it, and affirm that this sufficiency is the chief ground of the proposing it unto them (understanding those to whom it is proposed, that is those to whom the gospel is preached). To the second, That there is truth, as in all the ways and words of God, so in his offer of mercy to whomsoever it is offered. If we take the command to believe, with the promise of life upon so doing, for an offer of mercy, there is an eternal truth in it; which is, that God will assuredly bestow life and salvation upon all believers, the proffers being immediately declarative of our duty; secondly, of the concatenation of faith and life, and not at all of God’s intention towards the particular soul to whom the proffer is made: “For who hath known the mind of the Lord, and who hath been his counsellor?” To the third, the Spirit’s giving will or power, I say,—First, That ye set the cart before the horse, placing will before power. *Secondly*, I deny that any internal assistance is required to render a man inexcusable for not believing, if he have the object of faith propounded to him, though of himself he have neither power nor will so to do, having lost both in Adam. *Thirdly*, How a man may have given him a will to believe, and yet not believe, I pray, declare the next controversy ye undertake. This being observed, I shall take leave to put this proof into such form as alone it is capable of, that the strength thereof may appear, and it is this: “If the Spirit shall convince all those of sin to whom the gospel is preached, that do not believe, then Christ died for all men, both those that have the gospel preached unto them and those that have not; but the first is true, for their unbelief is their great sin: ergo, Jesus Christ died for all.” Which, if any, is an argument “a baculo ad angulum,” “from the beam to the shuttle.” The places of Scripture, John 3:18, 19; 8:24; 12:48; 15:22, 24, prove that unbelief is a soul-condemning sin, and that for which they shall be condemned in whom it is privative, by their having the gospel preached to them. But *quid ad nos?*

One place is more urged, and consequently more abused, than the rest, and therefore must be a little cleared; it is John 16:7-11. The words are, “I will send the Comforter to you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not in me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.” First, It is uncertain whether our author understands the words of the Spirit in and with Christ at the last day, or in and with the ministry of the word now in the days of the gospel. If the first, he is foully mistaken; if the latter, then the conviction here meant intends only those to whom the gospel is preached,—and what that will advantage universal redemption, which compriseth all as well before as after the death

of Christ, I know not. But, secondly, It is uncertain whether he supposeth this conviction of the Spirit to attend the preaching of the gospel only, or else to consist in strivings and motions even in them who never hear the word of the gospel; if he mean the latter, we wait for a proof. Thirdly, It is uncertain whether he supposeth those thus convinced to be converted and brought to the faith by that conviction and that attending effectualness of grace, or no.

But omitting those things, that text being brought forth and insisted on, farther to manifest how little reason there was for its producing, I shall briefly open the meaning of the words. Our Saviour Christ intending, in this his last sermon, to comfort his apostles in their present sad condition, whereto they were brought by his telling them that he must leave them and go to his Father,—which sorrow and sadness he knew full well would be much increased when they should behold the vile, ignominious way whereby their Lord and Master should be taken from them, with all those reproaches and persecutions which would attend them so deprived of him,—bids them not be troubled, nor filled with sorrow and fear, for all this; assuring them that all this loss, shame, and reproach should be abundantly made up by what he would do for them and bestow upon them when his bodily presence should be removed from them. And as to that particular, which was the head of all, that he should be so vilely rejected and taken out of the world as a false teacher and seducer, he telleth them he will send them *allon paraklaton*, John 14:16, “another Comforter,” one that shall “*vicariam navare operam*,” as Tertul.,—be unto them in his stead, to fill them with all that consolation whereof by his absence they might be deprived; and not only so, but also to be present with them in other greater things than any he had as yet employed them about. This again he puts them in mind of, chap. 16:7. Now, *oJ paraklato*”, who is there promised, is properly “an advocate,”—that is, one that pleadeth the cause of a person that is guilty or accused before any tribunal,—and is opposed *twkathgorw*/Rev. 12:10; and so is this word by us translated, I John 2: 1. Christ, then, here telleth them, that as he will be their advocate with the Father, so he will send them an advocate to plead his cause, which they professed, with the world; that is, those men in the world, which had so vilely traduced and condemned him as a seducer, laying it as a reproach upon all his followers. This, doubtless, though in some respect it be continued to all ages in the ministry of the word, yet it principally intended the plentiful effusion of the Spirit upon the apostles at Pentecost, after the ascension of our Saviour; which also is made more apparent by the consideration of what he affirmeth that the advocate so sent shall do, namely,—1. “He shall reprove,” or rather, evidently, “convince, the world of sin, because they believed not on him”; which, surely, he abundantly did in that sermon of Peter, Acts 2, when the enemies themselves and haters of Christ were so reprov'd and convinced of their sin, that, upon the pressing urgency of that conviction, they cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?” Then was the world brought to a voluntary confession of the sin of murdering Jesus Christ. 2. He shall do the same of “righteousness, because he went to his

Father”;— not of its own righteousness, to reprove it for that, because it is not; but he shall convince the men of the world, who condemned Christ as a seducer, of his righteousness,—that he was not a blasphemer, as they pretended, but the Son of God, as himself witnessed: which they shall be forced to acknowledge when, by the effusion and pouring out of the Spirit upon his apostles, it shall be made evident that he is gone to and received of his Father, and owned by him, as the centurion did presently upon his death. 3. He shall “convince the world of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged”; manifesting to all those of whom he speaketh, that he whom they despised as the carpenter’s son, and bade come down from the cross if he could, is exalted to the right hand of God, having all judgment committed to him, having beforehand, in his death, judged, sentenced, and overcome Satan, the prince of this world, the chief instigator of his crucifiers, who had the power of death. And this I take to be the clear, genuine meaning of this place, not excluding the efficacy of the Spirit, working in the same manner, though not to the same degree, for the same end, in the majesty of the word, to the end of the world. But what this is to universal redemption, let them that can understand it keep it to themselves, for I am confident they will never be able to make it out to others.

**Proof 5.** “God hath testified, both by his word and his oath, that he would that his Son should so far save as to work a redemption for all men, and likewise that he should bring all to the knowledge of the truth, that there-through redemption might be wrought in and upon them, I Tim. 2:4, with John 3:17. So he willeth not, nor hath any pleasure in, the death of him (even the wicked) that dieth, but rather that he turn and live, Ezek. 18:23, 32; 33:11. And dare any of us say, the God of truth saith and sweareth that of which he hath no inward and serious meaning? O far be such blasphemy from us!”

**Ans.** First, This assertion, “That God testifieth, by his word and oath, that he would that Christ should so far save us,” etc., is a bold calling of God to witness that which he never affirmed, nor did it ever enter into his heart; for he hath revealed his will that Christ should save to the utmost them that come to him, and not save so far or so far, as is boldly, ignorantly, and falsely intimated. Let men beware of provoking God to their own confusion; he will not be a witness to the lie of false hearts. Secondly, “That Christ should so bring all to the knowledge of the truth, that there-through redemption might be wrought in and upon them,” is another bold corruption of the word, and false-witness-bearing in the name of God. Is it a small thing for you to weary and seduce men? will you weary our God also? Thirdly, For places of Scripture corrupted to the sense imposed: In John 3:17, God is said to “send his Son, that the world through him might be saved”; not be saved so far or so far, but saved “from their sins,” Matt. 1:21, and “to the uttermost,” Heb. 7:25: so that the world of God’s elect, who only are so saved, is only there to be understood, as hath been proved. In I Tim. 2:4, there is something of the will of God for the saving of all sorts of men, as hath been declared; nothing conducing to the bold assertion used in this place. Fourthly, To

those are added that of Ezek. 18:23, that God hath no “pleasure at all that the wicked should die”; and, verse 32, “no pleasure in the death of him that dieth.” Now, though these texts are exceeding useless to the business in hand, and might probably have some colour of universal vocation, but none possibly of universal redemption, there being no mention of Christ or his death in the place from whence they are cited; yet because our adversaries are frequently knitting knots from this place to inveigle and hamper the simple, I shall add some few observations upon it to clear the meaning of the text, and demonstrate how it belongs nothing at all to the business in hand.

First, then, let us consider to whom and of whom these words are spoken. Is it to and of all men, or only to the house of Israel? Doubtless these last; they are only intended, they only are spoken to: “Hear now, O house of Israel,” verse 25. Now, will it follow that because God saith he delights not in the death of the house of Israel, to whom he revealed his mind, and required their repentance and conversion, that therefore he saith so of all, even those to whom he never revealed his will by such ways as to them, nor called to repentance, Ps. 147:19, 20? So that the very ground-work of the whole conclusion is removed by this first observation. Secondly, “God willeth not the death of a sinner,” is either, “God purposeth and determineth he shall not die,” or, “God commandeth that he shall do those things wherein he may live.” If the first, why are they not all saved? why do sinners die? for there is an immutability in the counsel of God, Heb. 6:17; “His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure,” Isa. 46:10. If the latter way, by commanding, then the sense is, that the Lord commandeth that those whom he calleth should do their duty, that they may not die (although he knows that this they cannot do without his assistance); now, what this makes to general redemption, I know not. Thirdly, To add no more, this whole place, with the scope, aim, and intention of the prophet in it, is miserably mistaken by our adversaries, and wrested to that whereof there is not the least thought in the text. The words are a part of the answer which the Lord gives to the repining Jews, concerning their proverb, “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” Now, about what did they use this proverb? Why, “concerning the land of Israel,” verse 2, the land of their habitation, which was laid waste by the sword (as they affirmed) for the sins of their fathers, themselves being innocent. So that it is about God’s temporal judgments in overturning their land and nation that this dispute is; wherein the Lord justifieth himself by declaring the equity of these judgments by reason of their sins, even those sins for which the land devoured them and spewed them out; telling them that his justice is, that for such things they should surely die, their blood should be upon them, verse 13,—they shall be slain with the sword, and cut off by those judgments which they had deserved: not that the shedding of their blood and casting out of their carcasses was a thing in itself so pleasurable or desirable to him as that he did it only for his own will, for let them leave their abominations, and try whether their lives were not prolonged in peace. This being the plain, genuine scope and meaning of this place, at the first view presenting itself to every unprejudiced man, I

have often admired how so many strange conclusions for a general purpose of showing mercy to all, universal vocation and redemption, have been wrested from it; as also, how it came to be produced to give colour to that heap of blasphemy which our author calleth his fifth proof.

**Proof 6.** “The very words and phrases used by the Holy Ghost in Scripture, speaking of the death of Christ, and the ransom and propitiation, to whom it belongs, and who may seek it, and in believing find life, implies no less than all men. As to instance: “All nations,” Matt. 28:19, 20; “the ends of the earth,” Isa. 45:22; 49:6; “every creature,” Mark 16:15; “all,” II Cor. 5:14, 15; I Tim. 2:6; “every man,” Heb. 2:9; “the world,” John 3:16, 17; II Cor. 5:19; “the whole world,” I John 2:2; “that which was lost,” Luke 19:10; “sinners,” Matt. 9:13; “unjust,” I Peter 3:18; “ungodly,” Rom. 5:6; and that whosoever of these repent and believe in Christ shall receive his grace, John 3: 16, 18; Acts 10:43. Now, all these so often and indifferently used, were it not pride and error to devise glosses to restrain the sense the Scripture holdeth forth, so full and large for all men?”

**Ans.** First, This argument, taken from the words and phrases whereby the object of the death of Christ is in the Scripture expressed, is that which filleth up both pages of this book, being repeated, and most of the places here cited urged, a hundred times over; and yet it is so far from being any pressing argument, as that indeed it is nothing but a bare naked repetition of the thing in debate, concluding according to his own persuasion; for the main *quæstio* between us is, whether the words *all* and *the world* be to be taken universally? He saith so, and he saith so; which is all the proof we have, repeating over the thing to be proved instead of a proof. Secondly, For those places which affirm Christ to die for “sinners,” “ungodly,” “that which was lost,” etc.,—as Luke 19:10; Matt. 9:13; I Peter 3:18; Rom. 5:6,—I have before declared how exceedingly unserviceable they are to universal redemption. Thirdly, For those places where the words “all,” “every man,” “the world,” “the whole world,” are used, we have had them over and over; and they likewise have been considered. Fourthly, For those expressions of “all nations,” Matt. 28:19, 20, “every creature,” Mark 16:15, used concerning them to whom the gospel is preached, I say,—First, That they do not comprise all individuals, nay, not all nations at all times, much less all singular persons of all nations if we look upon the accomplishment and fulfilling of that command; neither, *de facto*, was the gospel ever so preached to all, although there by a fitness and a suitableness in the dispensation thereof to be so preached to all, as was declared. *Secondly*, The command of preaching the gospel to all doth not in the least manner prove that Christ died with an intention to redeem all; but it hath other grounds and other ends, as hath been manifested. *Thirdly*, That the ransom belongs to all to whom it is proposed we deny; there be other ends of that proposal; and Christ will say to some of them that he never knew them: therefore, certainly, he did not lay down his life for them. *Fourthly*, “The ends of the earth,” Isa. 45:22, are those that look up to God from all parts, and are saved; which surely are not all and every one. And Christ being given to be a “salvation unto the end of the earth,” chap. 49:6, is to

do no more among the Gentiles than God promiseth in the same place that he shall do for his own people,—even “gather the preserved of Israel”; so shall he bear forth the salvation of God, and gather the preserved remnant of his elect to the ends of the earth.

And now, I hope, I need not mind the intelligent reader that the author of these collections could not have invented a more ready way for the ruin of the thesis which he seeks to maintain than by producing those places of Scripture last recounted for the confirmation of it, granting that *all* and *the world* are no more than “all the ends of the earth,” mentioned in Isa. 45:22; 49:6; it being evident beyond denial that by these expressions, in both these places, only the elect of God and believers are clearly intimated: so that, interpreting the one by the other, in those places where *all* and *the world* are spoken of, those only are intended. “If pride and error” had not taken full possession of the minds of men, they could not so far deny their own sense and reason as to contradict themselves and the plain texts of Scripture for the maintenance of their false and corrupt opinions.

**Proof 7.** “That whereas there are certain high and peculiar privileges of the Spirit contained in the New Testament, sealed by the blood of Christ, which belong not to all men, but only to the saints, the called and chosen of the Lord, and when they are alone distinctly mentioned, they are even so spoken of as belonging to them only, Matt. 13:11; John 14:17, 21-23; 16:13-15; 17:19, 20; Acts 2:38, 39; I Cor. 2:9, 14; Heb. 9:15; 8; I Peter 2:3, 9; yet many of these peculiar privileges are so spoken of as joined together with the ransom and propitiation, which belongs to all. Then are they not spoken of in such a restraining and exclusive manner, or with such appropriating words, but so, and with such words, as room is left to apply the ransom to all men, in speech; and withal, so hold out the privileges to them that believe that are proper to them, that they may both have their comfort and especial hope, and also hold forth the ransom and keep open the door for others, in belief and receipt of the propitiation, to come in and partake with them. And so it is said for his “sheep,” and for “many”; but nowhere but only for his sheep, or but only for many: which is a strong proof of the ransom for all men, as is shown, chap. 3, 10.”

**Ans.** The strength of this proof, as to the business in hand, is wholly hid from me; neither do I perceive how it may receive any such tolerable application as to deserve the name of a proof, as to the main thesis intended to be maintained. The force which it hath is in an observation which, if it hath any sense, is neither true nor once attempted to be made good; for,—First, That there are peculiar high privileges belonging to the saints and called of God is a thing which needs no proof. Amongst these is the death of Christ for them, not as saints, but as elect, which, by the benefit of that death and blood-shedding, are to be made saints, and accounted to be the holy ones of God: for “he redeemed his church with his own blood,” Acts 20:28; he “loved and gave himself for it,” Eph. 5:25; even “us,” Titus 2:14;—even as divers of those

[privileges] here intimated are expressly assigned unto them, as elect, such as those, John 17:19, 20; amongst which also, as in the same rank with them, is reckoned Jesus' "sanctifying himself for their sakes," that is to be an oblation, verse 19. In a word, all peculiar saving privileges belong only to God's elect, purchased for them, and them alone, by the blood of Jesus Christ, Eph. 1:3, 4. Secondly, For the other part of the observation, that where mention is made of these together with the ransom, there is room left to extend the ransom to all, I answer,—First, This is said, indeed, but not once attempted to be proved. We have but small cause to believe the author, in any thing of this importance, upon his bare word. *Secondly*, For the "leaving of room for the application," I perceive that if it be not left, ye will make it, though ye justle the true sense of the Scripture quite out of its place. *Thirdly*, I have already showed that where "many" are mentioned, the ransom only (as ye use to speak) is expressed, as also where "sheep" are spoken of; the like is said where the word "all" is used;—so that there is not the least difference. *Fourthly*, in divers places the ransom of Christ and those other peculiar privileges (which indeed are fruits of it) are so united together, as it is impossible to apply the latter to *some* and the other to *all*, being all of them restrained to his saved ones only, Rev. 5:9, 10. The redemption of his people by the ransom of his blood, and their making kings and priests, are united, and no room left for the extending of the ransom to all, it being punctually assigned to those saved crowned ones, distinguished from the rest of the nations and languages from among whom they were taken, who were passed by in the payment of the ransom; which is directly opposite to all the sense which I can observe in this observation. *Fifthly*, Of "sheep, and sheep only," enough before.

**Proof 8.** "The restoration wrought by Christ in his own body for mankind is set forth in Scripture to be as large and full for all men, and of as much force, as the fall of the first Adam, by and in himself, for all men; in which respect the first Adam is said to have been a figure of Christ, the second Adam, Rom. 3:22-25; 5:12, 14, 18; I Cor. 15:21, 22, 45-47: as is before shown, chap. 8."

**Ans.** First, It is most true that Christ and Adam are compared together (in respect of the righteousness of the one, communicated to them that are his, and the disobedience and transgression of the other, in like manner communicated to all them that are of him) in some of the places here mentioned, as Rom. 5:12, 18. But evidently the comparison is not instituted between the righteousness of Christ and the disobedience of Adam *extensively*, in respect of the *object*, but *intensively*, in respect of the *efficacy* of the one and the other; the apostle asserting the effectualness of the righteousness of Christ unto justification, to answer the prevalency of the sin of Adam unto condemnation,—that even as the transgression of Adam brought a guilt of condemnation upon all them that are his natural seed, so the righteousness of Christ procured the free gift of grace unto justification towards all them that are his, his spiritual seed, that were the children given unto him of his Father.

Secondly, I Cor. 15:21, 22, speaketh of the resurrection from the dead, and that only of believers; for though he mentions them all, verse 22, “In Christ shall all be made alive,” yet, verse 23, he plainly interprets those *all* to be all that are “Christ’s”: not but that the other dead shall rise also, but that it is a resurrection to glory, by virtue of the resurrection of Christ, which the apostle here treats of; which certainly all shall not have.

Thirdly, The comparison between Christ and Adam, verse 45 (to speak nothing of the various reading of that place), is only in respect of the principles which they had, and were intrusted withal to communicate to others: “Adam a living soul,” or a “living creature”; there was in him a principle of life natural, to be communicated to his posterity;—“Christ a quickening Spirit,” giving life, grace, and spirit to his. And here I would desire that it may be observed, that all the comparison that is anywhere instituted between Christ and Adam still comes to one head, and aims at one thing,—namely, that they were as two common stocks or roots, communicating to them that are ingrafted into them (that is, into Adam *naturally*, by generation; into Christ *spiritually*, by regeneration) that wherewith they were replenished;—Adam, sin, guilt, and disobedience; Christ, righteousness, peace, and justification. [As] for the number of those that do thus receive these things from one and the other, the consideration of it is exceedingly alien from the scope, aim, and end of the apostle in the places where the comparison is instituted.

Fourthly, It is true, in Rom. 3:23, it is said, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” which the apostle had at large proved before, thereby to manifest that there was no salvation to be attained but only by Jesus Christ; but if ye will ask to whom this righteousness of Christ is extended, and that redemption which is in his blood, he telleth you plainly, it is “unto all and upon all them that believe,” verse 22, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, “for there is no difference.”

**Proof 9.** “The Lord Jesus Christ hath sent and commanded his servants to preach the gospel to all nations, to every creature, and to tell them withal that whoever believeth and is baptized shall be saved, Matt. 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15, 16: and his servants have so preached to all, II Cor. 5:19; Rom. 10:13, 18. And our Lord Jesus Christ will make it to appear one day that he hath not sent his servants upon a false errand, nor put a lie in their mouths, nor wished them to dissemble, in offering that to all which they knew belonged but to some, even to fewest of all, but to speak truth, Isa. 44:26; 61:8; I Tim. 1:12.”

**Ans.** The strength of this proof is not easily apparent, nor manifest wherein it lieth, in what part or words of it: for,—First, It is true, Christ commanded his apostles to “preach the gospel to all nations and every creature,”—to tell them “that whosoever believeth shall be saved,” Matt. 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15, 16; that is, without distinction of persons or nations, to call all men to whom the providence of God should direct



them, and from whom the Spirit of God should not withhold them (as from them, Acts 16:6, 7), warning them to repent and believe the gospel. Secondly, It is also true, that, in obedience unto this command, his servants did beseech men so to do, and to be reconciled unto God, even all over the nations, without distinction of any, but where they were forbidden, as above, labouring to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth, and not to tie it up to the confines of Jewry, II Cor. 5:19, 20; Rom. 10:18. Most certain also it is, that the Lord Jesus Christ sent not his servants with a lie, to offer that to all which belonged only to some, but to speak the truth; of which there needs no proof. But now, what can be concluded from hence for universal redemption is not easily discernible.

Perhaps some will say it is in this, that if Christ did not die for all to whom the word is preached, then how can they that preach it offer Christ to all? A poor proof, God wot! For,—First, The gospel was never preached to all and every one, nor is there any such thing affirmed in the places cited; and ye are to prove that Christ died for all, as well those that never hear of the gospel as those that do. Secondly, What do the preachers of the gospel offer to them to whom the word is preached? Is it not life and salvation through Christ, upon the condition of faith and repentance? And doth not the truth of this offer consist in this, that every one that believeth shall be saved? And doth not that truth stand firm and inviolable, so long as there is an all-sufficiency in Christ to save all that come unto him? Hath God intrusted the ministers of the gospel with his intentions, purpose, and counsels, or with his commands and promises? Is it a lie, to tell men that he that believeth shall be saved, though Christ did not die for some of them? Such proofs as these had need be well proved themselves, or they will conclude the thing intended very weakly.

**Proof 10.** “The Lord willeth believers to pray even for the unjust and their persecutors, Matt. 5:44, 48; Luke 6:28; yea, even ‘for all men’; yea, even ‘for kings and all in authority,’ when few in authority loved Christianity. Yet he said not, some of that sort, but, ‘For all in authority’; and that on this ground,—it is good in the sight of God, ‘who will have all men saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth,’ Luke 10:5; I Tim. 2:1-4. Surely there is a door of life opened for all men, II Tim. 1: 10; for God hath not said to the seed of Israel, ‘Seek ye me in vain,’ Isa. 44:19. He will not have his children pray for vain things.”

**Ans.** The strength of this proof lieth in supposing,—First, That *indefinite* assertions are to be interpreted as equivalent to *universal*; which is false, Rom. 4, 5. Secondly, That by “all,” I Tim. 2:1, is not meant all sorts of men, and the word *all* is not to be taken distributively, when the apostle, by an enumeration of divers sorts, gives an evident demonstration of the distribution intended. Thirdly, That we are bound to pray for every singular man that he may be saved; which,—I. We have no warrant, rule, precept, or example for; 2. It is contrary to the apostolical precept, I John 5:16; 3. To our Saviour’s example, John 17:9; 4. To the counsel and purpose of God, in the

general made known to us, Rom. 9:11, 12, 15; 11:7, where evidently our praying for all is but for all sorts of men, excluding none, and that those may believe who are ordained to eternal life. Fourthly, It supposeth that there is nothing else that we are to pray for men but that they may be saved by Christ; which is apparently false, Jer. 29:7. Fifthly, That our ground of praying for any is an assurance that Christ died for them in particular; which is not true, Acts 8:22, 24. Sixthly, It most splendidly takes for granted that our duty is to be conformed to God's secret mind, his purpose and counsel. Until every one of these supposals be made good, (which never a one of them will be very suddenly), there is no help in this proof nor strength in this argument, "We must pray for all; therefore God intends by the death of Christ to save all and every one," its sophistry and weakness being apparent. From our duty to God's purpose is no good conclusion, though from his command to our duty be most certain. . . .

And these are the proofs which this author calls "*plain* and according to Scripture," being a recapitulation of almost all that he hath said in his whole book; at least, for the argumentative part thereof, there is not any thing of weight omitted: and therefore this chapter I fixed on to return a full and punctual answer unto. Now, whether the thing intended to be proved, namely, *The paying of a ransom by Christ for all and every man, be plainly, clearly, and evidently* from the Scripture *confirmed*, as he would bear us in hand; or whether all this heap of words, called arguments, reasons, and proofs, be not, for their manner of expression, obscure, uncouth, and oftentimes unintelligible,—for their way of inference, childish, weak, and ridiculous,—in their allegations and interpretations of Scripture, perverse, violent, mistaken, through ignorance, heedlessness, and corruption of judgment, in direct opposition to the mind and will of God revealed therein,— is left to the judgment of the Christian reader that shall peruse them, with the answers annexed.

## **A DEFENSE OF PARTICULAR REDEMPTION**

### **Wherein the Doctrine of the Late Mr. Fuller Relative to the Atonement of Christ Is Tried by the Word of God.**

William Rushton  
Liverpool, England  
1831

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## **PREFACE**

Actuated by a desire to benefit the cause of truth, I publish and send forth this edition of Rushton's "Defence of Particular Redemption," believing that the scarcity of former editions and the recurrence of questions therein discussed, render its republication needful.

Among the many who have risen in the Old Baptist church, who became dissatisfied with its doctrine and practice and sought to change them to suit the notions of the world and render that ancient church more popular, none have succeeded in gaining a greater name than Andrew Fuller. He was born in 1754 and died in 1815. At the early age of seventeen he began to consider the expediency of making a change in the tactics of the Baptists, and at the age of twenty-one he wrote an essay entitled "The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation," which was published in 1782. His object seems to have been to introduce the custom of offering salvation to all sinners without distinction, maintaining that the prophets, Christ, and his Apostles gave unlimited invitations to unconverted hearers of the gospel. As a reason for such indiscriminate exhortations, he argued that the atonement was general in its nature but special in its application, denying that Christ made a vicarious offering when he laid down his life. These views he advocated in a work entitled, "Dialogues, Letters, and Essays," to which Mr. Rushton replied in the form of letters as given in this work.

Mr. Fuller, in connection with Mr. Carey and others, founded the first Missionary Society ever organized—"Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel amongst the Heathen." This Society was organized at Kettering, England, October 2, 1792, and thus was introduced a departure from the apostolic practice that formed a wedge to sever the New School Baptists from the Old Order of Baptists.

Unscriptural practices usually result from false doctrines. Of the false doctrines that led to the introduction of this new and unscriptural move in the Baptist church, the doctrine of an indefinite atonement was, perhaps, the most prominent. That doctrine has always been a cardinal principle in the Arminian faith, and the arguments of Mr. Fuller are as strong as any that have ever been advanced to support that doctrine. As the issue is one that continues to mark an important distinction between the doctrine of the Apostolic church and that of the churches of the world, Mr. Rushton's letters will ever continue to be of great importance to the household of faith.

JOHN R. DAILY.

LURAY, VA., June 23, 1904.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

I think it right to inform the reader that, some time ago, I was accidentally engaged in a verbal controversy on the nature and extent of the atonement of Christ, with a Baptist minister of some celebrity, residing in Northamptonshire. At parting he earnestly entreated me to read Mr. Fuller's "Dialogues, Letters, and Essays," which I promised to do. No sooner had I read and pondered that work, than the fallacy of Mr. Fuller's doctrine, which my friend had espoused, appeared to me in a more striking manner than it had ever done before; and I felt assured that, with a little labor, the speciousness and deceitfulness of Mr. Fuller's views might be fully made manifest. With this conviction, I determined to attempt a refutation of them, and to publish it in the following Letters.

It is more than possible that some weak and inconsiderate persons may feel offended at the free use I have made of Mr. Fuller's name, because being now deceased he cannot answer for himself. Although I have no fear of any objection of this nature from persons who are acquainted with literary affairs, yet, for the sake of the weak, and because of the captious, I offer the following apology:—

1. The subsequent Letters are not directed against Mr. Fuller, but against the *doctrine* now prevailing in the Baptist churches.

2. It is impossible effectually to oppose this doctrine, without reference to some acknowledged writings in which it is stated and defended; and these acknowledged writings are Mr. Fuller's "Dialogues," &c. It is true there are some living authors who have asserted the same things; but these writers are inferior to Mr. Fuller in celebrity and polemical talents. To encounter them, therefore, would not be to allow my opponents the full exercise of their strength: neither would it become the great cause of truth to engage the subaltern, while the champion is defying the advocates of particular redemption, and crying out, "*Choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me.*"

3. When an author publishes on controverted subjects, he does so, not only for the generation living at the time, but for the succeeding generations. Though he dies as a man, he still lives as an author, and teaches and speaks as long as his writings are read. It is right, therefore, to examine the theories and doctrines of an author, whether he be living or dead. What man of sense would reflect on President Edwards, for publishing his confutation of Dr. Whitby, after the Doctor's death? Or who would charge Mr. Fuller with unfairness, for publishing his "Strictures on Sandemanianism," long after Mr. Robert Sandeman had returned to his original dust?

4. But if, notwithstanding this explanation, any Baptist minister or any other who understands the controversy, and who has espoused Mr. Fuller's views, feels hurt that Mr. Fuller's name has thus been introduced, let such a one take his pen, and as he reads, let him erase the name of Mr. Fuller, and substitute his own; and let him know

that he is the man against whom I am writing, and not the deceased Mr. Fuller.

If, however, the reader be one of those favored individuals whom the Father hath drawn to Jesus, he hath already been taught so much of the infinite evil of sin, and the vanity of all created things, as to loathe himself and his own righteousness, and to value nothing in comparison with truth. And in those happy moments, when he is favored with a glimpse of the exalted Lamb, whose transcendent glory fills heaven and earth, he looks coolly upon human authority, human wisdom, and human worthiness. Such a one will not be offended when the authority of celebrated names is set at nought that truth may be maintained; but rather he has learned, in some degree, to "cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

The only persons to whom I would offer any thing like the shadow of an apology, for the polemical style of the following Letters, are the afflicted, broken-hearted children of Zion. I know that disputings gall and distress a tender mind. But how can we contend earnestly for the faith, without disputation? Were not our Lord and his apostles often engaged in reasoning with the opponents of truth? I hope, therefore, that the lambs of the flock will not be offended, especially when they reflect that the things contended for in the following pages are of the highest importance—things with which the honor of God, and the glory of a dear Redeemer are concerned; and which are absolutely necessary to the strengthening of their own weak hands, and confirming of their feeble knees. It is now high time for the friends of truth to speak boldly. Error no longer hides its hateful head, but struts abroad before the sun, and scornfully defies the advocates of sovereign grace.

Although I have, in the following letters, boldly and unequivocally asserted what I believe to be the truth, and although I have endeavored to expose the deceitfulness of the opposite error, I hope the reader will find nothing inconsistent with the meekness and gentleness of Christ. That I have expressed indignation at iniquity I acknowledge, but have not yet learned that this is inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel, or contrary to the example of our Lord. Throughout the whole I have studied brevity and perspicuity; and I have not been unmindful of the well-known advice of the poet, which all controversial writers should observe:—

*"Quidquid praecipies esto brevis, ut cito dicta  
Percipiant animi dociles, teneantque fideles."*

Into the hands of Him whose servant I profess to be, I confidentially commit my work, notwithstanding the sinfulness and imperfection which adhere to it. I shall think myself more than remunerated for my labor, if he make it useful to any of his ransomed ones. But should it please him that it die as soon as it is born, and remain in silence forever, I trust I shall be content. For I am well persuaded that the Lord will

defend his own immortal truths in his own way and in his own time, though error may rejoice in a temporary triumph, and though truth may be "fallen in the street."

WILLIAM RUSHTON, JUN.  
Liverpool, 1831.

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## LETTER I.

DEAR SIR:— Agreeably to your earnest request, I have carefully read Mr. Fuller's publication, entitled "Dialogues, Letters, and Essays." Although I have long been acquainted with his sentiments generally, and have attentively perused some of his writings, yet I know not how long I should have postponed reading the "Dialogues" had it not been for your earnest solicitations. I consider myself, therefore, indebted to no small degree to you for the pleasure and advantage I have derived from some parts of that work. In the first and second parts, particularly, Mr. Fuller discovers that strength of mind, and that depth of originality of thought which characterize him as a polemic writer: he has also defended many truths, and triumphantly refuted some dangerous error. Here and there, indeed even in the first two parts, he touches upon certain points, on which you will not expect me to agree with him; but it is in the third part wherein he explains himself more particularly on all important subjects which engaged our attention when I had the pleasure of a personal interview with you, and on which, more especially, I find reason to differ from him.

It is well known that a particular truth is often more effectually opposed by the introduction of principles inconsistent with it, than by an open attack upon that truth. Now, if I mistake not, Arminian principles have been more effectually introduced into the churches, in this manner, by Mr. Fuller's writings, than if he had openly impugned the doctrines of grace, and employed the whole force of his able pen against election, efficacious grace and final perseverance. Those he professed to maintain inviolably; yet, by insisting on faith in Christ as a moral duty, comprehended radically in the law, —by his view of moral inability,—but especially by the sentiments he has advanced relative to the Atonement of the Son of God, he has furnished a system for those who are predisposed towards Arminianism; and this system has so far prevailed in the churches, that now we hear almost as little of finished salvation as if we were Arminians; as little of the earnest and the witness of the Spirit, as if we were Sandemanians.

In all religious error, there is some false doctrine in particular which constitutes its basis, and against which some one branch of divine truth, more than another, stands as a bulwark. In Mr. Fuller's controversy with his Baptist brethren, the *Atonement of Christ* is the cardinal point. I am not therefore surprised to find him labor so earnestly to explain away the doctrine of Particular Redemption, and by all means to establish

his own views of the atonement, as that which constitutes the very basis of his system. However important the controversy about faith and universal invitations may be, it sinks into insignificance when compared with that of the atonement. He who is unsound in this, cannot be sound in any other doctrine of grace. But when the death of Christ is known in its vicarious nature, its certain efficacy, and its discriminating character, it affords the surest defence of sovereign grace against all the attacks of Neonomian, Arminian and Semi-pelagian errors. To this important point our conversation was principally directed, when, in our friendly interview, you defended and I opposed Mr. Fuller's sentiments; and to this fundamental point would I again solicit your attention in an epistolary form. I am desirous of doing this not only because his views almost universally prevail in the churches, but also because in all the replies to Mr. Fuller's that I have seen [I except Mr. Booth's Sermon on "Divine Justice," &c., which, with the Appendix, may be considered a kind of caveat against Mr. Fuller's notions; but this work does not profess to be a full confutation of them nor is Mr. Fuller's name so much as mention[ed] either in the Sermon or the Appendix.] this subject has been almost neglected; whereas, it is his fundamental and almost vulnerable point. I do not intend to touch upon the other subjects in dispute, but shall confine myself entirely to the doctrine chiefly treated of in the third part of "Dialogues," that is, the doctrine of the ATONEMENT. In doing this, I shall carefully inquire what are Mr. Fuller's views on the subject. I shall take care not to misunderstand them. I shall closely analyze them, and compare them with the Scriptures of eternal truth. It will be necessary, then, in the first place, to attend to what Mr. Fuller has advanced on this great article of Christian doctrine, by quoting his own words:

"If God requires less than the real demerit of sin for an atonement, then there could be no satisfaction made to divine justice by such an atonement. And though it would be improper to represent the great work of redemption as a kind of commercial transaction betwixt a creditor and his debtor, yet the satisfaction of justice in all cases of offence, requires *that there be an expression of the displeasure of the offended, against the offender, equal to what the offense is in reality.* The end of punishment is not the misery of the offender, but the general good. Its design is express displeasure against disobedience; and where punishment is inflicted according to the desert of the offence, there justice is satisfied. In other words, such an expression of displeasure is uttered by the lawgiver, that in it every subject of his empire may read what are his views of the evil which he forbids, and what are his determinations in regard to its punishment. If sinners had received in their own persons the reward of their iniquity, justice would in that way have been satisfied; and if the infinitely blessed God hath devised an expedient for our salvation, though he may not confine himself to a *literal* conformity to those rules of justice which he hath marked out for us, yet he will certainly not depart from the *spirit* of them. Justice must be satisfied even in that way. An atonement made by a substitute, in any case, requires that the *same end* be

answered by it, as if the guilty party had actually suffered. It is necessary that the displeasure of the offended should be expressed in as strong terms, or in a way adapted to make as strong impression upon all concerned, as if the law had taken its course: otherwise *atonement* is not made, and mercy triumphs at the expense of righteousness."

The following quotations are taken from the third part, wherein Mr. Fuller has introduced his views in the form of a dialogue between Peter, James and John. James is introduced as expressing Mr. Fuller's sentiments. When asked by Peter his views of imputation, he replies:

"To impute, signifies in general to *charge, reckon or place to account*, according to the different objects to which it is applied. This word, like many others, has a *proper* and an *improper*, or figurative, meaning. 1st. It is applied to the *charging, reckoning, or placing to the account* of persons and things, THAT WHICH PROPERLY BELONGS TO THEM. This I consider as its *proper* meaning. In this sense the word is used in the following passages:—'Eli thought she (Hannah) had been drunken,' &c, &c. Secondly, it is applied to the *charging, reckoning, or placing to the account* of persons and things THAT WHICH DOES NOT PROPERLY BELONG TO THEM, AS THOUGH IT DID. This I consider as its *improper* or figurative meaning. \* \* It is in this latter sense that I understand the term when applied to justification. \* \* It is thus also that I understand the imputation of sin to Christ. He was accounted, in the divine administration, *as if he were, or had been*, the sinner, that those who believe in him might be accounted *as if they were or had been*, righteous."

"PETER. Do you consider Christ as having been *punished, really and properly PUNISHED?*"

"JAMES. I should think I do not. But what do you mean by punishment?"

"PETER. An innocent person may *suffer*, but, properly speaking, he cannot be punished. Punishment necessarily supposes *criminality*."

"JAMES. Just so; and therefore as I do not believe that Jesus was in any sense criminal, I cannot say he was really and properly punished."

"If eternal life, though it be a reward, and we partake of it, yet is really and properly the reward of Christ's obedience, and not ours, then the sufferings of Christ, though they were a punishment, and he sustained it, yet were really and properly the punishment of our sins, and not his," &c.

"A voluntary obligation to endure the punishment of another is not guilt, any more than the consequent exemption from obligation in the offender, is innocence. Both guilt and innocence are transferable in their *effects*, but in *themselves*, they are



untransferable. To say that Christ was *reckoned* or counted in the divine administration *as if he were* the sinner, and came under an obligation to endure the curse or punishment due to our sins, is one thing; but to say he deserved that curse, is another. Guilt, strictly speaking, is the inseparable attendant of transgression, and could never therefore for one moment occupy the conscience of Christ."

"That the Scriptures represent believers as receiving only the benefits of the *effects* of Christ's righteousness in justification, is a remark of which I am not able to see the fallacy: nor does it follow that his obedience itself is not *imputed* to them. Obedience itself may be, and is imputed, while its effects only are *imparted*, and consequently *received*. Neither sin nor righteousness are in *themselves* transferable."

Concerning SUBSTITUTION, Mr. Fuller thus explains:

"I apprehend, then, that many important mistakes have arisen from considering the interposition of Christ under the notion of *paying a debt*. \* \* Sin is a debt only in a metaphorical sense: properly speaking it is a *crime*, and satisfaction for it requires to be made not on pecuniary, but on moral principles. The reason of this difference is easily perceived. Debts are transferable, but crimes are not. A third person may cancel the one, but he can only obliterate the *effects* of the other: the *desert* of the criminal remains."

"Were I asked concerning the gospel when it is introduced into a country, *For whom was it sent?* If I had respect only to the revealed will of God, I should answer, It is for men, not as elect or non-elect, *but as sinners*. But if I had respect to the appointment of God without regard to its application, I should say, he hath visited that country to "take out of them a people for his name." In like manner, concerning the death of Christ, if I speak of it irrespective of the purpose of the Father and the Son as to the objects who should be saved by it, referring merely to what it is in itself sufficient for and declared it the gospel to be adapted to, I should think I answer the question in a scriptural way in saying, "*It was for sinners as sinners.*" But if I have respect to the purpose of the Father in giving his Son to die, and to the design of Christ in laying down his life I should answer, "*It was for his elect only.*"

"If the satisfaction of Christ was in itself sufficient for the whole world, there is no further propriety in asking, *Whose sins were imputed to Christ?* or, *For whom did he die as a substitute?* than as it is thereby inquired, Who are the persons whom he intended finally to save?"

"In short, we must either acknowledge an objective fulness in Christ's atonement sufficient for the salvation of the whole world, were the whole world to believe in him; or in opposition to Scripture and common sense, confine our invitations to believe, to such persons as have believed already."

I shall only add a few more quotations on the subject of PARTICULAR REDEMPTION.

"The particularity of redemption," says Mr. Fuller, "consists in the sovereign pleasure of God with regard to the application of the atonement; that is, with regard to the persons to whom it shall be applied."

"PETER. Is there anything in the atonement, or promised to it, which infallibly ascertains its application to all those for whom it was made?"

"JAMES. If by this you mean all for whose salvation it was sufficient, I answer, There is not. But if you mean all for whose salvation it was intended, I answer, There is."

"If satisfaction was made on the principle of debtor and creditor, and that which was paid was just of sufficient value to liquidate a given number of sins, and to redeem a given number of sinners, and no more, it should seem that it could not be the duty of any but the elect, nor theirs till it was revealed to them that they were of the elect, to rely upon it: for wherefore should we set our eyes on that which is not? But if there be such a fullness in the satisfaction of Christ, as it is sufficient for the salvation of the whole world, were the whole world to believe in him; and if the particularity of redemption lie only in the purpose or sovereign pleasure of God to render it effectual to some rather than others, no such consequence will follow," &c.

These extracts fully exhibit, at one view, Mr. Fuller's sentiments on the important doctrine of the atonement; and I solicit your minute attention to them; for plausible as his words are, I intend to prove that they are grossly inconsistent with themselves, and as inconsistent with the word of God. And I entreat your attention to them the more, because of the noisy complaints which have been raised that Mr. Fuller has been misrepresented. Even the honest and accurate Mr. Booth did not escape the charge of misunderstanding and misrepresenting Mr. Fuller's meaning. Whether there were any just ground for these complaints, it is not necessary now to enquire; but in the present investigation care shall be taken that there be no mistake.

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## LETTER II.

You will, I doubt not, agree with me when I say that a great change has taken place, during the last sixty years, in the principles maintained by the Particular Baptist churches. It was once the glory of these churches, that they contended earnestly for the doctrines of sovereign discriminating grace, even when a disposition appeared too generally amongst professors to relax on these points, and to accommodate matters with the world; a disposition much lamented and deprecated by the servants of Christ. Dr. Gill has distinctly foretold its pernicious effects, which have been only too visible

in our own churches. In his sermon on "The Watchman's Answer," &c., he says, "Of late years there has been a very visible decline, and a *night* is coming on, which we are entered into; the shadows of the evening are stretching out apace upon us, and the signs of the eventide are very manifest, and will *shortly appear yet more and more*: coldness and indifference in spiritual things, a want of affection to God, Christ, his people, truths and ordinances, may easily be observed; the first love is left; iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold; and it will wax yet colder and colder, and will issue in a general forsaking of assembling together, and in an entire neglect of the ministers of the gospel; when such who have been professors themselves will be *shy of them*, and carefully shun them," &c. Now, what would this holy man say, were he at present alive, to find his words fulfilled so soon in his own denomination? What an alteration must have taken place amongst us, when there are now very few to be found who maintain the same glorious truths for which Dr. Gill was so able an advocate, and the few who do, are no longer cordially received into our pulpits or tolerated in our associations! Men have risen up amongst us everywhere speaking perverse things; the churches have been gradually drawn aside by them, until at length professors will not endure sound doctrine, but are yearly heaping to themselves such teachers as will gratify their itching ears.

Mr. Fuller appears to have been a kind of a leader in this defection, at least he considered his own publications to have conduced not a little to the change. Writing to a friend on this subject, he expresses himself, says his biographer, in the following strong and pointed language:—"When I first published my treatise on the nature of faith, and the duty of all men who hear the gospel to believe it, the Christian profession had sunk into contempt among us; insomuch that had matters gone on but a few years longer, *the Baptists would have become a perfect dunghill in society.*" Strong and pointed language indeed! yet it must really be confessed that this was in a great degree the case. The truth is, that the principles maintained at that time by the Baptists were such as to render them *odious* to the public. They never could maintain those principles inviolably, and at the same time be generally esteemed a *respectable* body of professing Christians. They were distinctly forewarned by the Lord himself, that they should be hated of all men for his sake; that if they kept his words, the world would hate them, even as it had hated him. If the doctrine he taught caused the Master of the house to be despised and rejected of men; if, for the same cause, the apostles were esteemed as *the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things*,—what right had these Baptists to complain, if while holding in their measures the same truths, their profession became contemptible, and their churches considered a perfect dunghill in society? Complain! No, it was the highest honor they were capable of in this life. If to them it was given on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake, they ought to have rejoiced that they were *counted worthy to suffer shame for his name*. And I doubt not many of them did. Dr. Gill, when declaring his determination to go on preaching a free and finished salvation in the face

of all opposition, adds: "I am not afraid of the reproaches of men; I have been inured to these from my youth upwards, but none of these things move me."

But, as I have already said, the case is very different now. Since Mr. Fuller's principles have obtained amongst us, we are no longer *offensive* to the world; or, to use his strong language, we are no longer a *dunghill in society*. The offense of the cross has, in a great degree, ceased in reference to our doctrine, our profession, and our preaching. And to add to our respectability, we have amongst us a number of rational polite ministers; men whose minds are too *enlightened*, too *liberal*, to insist much on the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, and who are, consequently, rolling along in the full stream of earthly reputation. They speak according to the world and the world heareth them. But with all these advantages, what have we lost? O God! thou knowest what we have lost! Our profession is offensive; but alas! we have lost much of the comfort of the Holy Ghost. We have gained ease and tranquility; but we have lost in a great degree, the sensible enjoyment of the Lord's special presence. We are no more odious to society; but the Holy Spirit is remarkably withdrawn: that adorable Person is grieved; the *power* of godliness is almost gone; and, in many instances, the *form* is ready to depart also.

"O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance."

I would now proceed to an examination of the extracts given in my first letter; but before I do so, it will be proper to explain, that, in this controversy, I use the term *redemption* in its general acceptance. When we speak of particular redemption, or universal redemption, we use the term in reference to the *ransom price*. Sometimes in Scripture the word *redemption* means deliverance; but this is its secondary, and not its proper or original signification. To redeem, is properly to buy again, to purchase from captivity, &c., and when used in reference to the great affair of salvation, it relates primarily to the blood of Christ, "in whom we have redemption." In this sense Mr. Fuller uses the term when he speaks of the "particularity of redemption;" and in this sense the inspired writer uses it when he says, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." This explanation is necessary, because some, from inattention, and others from a worse cause, have attached an ambiguous meaning to the term.

The extracts to which I have called your attention are very ingeniously written. But the very ingenuity is suspicious, because truth requires none. Such are the obscurity and artfulness which run through them, that of the many persons who have read Mr. Fuller's Dialogues, &c., very few fully understand them. Some imagine he held the doctrine of particular redemption, because he sometimes speaks of Christ dying for his people. Others suppose he teaches universal redemption; but many, though they do not altogether understand him, plainly perceived that he favors their predisposition

to Arminianism, and therefore they approve of his system. In some instances, no doubt, Mr. Fuller has been misunderstood from inattention, but this has not always been the case. There is an uncommon degree of subtilty in his statements, attended with much speciousness: palpable inconsistencies are hid with great ingenuity, and the difference between him and his opponents is so artfully lessened, that it appears to many readers to be of little importance. He evidently wishes not to be considered an opponent of particular redemption; yet he neither agrees with Particular Baptists on the one side, nor asserts boldly, with the General Baptists, that Christ died equally for every man; but maintains a kind of a metaphysical medium which is as far removed from the simplicity that is in Christ, as it is from that gospel which is hid from the wise and prudent.

I shall occupy the remainder of this letter with such an examination of the extracts as may discover the inconsistency and self-contradiction which lie concealed within them.

FIRST. In the first place, Mr. Fuller has discovered great inconsistency and disingenuousness in desiring to be considered an advocate of particular redemption, while in reality he maintained no such doctrine. He wishes it to be understood that he is favorable to the doctrine itself, and differs from his brethren only in the explanation of it. "The particularity of redemption," says he, "consists in the *sovereign pleasure* of God, with regard to the application of the atonement, that is, with regard to the persons to whom it shall be applied." Now, most persons, on reading this, would be naturally led to conclude that Mr. Fuller believed there was something of particularity in the atonement itself. But herein they would be mistaken; he means no such thing. He affirms that the particularity of redemption lies only in "the sovereign purpose of God, to render it effectual to some rather than others." This, however, is not particular redemption; it is sovereign election. Some who have held universal redemption, have also held particular election, and have consequently maintained the "sovereign purpose of God" to render both the atonement and a preached gospel effectual to some rather than others. Mr. Fuller, therefore, ought to have been equally candid, and to have acknowledged openly that he believed in no particularity of the atonement itself, but only in the sovereign purpose of God with respect to its application; which sovereign purpose belongs to election, and not to the atonement.

It doubtless appeared, to the mind of Mr. Fuller, absurd to hold personal election in connection with universal redemption, as some Protestants, have done, and as the Church of England teaches in her 17th and 31st Articles, and he probably thought that if indefinite redemption were substituted for universal, the absurdity would no longer exist. But, on examination, it will be found that Mr. Fuller's views by no means removes the inconsistency. "The particularity of redemption," he says, "lies only in the purpose or sovereign pleasure of God to render it effectual to some rather than others." Here we have a theological inaccuracy. Mr. Fuller ought to have said that the

particularity of redemption is the *effect* of the sovereign purpose of God, &c. The death of the Redeemer is in pursuance of a previous plan; it is the result of the sovereign and immutable purpose of God, and in perfect harmony with it. It is therefore grossly inaccurate to say that the particularity of redemption *consists* in that which is as *distinct* from itself as cause is distinct from its effect.

But it is easy to perceive that an atonement for *sin* in *general* cannot be particular redemption. An atonement which in itself may suffice for an individual only, or for a world, but which was not offered for any particular number of individuals, but merely for *sin as sin*; such an atonement may be called by some other name, but particular redemption it cannot be. The particularity of the atonement consists in the vicarious nature of the death of Christ; in his representing the persons of the whole elect unto God; in his bearing their sins and sorrows; in his dying for them, and for them alone; and in thus purchasing them, body and soul, by his most precious blood. This view of the atonement is both the result of the sovereign purpose of God and in unison with it; but an indefinite atonement is not only a different thing from particular redemption, but it is also at variance with the sovereignty of the divine purpose, and the particular application of atoning blood.

SECOND. The holy Apostle describes the nature of a perverted gospel as "*yea, yea, and nay, nay,*" 2 Cor. i. 18; by which expression he intends to set forth its uncertainty and inconsistency; sometimes it is one thing, sometimes another. But I know not where, in all the world, an example of a yea and nay gospel is to be found, if it does not exist in the extracts under consideration. In page 244, Peter asks, whether there be any thing in the atonement which infallibly ascertains its application to all those for whom it was made? To which James answers, "If by this you mean all for whose salvation it was *sufficient*, I answer, There is not. But if you mean all for whose salvation it was *intended*, I answer, There is." Now the absurdity of this appears in several points of view.

1. If, as we have already seen, there be no particularity in the atonement of Christ itself, but only in the sovereign purpose of God to render it effectual to some, rather than others; then it follows necessarily, that there is not any thing in the atonement *itself* which infallibly ascertains its application to any man. Mr. Fuller has not shown what there is in the atonement to secure its application to those for whom it was *intended*, and in this he acted wisely. For on the supposition of indefinite redemption, it is impossible to show any necessary connection between the atonement and the application of it; because its application whether to an individual only, or to the whole world, will arise not from any thing in the *atonement itself*, but solely from the purpose or decree of God. If, therefore, the indefinite scheme be correct, there cannot be anything in the atonement itself which infallibly ascertains its application to any of the human race.

2. But admitting that the extracts assert, namely, that there is something in the atonement which infallibly ascertains its application to all for whom it was *intended*; then it will follow that the salvation of *one individual only*, is a thing impossible, seeing that the atonement secures the salvation of *many*. In other words, it will follow that the salvation of an individual, or of a world, does not depend *only* on the sovereign purpose of God, as Mr. Fuller affirms.

3. But further absurdities will be discovered if we inquire into the nature of that *sufficiency* which Mr. Fuller ascribes to the atonement. It is *sufficient*, he affirms, for all mankind—*intended* only for the elect. Now the fallacy of this will appear, if we attend to one simple truth; namely, that the Scriptures always ascribe the salvation of a sinner, not to any abstract sufficiency, but to the *vicarious nature* of the death of Christ. The atonement, therefore, is in no sense sufficient for a man, unless Jesus died *for* that man. Justice requires that the satisfaction be vicarious; so that the sufficiency of the atonement arises from this very thing, that Christ died in our stead. To this the Scripture always traces our salvation. "For God hath not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ WHO DIED FOR US." I conclude, therefore, that it is much less absurd to affirm with the Arminians, that Christ died for all mankind than to maintain with Mr. Fuller, that the atonement is sufficient for the salvation of those for whom it was not intended, and for whom the Saviour did not die.

If the nature of that sufficiency for all men, which Mr. Fuller ascribes to the atonement, be further sifted, it will appear to be nothing more than a *conditional* sufficiency, such as the Arminians attribute to their universal redemption. "There is," says Mr. Fuller, "such a fulness in the satisfaction of Christ, as is sufficient for the salvation of the whole world, were the whole world to believe in him." The atonement then, is sufficient for the whole world, *conditionally*—that is, if the whole world were to believe. The condition, however, is not so easily performed. Many professors speak of faith in Christ as comparatively an easy matter, and as though it were within the sinner's power; but the Scriptures teach a different thing. They represent man by nature as spiritually bound with chains, shut up in darkness, and in a prison-house. To this view, Mr. Fuller's *conditional* sufficiency of the atonement stands opposed, as may be illustrated in the following manner. A wealthy and philanthropic individual visits Algiers, and approaches a dungeon in which a wretched captive lies bound with chains and fetters, and strongly secured within walls and doors, and bars. He proclaims aloud to the captive that he has brought gold *sufficient* for a ransom, on condition that the captive will liberate himself from his chains, burst open his prison doors, and come forth. *Alas!* exclaims the wretched man, *your kindness does not reach my case. Unless your gold can EFFECT my deliverance, it can be of no service to me. The offer of it on such terms can do me no good.* Now, although there is a great difference between spiritual and physical inability, yet one serves to illustrate the other. Man by nature is *spiritually* as unable to believe in Christ, as the Algerine

captive is *physically* unable to break his chains and the prison doors; so that all this boasted sufficiency of the atonement is only an empty offer of salvation on certain terms and condition; and such an atonement is much too weak to meet the desperate case of a lost sinner.

But how different is the salvation of God! "By the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water."—Zech. ix. 11. Jesus, by his death, hath paid the ransom, and made the captives his own. Therefore he has a legal right to their persons, and with his own right arm he brings them forth. It is his glory "to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."—Isa. xlii. 6, 7.

It has just been asserted that the sufficiency which Mr. Fuller attributes to the atonement, is the same which the Arminians ascribe to their universal redemption. Whatever difference exists between him and them on other points, on redemption there is only a verbal variation. When Mr. Fuller asserts that the atonement of Christ is sufficient for all mankind, he does not mean that Christ so died for all mankind as to render their salvation certain: he only means that the atonement is sufficient for their salvation *conditionally*—that is, if they will believe. Dr. Whitby, the champion of Arminianism, explains his doctrine thus: "When we say that Christ died for all, we do not mean that he died for all, or any *absolutely*, or without any conditions to be performed on their part, to interest them in the blessings of his passion; but only that he died for all *conditionally*, or so that they should be made partakers of the blessings of his salutary passion, upon condition of their faith, repentance, &c." Here we find no essential difference between Mr. Fuller and Dr. Whitby on the atonement of Christ; the only difference between them relates to the purpose of God in reference to its application. Both agree in regarding the death of Christ as conditionally sufficient for all mankind; but the Doctor denies that the purpose of God ascertains the application of the atonement to any man; and in this respect he is more consistent with himself than Mr. Fuller.

The coincidence of indefinite redemption with the Arminian scheme, may be further confirmed by comparing Mr. Fuller's words with another quotation from the acute and learned Whitby. Mr. Fuller defines reconciliation to be a "satisfaction of divine justice, by virtue of which nothing pertaining to the moral government of God, hinders any sinner from returning to him; and it is upon this ground that sinners are indefinitely invited to do so." He considers the atonement "as a divine extraordinary expedient for the exercise of mercy consistently with justice, and that is in itself equally adapted to save the world as an individual, provided a world believed in it." Now, let us hear the Doctor express the very same sentiments in other words: "He (that is, Christ) only by his death hath put all men in a capacity of being justified and pardoned, and so of being reconciled to, and having peace with God, upon their turning to God, and having faith in our Lord Jesus Christ: the death of Christ having rendered it consistent with



the justice and wisdom of God, with the honor of his majesty, and with the ends of government, to pardon the penitent believer."

Would to God that Mr. Fuller had been found in better company!

4. If it be necessary to pursue this "yea and nay" system still further, it is only to disclose more inconsistencies and more absurdities. If, as Mr. Fuller allows, Christ *intended* that only some should be benefited by his death, then he accomplished his intention according to particular redemption, by paying their ransom only. It is absurd to represent Christ as paying a ransom sufficient for all, when he intended only to redeem some! Or to affirm that Christ is a sufficient Saviour of those whom he never intended to save!

Whenever the Scriptures speak of the sufficiency of redemption, they always place it in the *certain efficacy* of redemption. The atonement of Christ is sufficient because it is absolutely efficacious, and because it carries salvation to all for whom it was made. It is sufficient, not because it affords men the *possibility* of salvation but because, with invincible power, it *accomplishes* their salvation. Hence the word of God never represents the *sufficiency* of the atonement as more extensive than the *design* of the atonement, which Mr. Fuller has done. The Scriptures know nothing of a sufficient redemption which leaves the captive to perish in slavery, nor of a sufficient atonement which never delivers the guilty; but they speak of a redemption every way sufficient and efficacious—a redemption which cannot be frustrated, but which triumphantly accomplishes the salvation of all its objects. "Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him *plenteous redemption*. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." Ps. cxxx. 7, 8.

THIRD. Mr. Fuller's modesty most certainly failed him, when he reprobated, in so unqualified a manner, the representation of sin as a debt, and the atonement of Christ as the payment of a debt. Every one who has learned the Lord's prayer, knows that our Lord has there taught us to consider our sins under the notion of a debt. And yet Mr. Fuller informs us, that "it would be improper to represent the great work of redemption as a kind of commercial transaction betwixt a creditor and his debtor." But who should know best? If the wisdom of God has thought fit so to represent it, we may be assured there is an admirable propriety in it, whether we can discern it or not. Mr. Fuller, however, is apprehensive of evil consequences from such a view of sin and redemption. "I apprehend," says he, "that many important mistakes have arisen from considering the interposition of Christ under the notion of paying a debt." Really this is quite at variance with Mr. Fuller's usual reverence for the Scriptures: it is nothing less than a direct contradiction of the word of God. Does not the very term *redemption* plainly point at a commercial transaction? Does it not signify *buying again*, in allusion to an inheritance under the law, or to slaves in servitude? See Lev. xxv. 23-24; Isa. lii. 3. In how many instances are we taught that Christ "gave his life a

ransom," (Matt. xx. 28)—that the church is "bought with a price," (1 Cor. iv. 20)—and called the "purchased possession," (Eph. i. 14)—redeemed, not indeed with silver and gold, but with what is truly valuable, even the "precious blood of Christ?" (1 Peter i. 19.) Does not our Lord introduce a parable, one design of which is to reach us that our trespasses are debts, even *ten thousand talents*, for which God himself is our creditor? Matt. xviii. 23, &c. And does not the apostle represent the Lord Jesus as the great paymaster of his people's debts, when he says, "And for this cause he is the Mediator of the new testament, that, by means of death, for the *redemption of the transgressions* that were under the first testament, they who are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance?" Heb. ix. 15. Yet, with all this, Mr. Fuller judged it improper to represent the work of redemption as a debt cancelled, a price paid, and a purchase made.

But it may be inquired, what design had Mr. Fuller to answer by opposing this view of sin and redemption? To this it may be replied, that many Protestant writers, especially when defending imputed righteousness against the Papists and Socinians, have often illustrated the transfer of our sins to Christ, and our entire deliverance from them, by allusion to commercial transactions amongst men. These writers knew well that amongst men crimes could not be transferred, though the punishment of crimes might; and, judging that a transfer of punishment merely came infinitely short of that wondrous exchange which is transacted in the great work of redemption, they have often represented our sins as debts, Christ our great surety and paymaster, and our deliverance from guilt and misery so complete, in consequence of the transfer of our sins to him, that the justice of God demands our salvation, in the same way that justice amongst men requires the debtor to be set free, when the creditor has received payment at the hand of a surety.

These are the "important mistakes" to which Mr. Fuller alludes, but whether they are mistakes or not we shall enquire hereafter. However, to represent the interposition of Christ under the notion of paying his people's debts, although nothing can be more scriptural, is so repugnant to the view Mr. Fuller has taken of the atonement, that it is easy to account for the unguarded and inconsiderate manner in which he has expressed himself on the subject.

FOURTH. Mr. Fuller is singularly inconsistent with himself when he speaks, as he sometimes does, of Christ laying down his life for his sheep, his people, &c. If there be, as Mr. Fuller says, "such a fulness in the satisfaction of Christ as is sufficient for the salvation of the whole world, were the whole world to believe," and if "the particularity of redemption lie only in the sovereign pleasure of God to render it effectual to some rather than others," then it follows that Christ did not die for any of the human race in distinction from others, but only that it was the sovereign pleasure of God that his indefinite atonement should be applied to some rather than others. It follows, in other words, that Christ did not die for Paul any more than for Judas, but

only that the atonement was to be applied to Paul and not to Judas. It is therefore highly inconsistent to say that Christ died for his sheep, or that he laid down his life for his people, his elect, &c.

The atonement of Christ cannot be both indefinite and special. If Christ died for his elect, and for them only, then it is not true that the particularity of redemption lies *only* in the purpose of God with regard to its application; but if Christ made an indefinite atonement for sin, then it cannot be said with any degree of truth or propriety, that he died for his elect in distinction from others. If the death of Christ be special, it is no more indefinite; if it be indefinite, it is no more special.

The adoption of this uncertain self-contradictory system, has led many to suppose that it depends on our believing, whether Christ died for us or not. According to such persons, our believing makes it true that Christ died for us. Such a sentiment is contrary both to Scripture and to every principle of right reasoning. Surely if Christ died for any particular persons, this is a fact *in itself*, and is true independently of the application of the atonement; but if Christ died indefinitely, no change which passes upon the sinner can alter the previous fact, or make it true that Christ died for him. It is certainly much less absurd to affirm plainly with the Arminians, that Jesus died for all the human race, whether they believe in him or not.

FIFTH. Mr. Fuller has often spoken of the *application* of the atonement, but he has not informed us what he means by that term. The expression, in its ordinary acceptance amongst Calvinistic writers, is altogether inconsistent with his views of the death of Christ. The particular application of the atonement can comport only with particular redemption. By application, in the generally received sense, is intended that work of the ever-blessed Spirit, whereby the consciences of those for whom Christ died are purged from guilt through the knowledge of his blood, and faith in it, and whereby they are persuaded of their special interest in his death. This is called in Scripture "receiving the atonement;" Rom. v. 11, and is usually intended by its *application*. Now, it is inconsistent to speak of this particular application on the footing of indefinite redemption. Particular application plainly presupposes a special interest or propriety in Christ, unknown to the redeemed sinner until revealed by the Spirit; but no such propriety can possibly exist on the supposition of indefinite redemption. When the first Christians had received the atonement, they believed that "Christ died for *their sins*, according to the Scriptures." 1 Cor. xv. 3. This they received as an immutable truth, which depended not on the *application*, but rather the application depended on the fact, that Christ died for *their sins*. When the atonement was applied to Paul, he thereby recognized his special interest in it, so that we find him declaring his faith in the Son of God, "who" says he, "loved me and gave himself for me." Gal. ii. 20. By the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, or, in other words, by the application of the atonement, the conscience of the apostle was purged from guilt, and he became assured that Christ died for his sins. Gal. i. 14; Rom. v. 11. But all this is

wholly inconsistent with indefinite redemption. Indeed it is impossible, if, as Mr. Fuller says, "the particularity of redemption consists only in the purpose of God respecting its application."

Mr. Fuller's inconsistency on this subject is not unlike that which may be often observed among the Arminian Methodists. It is common for some of them, when describing their deliverance from guilt, to say that the blood of Christ was so powerfully *applied* to their consciences, that they felt assured that Christ died for them. But certainly when a man believes that Christ died for all mankind, he cannot think he needs the Spirit of God to show him that Christ died for him in common with all the rest! Neither is any man consistent who asserts a particular application of the atonement, and yet maintains, as Mr. Fuller does, that there is no particularity in the atonement at all, but only in the purpose of God!

SIXTH. I cannot pass by the very exceptionable manner in which Mr. Fuller has explained himself on the subject of imputation. I have quoted his words in my first letter, to which I beg leave to refer you, and also to the original. We are there informed what the term signifies: we are also told that, like many other words, it has a *proper* and an *improper* meaning. We are informed, moreover, that the word, in a *proper* sense, means so and so; and in an *improper* sense, it means so and so; the conclusion of all which is, that when the Scripture speaks of the imputation of sin to Christ, or of righteousness to the sinner, the term is to be taken not in a *proper*, but in an *improper* sense. Now, all this sounds very philosophically; but what real instruction or comfort can such a detail communicate to a sincere, inquiring soul? Such a one, on meeting with this explanation of Mr. Fuller, would immediately start, and say, "Alas! I did indeed think that all my sins were imputed to the Lord Jesus, and this was the ground of my comfort; but Mr. Fuller tells me that this was so only in what he calls an *improper* sense. And I have comforted myself with the thought that Christ's righteousness was mine, being truly imputed to me; but Mr. Fuller has perplexed and distressed me, for he says this is not *properly* the case." In this manner would Mr. Fuller's philosophy be worse than thrown away. But his whole statement on this subject is badly illustrated, and essentially deficient.

In the first place, then, the statement itself is liable to be misunderstood, owing to the indistinct and confused manner in which he has attempted to illustrate it. To give an instance or two. The *proper* sense of imputation, we are told, is, "the charging, reckoning, or placing to the account of persons and things THAT WHICH PROPERLY BELONGS TO THEM." And the very first instance of the imputation in a proper sense, which Mr. Fuller has adduced, is the case of Eli charging Hannah with drunkenness. "Eli thought she had been drunken." Now there is reason to think that many of Mr. Fuller's readers would not clearly comprehend his meaning here; and if they did not understand the deep metaphysical sense of the word "proper," they would be weak enough to imagine that Eli's imputation was an improper imputation. But even

amongst those who are more expert in the meaning of words, there may be some, who, being aware that Eli charged Hannah unjustly, would perhaps not find it so easy to understand how he imputed to her "that which properly belonged to her." Equally at a loss would some readers be to find that the Lord's not imputing iniquity to men, is to be understood in a proper sense; that is, he does not properly impute iniquity to his people. They would be still more at a loss, on reflecting that Mr. Fuller understands the imputation of sin to Christ in an improper sense, and might naturally conclude that, as the Lord does not properly impute sin to his people, nor yet to Christ, that their sin is never properly imputed at all. It is truly a pity to find so important, and yet so simple a subject darkened as it is in Mr. Fuller's explanation. Indeed, the artificial distinctions and scholastic phrases are sometimes worse than useless, and often good for nothing but to increase the importance of the teacher, and to serve the same purpose in divinity as a barbarous kind of Latin is made to answer in law and in physic.

But Mr. Fuller's explanation of this important subject is not only confused and indistinct, but it is essentially deficient. In short, the imputation of sin to Christ is explained away. According to Mr. Fuller, sin was not really, or, as he terms it, properly imputed to Christ, but only in appearance. He was treated as though sin were really imputed to him; he suffered as though he were guilty; but yet, according to Mr. Fuller, guilt itself was not truly imputed to him. Not to dispute about words, the subject may be illustrated by transactions among men. When one man imputes sin or crime to another, this is the same thing as charging him with that crime. Thus Saul imputed treason to Ahimelech, when he charged him with it. But such imputation may be real, or it may be only in appearance; an imputation may be just, or it may be unjust. When Nathan charged David with sin in the matter of Uriah, the imputation was both real and just. When Joseph imputed bad motives to his brethren, he charged them not really, but only in appearance, for he knew they were not spies; and when Eli imputed drunkenness to Hannah he did so really, but he did so unjustly. Now, when God imputed sin to Christ he charged him either really, or only in appearance, justly or unjustly. With respect to justice we shall not now inquire; but the question relates to the former, namely whether God really imputed sin to Christ, as a sinner's surety, or whether he did so only in appearance. Mr. Fuller denies that he did so really, or that Christ suffered real and proper punishment; and although he does not say, in the very words, that this imputation was only in appearance, yet this is his meaning. He tells us that the imputation of sin to Christ is to be understood in an improper sense. By imputation in an improper sense, he understands "charging, reckoning, or placing to the account of persons and things that which does not properly belong to them, as though it did." As an instance of this improper imputation, he gives us the complaint of Job, "Wherefore hidest thou thy face and holdest me for thine enemy?" Now the Lord did not really count Job for an enemy; he imputed enmity to him only in appearance, or he dealt with him as though he were an enemy. Yet in this very sense

does Mr. Fuller understand the imputation of sin to Christ. "He was counted," says he, "in the divine administration, as if he were, or had been the sinner, that those who believe in him might be accounted as if they were, or had been righteous." The plain meaning of which is, that God gave his Son to suffer, as though sin had been found upon him, or, in other words, that Christ bore the punishment of guilt, but not guilt itself. Now, for Christ to suffer instead of the guilty is one thing, but to have guilt itself imputed to him is another. The difference is so manifest that it scarcely needs the following illustration. A certain man is found guilty of high treason, and condemned to die. His brother, from mere compassion, offered to die in his stead. The ransom was accepted, and the innocent man underwent the penalty of the law as a voluntary substitute for his guilty brother. Now, in this case, the innocent man bore the punishment of his brother's guilt, but not the guilt itself. He underwent, indeed, the sentence of the law, but treason was not imputed to him—justice forbade that it should. He was treated as though he were guilty, and that is one thing, but to lie under the imputation of guilt is another. Thus Mr. Fuller explains away the doctrine of imputation. By denying the transfer of our guilt to Christ, he admits of no real imputation of our sins to him, but only a transfer of punishment. Imputation of sin, therefore, in Mr. Fuller's improper or figurative sense, means no real imputation at all.

SEVENTH. Although Mr. Fuller has written very ably against Socinianism, there are some of his own notions which savour most alarmingly of that heresy, and, it may be justly feared, tend directly thereto. The first I shall mention, is the view he takes of the chief design of the death of Christ. The principle design of our Lord's atonement, he says, is the "manifestation of God's hatred to sin, in order to render the exercise of mercy consistent with justice." "Its design," he says, "is to express displeasure against disobedience—it is to utter such an expression of displeasure by the lawgiver that in it every subject of his empire may read what are his views of the evil which he forbids, and what are his determinations in regard to its punishment; it is to answer this great end of moral government, which could not have been answered by the sufferings of a mere creature."

1. It is freely allowed that one design of the death of Christ is to express God's hatred to sin, and to answer the ends of moral government, even as one design of it is to leave us an example of patience and submission. But neither of these is its principal design. To suppose otherwise, would be to assign no sufficient reason for that great event, since the displeasure of the law-giver against sin is already uttered in the law itself, and in the sufferings of them that perish; and an example of patience is furnished in the conduct of the holy prophets. Indeed the Socinians themselves ascribe almost as much honor to the sufferings of Christ, as Mr. Fuller expresses. They speak of the death of Christ answering the ends of moral government, by confirming to us the will of God. And they go so far as to say, that "there is no doubt but that Christ so satisfied God by his obedience, as that he completely fulfilled the whole of his will, and by his

obedience obtained, through the grace of God, for all of us who believe in him, the remission of our sins and eternal salvation."

This fond notion of Mr. Fuller, respecting the chief design of the death of Christ, destroys the idea of *atonement*. It represents the Lord Jesus as a *Lawgiver* rather than a *Saviour*, and attributes to his death that which belongs rather to the law of ten commands. When that holy but fiery law came forth in terrible majesty from Sinai, its chief design was so manifest, that Moses quaked, and all the people trembled. Its design, indeed, is to "express displeasure against disobedience—to utter such an expression of displeasure by the lawgiver, that in it every subject of his empire may read what are his views of the evil which he forbids, and what are his determinations in regard to its punishment." But the death of Christ is not an atonement for sin, if this be its principal design; it is rather a law *given*, which, as is supposed, is able to give life, by publishing milder terms of acceptance than the moral law. It would then exhibit, indeed, the purity of the lawgiver, tempered with so much mercy as to offer salvation to men on certain terms and conditions, by the performance of which they may obtain life. Thus we have the law and the gospel mingled so ingeniously as to constitute a perversion of both.

2. In the next place, it is certainly a Socinian notion that all the virtue of the atonement lies in the *appointment of God*; and Mr. Fuller has argued very pertinently against this notion. But I am much deceived if Mr. Fuller himself does not teach doctrine very like this. Does he not teach that the atonement in itself is equally sufficient for the salvation of a world as for an individual, and that the only reason why its virtue reaches some and not others, is the appointment of God? Does he not maintain that if one sinner only were saved, the atonement would be the same as though the world were saved, and that the atonement being once yielded, a world may be saved or only an individual, according to the appointment of God? Now, what is this but to place the *virtue* of the atonement in the appointment of God? How comes the efficacy of the atonement to reach to the world, and not to an individual only? Is it because of any thing in the *atonement itself*? Certainly not; for Mr. Fuller says it is in itself equally adapted to an individual, and to all mankind. Its virtue to save, therefore, must be all traced to the appointment of God. Further; if there be nothing in the *atonement itself* to secure the salvation of more than an individual, had God so appointed, then it follows that God might not even have appointed the salvation of one individual. Thus it appears that if there be any virtue in Christ's death to accomplish salvation, it must be all placed in the appointment of God!

It is hard to say how the grace of God can be frustrated at all, if not by doctrine like this. To what purpose do we maintain the Godhead of Christ, if we hold so lax views of his atonement as to deny the certain efficacy of his death, or maintain, by implication, that there is no more power in his blood, of itself to take away sin, than there was in the blood of the Old Testament sacrifices?

3. It is well known to all who are acquainted with the Socinian controversy that one chief argument urged against the substitution of Christ is, that it leaves no room for the free unmerited mercy of God in the pardon of sin, but that it represents the salvation of men as a matter of justice. Thus the Socinians argue against those who assert the substitution of Christ. "The Scriptures every where testify that God forgives men their sins freely. But to a free forgiveness nothing is more opposite than such a satisfaction as they contend for, and the payment of an equivalent price. For where a creditor is satisfied, either by the debtor himself, or by another person on the debtor's behalf, it cannot with truth be said of him that he freely forgives the debt."

This reasoning is so very like that of Mr. Fuller in his objections to the principle of debtor and creditor, as serving to illustrate the great work of redemption, that the resemblance is both surprising and affecting. He agrees with the Socinians in denying that Christ hath so satisfied divine justice for the sins of his people, as that *justice itself* demands their salvation. And although the comparison of the debtor and creditor is only used to give some idea of the principle on which the great work of redemption proceeds, yet scriptural as it is, Mr. Fuller has had the hardihood to reject it, and, with it, the important truth intended to be illustrated by it. "In the case of the debtor," says he, "satisfaction being once accepted, justice *requires* his complete discharge; but in that of the criminal, where satisfaction is made to the wounded honor of the law, and the authority of the lawgiver, justice, though it *admits* of his discharge, yet no otherwise *requires it*, than as it may have been matter of promise to the substitute." The answer to this objection, on the part of Mr. Fuller and the Socinians, is very easy. Towards the sinner, salvation is an act of *free unmerited mercy*; but towards Christ, as the sinner's surety and representative, it is an act of *justice*, arising not merely from a promise made to him of the Father, but from the meritorious nature of his own plenary satisfaction. In all the stupendous plan of redemption, infinite justice and boundless mercy are displayed. In this great work, Jehovah shines in all his glory as a *just God and Saviour*.

EIGHTH. By denying the transfer of sin to Christ, Mr. Fuller has entangled himself with many absurdities. Among other things, this has led him to deny that the sufferings of Christ were real and proper punishment. But by this he does not mean, as some have supposed, that Christ did not really and truly *suffer*, but that his sufferings were not really and properly *punishment*. Now, if the sufferings of Christ were not real punishment, it will follow that the sins of those who are saved are never *punished at all*, and thus mercy would triumph at the expense of justice. It is allowed that sin is not properly punished in the persons of those who are saved; and if it be not in the person of their great Surety, it is remitted without punishment, and justice is not satisfied. If it be, as Mr. Fuller asserts, that "guilt is not transferable, but the *desert* of the criminal remains," then justice, because it finds guilt upon the criminal, calls aloud for his punishment; nor can it allow the sufferings of an innocent person in his stead, because it finds in such a one no guilt, and because it punishes sin, only



where it finds sin to punish. But if it be true that God, by a strange act of his grace, laid the iniquity of all that are saved upon Christ, then divine justice, finding sin upon him punished it in him; but the same justice forbids the punishment of believers, because it finds no guilt upon them.—Again: Mr. Fuller has said much about the sufferings of Christ, as an expression of God's hatred against sin; but this part of his system is as inconsistent as the rest. The sufferings of Immanuel were, indeed, an expression of God's infinite abhorrence of iniquity; and it appears in this that he would not spare sin when found upon his Son, but punished it even in him. But if we suppose that sin was not really transferred to Christ, then his sufferings might be indeed an expression of love to the sinner, and of the honor of the lawgiver, but hatred to iniquity would not be perfectly expressed. "All the world," says a holy Puritan, "is nothing so dear in the eyes of God as his Son; and if it had been possible that sin could have been connived at, it would be upon his Son, being his only by imputation. A fond father may possibly wink at a fault in a son, which he will not pass by in a slave; but when a father falls foul upon a dear child upon whom a fault is found, and the fire of indignation restrains his affection, this argues the extremity of the rage of the father, and heinousness of the crime that incenseth it. When the Lord will lay iniquity upon Christ, and when he finds it upon him, if he himself shall not escape—nay, if there shall not be a mitigation of wrath, though the crime be upon him no otherwise than only as a surety, this shews the iniquity is of such a loathsome savour in the nostrils of God, that it is impossible he should have any partiality or remissness wherever it is to be found." [Dr. Crisp's Sermons, 4th edit. 1791, vol. ii. page 43.]

NINTH. In which way soever Mr. Fuller's system is contemplated, its inconsistency and absurdity appear. He admits the doctrine of election, though experience has shewn that the tendency of his principles is opposed to the cordial reception of it; but he admits that God the Father chose a certain number of fallen men in Christ Jesus, whom he determined to bring to everlasting glory through the blood of the Redeemer; yet Mr. Fuller virtually denies that the blood of Christ was shed for the sins of the elect, in distinction from the rest. He admits that the design of God in giving his Son, and the design of Christ in laying down his life, were *definite*; yet he asserts an *indefinite* atonement. He allows that the sovereign purpose of God in election, and the work of the blessed Spirit in conversion, respect a peculiar people; yet he denies that the same sovereignty shines in the death of Christ. Instead of consistently maintaining that the part which each person in the adorable Trinity took in the great economy of salvation, respected the same objects, we have particular election, and effectual vocation, but not special redemption. The decree of God the Father he allows is absolute; the operation of the Spirit is absolute; yet, with marvelous inconsistency, he represents the atonement of Christ as conditionally sufficient for the whole race of Adam!

I have thus stated some particulars wherein Mr. Fuller's sentiments appear self-contradictory; and if you, my friend, are as heartily disgusted with this perverted

gospel, this "yea and nay" system, as I am, and if you have any relish for an honest declaration of divine truth in its simplicity, I will here introduce to you, by way of contrast, the testimony of some of those churches which have been considered almost "a perfect dunghill in society." It is the confession of the Baptist churches of the Norfolk and Suffolk Association, which Dr. Rippon has done himself the honor to record in his Baptist Register.

"We are kept by the power of our Covenant God steadfast in the great and glorious truths of the everlasting gospel—the God-honoring, soul-enriching, and heart-warming doctrines of a Trinity in the Godhead—of the sovereign, eternal, and immutable love of the Triune Jehovah, centering in Jesus, and resting with all its unfading glories, and unnumbered blessings, upon the sons of God—the eternal election of some of the human race to everlasting, life and glory in Christ Jesus proceeding from and directed by the absolute, uncontrollable sovereignty of Jehovah's will—the eternal and indissoluble union of all the chosen in Christ, who was set up from everlasting as their federal head and glorious representative; in whom their persons were accepted in love—their predestination to the adoption of children, as God the Father's act, proceeding from the boundless love of his heart in his Son, and designed for the praise of the glory of his stupendous grace—the eternal, gracious, and infinitely-wise covenant transactions of the Holy Three, relating to the salvation of offending mortals—the transfer of all the sins of the elect from them to Christ and the full condemnation and punishment of them in him—the complete atonement made for them by the one glorious and all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ's spotless humanity, presented to infinite justice upon the altar of his divinity in all the flames of his transcendent love—the personal and all-perfect obedience of our great Immanuel to the holy law, performed in the room and stead of his people, accepted for them, and imputed to them by the God of all grace; and their free, full, and everlasting justification by it in his sight—the glorious redemption, perfect cleansing, and full pardon, of all the vessels of mercy, through the precious blood of the cross—their regeneration, effectual calling, and conversion, by the glorious, almighty, and irresistible operations of God the Holy Ghost—the life of faith they live upon the fulness of Jesus, and the good works they perform in love to the Trinity in Covenant, for the honor of discriminating grace, and the glory of the Triune Jehovah—in fine, their preservation by the power of the Almighty, through faith, to that glory to which they were destined by electing love before the foundation of the world. These sublime truths we consider as the glory of the Bible, the soul of Christianity, the ground of a sinner's hope, and the source of a believer's joys; and we can say in truth that we esteem them beyond the riches of the Indies. Nor are we yet possessed of a sufficient degree of modern candor to treat them with cold indifference, or to view them as non-essentials, but think ourselves bound to maintain them to the utmost of our ability, and to reject all assertions inconsistent with them."

And are these the doctrines which have given Mr. Fuller such offence? Is this the

profession which is so contemptible in his eyes? Are these the churches which he compares to a *dunghill in society*? O my soul, be thou contemptible too! Be thou a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, and have thou fellowship with those who are, in their tribulation as well as in their joys. And what though thou be reproached and reviled here as thy great Leader was; be assured of thy consolation, that the reproach of his followers shall be rolled away, when he comes in his own glory, and in his Father's glory, and all the holy angels with him.

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### LETTER III

Having in my last letter compared Mr. Fuller's sentiments with themselves, I shall occupy the present with a careful examination of his peculiar views of the GREAT ATONEMENT, by bringing them to the test of the word of God. And I entreat your attention the more earnestly to this part of the subject, because it is my intention to prove that the principles I am opposing are subversive of nearly all the great and fundamental doctrines connected with redemption through the blood of Jesus. When I first began this investigation I was not aware that the evidence in support of this serious charge was so abundant; but the more I study the subject the deeper is my conviction that the difference is not in *words* but in *things*; and in things, too, which are essential to the gospel and constitute the very foundation of a sinner's hope. This charge I proceed to prove in the following manner.

FIRST. The first thing which strikes the mind on a close examination of Mr. Fuller's views relative to the atonement is, that upon his principles the *death of Christ is not vicarious*. By vicarious I mean *for*, or *in the stead of* others. Both Arminians and Calvinists hold that the death of Christ is vicarious, but Mr. F., by endeavoring to go between them, virtually denies it. When we assert that Christ laid down his life for his sheep, or that he died in the stead of his elect, we thereby assert that his death is *vicarious*; or should we affirm, with Dr. Whitby, that Christ died equally for the whole race of Adam, we would still assert that his death is *vicarious*. But Mr. Fuller agrees with neither of these; he neither teaches that Christ died for the elect only, nor does he affirm that he died for the whole race of Adam, but he maintains that Christ made an atonement for sin *indefinitely*, for *sin in general*, in such a way as that God might pardon some men if he pleased, or all men if he pleased. Thus Mr. Fuller denies that the death of Christ is *vicarious*.

This will perhaps appear still clearer by the following dilemma. If Christ died, he died for, or in the stead of, *all men*, or in the stead of *some men*, or in the stead of *no man*. Now let any person of Mr. Fuller's views take whichsoever of these he pleases, for one of them must be true. If he takes the first, and affirm with the Arminians that Christ died for all men, he changes his ground: if he takes the second, and asserts, that Christ died only for his elect, he gives up the argument by uniting with his opponents; and if

he takes the last, he denies that Christ died for any of the human race! And this Mr. F. has virtually done by his doctrine of indefinite atonement. The truth of this has often been confirmed in conversation with persons of Mr. Fuller's views. Such a dialogue as the following as frequently occurred.

*Question.* "What is your view of the efficacy and extent of the death of Christ?"

*Answer.* "I consider the atonement as a divine extraordinary expedient, for the exercise of mercy consistently with justice; and that therein such satisfaction is made for *sin*, as to afford ground for sinners to believe and be saved."

*Ques.* "Good; but I wish to know whether you believe that Christ died for all *men*, or only for *his elect*?"

*Ans.* "I consider he died for *sin*."

*Ques.* "Truly he did; but he also died for *sinner*s, and I wish to know whether you believe he died for *all sinner*s, or only for *some sinner*s?"

*Ans.* "I consider that if one sinner only had been saved consistently with justice, it required to be by the same all-perfect obedience unto death; and this being yielded is itself equally adapted to save the world as an individual, provided a word believed in it."

*Ques.* "I understand you, but you have not answered my question. You have not said whether he died *for* an individual or *for* a world."

*Ans.* "I believe there is a fulness in the atonement of Christ sufficient for the salvation of the whole world, were the whole world to believe in him."

*Ques.* "You still evade my question: I wish you to say whether Christ died for all sinners or only for some?"

*Ans.* "If by this you mean to ask whom Christ's atonement is sufficient for, I answer the *whole world*, but if you refer to the purpose Of God respecting its application, I answer *for some men, only*."

*Ques.* "Here you have artfully confounded several things; for a man may believe in the sovereign purpose of God, respecting the application of the atonement, and yet maintain universal redemption. But I ask nothing about the purpose of God, nor the application of the atonement, but I ask a plain question, to which I expect an ingenious answer, but in vain. Let me intreat you to renounce the hidden things of dishonesty, and walk no more in craftiness. Acknowledge boldly, either that Christ died for all men, or that he died only for some men, or else he died for no man. To say

that he died for *sin* merely, is to deny that his death is *vicarious*."

I am aware that Mr. Fuller sometimes departs from his peculiar sentiments, and speaks of Christ's dying for *his sheep, his church, &c.*; but this proves nothing but the inconsistency of error. Every erroneous man is condemned of himself [Titus iii. 11.] It is Mr. F.'s *peculiar* view of the atonement which I am opposing, and not the truth which he sometimes acknowledges. His peculiar view is simply this: "The death of Christ (he considers) was a satisfaction to justice, God having hereby expressed his displeasure against sin. This satisfaction being yielded, and this displeasure expressed, a way is opened whereby an individual may be saved, or the whole world, according to the sovereign pleasure of God." All particularity in the atonement itself he denies, but acknowledges the sovereign purpose of God with regard to its application. In short, he neither avows universal redemption with the Arminians, nor particular redemption with the Calvinists, but asserts what may be very properly termed *indefinite redemption* and how contrary this doctrine is to the word of God we shall presently see.

It is worthy of remark, that although there are many Scriptures which appear to favour universal redemption, there are none which even appear to countenance Mr. Fuller's views. Those texts which speak of Christ dying for the *whole world*, for every man, &c. prove too much for his purpose. In vain shall we search the Scriptures for a single text to countenance the absurd notion that the atonement is sufficient for all, but was intended only for some; or for the least warrant to separate the *sufficiency* of the atonement from the *design* of it. To the law and to the testimony we will now appeal, and by this unerring rule we will try the doctrine of indefinite redemption. To cite all the passages which express the fixed, definite, and vicarious nature of the atonement would be to transcribe a great part of the Old and New Testament; a few, therefore, may suffice as an example.

And, in the first place, if we attend to the meaning of the word redemption, we shall find it furnishes a strong argument against the indefinite scheme. Our English word is derived from the Latin *redimo*, to buy again, to ransom by price; and the words used in the Greek Testament to express our Redemption are, *apolutrosis*, *to buy*, and *apoluo*, *to buy out of the hands of another*, or to obtain something by paying a proper price for it. In Hebrew, to redeem signifies also to separate or sever; either because a thing when it is bought is "separated" for the purchaser's use, or because the children of Israel were by redemption separated to be a peculiar people unto the Lord. The very nature of redemption, therefore, comprehends something vicarious, something definite. This great truth shines in the types and figures of the law, in all which the definite nature of redemption by the death of Christ is constantly held forth. Thus, the ransom of a poor Israelite by any of his near kin, is a lively figure of the death of Christ for his people, who gave his life for their lives, and his person instead of theirs. "And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him

wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee; after that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him," &c. [Lev. xxv. 47.] The atonement money also was typical of the redemption by Christ, and of his giving himself a ransom for a given number of sinners. "When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel, after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul into the Lord, when thou numberest them, that there be no plague among them when thou numberest them. This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary. And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle." [Exodus xxx. 12—16.] It was commanded also that the land should not be sold for ever, but should be redeemed or bought back; to signify that although God's elect have sold themselves for nought, yet they shall not perish because they are the Lord's property, being certainly bought again, not indeed with silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ. "The land shall not be sold forever, for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land. If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold." [Lev. xxv. 23- 25.] In these instances we learn the meaning of the word redemption, and as they refer to our Lord Jesus Christ, we may also discern in them traces of the vicarious nature of his death. Indeed whenever the atonement of Christ is spoken of in the Scripture, this principle is always implied and nearly always expressed. Accordingly we read, that he "laid down his life for his sheep;" that he "gave himself for his Church;" that he "give his life a ransom for many." The prophet foretold that "Messiah should be cut off, but not for himself;" and another prophet informs us for whom, or in whose stead he should die: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, for the transgression of my people was he stricken." His blood, as the blood of the New Testament, "was shed for many." "He gave himself for us that he might redeem us." "He gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world." And, in short, the objects of redemption, the church of God, are "purchased with his own blood," [John x. 15, &c.] "redeemed from among men," and therefore said to be *bought with a price*. Now all these Scriptures with a host of others, declare plainly that the death of Christ is not an atonement for sin abstractedly, nor a mere expression of the Divine displeasure against iniquity, nor an indefinite satisfaction of Divine justice, but a ransom price paid for the eternal redemption of a certain number of sinners, and a plenary satisfaction for their particular sins.

Neither are those passages of Scripture which appear to favor the universal scheme, less to the point. It would be easy to show that such passages do not really favor universal redemption, inasmuch as they fully express the absolute satisfaction yielded to divine justice by the blood of Christ, and the certain efficacy of his death; but this is not our subject. The question relates not to universal, but to indefinite redemption:

the question is not for whom Christ died, but did he die for any? Is his death vicarious?

Now we read that Jesus "*died for all*." That he "tasted death for every man;" i.e., in the stead of every man. "Scarcely FOR a righteous man will one die; peradventure FOR a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died FOR US." And indeed in every passage which appears to favor universal redemption, this great truth is conveyed, that Christ died FOR, or *in the stead of* the persons referred to, and so purchased them by his blood. "Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died." "Shall thy weak brother perish for whom Christ died?" "They shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them." "Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." [Rom. xiv. 15; 1 Cor. viii. 11; 2 Peter ii. 1; 1 Tim. ii. 6.] In this last cited passage, the word translated "ransom" is very significant. It is not simply a ransom, but correspondent ransom. "It properly signifies," says a learned critic, "a price by which captives are redeemed from their enemies, and the kind of exchange, in which *one person is redeemed by another, and life is redeemed by life*." No one doctrine, therefore, is more opposed to another, than this scriptural view of redemption is to Mr. Fuller's indefinite scheme. I have called it by way of distinction, *indefinite redemption*, but it is, in fact, no redemption at all. The absurdity of the system may be further proved by the following arguments: viz.—

*Arg. 1.* If Christ died only for sin abstractedly, and his death be not vicarious then, no sinner in particular can have any special interest or propriety in his death, and consequently Paul labored under a mistake, when expressing his faith in the Son of God, he added, "Who loved me, and gave himself for me."

*Arg. 2.* An atonement for sin abstractedly, and an indefinite redemption, are both equally absurd. There can be no redemption where individuals are not ransomed; there can be no atonement where persons are not concerned. An atonement may be made for offences which one man commits against another, but an atonement for offence abstractedly is unintelligible; an atonement may be and was made for the offences of sinners, but an atonement for *sin as sin* is an absurdity. Connected with the atonement is reconciliation. Among men, when an offence is atoned for, the injured party is satisfied, and reconciliation ensues: so when Christ died for the sins of his elect, atonement was made, satisfaction given, and reconciliation took place. [Rom. v. 10.] But on the supposition that Christ died for sin in the abstract, who or what is reconciled?

*Arg. 3.* This notion of indefinite atonement reflects on the wisdom of God: for if, as Mr. Fuller allows, it was the purpose of God to render the atonement effectual only to the elect, then this great object was accomplished by laying their iniquities only upon Christ; and thus according to particular redemption, Jehovah is of *one mind*,

abounding towards his chosen in all wisdom and prudence. But indefinite redemption, coupled with personal election, represents our God as halting between two opinions, as though he had not fully determined whom he would save.

*Arg. 4.* The sentiment now under consideration obscures the glory of the all perfect work of Christ. All that it ascribes to that work is the mere possibility of salvation. In this respect the advocates of indefinite and of universal redemption agree. Both unite in denying that Christ made absolute satisfaction for the sins of men, and effected their real reconciliation to God; clearly perceiving that if Christ died for men *absolutely* their salvation would be certain. [See Dr. Whitby, p. 105, 2d ed. 8vo.] Indefinite redemption does not ascertain the salvation of a single sinner; all that it pretends to effect is to place men in a *salvable state*, and render them *reconcilable* to God. It pretends to be *sufficient* for the salvation of all men, but *secures* the salvation of none. Now it is the glory of redemption that it does not merely render God *placable* and sin *pardonable*; that it does not render God *reconcilable* to man, or man *reconcilable* to God; but that it hath finished transgression, made an end of sin, [Dan. ix. 24.] justified the ungodly, reconciled sinners to God, [Rom. v. 10.] and perfected for ever them that are sanctified. [Heb. x. 14.] Christ did not appear to render men *salvable* and sin *pardonable*; but he appeared to "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "In a word," says one of the valiant of Israel, "either the death of Christ was not real and perfect satisfaction for sin, or if it was, then upon every principle of reason and justice, all that sin must be actually forgiven and done away, which his death was a true and plenary satisfaction for. But on the supposition that his redemption was not absolute, it vanishes into no redemption at all. Go over, therefore, fairly and squarely, to the tents of Socinus, or believe that Christ is the Lamb of God, who, in deed and in truth, beareth and taketh away the sin of the world." [Toplady's Sermons. Works, vol. 3, p. 31]

*Arg. 5.* Mr. Fuller's view of the atonement destroys that beautiful harmony which pervades every part of the glorious priesthood of Christ. This harmony appeared typically under the law. Aaron, the high priest, was taken from his brethren, the children of Israel, to offer gifts and sacrifices. For the sins of Israel only, was atonement made, and not for the neighboring nations, nor yet for transgression indefinitely. The high priest represented Israel only, when he bore their names upon his heart in the breast-plate of judgment, and when he entered into the holy of holies with the names of the twelve tribes upon his breast. He bare their judgment, and theirs only, before the Lord continually; for them he made intercession, and them he solemnly blessed. All this represented that great high priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God. He took not on him human nature indefinitely, but he took on him the seed of Abraham that he might be the *Goel*, the kinsman of the heirs of promise, and so possess a legal right to redeem them. As their high priest, he made reconciliation for the sins of his people; for them he appears in the presence of God; them he represents; for them he intercedes, and them he will finally bless. He saves



none but those for whom he intercedes; he intercedes for none but those for whom he died; he died for none but those to whom he stands related as their kinsman redeemer. This glorious subject filled the soul of the apostle with holy rapture when he exclaimed, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." [Rom. viii. 33, 34.] But, alas, how does Mr. Fuller's doctrine disturb this harmony! If the great atonement be indefinite, every part of Christ's glorious priesthood, resting upon it, must needs be indefinite too. If Christ died for sin abstractedly, it will follow that he appears in the presence of God for no man particularly, that he represents sinners generally, and that he intercedes for men indefinitely; which doctrine, thanks be to God, is false, otherwise not an individual of the human race would be saved.

Thus Mr. Fuller's views stand opposed to the vicarious nature of the death of Christ, and are consequently subversive of one of the most important truths of the gospel.

SECOND. Another essential doctrine of the gospel, denied by Mr. Fuller, is *the transfer of Christ*. This great doctrine is not denied by him in an indirect manner; it is not denied consequentially or by inference; but he denies it boldly, and as plainly as language can possibly express. It is impossible to misunderstand the following quotations: "A voluntary obligation to endure the punishment of another is not guilt, any more than a consequent exemption from obligation in the offender is innocence. Both guilt and innocence are transferable in their effects, but in themselves they are untransferable;" (Dialogues, &c., page 209.) and again, "neither sin nor righteousness are in themselves transferable;" and again, "Debts are transferable, but crimes are not. A third person may cancel the one, but he can only obliterate the effects of the other; the desert of the criminal remains." (Morris Memoirs of Fuller, 412.)

How cautiously soever Mr. Fuller has thought right to express himself on some subjects, he speaks boldly on this. Here we have as plain a denial of a great Protestant doctrine as words are capable of. But again, care must be taken not to misrepresent him. Mr. Fuller does not deny that it was *transferred* to him. What he means by the *imputation* of sin to Christ, we have in his own words: "The imputation of our sin to Christ, consists in the transfer of its effects," but the transfer of *sin itself*, he positively denies as a thing impossible. Amongst men, indeed, it is admitted that guilt cannot be transferred, but its *effects* only. It is admitted that among the sons of men, a third person may cancel debts but not crimes, which with mortals can only be transferrable in their effects; but in the great affair of salvation, our God stands single and alone. In this most glorious work, there is such a display of justice, mercy, wisdom and power, as never entered into the heart of man to conceive, and consequently, can have no parallel in the actions of mortals. "Who hath declared this from ancient time? Who hath told it from that time? have not I the Lord? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me" [Isaiah xlv. 21.]

The question then is simply this: whether, in the great economy of salvation, the sins of men were transferred to Christ, or the effects only. If the former does not appear from the Scripture, then Mr. Fuller's reasoning is correct; but if the word of God plainly teaches that not only the tremendous consequences and effects of sin were transferred to Christ, but also sin itself, then all his reasonings on the subject are words of falsehood. It is freely and joyfully admitted that Christ did bear, as the surety of his people, the effects of their sin, the punishment of their guilt; but to teach that he bore this only, and to deny the translation of sin itself, is another matter, and is, as I shall attempt to prove, a grievous error and contrary to the plainest declarations of the word of God; as for example,

(1.) *The translation of sin itself to Christ, was clearly taught under the law.* It was prefigured by the sinner laying his hands on the head of the animal intended to be sacrificed. Thus when Aaron and his sons were to be hallowed, they were commanded to "put their hands on the head of the bullock," which represented typically the transfer of their sins to the animal which was thereby counted worthy of death; for it is added, "And thou shalt kill the bullock before the Lord, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." [Exod. xxix 10, 11.] Still more striking is the atonement of the scape goat, which is a lively figure of the transfer of sin to Christ, and of his bearing it away for ever. "And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited and he shall let go the goat into the wilderness" [Lev. xvi. 20- 22.] Here, then, we have in a figure first, the real transfer of *sin itself* to Christ; secondly, the transfer of the sins of a *peculiar people*, even the children of Israel; and thirdly, the transfer of *all* their iniquities, all their transgressions, and all their particular sins. In corroboration of this, it is worthy of notice that the word which in the law of Moses is used for the *sin offering*, properly means *sin itself*; so that the victim, in consequence of the typical transfer of iniquity to it, was considered a mass of sin *e. g.* Lev. iv. 21, and al. freq. where the bullock is called a sin offering of the congregation, but the animal is in the Hebrew called *sin* itself. "And he shall carry forth the bullock without the camp, and burn him as he burned the first bullock, THE SIN of the congregation is he." Also the word which is translated *trespass offering*, properly signifies *guilt*; because the animal typically bore the *guilt* of the transgressor who brought it for an offering. Lev. v. 6, 7, 18, and al. freq. "The victims and expiations offered for sins," says Calvin "were called ashmoth a word which properly signifies sin itself. By this appellation, the Spirit intended to suggest, that they were vicarious sacrifices to receive and sustain the curse due to sin. But that which was figuratively represented in the Mosaic sacrifices, is actually exhibited in Christ, the archetype of the figures.

Wherefore, in order to effect a complete expiation, he gave his soul, that is, an *atonement sacrifice for sin*, as the prophet says; so that our guilt, and consequent punishment, being as it were, transferred to him, must cease to be imputed to us." [Institutes, Book 2, chap. xvi. v. 6.]

(2.) The transfer of our sins to Christ is discovered not only in the law of Moses, but also in those parts of the prophets and of the Psalms which testify of him. In these Scriptures it is most clearly and distinctly revealed, not only that he bore our sorrows, and all the *consequences* of our transgressions, but also that he bore our very *sins* themselves; and not only so, but that his bearing our sorrows is the effect of his bearing our sins. Mr. Fuller positively denies that our sins themselves were, or could be transferred to Christ. The effects of them, he says, might, but not the sins themselves. "A voluntary obligation to endure the punishment of another," says he, "is not guilt, any more than a consequent exemption from obligation in the offender is innocence. Both guilt and innocence (or sin and righteousness, as he elsewhere expresses it) are transferable in their *effects*, but in *themselves* they are untransferrable." Thus Mr. Fuller teaches: now we will see what the word of God teaches. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is allowed to be a prophecy of the Messiah, his deep sufferings, and subsequent glory. In this portion of the divine word, the Messiah is represented as a despised and rejected person, as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: but it is more clearly taught that he was so, not on his own account, but on account of his people. Their transgressions wounded him, their iniquities bruised him. It is indeed more distinctly revealed that the *effects* of their iniquity were transferred to him. "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;" but it is not less clearly ascertained, that our sins *themselves* were transferred to him. "All we, like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." v. 6. The Messiah could not have borne our sorrows, unless they had been transferred to him; neither could he have borne our sins, unless they also had been transferred to him. Accordingly we are taught, that he bore our sins as well as their effects; "by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, FOR HE SHALL BEAR THEIR INIQUITIES." v. 11. "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great—because he hath poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors, AND HE BARE THE SIN OF MANY." v. 12.

In these solemn transactions, our Lord Jesus stood as the great Surety of many. "It was exacted and he became responsible: and he opened not his mouth." [See Lowth's translation of Isaiah liii. 7.] As debts are transferred from the original debtor to the surety, so were the sins of many transferred to the spotless Redeemer, and he bore them: and as the surety smarts for the debt which by transfer becomes his own, so Christ was *stricken for the transgression of his people*. Hence it is that he calls their sins his own, as he often does when speaking in the Psalms. In the fortieth Psalm, the speaker, beyond all doubt, is Messiah, as the apostle assures us in Heb. x. 5. In this

Psalm he calls the distress into which his covenant engagements brought him, *a horrible pit*; and though he foreknew the consequences yet in v. 7, he declares his readiness to assume a body, and to accomplish his Father's will in the salvation of his chosen, agreeably to the ancient settlements written in the *Volume of the Book*, saying, "Lo! I come, I delight to do thy will, O my God." Then in verses 11 and 12, he prays for deliverance from his deep distresses, saying, "Withhold not thy tender mercies from me, O Lord, let thy loving, kindness and thy truth continually preserve me. For innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head, so that my heart faileth me." And to this exactly corresponds the evangelical history of the sufferings of Christ. "Now" said he "is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour, but for this cause came I unto this hour." [John xii. 17.] The true cause of all his sufferings was this, that God the Father laid on him the iniquity of us all; and if our iniquity, consequently its effects. Indeed Christ could not have borne the effects if he had not borne sin itself, because one part of the punishment of sin is a sense of guilt and wrath. Therefore when our sin was upon him his heart failed him, and he was not able to look up, but cried out in infinite grief, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" [Matt. xxvii. 46.]

In the sixty-ninth Psalm also, which in various places of the New Testament is applied to Christ, we find the Messiah calling the sins of his people his own; inasmuch as he and they constitute one body. "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in upon my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." And in v. 5 he ascribes his sufferings to their proper cause. "O God, thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from thee." How could the spotless Redeemer speak of *his sins* in any other sense than the one in question? How could they be *his* otherwise than by transfer, as debts are transferred to the surety? But thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer: (Luke xxiv. 46) and since he became voluntarily responsible, "ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Luke v. 26.)

(3.) *This great doctrine is fully attested in the apostolic writings.*

All the expressions of the New Testament writers in relation to this subject seem to have a reference to the legal sacrifices. As the animal offered in sacrifice was called *sin*, because it typically bore transgression, so Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Cor. v. 21.) Yea, he was made a curse for us, (Gal. iii. 13.) and he was so, because he was once offered to bear the sins of many. (Heb. ix. 28.) This one offering was not typical, like the sacrifices of the law, but real expiation of iniquity; nor was the imputation of sin to Jesus of a figurative or improper nature, but an imputation connected with a real transfer of our iniquities to him, as is clearly comprehended in those forcible words of Peter, who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead

to sins should live unto righteousness. [1 Peter ii. 24.]

If there be a doctrine of the gospel with which we should desire to be acquainted, a doctrine on which our salvation and comfort depend, it is that of the translation of our sins to Christ. If we would know Christ, and the fellowship of his sufferings; if we would look on him whom we have pierced and mourn; if we would die unto sin, and bring forth fruit unto God, we must have the gift of the blessed Spirit to reveal to us this great mystery, that the Father hath laid on Christ the iniquity of us all. Why did the holy Redeemer go mourning to the grave? Why did divine justice pursue him? Only because he bare the sin of many. From this fountain the streams of free salvation flow: we die unto sin, we live unto righteousness, only because his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree. O mysterious transfer! O wondrous secret! which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor ever entered into the heart of man to conceive, but which thou, O God, will reveal to thine elect by the Spirit!

I shall only add, in further confirmation of this fundamental doctrine, the following arguments:

*Arg. 1.* If *sin itself* be not transferable, but only its *effects*, then it is not true that Christ bore our sins. Their consequences in part he might bear, but our sins themselves he could not bear, unless they were transferred to him. "He shall bear their iniquities," saith the prophet: for the original word signifies to bear, as a porter carries a burden. The Old Testament saints were well acquainted with their God, as a sin-bearing God, and considered this the glory of his character. "Who is a God like unto thee, that beareth iniquity; and that passeth over the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? [Micah vii. 18.] But because it is impossible among mortals that guilt should be transferred, Mr. F. argues that it is impossible with God.

*Arg. 2.* If sin itself be not transferable, Christ could not have borne all the effects and consequences of our iniquities. The shame and pain which the undefiled Redeemer endured from the Jews, the Roman soldiers, the cross, the nails, and the thorns, were a very small part of the reward of our transgressions. The principal part of the punishment of sin, consists in a *sense of guilt, and of Divine wrath*: but neither of these could Immanuel have endured, unless he had borne our sins themselves.

*Arg. 3.* If sin be not transferable, then infinite justice still finds guilt upon believers and glorified saints, and will do so for ever; in which case, justice would require to be satisfied, and mercy would be displayed at the expense of righteousness. But contrary to this, the Scripture represents it as the glory of salvation, that the guilt of sin itself is done away in the blood of the Lamb. In this consists the glory of his righteousness, not only that the curse is removed, but the *cause* of the curse also; "for as far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our TRANSGRESSIONS from us." Our sins were so transferred to Christ, that if he had not conquered and destroyed them,

they would have destroyed him. His resurrection was a proof that sin was on him no longer; and the apostle confirms this by a remarkable expression in Heb. ix. 26, where, after teaching that Christ bare the sins of many, he says, "he shall appear the second time without sin." "Mark it well," says a holy man, "there was a time that Christ did not appear without sin; for he bore the sins of many; but there is a second time when he shall appear, and then he shall be without sin; so that believers have no sins upon them, and Christ hath none either." [Dr. Crisp—Christ alone exalted, vol. i. p. 428.] A glorious truth, and worth more than a mountain of gold!

*Arg. 4.* If the sins of men were not transferred to Christ, then his sufferings were not of a penal nature, nor could infinite justice be satisfied with them. Justice requires that iniquity should be punished, but the sufferings of Christ were not punishment, unless our sins were transferred to him. An innocent person may *suffer*, but an innocent person cannot properly be *punished*; nor can justice admit that an innocent person, *considered as innocent*, should suffer in the room of the guilty. But divine justice is satisfied with the sufferings of Christ; because he bore both iniquity and its consequences, and thus God hath "condemned sin in the flesh."

"Penalty," says a judicious author, "is suffering under a charge of offence, and without a just imputation of guilt, punishment cannot in equity be inflicted on any subject. It is a most unrighteous thing to punish any one considered as innocent; and therefore, if it was not possible with God to impute sin to the innocent Jesus, neither could he inflict punishment on him; and if Christ did not endure *proper* punishment, his suffering were not, nor could be, satisfactory to the law and justice of God for our sins, and it is in vain to hope for salvation through his sufferings and death." (Brine's Sermon on 2 Cor. v. 21.)

What a serious thing it is that any professed friends of Christ should be found opposing this foundation principle of the gospel!

THIRD. Intimately connected with the foregoing, is the doctrine of JUSTIFICATION; which important article, although it seems to have been acknowledged with one consent by all the reformed churches, is entirely set aside by Mr. Fuller. Justification is a judicial term, and means an acquittal from guilt; it stands opposed, not to punishment, but to the *desert of punishment*. When a man, charged with a crime, is tried according to the laws of his country, the crime is either proved against him or it is not. If it be, he is then pronounced *guilty*; but if it be not, he is declared to be *not guilty*, or in other words, he is *justified* from the charge. But if a man be really guilty of a crime, he may be *pardoned*, but he cannot be *justified*. Pardon is merely an exemption from punishment, but justification is freedom from its *desert*. If mercy be extended to the criminal, he is pardoned, but no created power can justify him. But what is impossible with men is accomplished by our God. Wonder, O heavens! be astonished O earth, Jehovah not only pardons, but justifies the ungodly! He not only

remits their punishment, but removes their sins also; so that heaven, earth, and hell are challenged to bring one fault against the ransomed of the Lord, if they be able. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died." (Rom. viii. 33.) Now that this great doctrine is wholly set aside by Mr. Fuller's principles, can be scarcely doubted by any person who reads and understands the following quotations. "Debts are transferable but crimes are not. A third person may cancel the one, but can only obliterate the *effects* of the other: the *desert* of the criminal remains." And again, "Neither sin nor righteousness are in themselves transferable." And again, "That the Scriptures represent believers as receiving only the benefits or the effect of Christ's righteousness in justification, is a remark of which I am not able to see the fallacy: nor does it follow that his obedience itself is not imputed to them. Obedience itself may be, and is imputed, while its effects only are imparted, and consequently received." If this be really the case, then there is no such thing as the justification of a sinner, except in the same sense which the Papists themselves allow, which indeed is not justification but pardon only. And although Mr. Fuller uses the term justification, because it is found in the Scripture, yet it is evident he means no more by it than an exemption from punishment, or treating the sinner as though he were righteous. [Memoirs, 412.] He positively denies that sin itself is or can be transferred from the sinner, or the desert of punishment removed, or the righteousness of Christ imparted; which doctrine, if the Scriptures be true, I will prove is utterly false.

The ideal meaning of the word to justify, is expressed by justice in weights and measures: it is derived from a correct beam, just weights, a righteous balance. "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in mete yard, in weight or in measure. Scales of justice, weights of justice, an ephah of justice, and a hin of justice, shall ye have." [Lev. xix. 35, 36.] A just or righteous man, therefore, is one who, when weighed in the balance, is not found wanting; one whose obedience corresponds with the holy law. "Judgment also will I lay to the law, and righteousness to the plummet." But that obedience which is in any way lighter or shorter than the holy law of God is not righteousness; for "justice and judgment are the basis of his throne." [Ps. lxxxix. 14.] When Jehovah, therefore, is said to justify a man, he does more than pardon him; and as his judgment is always according to truth, he never condemns the innocent, nor deals with any as though they were righteous, who are not really so.

Nothing is more common amongst men than the pardon of offences, but the justification of an offender, consistently with truth, is with them impossible. All that created power can righteously do, is to justify the innocent, and *condemn* the guilty. But it is the glory of Jehovah's character, that he is a just God, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. In the stupendous work he brings to nought all the wisdom and disputing of this world. [Is. xxviii. 21.] In this his masterpiece of wisdom and of power, he accomplishes that which with men is impossible; viz. a transfer of sin and righteousness, and thus obliterates not only the *effects* of sin, but *sin itself*. And in

answer to all the objections of carnal men, as to the possibility of this great event, it is thus written, "Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and wonder; for the wisdom of their wise shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." This marvellous work, if we are to believe an inspired apostle, consists not in destroying the wisdom of the wise, but in that great event by which this effect is produced. It is no great achievement with our God to destroy the wisdom of this world, but to save and justify the ungodly by his precious blood of the cross is an amazing work indeed. This is God's marvellous work, this is God's wonder; by which he "destroys the wisdom of the wise, and brings to nothing the understanding to the prudent."

If we attend to what the Scripture says relative to the great blessing of justification, we shall find the term used in its strict and proper meaning, and also in a more extended sense. This has given occasion to many Protestant writers to teach that justification consists of two parts, namely remission of sin, and the imputation of Christ's perfect obedience. Justification, in its strict and original meaning, is that act of God's abounding grace, whereby he takes away the guilt of his elect, and constitutes them faultless and spotless in the eye of infinite justice, through the death and resurrection of Christ. In this sense believers are said to be *justified from sin*, and to be "justified from all things." In this sense the word is used in that triumphant exclamation of the Apostle, "Who shall lay any thing, to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth:" so that a justified man is one against whom no charge can be righteously brought; and in this respect, justification is ascribed to Jesus' *blood*. But as the humiliation, sufferings, and death of Christ were not only an expiation of iniquity, but also a solemn act of obedience to the law of God, so our righteousness consists not only in deliverance from guilt, as in Psalm, li. 14, and Rom. iv. 6, 7, 8., but also in our standing complete in the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

Having thus attempted an explanation of terms, I now proceed to prove that Mr. Fuller's doctrine, as above stated in his own words, is utterly false, being directly opposed to the word of God.

1. The Scripture teaches, as plainly as words can express, that God, in the justification of his people, not only obliterates the effects of their sins, through the blood of the cross, but sin itself; not only does he exempt them from the consequences of their transgressions, but takes away the guilt of their transgressions also.

It has been proved that the iniquity of the people was transferred to Christ, and laid on him, so that it will of course follow, that iniquity is no more to be found upon believers, since it was all transferred to Jesus. It is only in this sense that God "hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel." [Num. xxiii. 21.]



To inculcate this all important truth, the Holy Spirit has been pleased to employ many very strong expressions and figures, of which the following are a sample.

(1.) Believers are said, in reference to their justification, to be made "free from sin." Rom. vi. 7. The principal part of David's petitions in Psalm li. relate to this blessing. He does not seem so much concerned to be delivered from the punishment of his sins, as from the guilt of it. But if he had believed that guilt was not transferrable, he would never have prayed for deliverance from it. He had, indeed, murdered Uriah the Hittite, and the guilt of this action distressed his soul. But as the Lord had declared, by the prophet Nathan, that Jehovah had "put away his sin," he was encouraged to pray, v. 14, "deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness." In this petition, David expresses his conviction that the righteousness of God could take away his guilt, and, although his soul was stained with the foul murder of an innocent man, yet he knew that God his Saviour could wash him clean, and render his polluted soul "whiter than snow," v. 7. To this agrees the language of the Apostle when describing the blessedness of believers, he says, the "blood of Christ purges their conscience from dead works;" and accordingly they have "no more conscience of sins," but are become perfect forever in the eye of the law. Heb. ix. 14; x. 2,4. This judicial freedom from sin is confirmed and illustrated at large by Paul in his epistle to the Romans, chap. vi. He begins by repelling the charge of licentiousness brought against the doctrines of grace and by establishing the holy tendency of this very truth: "How shall we, that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" He further illustrates the subject, by the holy ordinance of Baptism, and the believer's union to Christ, in his death and resurrection; who, as the surety of many, became free from their sins in his death. "For he that is dead, is freed from sin," or rather *is justified from sin*. He then proceeds to prove that the believer is dead with Christ, and justified with him; and after shewing that this blessedness, so far from leading to licentiousness, is the spring of all true satisfaction, he thus concludes, "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

(2.) Believers receive not the remission of *punishment* merely, but also the remission of their *sins*. This blessing, so often spoken of in Scripture, involves pardon, but comprehends more than pardon merely. It implies that sin is put away; 2 Sam. xii. 13. Heb. ix. 26. Accordingly, they whose sins are remitted stand no more in need of atonement; for "where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." [Heb. x. 18.] Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness, saying, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are remitted, and whose sins; are covered, blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." And again it is written, "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive the remission of sins." [Acts x. 43.] And again, "This is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." [Matt. xxvi. 28.]

(3.) The sins of believers are *blotted out*. To blot out, is to obliterate; Mr. Fuller, however, says, that the *effects* only of sin can be obliterated; he denies that *sin itself* is, or can be so. But what saith the Scripture? "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." And, because this is impossible with men, and peculiar to Jehovah himself, it is added, "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel." [Isa. xlv. 22, 23.] Agreeable to this, the Psalmist prayed; "Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities." (Psalm li. 9.) And again it is written, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts iii. 19.) No figure can more strongly express the entire obliteration of all the sins and iniquities of the people of God, than this. As the debt which has been discharged, is obliterated from the creditor's books; or, as the sun dissipates for ever the thick cloud, which, in the morning, appears in an eastern sky, so Jehovah obliterates the sins of his chosen, when he justifies them by his grace. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for my own sake; and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance; let us plead together; declare thou, that thou mayest be justified."

(4.) The sins of the Lord's people are said to be *removed, or taken away* from them, and that in reference to the *guilt* thereof. This, like every other gospel blessing, is taught in the law of Moses. Aaron was commanded to lay his hands upon the head of the scape goat, to confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, putting them upon the head of the goat; and he was commanded to send all away, by the hand of a fit man, into the wilderness. It is then added, "And the goat shall bare upon him all their iniquities, into a land not inhabited; and he shall let go the goat into the wilderness," (Lev. xvi. 22.) This was a lively type of the "Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." (John i. 29.) He taketh away not the *punishment* of sin merely, but *sin itself*; "For, as far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." (Psa. ciii. 12.) And without doubt, it is in reference to the Messiah, the Branch, and to His death, as the surety of the guilty, that Jehovah said by the Prophet, "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day," (Zech. iii. 9) for we know, that "he was manifested to take away our sins." (1 John iii. 5.) How, then, can any man who believes the Scriptures say that "sin and righteousness are not in themselves transferable?"

(5.) The efficacy of the blood of Christ is such as to annihilate the iniquities he bore, which comprehends the destruction of sin, in its guilt, power, and awful consequences. Hence the lofty language of the prophet, when predicting that Messiah should be cut off, declares, he shall "finish the transgression, make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness;" which is thus explained by the apostle, "When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high;" or, in language still more similar to that of the prophet, "but now once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

Although the Messiah was crucified through weakness, yet his death is always represented as a glorious victory over our sins, which were his chief enemies. How often is he said to come with vengeance, &c. In Isaiah lxiii. he appears returning from the enemies territory with garments dyed in the blood of his foes, declaring at the same time his righteousness and ability to save, having conquered our sins and overcome the world. In Micah vii. 19, the triumphs of Messiah are related, in terms referring to the destruction of Pharaoh and the Egyptian host in the Red Sea. "He will subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." For as Pharaoh and his host were destroyed in the deep, so the Messiah, it is foretold, would conquer our sins, and annihilate them for ever. In the faith of a triumphant Saviour, holy Zacharias spake, saying, "That he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness," &c. And in the enjoyment of this great salvation, the Apostle exclaims, "But now, being made free from sin, (i. e. from the guilt of sin, as in v. 7.) and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end ever lasting life."

If, then, believers are made free from sin; if their sins are remitted; if they are blotted out; if they are removed from them; if they are finished, obliterated, and put away; in fine, if believers are so justified, that neither heaven, earth, nor hell, can righteously lay any thing to their charge—then, that doctrine is false which asserts that sin and righteousness are not transferable, but only in their effects.

2. The Scriptures clearly teach that the righteousness of the Lord Christ is transferred to believers, imparted to them, and received by them. This indeed is so clearly and unequivocally declared in the divine word, that it is marvellous any Protestant should be found denying it. Many of Mr. Fuller's admirers would refuse to believe, on any other evidence than their own senses, that so excellent a man would assert that "righteousness is in itself not transferable, but only its effects;" "that believers, in justification, receive "only the *benefits* or the *effects* of Christ's righteousness, and these only are *imparted* and consequently *received*." He has indeed admitted that Christ's obedience is *imputed*, but we have before learned what he understands by imputation of righteousness; he means nothing more by it "than the transfer of its *effects*, or treating the sinner as *though he were righteous*." [Memoirs, page 412.] But, alas! what corruption of the gospel is this! What a lamentable instance of handling the word of God deceitfully! How plainly does the Scripture declare that "the righteousness of God is unto all and upon all them that believe;" which cannot be true in any sense, unless this righteousness be transferred to them. With what rapture does the redeemed church express her triumphant faith in this sublime truth when she exclaims, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." In this Scripture the church expresses the ground of her rejoicing, which is not that the *effects* and *benefits* merely, but the righteousness of Christ itself,

was transferred and imparted to her, as really as the best robe was transferred to the Prodigal son and received by him. "To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white."

So far is it from being true, that God, in the justification of a sinner, treats him "as though he were righteous," that the Scripture declares in so many words that he constitutes him righteous. And to assert that believers in justification receive only the effects or benefits of Christ's righteousness, amounts to nothing short of a verbal contradiction of the word of God. The apostle in an inspired treatise of justification, in Rom. v., illustrates the subject at large. He introduces the first Adam as a figure or type of him who was to come. He contrasts the offence of the first man and its abounding, with the gift of righteousness through the second Adam and its abounding. He declares that, as in Adam's one offence, all his seed are guilty; so in the one righteousness of Christ are all Messiah's seed justified. And although the offence hath abounded in the awful reign of death, yet the free grace of God in the gift of righteousness hath much more abounded unto everlasting life. Here we discover that the righteousness of Christ is called *the free gift*, the *gift by grace*, and the *gift of righteousness*: we also learn that it hath *abounded* unto many, that the many *receive* it, and that it *comes upon* them. These expressions, if they mean any thing, mean that the righteousness of Christ is *transferred* for justification, and that the obedience of Christ is imparted to the believer, and received by him, as a robe imparted by the donor, and received by the wearer. "Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment (i. e. the offence) came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift (i. e. righteousness) came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made, or constituted sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be constituted righteous." According to Scripture, therefore, God first constitutes his people righteous, and then treats them as such: he first transfers to them the righteousness of Christ, and then the effects necessarily follow.

"For this Thy boundless favor,  
We thank Thee, Lord of heaven;  
'Tis through Thy love we daily prove,  
Thou hast our sins forgiven.

Ten thousand thanks we render  
To Thee, the Lord Jehovah;  
For Thou dost bless with righteousness,  
Thy bride, the favor'd Beulah."

3. The Scriptures speak abundantly of the glorious state of believers even in this life, considered as justified persons in Christ, which they would not do if believers received only the effects of Christ's righteousness. They are often spoken of as persons who

possess a righteousness, and a perfect one; and this righteousness is the cause of their glorious state and exalted character. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn! This is the heritage of the servant of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." It is in reference to her union to the Lord Christ, and her participation of his glorious righteousness, that it is said to Zion, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." The word 'ôr relates to the rising of the sun, and hence, in the revelations, the church is said to be "clothed with the sun," to express her union to the Lord our righteousness, and her justification in him; "for the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee."

The lofty description which the word of God gives of believers, is scarcely short of blasphemy in the eyes of a natural man. Amidst all their sins and sorrows, and doubt and fears, and weakness and failings, they are *perfect* in the eye of the law; they are *clean*; they are *whiter than snow*. Christ calls them his love, his dove, his *undefiled*, and says, "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." Even in this life they have a completeness in him, so as to appear in the court of God without spot. He hath loved them, and *washed them from their sins* in his blood, and therefore he calls them his "undefiled." Hence they are exalted to be priests and kings, through the blood of the Lamb; and shall trample upon sin, and death, and the world, and the curse of the law; as it is written, "in thy righteousness shall they be exalted."

4. The Scriptures represent believers as possessing a *title* to eternal life, in consequence of their justification in the righteousness of Christ. Now this could not be the case if they were not constituted righteous. If God merely treated them *as though* they were righteous, they could possess no *title to* life, nor could it be demanded on the footing of justice. John xvii. 24. Yet we find the Lord Jesus claiming eternal life for his people, not merely on the ground of his Father's promise, but on the ground of his own righteousness. Indeed this is the foundation of all his intercession for them. Rom. viii. 34. He appears in the holiest of all, like a lamb newly slain, and every request founded upon his righteousness is irresistible. The power which the Father hath given him, to bestow eternal life upon his chosen, is nothing but the reward of his righteousness. "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." And as he who sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are both one in the eye of the law, his title to eternal life becomes theirs also. Accordingly he uses the language of confidence, when asking their salvation, "Father, I will that they also whom thou gavest me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory."

One design of the apostle, in his dissertation on this subject in Rom. v., is to shew that as death is the wages of Adam's offence, so life is the reward of Christ's righteousness. He even ascribes much more efficacy to the latter, than to the former, and argues, that if death reign over all them to whom the offence is imputed, much more shall life

attend the imputation of righteousness. "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they who receive abundance of grace, (i. e. who are the objects of abundant mercy) and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." Here the apostle assures us that believers receive righteousness as a free gift, flowing from abundant grace, and that, through this righteousness, they are justly entitled to live and reign eternally with Christ; or, as he elsewhere expresses it, "That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life." Hence the heavenly bliss is called "the hope of righteousness;" and to this agree the words of Isaiah, "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance forever." Indeed, eternal life is represented in Scripture, as the just reward of Christ's righteousness, freely given, and freely received, as much so as, yea and much more than, the reign of death is the just reward of Adam's offence; "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

If the sins of believers are blotted out, obliterated, and put away; if the righteousness of Christ is transferred to them, and this entitles them to reign in life with him, then it will follow that those who are engaged, from one Lord's day to another, in teaching that "neither sin nor righteousness are in themselves transferable;" that believers in justification, "receive only the *benefits or effects* of Christ's righteousness," are false witnesses for God, and are engaged in speaking lies in the name of the Lord. And it should never be forgotten, that although the heavenly Comforter, the Holy Ghost, is the author of all meekness, and in his influences he is compared to a dove, yet he has inspired his servants, the prophets, to write the severest things against those who "utter error against the Lord, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and cause the drink of the thirsty to fail." And, notwithstanding all the pretensions of such men to universal charity and liberality of sentiment, he exposes the secret iniquity of their hearts, and calls them by very foul names. He calls them *liars*, and *churls*, and *vile persons* and *workers of iniquity* because they "devise wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right." In perfect accordance with this, was the conduct of our Lord. His whole character was made up of meekness, kindness, and love; yet how severe were his invectives against those builders, the Scribes and Pharisees. In this also he is imitated, in measure, by all his faithful disciples, whom he has so earnestly warned to "beware of false prophets who come in sheep's clothing." For in the same proportion believers are humbled with spiritual discoveries of the divine glory in the grand plan of salvation, will their holy zeal be inflamed against every corruption of the gospel, so as not to bear them that are evil, not even to receive them unto their house, nor to bid them God's speed.

I shall recapitulate the substance of what has been urged above, on the subject of free justification, in the following arguments.

*Arg. 1.* If sin and righteousness be not in themselves transferable, but only their effects; if believers receive only the *benefits* of Christ's righteousness; and if sin itself cannot be obliterated, then it follows that there is no such thing as the *justification* of a sinner. Pardon there may be, but justification there cannot be; and, consequently, the apostle was egregiously mistaken when he uttered those memorable words, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."

*Arg. 2.* If God, in the justification of a sinner, merely accounts him righteous, and treats him as such, when, in reality, he is not so, then his judgment is not according to truth. But far be this from our God. Justice and judgment are the basis of his throne. He hath declared, that he will lay righteousness to the line, and judgment to the plummet. He will not in judgment either condemn the innocent or clear the guilty. If, therefore, he accounts any of Adam's race righteous, it is because he has first *constituted* them so.

It is with much pleasure I quote the sound words of Mr. Hervey on this subject, in his letters to Mr. John Wesley. The latter had asserted that "God through Christ, first *accounts*, and then *makes* us righteous." To this Mr. Hervey replies. "How? Does God account us righteous before he makes us so? Then his judgment is not according to truth. Then he reckons us to be righteous, when we are really otherwise. Is not this absolutely irreconcilable with our ideas of the Supreme Being, and equally incompatible with the doctrines of Scripture? There we are taught that God *justifieth the ungodly*. Mark the words. *The ungodly* are the objects of the divine justification. But can he account the ungodly righteous? Impossible! How then does he act? He first makes them righteous. After what manner? By imputing to them the righteousness of his dear Son. Then he pronounces them righteous, and most truly. He treats them as righteous, and most justly. In short, then, he absolves them from guilt; adopts them for his children, and makes them heirs of his eternal kingdom." [Letters to Wesley. Letter x.]

*Arg. 3.* If God merely deals with his people *as though they were* righteous when he bestows eternal life upon them, then mercy indeed may be displayed, but justice cannot be satisfied. Justice requires equally, that the guilty should die, and that the righteous should live. If guilt cannot be obliterated, but the "desert of the criminal remains," then righteousness and truth forbid that he should live: but if the sinner be constituted righteous, then, as such, justice forbids that he should die. In judgment, justice does not merely *admit* of these effects, but it *requires* them. Accordingly, a believer is "passed from death unto life," in a judicial or forensic sense, because he has received that great blessing which is called "justification of life."

This wondrous display of justice and mercy constitutes the very glory of the gospel, and renders it infinitely superior to any thing that ever entered into the mind of man to conceive. For "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart

of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." In the plan of salvation, infinite justice and infinite mercy, sweetly harmonize. Mercy is not displayed at the expense of righteousness, nor is justice so displayed as to obscure the glory of sovereign mercy; but in the wondrous scheme of redemption, justice goes forth in all its brightness; and mercy as a lamp that burneth. They are greatly mistaken who imagine that if salvation be a matter of justice, no room is left for the exercise of free, unmerited mercy. Such objectors forget that those who receive the gift of righteousness, do so in consequence of abounding grace. In all the mysterious plan grace reigns. But how does it a reign? Through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

FOURTH. Another doctrine, clearly ascertained in the word of God, with which Mr. Fuller's views are entirely at variance, is the *federal union of Christ and his people*. By federal union, I mean that covenant, or representative union, which subsists between Christ and his elect, prior to their believing in him, and which is the foundation of vital union to him. There is a sense in which the chosen of God are not in Christ until renewed by his grace, Rom. xvi. 7; when by faith and love he dwells in them, and they dwell in him; and this has been rightly termed *vital union*. But there is another kind of union, which subsisted between Christ and his elect, in every step of his meditorial work, and in every act of his most glorious redemption; so that when he obeyed they obeyed in him, when he died they died in him, and when he rose they rose in him. This union is the foundation of all the benefits which believers ever did, or ever will receive from the death of Christ; and this union, by whatever other name it may be called, is what I mean by *federal union*. It is necessary that I should first prove the doctrine itself; and then show how Mr. Fuller's views are opposed to it though I do not find that he directly notices it in his "Dialogues. &c."

One design of the apostle, in this chain of reasoning throughout Rom. v., is to establish this important doctrine. He introduces the two Adams, as the covenant or federal heads of their respective seeds. He insists upon the union of the first Adam and all his seed, so that when he fell, they all fell in him; and when he committed the offence, judgment came upon them, because of their federal union unto him. Now Adam was a figure or type of him that was to come. As Adam and his seed stood or fell together, so is it with the Lord Christ and his seed. For as when the one federal head offended, the offence came upon all men whom he represented; so, when the second Adam obeyed, righteousness came upon all the men whom he represented. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so, by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous." All this proceeds upon the supposition of union, and of *federal union*; for, unless union subsisted at the time Adam's offence was committed, justice would forbid that the offence should be imputed to all men. Yet we know that death reigns, even over them who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression; even so, because of the union of the second Adam and his seed when he obeyed, righteousness is imputed to them all, and they reign in life, although, in their



own persons, they have never perfectly obeyed the law. Accordingly we find it clearly taught in Scripture, that Christ and his people are one; he the head, they the members; and that, in the eye of the law, they were one body when he obeyed, died, and rose. "Thy dead man shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise." In this Scripture we are taught, that those for whom Christ died are "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;" that federally they died with him, revived with him, and rose with him. And this will appear more fully, if we consider that the words *together with*, are a supplant, and that the text may more literally be thus rendered, "Thy dead men shall live, even my dead body shall they arise," the meaning of which is thus explained by the apostle; "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins; hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." That this refers to *federal* union is clear; for believers are not yet exalted in *their own persons*, to sit in heavenly places; but having a representative existence in Christ, they sat down there with him, when he entered into the holiest, and took his seat at the right hand of God, in the highest heavens. And in reference to this federal union, believers are said to be crucified with Christ, dead with him, buried with him, and justified in him, and raised up together with him. For that spiritual or vital union to Christ, which believers enjoy by faith, is the effect of this federal union, as the word of God abundantly teaches. "We thus judge," says the apostle, "that if one died for all, then were all dead;" that is, if one died as the covenant head, or representative of all, then all died in that one. This is federal union. "And that he died for all, that they who live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again." Whereby the apostle teaches, that because Christ died as the representative of all his covenant seed, the spirit causes them to die unto sin, through his death, and to live unto him, through his resurrection. This will appear still clearer, if we consider Paul's prayer for the believing Ephesians, that they might know the mystery of the Spirit's work on their hearts, and understand how it corresponds with the resurrection and exaltation of Christ. "That ye may know, what is the exceeding greatness of his power, to usward who believe, ACCORDING to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." Here we see that the work of the Holy Ghost, in the hearts of the saints, which produces spiritual union to Christ in his death and resurrection, is a work corresponding with the work wrought in Christ himself, and is the necessary effect of it. This is the mystery which the apostle himself desired, above all things to comprehend. "That I may know him, and the POWER of his resurrection, and the FELLOWSHIP of his sufferings, being made CONFORMABLE unto his death."

The doctrine of *federal* union as the foundation of *vital* or spiritual union to Christ, has been acknowledged by most writers who have firmly maintained eternal and personal election; but it is gratifying to know that the Lord's people, who are more

remarkable for their attachment to the first principles of the gospel, than to the deeper doctrines of it, have been led to see that their salvation depends upon this very thing.

Mr. John Bunyan, in the account he has given of the Lord's dealings with him, has recorded, with artless simplicity, the establishment of his soul in this most glorious truth. "Now I saw," says he, "that Christ Jesus was looked upon of God, and should be looked upon by us, as that common or public person, in whom all the whole body of his elect are always to be considered and reckoned; that we fulfilled the law by him, died by him, rose from the dead by him, got the victory over sin, death, the devil, and hell, by him; when he died, we died, and so of his resurrection. 'Thy dead men shall live,' &c. saith he. And again, 'after two days he will revive us, and the third day we shall live in his sight;' which is now fulfilled, by the sitting down of the Son of Man at the right hand of the Majesty of the heavens; according to that to Ephesians, 'He hath raised us up together, and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' Ah! these blessed considerations and Scriptures, with many others of like nature, were in those days made to spangle in mine eye; so that I have cause to say, 'Praise ye the Lord in his sanctuary, praise him in the firmament of his power; praise him for his mighty acts, praise him according to his excellent greatness.'" [Grace abounding, &c.]

But, alas! these soul-comforting considerations, which have supported the drooping and afflicted saints in all ages, are not true, unless Mr. Fuller's sentiments are false. They cannot stand, if it be true that the atonement of Christ is indefinite, or that Christ died for sin abstractedly. But if the Scripture most clearly teaches that Christ died as the federal head of his chosen, and that their salvation depends upon their *federal* union to him when he died and rose again; then the absurd notion that the atonement of Christ was *intended* only for some men, but is *sufficient* for all mankind will fall to the ground.

FIFTH. The Scripture clearly discovers a necessary connection between the death of Christ, and the conversion or faith of those for whom he died; that is, the death of Christ hath *obtained* faith, repentance, and every grace of the Spirit, for those who are interested in it. Many of our English writers, especially the old ones, have used the term *purchase*, in this sense; and have often said that Christ by his death, *purchased* faith, repentance, and the Spirit for his elect. Now, although there are reasons why the term *purchase* should not be used in reference to these things, yet what those writers meant by the term is a doctrine fully ascertained in the word of God. Without, therefore, dwelling upon words, the scriptural doctrine, that a necessary connection subsists between the death of Christ and the conversion of his redeemed, is entirely set aside by the doctrine of Mr. Fuller. It must appear plainly to every one who considers the subject, that if Christ so died for *sin* as to open a way for the efflux of divine mercy to millions of sinners, or only to one sinner, according as the sovereign pleasure of God shall decree; then it will follow, that whatever connection there, may be between the *purpose* of God and the conversion of millions, there can be none

between the *death of Christ* and their conversion: for, according to their scheme, one sinner only might have been saved by the death of Christ. It is only necessary, therefore, to prove that there is such a connection, and that the faith and repentance of the ransomed is secured most infallibly, by the blood of the Redeemer; and then the scheme of indefinite atonement will appear to be entirely false.

It has been proved that a federal union subsisted between Christ and his elect, when he died and rose again; and also that their vital, or spiritual union to him, is the effect of his dying and rising again for them. When the apostle says that the exceeding power displayed in believers is *according* to the power wrought in Christ, he means, not only that there is a *similitude* between these two instances of Almighty power, but also that there is a *connection*; and that faith is the necessary effect of the resurrection of Christ. The power of the Spirit towards them that believe, and its connection with the work of Christ, is thus illustrated by an excellent writer. "After that christians are joined to Christ, and made mystically bone in his bone, and flesh of his flesh, Christ worketh of them effectually by his Holy Spirit, and his works are principally three. First, he causeth his own death to work effectually the death of all sins, and to kill the power of the flesh. Secondly, his burial causeth the burial of sins as it were in a grave. Thirdly, his resurrection sendeth quickening power into them, and serveth to make them rise out of their sin in which they were dead and buried, to work righteousness, and to live in holiness of life." [Perkin's Estate of a Christian, sec. 33] But the Spirit operates thus upon none but those who federally died and rose with Christ, otherwise the harmony of the Sacred Three, in the execution of salvation, would be destroyed, and the regeneration of a believer would no longer correspond with the resurrection of Christ. But that he does thus work upon all for whom Christ died, and *because* he died for them, is evident from the following considerations.

1. The new birth, and the sanctification of a sinner, are plainly ascribed to this, as the procuring cause, namely, that Christ died for that sinner. Thus Christ "gave himself for his church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word." [Eph. v. 26.] And again, the apostle says, "Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people." [Titus ii. 14.] Here we are taught not only that there is a connection between the death of Christ and the regeneration of those for whom he died, but also that his death is the *meritorious* cause thereof.

2. The deliverance of the people of God from the slavery of sin and Satan, is said expressly to have been *obtained* for them by the death of Christ:—"He entered in once, into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." [Heb. ix. 12.] This redemption, which is said to have been obtained, comprehends entire deliverance from all bondage, and includes the gift of the Spirit. So that there is a meritorious power in the death of Christ to secure these blessings to all for whom he died.

3. Faith, and consequently other spiritual blessings, are freely given on the *behalf* of Christ, or *for the sake* of his death; which clearly shows a necessary connection between them. "Unto you it is given on the behalf of Christ—to believe in him." [Phil. i. 29.] Accordingly we find that the exalted Saviour hath received of the Father power to bestow spiritual blessings upon his redeemed. Ps. lxxviii. 18. Comp. Acts ii. 33. And the reasoning of the apostle in another place, on this subject, is very convincing, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" [Rom. viii. 32.] Here we learn that all spiritual blessings—faith, repentance, sanctification, &c. are involved in the gift of Christ, and bestowed for his sake; that for whom God delivers up Christ, much more to them, will he bestow these. Now, if God gave his Son for all mankind, he will with him freely bestow (not merely offer, but freely give,) to all mankind, faith, repentance, and every spiritual blessing; but this we know he does not. Yet if God gave his Son for all his elect, he will also with him give them inferior blessings—faith, repentance, &c.; and this we know he does. But if God delivered up his Son to die for sin *indefinitely*, then there is no reason, arising from the death of Christ, why God should bestow spiritual blessings on any of the human race.

4. The Scripture distinctly ascertains the conversion of *many* transgressors, and assigns this as the reason, that Christ bear the iniquities of *many*. "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify MANY; for he shall bear THEIR iniquities. [Isaiah liii. 11, 12.] If we ask, therefore, why any of the sons of men are justified by faith, or by the knowledge of Christ, the answer is, because he bare their iniquities. It is impossible that only *one sinner* should be saved by the atonement of Christ, if he bare the sins of many; and it is equally impossible that the whole world should be saved by his death, unless he bare the sins of every man; because there exists a necessary connection between Christ bearing the sins of a transgressor, and the justification of that transgressor by faith. In this view, there is a glorious harmony in the plan of salvation throughout; and divine sovereignty shines in the redemption of Christ in all its transcendent glory. It is far from being true, that one sinner only might have been saved by the atonement of Christ, for "God will give his Son a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." The reason is, he bare the sin of *many*, and died for *many*, and made intercession for *many*; and such is the merit of his death, that God will surely give him the *many* for whom he died.

5. The Scripture teaches that men are converted, or brought to Zion, in consequence of their having been redeemed. Their redemption by blood, secures their salvation by power: and because Christ hath redeemed them by his blood, he claims them, *ipso facto*, as his own. Therefore they are called the "ransomed of the Lord." "For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. THEREFORE they shall come and sing in the height of Zion." [Jer. xxxi. 11, 12.] "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and shall come to Zion with songs." [Isaiah xxxv. 10.] "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."

Thus it appears that there is a necessary connection between the vicarious death of Christ, and the conversion of those for whom he died, which cannot be the else if the atonement be indefinite.

SIXTH. The last error I shall charge upon Mr. Fuller's principles is one which is not openly avowed in his writings, but which follows as a deduction from his general sentiments: namely, that *not the obedience of Christ, but the act of believing, is imputed to us for righteousness*. This is, in short, neither more nor less than a revival of the Neonomian error, which error consists principally in the following doctrine; viz., "That Christ, having satisfied for the breach of the old law of works, hath procured and given a new law, a remedial law, which is the gospel, containing precepts, promises and threatening, and which saith, DO AND LIVE, in some milder sense than the first covenant. That faith in Christ is the principal part of that obedience which is required by the new law, and this is accepted for righteousness, instead of that perfect unceasing obedience, which the law of ten commands requires." [See the preface to Beart's *Eternal Law, &c.*] This is the marrow of what has been called Neonomianism; which doctrine, as to substance, is taught in the writings of Mr. Baxter, of the Arminians, and of the most learned of the Roman Catholics. It remains, however, to be proved, that it is substantially taught in the writings of Mr. Fuller; and for this purpose I urge the following reasons.

1. All the efficacy unto justification which Mr. Fuller allows to the obedience and death of Christ is, that the Redeemer merited this great blessing for us, on the conditions of our believing the gospel; or, in other words, that the blood of Christ hath merited salvation for us, on milder terms than those required by the law of works. Mr. Fuller expressly teaches that "there is such a fulness in the satisfaction of Christ, as is sufficient for the salvation of the whole world, were the whole world to believe on him." "Now this '*fulness*' does not absolutely secure the salvation of the whole world, but only on certain terms;" accordingly it follows, that not the obedience of Christ itself is the *matter of* our justification, but our performance of the condition; for Christ hath only so merited that we should be justified on *condition of our obedience to the gospel*.

2. It has been proved that according to Mr. Fuller's views, the death of Christ is not vicarious; and if not his death, so also is not his obedience to the law. If Christ did not die in the *stead* of his elect, but only made an indefinite atonement for sin, it will follow that his obedience to the law was not for them, or in *their stead*, any more than his death. This being admitted, it will follow, moreover, that Christ's obedience cannot be *that very thing* which justifies a sinner, because it is necessary that Christ should be constituted a covenant head of all his people, and act as their representative ere his obedience can be imputed to them for justification. Rom. v. 14, 19. But as this is denied, it must follow, that not the *obedience* of Christ, but our *believing* is counted to

us for righteousness.

3. We have before seen that Mr. Fuller denies the *transfer* of the Redeemer's obedience to the sinner as a thing impossible; Dialogues, &c. page 211. and 213.] and if so, it must follow of course that this obedience cannot be *the very thing* that justifies the sinner. Mr. Fuller does indeed speak of "the obedience of Christ *imputed*," but by this expression he only means that the *effects* of Christ's obedience are conditionally imparted, and which is saying no more than the Redeemer's obedience has *merited* our pardon, on condition of our believing; and more than this, no intelligent Arminian or Neonomian would desire.

4. The conditional sufficiency for the justification of the whole world, which Mr. Fuller ascribes to the work of Christ, places all the efficacy thereof in the *act of believing*. It is sufficient for the whole world if they believe; it is not sufficient if they do not believe; so that all the stupenduous acts of Christ's mediatorial work, are, as it respects our salvation, only so many cyphers, and our believing is the initial figure which renders the whole of value! What is this, but to ascribe our justification to *faith* as that which constitutes us righteous, on easier terms than perfect obedience to the law?

In opposition to this doctrine, all sound Protestants have maintained that the elect of God are made righteous only by the obedience of the Lord Christ, and that this is *the very thing* which constitutes a sinner just in the eyes of the Lord. They have maintained constantly that Jesus Christ, as the representative and surety of his chosen, satisfied divine justice, and obeyed the holy law, for *them*, and in *their stead*; and that not their believing, but his most glorious righteousness imputed and transferred to them, is the very thing which constitutes them righteous. They have also maintained that the people of God are justified by faith, not as the procuring cause of justification, but only as an instrument by which the righteousness of Christ is received; so that not the act of believing, but the thing believed, is counted to the faithful for righteousness. That these are sound and wholesome words will appear from the following considerations.

1. The holy law of God is satisfied with nothing short of perfect obedience: and this must be yielded either in our own persons, or in the person of the great Surety, it ever we are justified. Now, if faith itself were reckoned to us for righteousness, a sincere obedience would be accepted in the stead of a perfect obedience; and thus the holy law, instead of being fulfilled, would be destroyed. He, therefore, who teaches that our believing is counted for righteousness, seeks to establish Antinomianism of the most dangerous description. Christ came not to destroy the law, nor to deprive it of its righteous demands, but to fulfil it as the representative of his chosen: and in the salvation of all his redeemed, the law is in all respects honored, its demands are completely satisfied, and in its most extensive latitude it is fulfilled.

2. The Lord Christ, by his obedience and blood, hath either satisfied the law for his people, or he has not. If he has, then it must necessarily follow that his obedience alone is the matter of their justification or in other words, it is the very thing which makes them righteous. If he has not, then their own obedience to the gospel, or their believing, never can make them righteous, because the law still insists upon an obedience absolutely perfect and sinless, and it cannot be satisfied until this is yielded.

3. The Scripture clearly testifies, that the believer's righteousness is the Lord Jesus himself. "And this is the name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness." [Jer. xxiii. 6.] Now, if Christ himself be our righteousness the act of believing cannot be so.

4. If the act of believing were our righteousness, then the true nature of faith would be destroyed. It is the business of faith to look for righteousness, not in itself, but in another; and it consists in the bare reception of Lord Christ. "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities."

5. The word of God plainly distinguishes between the righteousness by which a sinner is justified, and the faith which receives that righteousness. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." [Rom. i. 17.] "And why," says a learned and judicious writer, "is it called the righteousness of God? Because the righteousness of man is insufficient. And why a righteousness *revealed*, but because it was *another's*? For our own is known by nature, and is never said to be revealed. But this heavenly righteousness is altogether above sense and reason; and therefore, if it is not revealed, men are always disputing against it. And why revealed *to faith*, from one degree of it to another? Even because *faith itself*, or any work whatsoever, is not that which it justifies; nor can any thing else take it in, and close with it but faith." [Beart's Eternal Law, &c., part 1. chap. v.] Thus it appears that the *very thing* which constitutes a believer righteous, is not any inherent holiness of which he is the subject, nor any works of his own, either legal or evangelical, whether performed with the help of divine grace, or in his own strength; but that which makes the sinner just, is the alone work of Christ, finished on the cross, imputed to all for whom it was accomplished, and received by faith alone. This is the grand article of Christianity, the glory of the gospel, and the very foundation of Zion. [Isa. liv. 14.] A departure from this is the grand apostacy so often spoken of in the New Testament, whence all the abominations of popery arise; and that church, whatever be its denomination which departs from this foundation principle, is anti-christian in the sight of God.

I have now laid before you what I have to advance in proof of the serious charge I preferred against Mr. Fuller's principles, in the commencement of this letter; namely, that they are subversive of nearly all the great doctrines connected with redemption

through the blood of Jesus. Notwithstanding the speciousness and plausibility of his sentiments, they admit of an easy and triumphant confutation, because of their palpable opposition to the word of God. They comprehend all that is poisonous in universal redemption, without the same *appearance* of support from the Scriptures; and it would not be difficult to show their striking coincidence with the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church on the subjects of justification, grace and satisfaction. Indeed, it is much to be feared that the very soul of popery, in its refined and most delusive parts, is flourishing amongst us, so that we need no longer to wonder at the great decay of vital godliness which everywhere prevails, at the loss of faith and love, or at the carnal policy, the worldly-mindedness, the dead profession, which are too visible in the churches. Wherever the doctrine of imputed righteousness is given up, or held only in name, there Christ will be lightly esteemed, and human worthiness will stand exalted; there will a worldly profession obtain, and there will anti-christian principles and practices appear. And what is popery, but a *profession of christianity adapted to the course of this world?*

In my next letter I shall pursue this subject more fully, in which I shall endeavor to trace the operation of Mr. Fuller's sentiments, and to show their effects as exemplified in the sad decline of true holiness in our denomination. With that letter I shall conclude all I have to submit to your consideration on this very important controversy.

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#### LETTER IV.

DIVINE truth, when cordially received, always produces effects corresponding to its own nature. No man who has beheld the divine glory shining in the atonement of Christ, and who has found salvation therein, can possibly exhibit, in his own character and habitual conduct, the dominion of principles that are the very reverse of the gospel which he has received. It is impossible for a genuine believer to be an unjust man, because he has seen in the cross of Christ, such a display of divine justice, as hath transformed his own mind into the same image. Such a one cannot be an unmerciful or an implacable man, because he has beheld in the atonement, the highest display of divine compassion towards his guilty soul; and accordingly as he is influenced by the discovery, will he be kind and tender-hearted towards others, ready to forgive injuries, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven him. A true Christian cannot be a deceitful man or a liar, because his mind has been deeply affected by the character of Jehovah, as it appears in the grand plan of salvation; he has been taught to admire the truth and faithfulness of his redeeming God, and in some measure he exhibits the same character, agreeably to the apostolic exhortation, "Be ye followers, (or imitators,) of God, as dear children." In fine, a believer in Jesus cannot live under the dominion of sin, for as the seal makes its own impression on the melted wax, so does divine truth, in the hand of the Spirit, on the mind of a sinner, when his heart is



softened by the melting of divine grace; "but ye have obeyed from the heart, that form of doctrine, whereunto ye were delivered." [Romans vi. 17.]

Of all the presumptuous sins which may be charged upon religious people, in this day of flaming profession, none is more awful than their charging the doctrines of grace with a licentious tendency. To assert that the truths of eternal election, free justification, imputed righteousness, efficacious redemption, and invincible grace in regeneration, lead to carelessness and an ungodly life, is to sin with a very high hand indeed. How odious soever the loose principles of the Sadducees may be, or the gross practices of publicans and harlots, the iniquity of these is far surpassed by the spiritual wickedness of self-righteous persons, who discover the enmity of their hearts against sovereign grace, in a similar manner to those referred to by the apostle in Rom. iii. 8: "We be slanderously reported, and some affirm that we say, let us do evil that good may come; whose damnation is just." But this unrighteous reflection upon the distinguishing truths of the gospel, is not confined to the open opposers thereof. Many who profess attachment to the doctrines of sovereign grace do not fully and openly exhibit them, lest evil consequences should be the result. If they assert them at all, it is in so guarded a manner as betrays a secret suspicion that such doctrines are injurious in their tendency. But if those prudent men, who are so careful to *guard* the gospel, really believe that the open declaration of the doctrines thereof is dangerous, why do they profess attachment to them? Surely the doctrines which require to be thus guarded, are in themselves mischievous and can not be of God!

The apostles, however, did not deal thus with the gospel of Christ, nor act so deceitfully. Having received mercy, they renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, and by *manifestations of the truth* they commended themselves to every man's conscience. They always represented the truths of God as holy in their nature, and holy in their effects. All these truths, in the estimation of the apostles exhibit the glory of Jesus, and consequently furnish an argument for universal holiness. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image." [2 Cor. iii. 18.]

But as truth always produces effects corresponding to its own nature, so also doth error: and as the fruit of the former is holiness, the effect of the latter is unrighteousness. Hence the apostle contrasts the truth, not merely with error, but with iniquity: "Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; [1 Cor. xiii 6.] For a deviation from the truth is itself iniquity. The pernicious influence of error on the conduct of its votaries, appears in the instance of the ancient Pharisees, who are set forth as an example of that bitter opposition to the free and sovereign grace of God which self-righteous persons in all ages discover. It appears also in the character of the legal teacher who troubled the primitive churches; and, subsequently, in the effects produced by the great apostasy, so often foretold in the New Testament, which began by a *departure from the faith*. 1 Tim. iv. 1. But as erroneous principles produce

unholy fruits wherever they prevail, so the influence of the false doctrine adverted to in the preceding letters may be plainly perceived in the Baptist churches of the present day. Nothing can be more applicable to our present condition than the words of the excellent Dr. Owen, when lamenting the day of evangelical holiness to his own time. Referring no doubt to the influence of Mr. Baxter's sentiments, he says, "Little did I think I should ever have lived in this world to find the minds of professors grown altogether indifferent, as to the doctrine of God's eternal election, the sovereign efficacy of grace in the conversion of sinners, justification by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ; but many are as to all these things grown to an indifferency, they know not whether they are so or not. I bless God, I know something of the former generation, when professors would not hear of these things without the highest detestation: and now high professors begin to be leaders in it, and it is too much amongst the best of us. We are not so much concerned for the truth as our forefathers; I wish I could say we were as holy."

Thus did this eminent saint mourn over the spiritual declension which began to appear among the Pedobaptist churches in his own times; but if he had lived in this day, and had intended to contrast the present with the former Baptist churches, he could not have used more appropriate language than he has done, in following exhortation: "Let us carefully remember the faith of them who went before us in this nation, in the profession of the last age. And, pray, what faith were they of? Were they half Arminian and half Socinian? were they half Papist and half I know not what? Remember how zealous they were for the truth; how little their holy souls would have borne with those public defections from the doctrine of truth, which we see and do not mourn over, but make nothing of the days wherein we live. God was with them, and they lived to his glory, and died in peace, whose faith follow and example pursue, and remember the faith they lived and died in. *Look round about and see whether any of the new creeds have produced a new holiness to exceed theirs.*"

The pernicious consequences of such a departure from the truth as the Baptist churches are generally chargeable with, may be discerned in the following instances:

FIRST. *A certain kind of insincerity and dissimulation usually attends the reception and the preaching of a perverted gospel.* Simplicity is the characteristic of truth, artfulness and tortuous winding are attendant on falsehood. As in natural things, he who is guilty of one untruth, must invent many falsehoods to conceal that one; so in spiritual matters, a departure from the simplicity which is in Christ, is marked by a course of craftiness and deceit. Our Lord assures us that the leaven, i.e. the doctrine of the Pharisees, is *hypocrisy* [Luke xi. 1], and his faithful apostle calls the legal teachers "false apostles, deceitful workers." [2 Cor. xi. 13.] Hypocrisy and unjust power are the very support of error and of antichrist, so that the power and grace of Jesus are displayed in delivering the souls of his saints from deceit and violence.

But this spirit of dissimulation has appeared visibly in the conduct of many, from whom better things might have been expected. A disposition to conceal their real sentiments, especially at such times as do not suit their purpose to advance them, and a professed attachment to doctrines which they do not heartily receive, may be often observed in many who have imbibed Mr. Fuller's sentiments. They profess to maintain *inviolably* the doctrines of eternal personal election, free justification, and efficacious grace in regeneration; yet in their public discourses these important points are seldom ever advanced, or if they are mentioned occasionally, for the sake of an orthodox reputation, it is in such a manner as shews the preacher does not cordially receive those truths nor heartily approve them. Such persons know well which way the stream of popular approbation runs; and while they bear a rooted aversion towards an honest witness for the doctrines they themselves allow, they can openly countenance the avowed foes of sovereign electing grace. The excellent and judicious Mr. Brine has drawn lively and so faithful a figure of such persons, that I feel it almost incumbent on me to quote his words.

The secret enemies of divine truth are numerous, from whom many temptations arise.

Men of his character very rarely are open and frank in declaring their sentiments. They choose to lie concealed as to their notions, until such time as they have been able to ingratiate themselves into the good opinion of those whom they intend to bring over to their sentiments. And very watchful they are for every opportunity and advantage which offer, that are favourable to their design, nor will they fail of improving them to the utmost. Doctrines which they have no relish for, it may be some in their congregations firmly believed, and therefore they dare not at once, and in plain manner, deny them; but by long silence about them, and now and then advancing principles not consistent with them, they insensibly instil them into the minds of their hearers, and draw them off from that regard they once paid to those other principles. It is very sad what influence such conduct hath had, and still hath in many places, I had almost said to the total subversion of Christianity. And in others, this sort of demeanor is very likely to be productive of the same dreadful effects. May the good Lord have mercy upon his churches, and preserve them from being seduced by these men, who *lie in wait to deceive*. If Christians are not excited to watchfulness against them, by their insinuation and address, whereof they are perfect masters, they will be in great danger of being drawn aside. Formen are completely qualified from that kind of disservice to the church of God whereunto they have devoted themselves, and unto which they direct all their studies.

This sort of persons frequently declaim much against controversy in religion, and against insisting on controverted points, because, as they are pleased to say, it tends to fill men's heads with niceties and speculative notions, which have no great influence on their morals to make them better; and that it is certainly best to treat on plain and practical subjects, which are calculated to promote holiness. By this means they bring

their hearers to be content without discourses on the important truths of the gospel, all which are controverted points, until at length they become indifferent about them, and greatly prejudiced against them.

Then the fit time being come for them to be *open* and *unreserved*, they throw off the mask, and can dare to enter upon the stage of controversy and with downright blows oppose those doctrines they never believed, but till now were shy of letting it be known. Now they become zealous defenders of principles which before they but whispered softly in the ears of some trusty friends. In this their success they glory, as if it were a very honorable achievement. Let them expect their reward from him whose servants they pretend to be. [Treatises on various subjects, 8vo. 1756, p. 324.]

SECOND. *The direct tendency of a "yea and nay" gospel is to produce a worldly profession of Christianity.* Every attempt to render the gospel more acceptable to men, by softening down any of its offensive doctrines, is in itself an act of conformity to the world in the very worst form. The command of God is, "let them return unto thee; but return not unto them." [Jer. xv. 19.] The offence of the cross never can cease in this world, but by a corruption of the doctrines thereof; and wherever such corruption exists, conformity to the world in other respects will proportionately prevail. "True Christianity is," as an acute writer has observed, "an insult on the taste of the public; yea, the most respectable part of the public, and that in the most important matters." This, it is evident, must always be the case, so long as that which is "highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." While a church of Christ is keeping the word of his patience, and faithfully holding forth the doctrines of the cross, it will meet with sufficient reproach from the world to illustrate those consolatory words, "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Romans viii. 17.

But if it be true that all who live godly in Christ Jesus *shall suffer persecution*, what must we think of Mr. Fuller's reflection on the older Baptist churches, comparing them *almost to a perfect dunghill in society*? A censure like this can have weight with those only who know not the nature of Jesus' kingdom. Such censure is in fact a commendation: it was intended indeed for a curse, but God hath turned it into a blessing. If the older churches were despised, they had fellowship with their Lord in his sufferings; and the joyful hope of reigning with him at last induced them to reject with abhorrence the only method of escaping the cross, namely a *compromise of the truth*. The very little reproach which now attends our profession proves not that the world is better disposed towards Christ than it was, but rather that our profession is lifeless and that we are conformed to the world. Were an inspired apostle to appear amongst us from the dead, he would cry out against some of our most *popular* ministers and our most *respectable* churches, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship the world is enmity with God?"

But as in a bodily consumption the patient often indulges flattering expectations, and is not alive to his real danger, so is it in spiritual declension. *Grey* hairs are here and there upon us, yet we know it not, nor will we believe it. It is a sure mark of the Laodicean state, when we talk more of what we have done for God, than of what he hath done for us, and when our minds are occupied rather with our own splendid exertions to promote the kingdom of Christ, than with his most glorious person and work. We dream that we are rich and increased with goods, but we know not that we are poor and miserable. In how many instances are we elated with our respectability, our wealth, our influence and with the great things we have done for the Lord in missionary exertions! How often is it publicly declared from a stage or a pulpit that our forefathers were asleep; that their missionary zeal was contemptible in comparison with ours; and that there never was such a day of wonderful works as at the present! But who, that knows what primitive Christianity is, cannot discern an awful declension of spirituality amongst us? Who that is taught of God cannot perceive that our flaming zeal is perfectly compatible with opposition to the righteousness of God and to the sovereignty of his grace?

If it be inquired wherein consists that worldly profession of Christianity which the prevalence of Mr. Fuller's principles has promoted amongst us, the answer is given in the following facts:

1. The precious truths of the gospel which were once the glory of our churches, and which always expose the professors of them to reproach, are now very rarely heard amongst us. Covenant engagements, precious promises, eternal election, immutable love, free pardon, and complete justification, are subjects seldom insisted on. We still profess these things in our circular letter, but the open preaching of them is judged by no means expedient, and, as is taught, can answer no other end than to discourage practical religion, and to bring us into disrepute. Instead of those glorious truths of which the apostle Paul has given a catalogue, in Ephesians, chapters i. and ii., as constituting the substance of his own preaching, human piety, human worthiness, human greatness, and human influence stand exalted, so that the glory of Jesus is eclipsed amongst us. It affords no small proof that we have left our first love, when we grow cold towards the doctrines of grace, and when human excellence occupies so high a place in our esteem. And it is remarkable that our very *missionary fire* is of such a nature, as to be extinguished, rather than increased, by the free declaration of those immortal truths, which are connected with the honor of God and shew forth the glory of Jesus.

2. With so general a departure from the truth, it is no wonder that there is reason to lament the scarcity of a searching, faithful ministry amongst us, and to regret the prevalence of an *accommodating* ministry, inoffensive to the world and to the carnal mind. The case of many of our churches is truly pitiful; who, instead of being fed from time to time with sound and wholesome words, are induced to listen to powerless

discourses, without unction, without savour. Some of our preachers, despising the majestic simplicity of the Scripture, imitate the language of worldly philosophy. Others deliver discourses which are little better than moral essays. Some of the more popular kind, with much noise and bombast, exhibit their abilities as on a stage, and, with great swelling word of vanity, preach themselves, and not Christ Jesus the Lord. Others are so cautious and crafty, and so concerned not to give offence, that it is difficult to tell what their real sentiments are. But there are now comparatively few of those faithful men to be found, whose only aim is to exalt Christ and to lay the sinner low: who tremble to connect their own worldly interest with the interest of Christ; and who would rather suffer the loss of all temporal advantages, than keep back the despised truths of the gospel. A worldly spirit is the very ruin of us. Aversion from bearing the cross, a determination to avoid the afflictions of the gospel, is one chief cause of those doctrinal corruptions which have obtained amongst us; and God hath visited this sin upon us, by giving us up to further worldly conformity and to more iniquity, so that we have every reason to fear that our candlestick will soon be entirely removed, unless we repent.

3. This lifeless profession appears, moreover, in the constitution of our churches. We do not lay the stress we ought on *regeneration*, as absolutely necessary to communion of saints. Persons who are *seriously inclined*, whose moral character is good, especially if they are zealous in the missionary cause, and possess a high opinion of their minister, are judged very proper subjects for fellowship; without much inquiry whether they are dead to the law, and possess a living faith in Jesus, or whether they have ever been brought as lost sinners, by the Holy Spirit, to the blood of sprinkling. In this manner are carnal persons introduced into the church of God, and in this way the machinations of Satan to connect the church and the world are answered. Then are the designs of the great adversary accomplished, when carnal, unrenewed persons are induced to profess Christianity, and when the truth is corrupted to meet their carnal views.

The same disregard of Scripture appears in reference to offences. We judge of these, not so much by the Word of God, as by the rule of respectability among men. Hence scandalous offences and open immorality are noticed, and the delinquents sometime excluded, because sins of this description disgrace a society in the eyes of the world. But the lusts of the mind, which are equally abominable to God, are almost wholly overlooked. Covetousness, pride, self-righteousness, and love of this present world, are quite compatible with the character of an eminent professor. Persons may be manifestly under the dominion of such lusts as these, yet if they preserve a pious exterior, and contribute freely to the missionary cause, they are highly extolled. And with all this, we cry out against Antinomianism, and are afraid that unless the doctrines of grace are *well guarded*, they will lead to licentiousness!

4. The dead and worldly state of the Christian profession amongst us appears

conspicuously in the carnal views of Christ's kingdom, which have for some time prevailed. The churches seem to have forgotten that the Redeemer's kingdom is not of this world. They cannot understand how the church of Christ can be in a flourishing state, unless it makes a *respectable* figure in society. They do not consider that the special presence of Christ with his people constitutes the alone ground of their excellency and glory; nor do they consider that the prosperity of a church consists not in external things, but in the things of the Spirit only; nor do they know that a company of believers may be truly glorious though they have no *reverend gentlemen* to keep them in countenance, nor wealthy professors to support the cause. Hence the anxiety of many to engage human power of the side of the church; hence the difference paid to rich men; and hence the carnal policy which, in many instances, directs religious proceedings. According to the proportion in which this spirit prevails, will professors be ashamed of that contemptible appearance which Christ hath made, and which his followers always must make in the world; so that it is no wonder that such professors look upon those churches who are suffering for their attachment to the despised truths of the gospel, "*as a perfect dunghill in society.*"

These carnal notions have had the most pernicious influence on our profession. There is now but little of that unity, that simplicity, that gospel fellowship which the earlier churches enjoyed. Formerly believers were hated of the world, and, being separate from it, they found comfort in the fellowship of Zion: but now we are conformed to the world, and the love of many waxes cold. We shall one day find that our apparent prosperity is a poor compensation for the word of faith, the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and the communion of saints. Whoever is alive to the things of God, must acknowledge that the Spirit is remarkably withdrawn, divine consolations are but little enjoyed, and primitive Christianity is comparatively unknown. These complaints are not applicable exclusively to our own denomination. The Independents are as different from what they once were, as we are; they even take the lead of us in respectability. There is a degree of reproach which still cleaves to us, because of believers' baptism, and this clog to our feet renders it difficult for us to keep pace with those who practice infant baptism. But some of our churches and ministers have contrived to liberate themselves, in a great degree, from this impediment, by the practice of open communion, so as to become almost as respectable as their Pedobaptist brethren. Alas! alas! There is little occasion for all the contempt which has been cast upon the former churches. The comparison of what we are, with what we were, is truly affecting. We may justly appropriate a smart reply of the celebrated Thomas Aquinas to Pope Innocent IV. The former visiting the latter, found himself surrounded with heaps of gold. "Lo! Thomas," said his Holiness, "the church cannot now say, as of old, silver and gold have I none." "No," says the surly Doctor, "nor can she say to the lame, *arise and walk!*"

5. A worldly spirit has so far prevailed as almost to extinguish brotherly love amongst us. The decay of this grace answers to the influence of idolatry under the Old

Testament. A desire to be like the neighbouring nations was the great sin of the Old Testament Israel, and was the source of all their idolatrous departures from God. Under the New Testament, the love of the world is idolatry, and nothing tends so effectually as this to destroy the unity of saints and brotherly affection. The decay of mutual love is proof indisputable of spiritual declension, even as the prevalence of it is an evidence of prosperity. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." [John xiii. 35.]

But who that is spiritual can doubt of the feebleness of this grace in the churches? So little is it in exercise, that many cannot tell wherein it consists; nor have they any distinct idea of what it is that holds them together as a church. They seem to have no notion of spiritual love, beyond that *friendly feeling* which exist among the members of an earthly society. Some are drawn together because they must go to a place of worship, and they assemble where they and their fathers have been accustomed to meet. Others are united by the spirit of a party: a quarrel from some frivolous cause, having separated them from their former religious connections. Others seem to be united by the good opinion which they unanimously form of their minister; they agree in a blind adoration of their favorite preacher, so that when he dies there is an end of their union. This kind of subjection is of the same nature as that *one mind*, which the antichristian nations have for the Bishop of Rome, Rev. xvii. 13. But because the truth itself is fallen in our streets, therefore the love of the brethren for the truth's sake faileth also.

There is, however, a kind of charity prevalent amongst us, a spurious charity, *which rejoiceth not in truth*. It is now thought an evidence of a bigoted spirit, to contend earnestly for the peculiar doctrines of grace; and it is considered the mark of a candid disposition to bear with doctrines opposed to the truth, and to cover such opposition with the mantle of charity and forbearance. But how often does it occur that those amiable persons, who can easily forbear when only the honour of God and the glory of his Christ are concerned, have very little forbearance when *their own* dignity is wounded or their pride mortified. O how indignant are they when personally offended! how wroth, how implacable! Who would think that these amiable creatures, who are so charitable when the honour of Christ is wounded, could exercise so little forbearance when their own dear selves are injured?

6. Our conformity to the world appears in antichristian manners and institutions which have been introduced among us. Of these I shall take notice only of two instances.

(1.) The Popish distinction of *clergy* and *laity* has been of late much revived in the churches, although there was a time when this distinction was generally set aside among baptized believers, as constituting one of the pillars of Antichrist.



That the great head of the church hath mercifully appointed pastors and teachers for the edifying of his people is beyond all doubt, but these are never in the New Testament termed *priests* or clergy in distinction from their brethren, nor are the believing brethren ever termed the *people* or laity in order to distinguish them from their pastors. Under the Old Testament, indeed, there was a distinct clergy or priesthood separate from the rest of Israel, and as this appointment was by the special command of God, none of the common people could lawfully invade the sacred office. But the death of Christ hath elevated the whole body of the saints to the dignity of priests. Jesus hath "washed us from our sins in his blood; and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." For thus saith the prophet Isaiah, when he foretold the glory of New Testament saints. "But ye shall be named the priests of the Lord, men shall call you the ministers of God." Hence the people of God in general are a "holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices." Hence they are called "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood," constituted such through the precious righteousness of the Son of God. This is the priesthood which God hath ordained, and every other is antichristian.

But no sooner do Christian churches lose sight of the glory of imputed righteousness than they are brought into bondage. Then they become an easy prey to false teachers; and the more ignorant of the Scriptures religious persons are, the more entirely are they under the dominion of their clergy. So bewitching is this deception, that the people of God themselves are sometimes ensnared by it. The church at Corinth despised the apostle because he usurped no lordship over them, but preached the gospel unto them freely, and supported himself by his own labor. But when false teachers came among them preaching a perverted gospel, and thus exalted themselves, these they gladly received. "For we suffer," said the holy Paul, "if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face." In this manner did the mystery of iniquity begin to work so early; but it afterwards became fully developed in the coming of the man of sin. And who does not see, that if opposition to the righteousness of Christ be essential to popery, the dominion of the clergy is not less so.

It is truly affecting, however, to trace the operation of this spirit in our own churches. We have departed from the simplicity of the faith and are desirous to make a *respectable* figure in the world. Accordingly we have begun to talk of our *clergy* and our *laity*. Ours indeed is but a pitiful imitation of the original, but it is an imitation. In the church of Rome the dominion of an antichristian priesthood appears in all its grandeur, but ours has neither antiquity no splendor to support it. "Theirs," says the ingenious Robinson, "is nature in the theatre of the metropolis, we are strollers, uttering bombast, in cast-off finery, in a booth at a fair." [Sermon on John xviii. 36.]

O that the ministers of Christ would adhere to the simplicity of the gospel! When will they cease to imitate the hateful language and manners of Antichrist? Their true

wisdom is to stand fast in the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus; for as they have neither authority nor antiquity to urge in favor of their pretensions to clerical dignity, they will always be despised by the *original clergy*, even as ancient Israel, when it departed from God, was held in contempt by those very nations from whom it had borrowed its idolatry.

NOTE.—It is well known what hot disputes have been carried on between the clergy of England and of Rome, respecting the validity of the ordinations of the former. It is admitted on both sides, that no man can lawfully exercise the priestly office, unless duly called, and properly authorized. Now the validity of the Catholic priesthood is without dispute. Every Roman Catholic priest is regularly ordained by his bishop, who also receives his ordination from the head of his church, at Rome; and the pope himself, who is the fountain of all clerical dignity and authority, says he derives his power by regular and unbroken succession, from St. Peter, to whom Christ gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and on whom (says his holiness) he declared he would build his church. Now all this is as clear and satisfactory as the nature of the case is capable of. The clergy of England admit the validity of the Catholic priesthood, but the Catholics are not so sure of the validity of the English ordinations; and, to say the least, it is very doubtful whether the clergy of the church of England have ever been regularly ordained at all.

But whatever may be concluded relative to the Episcopalian clergy of England, the Dissenters have not the least ground for their pretensions to the high dignity. Ask a young dissenting minister, instructed in the pious trade, who gave him authority to exercise the clerical office? He replies, that he was set forth and ordained by the Rev. Dr. -----, Tutor of -----College. But if further inquiry be made into the authority of the Rev. Dr. himself, it will be found to rest on the authority of some other such Rev. Doctor; and if it be traced to its source, it will probably be found that its origin is with some preaching mechanic, in the days of Oliver Cromwell, or later. A sorry imitation truly!

The ministers of Jesus would do well to consider how hateful in his eyes are all those *little arts*, by which false teachers keep up their dominion over the people. He hates these things, because they are of all others most inimical to his kingdom, and induce the highest contempt of his righteousness. What but *self-righteousness* could ever induce a preacher to imagine that he belongs to a different order from the church in general; and what but *pride* of the very worst description could lead him to expect his brethren to call him "*Reverend?*" This spirit of self-righteousness and pride in the ancient scribes called forth the severest invective from the patient and lovely Jesus. He even notices their carriage and their dress. "Beware of the Scribes, who love to go in long clothing." Not that their clothing was in itself of any importance, but as it indicated a spirit of clerical self-righteousness, it provoked the eyes of his glory. They *loved* to go in long clothing, they *loved* the chief seats, they *loved* to be called Rabbi,

Rabbi. It was therefore on account of the spiritual pride of their hearts that our Lord uttered his solemn "Woe to the Scribes." It well becomes men to tremble when they hear a *woe* from the mouth of incarnate love! The "*woe*" of Jesus falls not upon men in this life, but in the world to come. Many, who are too righteous in their own eyes to imagine they are under his *woe*, live respectably and their death is honourable and hopeful in the sight of the world. Our Saviour himself has given us a solemn instance of this. [Luke xvi. 19-31.] A certain rich but carnal professor, a nominal son of Abraham, was of elevated rank and enjoyed abundantly the fatness of the earth. There is reason to believe that his religious character stood high and that he cast of his abundance into the treasury. It is certain that he contributed to the necessities of a poor saint, though not from a right motive. It came to pass, however, that he died and was buried. It is highly probable that a sort of funeral eulogium from the lips of some chief priest recorded his pious and liberal actions and elevated him to the third heaven. But he died under the woe of God and the next account we have of him is, that *in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments!*

(2.) The stress which is now laid on academical tuition as a necessary qualification for the Christian ministry is another proof of the prevalence of antichristian principles. No truth is more clearly taught in the New Testament than this, namely, that it is the sole prerogative of the Holy Ghost, by his own gifts, and *by them alone*, to give pastors unto Zion and to constitute them able ministers of the New Testament. The question relates not to the value of human learning in its own place. The question is not whether it be *desirable* that a Christian minister should study the Scriptures in the Hebrew and Greek. Most certainly it is desirable, not only that ministers of the word, but also that all the Lord's people if they have time and opportunity, should study the Scriptures in their original languages; and it would be well for some who make great pretensions to learning and who think it essential to the ministry, were more extensively and more critically acquainted with sacred literature than they really are. But the question relates solely to the *power* by which the ministers of Jesus are furnished for their great work. Now, nothing is more certain than that this power is derived immediately from the exalted head of the church. "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. AND HE GAVE some, apostles; and some, prophets, and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." [Ephes. iv. 11.] The same power, therefore, which constitutes some apostles, qualifies others to be pastors and teachers; and this we know was the power of the *Spirit alone*, Acts i. 8, for many of the apostles were destitute of human learning, even after the day of Pentecost, Acts iv. 13. The apostles and primitive pastors were qualified for their work not by the tuition of Gamaliel, or any other theological tutor, but only by the communication of the Holy Ghost. "Our sufficiency is of God; who hath made us able ministers of the New Testament." [2 Cor. iii. 5, 6.] How little do they know of the gospel ministry, and of the kingdom of Jesus, who imagine that academical instruction is sufficient for them whose weapons are "mighty through God to the

pulling down of strong holds;" [2 Cor. x. 4,] who are "unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them who are saved, and in them that perish. To the one, the savor of death unto death; and to the other, the savor of life unto life." Well may the holy apostle add, "and who is sufficient for these things?" [2 Cor. ii. 16.]

The promise of the Spirit was given not only for the sake of the apostles, but also to furnish ordinary pastors and teachers, to the end of time, with power for their work, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Accordingly the elders or bishops of the church at Ephesus were fitted for their office by the ever-blessed Spirit. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the HOLY GHOST HATH MADE YOU OVERSEERS to feed the church of God." [Acts xx. 28.] The sacred Spirit pervades the whole body of Christ and by the fulness of his gracious gifts, is absolutely sufficient for all offices in the church. As the spirit of life animated the cherubim and the wheels and directed all their motions, so doth the Holy Ghost animate all the members of Christ and direct all the affairs of the Christian ministry. "Whithersoever the Spirit was to go, they went; thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them; for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels." This communication of the Spirit is both the foundation of all spiritual gifts in the church of Christ and is *of itself* sufficient for all the purposes of the Christian ministry. "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit," &c. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." [1 Cor. xii. 7, 8, 13.] "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry," &c. [Rom. xii. 6, 7.] Hence the Holy Spirit in his official character and in reference to the fulness and perfection of his gifts, is compared to "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne;" and not only is the blessed Spirit sufficient to qualify his ministers for their work, who for this reason are called *ministers of the Spirit*, but also all the operations of the Christian ministry are under his absolute and sovereign control. He opens, and no man shuts; he shuts and no man opens. He sends his ministers to some countries, to others he suffers them not to go. Thus Paul and his companions "WERE FORBIDDEN OF THE HOLY GHOST to preach the word in Asia. Afterwards "they assayed to go into Bithynia; BUT THE SPIRIT SUFFERED THEM NOT." [Acts xvi. 6, 7.] Under his Almighty influence the gospel prevailed in primitive times. The first Christians erected no human machinery for the spread of the gospel. They never sought the support of the great and the rich; nor did they ever complain of the want of pecuniary means, nor suggest that adequate funds would enable them to convert the world.

But afterwards, when Christianity became corrupted, nominal conversions took the place of regeneration and the kingdom of the clergy began to rise. The nations professing Christianity had no love for the truth, and as for the Spirit they knew him

not. The simple gospel was exchanged for a scholastic theology founded on the philosophy of this world and the wisdom of Aristotle. Then were universities instituted, that by them men might be fitted for the Christian ministry. These have been the nurseries of the clergy in all ages, vomiting forth their antichristian divinity like the smoke of the bottomless pit, out of which a carnal priesthood, like locusts, have proceeded and overspread the earth. Schools of learning considered simply as a means of knowledge are good, but when they are employed to invade the prerogative of Jesus Christ, when they are instituted to accomplish what none but the Spirit can effect, they become an engine of Satan and are abominable to God.

In this respect also, our Baptist Churches have begun to imitate the antichristian apostacy. As we have our *clergy* and our *laity*, so also have we our *colleges* for preparing and qualifying pious young men for the Christian ministry. It has been often affirmed, that, although we have our colleges and academies, these are not for the purpose of *making ministers*, but for affording young men those literary advantages which they could not so easily obtain in any other way. But this is only another instance of that deceitfulness which always attends a departure from the simplicity of truth. Are not young men sent to Stepney or to Bristol for the purpose of being *fitted* for the ministry? Are they not, while there, considered to be in a course of *training for* the ministry? It is true that our seminaries were not instituted to make men pious, but it is undeniable that they were intended to make pious young men *ministers*. Mr. Robt. Hall, in the preface to his Sermon on "The Discouragements &c., of the Christian Minister," says, "To the Bristol Academy, the only Seminary they (i.e. the Baptists) possessed till within these few years, they feel the highest obligations, *for supplying them with a succession of able and faithful pastors*, who have done honor to their churches." Now, why should we owe such a debt of gratitude to the Bristol Academy for *supplying* us with pastors, unless that Academy hath *made* these pastors what they are? If they are so able and faithful, thanks be to the Bristol Academy which hath *supplied* them!

In the report of the Bradford Academy for 1830, the writer says, page 4, "It cannot be too well understood, that we disclaim all idea of *making ministers*." Yet in the very same page he says, "most of our churches seem to think that the young persons whom they call to the work of the ministry should avail themselves of the best advantages that are to be obtained for preparing them for, and assisting them in, the important undertaking." Now what can the writer mean by disclaiming all idea of making ministers and at the same time acknowledging that the academy prepares young men for the ministry? If the latter words mean any thing they mean that the Society furnishes young persons with that kind of education without which they would not be fitted or prepared for the ministry; and this is only saying, in other words, that the Society makes them ministers. Exalted Saviour! and have thy people yet to learn that thy Spirit, and He alone, is sufficient for this? Do they not know that thou holdest the seven stars in thy right hand? Surely the true Christian divinity cannot be taught as

human sciences are taught. How can a theological tutor impart to his neighbor that knowledge which is necessary for the Christian ministry? How can he teach him to understand the mystery of godliness, as it is opened in the wonderful person of Christ, in all the steps of his humiliation, sufferings, and death, and in unspeakable wonders of his blood and righteousness? Alas! the tutor cannot teach himself these things, yet both the *knowledge* of these and *utterance* to make them known are absolutely necessary for the Christian ministry and are imparted by the Spirit through the medium of his ordinances. "All my divinity," said Luther, "consists in this, that I believe that Christ alone is the Lord concerning whom the Scriptures speak, and neither my grammar nor Hebrew language taught me this but the good Spirit of the living God." The words of the honest reformer are in accordance with the Scripture and with the nature of the Redeemer's spiritual kingdom, so also are the following sentiments of an old English writer: "Christ under the New Testament hath erected and constituted a new ministry, not through any ecclesiastical ordination, but *merely through the unction of His Spirit*, without any regard at all to a man's outward calling or condition in the world; but whether a man be a scholar, or clergyman, or gentleman, or tradesman, if Christ call him and pour forth his Spirit on him, that, and that only, makes him a true minister of the New Testament." How forcible are right words, but how little understood and regarded!

Knowledge, in its most unlimited extent comprehending universal learning, is, in itself, good and the acquisition of it desirable. If, however, the attainment of sound learning could possibly be opposed to the simplicity of the gospel and consequently be pernicious, our denomination in the present day would not be in imminent danger from that cause. If the acquisition of learning were a sin, our guilt would not be *very* heinous. But the sin of the churches consists in this, that *they heap to themselves teachers*, instead of waiting on the Lord for the fulfilment of his promise to give pastors unto Zion. The work is entirely the Lord's, but instead of looking unto Him in the way of *his own* ordinances, they vainly imagine they can provide for themselves ministers by ordinances which he hath not instituted, but which are of *their own appointing*, in imitation of the universities of antichrist. Thus do the churches despise the promise of the Spirit. In this manner do they trust in an arm of flesh, in respect to the ministry, and cease from trusting in the Lord, and thus do they grieve that adorable Comforter by whom the saints are sealed unto the day of redemption.

THIRD. *A perverted gospel tends directly to scatter the people of God by destroying their bond of union.* The Lord Jesus Christ, to whom all the saints are united, is the only foundation and bond of spiritual union. The whole family meet and centre in him. That which unites them in his glorious person and work, and that which demands their obedience is his voice. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me." This voice which they hear is the truth of the gospel which they receive and love and which produce among them brotherly love for the truth's sake. In the exercise of his grace they have fellowship with each other, they are despised by the

world and are separated from it. "Lo! the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations."

If, therefore, the people of God are united in the bond of truth, it is evident that nothing is so effectual to scatter them as the influence of erroneous doctrine, especially such as affects the righteousness of Christ which is the ground of their unity, concord and hope. Hence the zeal of the apostle against legal doctrines and false teachers. Hence the connection between unsound doctrines and divisions in the church. "Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them." [Romans xvi. 17, 18.] As amongst the nations of this world, sedition and treason are punished more severely than private offences because the former cut asunder the very bonds of society itself, and injure not an individual, but the whole community; so in the kingdom of Christ the advancement of doctrines which obscure the glory of imputed righteousness and exalt human merit, is an offence of the most malignant kind, because it tends directly to abase the Lord Jesus and to destroy unity and brotherly love among his people. For this reason it is, that so much is said in Scripture against the teachers of such doctrines. "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord." (Jer. xxiii. 1.) So indignant was the holy Paul against them that he cried out, "I would they were even cut off who trouble you." (Gal. v. 12.)

The effect of a legal ministry is not only to produce divisions and offences amongst the people of God, but also to *exalt the preacher*. The apostle abased himself, that the brethren might be exalted, 2 Cor. xi. 7; but the false teachers exalted themselves, and brought the saints into bondage, 2 Cor. xi. 20. Self-exaltation is a mark which invariably distinguishes the preachers of a perverted gospel. While their doctrine has a direct tendency to obscure the glory of Christ it tends to magnify themselves; and their votaries, instead of hearing the voice of Christ, are brought into subjection to the minister and he becomes the bond of union among them. "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to DRAW AWAY DISCIPLES AFTER THEM." (Acts xx. 30.) This spirit which began to work in the days of the apostles, is the foundation of all that clerical dominion which constitutes the very strength of antichrist and the support of his accursed kingdom.

But we greatly mistake the mind of the spirit in the Scriptures if we imagine that the marks of a false church are to be found nowhere except within the pale of the Papacy. The Lord does not judge of men according to the *names they bear*, but according to *the fruits they bring forth*. Whenever antichristian doctrines are received, there antichristian fruits will appear. For as the mystery of iniquity began to work before the man of sin was revealed, so it is found working in churches which are not nominally under his dominion. "—AND ALL THE CHURCHES shall know that I am he who searcheth the reins and hearts; AND I WILL GIVE UNTO EVERY ONE OF YOU ACCORDING TO HIS WORKS."

It ought, therefore, to be a matter of solemn inquiry, whether the marks of antichrist be not plainly visible upon many of our churches and ministers. It has been proved in the course of these letters that the doctrine now prevailing amongst us relative to the glorious atonement and righteousness of Christ is quite a different thing from that which is handed down to us in the Scriptures, and it has also been shewn that such doctrine induces worldly conformity and a dead profession. It might therefore be inferred, *a priori*, that the natural tendency of such principles is to scatter the people of God and to destroy the unity of the Spirit. For wherever the precious doctrines of grace are kept back in the public ministry of the word, there, though carnal professors may be pleased, the saints will be deprived of that rich provision which God hath laid up for them; they will decline in the exercise of faith and love, and communion of saints will degenerate into formal worship. That this is the sad condition of many of Zion's children in the present day is beyond a doubt. Many who sit under a legal, insipid ministry are in a lean and famishing state for want of the pure word and ordinances of the Lord, and are crying out in a soul distress, "Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat." Micah. vii. 1.

FOURTH. *The doctrine of indefinite redemption is greatly injurious to the comforts and joys of believers.*

1. The notion that the death of Christ is conditionally sufficient for all mankind, that is if all mankind were to believe in it, leads the sinner at once to the performance of *some duty* which he imagines will give efficacy to the death of Christ and render it available to him. By this means he is led to draw comfort from his duties instead of the finished salvation of Christ. This error is the fruitful cause of the disquieting fears and legal bondage of many professors. They are constantly in fear lest they have not performed the requisite condition and, after much toiling, their uneasy spirits are as far from rest as ever, and again they utter the old complaint, "What lack I yet?" They have no notion that the alone work of Christ made manifest to the heart by the Holy Spirit, is sufficient to give joy unspeakable without the performance of some duty on their part, and therefore they are in constant perplexity lest this important duty should not have been performed. "I find," said Mr. Owen Stockton, "that though in my judgment and profession, I acknowledge Christ to be my righteousness and peace, yet I have secretly gone about to establish my own righteousness and have derived my comfort and peace from my own actings. For when I have been disquieted by the actings of sin, not God speaking peace through the blood of Christ, but the intermission of temptation and the cessation of those sins have restored me to my former peace. When I have been troubled at the evil frame of my heart, not the righteousness of Christ, but my feeling of a better temper hath been my consolation. I have prayed against, and resolved against sin, striven with sin, and avoided occasions of sin; all which a natural man may do. But how to fetch power from the death of Christ, how to believe in God for the subduing of sin, and how to do it by the Spirit,



have been mysteries to me."

In this state of bondage are many precious souls detained because they cannot see the absolute perfection of the work of Christ. They allow that Christ has done a great deal for sinners, but something they imagine must be done on our part to render his blood available; and that something not being able to satisfy divine justice and being too weak to purge their guilty conscience, they are disquieted. But when the soul is driven from every other refuge to trust in Christ alone then it finds rest. It no more asks, "What lack I yet?" knowing that the law is magnified, justice satisfied, and God the Father well pleased in his beloved Son: "for we who do believe have entered into rest." [Heb. iv. 3.] "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned." [Isaiah xl. 1, 2.]

2. The knowledge which believers have that Christ died in their stead, and gave himself particularly for them, is full of the sweetest consolation to their ransomed spirits. Who can describe the inward peace which fortified the mind of the Psalmist, when he uttered those memorable words, "My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul which thou hast redeemed?" Ps. lxxi. 23. Or can we express the comfort which is poured into the heart of an afflicted saint, when the Holy Spirit brings powerfully to his mind such a precious promise as this? "But now, thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel; Fear not, for I have redeemed thee—thou art mine. [Isaiah xliii. 1.] No small part of the consolation comprehended in such promises arises from distinguishing love and special redemption. But if Christ died for sin abstractedly, he died no more for one man than another, and the comfort derived from particular redemption is vain.

3. A spiritual conviction of union to Jesus, in his death, resurrection, and exaltation, is essential to a believer's joy. The comfort of a saint is, that he is dead judicially with Christ. He rejoices in this, that Jesus is alive from the dead to die no more, having made an end of sin, and as the sins of his people are no more found upon him death hath no dominion over him, but he lives evermore unto God. Now, the Spirit assures a believer's heart that Christ and he are one. A saint, through the Spirit, reckons himself to be "dead indeed, unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." He is crucified with Christ, dead with Christ, risen with Christ, and exalted to sit in heavenly places in Christ, and all this is the spring of his joy. "Your spirits," says the holy Mr. Walter Cradock, "will never be heightened and raised to live the life of Paul by beholding any thing that is in you *personally* in your possession, but what you are by *relation and marriage to Christ*. Reckon yourselves *dead with Christ*; and so conceive, I am a just man; I was bound once to the law of God, a terrible law; and there are thousands in hell paying the debt, and cannot pay it; and yet I have payed every farthing, and the law cannot ask me more. I have offered a perfect righteousness to God; and I am now sitting at God's right hand in heaven, by my union with Jesus

Christ." (W. Cradock's works, page 25.) Another of the precious sons of Zion thus expresses his faith in a living Redeemer, and exercises the confidence of his ransomed spirit. Referring to the cross of Christ, he says,

"My full receipt may there be view'd,  
Graven with iron pens and blood,  
In Jesus' hands and side;  
I'm safe, O death, O law, and sin,  
Ye cannot bring me guilty in,  
For Christ was crucified."—CENNICK

In this manner do believers joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom they have received the atonement. But all this proceeds on the supposition of union to Jesus, when he died and when he rose again; but no such union existed between Christ and any of Adam's race if the indefinite scheme be true.

4. The covenant interest which God has in his people and they have in him, is a fruitful source of consolation to the saints. It constitutes the grand promise of the new covenant: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people;" and it is the bulwark of their security: "Fear not: for I am with thee, be not dismayed, for I am thy God." An afflicted saint possesses a peace which passeth all understanding when the Holy Ghost enables him to say, "The Lord is my God." This dries his tears, brightens his countenance and cheers his mournful heart. It comprehends all he can desire in time and to eternity. "They shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I have said, It is my people, and they shall say, Jehovah is my God." [Zech. xiii. 9.]

But the advocates of indefinite and universal redemption seem not to acknowledge this covenant union. They believe that God has a peculiar regard for *pious people*, but as for that conjugal covenant relationship, which flows from electing love and everlasting kindness, they know nothing of it. This federal connection arises out of discriminating love and is consistent only with special redemption, because all the blessings of the everlasting covenant are ratified by that blood which was *shed for many*.

FIFTH. I shall only add, in the last place, that *indefinite redemption is too weak to support the mind in the solemn hour of dissolution*. Nothing short of a personal application of the atoning blood can destroy the fear of death. To die joyfully we must possess the assurance that Christ hath loved us and given himself for us, but his assurance we cannot have if Christ died only for sin and not for particular persons. Our safety, indeed, does not depend upon this assurance, but our joyfulness does.

The most striking manner of confirming this argument is, by adducing instances of the dying experience of the saints. Many instances are on record of professors who

held legal sentiments during life who were glad to renounce them when they came to die. But I never heard or read of an individual, who had been led into the glories of sovereign grace, who did not cling to the same truth as his only support in the hour of death. I never heard that any such when they came to die regretted that they had carried the doctrine of grace too far or exalted Christ too much. I never knew an instance of such a one forsaking his principles and taking refuge in Arminianism or indefinite redemption, for no man "having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new; for he saith, the old is better."

An obstinate adherence to any particular sentiments is indeed no proof that those sentiments are right, yet the confidence of a dying believer affords a strong argument for the truth of those principles which enable him thus to triumph. The dying testimonies of the Lord's people are highly delightful in themselves, consolatory to the brethren, and honorable to God. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Every testimony which the true believers are enabled to give to the truths of the gospel and the faithfulness of God is valuable in the sight of the Lord, but their dying testimonies are peculiarly so, being usually attended with a richer communication of the Spirit.

It must, however, be confessed that the Lord's dealings with his people are very mysterious and past finding out. It is not always in a joyful frame of spirit that they must be witnesses to the truth. Sometimes the Lord withdraws the light of his countenance from them and gives them to understand that he does so in fatherly displeasure because they have grieved his Holy Spirit. This is especially the case if they have dealt deceitfully respecting his truth. Toplady, that valiant man of God, relates the following memorable instances of the Lord's fatherly displeasure, and covenant faithfulness. "I was formerly," says he, "well acquainted with two worthy persons in the ministry who were eminently pious and extensively useful. One of them died in 1759, the other in 1761. I thought that if ever any men in the world were faithful to the light God had given them these were. And yet in their last illness they had such a feeling sight of their past unfaithfulness as almost reduced them, for a time, to despair of salvation. The former of them said he only wished to live that he might have an opportunity of preaching the gospel in a fuller manner than he had ever yet done. The latter cried out in an agony of distress, 'God hides the light of his face from my soul and is putting me to bed in the dark because out of a dastardly compliance to some of my hearers I have not dwelt enough upon the doctrines of grace in the course of my public ministrations, particularly the doctrine of election, in which doctrine I now see such a glory as I never saw before.' Yet both were good men and went off comfortably at last; though not until they had been led through a dismal, tedious wilderness of keen remorse and distressing conflicts." [Works, vol. 3, p. 133, note.] True it is, that we cannot always interpret the Lord's dealings with others and should therefore "judge not;" yet God often interprets his own ways to his own people and teaches his disobedient children that he will honor them who honor him.

But in what manner soever the minds of the saints are exercised at last, whether they rejoice, they are made to bear witness more or less to the truth. Herein consists no small part of the preciousness of their death. For herein is God glorified and his word magnified, when the gospel appears all sufficient to support the soul in life and in death. The following examples will serve to illustrate this subject.

DR. THOMAS GOODWIN was, it is well known, one of the ablest writers in defence of eternal election and particular redemption that this country ever produced. During a great part of his long life, he held fast of these doctrines with uniform consistency and died in the fullest assurance of their truth. In the account of his life and death, prefixed to the 5th vol. of his works, we have the following particulars of his triumphant departure. "In February, 1679, a fever seized him which in a few days put an end to his life. In all the violence of it he discoursed with that strength of faith and assurance of Christ's love, with that holy admiration of free grace, with that joy in believing, and such thanksgivings and praises, as extremely moved and affected all that heard him. He rejoiced in the thoughts that he was dying and going to have full and uninterrupted communion with God. 'I am going,' said he, 'to the Three Persons with whom I have had communion; they have taken me, I did not take them. I shall be changed in the twinkling of a eye; all my lusts and corruptions I shall be rid of, which I could not be here; these croaking toads will fall off in a moment. I could not have imagined I should ever have had such a measure of faith in this hour; no, I could never have imagined it. My bow abides in strength. Is Christ divided? No, I have the whole of his righteousness; I am found in him, not in my own righteousness, which is of the law, but in the righteousness which is of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Christ cannot love me better than he doth; I think I cannot love Christ better than I do; I am swallowed up in God.' With this assurance of faith, and fulness of joy he left this world in the 80th year of his age."

DR. TOBIAS CRISP, like many others of the Lord's people, was, in his earlier years, a zealous Arminian and very indefatigable in his ministerial duties. But it pleased God several years before his death to lead his mind into the heights and depths of free grace and everlasting love and to establish his soul in an extraordinary manner in the faith of imputed righteousness. This soon procured for him the surname of Antinomian, though all who knew him, both professors and profane, were witnesses to his uncommon devotedness to God and to the holiness of his life. After his strength was greatly spent by constant and laborious preaching, praying, &c., often whole nights, to the ruin of his health, he died in 1642. But the same truths which were his support in life were his triumph in death. "He manifested," says Mr. Lancaster, "such faith, such joy, such a quiet and appeased conscience, such triumph over death and hell, as made the standers-by amazed. And withal he forgot not to profess before some present the steadfastness of his faith to this effect; 'that as he had lived in the free grace of God through Christ, so he did with confidence and great joy, even as much as

his present condition was capable of, resign his life and soul into the hands of his most dear Father.' His son, Mr. S. Crisp, informs us that a few moments before his departure out of this world he said to friends by his bed-side, 'Where are all those that dispute against the free grace of God and what I have taught thereof? I am now ready to answer them all;' and so he fell asleep."

MR. THOMAS COLE was a minister of the Independent denomination in London, and the author of an excellent work on Regeneration, Faith, &c. He ably advocated the doctrines of sovereign grace, especially imputed righteousness, and zealously opposed the Neonomian error. For the account of his last illness and death, which took place in 1697, I am indebted to Mr. Wilson's History of Dissenting Churches. We are informed that, "in the prospect of his approaching end, his mind was the most happy imaginable and he conversed with different persons in a manner that gave great satisfaction to those about him. Mr. Traile, who was present, said to him, 'Sir, you know what opposition hath been made against the truths of the gospel and what contending there hath been, &c. But have you no kind of repenting that you have given occasion of this contention?' Mr. Cole replied, 'Repenting, no; I repent I have been no more vigorous and active in defending those truths, in the confidence of which I die; and if I have any desire to live it is that I may be further serviceable to Christ in vindicating his name in the pulpit. But he can defend his own truth when his poor creatures and ministers who contended for them (as well as they could) are laid in the dust.' Mr. Traile said, 'We desire to know the peace and comfort you have of these truths, as to your eternal state?' He replied, 'It is my only ground of comfort. Death would be terrible else. I should not dare to look death in the face if it were not for the comfortable assurance which faith gives me of eternal life in Christ. Not what I bring to Christ, but derive from him, having received some beginning of it which I see springing up to eternal life. They do not know the constraining power of the love of Christ, who can be wicked and licentious under such a comfortable doctrine. None feel the power of it but those whom God enableth to believe, and it will be abused by every one that does not believe.'

"The following are some of his occasional sayings at several times on his death-bed. 'I wait for a peaceable dismissal, I long to see his salvation: ere long I shall be where I shall be free from all pain. The Spirit saith, Come, and the Bride saith, Come, O Come! Lord Jesus, come quickly.' To one that came to see him, he said, 'God hath made me a man of contention; but I would have all the world know, that the doctrine I have been preaching I can comfortably die in.' One friend said to him, 'You have been one of those that tormented the earth as was mentioned this day in prayer.' He replied, 'The gospel will torment them more and more. God will have his witnesses, a competent number in all ages. Blessed be God, he hath called me to his heavenly kingdom! I long to be with Christ. It is a pleasant thing to die; I am waiting for thy salvation!' To Dr. Chancey, who was present, he said, 'Though they would not suffer me to preach the doctrine of free grace quietly, yet God suffereth me to die in the comfort of it.' In this

resigned and happy manner, Mr. Cole departed to the world of spirits, September 16, 1697, in his 70th year of age."

MR. JOSEPH HUSSEY, who is best known by his works entitled, "God's Operations of Grace, but no Offers of Grace," and his "Glory of Christ Unveiled," was, in the latter part of his life, a most zealous opponent of Arminianism, in all its branches. In his dying moments, though in extreme pain, he was honored to bear some precious testimonies to the truths of discriminating grace, of which the following are a few. "One of the church asking him how his faith was exercised with regard to those doctrines he used to preach, he answered, 'I am in the firm and full persuasion of all those truths I have preached, and die in the firm belief of them all.' Many of the church being in his chamber, he often dropped some spiritual observations that expressed the feelings of his mind on the occasion. A person asking him how he did, 'I am,' said he, 'waiting for my happy change, to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.' 'What do you take, sir?' 'I have no palate for anything here, but my spiritual one is as good as ever to relish the doctrines of the gospel.' Being asked how he found it in his soul as to those doctrines he had delivered, he answered; 'O bravely! They are my main supports under my trials and pains. I find now the truth of what I have preached. They are not my notions or fancy, but the power of Christ to my soul.'

"Dosing at time, when he waked, he would drop such words as follow: 'I have often sung the praises of God in the low lands, but, oh! how long will it be before I come to the height of Zion, to sing to God and the Lamb upon the throne. Oh, blessed death, it is a sweet thing to die, for Christ will then be all in all. O Lord, gather thine elect out of this sinful world unto thyself.' He would occasionally break forth with many short sentences, such as these: 'Blessing, glory, honor, and praise be to God and the Lamb, for ever and ever. Sin is dreadful, but grace triumphs through Jesus Christ. Lord, be with me in my last conflicts, and leave me not. O let me have an abundant entrance into glory, to sing thy praise.' Thus he continued testifying of Jesus Christ, and praising him, until Tuesday, Nov. 15, 1726, when he slept in the Lord, in the 67th year of his age." [Abridged from Wilson's History.]

Mr. A. M. TOPLADY. If ever a believer of modern times finished his course with joy, and was honored to bear his dying testimony to the truths of the gospel, it was the celebrated Mr. Toplady. For nearly two years before the Lord took his highly favored servant to himself, he was pleased to fill him most remarkably with the Holy Spirit, and to give him extraordinary foretastes of glory. He was delivered from all doubts and fears, and possessed the fullest assurance of an eternal salvation in Christ. In public ministrations he was sometimes carried out beyond himself, and appeared almost in an ecstasy while discoursing on everlasting love, full redemption, free grace, and absolute salvation. The divine consolations with which he was favored increased the nearer he approached his end. About a month before his decease, in consequence of a wicked report that he had changed his sentiments, circulated by the followers of Mr.

John Wesley, he published his dying avowal of those precious truths which he had so zealously and so ably defended. In this avowal he say, "Should any hostile notice be taken of this paper, I do not intend to make any kind of reply. I am every day in view of dissolution. And in the fullest assurance of my eternal salvation, I am waiting, looking, and longing for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In conversation with a gentleman of the faculty, not long before his death, he frequently disclaimed with abhorrence the least dependence on his own righteousness, as any cause of his justification before God, and said that he rejoiced only in the free, complete, and everlasting salvation of God's elect, by Jesus Christ, through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. The same medical gentleman has related the following particulars of their conversation. After observing that a remarkable jealousy was apparent in his whole conduct, for fear of receiving any part of the honor due to Christ alone, he adds, "His feelings were so very tender on this subject, that I once undesignedly put him almost in an agony, by remarking the great loss which the church of Christ would receive by his death, at this particular juncture. The utmost distress was immediately visible in his countenance and he exclaimed to this purpose: 'What, by my death? No! By my death? No! Jesus Christ is able, and will, by proper instruments, defend his own truths. And with regard to what little I have been enabled to do in this way; not to me, not to me, but to his own name, and to that alone, be the glory.'

"Conversing on the subject of election, he said; 'That God's everlasting love to his chosen people, his eternal, particular, most free, and immutable choice of them in Christ Jesus, was without the least respect to any work or works of righteousness wrought, to be wrought, or that should ever be wrought in or by them; for God's election does not depend upon our sanctification, but our sanctification depends upon God's election and appointment of us unto everlasting life.' At another time, he was so affected with a sense of God's everlasting love to his soul, that he could not refrain from bursting into tears.

"A short time before his death, at his request, I felt his pulse; and he desired to know what I thought of it. I told him that his heart and arteries evidently beat weaker and weaker. He replied immediately, with the sweetest smile upon his countenance, 'Why, that is a good sign that my death is fast approaching; and, blessed be God, I can add, that my heart beats every day stronger and stronger for glory.'

"To another friend, who, in conversation with him on the subject of his principles, had asked him whether any doubt remained upon his mind respecting the truth of them, he answered; 'Doubt, sir, doubt! Pray use not that word when speaking of me. I cannot endure the term; at least while God continues to shine upon my soul in the gracious manner he does now. Not but that I am sensible, that while in the body, if left of him, I am capable, through the power of temptation, of calling in question every truth of

the gospel. But that is so far from being the case, that the comforts and manifestations of his love are so abundant, as to render my state and condition the most desirable in the world. And, with respect to my principles, those blessed truths which I have been enabled in my poor measure to maintain, appear to me, more than ever, most gloriously indubitable. My own existence is not, to my apprehension, a greater certainty.'

"Speaking to another friend on the subject of his 'Dying Avowal,' he expressed himself thus: 'My dear friend, those great and glorious truths which the Lord in rich mercy hath given me to believe, and which he hath enabled me (though very feebly) to stand forth in the defence of, are not (as those who believe not or oppose them say) dry doctrines, or mere speculative points. No. But being brought into the practical and heartfelt experience, they are the very joy and support of my soul; and the consolations flowing from them carry me far above the things of time and sense.'

"Another of his friends, mentioning likewise the report of his recanting his former principles, he said, with some vehemence and emotion, 'I recant my former principles! God forbid that I should be so vile an apostate.' To which he presently added, with great apparent humility, 'And yet that apostate I should soon be, if I were left to myself.'

"Another time he cried out, 'O what a day of sunshine this has been to me! I have not words to express it. What a great thing it is to rejoice in death!' Speaking of Christ, he said, 'his love is unutterable.' He was happy in declaring that the eighth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, verse thirty-third to the end, were the joy and comfort of his soul. Upon that portion of Scripture, he often descanted with great delight, and would be frequently ejaculating, 'Lord Jesus! why tarriest thou so long?'

"Within the hour of his death, he called his friends and his servant, and asked them if they could give him up. On their answering in the affirmative, since it pleased the Lord to be so gracious to him, he replied, 'O what a blessing it is you are made willing to give me up into the hands of my dear Redeemer, and to part with me; it will not be long before God takes me, for no mortal man can live (bursting, while he said it, into tears of joy,) after the glories which God hath manifested to my soul.' Soon after this, his redeemed spirit took its flight, on Tuesday, August 11, 1778, in the 38th year of his age."

MR. JOHN MACGOWAN, known to the world as the author of 'Dialogues of Devils,' and other ingenious works, was a Baptist minister, and pastor of the church meeting in Devonshire-square, London. In the early part of his life he was in connection with the Wesleyan Methodists, but after his mind was enlightened to see the glory of sovereign grace, he zealously and publicly preached all those important truths which the Particular Baptists at that time steadily maintained.



Mr. Macgowan's views of the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel may be collected from the following pathetic lines, which he composed on the death of Dr. Gill. I quote them with much approbation, excepting the allusion to Elijah and Elisha, which appears to savour too much of the legal dispensation. Dr. Gill was worthy of all the love and esteem which his brethren manifested towards him, but he should not be regarded in any other character than a *faithful and beloved brother*. Those who are of the truth, acknowledge no *leader* but Christ himself. Few men understood this principle better than Mr. Macgowan; but being a young man when Dr. Gill died, and having lost a venerable friend, whom he loved exceedingly for the truth's sake, and from whom he had derived great spiritual advantage, the ardour of his mind led him to compare his situation with that of Elisha, when his aged companion was transported to heaven; so that he gave vent to the feelings of his soul in the following verses:

"Sad was the day, to young Elisha sad,  
When Great Elijah from his head was taken;  
Not less to me, O Gill! thy head now laid,  
And this my mansion now by thee forsaken.

Those days were precious, when the lure of truth  
Unmixed, by thee proclaimed, our willing feet  
Drew thither, and the genial dew of youth  
Shed on our hearts, and made our joys complete.

But now thy pulpit's dumb, thy voice no more  
From thence proclaims illustrious truth divine;  
Better employed on yonder blissful shore;  
And here to mourn in solitude is mine.

Yet still methinks, I hear the solemn sound  
Of sovereign love, as preached by thee of yore;  
Of boundless heights and depths beyond profound,  
Brimless and bottomless, without a shore.

O! the sweet theme! how hast my heart been warm'd  
With holy gratitude to hear thee tell  
Of grace foreknowing, grace selecting, arm'd  
At all events to rescue me from hell!"

To Mr. Reynolds, a sound minister, who succeeded Mr. Brine, we are indebted for the account of the dying testimony of Mr. Macgowan. "I frequently visited him," says Mr. Reynolds, "in his last sickness, when he took occasion as opportunity offered, of opening to me his whole heart.

"At one time he was in great darkness of soul, and lamented exceedingly the withdrawings of the presence of God. Two things, he said, had deeply exercised his thoughts. The one was, how those heavy and complicated afflictions which God had seen fit to lay upon him could work so as to promote his real good. And the other was, that God, his best friend, should keep at a distance from his soul, when he knew how much his mind was distressed for the light of his countenance. 'O!' said he, turning to me, and speaking with great earnestness, 'My soul longeth and panteth for God, for the living God; his love visits would cheer my soul, and make this heavy affliction sit light upon me. The wonted presence of Jesus, my Redeemer, I cannot do without. I trust he will turn to me soon, yea, I know he will in his own time; for he knows how much I need the influence of his grace!' In this conversation he often mentioned the depravity of his nature, and what a burden he found it. 'My heart,' said he, 'is more and more vile. Every day I have such humiliating views of heart corruption as weighs me down. I wonder whether any of the Lord's people see things in the same light that I do.' And then turning to me he said, 'And do you find it so brother?' On my answering him in the affirmative, he replied, 'am glad of that.'

"The next time, which was the last of my conversing with him, I found him in a sweet and heavenly frame; his countenance indicated the serenity of his mind. On my entering the room, he exclaimed, 'O, my dear brother, how rejoiced am I to see you! Sit down, and hear of the loving-kindness of my God. You see me as ill as I can be whilst in this world, and as well as I can be whilst in the body. Methinks I have as much of heaven as I can hold.' Then tears of joy, like a river flowed from his eyes; and his inward plausible frame interrupted his speech for a time. He broke silence with saying, 'The work will soon be over; but death to me has nothing terrific in it. I have not an anxious thought. The will of God and my will are one. 'Tis all right, yet mysterious. You cannot conceive the pleasure I feel in this reflection; viz., that I have not shunned to declare (according to the best of my light and ability), the whole counsel of God. I can die on the doctrines that I have preached. They are true; I find them so. Go on to preach the gospel of Christ, and mind not what the world may say of you.' All the while I sat silent; and rising to take my leave, fearing he would spend his strength too much, he immediately took me by the hand, and weeping over each other, we wished mutual blessings. On parting, he said, 'My dear brother, farewell; I shall see you no more.'

"Thus I left my much esteemed friend and brother; and the next news I heard from his was, that on Saturday evening his immortal spirit left the body, to go to the world of light and bliss, and keep an eternal Sabbath with God, angels and saints.

"Mr. Macgowan departed this life, November 25, 1780 in the 55th year of his age."

MR. SAMUEL MEDLEY was for twenty-seven years the pastor of a Baptist church in Liverpool, but as he frequently preached in the metropolis, he was well known there,

and in many parts of the country, where his labours were extensively useful. His views of divine truth were nearly the same as those of Dr. Gill; and although he was far removed from a party or bigoted spirit, he was too faithful to escape the revilings of many, who were willing to bury the doctrines of the gospel under the pretence of universal charity. In the latter part of his time, the sentiments of Mr. Fuller were beginning to prevail, but had not then obtained an entrance into the church at Liverpool, a circumstance for which Mr. Medley, in conversation with a friend expressed his thankfulness to God. In a letter written with his own hand during his last illness, to my near and honoured relative, he thus declares the foundation of his hope. "I know no other name, I want no other foundation for my hope and salvation for time or for eternity, but that of Jesus, and everlasting love. This has never failed any of God's chosen and called yet, and I am persuaded it never will. I do not love trimming and half-way preaching nor professing either. You can and will, my dear brother, I trust, bear me witness, that ever since you have known and loved me in the bonds of the gospel and in the bowels of Christ, that I have, as I trust by grace enabled, uniformly set my face against all such mingle mangle. I know, and daily feel I am a poor, dark, weak, and worthless worm; but I trust I would not walk willingly in craftiness, nor knowingly handle the word of God deceitfully, for all the world, or all the men in the world, whether professors or profane, whether they frown or smile. And these things I write not to aggrandize or set up myself, O no! God forbid, but to bear my sincere and humble testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus."

The following account of Mr. Medley's dying testimony to the glorious truths of the gospel is extracted from the memoirs of him, published by his son, "From the first of his illness he laboured under great depression of spirits, arising partly from the nature of his disorder, but more especially from the frame of his mind, which was in general low and dark, mourning much on account of the loss of sensible comforts. During this trial he would sometimes say he 'feared he had only been instrumental in the salvation of others as a scaffold to the building, which, when completed, is taken down as of no further use.'

"This dejected frame did not long continue, though the change that took place was gradual. He was somewhat cheered by the following passage: 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness,' &c., &c. As his bodily infirmities increased, the gloom and darkness under which he had laboured were dispelled, and the delightful dawn of an eternal day began to break forth. His confidence and comfort in God, as his covenant God in Christ Jesus, constantly increased; and he became more and more resigned to the sovereign of his heavenly Father, casting himself on the Rock of ages, and patiently waiting the termination of his troubles. The 17th chapter of John was peculiarly precious to him. He often read it during his illness. 'It is indeed the Lord's prayer,' he would say, 'none but Christ could use that prayer.'

"In a letter which he wrote a few days before his death, he said, 'Blessed be God, he supports and upholds my mind on and by his good word and the Holy Spirit. Though I have no ravishing frames, or flights of soul, yet I humbly trust the eternal God is my refuge, and underneath are his everlasting arms.' He then repeated those words in the 130th Psalm, 'I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.'

"To a clergyman with whom he had lived some time in the habits of friendship, he said, 'Farewell, God bless you: remember I die no Arminian, Arian, or Socinian. I die a poor sinner, saved by sovereign, rich and free mercy.' To another, whose occupation had formerly been in the sea-faring line, he said, 'I am now a poor shattered bark, just about to gain the blissful harbour; and O how sweet will be the port after the storm!'

"On the day before he died, he exclaimed, 'Is there not an appointed time to man? Sweet Jesus, thou art my strength, my support, my salvation, my salvation. Tell my dear friends I am going: Jesus is with me, and I am not dejected. I am full of comfort and consolation, and able yet to recollect God's precious word. I never saw so much of my own unworthiness, or so much of the excellency, glory, and suitableness of Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour. As to my sentiments,' he continued, 'I am no ways altered. The doctrines I have preached, I am fully persuaded, are of the truth. They are now the support and consolation of my mind. That Jesus, whom I have so long recommended to poor sinners, is my only comfort in my dying hours. His salvation is every way perfect and complete.'

"Early in the morning of the day on which he died, he said, with a serene and smiling countenance, 'Look up, my soul, and rejoice, for thy redemption draweth nigh!' He then added, 'I am looking up to Jesus—but a point or two more, and I shall be at my heavenly Father's house.' Though his bodily agonies were sometimes extreme, yet the views he had of the finished salvation of Jesus raised him above them all, and in this happy frame of mind did he continue, till, with a smiling countenance, he yielded up his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father, on July 27, 1799."

Now, what shall we say to these things? Here we have many witnesses, who testified, with one accord, that the sovereign mercy of Israel's Triune God, displayed in eternal election, special redemption, and spiritual revelation, was their support in life, and their only consolation in death. It would be easy to enlarge the catalogue with a cloud of witnesses; but the time would fail to tell of Owen, of Gill, of Brine, of Hervey, of Romaine, of Hawker, and of a thousand others, who lived and died in the faith of these truths. The Lord himself had instructed them with a strong hand; he had shown them the infinite evil of sin, and humbled them with such views of their real character, as condemned sinners, that they were convinced that nothing short of a finished and absolute salvation would meet their wretched case.

"They therefore preached the gospel fix'd and free,

Not 'yea and nay,'—it may or may not be;  
Such gospel God had taught them to detest,  
And in the certain gospel gave them rest."

But can indefinite redemption yield so strong consolation? Can a 'yea and nay' gospel thus support the mind? Let the dying confession of Mr. Fuller himself answer the question.

It is with mingled emotions of pleasure and fear that I appeal to Mr. Fuller's last words. Of fear, because of the delicacy of the subject; of pleasure, because his last confession of hope, affords abundant reason for thanksgiving to God on his behalf. It would have been a gloomy circumstance indeed, if Mr. Fuller had gone out of the world expressing the same confidence in the doctrine he had taught, as Cole, Toplady, &c. did, in the immortal truths which supported their minds.

It seems pretty evident, that, during the whole of his last illness, the Lord was instructing him by means of his complicated afflictions and giving him to understand, in a clearer manner than he had ever known before, that it was not *for his own righteousness' sake that he was about to go into and possess the land*. He was subject not only to great bodily suffering, but of much darkness and depression of spirit; a state of mind, to which the most eminent saints are liable, and with which all the elect of God are, at one time or other, made acquainted. While thus exercised, he appears to have been surrounded by miserable comforters, who reminded him of his eminent goodness, and the consequent reward. One of this description said to him, "I know of no person, sir, who is in a more happy situation than yourself; a good man on the verge of a blessed immortality." But Mr. Fuller was not in a state of mind to be consoled by the consideration of his goodness, though his biographer says, he "humbly acquiesced, and hoped it was so." But we are informed that "he afterwards lifted up his hands and exclaimed, 'I am a great sinner, and if I am saved, it must be by great and sovereign grace—by great and sovereign grace.'" [Morris' Memoirs, 8vo, 1816, page 470.] Thanks be to God for such an exclamation as this!

Another friend, a Mr. Burls, who witnessed his last hours, thus writes: [Bap. Mag. 1815, page 248.] "Respecting our dear friend, many will *be disappointed as to his dying experience*; so little being known as to the feelings of his mind. While he was able to converse, the substance of what he said was,—he had no raptures, no despondency. His feelings were not so much in exercise as his judgment." No doubt many would be disappointed as to the dying experience of Mr. Fuller. Doubtless many of his friends expected that so good, so pious a man, would, when he came to die, reflect with joy upon his well-spent life, and express the utmost confidence that his sincere and humble efforts would be acceptable through the merits of our Saviour. But it please God in mercy to disappoint their foolish expectations. It pleased him to convince Mr. Fuller that he was altogether an unclean thing, and that there was no

hope for his guilty soul, but on the foundation of sovereign mercy alone. The friends of truth have no reason to be disappointed at the dying experience of Mr. Fuller, but rather to thank God on his behalf. There is abundant reason to believe he was fully convinced, that if he was saved, it would not be because he was so good, so pious, so useful a man, but because Jesus bore his sins and died in his stead. Accordingly, he expressed himself in these appropriate words: "I am a poor guilty creature; but Jesus is an Almighty Saviour. I have no other hope of salvation than arises from mere sovereign grace, through the atonement of my Lord and Saviour. With this hope, I can go into eternity with composure."

These last expressions are contained in a very interesting and affecting letter, which he wrote to Dr. Ryland a few days before his death. Would to God that the whole course of Mr. Fuller's ministry had been doctrinally in unison with that letter! He there seems to acknowledge divine sovereignty in all its parts. In the same letter are the following remarkable words: "I have preached and written much against the abuse of the doctrine of grace; BUT that doctrine is all my salvation, and all my desire." Now, although this is not a *formal* renunciation of his former principles, yet it evidently betrays a secret suspicion that he had gone too far in his opposition to the abuse of the doctrine of grace. He bears no dying testimony to the truth of his former principles, like Cole, Toplady, Macgowan; he makes no reference to them as his support in death, but rather he discovers a latent uneasiness, lest all had not been quite right. Else what means that significant conjunction, *but*? Or why did Mr. Fuller advert exclusively to the controversy with his Baptist brethren, especially in a letter to Dr. Ryland, who he knew had formerly held different sentiments from those which at that time he maintained. Mr. Fuller had written against the Socinians; he had written against the Sandemanians; he had written against Mr. Dan Taylor, the General Baptist; and against Mr. McLean, of Edinburgh; but he makes not the slightest allusion to any thing he had written against these. His mind was quite at rest as to the parts he had taken in their controversies. But he had written against what he considered the *abuse of the doctrine of grace*; and if, as a dying man, he alluded to what he had taught on this subject, it might at least have been expected that he would have set his last seal to it, had he possessed the confidence that his doctrine would stand the test. Instead of this, we have a significant *but*, wherein much is implied which is not expressed; and the whole sentence evidently discovers *a secret suspicion, if not a persuasion, that what he had written against the abuse of sovereign grace, had a tendency to subvert sovereign grace itself*; yet through the tender compassion of God, he is made freely to confess, that *sovereign mercy, and sovereign mercy alone, in all its bearings, is the only hope for his guilty and polluted soul*.

How painful soever it may be in some respects, to contrast the dying experience of Mr. Fuller with that of the precious sons of Zion already referred to, the painfulness is swallowed up in the delightful consideration, that the most subtle opponent of sovereign grace that ever appeared in our denomination, was himself a monument of

that very grace which his writings had a tendency to destroy. There is abundant reason to hope, that he who once laboured to prove that *guilt is untransferable*, is now singing a different song. "Unto him that loved us, AND WASHED US FROM OUR SINS in his own blood." We have reason to indulge the pleasurable reflection, that he who formerly denied the *vicarious nature* of the death of Christ, who taught that Jesus died *indefinitely*, is now joining with the innumerable multitude bought with blood, to celebrate particular redemption before the throne, and to sing with one accord to the exalted Lamb, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

And now, my dear sir, adieu! May sovereign mercy be your support in life, and your consolation in death. Glad shall I be to hear of your becoming a more decided preacher of it, and of that glorious righteousness which is revealed in the gospel. But, if you should be thus honored, rest assured that you will not escape persecution. Opposition to the truth has now become too common, not only in the world, but amongst professors to allow you to escape. But the faith of that glorious righteousness will make you strong in weakness, joyful in tribulation, and triumphant in the awful moment of death. If, in your last conflict with the king of terrors, it should please the Holy Ghost to irradiate your soul with the glory of that righteousness, you will meet the monster with a smile, and triumphantly exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting,? O grave, where is thy victory?"

WILLIAM RUSHTON, JUN.  
LIVERPOOL, AUG. 31, 1831.

## **The Case for a Definite and Complete Atonement**

**By Francis Turretin**

1. We argue that the atonement was definite, from the fact that Christ was destined to die for none but those who were given him by the Father. All men universally were not given to Christ but a limited number only. Since, in the council of the Father which regulated Christ's death and defined its object, there was a designation, not only of Christ as Mediator, but also of those for whose redemption and salvation He was to suffer; it is plain that He could die for those only who were in this sense given Him. Here we may remark a twofold donation. One of Christ to men, another of men to

Christ. Christ was given to men for the purpose of saving them and men to Christ that through Him they might be saved. The former is referred to in Isa. 9.6 and 49.6, as well as in all those places in which He is said to be given and sent to us; the latter is alluded to in the places where mention is made of those given to Christ, as in John 17.2, 6,12, and 6.37. Seeing this twofold giving is reciprocal, each of them must be of the same extent; so that Christ is given for none but those who are given to Him, and all those are given to Christ for whom He is given. Now, it is abundantly plain that some men only; and not all men, were given to Christ. This is asserted in many texts of Scripture, where those who are given to Him are distinguished from other men. 'Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. I have manifested thy name unto the men whom thou hast given me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me', John 17.2,6. The Scripture designates those whom the Father gave Him by such phrases as these: the people whom He foreknew, Rom. 11.2; heirs and children of promise, Rom. 9.8; the seed of Abraham, not carnal, but spiritual, both of the Jews and Gentiles, Rom. 4.13, Gal. 3.18, Heb. 2.16; His people, His body, the Church, Matt. 1.21, Eph. 5.23; vessels of mercy prepared to glory, Rom. 9.24; chosen in Christ, predestinated to the adoption of sons and to conformity to His image, Rom. 8.30, Eph. 1.4, 5; and the posterity of the second Adam, all of whom are to be quickened in Christ, in opposition to the posterity of the first Adam, in whom all die, 1 Cor. 15.22, 23. From all which it appears, that Christ was not given for all of all nations, but for a limited number only.

To no purpose will our opponents reply, that 'the giving of Christ was conditional, not absolute; that the condition was that all who would by faith receive the offered salvation, should be made partakers of it; and since this was not to be the case with all, it is not surprising that they derive no advantage from it.' This is a begging of the question; it is without foundation in Scripture, which nowhere mentions such a conditional giving of Christ. Though faith is proposed as a means and condition necessary to the reception of Christ, and the enjoyment of the blessings offered in the Gospel, yet it does not follow that it was a condition to the giving of Christ, since faith itself is a gift of grace and one of the fruits of Christ's being delivered up for sinners. Further, if the giving of Christ rested upon any condition, the condition must depend either upon God or upon man. The latter of these can be affirmed by none but a Pelagian; if the former be affirmed, then it comes to this, that Christ is said to be given to us as a Saviour by God on these terms, that He will bestow Him on us on condition of His working faith in us; which faith, however, He will not give, though He alone is able to give it. How glaring an absurdity!

Our view is further confirmed by the connection of that twofold relation to us, which Christ sustains: the relation of a surety, and that of a Head. He is our surety, that He may acquire salvation for us, by rendering to justice that satisfaction which it demands. He is our Head, in order to apply this salvation to us, by working in us faith



and repentance, through the effectual operation of his Holy Spirit upon our hearts. Hence, as He is not given as a Head to all men, but to His members only, or, which is the same thing, to the elect, who are actually to partake of salvation, He cannot be the surety or sponsor of any other than these. Of whomsoever He is the surety, He is also the head. The one cannot be extended farther than the other. This also appears from the connection between the death and resurrection of Christ, in which there is the same twofold relation. Since He died as surety, He must rise as Head, as the reasons for His death and resurrection are the same; nor can any reason be given, why the ground of the one should be more extensive than that of the other. Hence it is, that the Apostle Paul speaks of these as being equal in efficacy and extent: 'Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification', Rom. 4.25. 'That he died for all, that they which live, should not live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again', 2 Cor. 4.15. Hence it cannot be said that He died for any others than those for whom He rose, because no one will be a partaker of the fruits of Christ's death, unless by His resurrection. But that He did not rise as a Head to confer salvation upon all, is self-evident.

2. The same doctrine is established by the connection between the atonement and the intercession of Christ. As they are both parts of His priestly office, they must be of the same extent; so that for all for whom He made satisfaction, He should also intercede, and not make atonement for those who will never have a place in His intercession. The object of His propitiation and of His appearance in the presence of God must be one, since the Apostles Paul and John represent their connection as indissoluble, 1 John 2.1, 2, Rom. 8.34. That He does not intercede for all, but only for those who are given Him by the Father, Christ Himself expressly declares: 'I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me out of the world', John 17.9. When it is so much more easy to pray for any one than to lay down life for them, will any one say that Christ would die for those for whom He would not pray? Will they say that at the very moment before His death He would refuse His prayers on behalf of those for whom He is just about to shed His blood?

The objection which the Arminians offer is frivolous: 'that there is a twofold intercession of Christ: one universal, which is made for the whole world, of which intercession Isaiah speaks, 53.12, and agreeably to which He is said to have prayed for His murderers, Luke 23.34; another particular, which is made for believers only, which is spoken of, John 9 and Rom. 8.' The objection rests not on any foundation, either in Scripture or reason. As Christ is always heard and answered by the Father, John 11.42, if He prays for all, all will be saved. The doctrine of universal intercession is not taught by the Prophet Isaiah, where he says, 'he made intercession for the transgressors,' Isa. 12; for it is not said that He made intercession for all, but for many whose character is delineated by the prophet, in a preceding verse, as those who shall be justified by Christ. It is not said, Luke 23.4, that He prayed for all those who

crucified Him, but for those who knew not what they did; and we are assured that these obtained pardon, no doubt the fruit of the prayer which Christ offered up on the cross to the Father, Acts 2.3. Nor if Christ, through the impulse of humane affections of love, prayed for those who perished, is it to be considered that the intercessory prayers, which He offered as Mediator and in the discharge of His special office, are to be extended to others than the elect given Him by the Father. To the elect Christ Himself restricts His intercessory prayers.

3. The inseparable connection between the gift of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit bears the most conclusive testimony to the definite atonement. As these two gifts, the most excellent which God has bestowed on us, are always in Scripture joined together as cause and effect, John 16.7, Gal. 4.4, 6, Rom. 8.9, 1 John 3.24, they must be of equal extent and go together; so that the Son is not given to acquire salvation for any others than those to whom the Spirit was given to apply the salvation procured. No reason can be assigned why the gift of the Son should be more extensive than the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is plain that the Holy Spirit is given to none but the elect. Hence, if there be any harmony between the work of the Son and that of the Holy Spirit, in the economy of salvation, Christ was given to die for the elect, and for them only. Pertinent to this purpose is the argument of the Apostle Paul, in which, from the giving of Christ, he infers the communication of every blessing. 'He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?' Rom. 8.32. The apostle reasons from the greater to the less. Surely He who gave His Son, which incontrovertibly was the greater gift, will not refuse to give us faith and all other saving blessings, which are the less; and this the rather, because Christ, by delivering Himself up, has merited for us, together with salvation, all those gifts. Whence the conclusion is inevitable: either all those blessings shall be given to the reprobate, if Christ died for them; or if they are not given them, which is granted by all, then Christ did not die for them, i.e., He did not die for all. This is not answered by alleging that the apostle speaks of Christ's being given in a special manner to the believers. For, as was said above, the supposition of a universal giving is gratuitous, and nowhere countenanced in Scripture; and since faith is a fruit of Christ's death, it cannot be a condition antecedent to His death. Further, since, according to the order which is laid down by our learned opponents themselves, the decree concerning Christ's death was antecedent to the decree relative to bestowing faith; it is inconceivable how at one and the same time, and in the self-same simple act, Christ could be delivered up for all, and for some only.

4. Another argument is, the superlative love of Christ towards those for whom He died. He loved them with the most ardent affection. Greater love has no one, than that one should lay down his life for his friend, John 15.13. In the same exalted strain does the Apostle Paul extol the love of Christ: he speaks of it as truly wonderful and unheard of among men. 'Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure

for a good man some would dare even to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us', Rom. 5.7, 8. But this cannot be said of all men, and every man.

## **For Whom Did Christ Die?**

**by Charles Hodge (1823-1886)**

### **1. State of the Question**

This is a question between Augustinians and Anti-Augustinians. The former believing that God from all eternity having elected some to everlasting life, had a special reference to their salvation in the mission and work of his Son. The latter, denying that there has been any such election of a part of the human family to salvation maintain that the mission and work of Christ had an equal reference to all mankind.

The question, therefore, does not, in the first place, concern the nature of Christ's work. It is true, if it be denied that his work was a satisfaction for sin, and affirmed that it was merely didactic; that his life, sufferings, and death were designed to reveal and confirm truth; then it would follow of course that it had no reference to one class of men more than to another, or to men more than to angels. Truth is designed for the illumination of all the minds to which it is presented. But admitting the work of Christ to have been a true satisfaction for sin, its design may still be an open question. Accordingly, Lutherans and Reformed, although they agree entirely as to the nature of the atonement, differ as to its design. The former maintain that it had an equal reference to all mankind, the latter that it had special reference to the elect.

In the second place, the question does not concern the value of Christ's satisfaction. That Augustinians admit to be infinite. Its value depends on the dignity of the sacrifice; and as no limit can be placed to the dignity of the Eternal Son of God who offered Himself for our sins, so no limit can be assigned to the meritorious value of his work. It is a gross misrepresentation of the Augustinian doctrine to say that it teaches that Christ suffered so much for so many; that He would have suffered more had more been included in the purpose of salvation. This is not the doctrine of any Church on earth, and never has been. What was sufficient for one was sufficient for all. Nothing less than the light and heat of the sun is sufficient for any one plant or animal. But what is absolutely necessary for each is abundantly sufficient for the infinite number and variety of plants and animals which fill the earth. All that Christ did and suffered would have been necessary had only one human soul been the object

of redemption; and nothing different and nothing more would have been required had every child of Adam been saved through his blood.

In the third place, the question does not concern the suitability of the atonement. What was suitable for one was suitable for all. The righteousness of Christ, the merit of his obedience and death, is needed for justification by each individual of our race, and therefore is needed by all. It is no more appropriate to one man than to another. Christ fulfilled the conditions of the covenant under which all men were placed. He rendered the obedience required of all, and suffered the penalty which all had incurred; and therefore his work is equally suited to all.

In the fourth place, the question does not concern the actual application of the redemption purchased by Christ. The parties to this controversy are agreed that some only, and not all of mankind are to be actually saved.

The whole question, therefore, concerns simply the purpose of God in the mission of his Son. What was the design of Christ's coming into the world, and doing and suffering all He actually did and suffered? Was it merely to make the salvation of all men possible; to remove the obstacles which stood in the way of the offer of pardon and acceptance to sinners? or, was it specially to render certain the salvation of his own people, i.e., of those given to Him by the Father? The latter question is affirmed by Augustinians, and denied by their opponents. It is obvious that if there be no election of some to everlasting life, the atonement can have no special reference to the elect. It must have equal reference to all mankind. But it does not follow from the assertion of its having a special reference to the elect that it had no reference to the non-elect. Augustinians readily admit that the death of Christ had a relation to man, to the whole human family, which it had not to, the fallen angels. It is the ground on which salvation is offered to every creature under heaven who hears, the gospel; but it gives no authority for a like offer to apostate angels. It moreover secures, to the whole race at large, and to all classes of men, innumerable, blessings, both providential and religious. It was, of course, designed to produce these effects; and, therefore, He died to secure them. In view of the effects which the death of Christ produces on the relation of all mankind to God, it has in all ages been customary with Augustinians to say that Christ died "*sufficiens pro omnibus, efficaciter tantum pro electis*;" sufficiently for all, efficaciously only for the elect. There is a sense, therefore, in which He died for all, and there is a sense in which He died for the elect alone. The simple question is, Had the death of Christ a reference to the elect which it had not to other men? Did He come into the world to secure the salvation of those given to Him by the Father, so that the other effects of his work are merely incidental to what was done for the attainment of that object?

## **2. Proof of the Augustinian Doctrine.**

That these questions must be answered in the affirmative, is evident, —

1. From the nature of the covenant of redemption. It is admitted that there was a covenant between the Father and the Son in relation to the salvation of men. It is admitted that Christ came into the world in execution of that covenant. The nature of the covenant, therefore, determines the object of his death. According to one view, man having by his fall lost the ability of fulfilling, the conditions of the covenant of life, God, for Christ's sake, enters into a new covenant, offering men salvation upon other and easier terms; namely, as some say, faith and repentance, and others evangelical obedience. If such be the nature of the plan of salvation, then it is obvious that the work of Christ has equal reference to all mankind. According to another view, the work of Christ was designed to secure the pardon of original sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit for all men, Jews or Gentiles, and those are saved who duly improve the grace they severally receive. The former is the doctrine of the ancient Semi-Pelagians and modern Remonstrants; the latter of the Wesleyan Arminians. The Lutherans hold that God sent his Son to make a full and real legal satisfaction for the sins of all mankind; and that on the ground of this perfect satisfaction the offer of salvation is made to all who hear the gospel; that grace is given (in the word and sacraments) which, if unresisted, is sufficient to secure their salvation. The French theologians at Saumur, in the 17th century, taught also that Christ came into the world to do whatever was necessary for the salvation of men. But God, foreseeing that, if left to themselves, men would universally reject the offers of mercy, elected some to be the subjects of his saving grace by which they are brought to faith and repentance. According to this view of the plan of salvation, election is subordinate to redemption. God first redeems all and then elects some. This is the view extensively adopted in this country. According to Augustinians, men, by their fall, having sunk into a state of sin and misery, might justly have been left, as were the fallen angels, to perish in their sins. But God, in his infinite mercy, having determined to save a multitude whom no man could number, gave them to his Son as his inheritance, provided He would assume their nature and fulfil all righteousness in their stead. In the accomplishment of this plan Christ did come into the world, and did obey and suffer in the place of those thus given to Him, and for their salvation. This was the definite object of his mission, and therefore his death had a reference to them which it could not possibly have to those whom God determined to leave to the just recompense of their sins. Now this plan only supposes that God determined from eternity to do what in time He has actually accomplished. If it were just that all men should perish on account of their sin it was just to leave a portion of the race thus to perish, while the salvation of the other portion is a matter of unmerited favour. It can hardly be denied that God did thus enter into covenant with his Son. That is, that He did promise Him the salvation of his people as the reward of his incarnation and sufferings; that Christ did come into the world and suffer and die on that condition, and, having performed the condition, is

entitled to the promised reward. These are facts so clearly and so repeatedly stated in the Scriptures as not to admit of their being called into question. But if such is the plan of God respecting the salvation of men then it of necessity follows that election precedes redemption; that God had determined whom He would save before He sent his Son to save them. Therefore our Lord said that those given to Him by his Father should certainly come to Him, and that He would raise them up at the last day. These Scriptural facts cannot be admitted without its being also admitted that the death of Christ had a reference to his people, whose salvation it rendered certain, which it had not to others whom, for infinitely wise reasons, God determined to leave to themselves. It follows, therefore, from the nature of the covenant of redemption, as presented in the Bible, that Christ did not die equally for all mankind, but that He gave Himself for his people and for their redemption.

### **Argument from the Doctrine of Election.**

2. This follows also almost necessarily from the doctrine of election. Indeed it never was denied that Christ died specially for the elect until the doctrine of election itself was rejected. Augustine,

the follower and expounder of St. Paul, taught that God out of his mere good pleasure had elected some to everlasting life, and held that Christ came into the world to suffer and die for their salvation. He purchased them with his own precious blood. The Semi-Pelagians, in denying the doctrine of election, of course denied that Christ's death had more reference to one class of men than to another. The Latin Church, so long as it held to the Augustinian doctrine of election, held also to Augustine's doctrine concerning the design and objects of Christ's death. All through the Middle Ages this was one of the distinctive doctrines of those who resisted the progress of the Semi-Pelagian party in the Western Church. At the time of the Reformation the Lutherans, so long as they held to the one doctrine held also to the other. The Reformed, in holding fast the doctrine of election, remained faithful to their denial of the doctrine that the work of Christ had equal reference to all mankind. It was not until the Remonstrants in Holland, under the teaching of Arminius, rejected the Church doctrine of original sin, of the inability of fallen man to anything spiritually good, the sovereignty of God in election, and the perseverance of the saints, that the doctrine that the atonement had a special reference to the people of God was rejected. It is, therefore, a matter of history that the doctrine of election and the Augustinian doctrine as to the design of the work of Christ have been inseparably united. As this connection is historical so also is it logical. The one doctrine necessarily involves the other. If God from eternity determined to save one portion of the human race and not another, it seems to be a contradiction to say that the plan of salvation had equal reference to both portions; that the Father sent his Son to die for those whom He had

predetermined not to save, as truly as, and in the same sense that He gave Him up for those whom He had chosen to make the heirs of salvation.

### **Express Declarations of Scripture.**

3. We accordingly find numerous passages in which the design of Christ's death is declared to be, to save his people from their sins. He did not come merely to render their salvation possible, but actually to deliver them from the curse of the law, and from the power of sin. This is included in all the Scriptural representations of the nature and design of his work. No man pays a ransom without the certainty of the deliverance of those for whom it is paid. It is not a ransom unless it actually redeems. And an offering is no sacrifice unless it actually expiates and propitiates.

The effect of a ransom and sacrifice may indeed be conditional, but the occurrence of the condition will be rendered certain before the costly sacrifice is offered.

There are also very numerous passages in which it is expressly declared that Christ gave Himself for his Church (Ephesians v. 25); that He laid down his life for his sheep (John x. 15); that He laid down his life for his friends (John xv. 13); that He died that He might gather together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad (John xi. 52); that it was the Church which He purchased with his blood (Acts xx. 28). When mankind are divided into two classes, the Church and the world, the friends and the enemies of God, the sheep and the goats, whatever is affirmed distinctively of the one class is impliedly denied of the other. When it is said that Christ loved his Church and gave Himself for it, that He laid down his life for his sheep, it is clear that something is said of the Church and of the sheep, which is not true of those who belong to neither. When it is said that a man labours and sacrifices health and strength for his children, it is thereby denied that the motive which controls him is mere philanthropy, or that the design he has in view is the good of society. He may indeed be a philanthropist, and he may recognize the fact that the well-being of his children will promote the welfare of society, but this does not alter the case. It still remains true that love for his children is the motive, and their good his object. It is difficult, in the light of Ephesians v. 25, where the death of Christ is attributed to his love of his Church, and is said to have been designed for its sanctification and salvation, to believe that He gave Himself as much for reprobates as for those whom He intended to save. Every assertion, therefore that Christ died for a people, is a denial of the doctrine that He died equally for all men.

### **Argument from the Special Love of God.**

4. By the love of God is sometimes meant his goodness, of which all sensitive creatures are the objects and of whose benefits they are the recipients. Sometimes it

means his special regard for the children of men, not only as rational creatures, but also as the offspring of Him who is the Father of the spirits of all men. Sometimes it means that peculiar, mysterious, sovereign, immeasurable love which passes knowledge, of which his own people, the Church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven, are the objects. Of this love it is taught, (1.) That it is infinitely great. (2.) That it is discriminating, fixed on some and not upon others of the children of men. It is compared to the love of a husband for his wife; which from its nature is exclusive. (B.) That it is perfectly gratuitous and sovereign, i.e., not founded upon the special attractiveness of its objects, but like parental affection, on the mere fact that they are his children. (4.) That it is immutable. (5.) That it secures all saving blessings, and even all good; so that even afflictions are among its fruits intended for the greater good of the sufferer. Now to this love, not to general goodness, not to mere philanthropy, but to this peculiar and infinite love, the gift of Christ is uniformly referred. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John iv. 10.) Hereby perceive we the love of God (or, hereby we know what love is), because He (Christ) laid down his life for us. (1 John iii. 16.) God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans v. 8.) Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (John xv. 13.) Nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. (Romans viii. 35-39.) He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? (Romans viii. 32.) The whole argument of the Apostle in Romans v. 1-11, and especially throughout the eighth chapter, is founded upon this infinite and immutable love of God to his people. From this he argues their absolute security for time and eternity. Because He thus loved them He gave his Son for them; and, having done this, He would certainly give them everything necessary for their salvation. No enemy should ever prevail against them; nothing could ever separate them from his love. This whole argument is utterly irreconcilable with the hypothesis that Christ died equally for all men. His death is referred to the peculiar love of God to his people, and was the pledge of all other saving gifts. This peculiar love of God is not founded upon the fact that its objects are believers, for He loved them as enemies, as ungodly, and gave his Son to secure their being brought to faith, repentance, and complete restoration to the divine image. It cannot, therefore, be explained away into mere general benevolence or philanthropy. It is a love which secured the communication of Himself to its objects, and rendered their salvation certain; and consequently could not be bestowed upon all men, indiscriminately. This representation is so predominant in the Scriptures, namely, that the peculiar love of God to his people, to his Church, to the elect, is the source of the gift of Christ, of the mission of the Holy Spirit, and of all other saving blessings, that it cannot be ignored in any view of the plan and purpose of salvation. With this representation every other statement of the Scriptures must be consistent; and therefore the theory which denies this great and precious truth, and which assumes that the love which secured the gift of God's



eternal Son, was mere benevolence which had all men for its object, many of whom are allowed to perish, must be unscriptural.

### **Argument from the Believer's Union with Christ.**

6. Another argument is derived from the nature of the union between Christ and his people. The Bible teaches, (1.) That a certain portion of the human race were given to Christ. (2.) That they were given to Him before the foundation of the world. (3.) That all thus given to Him will certainly come to Him and be saved. (4.) That this union, so far as it was from eternity, is not a union of nature, nor by faith, nor by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It was a federal union. (5.) That Christ, therefore, was a federal head and representative. As such He came into the world, and all He did and suffered was as a representative, as a substitute, one acting in the place and for the benefit of others. But He was the representative of those given to Him, i.e., of those who were in Him. For it was this gift and the union consequent upon it, that gave Him his representative character, or constituted Him a federal head. He was therefore the federal head, not of the human race, but of those given to Him by the Father. And, therefore, his work, so far as its main design is concerned, was for them alone. Whatever reference it had to others was subordinate and incidental. All this is illustrated and proved by the Apostle in Romans v. 12-21, in the parallel which he draws between Adam and Christ. All mankind were in Adam. He was the federal head and representative of his race. All men sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression. The sentence of condemnation for his one offence passed upon all men. In like manner Christ was the representative of his people. He acted for them. What He did and suffered in their place, or as their representative, they in the eye of the law, did and suffered. By his obedience they are justified. As all in Adam died, so all in Christ are made alive. Such is the nature of the union in both cases, that the sin of the one rendered certain and rendered just the death of all united to Adam, and the righteousness of the other rendered certain and just the salvation of all who are in Him. The sin of Adam did not make the condemnation of all men merely possible; it was the ground of their actual condemnation. So the righteousness of Christ did not make the salvation of men merely possible, it secured the actual salvation of those for whom He wrought. As it would be unreasonable to say that Adam acted for those who were not in him; so it is unscriptural to say that Christ acted for those who were not in Him. Nevertheless, the act of Adam as the head and representative of his race, was fruitful of evil consequences, not to man only, but to the earth and all that it contains; and so the work of Christ is fruitful of good consequences to others than those for whom He acted. But this does not justify anyone in saying that Adam acted as much as the representative of the brute creation, as of his posterity; neither does it justify the assertion that Christ died for all mankind in the same sense that He died for his own people. This is all so clearly revealed in Scripture that it extorts the assent of those who are decidedly opposed to the Augustinian system. One class of those opponents,

of whom Whitby may be taken as a representative, admit the truth of all that has been said of the representative character of Adam and Christ. But they maintain that as Adam represented the whole race, so also did Christ; and as in Adam all men die, so in Christ are all made alive. But they say that this has nothing to do with spiritual death in the one case, or with the salvation of the soul in the other. The death which came on all men for the sin of Adam, was merely the death of the body; and the life which comes on all through Christ, is the restoration of the life of the body at the resurrection. The Wesleyans take the same view of the representative character of Christ and of Adam. Each stood for all mankind. Adam brings upon all men the guilt of his first sin and corruption of nature. Christ secures the removal of the guilt of original sin and a seed of grace, or principle of spiritual life, for all men. So also one class of Universalists hold that as all men are condemned for the sin of Adam, so all are actually saved by the work of Christ. Rationalists also are ready to admit that Paul does teach all that Augustinians understand him to teach, but they say that this was only his Jewish mode of presenting the matter. It is not absolute truth, but a mere transient form suited to the age of the Apostles. In all these cases, however, the main fact is conceded. Christ did act as a representative; and what He did secured with certainty the benefits of his work for those for whom He acted. This being conceded, it of course follows that He acted as the representative and substitute of those only who are ultimately to be saved.

6. There is another argument on this subject generally presented, which ought not to be overlooked. The unity of the priestly office rendered the functions of the priesthood inseparable. The high-priest interceded for all those for whom he offered sacrifice. The one service did not extend beyond the other. He bore upon his breast the names of the twelve tribes. He represented them in drawing near to God. He offered sacrifices for their sins on the great day of atonement, and for them he interceded, and for no others. The sacrifice and the intercession went together. What was true of the Aaronic priests, is true of Christ. The former, we are told, were the types of the latter. Christ's functions as priest are in like manner united. He intercedes for all for whom He offered Himself as a sacrifice. He himself, however, says expressly, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." (John xvii. 9.) Him the Father heareth always, and, therefore, He cannot be assumed to intercede for those who do not actually receive the benefits of his redemption.

### **The Church Doctrine Embraces All the Facts of the Case.**

7. The final test of any theory is its agreeing or disagreeing with the facts to be explained. The difficulty with all the Anti-Augustinian views as to the design of Christ's death, is that while they are consistent with more or less of the Scriptural facts connected with the subject, they are utterly irreconcilable with not less clearly revealed and equally important. They are consistent, for example, with the fact that

the work of Christ lays the foundation for the offer of the gospel to all men, with the fact that men are justly condemned for the rejection of that offer; and with the fact that the Scriptures frequently assert that the work of Christ had reference to all men. All these facts can be accounted for on the assumption, that the great design of Christ's death was to make the salvation of all men possible, and that it had equal reference to every member of our race. But there are other facts which this theory leaves out of view, and with which it cannot be reconciled. On the other hand it is claimed that the Augustinian doctrine recognizes all the Scriptural assertions connected with the subject, and reconciles them all. If this be so, it must be the doctrine of the Bible. The facts which are clearly revealed concerning the death or work of Christ are,

- (1.) That God from eternity gave a people to his Son.
- (2.) That the peculiar and infinite love of God to his people is declared to be the motive for the gift of his Son; and their salvation the design of his mission.
- (3.) That it was as their representative, head, and substitute, He came into the world, assumed our nature, fulfilled all righteousness, and bore the curse of the law.
- (4.) That the salvation of all given to Him by the Father, in thus rendered absolutely certain.

That the Augustinian scheme agrees with these great Scriptural facts, is readily admitted, but it is denied that it accounts for the fact that on the ground of the work of Christ, salvation may be offered to every human being; and that all who hear and reject the gospel, are justly condemned for their unbelief. That these are Scriptural facts cannot be denied, and if the Augustinian doctrine does not provide for them, it must be false or defective. There are different grounds on which it is assumed that the Augustinian doctrine does not provide for the universal offer of the gospel. One is, the false assumption that Augustinians teach that the satisfaction of Christ was in all respects analogous to the payment of a debt, a satisfaction to commutative or commercial justice. Hence it is inferred that Christ suffered so much for so many; He paid so much for one soul, and so much for another, and of course He would have been called upon to pay more if more were to have been saved. If this be so, then it is clear that the work of Christ can justify the offer of salvation to those only whose debts He has actually cancelled. To this view of the case it may be remarked, —

1. That this doctrine was never held by any historical church and the ascription of it to Augustinians can only be accounted for on the ground of ignorance.
2. It involves the greatest confusion of ideas. It confounds the obligations which arise among men as owners of property, with the obligations of rational creatures to an infinitely holy God. A debtor is one owner, and a creditor is another. Commutative justice requires that they should settle their mutual claims equitably. But God is not

one owner and the sinner another. They do not stand in relation to each other as two proprietors. The obligation which binds a debtor to pay a creditor, and the principle which impels a just God to punish sin, are entirely distinct. God is the absolute owner of all things. We own nothing. We cannot sustain to Him, in this respect, the relation of a debtor to his creditor. The objection in question, therefore, is founded on an entire mistake or misrepresentation of the attribute of justice, to which, according to Augustinians, the satisfaction of Christ is rendered. Because the sin of Adam was the ground of the condemnation of his race, does any man infer that He sinned so much for one man and so much for another? Why then should it be said that because the righteousness of Christ is the judicial ground of our salvation, that He did and suffered so much for one man and so much for another?

3. As this objection is directed against a theory which no Church has ever adopted, and as it attributes to God a form of justice which cannot possibly belong to Him, so it is contrary to those scriptural representations on which the Augustinian doctrine is founded. The Scriptures teach that Christ saves us as a priest, by offering Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. But a sacrifice was not a payment of a debt, the payment of so much for so much. A single victim was sometimes a sacrifice for one individual; sometimes for the whole people. On the great day of atonement the scape-goat bore the sins of the people, whether they were more or less numerous. It had no reference at all to the number of persons for whom atonement was to be made. So Christ bore the sins of his people; whether they were to be a few hundreds, or countless millions, or the whole human family, makes no difference as to the nature of his work, or as to the value of his satisfaction. What was absolutely necessary for one, was abundantly sufficient for all.

The objection, however, is at times presented in a somewhat different form. Admitting the satisfaction of Christ to be in itself of infinite value, how can it avail for the non-elect if it was not designed for them? It does not avail for the fallen angels, because it was not intended for them; how then can it avail for the non-elect, if not designed for them? How can a ransom, whatever its intrinsic value, benefit those for whom it was not paid? In this form the objection is far more specious. It is, however, fallacious. It overlooks the peculiar nature of the case. It ignores the fact that all mankind were placed under the same constitution or covenant. What was demanded for the salvation of one was demanded for the salvation of all. Every man is required to satisfy the demands of the law. No man is required to do either more or less. If those demands are satisfied by a representative or substitute, his work is equally available for all. The secret purpose of God in providing such a substitute for man, has nothing to do with the nature of his work, or with its appropriateness. The righteousness of Christ being of infinite value or merit, and being in its nature precisely what all men need, may be offered to all men. It is thus offered to the elect and to the non-elect; and it is offered to both classes conditionally. That condition is a cordial acceptance of it as the only

ground of justification. If any of the elect (being adults) fail thus to accept of it, they perish. If any of the non-elect should believe, they would be saved. What more does any Anti-Augustinian scheme provide? The advocates of such schemes say, that the design of the work of Christ was to render the salvation of all men possible. All they can mean by this is, that if any man (elect or non-elect) believes, he shall, on the ground of what Christ has done, be certainly saved. But Augustinians say the same thing. Their doctrine provides for this universal offer of salvation, as well as any other scheme. It teaches that God in effecting the salvation of his own people, did whatever was necessary for the salvation of all men, and therefore to all the offer may be, and in fact is made in the gospel. If a ship containing the wife and children of a man standing on the shore is wrecked, he may seize a boat and hasten to their rescue. His motive is love to his family; his purpose is to save them. But the boat which he has provided may be large enough to receive the whole of the ship's company. Would there be any inconsistency in his offering them the opportunity to escape? Or, would this offer prove that he had no special love to his own family and no special design to secure their safety. And if any or all of those to whom the offer was made, should refuse to accept it, some from one reason, some from another; some because they did not duly appreciate their danger; some because they thought they could save themselves; and some from enmity to the man from whom the offer came, their guilt and folly would be just as great as though the man had no special regard to his own family, and no special purpose to effect their deliverance. Or, if a man's family were with others held in captivity, and from love to them and with the purpose of their redemption, a ransom should be offered sufficient for the delivery of the whole body of captives, it is plain that the offer of deliverance might be extended to all on the ground of that ransom, although specially intended only for a part of their number. Or, a man may make a feast for his own friends, and the provision be so abundant that he may throw open his doors to all who are willing to come. This is precisely what God, according to the Augustinian doctrine, has actually done. Out of special love to his people, and with the design of securing their salvation, He has sent his Son to do what justifies the offer of salvation to all who choose to accept of it. Christ, therefore, did not die equally for all men. He laid down his life for his sheep; He gave Himself for his Church. But in perfect consistency with all this, He did all that was necessary, so far as a satisfaction to justice is concerned, all that is required for the salvation of all men. So that all Augustinians can join with the Synod of Dort in saying, "No man perishes for want of an atonement."

### **If the Atonement Be Limited in Design, It Must Be Restricted in the Offer.**

There is still another ground on which it is urged that Augustinians cannot consistently preach the gospel to every creature. Augustinians teach, it is urged, that the work of Christ is a satisfaction to divine justice. From this it follows that justice cannot condemn those for whose sins it has been satisfied. It cannot demand that

satisfaction twice, first from the substitute and then from the sinner himself. This would be manifestly unjust, far worse than demanding no punishment at all. From this it is inferred that the satisfaction or righteousness of Christ, if the ground on which a sinner may be forgiven, is the ground on which he must be forgiven. It is not the ground on which he may be forgiven, unless it is the ground on which he must be forgiven. If the atonement be limited in design it must be limited in its nature, and if limited in its nature it must be limited in its offer. This objection again arises from confounding a pecuniary and a judicial satisfaction between which Augustinians are so careful to discriminate. This distinction has already been presented on a previous page (470). There is no grace in accepting, a pecuniary satisfaction. It cannot be refused. It *ipso facto* liberates. The moment the debt is paid the debtor is free; and that without any condition. Nothing of this is true in the case of judicial satisfaction. If a substitute be provided and accepted it is a matter of grace. His satisfaction does not *ipso facto* liberate. It may accrue to the benefit of those for whom it is made at once or at a remote period; completely or gradually; on conditions or unconditionally; or it may never benefit them at all unless the condition on which its application is suspended be performed. These facts are universally admitted by those who hold that the work of Christ was a true and perfect satisfaction to divine justice. The application of its benefits is determined by the covenant between the Father and the Son. Those for whom it was specially rendered are not justified from eternity; they are not born in a justified state; they are by nature, or birth, the children of wrath even as others. To be the children of wrath is to be justly exposed to divine wrath. They remain in this state of exposure until they believe, and should they die (unless in infancy) before they believe they would inevitably perish notwithstanding the satisfaction made for their sins. It is the stipulations of the covenant which forbid such a result. Such being the nature of the judicial satisfaction rendered by Christ to the law, under which all men are placed, it may be sincerely offered to all men with the assurance that if they believe it shall accrue to their salvation. His work being specially designed for the salvation of his own people, renders, through the conditions of the covenant, that event certain; but this is perfectly consistent with its being made the ground of the general offer of the gospel. Lutherans and Reformed agree entirely, as before stated, in their views of the nature of the satisfaction of Christ, and consequently, so far as that point is concerned, there is the same foundation for the general offer of the gospel according to either scheme. What the Reformed or Augustinians hold about election does not affect the nature of the atonement. That remains the same whether designed for the elect or for all mankind. It does not derive its nature from the secret purpose of God as to its application.

### **Certain Passages of Scripture Considered.**

Admitting, however, that the Augustinian doctrine that Christ died specially for his

own people does account for the general offer of the gospel, how is it to be reconciled with those passages which, in one form or another, teach that He died for all men? In answer to this question, it may be remarked in the first place that Augustinians do not deny that Christ died for all men. What they deny is that He died equally, and with the same design, for all men. He died for all, that He might arrest the immediate execution of the penalty of the law upon the whole of our apostate race; that He might secure for men the innumerable blessings attending their state on earth, which, in one important sense, is a state of probation; and that He might lay the foundation for the offer of pardon and reconciliation with God, on condition of faith and repentance. These are the universally admitted consequences of his satisfaction, and therefore they all come within its design. By this dispensation it is rendered manifest to every intelligent mind in heaven and upon earth, and to the finally impenitent themselves, that the perdition of those that perish is their own fault. They will not come to Christ that they may have life. They refuse to have Him to reign over them. He calls but they will not answer. He says, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Every human being who does come is saved. This is what is meant when it is said, or implied in Scripture, that Christ gave Himself as a propitiation, not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world. He was a propitiation effectually for the sins of his people, and sufficiently for the sins of the whole world. Augustinians have no need to wrest the Scriptures. They are under no necessity of departing from their fundamental principle that it is the duty of the theologian to subordinate his theories to the Bible, and teach not what seems to him to be true or reasonable, but simply what the Bible teaches.

But, in the second place, it is to be remarked that general terms are often used indefinitely and not comprehensively. They mean all kinds, or classes, and not all and every individual. When Christ said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," He meant men of all ages, classes, and conditions, and not every individual man. When God predicted that upon the advent of the Messiah He would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh, all that was foretold was a general effusion of the Holy Ghost. And when it is said that all men shall see (experience) the salvation of God, it does not mean that all men individually, but that a vast multitude of all classes shall be saved. The same remark applies to the use of the term world. It means men, mankind, as a race or order of beings. No one hesitates to call the Lord Jesus the "Salvator hominum." He is so hailed and so worshipped wherever his name is known. But no one means by this that He actually saves all mankind. What is meant is that He is our Saviour, the Saviour of men, not of angels, not of Jews exclusively, nor yet of the Gentiles only, not of the rich, or of the poor alone, not of the righteous only, but also of publicans and sinners. He is the Saviour of all men who come unto Him. Thus when He is called the Lamb of God that bears the sin of the world, all that is meant is that He bears the sins of men; He came as a sin-offering bearing not his own, but the sins of others.

In the third place, these general terms are always to be understood in reference to the things spoken of in the context. When all things, the universe, is said to be put in subjection to Christ it is, of course, to be understood of the created universe. In 1 Corinthians xv. 27, Paul expressly mentions this limitation, but in Hebrews ii. 8, it is not mentioned. It is, however, just as obviously involved in the one passage as in the other. When in Romans v. 18, it is said that by the righteousness of Christ the free gift of justification of life has come upon all men, it is of necessity limited to the all in Christ of whom the Apostle is speaking. So also in 1 Corinthians xv. 22, As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive (i.e., quickened with the life of Christ), it is in both members of the sentence not absolutely all, but the all in Adam and the all in Christ. This is still more obvious in Romans viii. 32, where it is said that God gave up his own Son for us all. The us refers to the class of persons of which the whole chapter treats, namely, of those to whom there is no condemnation, who are led by the Spirit, for whom Christ intercedes, etc. Ephesians i. 10, and Colossians i. 20, are favorite texts with the Universalists, for they teach that all in heaven and on earth are reunited unto God by Jesus Christ. They are right in understanding these passages as teaching the salvation of all men, if by *all* in this connection we must understand all human beings. But why limit the word to all men? Why not include angels and even irrational creatures? The answer is, because the Bible teaches that Christ came to save men, and neither angels nor irrational animals. This is only saying that all must be limited to the objects of redemption. Who they are is to be learned not from these general terms, but from the general teaching of Scripture. The *all* who are to be united in one harmonious body by Jesus Christ are the all whom He came to save. The same remark applies to Hebrews ii. 9, Christ tasted "death for every man." It is well known that Origen understood this of every creature; others, of every rational creature; others, of every fallen rational creature; others, of every man; others, of every one of those given to the Son by the Father. How are we to decide which of these interpretations is correct? So far as the mere signification of the words is concerned, one is as correct as another. It is only from the analogy of Scripture that the meaning of the sacred writer can be determined. Christ tasted death for every one of the objects of redemption. Whether He came to redeem all created sensuous beings, or all rational creatures, or all men, or all given to Him in the councils of eternity, the Bible must decide. The great majority of the passages quoted to prove that Christ died equally for all men come, under one or other of the classes just mentioned, and have no real bearing on the question concerning the design of his death.

There is another class of passages with which it is said that the Augustinian doctrine cannot be reconciled; such, namely, as speak of those perishing for whom Christ died. In reference to these passages it may be remarked, first, that there is a sense, as before stated, in which Christ did die for all men. His death had the effect of justifying the offer of salvation to every man; and of course was designed to have that effect. He



therefore died sufficiently for all. In the second place, these passages are, in some cases at least, hypothetical. When Paul exhorts the Corinthians not to cause those to perish for whom Christ died, he merely, exhorts them not to act selfishly towards those for whom Christ had exhibited the greatest compassion. The passage neither asserts nor implies that any actually perish for whom Christ died. None perish whom He came to save; multitudes perish to whom salvation is offered on the ground of his death.

As God in the course of nature and in the dispensation of his providence, moves on in undisturbed majesty, little concerned at the apparent complication or even inconsistency of one effect or one dispensation with another; so the Spirit of God in the Bible unfolds the purposes, truths, and dealings of God, just as they are, assured that even finite minds will ultimately be able to see the consistency of all his revelations. The doctrines of foreordination, sovereignty, and effectual providential control, go hand in hand with those of the liberty and responsibility of rational creatures. Those of freedom from the law, of salvation by faith without works, and of the absolute necessity of holy living stand side by side. On the same page we find the assurance of God's love to sinners, and declarations that He would that all men should come unto Him and live, with explicit assertions that He has determined to leave multitudes to perish in their sins. In like manner, the express declarations that it was the incomprehensible and peculiar love of God for his own people, which induced Him to send his Son for their redemption; that Christ came into the world for that specific object; that He died for his sheep; that He gave Himself for his Church; and that the salvation of all for whom He thus offered Himself is rendered certain by the gift of the Spirit to bring them to faith and repentance, are intermingled with declarations of good-will to all mankind, with offers of salvation to every one who will believe in the Son of God, and denunciations of wrath against those who reject these overtures of mercy. All we have to do is not to ignore or deny either of these modes of representation, but to open our minds wide enough to receive them both, and reconcile them as best we can. Both are true, in all the cases above referred to, whether we can see their consistency or not.

In the review of this subject, it is plain that the doctrine that Christ died equally for all men with the purpose of rendering the salvation of all possible, has no advantage over the doctrine that He died specially for his own people, and with the purpose of rendering their salvation certain. It presents no higher view of the love of God, or of the value of Christ's work. It affords no better ground for the offer of salvation "to every creature," nor does it render more obvious the justice of the condemnation of those who reject the gospel. They are condemned by God, angels, and men, and by their own consciences, because they refuse to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh, and to love, worship, trust, and obey Him accordingly. The opposite, or anti-Augustinian doctrine, is founded on a partial view of the facts of the

case. It leaves out of view the clearly revealed special love of God to his peculiar people; the union between Christ and his chosen; the representative character which He assumed as their substitute; the certain efficacy of his sacrifice in virtue of the covenant of redemption; and the necessary connection between the gift of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. It moreover leads to confused and inconsistent views of the plan of salvation, and to unscriptural and dangerous theories of the nature of the atonement. It therefore is the limited and meagre scheme; whereas the orthodox doctrine is catholic and comprehensive; full of consolation and spiritual power. as well as of justice to all mankind.

## **Limited Atonement**

**by Loraine Boettner**

1. Statement of the Doctrine. 2. The Infinite Value of Christ's Atonement. 3. The Atonement is Limited in Purpose and Application. 4. Christ's Work as a Perfect Fulfillment of the Law. 5. A Ransom. 6. The Divine Purpose in Christ's Sacrifice. 7. The Exclusion of the Non-Elect. 8. The Argument from the Foreknowledge of God. 9. Certain Benefits Which Extend to Mankind In General.

### **1. STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE**

The question which we are to discuss under the subject of "Limited Atonement" is, Did Christ offer up Himself a sacrifice for the whole human race, for every individual without distinction or exception; or did His death have special reference to the elect? In other words, was the sacrifice of Christ merely intended to make the salvation of all men possible, or was it intended to render certain the salvation of those who had been given to Him by the Father? Arminians hold that Christ died for all men alike, while Calvinists hold that in the intention and secret plan of God Christ died for the elect only, and that His death had only an incidental reference to others in so far as they are partakers of common grace. The meaning might be brought out more clearly if we used the phrase "Limited Redemption" rather than "Limited Atonement." The Atonement is, of course, strictly an infinite transaction; the limitation comes in, theologically, in the application of the benefits of the atonement, that is in redemption. But since the phrase "Limited Atonement" has become well established in theological usage and its meaning is well known we shall continue to use it.

Concerning this doctrine the Westminster Confession says: ". . . Wherefore they who are elected being fallen in Adam, are redeemed in Christ, are effectually called unto

faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power through faith unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only." [Ch. III, Sec. 4.]

It will be seen at once that this doctrine necessarily follows from the doctrine of election. If from eternity God has planned to save one portion of the human race and not another, it seems to be a contradiction to say that His work has equal reference to both portions, or that He sent His Son to die for those whom He had predetermined not to save, as truly as, and in the same sense that He was sent to die for those whom He had chosen for salvation. These two doctrines must stand or fall together. We cannot logically accept one and reject the other. If God has elected some and not others to eternal life, then plainly the primary purpose of Christ's work was to redeem the elect.

## **2. THE INFINITE VALUE OF CHRIST'S ATONEMENT**

This doctrine does not mean that any limit can be set to the value or power of the atonement which Christ made. The value of the atonement depends upon, and is measured by, the dignity of the person making it; and since Christ suffered as a Divine-human person the value of His suffering was infinite. The Scripture writers tell us plainly that the "Lord of glory" was crucified, 1 Cor. 2:8; that wicked men "killed the Prince of life," Acts 3:15; and that God "purchased" the Church "with His own blood," Acts 20:28. The atonement, therefore, was infinitely meritorious and might have saved every member of the human race had that been God's plan. It was limited only in the sense that it was intended for, and is applied to, particular persons; namely for those who are actually saved.

Some misunderstanding occasionally arises here because of a false assumption that Calvinists teach that Christ suffered so much for one soul, and so much for another, and that He would have suffered more if more were to have been saved. We believe, however, that even if many fewer of the human race were to have been pardoned and saved, an atonement of infinite value would have been necessary in order to have secured for them these blessings; and though many more, or even all men were to have been pardoned and saved, the sacrifice of Christ would have been amply sufficient as the ground or basis of their salvation. Just as it is necessary for the sun to give off as much heat if only one plant is to grow upon the earth as if the earth is to be covered with vegetation, so it was necessary for Christ to suffer as much if only one soul was to be saved as if a large number or even all mankind were to be saved. Since the sinner had offended against a Person of infinite dignity, and had been sentenced to suffer eternally, nothing but a sacrifice of infinite value could atone for him. No one assumes that since the sin of Adam was the ground for the condemnation of the race, he sinned so much for one man and much for another and would have sinned more if

there were to have been more sinners. Why then should they make the assumption in regard to the suffering of Christ?

### **3. THE ATONEMENT IS LIMITED IN PURPOSE AND APPLICATION**

While the value of the atonement was sufficient to save all mankind, it was efficient to save only the elect. It is indifferently well adapted to the salvation of one man to that of another, thus making the salvation of every man objectively possible; yet because of subjective difficulties, arising on account of the sinners own inability either to see or appreciate the things of God, only those are saved who are regenerated and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The reason why God does not apply this grace to all men has not been fully revealed.

When the atonement is made universal its inherent value is destroyed. If it is applied to all men, and if some are lost, the conclusion is that it makes salvation objectively possible for all but that it does not actually save anybody. According to the Arminian theory the atonement has simply made it possible for men to co-operate with divine grace and thus save mselves if they will. But tell us of one cured of disease and yet dying of cancer, and the story will be equally luminous with that of one eased of sin and yet perishing through unbelief. The nature of the atonement settles its extent. If it merely made salvation possible, it applied to all men. If it effectively secured salvation, it had reference only the elect. As Dr. Warfield says, "The things we have to choose between are an atonement of high value, or an atonement of wide extension. The two cannot go together." The work of Christ can be universalized only by evaporating its substance.

Let there be no misunderstanding at this point. The Arminian limits the atonement as certainly as does the Calvinist. The Calvinist limits the extent of it in that he says it does not apply to all persons (although as has already been shown, he believes that it is efficacious for the salvation of the large proportion of the human race); while the Arminian limits the power of it, for he says that in itself it does not actually save anybody. The Calvinist limits it quantitatively, but not qualitatively; the Arminian limits it qualitatively, but not quantitatively. For the Calvinist it is like a narrow bridge which goes all the way across the stream; for the Arminian it is like a great wide bridge which goes only half-way across. As a matter of fact, the Arminian places more severe limitations on the work of Christ than does the Calvinist.

### **4. CHRIST'S WORK AS A PERFECT FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW**

If the benefits of the atonement are universal and unlimited, it must have been what the Arminians represent it to have been merely a sacrifice to t out the curse which rested upon the race through the fall in Adam, a mere substitute for the execution of the law which God in His sovereignty saw fit to accept in lieu of what the sinner was

bound to render, and not a perfect satisfaction which fulfilled the demands of justice. It would mean that God no longer demands perfect obedience as He did of Adam, but that He now offers salvation on lower term. God, then, would remove legal obstacles and would accept such faith and evangelical obedience as the person with a graciously restored ability could render if he chose, the Holy Spirit of course aiding in a general way. Thus grace would be extended in that God offers an easier way of salvation He accepts fifty cents on the dollar, so to speak, since the crippled sinner can pay no more.

On the other hand Calvinists hold that the law of perfect obedience which was originally given to Adam was "permanent, that God has never done anything which would convey the impression that the law was too rigid in its requirements, or too severe in its penalty, or that it stood in need either of abrogation or of derogation. Divine justice demands that the sinner shall be punished, either in himself or in his substitute. We hold that Christ acted in a strictly substitutionary way for His people, that He made a full satisfaction for their sins, thus blotting out the curse from Adam and all their temporal sins; and that by His sinless life He perfectly kept for them the law which Adam had broken, thus earning for His people the reward of eternal life. We believe that the requirement for salvation now as originally is perfect obedience, that the merits of Christ are imputed to His people as the only basis of their salvation, and that they enter heaven clothed only with the cloak of His perfect righteousness and utterly destitute of any merit properly their own. Thus grace, pure grace, is extended not in lowering the requirements for salvation but in the substitution of Christ for His people. He took their place before the law and did for them what they could not do for themselves. This Calvinistic principle is fitted in every way to impress upon us the absolute perfection and unchangeable obligation of the law which was originally given to Adam. It is not relaxed or set aside, but is fittingly honored so that its excellence is shown. In behalf of those who are saved, for whom Christ acted, and in behalf of those who are subjected to everlasting punishment, the law in its majesty is enforced and executed.

If the Arminian theory were true it would follow that millions of those for whom Christ died are finally lost, and that salvation is thus never applied to many of those for whom it was earned. What benefits, for instance, can we point to in the lives of the heathens and say that they have received them from the atonement? It would also follow that God's plans many times have been thwarted and defeated by His creatures and that while He may do according to His will in the armies of heaven, He does not do so among the inhabitants of the earth.

"The sin of Adam," says Charles Hodge, "did not make the condemnation of all men merely possible; it was the ground of their actual condemnation. So the righteousness of Christ did not make the salvation of men merely possible, it secured the actual salvation of those for whom He wrought."

The great Baptist preacher Charles H. Spurgeon said: "If Christ has died for you, you can never be lost. God will not punish twice for one thing. If God punished Christ for your sins He will not punish you. 'Payment God's justice cannot twice demand; first, at the bleeding Saviour's hand, and then again at mine.' How can God be just if he punished Christ, the substitute, and then man himself afterwards?"

## **5. A RANSOM**

Christ is said to have been a ransom for his people "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many," Matthew 20:28. Notice, this verse does not say that He gave His life a ransom for all, but for many. The nature of a ransom is such that when paid and accepted it automatically frees the persons for whom it was intended. Otherwise it would not be a true ransom. Justice demands that those for whom it is paid shall be freed from any further obligation. If the suffering and death of Christ was a ransom for all men rather than for the elect only, then the merits of His work must be communicated to all alike and the penalty of eternal punishment cannot be justly inflicted on any. God would be unjust if He demanded this extreme penalty twice over, first from the substitute and then from the persons themselves. The conclusion then is that the atonement of Christ does not extend to all men but that it is limited to those for whom He stood surety; that is, to those who compose His true Church.

## **6. THE DIVINE PURPOSE IN CHRIST'S SACRIFICE**

If Christ's death was intended to save all men, then we must say that God was either unable or unwilling to carry out His plans. But since the work of God is always efficient, those for whom atonement was made and those who are actually saved must be the same people. Arminians suppose that the purposes of God are mutable, and that His purposes may fail. In saying that He sent His Son to redeem all men, but that after seeing that such a plan could not be carried out He "elected" those whom He foresaw would have faith and repent, they represent Him as willing what never takes place, as suspending His purposes and plans upon the volitions and actions of creatures who are totally dependent on Him. No rational being who has the wisdom and power to carry out his plans intends what he never accomplishes or adopts plans for an end which is never attained. Much less would God, whose wisdom and power are infinite, work in this manner. We may rest assured that if some men are lost God never purposed their salvation, and never devised and put into operation means designed to accomplish that end.

Jesus Himself limited the purpose of His death when He said, "I lay down my life for the sheep." If, therefore, He laid down His life for the sheep, the atoning character of His work was not universal. On another occasion He said to the Pharisees, "Ye are not my sheep;" and again, "Ye are of your father the Devil." Will anyone maintain that He

laid down His life for these, seeing that He so pointedly excludes them? The angel which appeared to Joseph told him that Mary's son was to be called JESUS, because His mission in the world was to save His people from their sins. He then came not merely to make salvation possible but actually to save His people; and what He came to do we may confidently expect Him to have accomplished.

Since the work of God is never in vain, those who are chosen by the Father, those who are redeemed by the Son, and those who are sanctified by the Holy Spirit, or in other words, election, redemption and sanctification, must include the same persons. The Arminian doctrine of a universal atonement makes these unequal and thereby destroys the perfect harmony within the Trinity. Universal redemption means universal salvation.

Christ declared that the elect and the redeemed were the same people when in the intercessory prayer He said. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them to me," and "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me; for they are thine: and all things that are mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them," John 17:6, 9, 10. And again, "I am the good shepherd; and I know my own, and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep," John 10:14, 15. The same teaching is found when we are told to "feed the Church of the Lord which He purchased with His own blood," Acts 20:28. We are told that "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it," Ephesians 5:25; and that He laid down His life for His friends, John 15:13. Christ died for such as were Paul and John, not for such as were Pharaoh and Judas, who were" goats and not sheep. We cannot say that His death was intended for all unless we say that Pharaoh, Judas, etc., were of the sheep, friends, and Church of Christ.

Furthermore, when it is said that Christ gave His life for His Church, or for His people, we find it impossible to believe that He gave Himself as much for reprobates as for those whom He intended to save. Mankind is divided into two classes and what is distinctly affirmed of one is impliedly denied of the other. In each case something is said of those who belong to one group which is not true of those who belong to the other. When it is said that a man labors and sacrifices health and strength for his children, it is thereby denied that the motive which controls him is mere philanthropy, or that the design he has in view is the good of society. And when it is said that Christ died for His people it is denied that He died equally for all men.

## **7. THE EXCLUSION OF THE NON-ELECT**

It was not, then, a general and indiscriminate love of which all men were equally the objects, but a peculiar, mysterious, infinite love for His elect, which caused God to send His Son into the world to suffer and die. Any theory which denies this great and

precious truth, and which would explain away this love as merely indiscriminate benevolence or philanthropy which had all men for its objects, many of whom are allowed to perish, must be un-Scriptural. Christ died not for an unordered mass, but for His people, His bride, His Church.

A farmer prizes his field. But no one supposes that he cares equally for every plant that grows there, for the "tares" as well as the "wheat." God's field is the world, Matthew 13:38, and he loves it with an exclusive eye to its "good seed," the children of the kingdom, and not the children of the wicked one. It is not the whole of mankind that is equally loved of God and promiscuously redeemed by Christ. God is not necessarily communicative of His goodness, as the sun of its light, or a tree of its cooling shade, which does not choose its objects, but serves all indifferently without variation or distinction. This would be to make God of no more understanding than the sun, which shines not where it pleases, but where it must. He is an understanding person, and has a sovereign right to choose His own objects.

In Genesis we read that God "put enmity" between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Now who were meant by the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent? On first thought we might suppose that the seed of the woman meant the entire human race descended from Eve. But in Galatians 3:16 Paul uses this term "seed," and applies it to Christ as an individual. "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." On further investigation we also find that the seed of the serpent means not literal descendants of the Devil, but those non-elect members of the human race, who partake of his sinful nature. Jesus said of His enemies, "Ye are of your father, the Devil; and the lusts of your father it is your will to do," John 8:44. Paul denounced Elymas the sorcerer as a son of the Devil and an enemy of all righteousness. Judas is even called a devil, John 6:70. So the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent are each a part of the human race. In other parts of the Scriptures we find that Christ and His people are "one," that He dwells in them and is united with them as the vine and the branches are united. And since at the very beginning God "put enmity" between these two groups, it is plain that He never loved all alike, nor intended to redeem all alike. Universal redemption and God's sentence on the serpent can never go together.

There is also a parallel to be noticed between the high priest of ancient Israel and Christ who is our high priest; for the former, we are told, was a type of the latter. On the great day of atonement the high priest offered sacrifices for the sins of the twelve tribes of Israel. He interceded for them and for them only. Likewise, Christ prayed not for the world but for His people. The intercession of the high priest secured for the Israelites blessings from which all other peoples were excluded; and the intercession of Christ, which also is limited but of a much higher order, shall certainly be efficacious in the highest sense, for Him the Father heard always. Furthermore, it is not necessary that God's mercy shall extend to all men without exception before it can



be truly and properly called infinite; for all men taken together would not constitute a multitude strictly and properly infinite. The Scriptures plainly tell us that the Devil and the fallen angels are left outside of His benevolent purposes. But His mercy is infinite in that it rescues the great multitude of His elect from indescribable and eternal sin and misery to indescribable and eternal blessedness.

While the Arminians hold that Christ died equally for all men and that He obtained sufficient grace to enable all men to repent, believe, and persevere, if they will only co-operate with it, they also hold that those who refuse to co-operate shall on that account and through all eternity be punished far more severely than if Christ had never died for them at all. We see that so far in the history of the human race the large proportion of the adult population have failed to co-operate and have thus been allowed to bring upon themselves greater misery than if Christ had never come. Surely a view which permits God's work of redemption to issue in such failure, and which sheds so little glory on the atonement of Christ, cannot be true. Vastly more of God's love and mercy for His people is seen in the Calvinistic doctrines of unconditional election and limited atonement than is seen in the Arminian doctrine of conditional election and unlimited atonement.

## **8. THE ARGUMENT FROM THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD**

The argument from the foreknowledge of God is of itself sufficient to prove this doctrine. Is not God's mind infinite? Are not His perceptions perfect? Who can believe that He, like a feeble mortal, would "shoot at the convoy without perceiving the individual birds?" Since He knew beforehand who they were that would be saved and the more evangelical Arminians admit that God does have exact foreknowledge of all events He would not have sent Christ intending to save those who he positively foreknew would be lost. For, as Calvin remarks, "Where would have been the consistency of God's calling to Himself such as He knows will never come?" If a man knows that in an adjoining room there are ten oranges, seven of which are good and three of which are rotten, he does not go into the room expecting to get ten good ones. Or if it is foreknown that out of a group of fifty men to whom invitations to a banquet might be sent a certain ten will not come, the host does not send out invitations expecting those ten as well as the others to accept. They do but deceive themselves who, admitting God's foreknowledge, say that Christ died for all men; for what is that but to attribute folly to Him whose ways are perfect? To represent God as earnestly striving to do what He knows He will not do is to represent Him as acting foolishly.

## **9. CERTAIN BENEFITS WHICH EXTEND TO MANKIND IN GENERAL**

In conclusion let it be said that Calvinists do not deny that mankind in general receive some important benefits from Christ's atonement. Calvinists admit that it arrests the penalty which would have been inflicted upon the whole race because of Adam's sin;

that it forms a basis for the preaching of the Gospel and thus introduces many uplifting moral influences into the world and restrains many evil influences. Paul could say to the heathen people of Lystra that God "left not Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness," Acts 14:17. God makes His sun to shine on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust. Many temporal blessings are thus secured for all men, although these fall short of being sufficient to insure salvation.

Cunningham has stated the belief of Calvinists very clearly in the following paragraph: - "It is not denied by the advocates of particular redemption, or of a limited atonement, that mankind in general, even those who ultimately perish, do derive some advantages or benefits from Christ's death; and no position they hold requires them to deny this. They believe that important benefits have accrued to the whole human race from the death of Christ, and that in these benefits those who are finally impenitent and unbelieving partake. What they deny is, that Christ intended to procure, or did procure, for all men these blessings which are the proper and peculiar fruits of His death, in its specific character as an atonement, that He procured or purchased redemption that in, pardon and reconciliation for all men. Many blessings flow to mankind at large from the death of Christ, collaterally and incidentally, in consequence of the relation in which men, viewed collectively, stand to each other. All these benefits were of course foreseen by God, when He resolved to send His Son into the world; they were contemplated or designed by Him, as what men should receive and enjoy. They are to be regarded and received as bestowed by Him, and as thus unfolding His glory, indicating His character, and actually accomplishing His purposes; and they are to be viewed as coming to men through the channel of Christ's mediation, of His suffering and death." [*Historical Theology*, II, p. 333.]

There is, then, a certain sense in which Christ died for all men, and we do not reply to the Arminian tenet with an unqualified negative. But what we do maintain is that the death of Christ had special reference to the elect in that it was effectual for their salvation, and that the effects which are produced in others are only incidental to this one great purpose.

## **Particular Redemption**

**by C. H. Spurgeon**

"Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."—Matthew 20:28.

WHEN first it was my duty to occupy this pulpit, and preach in this hall, my congregation assumed the appearance of an irregular mass of persons collected from all the streets of this city to listen to the Word. I was then simply an evangelist, preaching to many who had not heard the Gospel before. By the grace of God, the most blessed change has taken place; and now, instead of having an irregular multitude gathered together, my congregation is as fixed as that of any minister in the whole city of London. I can from this pulpit observe the countenance of my friends, who have occupied the same places, as nearly as possible, for these many months; and I have the privilege and the pleasure of knowing that a very large proportion, certainly three-fourths of the persons who meet together here, are not persons who stray hither from curiosity, but are my regular and constant hearers. And observe, that my character also has been changed. From being an evangelist, it is now my business to become your pastor. You were once a motley group assembled to listen to me, but now we are bound together by the ties of love; through association we have grown to love and respect each other, and now you have become the sheep of my pasture, and members of my flock; and I have now the privilege of assuming the position of a pastor in this place, as well as in the chapel where I labour in the evening. I think, then, it will strike the judgment of every person, that as both the congregation and office have now changed, the teaching itself should in some measure suffer a difference. It has been my wont to address you from the simple truths of the Gospel; I have very seldom, in this place, attempted to dive into the deep things of God. A text which I have thought suitable for my congregation in the evening, I should not have made the subject of discussion in this place in the morning. There are many high and mysterious doctrines which I have often taken the opportunity of handling in my own place, that I have not taken the liberty of introducing here, regarding you as a company of people casually gathered together to hear the Word. But now, since the circumstances are changed, the teaching will be changed also. I shall not now simply confine myself to the doctrine of faith, or the teaching of believer's baptism; I shall not stay upon the surface of matters, but shall venture, as God shall guide me, to enter into those things that lie at the basis of the religion that we hold so dear. I shall not blush to preach before you the doctrine of God's Divine Sovereignty; I shall not stagger to preach in the most unreserved and unguarded manner the doctrine of election. I shall not be afraid to propound the great truth of the final perseverance of the saints; I shall not withhold that undoubted truth of Scripture, the effectual calling of God's elect; I shall endeavour, as God shall help me, to keep back nothing from you who have become my flock. Seeing that many of you have now "tasted that the Lord is gracious," we will endeavour to go through the whole system of the doctrines of grace, that saints may be edified and built up in their most holy faith.

I begin this morning with the doctrine of Redemption. "He gave his life a ransom for many."

The doctrine of Redemption is one of the most important doctrines of the system of

faith. A mistake on this point will inevitably lead to a mistake through the entire system of our belief.

Now, you are aware that there are different theories of Redemption. All Christians hold that Christ died to redeem, but all Christians do not teach the same redemption. We differ as to the nature of atonement, and as to the design of redemption. For instance, the Arminian holds that Christ, when He died, did not die with an intent to save any particular person; and they teach that Christ's death does not in itself secure, beyond doubt, the salvation of any one man living. They believe that Christ died to make the salvation of all men possible, or that by the doing of something else, any man who pleases may attain unto eternal life; consequently, they are obliged to hold that if man's will would not give way and voluntarily surrender to grace, then Christ's atonement would be unavailing. They hold that there was no particularity and speciality in the death of Christ. Christ died, according to them, as much for Judas in Hell as for Peter who mounted to Heaven. They believe that for those who are consigned to eternal fire, there was a true and real a redemption made as for those who now stand before the throne of the Most High. Now, we believe no such thing. We hold that Christ, when He died, had an object in view, and that object will most assuredly, and beyond a doubt, be accomplished. We measure the design of Christ's death by the effect of it. If any one asks us, "What did Christ design to do by His death?" we answer that question by asking him another—"What has Christ done, or what will Christ do by His death?" For we declare that the measure of the effect of Christ's love, is the measure of the design of it. We cannot so belie our reason as to think that the intention of Almighty God could be frustrated, or that the design of so great a thing as the atonement, can by any way whatever, be missed of. We hold—we are not afraid to say that we believe—that Christ came into this world with the intention of saving "a multitude which no man can number;" and we believe that as the result of this, every person for whom He died must, beyond the shadow of a doubt, be cleansed from sin, and stand, washed in blood, before the Father's throne. We do not believe that Christ made any effectual atonement for those who are for ever damned; we dare not think that the blood of Christ was ever shed with the intention of saving those whom God foreknew never could be saved, and some of whom were even in Hell when Christ, according to some men's account, died to save them.

I have thus just stated our theory of redemption, and hinted at the differences which exist between two great parties in the professing church. It shall be now my endeavour to show the greatness of the redemption of Christ Jesus; and by so doing, I hope to be enabled by God's Spirit, to bring out the whole of the great system of redemption, so that it may be understood by us all, even if all of us cannot receive it. For you must bear this in mind, that some of you, perhaps, may be ready to dispute things which I assert; but you will remember that this is nothing to me; I shall at all times teach those things which I hold to be true, without let or hindrance from any man breathing. You have the like liberty to do the same in your own places, and to preach your own

views in your own assemblies, as I claim the right to preach mine, fully, and without hesitation.

Christ Jesus "gave his life a ransom for many;" and by that ransom He wrought out for us a great redemption. I shall endeavour to show the greatness of this redemption, measuring it in five ways. We shall note its greatness, first of all from the heinousness of our own guilt, from which He has delivered us; secondly, we shall measure His redemption by the sternness of divine justice; thirdly, we shall measure it by the price which He paid, the pangs which He endured; then we shall endeavour to magnify it, by noting the deliverance which He actually wrought out; and we shall close by noticing the vast number for whom this redemption is made, who in our text are described as "many."

I. First, then we shall see that the redemption of Christ was no little thing, if we do but measure it, first by OUR OWN SINS. My brethren, for a moment look at the hole of the pit whence ye were digged, and the quarry whence you were hewn. Ye, who have been washed, and cleansed, and sanctified, pause for a moment, and look back at the former state of your ignorance; the sins in which you indulged, the crimes into which you were hurried, the continual rebellion against God in which it was your habit to live. One sin can ruin a soul for ever; it is not in the power of the human mind to grasp the infinity of evil that slumbereth in the bowels of one solitary sin. There is a very infinity of guilt couched in one transgression against the majesty of Heaven. If, then, you and I had sinned but once, nothing but an atonement infinite in value could ever have washed away the sin and made satisfaction for it. But has it been once that you and I have transgressed? Nay, my brethren, our iniquities are more in number than the hairs of our head; they have mightily prevailed against us. We might as well attempt to number the sands upon the sea-shore, or count the drops which in their aggregate do make the ocean, as attempt to count the transgressions which have marked our lives. Let us go back to our childhood. How early we began to sin! How we disobeyed our parents, and even then learned to make our mouth the house of lies! In our childhood, how full of wantonness and waywardness we were! Headstrong and giddy, we preferred our own way, and burst through all restraint which godly parents put upon us. Nor did our youth sober us. Wildly we dashed, many of us, into the very midst of the dance of sin. We became leaders in iniquity; we not only sinned ourselves, but we taught others to sin. And as for your manhood, ye that have entered upon the prime of life, ye may be more outwardly sober, ye may be somewhat free from the dissipation of your youth; but how little has the man become bettered! Unless the sovereign grace of God hath renewed us, we are now no better than we were when we began; and even if it has operated, we have still sins to repent of, for we all lay our mouths in the dust, and cast ashes on our head, and cry, "Unclean! Unclean!" And oh! ye that lean wearily on your staff, the support of your old age, have ye not sins still clinging to your garments? Are your lives as white as the snowy hairs that crown your head? Do you not still feel that transgression besmeared the skirts of

your robe, and mars its spotlessness? How often are you now plunged into the ditch, till your own clothes do abhor you! Cast your eyes over the sixty, the seventy, the eighty years, during which God hath spared your lives; and can ye for a moment think it possible, that ye can number up your innumerable transgressions, or compute the weight of the crimes which you have committed? O ye stars of Heaven! the astronomers may measure your distance and tell your height, but O ye sins of mankind! ye surpass all thought. O ye lofty mountains! the home of the tempest, the birthplace of the storm! man may climb your summits and stand wonderingly upon your snows; but ye hills of sin! ye tower higher than our thoughts; ye chasms of transgressions! ye are deeper than our imagination dares to dive. Do you accuse me of slandering human nature? It is because you know it not. If God had once manifested your heart to yourself, you would bear me witness, that so far from exaggerating, my poor words fail to describe the desperateness of our evil. Oh! if we could each of us look into our hearts today—if our eyes could be turned within, so as to see the iniquity that is graven as with the point of the diamond upon our stony hearts, we should then say to the minister, that however he may depict the desperateness of guilt, yet can he not by any means surpass it. How great then, beloved, must be the ransom of Christ, when He saved us from all these sins! The men for whom Jesus died, however great their sin, when they believe, are justified from all their transgressions. Though they may have indulged in every vice and every lust which Satan could suggest, and which human nature could perform, yet once believing, all their guilt is washed away. Year after year may have coated them with blackness, till their sin hath become of double dye; but in one moment of faith, one triumphant moment of confidence in Christ, the great redemption takes away the guilt of numerous years. Nay, more, if it were possible for all the sins that men have done, in thought, or word, or deed, since worlds were made, or time began, to meet on one poor head—the great redemption is all-sufficient to take all these sins away, and wash the sinner whiter than the driven snow.

Oh! who shall measure the heights of the Saviour's all-sufficiency? First, tell how high is sin, and, then, remember that as Noah's flood prevailed over the tops of earth's mountains, so the flood of Christ's redemption prevails over the tops of the mountains of our sins. In Heaven's courts there are today men that once were murderers, and thieves, and drunkards, and whoremongers, and blasphemers, and persecutors; but they have been washed—they have been sanctified. Ask them whence the brightness of their robes hath come, and where their purity hath been achieved, and they, with united breath, tell you that they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. O ye troubled consciences! O ye weary and heavy-laden ones! O ye that are groaning on account of sin! the great redemption now proclaimed to you is all-sufficient for your wants; and though your numerous sins exceed the stars that deck the sky, here is an atonement made for them all—a river which can overflow the whole of them, and carry them away from you for ever.

This, then, is the first measure of the atonement—the greatness of our guilt.

II. Now, secondly, we must measure the great redemption BY THE STERNNESS OF DIVINE JUSTICE. "God is love," always loving; but my next proposition does not at all interfere with this assertion. God is sternly just, inflexibly severe in His dealings with mankind. The God of the Bible is not the God of some men's imagination, Who thinks so little of sin that He passes it by without demanding any punishment for it. He is not the God of the men who imagine that our transgressions are such little things, such mere peccadilloes that the God of Heaven winks at them, and suffers them to die forgotten. No; Jehovah, Israel's God, hath declared concerning Himself, "The Lord thy God is a jealous God." It is His own declaration, "I will by no means clear the guilty." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Learn ye, my friends, to look upon God as being as severe in His justice as if He were not loving, and yet as loving as if He were not severe. His love does not diminish His justice, nor does His justice, in the least degree, make warfare upon His love. The two things are sweetly linked together in the atonement of Christ. But, mark, we can never understand the fullness of the atonement till we have first grasped the Scriptural truth of God's immense justice. There was never an ill word spoken, nor an ill thought conceived, nor an evil deed done, for which God will not have punishment from some one or another. He will either have satisfaction from you, or else from Christ. If you have no atonement to bring through Christ, you must for ever lie paying the debt which you never can pay, in eternal misery; for as surely as God is God, He will sooner lose His Godhead than suffer one sin to go unpunished, or one particle of rebellion unrevenged. You may say that this character of God is cold, and stern, and severe. I cannot help what you say of it; it is nevertheless true. Such is the God of the Bible; and though we repeat it is true that He is love, it is no more true that He is love than that He is full of justice, for every good thing meets in God, and is carried to perfection, whilst love reaches to consummate loveliness, justice reaches to the sternness of inflexibility in Him. He has no bend, no warp in His character; no attribute so predominates as to cast a shadow upon the other. Love hath its full sway, and justice hath no narrower limit than His love. Oh! then, beloved, think how great must have been the substitution of Christ, when it satisfied God for all the sins of His people. For man's sin God demands eternal punishment; and God hath prepared a Hell into which He casts those who die impenitent. Oh! my brethren, can ye think what must have been the greatness of the atonement which was the substitution for all this agony which God would have cast upon us, if He had not poured it upon Christ. Look! look! look with solemn eye through the shades that part us from the world of spirits, and see that house of misery which men call Hell! Ye cannot endure the spectacle. Remember that in that place there are spirits for ever paying their debt to divine justice; but though some of them have been for these four thousand years sweltering in the flame, they are no nearer a discharge than when they began; and when ten thousand times ten thousand years shall have rolled away, they will no more have made satisfaction to God for their guilt than they have done up till now. And now can you grasp the thought of the greatness

of your Saviour's mediation when He paid your debt, and paid it all at once; so that there now remaineth not one farthing of debt owing from Christ's people to their God, except a debt of love. To justice the believer oweth nothing; though he owed originally so much that eternity would not have been long enough to suffice for the paying of it, yet, in one moment Christ did pay it all, so that the man who believeth is entirely justified from all guilt, and set free from all punishment, through what Jesus hath done. Think ye, then, how great His atonement if He hath done all this.

I must just pause here, and utter another sentence. There are times when God the Holy Spirit shows to men the sternness of justice in their own consciences. There is a man here today who has just been cut to the heart with a sense of sin. He was once a free man, a libertine, in bondage to none; but now the arrow of the Lord sticks fast in his heart, and he has come under a bondage worse than that of Egypt. I see him today, he tells me that his guilt haunts him everywhere. The Negro slave, guided by the pole star, may escape the cruel ties of his master and reach another land where he may be free; but this man feels that if he were to wander the wide world over he could not escape from guilt. He that hath been bound by many irons, can yet find a file that can unbind him and set him at liberty; but this man tells you that he has tried prayers and tears and good works, but cannot escape the gyves from his wrist; he feels as a lost sinner still, and emancipation, do what he may, seems to him impossible. The captive in the dungeon is sometimes free in thought, though not in body; through his dungeon walls his spirit leaps, and flies to the stars, free as the eagle that is no man's slave. But this man is a slave in his thoughts; he cannot think one bright, one happy thought. His soul is cast down within him; the iron has entered into his spirit, and he is sorely afflicted. The captive sometimes forgets his slavery in sleep, but this man cannot sleep; by night he dreams of hell, by day he seems to feel it; he bears a burning furnace of flame within his heart, and do what he may he cannot quench it. He has been confirmed, he has been baptized, he takes the sacrament, he attends a church or he frequents a chapel, he regards every rubric and obeys every canon, but the fire burns still. He gives his money to the poor, he is ready to give his body to be burned, he feeds the hungry, he visits the sick, he clothes the naked, but the fire burns still, and do what he may he cannot quench it. O, ye sons of weariness and woe, this that you feel is God's justice in full pursuit of you, and happy are you that you feel this, for now to you I preach this glorious Gospel of the blessed God. You are the man for whom Jesus Christ has died; for you He has satisfied stern justice; and now all you have to do to obtain peace of conscience, is just to say to your adversary who pursues you, "Look you there! Christ died for me; my good works would not stop you, my tears would not appease you: look you there! There stands the cross; there hangs the bleeding God! Hark to His death-shriek! See Him die! Art thou not satisfied now?" And when thou hast done that, thou shalt have the peace of God which passeth all understanding, which shall keep thy heart and mind through Jesus Christ thy Lord; and then shalt thou know the greatness of His atonement.



III. In the third place, we may measure the greatness of Christ's Redemption by THE PRICE HE PAID. It is impossible for us to know how great were the pangs of our Saviour; but yet some glimpse of them will afford us a little idea of the greatness of the price He paid for us. O Jesus, who shall describe thine agony?

"Come, all ye springs,  
Dwell in my head and eyes; come, clouds and rain!  
My grief hath need of all the wat'ry things,  
That nature hath produc'd. Let ev'ry vein  
Suck up a river to supply mine eyes,  
My weary weeping eyes; too dry for me,  
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies,  
To bear them out, and with my state agree."

O Jesus! thou wast a sufferer from thy birth, a man of sorrows and grief's acquaintance. Thy sufferings fell on thee in one perpetual shower, until the last dread hour of darkness. Then not in a shower, but in a cloud, a torrent, a cataract of grief, thine agonies did dash upon thee. See Him yonder! It is a night of frost and cold; but He is all abroad. It is night; He sleeps not, but He is in prayer. Hark to His groans! Did ever man wrestle as He wrestles? Go and look in His face! Was ever such suffering depicted upon mortal countenance as you can there behold? Hear His own words: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He rises: He is seized by traitors and is dragged away. Let us step to the place when just now He was engaged in agony. O God! and what is this we see? What is this that stains the ground? It is blood! Whence came it? Had He some wound which oozed afresh through His dire struggle? Ah! no. "He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, falling down to the ground." O agonies that surpass the word by which we name you! O sufferings that cannot be compassed in language! What could ye be that thus could work upon the Saviour's blessed frame, and force a bloody sweat to fall from His entire body? This is the beginning; this is the opening of the tragedy. Follow Him mournfully, thou sorrowing church, to witness the consummation of it. He is hurried through the streets; He is dragged first to one bar and then to another; He is cast and condemned before the Sanhedrin; He is mocked by Herod; He is tried by Pilate. His sentence is pronounced—"Let Him be crucified!" And now the tragedy cometh to its height. His back is bared; He is tied to the low Roman column; the bloody scourge ploughs furrows on His back, and with one stream of blood His back is red—a crimson robe that proclaims Him emperor of misery. He is taken into the guard room; His eyes are bound, and then they buffet Him, and say, "Prophesy who it was that smote thee?" They spit into His face; they plait a crown of thorns, and press His temples with it; they array Him in a purple robe; they bow their knees, and mock Him. All silently He sits; He answers not a word. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again," but committed Himself unto Him whom He came to serve. And now they take Him, and with many a jeer and jibe they drive Him from the place, and hurry Him through the streets. Emaciated by continual fastings, and

depressed with agony of spirit He stumbles beneath His cross. Daughters of Jerusalem! He faints in your streets. They raise Him up; they put His cross upon another's shoulders, and they urge Him on, perhaps with many a spear-prick, till at last He reaches the mount of doom. Rough soldiers seize Him, and hurl Him on His back; the transverse wood is laid beneath Him; His arms are stretched to reach the necessary distance; the nails are grasped; four hammers at one moment drive four nails through the tenderest parts of His body; and there He lies upon His own place of execution dying on His cross. It is not done yet. The cross is lifted by the rough soldiers. There is the socket prepared for it. It is dashed into its place: they fill up the place with earth; and there it stands.

But see the Saviour's limbs, how they quiver! Every bone has been put out of joint by the dashing of the cross in that socket! How He weeps! How He sighs! How He sobs! Nay, more hark how at last He shrieks in agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" O sun, no wonder thou didst shut thine eye, and look no longer upon a deed so cruel! O rocks! no wonder that ye did melt and rend your hearts with sympathy, when your Creator died! Never man suffered as this man suffered, Even death itself relented, and many of those who had been in their graves arose and came into the city. This, however, is but the outward. Believe me, brethren, the inward was far worse. What our Saviour suffered in His body was nothing compared to what He endured in His soul. You cannot guess, and I cannot help you to guess, what He endured within. Suppose for one moment—to repeat a sentence I have often used—suppose a man who has passed into Hell—suppose his eternal torment could all be brought into one hour; and then suppose it could be multiplied by the number of the saved, which is a number past all human enumeration. Can you now think what a vast aggregate of misery there would have been in the sufferings of all God's people, if they had been punished through all eternity? And recollect that Christ had to suffer an equivalent for all the hells of all His redeemed. I can never express that thought better than by using those oft-repeated words: it seemed as if Hell were put into His cup; He seized it, and, "At one tremendous draught of love, He drank damnation dry." So that there was nothing left of all the pangs and miseries of Hell for His people ever to endure. I say not that He suffered the same, but He did endure an equivalent for all this, and gave God the satisfaction for all the sins of all His people, and consequently gave Him an equivalent for all their punishment. Now can ye dream, can ye guess the great redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ?

IV. I shall be very brief upon the next head. The fourth way of measuring the Saviour's agonies is this: we must compute them by **THE GLORIOUS DELIVERANCE WHICH HE HAS EFFECTED.**

Rise up, believer; stand up in thy place, and this day testify to the greatness of what the Lord hath done for thee! Let me tell it for thee. I will tell thy experience and mine in one breath. Once my soul was laden with sin; I had revolted against God, and grievously transgressed. The terrors of the law gat hold upon me; the pangs of

conviction seized me. I saw myself guilty. I looked to Heaven, and I saw an angry God sworn to punish me; I looked beneath me and I saw a yawning Hell ready to devour me. I sought by good works to satisfy my conscience; but all in vain, I endeavoured by attending to the ceremonies of religion to appease the pangs that I felt within; but all without effect. My soul was exceeding sorrowful, almost unto death. I could have said with the ancient mourner, "My soul chooseth strangling and death rather than life." This was the great question that always perplexed me: "I have sinned; God must punish me; how can He be just if He does not? Then, since He is just, what is to become of me?" At last mine eyes turned to that sweet word which says, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin." I took that text to my chamber; I sat there and meditated. I saw one hanging on a cross. It was my Lord Jesus. There was the thorn-crown, and there the emblems of unequalled and peerless misery. I looked upon Him, and my thoughts recalled that word which says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Then said I within myself, "Did this man die for sinners? I am a sinner; then He died for me. Those He died for He will save. He died for sinners; I am a sinner; He died for me; He will save me." My soul relied upon that truth. I looked to Him, and as I "viewed the flowing of His soul-redeeming blood," my spirit rejoiced, for I could say,

"Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to this cross I cling;  
Naked look to Him for dress;  
Helpless come to Him for grace!  
Black, I to this fountain fly;  
Wash me, Saviour, or I die!"

And now, believer, you shall tell the rest. The moment that you believed, your burden rolled from your shoulder, and you became light as air. Instead of darkness you had light; for the garments of heaviness you had the robes of praise. Who shall tell your joy since then? You have sung on earth hymns of Heaven, and in your peaceful soul you have anticipated the eternal Sabbath of the redeemed. Because you have believed you have entered into rest. Yes, tell it the wide world over; they that believe, by Jesus' death are justified from all things from which they could not be freed by the works of the law. Tell it in Heaven, that none can lay anything to the charge of Gods' elect. Tell it upon earth, that God's redeemed are free from sin in Jehovah's sight. Tell it even in Hell, that God's elect can never come there; for Christ hath died for them, and who is he that shall condemn them?

V. I have hurried over that, to come to the last point, which is the sweetest of all. Jesus Christ, we are told in our text, came into the world "to give his life a ransom for many." The greatness of Christ's redemption may be measured by the **EXTENT OF THE DESIGN OF IT**. He gave His life "a ransom for many." I must now return to that controverted point again. We are often told (I mean those of us who are commonly

nicknamed by the title of Calvinists—and we are not very much ashamed of that; we think that Calvin, after all, knew more about the Gospel than almost any man who has ever lived, uninspired), we are often told that we limit the atonement of Christ, because we say that Christ has not made a satisfaction for all men, or all men would be saved. Now, our reply to this is, that, on the other hand, our opponents limit it: we do not. The Arminians say, Christ died for all men. Ask them what they mean by it. Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of all men? They say, "No, certainly not." We ask them the next question—Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of any man in particular? They answer "No." They are obliged to admit this, if they are consistent. They say, "No; Christ has died that any man may be saved if"—and then follow certain conditions of salvation. We say, then, we will go back to the old statement—Christ did not die so as beyond a doubt to secure the salvation of anybody, did He? You must say "No;" you are obliged to say so, for you believe that even after a man has been pardoned, he may yet fall from grace, and perish. Now, who is it that limits the death of Christ? Why, you. You say that Christ did not die so as to infallibly secure the salvation of anybody. We beg your pardon, when you say we limit Christ's death; we say, "No, my dear sir, it is you that do it." We say Christ so died that He infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can number, who through Christ's death not only may be saved but are saved, must be saved, and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved. You are welcome to your atonement; you may keep it. We will never renounce ours for the sake of it.

Now, beloved, when you hear any one laughing or jeering at a limited atonement, you may tell him this. General atonement is like a great wide bridge with only half an arch; it does not go across the stream: it only professes to go half way; it does not secure the salvation of anybody. Now, I had rather put my foot upon a bridge as narrow as Hungerford, which went all the way across, than on a bridge that was as wide as the world, if it did not go all the way across the stream. I am told it is my duty to say that all men have been redeemed, and I am told that there is a Scriptural warrant for it—"Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." Now, that looks like a very, very great argument indeed on the other side of the question. For instance, look here. "The whole world is gone after Him." Did all the world go after Christ? "Then went all Judea, and were baptized of him in Jordan." Was all Judea, or all Jerusalem baptized in Jordan? "Ye are of God, little children," and "the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Does "the whole world" there mean everybody? If so, how was it, then, that there were some who were "of God?" The words "world" and "all" are used in seven or eight senses in Scripture; and it is very rarely that "all" means all persons, taken individually. The words are generally used to signify that Christ has redeemed some of all sorts—some Jews, some Gentiles, some rich, some poor, and has not restricted His redemption to either Jew or Gentile.

Leaving controversy, however, I will now answer a question. Tell me, then, sir, whom did Christ die for? Will you answer me a question or two, and I will tell you whether

He died for you. Do you want a Saviour? Do you feel that you need a Saviour? Are you this morning conscious of sin? Has the Holy Spirit taught you that you are lost? Then Christ died for you and you will be saved. Are you this morning conscious that you have no hope in the world but Christ? Do you feel that you of yourself cannot offer an atonement that can satisfy God's justice? Have you given up all confidence in yourselves? And can you say upon your bended knees, "Lord, save, or I perish"? Christ died for you. If you are saying this morning, "I am as good as I ought to be; I can get to Heaven by my own good works," then, remember, the Scripture says of Jesus, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." So long as you are in that state I have no atonement to preach to you. But if this morning you feel guilty, wretched, conscious of your guilt, and are ready to take Christ to be your only Saviour, I can not only say to you that you may be saved, but what is better still, that you will be saved. When you are stripped of everything, but hope in Christ, when you are prepared to come empty-handed and take Christ to be your all, and to be yourself nothing at all, then you may look up to Christ, and you may say, "Thou dear, Thou bleeding Lamb of God! thy griefs were endured for me; by thy stripes I am healed, and by thy sufferings I am pardoned." And then see what peace of mind you will have; for if Christ has died for you, you cannot be lost. God will not punish twice for one thing. If God punished Christ for your sin, He will never punish you. "Payment, God's justice cannot demand, first, at the bleeding surety's hand, and then again at mine." We can today, if we believe in Christ, march to the very throne of God, stand there, and if it is said, "Art thou guilty?" we can say, "Yes, guilty." But if the question is put, "What have you to say why you should not be punished for your guilt?" We can answer, "Great God, Thy justice and Thy love are both guarantees that Thou wilt not punish us for sin; for didst Thou not punish Christ for sin for us? How canst Thou, then, be just—how canst Thou be God at all, if Thou dost punish Christ the substitute, and then punish man himself afterwards?" Your only question is, "Did Christ die for me?" And the only answer we can give is—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came into the world to save sinners." Can you write your name down among the sinners—not among the complimentary sinners, but among those that feel it, bemoan it, lament it, seek mercy on account of it? Are you a sinner? That felt, that known, that professed, you are now invited to believe that Jesus Christ died for you, because you are a sinner; and you are bidden to cast yourself upon this great immovable rock, and find eternal security in the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

## **What does the term “Irresistible Grace” mean, and does the Bible teach it?**

The term “irresistible grace” is a common theological phrase referring to the Calvinistic teaching that God has sovereignly determined to have grace upon certain

persons, and he will unstoppably have his way in being gracious to them, and in finally saving them. In other words, God's grace, in the case of the elect, does not stop with a mere offer of mercy; it is greater yet, and irresistibly draws his people to himself. It commands repentance and then grants that very repentance commanded. It calls sinners to himself and then gives them the spiritual life and heart of faith necessary to respond to that call. In other words, God's grace freely and necessarily supplies everything, including the will to believe, that is necessary for the salvation of all the elect.

What the doctrine of irresistible grace does not teach is that God's grace or the work of the Holy Spirit can never be resisted. The non-elect not only might, but always do resist the Holy Spirit and the grace of God freely offered in the Gospel (e.g. Acts 7:51; John 12:37-40); and even the elect may resist it for a time. However, God will continue to work and draw his elect; and in his own time, he will eventually overcome all resistance, and bring them to himself certainly and unstoppably.

There are many scriptural passages that teach the doctrine of irresistible grace, in its correctly understood sense that God will certainly overcome the natural opposition of the elect and draw them to himself. In Deuteronomy 30:6, for instance, God promises not just to give his people an opportunity for salvation, but to give them circumcised hearts that will obey his laws; and then in Ezekiel 11:19-20; 36:26-27; Jeremiah 31:31-34; 32:40 he confirms and expands upon this promise, assuring his people that he will give them new hearts of faith, causing them to trust and believe in him and preventing them from turning away from himself. Not only does his grace present them with a free offer of salvation, it also provides them with the new heart that delights in the gospel and freely embraces that offer.

In John 3:8, Jesus teaches the doctrine of irresistible grace by saying that, just as the wind blows wherever it wishes, so the Holy Spirit gives life to whomever he desires. In John 5:21, he teaches that the Son has the authority to give life to whomever he will. And in John 6:37-45, he teaches that all (without exception!) whom the Father gives to the Son and draws to him will infallibly come to Christ and be raised up on the last day. So in the gospel of John, all three persons of the Trinity are portrayed as providing irresistible and certain grace to the elect, which will unstoppably give life and salvation to those whom the Father has chosen and given to the Son. Many more scriptures could be provided, but perhaps the clearest teaching of the doctrine of irresistible grace comes from Romans 9:15-24, where God declares unilaterally, "I will (not might!) have mercy on whomever I will have mercy".

The common objection to the doctrine of irresistible grace, that it makes human response forced and artificial, as if they were robots and not real people making real choices, misunderstands what irresistible grace actually means. It certainly does not mean that God will bring people to Christ against their wills, kicking and screaming.

Irresistibility, in other words, does not imply coercion. On the contrary, it means that God will not just save his people apart from or in opposition to their wills, but he will give them the very will to come. He will give them new hearts of faith, that delight to come to him and walk in his ways. When Christ called to Lazarus from his grave, he irresistibly arose and came forth – but it was not as if the still-dead corpse were miraculously moving like a robot, nor yet as if he desperately wanted to stay in his grave, but Jesus dragged him out anyway. No, he was given new life, and the living will he received delighted to come forth from his stinking grave and embrace the Master (John 11:43-44). In the same way, when God irresistibly draws us to Christ, he does not make us come mechanically, even though our hearts are still spiritually dead, nor does he force us to come unwillingly. He gives us new, living hearts of faith that delight to come to him, that could not do anything else, in fact, because our re-created wills naturally delight in him and want nothing else but to belong to him (for scriptural support, see the previous question, “What does the term ‘irresistible grace’ mean, and does the bible teach it?”).

To insist that, if God's grace is irresistible then our response must therefore be coerced and artificial, is really to diminish God's power. Why is it that you have a will at all, so that you might volitionally choose anything? Is it not because God created you as a volitional creature and not a robot? God created your will in the first place, a will that is able to choose the things it desires; so can he not create a new heart and will that still chooses what it desires, but that naturally desires what is good and right? To say that our response is forced or constrained, just because God gives us the desire to come to Christ freely and joyfully, is to minimize his power both as Creator and Redeemer.

## **Irresistible Grace**

**John Murray**

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In reference to all the aspects from which God's saving grace may be viewed we must always reckon with the reality and gravity of sin. The salvation God has provided is more than salvation from sin and its consequences. Its design embraces the exceeding riches of God's grace and contemplates the highest conceivable destiny that could be bestowed upon creatures, conformity to the image of God's own Son that he might be the firstborn among many brethren (cf. Rom. 8:29). But no such destiny could be envisioned or achieved without salvation from sin in all its ramifications and liabilities. In order to be salvation *to* it must first of all be salvation *from*.

We cannot assess the gravity of sin unless we probe to that which is central in its definition. If we say that sin is selfishness we do state something that belongs to the character of sin, especially if we think of self-centeredness and construe this as involving the worship of self rather than of the Creator (cf. Rom. 1:25). The iniquity of sin is thereby disclosed. Again, if we say that sin is the assertion of human autonomy versus the sovereignty of God we are saying something relevant. Sin is precisely that, and it became apparent in Eden when the sin of our race began.

But we must ask: are these analyses sufficient? To put it otherwise: does not Scripture warrant and compel a more penetrating description? When Paul says that “the carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom. 8:7), he has surely provided us with what is ultimate in the definition of sin. Sin is the contradiction of God, contradiction all along the line of God’s unique and essential glory. Nothing is more germane to God’s glory than his truth; he is truth. The tempter was well aware of this and so his strategy was framed accordingly. To the woman he said: “ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). This was blatant contradiction of God’s veracity. When the woman acceded to this contradiction her integrity collapsed and to sin she became captive. Our Lord’s indictment of the tempter is to the effect that his own fall from integrity was of the same character as that by which he seduced Eve. “He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44).

Yes, the essence of sin is to be against God (cf. Ps. 51:4); it is the contradiction of God in the whole range of its connotation and application. When Paul wrote, “the carnal mind is enmity against God,” he added, “for it is not subject to the law of God” (Rom. 8:7). It is significant that the law of God should be specified in this connection. The enmity manifests itself in insubjection to the law of God. And not only so. The insubjection may be said to constitute the enmity, the contradiction. For the law is the glory of God coming to expression for the regulation of human thought, word, and action consonant with the image in which man has been created. So sin can be defined in terms of law as “lawlessness” (I John 3:4).

The contradiction which sin offers to God and to his will, if it is not adequately described as resistance, involves and is expressed in resistance. Scripture sometimes uses this term or its equivalents to express the attitude of unbelief (cf. Acts 7:51; 13:45; Rom. 10:21; II Tim. 3:8; Tit. 1:9). It is obvious that sin consists in resistance to the will of God. If the claims of God were not resistible, there would be no sin. The claims of God come to expression in the gospel and all rejection of the gospel and of its demands is resistance. In the gospel we have the supreme revelation of the grace of God, and Christ is the embodiment of that grace. The glory of God is nowhere more effulgent than in the face of Jesus Christ. Hence unbelief is resistance of grace at the zenith of its disclosure and overture. So to say that all grace is irresistible is to deny the plain facts of observation and experience as also of Scripture teaching. Stephen



was bold enough to indict his unbelieving audience with resistance to the Holy Spirit: “Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye” (Acts 7:51). This is the enormity of unbelief; it is the contradiction of sin expressing itself in resistance to the claims and overtures of supreme love and grace. “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men loved the darkness rather than the light” (John 3:19).

When we speak of irresistible grace, therefore, it is not to assert that all grace is irresistible, nor is it to deny the numberless respects in which grace is resisted and resisted to the culmination of resistance in everlasting doom. In fact the truth of and necessity for irresistible grace may be most cogently demonstrated in the premise of resistible grace. The enmity of the human heart is most virulent at the point of the supreme revelation of God’s glory. So deep-seated and persistent is the contradiction that the Saviour as the embodiment of grace is rejected. It is when we recognize this that the need for irresistible grace is perceived.

In much of present-day evangelism it is assumed that the one thing man can do in the exercise of his own liberty is to believe in Christ for salvation. It is supposed that this is the one contribution that man himself must make to set the forces of salvation in operation and that even God himself can do nothing towards this end until there is this crucial decision on man’s own part. In this assessment there is total failure to reckon with human depravity, with the nature of the contradiction that sin involves. Paul tells us that not only is the mind of the flesh not subject to the law of God but also that it cannot be (Rom. 8:7). This impossibility extends to the gospel as well. It is the implication of Paul’s other word that “the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (I Cor. 2:14). But to this truth we have the most pointed and express witness of our Lord himself. “No man can come unto me, except the Father who bath sent me draw him” (John 6:44); “no man can come unto me, except it were given to him of the Father” (John 6:65). Here is the witness of him who knows what is in man and who knows the Father as the Father knows him. And it is to the effect that it is a moral and spiritual impossibility for a man to come unto him except by the free gift from the Father in his secret and efficacious drawing.

The foregoing words of our Lord must be coordinated with another in the same context. “All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). The giving on the part of the Father in this text has been understood as the election in Christ before the foundation of the world (cf. Eph. 1:4, 5) or, at least, in terms of giving to the Son correlative with or flowing from the election. But this does not by any means appear to be the action of the Father referred to in the text. There are two reasons for this conclusion. First, in this Gospel elsewhere, when Jesus speaks of those given to him by the Father, they are identified as those given to him out of the world, as those who had kept his word, as those who

had known that all things given to him were from the Father, as those who had received the words given him and had come to know the truth that he, Jesus, had come out from the Father (John 17:6-8). These characterizations require much more than election before the foundation of the world; they involve a relation of faith. Second, in the more immediate context Jesus is referring to the effectual drawing and giving on the Father's part (John 6:44, 65). So we must conclude that the giving is the giving that occurs in the actual operations of grace, defined more specifically as drawing and giving in the realm of consciousness. The constraints of the Father's grace in the hearts of men are concomitant with or, perhaps, may be construed as donation on the part of the Father to the Son. God the Father draws men, places holy constraints upon them, calls them into the fellowship of his Son, and presents them to Christ as trophies of the redemption Christ himself has accomplished.

This constraint has been called "efficacious." No other inference could reasonably be drawn from John 6:44, 45. Jesus is speaking of coming unto him, that is, of the commitment of faith and of the impossibility apart from the Father's drawing. In making the exception it is surely implied that when the Father draws the exception occurs—the person drawn does come. Furthermore, it would offend against all that may be conceived as to the nature and intent of the Father's drawing and giving in terms of verses 44, 65 to think of these actions as ineffectual. But John 6:37 puts this beyond all question: "All that the Father giveth me will come to me." Jesus does not say: all that the Father giveth me are brought to me. He uses the term that denotes motion on the part of the person—"will come to me." Coming to Christ is the movement of commitment to Christ, coming that engages the whole-souled activity of the person coming. It is not that he may come, not that he has the opportunity to come, not that he will in all probability come, and not simply that he is empowered to come, but that he will come. There is absolute certainty. There is a divine necessity; the order of heaven insures the sequence.

It is a moral and spiritual impossibility for a person to come to Christ apart from the Father's drawing. What we find now is that it is a moral and spiritual impossibility for the person given by the Father to the Son not to come. There is by Jesus' verdict the invariable conjunction of these two diverse kinds of action—"all that the Father *giveth* me *will come* to me." There is invincible efficacy in the Father's action and this means grace irresistible.

The reality of such grace is inscribed on Jesus' words. But the teaching also points to the *necessity*. The premise of our Lord's teaching is the impossibility of faith when only human agency obtains. The agency of the Father is interposed to meet this impossibility and the impossibility establishes the indispensability of the interposition.

Thus far attention has been focused upon the action of God the Father in the

constraint that issues in faith. It is highly important that this emphasis of Scripture should be appreciated. Otherwise we dishonor God the Father and our view of the provisions of salvation is seriously distorted. The love of the Father is the fountain from which all the acts and processes of redemption proceed. But we must also recognize that at the inception of salvation in possession lie the operations of grace of which the Father is agent. It is he who calls effectually into the fellowship of his Son (cf. Rom. 8:28, 30; I Cor. 1:9; Gal. 1:15, 16; Eph. 1:18) and he draws men to the Saviour. When sinners first experience the invincible attraction of the Redeemer, are entranced by his beauty, and invest their all in him, it is because the Father has made a donation to his own Son and placed upon men irresistible constraint. To conceive of all this as less than irresistible grace is to deny its character and impugn the efficacy of the Father's will.

Most frequently in theology irresistible grace has been thought to find its focus in regeneration, and regeneration is specifically the act of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 3:3-8). It would be easy to say that the actions of the Father referred to above are simply different ways of expressing regeneration. This is far too simplistic and fails to reckon with the manifoldness of the operations of grace. In the design of salvation there is an economy. In the once-for-all accomplishment of redemption there is an economy. That is, there are the specific and distinguishing functions of the distinct persons of the Godhead. There is also economy in the application of redemption and we must take full account of the diversity involved. To equate the actions of the Father with regeneration is to ignore the diversity; our theology is thereby truncated and our faith deprived of the richness which the economy requires.

Regeneration is specifically the work of the Holy Spirit, and our appreciation of the economy of salvation demands that we honor him in the distinctive functions he performs.

No ingredient in the manifold of God's saving operations bears more relevantly on the subject of irresistible grace than does regeneration. Again, our Lord's own teaching is basic. "Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:3, 5). The impossibility we found earlier in connection with faith appears here in connection with understanding of and membership in the kingdom of God, and birth from above, of water, and of the Spirit is the interposition that meets human impotence. It cannot be questioned that our Lord's assessment of man's situation is the total incapacity in reference to what is most germane to his well-being and is to the same effect as Paul's indictment of the natural man (I Cor. 2:14).

The provision of grace appears in this connection, as in John 6:44, 65, in the exception, born from above, of water, and of the Spirit, the exception that insures understanding of and membership in the kingdom of God. And the certainty of this

outcome is implied not only in the “except” of verses 3 and 5 but is expressly affirmed in verse 6: “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit,” a new person indwelt, directed, and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

It is John alone who records for us the Lord’s discourse to Nicodemus. The profound effect this teaching impressed on John’s thinking is evinced in his first epistle. On six occasions reference to regeneration occurs (I John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18). Pertinent to our present interest is the emphasis upon the invariable concomitance of birth from God and new life. “Every one who is begotten of God does not do sin . . . and he cannot sin because he is begotten of God” (3:9). “Every one who is begotten of God overcomes the world” (5:4). Every one who is begotten of God does not sin . . . and the evil one does not touch him” (5:18). So the person born or begotten of God no longer lives in sin but has the victory, in a word, is converted.

When these data are placed in contrast with the impossibility of which our Lord spoke to Nicodemus, the only inference is that the new birth is invincibly efficacious and this is just to affirm irresistible grace.

It is significant that in the prologue of John’s Gospel there occur the words, “who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God” (John 1:13). The cumulative negatives reinforce the positive and the lesson is that of divine monergism. It is not what man does but what God effects and God alone to the exclusion of all human volition or agency. The same monergism is patent in our Lord’s own teaching. In John 3:3-8 we cannot suppress the analogy on which the language of regeneration turns. When a person is begotten or born according to the flesh, it is not because he or she *decided* for this event. It was wholly by the volition and agency of others. So in the new birth. And by whose will and agency is not left in any doubt. The Holy Spirit is the agent and he alone. In terms of verse 3 the action is supernatural, in terms of verse 5 it is by radical purification and impartation, in terms of verse 6 it is invincibly determinative, in terms of verse 8 it is mysterious and sovereignly effective.

Why should there be any reluctance to accept the truth of irresistible grace? It is God’s interposition to do for us what we cannot do of ourselves. It is God’s amazing grace to meet our hopeless impotence. Here is the gospel of sovereign mercy. In evangelism it is the only hope of its success unto the salvation of lost souls. The Holy Spirit accompanies the gospel proclamation with his sovereign demonstration and power. The lost are born of the Spirit and the fruit is unto holiness and the end everlasting life.

In concluding, may we return to John 6:37, 44, 65. When a sinner comes to Christ in the commitment of faith, when the rebellious will is renewed and tears of penitence begin to flow, it is because a mysterious transaction has been taking place between the

persons of the Godhead. The Father has been making a presentation, a donation to his own Son. So perish the thought that coming to Christ finds its explanation in the autonomous determinations of the human will. It finds its cause in the sovereign will of God the Father. He has placed upon this person the constraint by which he has been captivated by the glory of the Redeemer and invests in him all his interests. Christ is made wisdom from God, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Here is grace surpassing; and it is grace insurmountable.

## **A Discourse of the Word, the Instrument of Regeneration**

**Stephen Charnock**

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*Of his own will begot he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.—James 1:18.*

I have chosen this text to treat of the instrument of the new birth.

The apostle having advised them (verse 13, 'But let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted to evil, neither tempts he any man') not to charge God as the author of any temptation to evil, showing it to be contrary to the nature of God, who is infinite goodness and righteousness; for as he cannot be tempted with evil, so neither can he tempt any man; and declaring the true cause and spring of all evil to be inherent in ourselves, even that lust which is riveted in our nature, which he calls our own lust, - verse 14, 'But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed,' - he takes occasion from thence to show the order of sin's working. Sin is first conceived by that original corruption in our nature, and formed and brought forth into action; and when it is finished, and grows into a habit, it 'brings forth death,' verse 15. To remove this error, which some in those days had sucked in out of a natural self-love that man has to excuse himself, and remove the cause of sin far from him, the apostle shows that God is the author and fountain of all the good we have: ver. 17, 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of change.' God being the infinite Father of lights, who has no eclipses or decreases, no shadows or mixtures of darkness, but always shines with a constant and settled brightness, of this goodness has given a great evidence, in conferring the choicest mercy upon us, even a new begetting through the gospel, and thereby the relation of children to him, that we might be consecrated to him as the first fruits and a peculiar portion. Of his own will, "boultheis; by his mere motion, induced by no cause but the

goodness in his own breast. (1.) To distinguish it from the generation of the Son, which is natural, this voluntary; of his own will, not naturally, as he begot his Son from eternity. (2.) Not necessarily, by a necessity of nature, as the sun, to which he had compared God before, does enlighten, and enliven, when matter is prepared to receive his quickening beams; but by an arbitrariness of grace. (3.) Not by any obligation from the creature; the will of God is opposed to the merit of man. The new creation answers to election; the first purpose was free, the bringing that purpose to execution is free whatsoever obligation there is, results not from the creature, but from himself, his own immutable nature, which has no variableness, nor shadow of change. "Begot us," "apekuesen", or brought us forth, for the same word "apokuei", ver. 15, is translated 'brings forth.' 'By the word of truth', a title given to the gospel both in the Old and New Testament: in the Old, Ps. xiv. 4, 'And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth,' or 'upon thy word of truth,' in the New Testament, Eph. i. 13, 'In whom you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.' So 2 Cor. vi. 7, and 2 Tim. ii. 15. And it is called truth by way of excellency, as paramount to all other truth. (1.) Either, by an Hebraism, the word of truth; that is, the true word. (2.) Or rather, by way of eminency, as containing a higher truth, more excellent in itself, more advantageous for the creature, than any other divine truth; wherein the highest glory of God, the sure and everlasting happiness of the creature, is set forth; a word which he has 'magnified above all his name,' Ps. cxxxviii. 2.

And called the word of truth.

1. In regard of the author, truth itself; and the publisher, he who was 'the way, the truth, and the life.'
2. In opposition to all false doctrines, which can never be the instruments of conversion; for error to convert to truth, is the same thing as for darkness to diffuse light, or water to kindle fire.
3. In opposition to the windy and flashy conceits of men, which can no more be instrumental in the begetting a Christian, than mere wind can beget a man.
4. In opposition to the legal shadows; the gospel declares the truth of those types. Both the law and prophecy were but as a dim candle 'in a dark place,' 2 Peter i. 19, but this as a sun shining out at noonday. All other discourses did stream to this as their great ocean, wherein they were to be swallowed up. The law was the word of truth, but referred to the gospel as the great end of it. This contains the whole and ultimate purpose of God, for saving men by Jesus Christ, and in him enriching them with all spiritual blessings, and not by the works of the law, and thus the Spirit, which enlightens and seals instruction upon our souls, is called 'the Spirit of truth,' John xiv. 17, as it is called a Spirit of holiness, as it makes us holy, a Spirit of grace, as it makes

us gracious, or as it declares the grace of God. Some by the word of truth understand Christ, the essential and uncreated "logos", Word, as it is understood by some in 1 Peter i. 23, 25, 'By the Word of God, which lives and abides for ever; and this is the Word which by the gospel is preached to you.' Possibly it may be meant of Christ, who by the gospel is declared and preached to be the mediator between God and man, appointed to raise up those that are given to him. Others by the word there, mean the will of God of giving grace in Christ, which is manifest in, and expressed by, the gospel. But here it is evidently meant of the gospel, because of the inference the apostle makes: ver. 19, 'Be swift to hear;' that is, prize the word, wait upon the means with all readiness; 'slow to speak,' to utter your judgment of it, or be wise in your own conceit, whereof a readiness to speak peremptorily in divine truth is sometimes an evidence; 'slow to wrath' and passion, which hinder any profit by the word. 'That we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures;' the chief among his creatures. The first fruits were the best of every kind to be offered to God, whereby they acknowledged God's gift of them, and desired his blessing upon them, and were given as God's peculiar right and portion. It was commanded in the law, Deut. xviii. 4. It was a custom among many of the heathens. To offer them was a token of thankfulness; not to offer them, was accounted a sign of atheism and profaneness. The new creature is God's peculiar portion taken out of mankind; and it bespeaks duty too: being consecrated to God by a new begetting, they should serve God with a new spirit, new thankfulness, new frames.

We see here,

1. The efficient of regeneration, God; 'he,' the Father of lights.
2. The impulsive or moving cause, 'his own will.'
3. The instrumental cause 'with the word of truth.'
4. The final cause, 'that we may be a kind of first fruits.'

The doctrine I am to handle is,

Doctrine. That the gospel is the instrument whereby God brings the soul forth in a new birth.

The Scripture does distinguish the efficient and instrumental cause by the prepositions "ek", or, "eks", and "dia". When we are said to be 'born of the Spirit,' it is, John iii. 5, "ek pneumatos"; 1 John iii. 9, v. 1, "ek Theou"; never "dia pneumatos", or "dia Theou:" but we are nowhere said to be born of the word, or begotten of the word, but "dia logou", by or with the word, 1 Peter i. 23; and "dia euangeliou", 1 Cor. iv. 15, I have begotten you 'through the gospel.' The preposition "ek" or "eks", usually notes the efficient or material cause; "dia", the instrumental or means by which a thing is

wrought. Sin entered into the heart of Eve by the word of the devil, grace enters into the heart by the word of God; that entered by a word of error, this by a word of truth: 'Ye are clean through the word I have spoken to you, John xv. 3, whereby our Saviour means the word outwardly preached by him, for it is the word spoken by him. Not that it had this efficacy of itself, but as an instrument of their sanctification, rendering them ready to every good work. The holiness, therefore, which it begets, is called the holiness of truth, Eph. iv. 24, opposed to the "epithumiai tes apates", 'lusts of deceit,' ver. 22. Lusts grow up from error and deceit, and holiness of the new man grows up from truth. The gospel administration, in regard of the effects of it, is called 'the kingdom of God,' Mark i. 14; it erects the kingdom of God in the world and in the hearts of men, and called the regeneration: Mat. xix. 28, 'Ye which have followed me in the regeneration;' the gospel administration being a creating of 'new heavens and a new earth,' Isa. lxv. 17. This is the triumphal chariot, wherein Christ rides majestically to the conquest of hearts: Ps. xiv. 4, 'And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth,' "'al dvar 'emut", a psalm the Jews themselves understand of the Messiah. The word of his truth is the support of his kingdom, whereby he awes sinners into submission. Peace from heaven, and the health of our nature, is 'the fruit of the lips,' though of God's creation, Isa. lvii. 19. It is like the dew or mist which watered the ground, and prepared the earth for the formation of Adam's body, into which God breathed afterwards a living soul, Gen. ii. 6. 7.

I. For explication, take some I propositions:

1. It is not the law that is this instrument. The law, taken in general for the legal administration prescribed to the Jews, was instrumental for renewing, because there was a typical gospel in that Judaic administration: Heb. iv. 2, 'For to us was the gospel preached as well as unto them.' They were evangelised, "Euangelismenoi", as the word signifies. The Judaic administration was composed of law and gospel: the moral law, as a covenant of works; the ceremonial law, representing the covenant of grace. The law of God, or gospel among them, is said to convert the soul, Ps. xix. 7. But the law, taken as a covenant of works, was not appointed for renewing the soul, otherwise what need had there been of enacting another law for that work? And those that say the law is instrumental in conversion, or inflaming our affections to obedience, say that all the benefits by it are to be ascribed to the covenant of grace in Christ. It is true, the law considered in itself is preparatory to cast men down, and show them their distance from God and contrariety to his command; but the law without the gospel never brought any man to Christ. Whatsoever it does in this case is not of itself, but by the mingling the gospel with it, which spirits it to such an end. Though the law did not encourage sin, yet it gave no help against it, but left the soul under the dominion of it, which is evident by the apostle's inference: Rom. vi. 14, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not under the law, but under grace.' Hence the property of the law, which is meant by 'the letter,' 2 Cor. iii. 6, is to kill, but 'the Spirit' gives life; that leaves under the severity of justice, after sin had entered; but the spiritual



administration, wherein the Spirit works, is to quicken and renew the soul, and make it able to get above the guilt and power of sin. The apostle, therefore, wholly excludes the law: Gal. iii. 2, 'Received you the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?' that is, the word of faith, as the gospel is called, Rom. x. 8. By Spirit is meant, says Calvin, the grace of regeneration, as by faith is meant the doctrine of faith. I might have preached (as if the apostle had said) the works of the law till my lungs had been worn out, and the renewing Spirit would never have entered into you by that fire, but it descended upon you in the sweet gospel dew. The gospel is therefore called the 'ministration of the Spirit,' and the 'ministration of righteousness,' 2 Cor. iii. 8, 9. It is the chariot or vehiculum wherein the Spirit rides, the proclamation by which it is declared, the channel through which it is conveyed. The law discovers the righteousness of God as well as the gospel; but that demands a righteousness from the creature, the gospel confers a righteousness upon the creature; the law shows us God's righteousness in his nature, the gospel shows us God's righteousness in his nature and grace. The law is a hammer to break us, the gospel God's oil to cure us; the law makes sin live and our souls die,—Rom. vii. 9, 'When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died,—the gospel makes sin die and our souls live; the law awakens the lion, the gospel lets out his blood. At the best, the terrors of the law do chain up our furious affections, but the sweetness of gospel mercy changes them. The law prepares the matter, the gospel brings the new form. That was appointed for the rule of our walk, not for the restoration of our life. And they are the promises of mercy which are the motives to return; rebels will not submit to their prince as long as they know they shall have no quarter. Hue and cry makes the thief fly away the faster. By the 'great and precious promises;' we 'are made partakers of the divine nature,' 2 Peter i. 4. The promises of the law being conditional, belong not to us without fulfilling the condition, of which we are incapable of ourselves. The law, therefore, since the fall, is destructive, the gospel restorative, and the promises of it the cords whereby God draws us.

2. The gospel is this instrument. It is an instrument to unlock the prison doors, and take them off the hinges, strike off the fetters, and draw out the soul to a glorious liberty. It is by the voice of the archangel men shall rise in their bodies; it is by the voice of the Son of God in the word that men rise in their souls. Nothing else ever wrought such miraculous changes. To make lions become lambs, Isa. vi. 6, Hosea iv. 13; beloved idols to be cast away with indignation; to make its entrance like fire, and consume old lusts in a short time: these have been undeniable realities, which have created affection and astonishment in some enemies as well as friends. It has a more excellent instrumentality in it than other providences of God, because it is a higher manifestation. Every creature conducts us to the knowledge of God, by giving us notice of his power, wisdom, and goodness, Rom. i. 20. The declaration of his works in the world is instrumental to make men seek him, Acts xvii. 27. Every day's providence declares his patience, every shower of rain his merciful provision for mankind, Acts

xiv. 17, every day's preservation of the world under a load of sin manifests his mercy. The heavens have a tongue, and the rod has a voice; the design of all is to lead men to repentance, Rom. ii. 4. If these, therefore, be some kind of instruments upon the hearts of considering men, the gospel being a discovery superior to all these, in manifesting not only a God of nature, but a God of grace, must be designed to a choicer and nobler work. The heavens and providence are instruments to instruct us, this to renew us.

It is an instrument; but,

(1.) It is not a natural instrument, to work by any natural efficacy, as food does nourish, the sun shines, or the air and water cools, or as a sharp knife cuts if it be applied to fit matter. If it were thus natural, it would not be of grace. Though the shining of the sun, or the healing by a plaster, are acts of the goodness and mercy of God, yet the Scripture calls them not by that higher title of acts of grace. If the operation were natural, the gospel would never be without its effect wherever it were preached; as the sun, wherever it shines in any land, does both enlighten and warm. Our Saviour then would have had more success, since the gospel could not have greater natural efficacy than from his lips; yet the number of his converts were probably not much above five hundred, for so many he appeared to after his resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 6, when many thousands in that land heard his voice, and saw his miracles. Christ, who was always able to give himself success, would not, perhaps for this among many other reasons, to advance his spiritual above his corporal presence, and to prevent any thoughts of any natural virtue in the word, without the power of the Spirit working by it. Every day teaches us, that though many see the glass of the gospel, yet few see the glory of God in that gospel. Were it natural, then, that all that hear it were not renewed, would be more miraculous than that any are; as it was more a miracle that the sun should stand still in Joshua's time, against its natural course of motion, than that it moves every day in the heavens. If it were a natural instrument, it must then have life in itself, but how can the voice of a man, or the words and syllables in a book, be capable of receiving spiritual life, which they must have before they can naturally convey it to others? Were it a natural instrument, it would have the same effect upon the soul at one time as at another. But does not daily experience witness, that the word shines at some particular times upon the soul with a clearer ray than at other times, that such a soul has thought itself in another world (as it were), and that too when it has been much clouded by the weakness of the instrument declaring it? Lastly were it natural, the wisest men, men of the sharpest understandings, could not resist it, no man can hinder the sun's shining upon him, when he is under the beams of it, it would warm him whether he would or no, yet have not such been the most desperate opposers of it in all ages of the world, as well as in the times of the apostles? It is not then a natural, but a moral instrument, which will follow afterwards, when we come to consider how it works.

(2.) It is the only instrument appointed by God to this end in an ordinary way. God has made a combination between hearing and believing, Rom. x. 14, 17, so that believing comes not without hearing. The waters of the sanctuary run only through the channels of the gospel; the mines of grace are found only in the climates of the word. Why does not air nourish? Because God did not set that, but meat, apart for each an end. Though God could by his almighty power bless air to this end, yet in an ordinary way he has fixed his blessing on these natural causes of his own ordaining. God has appointed second causes for natural operations; if we would be warm, God has appointed fire and sun to warm us; he could do it immediately, by spreading a lively heat in every member, as well as he gave at first a power to fire to burn; but he uses natural instruments in natural effects, and likewise spiritual instruments in spiritual productions. God may blow in an extraordinary way upon the soul by a divine breath without any instrument, as he did immediately upon the prophets, or as he gave light to the world the three first days of the creation without a sun, but since only by the sun and stars. But God seems here to have fixed his power: Rom. i. 16, the gospel is 'the power of God to salvation;' not that his power shall always attend it, but that he will exert his power, at least ordinarily, only by it; no other organ through which the wind of the Spirit shall blow, no other sword which the Spirit shall manage but this, Eph. vi. 13. Though our Saviour prayed upon the cross for some of his greatest enemies, who had their hands embued in his precious blood, though he was heard, yet his prayer was not answered but through Peter's ministry, to grace the first spiritual discovery of the gospel. Nothing else can have that efficacy. Had every man in Israel made a brazen serpent, and looked upon it when they had been stung, they might have looked till they had groaned their last, before they had met with any cure, because only one was of God's appointing. To a cast of an eye upon that, he had only promised his healing virtue, in that only then he had lodged his power.

(3.) It is therefore a necessary instrument.

[1.] In regard of the reasonable creature there must be some declaration. God does not ordinarily work but by means, and does not produce anything without them which may be done with them. God does not maintain the creatures by a daily creation, but by generation; he maintains that faculty of generation in them by the means of health and nourishment, and that by the means of the fruits of the earth, and does all this according to the ordinance he fixed at the creation, when he appointed every kind of creatures their proper food, and bestowed his blessing upon them, 'Increase and multiply.' So according to the method God has set of men's actions, it is necessary that this regeneration should be by some word as an instrument, for God has given understanding and will to man. We cannot understand anything, or will anything, but what is proposed to us by some external object; as our eye can see nothing but what is without us, our hand take nothing but what is without us, so it is necessary that God by the word should set before us those things which our understandings may apprehend, and our wills embrace. Now we believe things as we conceive them true, or

not believe them as we conceive them false. We love, desire, delight in things, as we conceive them honest or profitable; we hate, we refuse, or grieve, as we conceive them dishonest, or troublesome, or hurtful to us; whatever we are changed by in our understandings, wills, and affections, is represented to us under some of these considerations. To make an alteration in us according to our nature of understanding, will, and affection, it is necessary there should be some declaration of things under those considerations of true, good, delightful, &c., in the highest manner, to make a choice change in every faculty of the soul, and without this a man cannot be changed as a rational creature; he will otherwise have a change he knows not why, nor to what end, nor upon what consideration, which is an inconceivable change in a rational creature.

[2.] It is necessary the revelation of this gospel we have should be made. There is a necessity of some revelation, for no man can see that which is not visible, or hear that which has no sound, or know that which is not declared. There is also a necessity of the revelation of this gospel, since faith is a great part of this work. How can any man believe that God is good in Christ, without knowing that he has so declared himself? Since the Spirit takes of Christ's, and shows it to us, there must be a revelation of Christ, and the goodness of God in Christ, before we can believe. Though the manner of this revelation may be different, and the Spirit may renew in an extraordinary manner, yet this is the instrument whereby all spiritual begettings are wrought; the manner may be by visions, dreams, by reading or hearing, yet still it is the gospel which is revealed; the matter revealed is the same, though the formal revelation or manner may be different. Paul's regeneration was by a vision, for at that vision of the light, and that voice of Christ, I suppose him to be renewed, because of that full resignation of his will to Christ, Acts ix. 6, yet the matter of the revelation was the same, that Christ was the Messiah, for so Paul understands it, in giving him the title of Lord. Though God may communicate himself without the written word to some that have it not, yet according to his appointment, not without a revelation of what is in that word.

[3.] This necessity will further appear, if we consider that it always was so. Adam and Eve were the first after the fall wherein God did constitute his church, whose regeneration and conversion were wrought by that promise of the seed of the woman made to them in paradise; God surely putting an enmity in the heart of those to whom this first promise of an enmity was made, upon which promise a sacrifice followed, which some ground on Gen. iii. 21, 'God made them coats of skins' of beasts, which the word "od" signifies, and is never taken in Scripture otherwise than for the outward skin of a beast. And, indeed, it is not likely that 129 years should be between the promise and the first sacrifice, for some think Abel was killed by Cain in the 129th year after the creation, for it is certain 130 years after the creation Seth was born, Gen. v. 3. And this is confirmed, Heb. ix. 32, 'Neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.' The first testament was of more ancient date than the Jewish service

ordained by Moses; and some ceremonies, as sacrifices, and distinction of clean and unclean beasts, were in use before, Gen. viii. 20, so that there seems to be a sacrifice representing the Messiah for the dedication of the first testament, which Adam had received from God and transmitted to Abel, whom he taught the way of sacrificing. What regeneration Adam had was by this word of the gospel. Had not Adam believed it, he would not have delivered it to Abel; and Abel had not sacrificed, unless he had been taught so by his father, or immediately by God; but most likely by his father, because God does not use extraordinary means, when ordinary will serve. And Abel was regenerate, for it is said 'by faith he offered' this sacrifice, Heb. xi. 4: and it was faith in Christ, faith in the promised seed, for all of them in that catalogue, Heb. xi., did eye Christ by faith, as well as Moses. of whom it is particularly expressed, ver. 26, that 'he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.' Considering all this, it is evident, that the ancient restoration was by the revelation of Christ and the gospel as the only necessary means. Abraham, it is likely, had some external word in his father Terah's family, by tradition from the patriarchs, and had the revelation of the promise made to him by God, Gen. xviii. 19. And it was wrought then in an ordinary way by instruction, for, for that Abraham is commended, and no doubt but Isaac and Jacob did the same, so that all along this change of the heart was wrought by a declaration of the word of the gospel.

(4.) It seems to be the standing instrument of it to the end of the world. Some indeed think the conversion of the Jews shall not be by the declarations of the word in a way of preaching and instruction, as the Gentiles were brought in, but by a visible appearance of Christ, which they ground upon Zech. xii. 10, 'They shall look upon him whom they have pierced,' they shall see Christ in the clouds as pierced by them, and understand Paul's conversion by an extraordinary light shining round about him, and a voice from heaven, to be a type and pattern of God's manner of the future conversion of the Jews, which is intimated, 1 Tim. i. 16, that the mercy he obtained was 'a pattern for them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting'. Whether this be so or no, yet however the conversion is by a revelation of that which is the matter and substance of the gospel, it is the revelation of Christ himself; and if, like Paul's conversion, by a voice, as well as by sight, by instruction as well as apparition; but it seems to me to be the perpetual standing means of regeneration. The fruits of our Saviour's ascension shall endure to the end of the world, and the enduing men with gifts for the building him a spiritual house is a great end of his ascension, Ps. lxviii. 18, compared with Eph. iv. 8, 9, 'Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord might dwell among them.' He receives gifts upon his ascension, for the subduing and changing the hearts of the rebellious, that they may be a fit habitation for God, who dwells in them by his Spirit; these gifts being the fruit of so glorious an ascension, and a rich donative to him for the accomplishment of his undertaking in the world, and being given for the smoothing, polishing, and fitting

rude stones to combine together for a temple for the Lord to dwell in (which is the reason why he keeps up the world). As long therefore as God has a temple, and any stone to polish, these gifts will remain in the ministry of the word, and be exercised in order to so great a building; and we may infer also by the way, that it is not likely that God does dwell in any, but such who are so subdued and formed by the ministry of the word, which is the fruit of Christ's ascension. It seems also to have an more ancient date, and founded upon the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son. All that prayer in the 17th of John seems to me to run upon those articles agreed on between them. Those that were given to Christ were given to keep his word: John xvii. 6, 'Thou gave them me, and they have kept thy word.' Which word was given to Christ by God in order to be given to them: ver. 8, 'I have given them the word which thou gave me.' And in his prayer for their sanctification, her. 17, he seems to intimate that this was the ordinary method then subscribed to by both, and the settled means of sanctification; he does not only propose his desire for their sanctification, but the means, 'through thy truth,' and specifies what he means by truth, 'thy word is truth.' And what he did here pray for, for them that were then with him, he did for all that should hereafter believe, ver. 20; and though this be meant of a further sanctification of those that were already regenerate, yet it will, I think, evidently follow that if the word by agreement between the Father and the Son be the instrument of every degree of sanctification, it must be also of the first; since there can be no faith, but refers to the object believed, and the ground why it is believed, whence 'belief of the truth' is joined with the 'sanctification of the Spirit,' 2 Thes. ii. 13; besides, ver. 20, all belief for the future was to be through the word, 'through their word.' Let me add another inference from this; what an excellent argument is this to plead in prayer, before you go to hear or read the word; Lord, was not this an article of agreement between thee and thy Son? Was not this the desire of our Saviour, who knew the best means of sanctifying?

[5.] It is necessary, by God's appointment, for all the degrees of the new birth, and all the appendixes to it. When God shows his own glory for a further change, he represents the species of it in the glass of the gospel: 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory.' It is the ministration of the Spirit in all the acts of the spirit. If the Spirit quicken, it is by some gospel precept; if it comforts, it is by some gospel promise; if it startles, it is by some threatening in the word. Whatsoever working there is in a Christian's heart, it is by some word or other dropping upon it. If any temptation which assaults us be baffled, it is by the word, which is the sword of the Spirit. The life of a Christian is made up of increasing light, refreshing comforts, choicer inclinations of the heart towards God. By the same law whereby the soul is converted the heart is rejoiced, and the eyes further enlightened: Ps. xix. 7, 8, 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul, making wise the simple, rejoicing the heart, enlightening the eyes.' The Spirit makes the word not only the fire to kindle the soul, but the bellows to blow; it is first

life, then liveliness to the soul. It is through the word he begets us, and through the word he quickens us: 'Thy word has quickened me,' Ps. cxix. 50, 93. It is by the word God gathers a church in the world; by the same word he sanctifies it to greater degrees, Eph. v. 26. It is the seed whereby we are born, the dew whereby we are refreshed. As it is the seed of our birth, so it is the milk of our growth, 1 Peter ii. 2. Faith comes by hearing, and salvation after faith by the 'foolishness of preaching,' 1 Cor. i. 21. It helps us after we have believed through grace, Acts xviii. 27. Our fruitfulness depends upon our plantation by this river's side. The influence of other ordinances depends upon it. Sacraments that nourish and increase, are not efficacious, but by virtue of the word; they have their dependence on the word, as seals upon the covenant. The word is operative without sacraments; sacraments are not operative without the influence of the word, they are only assistants to it. This quickens and increases habitual grace, as well as it was the instrument first to usher it into the heart: Eph. v. 26 'That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.' As God will have the mediation of his Son honoured in the whole progress and perfection of grace as the meritorious cause, the efficacy of the Spirit as the efficient cause, so he will have the word in every step to heaven honoured as the instrumental cause; that as Jesus Christ is all in all, as the chief, so the word may be all in all as the means. As God created the world by the word of his power, and by the word of his providence bid the creatures increase and multiply, so by the word of the gospel he lays the foundation, and rears the building, of his spiritual house.

4. As it is not a natural instrument, but the only instrument appointed by God, and therefore, upon these and upon other accounts, a necessary instrument, so it is an instrument which makes mightily for God's glory. The meaner the appearance of the instrument, the more evident the power and skill of the workman. It would be miraculous for a man to raise up another from death, by a composition of medicines syringed down the throat, but a greater miracle to raise him by speaking a word. In the new birth there is nothing sensible to man but the word, the other causes are secret; like the wind, you know not whence it comes, nor whither it goes. The instrument being weak in itself, none can claim any share with God in the glory of the work. But were there a natural strength in the means, much of the honour would be pared from God, and assumed by the creature. It is like the trumpet in the right hand of Gideon's soldiers, and a pitcher with a lamp in the left. Upon the blowing of the trumpet and the breaking of the pitcher, the enemies fled; and God would have the means but small, but three hundred of thirty-two thousand, that Israel might not vaunt, and say, Mine own arm has saved me, Judges vii. 2. It had not been so admirable for Samson to have killed so many with a sword or spear, or if the walls of Jericho had fallen flat by the force of some battering engine; but it was wonderful to see them tumble at the blast of ram's horns. Is it not the same to see strong-holds, high thoughts, Goliath-like corruptions, and spiritual death itself, fly before the voice of the word? To see a man like the Babel-builders, swelling and rearing up his own confidences against God, to

have all the former language of his soul confounded by a word; to think of other objects, speak in another strain, descend from self to dust, deny pleasure, embrace a crucified Christ; that carnal reason should be silenced, legions of devils driven out, a messy Dagon fall before an ark of wood, that has nothing in it but the rod of Aaron and the pot of manna: in such weak means is the power of God exalted, and no other cry can reasonably be heard but 'This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.' So it was more glorious for our Saviour to turn many of the Jews to him after his death than in his life, to bring them to believe by a Word, upon a person they had crucified as a malefactor, than if he had brought them to believe while he was attended with a train of miracles. The power of his miracles might seem in their eyes to be extinct with his death, since he that delivered others did not deliver himself from the hands of his murderers. He now honours both his own words and their faith, in bringing them to believe by the preaching of men, who did not believe by the Word from his lips, attended with the seals of so many glorious miracles.

5. Consider, as it is an instrument, so but an instrument. God begets by the word; the chief operation depends upon the Spirit of God. No sword can cut without a hand to manage it, no engine batter without a force to drive it. The Word is objective in itself, operative by the power of the Spirit; instrumental in itself, efficacious by the Holy Ghost. The Word of Christ is first spirit and then life. 'The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life,' John vi. 63. The word is the chariot of the Spirit, the Spirit the guider of the word; there is a gospel comes in word, and there is a gospel comes in power, 1 Thes. i. 5. There is a publishing of the gospel, and there is the 'fullness of the blessing of the gospel,' Rom. xv. 29. 'There was the truth of God spoken by Peter and Paul, and God in that truth working in the heart: Gal. ii. 8, 'He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles.' The gospel in itself is like Christ's voice; the gospel with the Spirit is like Christ's power raising Lazarus; other men might have spoken the same words, but the power of rising must come from above. It is then successful when an inward unction drops with the outward dew, when the veil is taken from the heart, and the curtain from the word, and both meet together, both word and heart; when Christ kisses with the kisses of his mouth, and the man embraces it with the affections of his heart. The light in the air is the instrument by which we read, but the principle of that light is in the sun in the heavens. The word is a rod, a breath, but efficacious in smiting and slaying the old man, as it is the rod of Christ's mouth, the breath of his lips, Isa. xi. 3; a rod like that of Moses to charm us, but as it is the rod of his strength, Ps. cx. 2; a weapon, but only 'mighty through God,' 2 Cor. x. 4; a seed, but brings not forth a plant but by the influence of the sun. The word has this efficacy from the bleeding wounds and dying groans of Christ. It is by making his soul an offering for sin that he sees the travail of his soul in his new born creatures. By his blood are all the promises of grace confirmed; by his blood they are operative. The word whereby we are begotten was appointed by God, confirmed by



Christ, and the Spirit which begets us was purchased by the same blood. To conclude: the word declares Christ, and the Spirit excites the heart to accept him; the word shows his excellency, and the Spirit stirs up strong cries after him; the word declares the promises, and the Spirit helps us to plead them; the word administers reasons against our reasonings, and the Spirit edges them, the word shows the way, and the Spirit enables to walk in it; the word is the seed of the Spirit, and the Spirit the quickener of the word; the word is the graft, and the Spirit the engrafter; the word is the pool of water, and the Spirit stirs it to make it healing.

## II. Quest. How does the word work?

1. Objectively, as it is a declaration of God's will, as it does propose to the understanding what is to be known, in order to salvation hereafter and practice here, as it does declare the purpose of God to save only by Jesus Christ the Mediator, and by him to deliver us from sin, Satan, and whatsoever is contrary to everlasting happiness; and thus is significative of something to our minds and understandings. The Spirit gave us an eye to see, and the word is the light which discovers the object to the eye. The Spirit gives us an organ, but something must be proposed for that organ to exercise itself about, otherwise there is no use of the understanding in any rational operation; which certainly there is, for though the object is supernatural, and the inward work upon the mind supernatural, yet the proposal of the object to the mind is made in a rational manner. The word does objectively propose life and death in a way suitable to the nature of man, that he may rationally choose life: 'I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose life,' Deut. xxx. 19. Both the blessings of the gospel and the curses of the law are presented in the word, that the one may be chosen, the other avoided. The word is proposed under various notions: as true, and so it is the object of the speculative understanding; as good, so it is the object of the practical understanding and will; as profitable, so it is the object of the appetite and affections. When it is received into the speculative understanding, it is a preparation to the new birth; when it is received into the practical understanding and will, it is the new birth. It discovers the wonders in God's own heart, his Son, and his promise; the Spirit demonstrates it, and gives power to embrace it. It first presents the promise and then answers the pleas the stubborn heart makes against it, yet by the same gospel, it fetches demonstrative arguments from that quiver to satisfy a cavilling understanding, and motives from thence to overcome a resisting will, it silences the fears, points to the way, excites the soul to an acceptance of Christ, all by this gospel, and so draws us, as a man draws a child, by presenting some alluring object to him. The Spirit immediately himself touches the soul, but by the word, as an instrument proposing the object, and drawing out the soul into an actual believing. The two chief parts of the word are,

(1.) The discovery of our misery by nature. The heart is ripped open, our putrefied condition in our blood evidenced, our deplorable state unfolded, and thereby the

conscience awakened to sensible reflections. It dissects the heart, discovers the secret reserves, unravels the thoughts, pursues sin to its fastnesses, and pulls and brings it out, as Joshua the kings to execution: 1 Cor. xiv. 26, 'And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.' It opens sin to the very bowels, discovers the inward filth, takes off its beautiful disguise, its silken covering, and shows the running ulcer under it. It discovers the forlorn estate by nature, and the insufficiency of flesh and blood to inherit the kingdom of God. Let the word be whispered by the Spirit in the ears of a ruffling sinner, and the curtains which obscured his sin from his eye drawn open, that he may see what a nest of devils he has, what astonishment will it raise in him! How will he stand amazed at his own folly! How will he loathe that self which before he so vehemently loved!

(2.) A second discovery is of the necessity and existence of another bottom. It discovers our misery by nature, and our remedy by Christ, the plague brought upon the world by the first Adam, the cure brought to the world by the second. It proclaims a peace, concluded between God and the humbled sinner, by his Son, the great ambassador, confirmed by his blood, assured by his resurrection. It shows him the fountain of death in his sin, the fountain of life in Christ, the free streams and gracious communications of it. The promise discovers the gracious nature of God, his kindness to man, the openness of his arms to receive him, and thus bring the soul off from itself to the foot of God and the bottom of the cross. When the word like fire and the heart like tinder come close together, the heart catches the spark and burns. From the word reconciliation and peace step out and meet the soul, it finds the kisses of Christ's mouth inspiring it with life, the box of the gospel promises broke open, the window of the gospel ark opened, and the dove flying out of it into the desert heart. The word proposes things as they are in reality, and the soul knows things as it ought to know, 1 Cor. viii. 2. It understands the unavoidable necessity and the infallible excellency of the things proposed; it sees the rocks and shelves wherein the danger lies, and a compass whereby to steer, a road wherein to lie safe at anchor; whereupon he relents for his sin, is astonished at divine kindness, rejoices at the promise as before he trembled at the threatening, and has far other thoughts of God than he had before, in which act divine life is breathed into the soul.

2. The word seems to have an active force upon the will, though the manner of it be very hard to conceive. It is operative in the hand of God for sanctification. The petition of our Saviour, John xvii. 17, 'Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth,' seems to intimate more than a bare objective relation to this work; it both shows us our spots and cleanses them. It is a seed. Seed, though small, is active, no part of the plant retains a greater efficacy; all the glory and strength of the plant, in its buds, blossoms, and fruit, are hidden in it. The word is this seed, which being settled in the heart by the power of the Spirit, brings forth this new creature. It is a glass that not only represents the image of God, but by the Spirit changes us into it, 2 Cor. iii. 18. A

word that pierces the heart, Heb. iv. 12, ye, 'sharper than a two-edged sword, dividing asunder the soul and spirit.' It is a fire to burn. The Spirit does so edge the word that it cuts the quick, discerns the very thoughts, insinuates into the depths of the heart, and rakes up the small sands from the bottom, as a fierce wind does from the bowels of the sea. It is God's ordinance to batter down strongholds. Though it be not a natural instrument to work necessarily, yet it is likened to natural instruments, which are active under the efficiency of the agent which manages them; and this also, in the hands of the Spirit, works mighty effects. The 'sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth ' are joined together, one subordinate to another, 2 Thes. ii. 13. The Spirit efficiently infusing holy habits; the word objectively and actively—objectively, as outwardly proposed; actively, as inwardly engrafted;—it at least excites the new infused gracious principle, and produces our actual conversion and believing. As the pronouncing excommunication in the primitive times filled the person with terror; and no question but upon the same account the authoritative pronouncing the pardon of sin by the apostles, though only declarative, might have a mighty operation upon the soul in filling it with joy; yet both, as managed by the Spirit, concurring with his own ordinance. So that the word is mighty in operation as well as clear in representation; for an activity seems to be ascribed to it by the Scripture metaphors. The chief activity of it is seen in that likeness which it produces in the soul to itself. Seeds have an efficacious virtue to produce plants of the same kind with that whose seeds they are; so the word produces qualities in the heart like itself. The law in the heart is the law in the word transcribed in the soul; a graft which changes a crabbed stock into a sweet tree, James i. 21; like a seal it leaves a likeness and impression of itself; it works a likeness to God as he is revealed in the gospel, for we are changed into the same image. What image? The same image which we behold in that glass, 2 Cor. iii. 18; not his essential image, but the image of his glory represented in the gospel for our imitation. The word is the glory of God in a glass, and imprints the image of the glory of God in the heart. It is a softening word, and produces a mollified heart; an enlightening word, and causes an enlightened soul; a divine word, and engenders a divine nature; it is a spiritual word, and produces a spiritual frame; as it is God's will, it subdues our will; it is a sanctifying truth, and so makes a sink of sin to become the habitation of Christ. To conclude: this is certain: the promise in the word breeds principles in the heart suitable to itself; it shows God a father, and raises up principles of love and reverence; it shows Christ a mediator, and raises up principles of faith and desire. Christ in the word conceives Christ in the heart; Christ in the word, the beginning of grace, conceives Christ in the soul, the hope of glory.

### III. The Use. 1. Information.

1. How admirable, then, is the power of the gospel! It is a quickening word, not a dead; a powerful word, not a weak; a sharp-edged word, not dull; a piercing word, not cutting only skin deep, Heb. iv. 12. That welcome work does it make, when a door of utterance and a door of entrance are both opened together! It has a mighty power to out-wrestle

the principalities of hell, and demolish the strongholds of sin in the heart. It is a word of which it may be said, as the psalmist of the sun, Ps. xix. 6, 'His circuit is to the ends of the earth, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.' To part of the soul is hidden from a new birth by the warm beams of it, when directed by God to the soul. What a powerful breath is that which can make a dead man stand upon his feet and walk! If you should find your faces, by looking in a glass, transformed into an angelical beauty, would you not imagine some strange and secret virtue in that glass? How powerful is this gospel word, which changes a beast into a man, a devil into an angel, a clod of earth into a star of heaven!

(1.) It is above the power of all moral philosophy The wisdom of the heathens never equalled the gospel in such miracles; the political government of the best states never made such alterations in the hearts of men. How excellent is that gospel which has done that for the renewing of millions of souls, which all the wit and wisdom of the choicest philosophers could never effect upon one heart! All other lectures can do no more than allay the passions, not change them; bring them into an order fit for human society, not beget them for a divine fellowship; not draw them forth out of a principle of love to God, and fix them upon so high an end as the glory of God that is invisible. This is the glorious begetting by the gospel, which enables not only to moral actions, but inspires with divine principles and ends, and makes men highly delight in the ways they formerly abhorred. What are a few sprinklings of changes moral philosophy has wrought in the lives of men, to the innumerable ones the gospel has wrought, which were such undeniable realities, that they were never openly contradicted by any of the most violent persecutors of the Christian religion, and were always the most urged argument for the truth of the gospel in the ancient apologies for it? How long may we read and hear mere moral discourses, and arrive no higher than some reformation of life, with unchanged hearts: have sin beaten from the outworks, yet retain the great fort, the heart!

(2.) Above the power of the law. The natural law sees not Christ, the Mosaical law dimly shows him afar off; the gospel brings him near, to be embraced by us, and us to be divinely changed by him. The natural law makes the model and frame of a man, the Mosaical adds some colours and preparations, and the gospel conveys spirit into them. The natural law begets us for the world, the Mosaical kills us for God, and the gospel raises up to life. The natural law makes us serve God by reason, the Mosaical by fear, and the gospel by love. It is by this, and not by the law, those three graces which are the main evidences of life are settled in the soul. It begets faith, whereby we are taken off from the stock of Adam, and inserted in Christ; hope, whereby we flourish; and love, whereby we fructify. By faith, we have life; by hope, strength; by love, liveliness and activity. All these are the fruits of the gospel administration.

(3.) Its power appears in the subjects it has been instrumental to change. Souls bemired in the filthiest lusts, have been made miraculously clean; it has changed the

hands of rapine into instruments of charity, hearts full of filth into vessels of purity; it has brought down proud reason to the obedience of faith, and made active lusts to die at the foot of the cross; it has struck off Satan's chains, and snatched away his captives into the liberty of God's service; it has changed the most stubborn hearts. The conversion of a great company of those Jewish priests that were most violent against it and the author of it, is ascribed to the power of the word: Acts vi. 7, 'And the word of God increased, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.' How many were raised to life by Peter's sermon! More souls turned than words spoken upon record. It subdues the will, which cannot be conquered but by its own consent. Light can dart in upon the understanding whether a man will or no, and flash in his face though he keep it in unrighteousness. Conscience will awaken and rouse them, though men use all the arts they can to still it. The will cannot be forced to any submission against its own consent; the power of the gospel is seen in the conquest of the will, and putting new inclinations into that.

(4.) The power of it is seen in the suddenness of its operation. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, like the change at the last resurrection: 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52, 'We shall all be changed, in a moment, at the last trumpet.' How have troops of unmastered lusts fled at the voice of the gospel trumpet, like a flock of frightened birds, and left their long-possessed mansion! How have the affections, which have sheltered so many enemies against God, been on the sudden weary of their residence, and abhorred what they loved, and loved what the moment before they abhorred! How have welcome temptations been upon this sudden change rejected, a despised Saviour dearly embraced, a furious soul tamed, a darling self crucified, and a soul open to every temptation strongly fortified against it! How frequent are the examples, in the first times of Christianity, of men that have been almost as bad as devils one day, one hour, and joyful martyrs the next; and as soon as ever they have been begotten by it, asserted the power of it in another new birth by flames!

(5.) And this has been done many times by one part, one particle of the word. One word of the gospel, a single sentence, has erected a heavenly trophy in a soul, which all the volumes of the choicest mere reason could never erect; one plain scripture has turned a face to heaven that never looked that way before, and made a man fix his eye there against his carnal interest. One plain scripture has killed a man's sins, and quickened his heart with eternal life; one word of Christ, remembered by Peter, made him weep bitterly, and two or three scriptures, pressed by the same Peter upon his hearers, pricked their hearts to the quick. How has hell flashed in the face of a sinner, out of a small cloud of a threatening, and heaven shot into the soul from one little diamond spark of a promise! A little seed of the word, like a grain of mustard seed, changed the soul from a dwarfish to a tall stature! This the experience of every eye can testify.

(6.) And this power appears in the simplicity of it. Savonarola observes, that when he

neglected the preaching of the Scripture, and applied himself to discourses of philosophy, he gained little upon the hearts of people; but when he came to illustrate and explain the Scripture, the minds of people were wonderfully inflamed and excited to a serious flame; and that when he discoursed in a philosophical manner, there was a non-attention, not only of the more ignorant, but the more learned sort too; but when he preached Scripture truths, he found the minds of men mightily delighted, sting with divine truth, brought to compunction, and a reformation of their lives, which shows, says he, the power of the word, acting more vigorously than all human reason in the world. And indeed Scripture, and Scripture reason, is the wisdom of God; all other reason is the wisdom of man. God will depress man's wisdom and advance his own. It works as it is 'the word of God which lives and abides for ever', 1 Peter i. 23. To wrap a fine piece of silk about a sword, or gild a diamond, is to hinder the edge of the one, and the lustre of the other.

2. Information. The gospel is then certainly of divine authority, since in this 'God has set a tabernacle for the Sun of righteousness to move in, as the heavens are the tabernacle for the material sun, Ps. xix. 4. That word that raises the dead, must needs be the word of no less than God. Our Saviour's discovery of men's thoughts argued his deity. The word's discovery of the inward workings of the heart, and the alteration it makes there, evidences a divine stamp upon it. God would never have made a lie so successful in the world, or blessed it in making those alterations in men, so comely in the eye of moral nature, so advantageous to human society, as the principles it instils into the minds of men are. A lie would never have been blessed to be an instrument of so much virtue and truth; it would not consist with the righteousness of God's government, or his goodness and truth as governor, to bring the hearts of men into so beautiful an order by a deceitful gospel. What word ever had such trophies! What engine ever battered so many strongholds! If the lame walk by the strength of it, if the dead are raised by the power of it, if lepers are cleansed by the virtue of it, if impure souls are sanctified, dead souls enlivened, are we to question its divine authority? Should a word work such wonderful effects for so many ages, that had no stamp of divine authority upon it? Would all those witnesses be given by God to a mere imposture? Let the victories it has gained evidence the arm that wields it. What sword was used at the first conquest of the world through grace, but this of the Spirit? How soon was the devil, with all his heap of idols, fain to fly before it! How soon was the devil, with all his pack of lusts, forced to leave his habitation in the hearts of men! Is not that of divine authority that so routs the enemies of God, puts sin to flight, expels spiritual death, breaking the bands of that worst king of terrors; that had skill to find out sin in its lurking holes, and power to dispossess that, and introduce spiritual life into the soul? Can that be a thing less than divine, that restores man to his due place as a creature respecting his Creator, referring all things to his glory; that implants the love, fear, hope of God in the mind; that makes man, of a miserable corrupt creature, to become divine; that roots out the vices of hell, and stores the soul with the virtues

of heaven? Can such a gospel be termed less than a divine word of truth? If there be any word that can so change the nature, and transform wolves into lambs, let it have the honour and due praise when it is found out; but whatsoever the atheism of the world is, that never felt the powerful efficacy of it, you surely that have felt it a mighty weapon to conquer the devils that once possessed you, and an instrument to new beget you when you lay in your blood, should entertain no whisper against the divine authority of it, but count it the power and wisdom of God as, indeed, it is in itself, and in its effects upon souls, Rom. i. 16. It is said there to be 'the power of God to salvation.' Upon that account the apostle was not ashamed of it; neither should we, but conclude as the same apostle says, 'If I be not an apostle, yet to you I am an apostle.' So if the gospel be not in itself the gospel of God, surely it is so to you who have been renewed.

3. Information. It shows us the reason why the gospel is so much opposed by Satan in the world. It begets those for heaven whom he had begotten for hell. It pulls down his image and sets up God's; it pulls the crown off his head, the sceptre from his hand, snatches subjects from his empire, straitens his territories, and demolishes his forts, breaks his engines, outwits his subtilty, makes his captives his conquerors, and himself, the conqueror, a captive; it pulls men 'out of the kingdom of darkness, and translates them into a kingdom of light,' Col. i. 13. And all this, as it is a word of truth, opposed to his word of deceit, whereby he has cheated mankind and deceived the nations; that we may well say of him, as the apostle of death, 'O death, where is thy sting?' 1 Cor. xv. 55. O hell, where is thy sting? O Satan, where is thy victory? This slays Satan and revives the soul.

4. We see then how injurious they are to God, who would obstruct the progress of the gospel in the world; that, as the papists, would hinder the reading and the preaching of the word. Whose seed are they, but the seed of that dragon, that would as well hinder the new birth as devour a divine-begotten babe 'as soon as ever it were born,' Rev. xii. 4. Such would hinder the greatest and most excellent work of God upon the souls of men, would have no spiritual generations for God in the world. Such envy Christ a seed, and God a family, they would despoil him of a family on earth, though they cannot of a family in heaven. In banishing the word, they would banish the grace of God out of the world, and leave no place in a world drowned with ignorance, where this dove should set her foot. Those that would take away the seed, would not have a spiritual harvest, but reduce souls to a deplorable famine, lock them up in the grave, and keep them under the bands of a spiritual death.

5. It informs us, that the gospel shall then endure in the world, as long as God has any to beget. Men may puff at it, but they cannot extinguish it, it is a word of truth, and truth is mighty, and will prevail. It was a mighty wind wherein the Spirit came upon the apostles, to show not only the quick and speedy progress of the gospel, as upon the wings of the wind, but the mighty force of it, that men can no more silence the sound

of the gospel than they can the blustering of the wind. It shall prevail in all places, where God has a seed to bring in, a people to beget. Those given to Christ shall come from far: 'from the east,' Isa. xlix. 12, 'and from the west, and from the land of Sinim' (now, I think, called Damiata, in Egypt). The word, being the instrument, shall sound everywhere, where he has sons and daughters to beget for Christ. As long as Christ does retain his royalty, 'his mouth shall be a sharp sword,' Isa. xlix. 2. That is the first thing concluded on between God and Christ, before they come to any further treaty, which is expressed in that chapter. As Christ shall be his salvation to the ends of the earth, so shall the word be the instrument of it to the end of the world: the 'polished shaft' is 'hid in his quiver.' As he is a light to the Gentiles, so the golden candlestick of this gospel wherein this light is set, shall endure in spite of men and devils. Since his promise of a seed to Christ stands sure, the word, whereby he begets a generation for him, is as sure as the promise, and shall not return void: Isa. lv. 11, 'but it shall accomplish that which he pleases, and it shall prosper in the things whereto he sent it.' Never fear then the removal of the gospel out of the world, though it be removed out of a particular place, since it is a word of truth, and an instrument ordained to so glorious an end.

6. It is a sign, then, God has some to beget, when he brings his gospel to any place. He has a pleasure to accomplish, and it shall not return unto him void. Prosperity is entailed upon it for the doing the work whereto he sent it. Since then it is appointed an instrument, in the hand of the Spirit, for a new begetting, it will be efficacious upon some souls where it comes, for the wise God would not send it, but to attain its main end upon some hearts. God never sends his word to any place, but it is received and relished by some as the savour of life. It looses the bands of spiritual death in some, and binds them harder upon obstinate sinners, to them that perish it is the savour of death. In every place the gospel was savoury to some: 2 Cor. ii. 14, 15, 'God made manifest the savour of his knowledge,' by the apostles, 'in every place.' Wherever this seed is sown, the harvest has been reaped, either more or less. It is fruitful at Corinth, for there God had much people, Acts xviii. 10. It is not fruitless at Athens, though the harvest was less; most mocked, but some believed, and but one man of learning and worldly wisdom, Acts xvii. 32, 34. When God sends John in a way of righteousness, if the Pharisees believe not, God will make a conquest of publicans and harlots: Mat. xxi. 32, 'John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you believed not: but the publicans and harlots believed him.' The net of the gospel is not cast wholly in vain, but from the time of its coming, to the time of its removal, some souls have been caught, though not of the most delicious fish, yet of the worst sort.

7. It informs us, what an excellent thing is a new birth! The end is more desirable than the means, this is the chief end of all the ordinances of God in the world. The gospel had never been revealed but for this intent, this is the 'design of the Spirit's operation in any gospel administration. All the lines of the word are to draw the lineaments of grace in the heart. This must be a noble and excellent thing, for which chiefly the



oracles of God sound in the world, for which so great a light is set up in the gospel. All the love of Christ breathes in the gospel; the whole Testament is sealed by his blood; the perpetual workings of the Holy Ghost, the preaching of the word, the celebration of the sacraments, are in subservience to this end, the one to make us live, the other to make us grow. How inconceivably excellent is that, how valuable in the eye of God, how advantageous to the happiness of men, that is, the design wherein so many divine operations meet!

8. What a lamentable thing is it, that so few should be new begotten by the word of truth! How many are there among us that understand not what a new begetting and birth is, no more than Nicodemus when he discoursed with our Saviour! What a deplorable thing is it that the word should be preached, and so little regarded! that not only an hour's, but many years' discourses should pass away (as the Psalmist speaks of our lives) 'like a tale that is told!' Ps. xc. 9. How miserable is that man that has the objective cause of the new birth, without the effective! It is the word of truth. What will become of you, if you prefer a word of error before it; if you prefer the devil's killing suggestions before God's reviving, oracles? What does the word of truth move you to, but to a new birth? Why will any man struggle against it? Every resistance of the word is a resistance of God himself. It is God hews by the prophets, Hos. vi. 5; it is God offers to beget by the word; every reluctance then against the word is a reluctance against God. The word will either bring in a new form of grace, or a new form of torment. If the working of the one be rejected, the in-working of the other cannot be avoided; it will either cut the bands of a spiritual death, or cut the sinews of our souls. That piece of timber that has not its knots cut off for the building, shall be cut in pieces for the fire. A new life waits for them that obey the gospel; an endless death for them that reject it; they that obey not the gospel, know not God, 2 Thess. i 8. And what is reserved for such, but revenging flames in another world? It would be happy for such, that they had never heard of a renewing gospel. Every gospel discourse that might have been the cause of a spiritual life, and a divine cordial, if sucked in, rejected, will be a bitter drug in that potion which shall be drunk in an eternal fever.

9. Hereby you may examine whether you are new begotten. It is the word of truth whereby God befits. In this word he opens the glory of his grace, and through this he conveys the power of his grace. The conquests of Christ were to be made by the word, and it was so settled at the first constitution of him as Mediator and Redeemer: Isa. xlix. 2, 'He has made my mouth like a sharp sword.' It was by this the hearts of men were to be conquered. And what heart is not subdued by the sword of his mouth, is not subdued by the power of his arms. Some word or other was the instrument to beget you (I speak of people grown up). The apostle's interrogation is a strong negative. There is no believing without hearing, Rom. x. 14. Hearing goes before believing; he lays it down as a certain conclusion from his former arguing: 'So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' If you conclude yourselves new begotten, how came you by it? Is it by the word, or no? That is God's ordinary

means. If you be not renewed by this, it is not likely you are renewed at all; no other instrument has God ordinarily appointed to this end. Afflictions may plough men for it, but the word is the only seed that renews the face of the earth. All false notions or presumptions of the new birth must be brought to this touchstone; it is a misshapen and monstrous birth, that is not by a seed of the same kind; the law in the heart has no seed of the same nature with it to engender it, but the law in the word, that word which we properly call gospel; the word of truth, not the word of philosophy, which is a word of uncertainty; God's word, not Plato's word. If a thousand beasts had been consumed by common fire, not one of them had been an holocaust, a grateful sacrifice, unless consumed by the fire of the altar which came down from heaven. Moral wisdom is not that fire, has not that eminent descent from heaven; it is not that speech from heaven whereby our Saviour is said yet to speak, Heb. sit. 26. A little spark kindled by the voice of Christ from heaven, from whence he yet speaks in the gospel, is more worth than all the bonfires in the world, kindled by the sparks of moral wisdom. Those qualifications which grow of their own accord, without the word, are like the herbs which sprout in wild places without any tillage, which are of a different kind than what are planted and watered in a garden, and overlooked by the care of man. If your dispositions you boast of were not planted by the word, how fair soever they may look, they are but a wild kind of fruit; therefore, it concerns you to look back upon yourselves, think what word it was whereby you were begotten. If no particular word can be remembered, if your regeneration were wrought insensibly in your younger years, examine what suitableness there is between the word and your souls, whether your hearts are turned into the nature of it. The measures of grace are according to the measures of the word. If you cannot remember the first glorious entrance of it, you must see for the rich dwelling of it. An inhabitant may enter into our houses unseen, but he cannot dwell there without our knowledge; the lines of the word will be seen in the heart, though the particular pencil whereby they were wrought may not be remembered.

10. It instructs ministers how to preach. It is the word of truth, the gospel, that must be the main matter of our preaching; and those things in the gospel that have the greatest tendency to the new begetting men, and working this great change in them, and driving it on to greater maturity. The instrument of conversion is not barely the letter of the word, but the sense and meaning of it, rationally impressed upon the understanding, and closely applied to the conscience. The opening the word is the life of it, and the true means of regeneration. If any man would turn his servant or child from a course of sin, would he discourse to them of the nature of the of the sun and stars, their magnitude, motions, numbers, and qualities? This would be nothing to the purpose; his way would be to show them the deformity and danger of their sin. The word of truth is God's instrument, and it should be ours; what is the end of the word, should be the end of our preaching. It was through the gospel the apostle begot the Corinthians; not that the preaching of the law is excluded, but it must be preached in

order to the gospel as a preparation to it. Whatsoever in the word of truth does prepare for the new birth, produce it, cherish it, preserve it, centre in one and the same end. How careful and industrious should we be to beget children to God, that we may present them, and say, 'Here am I, and the children, which thou hast given me.' The new birth will be your joy, and crown and you will be ours, 1 Thess. ii. 19,20. Aaron's sons are called the generations of Moses, as well as Aaron, Num. iii. 1, though none of his natural sons are reckoned; Aaron's by natural generation, Moses' perhaps by a spiritual regeneration and instruction.

Use 2. Of exhortation.

1. Highly glorify God for the word of truth, which is so great an instrument. How thankful should we be for an intention, to secure our estates from consuming, houses from burning. bodies from dying! The gospel, the word of truth, does much more than this: it is an instrument to beget a soul for God; an instrument whereby God makes himself our Father, and us his children. It is but an instrument; let not the glory be given to the instrument, but to the agent. As it is an instrument, let it have part of your affections, but nothing of the glory that belongs to God; love the truth, but glorify and bless the God of truth, that has ordained it to be so excellent an instrument.

(1.) Bless God in your hearts. [1.] That ever you had the word of truth made known to you. How many millions sit in a spiritual darkness, without so much as the means of a new begetting! Millions never heard the sound of it, nor ever will. [2.] Much more that it has been successful to any of' you. Have you any thing in your spirits that bears witness to the truth of it? When you read or hear it, do you find something of kin to it in your souls, and feel something within you rise up and call it blessed? How should you read and hear it, with eruptions of thankfulness to God for it, hearty embraces for it, and fervent ejaculations to God to work more in you by the power of it! Why has the word grappled with any of our souls, and not with others; arrested any of you in a course of sin, and left others to walk in their own ways, to ran down silently like the streams of' a river, till swallowed up in an ocean of death? The apostle Paul heard the voice, others with him only a sound of words, Acts ix. 9, 7, xxii. 9; some have heard a sound of words, without the voice of God in it, while others have heard a divine voice in a human sound. The wind has blown upon many, God in that wind only upon few; some have received air, whilst others have received Spirit and life; some have only the body of the word, while others feel the spirit and power of it in their hearts. Shall not God be glorified for this? Had it not been for him, and his Spirit, words had been only words and wind to all as well as to some.

(2.) Glorify God in your lives. As you feel the power of it in your hearts, let others see the brightness and efficacy of it in your actions. The new born creature should principally aim at the glory of God, since the instrument whereby he is begotten was first published for the 'glory of God in the highest,' Luke ii. 14. What is produced by

the efficacy of such an instrument must have the same end, viz. the glory of God in the practice of holiness. A holy gospel imprinted can never leave the heart and life unholy. A gospel coined for the glory of God, when wrought in the heart, can never suffer the soul to aim chiefly at self; but at the great end for which the gospel was first discovered. The gospel of holiness and truth in the heart will engender sincerity and holiness in the life.

2. Prize the word of truth, which works such great effects in the soul. Value that as long as you live, which is the cord whereby God has drawn any of you out of the dungeon of death. Never count that foolishness by which God has inspired you with the choicest wisdom, and never count that weakness which has made any of you of death, living; and of darkness, light; and of miserable, happy by grace. If a soul be worth a world, and therefore to be prized, how precious ought that to be which is an instrument to let a soul for the felicity of another world! How should the law of God's mouth be better to us than thousands of gold and silver! Ps. cxix. 72. How should we prize that word whereby any of us have seen the glory of God in his sanctuary, the glory of God in our souls! When corruptions are strong, it is an engine to batter them; when our hearts are hard, it is a hammer to break them; when our spirits are impostumated, it is a sword to cut them; when our hearts are cold, it is a fire to inflame them; when our souls are faint, it is a cordial to refresh them, it begins a new birth and maintains it. It is the seed from whence we spring, 1 Peter i. 23, the glass wherein we see the glory of God, 2 Cor. iii. 18. By the waters of the sanctuary, we have both meat for nourishment, and medicines for cure, from the tree that grows by its streams: Ezek. xlvii. 12, 'The fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf for medicine.' Have a great regard to it, keep it in the midst of your hearts, for it is life, Prov. iv. 21, 22.

3. Pray and endeavour for the preservation and success of the word of truth. Were there a medicine that could preserve life, how chary should we be in preserving that? The gospel is the tree, whose leaves cure the nations, Rev. xxii. 2. It was a blessing God endued the creatures with, when he bid them increase and multiply, Gen. i. 22. It was an evidence that he intended to preserve the world. If the gospel get ground in the hearts of men, it is an evidence it shall continue in spite of the oppositions of men or devils.

4. Wait upon God in the word. Where there is a revelation on God's part, there must be a hearing on ours. Sit down therefore at the feet of God, and receive of his words, Dent. xxxiii. 3. (1.) Despise it not; he that contemns it never intends to be new begotten, since he slights the means of God's appointment; he that intends an end, will use all means proportionately to his desires for that end; he that contemns it never was renewed. Habitual grace being wrought by it, cannot, but in its own nature, have a great affection to it. He that loves Christ cannot but love all the methods of his operations. (2.) Despise it not because it is but an instrument: say not, because God is

the chief agent, therefore you need not come to the word. Our Saviour knew that 'man did not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God,' Mat. iv. 4. Did he therefore neglect means for preserving his life? Because God gives the increase, should not the husbandman plough and sow? If God does not work upon you by the means, you can have no rational hopes he will do it any other way. What though ministers can only speak to the ear? John Baptist could do no more, whose ministry was notwithstanding glorious, in being the forerunner of Christ. To neglect it, therefore, is to double-bar your hearts against the entrance of grace, and slight the truth which Christ brought down from the bosom of God.

(1.) Never did God appoint any other way but this. Miracles were never appointed but as attendants upon this. Miracles come after teachings in the great gifts to the church, 1 Cor. xii. 7-10. First, the 'manifestation of the Spirit,' the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge,' then 'gifts of healing and miracles.' Miracles are ceased, as being not absolutely necessary; but the ministry of the word will last to the end of the world. By the prophets God brings souls out of a state of bondage, and by the prophets he preserves them in a state of grace: Hosea xii. 13, 'By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.' Miracles and the resurrection of one from the dead, was never appointed under the legal administration, but Moses and the prophets, Luke xvi. 13. These were the ordinary means, and if these did not work, miracles were inefficacious.

(2.) God never made any promise but in this way. God promised to circumcise their hearts to love him with all their soul, but in the way of hearing his voice, and observing his statutes, Deut. xxx 6, 10, 11. He meets souls only that remember him in his way, Isa. lxiv. 5. And to the preaching of the gospel only, our Saviour promised his presence to the end of the world, Mat. xxviii. 20; the promise is perpetually and immovably throughout all ages of the world fixed to this command. The promising his presence to the preaching of the gospel, implies that his presence shall be enjoyed only by attendance on the gospel. The gracious workings of the Spirit are by this, they are the words of Christ brought to remembrance by him, whereby he does so mightily operate.

(3.) No other way did God apparently work by formerly. In the time when God did especially manifest himself to his people by visions, dreams, and apparitions of angels, and in those days made revelations to them, he converted not any either from a state of nature, or from a particular fall, but by the word. Manasseh's conversion was by the word of the seers, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 18; nor was David reclaimed after his fall by an immediate vision, but by the ministry of Nathan; Peter by a look, which revived the word spoken to him, Luke xxii. 61. The angel that attended the eunuch, Acts viii. 26, made no impressions upon him, but was ordered to direct Philip thither to explain to him the mystery of the gospel; and the Spirit particularly orders him to go near the chariot, ver. 29, but makes no impression upon him but by the ministry of the word.

An angel is sent to direct Philip, but Philip is sent to discover Christ. An angel is sent to Cornelius, not to preach the gospel, but to direct him where to send for a teacher, Acts x.3, 5, 6, the Spirit prepares Peter to go, verse 19, 20, and likewise prepares Cornelius for his reception; God prepares the jailer by an earthquake, but renews him not but by the ministry of Paul, Acts xvi. 26, 32. In the times of the gospel there was first to be a teaching of God's law, before a walking in his paths, Isa. iii. 3. The arm that made heaven and earth makes the new heart and new spirit, but by a word as well as them. The net of the gospel is only appointed to catch the fish, though the fish that had the tribute-money in its mouth was immediately for the service of Christ, yet he would not use his power to bring it to the shore, without Peter's casting out the net. Christ first brings souls to the net, and by the net to himself.

(4.) God has always blessed this more or less. Moses' rod in Moses his hand has brought miracles, Christ's rod in the Spirit's hand has wrought greater; the new creations have been always by it, and the after-breathings of the Spirit through it. By this he makes men righteous, holy, sincere, in a way of eminency, as the morning light which increases to a perfect day, and no longer as a morning cloud which quickly vanishes, Hosea vi. 5, which some understand of a gospel promise mixed with that discourse. How has the light of the beauty and excellency of God, flashing upon the understanding from the glass of the gospel, filled the will and affections of many with desire and love to that glory it represents, and that state it offers! The very leaves of it, the profession has healed nations, and brought human societies into order, and the fruit of it has been the cure of many a soul. Wait therefore for the falling of this fruit. Grace is a beam from the Sun of righteousness, but darted through the medium of gospel air; a pearl engendered by the blood of Christ, but only in the gospel sea. It has not been without its blessing to others, it has raised men from death to life. Is the virtue of the seed expired? or the strength of the Lord grown feeble? If ever therefore you could have the image of God in inward impressions of grace, and outward expressions of holiness, you must look for your transformation in and by the gospel. All the other knowledge in the world cannot give a man a right notion of the new birth, much less produce it. Look not after enthusiasms, nor expect it in new ways, 'to the law and to the testimony,' ways of God's appointment. The Jews could not expect an angel to bring them soundness of limbs, but by the pool; nor we the Spirit to infuse grace into us, but by the word. It is from the mercy-seat only God speaks to Israel; wisdom's gates are the places where to expect her alms, Prov. viii. 34. Wait therefore upon the word, Herein the Spirit of God travails with souls.

Quest. How shall we wait upon the Lord, so as that we may be new begotten by it?

1. Wait upon the word frequently. Be often in reading and hearing, and meditating on it. Men set upon these works as if they were afraid they should be new born too soon, or prejudiced in their concerns and contentments in the world, as if they feared the mighty wind of the Spirit should blow away their beloved dross too fast, as if it were a

matter of indifference to be like their Maker. If you had gold not thoroughly refined, would you not cast it again and again into the fire? If filth not wholly purged, would you not use the fountain again and again? Those that are in the sun are coloured and heated by it, and have things more visible; those that are much in the word, see more of the wonders, feel more of the warmth, receive deeper impressions, are endued with the grace and holiness of truth, have a purer flame in their affections for heaven. How do you know but an opportunity missed, might have been the best market? How do you know but the Spirit might have joined himself to the word, as Philip to the eunuch's chariot, while he was reading? 'While Peter yet spake those words (it is said), the Holy Ghost fell upon all them which heard the word,' Acts x. 44. What words? Even the marrow of the gospel, ver. 43, 'that through his name, whosoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins.' God may have a portion ready for us, and we go without it, because we are not ready to receive it. We must not expect a raven to bring us food upon a bed of sluggishness. Do it the rather, because you may live to see such times, wherein Bibles may be as much shut as they are now open, wherein (as in former times) you may be willing to give a large parcel of your goods for one chapter of it. We read of some that have given a load of hay for one chapter of St James. Be frequent in waiting upon the word.

2. Let your hearts be fixed upon that which is the great end of the word. New begettings are the end of the gospel. Come, then, with minds fixed upon this end, and desires for it. Regard it not as a mere sound of words, but as an instrument of the noblest operations in the soul. If this be the great work of the gospel, we ought to read and hear it, with desires to be enlivened where we are dead, quickened where we are dull, be made new creatures where we are yet but old, taller creatures where we are yet but of a low stature; not only to have our understandings instructed, but our hearts changed; to inquire after God to behold the beauty of the Lord, Ps. xxvii. 4, that we may be transformed into it; to look for God, who is in the word of a truth, for the kingdom of God comes nigh to you in the gospel. That was that word that Christ, when he sent his disciples out first to preach, bid them speak unto men, Luke xii. Men usually get more than they come to seek. He that goes to market, intending only to lay out his money upon some trifle, returns for the most part with no better commodity. Zacchaeus got upon the tree to meet with Christ, and so noble an end wanted not an excellent success: that day came salvation into his house, Luke xix. 9. When the Jews did not mind the end of sacrifices, and regarded not the things God principally looked for in them, God slighted them, and they went without any divine operations upon their souls by them, Isa. i. 11, 18, 14. When our ends suit the gospel, then are we like to feel gospel influences. We come with wrong ends, and, therefore, return with unchanged hearts; we come for a sound, and go away with no more. One end therefore in coming should be to gain this new begetting, or increase the growth of the new creature; our ends are not else conformable to the ends of God in it; therefore, as the earth sucks in the rain, and the roots in the earth attract it unto themselves that they

may bring forth fruit, so should we open our hearts to receive the showers of the word with an aim at a new birth, or a further growth. As this is *finis operis*, so it should be *finis operantis*.

3. Mind the word in the simplicity of it, and that in it which tends to that end. Some men are more taken with colours than truth, more enamoured with words than matter, fill themselves only with air, and neglect the substance. Such are like those that are pleased with the colours of the rainbow, more than with the light reflected, or the covenant of God represented by it. No man is renewed by phrases and fancies; those are only as the oil to make the nails of the sanctuary drive in the easier: in Eccles. xii. 11, 'Acceptable words,' joined with 'words of truth,' are as the 'fastening of the nails,' both 'given by one shepherd.' Words there must be to make things intelligible; illustrations to make things delightfully intelligible, but the seminal virtue lies not in the husk and skin, but in the kernel; the rest dies, but the substance of the seed lives, and brings forth fruit; separate, therefore, between the husk and the seed. The word does not work as it is elegant, but as it is divine, as it is a word of truth. Illustrations are but the ornaments of the temple, the glory of it is in the ark and mercy-seat. It is not the engraving upon the sword cuts, but the edge; nor the key, as it is gilded, opens, but as fitted to the wards. Your faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God, 1 Cor. ii. 5. It is the juice of the meat, and not the garnishings of the dish, that nourishes. Was it the word as a pleasant song, or as a divine seed, that changed the souls of old, made martyrs smile in the midst of flames? It was the knowledge of the excellency of the promise, and not worldly eloquence, made them with so much courage slight gibbets, stakes, executioners; they had learned the truth as it is in Jesus.

4. Mind the word as the word of truth. Take it not upon the account of persons, value it for its own sake, as it is a word of truth. It is neither Paul nor Apollos, but God that gives the increase. Value it not by men; it is no matter what the pipe is, whether gold or lead, so the water be the water of life; the word has an edge, because it is the word of God, not because it is whetted upon this or that grindstone. Some will scarce receive a truth, but from one they fancy; as if a man should be so foolish as to refuse a medicine which will preserve his life, because it is not presented to him in a glass which he has a particular esteem of. To receive or refuse any truth upon the account of the person, is a sign of carnality, and the way to remain carnal; upon this account the apostle pronounces the Corinthians again and again carnal, 1 Cor. iii. 4. Despise not the meanest instrument. Our Saviour in his agony was comforted by an angel, much more inferior to him who was the Lord of angels, than any minister can be to a hearer. Mr Peacock, being fellow of a college, in great despair, when some minister had been discoursing with him, and prevailing nothing, offering to pray with him, No, says he; dishonour not God so much, as to pray for such a reprobate. A young scholar of his standing by, answered, Surely a reprobate could not be so tender of God's honour; which words prevailed more to the bringing him to believe than all that the



other had spoken. When men turn their backs upon the word, because the mouth does not please them, they turn their backs upon God, John xiii. 20, and perhaps upon their own mercy. When any have respect to the man more than the word, God will leave them to the operation of the man, and withdraw his own.

5. Attend upon the word with an eye to God. Look not for the new birth only from the word. It was the folly of the Jews to think to find life in the Scriptures without Christ; life in the letter, without the original of life, John v. 39, 40. 'Except the Lord build the house' (that is the temple), 'they labour in vain that build it,' Ps. cxxvii. 1. Without God all our endeavours to build a spiritual temple are like the strivings to wash a blackamore white. No believing the word, though preached a thousand times, without God's revealing his arm, Isa. liii. 1. It is not the file that makes the watch, but the artist by it. No instrument can act without the virtue of some superior agent. It is the altar that sanctifies the gold, and Christ that sanctifies the ordinances. Paul may plant by his doctrine and miracles; Apollos may water by his affectionate eloquence; but God alone can give the increase by his almighty breath. Man sows the seed, but God only can make it fructify. The richest showers cannot make the ground fruitful, but as instruments under God's blessing. It is not said the prophets did hew them, but God by his prophets, Hosea vi. 5. Then have your eyes fixed upon God. It is the word of his lips, not of man's, whereby any are snatched out of the paths of the destroyer, as well as kept from them. Man's teachings direct us to Christ; God's teachings bring us to Christ; man brings the gospel, at most, to the heart, the Spirit only brings the gospel into the heart, man puts the key in the lock, God only turns it, and opens the heart by it, man brings the word of truth, and God the truth of the word into the soul, man brings the objective word of grace, God alone the attractive grace of the word. If where there is already the new birth, the soul must be fixed on God for further openings, much more where it is not yet wrought. David had an excellent knowledge, yet cries out for the opening of his eyes to see the wonders in God's law. It is God only can knock off the fetters of a spiritual death, and open the iron gates, that the King of glory may enter with spiritual life. If any, therefore, will regard the word more than as an instrument, as a partner with God in his operation, he may justly leave you to the weakness of that, and deny the influx of his own strength.

Therefore let the word be attended with prayer.

(1.) Before you wait upon God in any ordinance, plead with him as Moses did in another case, 'To what purpose should I go, unless thy presence go with me?' What can the letter do without the Spirit, or words without that powerful wind to blow them into my heart? None can have life by the bread of the word, without the blessing of God. As man brings the graft, desire God to insert it. As God has promised gifts to his church, so he promised his own teachings: Heb. viii. 11, 'All shall know me, from the least to the greatest.' Urge God with his own promise, desire him to open his mouth, and to open your hearts; his mouth to breathe, and your hearts to receive. When men

overlook God, he makes a separation between the word and his own quickening presence. The end does not necessarily arise from the means; and, therefore, in the use of them, there must be a fiduciary recourse to the grace of God. In the time, too, of waiting upon God, let there be ejaculations; let your hearts be continually lifted up to God; let your expectations be from him. We should be like Jacob's ladder; though the feet stand in Bethel, the house of God, our heads should reach to heaven in all our attendances.

(2.) After you have been at the word. God is the great seer, Christ the great prophet; we should go to him for the repetition of things upon our hearts; we may have that wind afterwards by prayer, which we felt not so stiff at hearing. The operations of truth, as well as the knowledge of it, are best fetched out upon our knees by earnest prayer. How do you know but, while you are praying, the fire may descend from heaven, and transform you into a divine likeness? Thus you will make God the Alpha and Omega of his own ordinances, in your acknowledgement of him, as well as he is so in himself.

(3.) Rest not in bare hearing. Look for God in the ordinances as he is the living God, who lives in himself and gives life to men and means: Ps. xxxiv. 2, 'My soul longs for the living God,' there is a strength and glory of God to be longed for in the sanctuary; no means are to be rested in or used, but as to lead to such an end for which they are fitted. To rest in the word heard, or read, is to make that our end, which God has appointed only as the means. The word is sweet, but as it is the pipe through which God and his image, God and his grace, which is sweeter and higher than all ordinances, stream to the soul. Rejoice in the word, but only as the wise men did in the star, as it led them to Christ. The word of Christ is precious; but nothing more precious than himself, and his formation in the soul. Rest not in the word, but look through it to Christ.

6. Attend upon the word submissively. It is not the hearer, but the humble hearer, shall find the power of the word working in him; as it is not the speaking a prayer, but the wrestling and struggling of the heart with God in prayer, receives a gracious answer. The humble are the fittest subjects for grace, those that lie upon the ground with their mouth close to the pipe. 'He gives grace to the humble.' Resign yourselves up to the word, struggle not against the battery it makes, nor the wind that blows; receive every stroke till you see the frame of the new creature. Let a silence be imposed upon the flesh, and self bowed down to the dust, while Christ the great prophet speaks. Be not peevish, not expostulate with God's sovereignty, as they did: Isa. lviii. 3, 'Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takes no knowledge?' Acknowledge God a free agent, submit to his sovereign pleasure. A truly humble bow to God will prevail more than all the saucy expostulations of proud flesh. In hearing the word, pick not here a part, and there a part, as suits your humour, but consider what really is God's will, and submit

to it. Cornelius was of this resigning temper when the Spirit descended upon him: Acts x. 33, 'We are here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.' An humble soul, says Kempis, by the grace of God, understands more the reasons of eternal truth in a trice, than a man that has studied many years in the schools, because he has the operations of them in his heart.

7. Receive the word with faith. I mean, not the faith which is a part of the new creature, but an assent. There is a rational belief that it is the word of truth, which is in many men that have no justifying faith. Actuate this. The believing the word to be so, to be the word of God, is the first step to the receiving advantage by it. No man will ever comply with that which he believes not to be true, or believes not himself to be concerned in. It is said by the apostle, Heb. iv. 1, 2, 'The word profited not, because it was not mixed with faith.' There was truth in the word, but no firm assent to it in their hearts. There can never be a full compliance with Christ, in order to a new birth, if there be not first an assent to the word. Where there is a defect in the first concoction, there will also be a defect in the second and third. If you do not believe with Naaman, that the waters of Jordan are appointed by God for this end, and not those of Abana and Pharpar, you will never be rid of the spiritual death, no more than he would have been of his leprosy. You never see God in his sanctuary, nor feel God in his power for want of this. Surely as this made our Saviour suspend the power of his miracles, by the same reason it makes him suspend the power of his word: Mat. xiii. 58, 'He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.' If men did believe there were a place where they might enjoy all earthly delights in a higher measure, at an easier rate, how ambitious would they be of putting themselves into a state to enjoy them? If men did believe the report of the gospel, would they not be full of great undertakings for the enjoyment of the proffers of it? But the gospel, more is the pity, has not naturally that credit with men that a fiction has.

8. Observe much the motions upon your hearts while you are attending upon God. If the sails be not skilfully ordered to catch and hold, and make the best improvement of the wind that blows, much of the wind will pass beside it, and the ship lag many leagues behind, or lie wind-bound a long time before it receive a like gale. God has particular seasons: Heb. iv. 7, 'Today if you will hear his voice.' Sometimes the Spirit is more urging than at another time, and sends his motions thicker upon the heart; let those times be observed, and when there are motions on the Spirit's part, let there be compliance on yours. Catch a promise when the Spirit opens; bind yourselves to an observance of the precept when the Spirit shows it; let God's drawing be answered with the soul's running; observe what precious oil is dropped through the golden pipes upon the heart, and spill it not; take notice of what sparks light upon you, and lose not the warmth they may convey to your hearts; what beam of light breaks in, let it not be puffed out by a temptation or diversion; observe what is afforded to make your hearts burn, and your corruptions and sinful inclinations cool. Regard not so much your affections, as what touches are upon your wills. Affections may arise from a natural

constitution of the body, some tempers being more easily excited to exert affections than others, yet they are not always, nor altogether, to be disregarded, nor are they always to be looked upon as ciphers; but, especially, see what influence the word has upon the understanding and will chiefly, as well as upon the affections. Judge of yourselves by the inward power and might, by the breakings in of the light, and the sprightly strain of your wills. The might of the Spirit works in the inner man, Eph. iii. 16; not in a part of the inner man, but in every faculty. See what compunction there is in your souls, what strong desires in the will. Bare affections are but like a sponge, which will by a light compression let out that water which it so easily sucked up. Men may 'receive the word with gladness' without having any root of spiritual grace, Mark iv. 16, 17. When men regard only particular affections, they usually sit down in those sparks of their own kindling, and look not after a thorough change. Or if you find such affections see whether those affections are raised rather by the truth than the dress; whether they be kindled by the consideration of those attributes of God, his mercy, goodness, wisdom, holiness, which have a great hand in the new birth, whether by the deep consideration of our Saviour's death and resurrection, the great designs of the gospel; whether the motion be orderly, first, understanding, then will, and afterwards affections. This is a genuine flame kindled by a fire which comes down from heaven, working upon all the parts of the soul. A bare work upon the affections is rather a strange and carnal fire. Observe, therefore, what tender blades bud and shoot forth in the higher faculties of your souls.

9. Press the word much upon your hearts after hearing. How great is the neglect of this application of the word of truth! Men will spend hours in hearing, and not one minute in serious reflections, as if the word in their ears, or a receipt in their pockets, could cure the disease in the heart. This is the worm at the root of all our spiritual advantages. What is only dashed upon the fancy, or lightly coloured, may soon be washed off. The soil must be made tenacious of the seed by the harrow of meditation, which hides it in the heart, and covers it with earth; for want of being laid deep, and branded by serious meditation, the seed takes no root, because there is not much earth about it, Mark iv. 5, 6, 16. How can food nourish your body, unless it be concocted by natural heat? or spiritual food enliven you, unless concocted by meditation? The shepherds, after they had heard the news of Christ's incarnation from the mouth of the angel, reflected upon their duty, Luke ii. 14,15. Words must be kept some time upon the mind, and rolled over and over again, before they can work any sensible change, because the heart naturally has an averseness to God and his word; as the strongest physic must be in the body some time, and be wrought upon by the stomach, before it can work upon the humours. How do you know, but while you are musing, a divine fire may sparkle in your souls, and Christ rise in your hearts? Grapes must be pressed to get out the wine that will cheer the heart. Put the question to your soul, in every part you can remember, as our Saviour did to Martha, John xi. 25, 26, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Believest thou this?' There is such a thing as the new

birth: believest thou this? It is necessary to be had: believest thou this? God only can work it: believest thou this? And so for every divine truth. Leave not thy soul to its vagaries, hold it on to the work, press it to give a positive answer whether it believe this or that truth. Put not yourselves off with a slight answer to the question, but examine the reasons of your belief of it. Look upon yourselves as really concerned in the word you hear, otherwise it will no more affect you than if you should tell an ambitious man, gaping after preferment in England, of a wealthy place fallen in Spain, which will not engage his thoughts, as being out of his sphere and at too great a distance. To have a listlessness to such duties, or any spiritual duty, after hearing the word, which is the food of the soul, shows a great corruption within, as the heaviness in the body, and corrupt vapours in the mouth, show the badness of concoction.

10. Labour to have the savour of truth upon your spirits, as well as the notions of it in your heads. The kingdom of God consists not in word, but in power: the new birth consists not in a bare notion but in spiritual savour. The highest notional knowledge comes far short of experimental; the knowledge a blind man has of light and colours, by hearing a lecture upon it, is but mere ignorance to the knowledge he would have if his eyes were opened. Endeavour to have the savour of Christ's ointments, Cant. i. 8, and inward sense exercised, Heb. v. 14. The apostle distinguishes knowledge and judgement, Philip. i. 9. Knowledge is a notion in the head, judgement, or "aisthesis", is the sense or savour of it in the heart. What a miserable thing is it to spend our lives without a taste! Knowledge is but as a cloud that intercepts the beams of the sun and does not advantage the earth, unless melted into drops, and falling down into the bosom of it; let the knowledge of the word of truth drop down in a kindly shower upon your hearts, let it be a knowledge of the word heated with love.

I might have added more; bring plain hearts to the word, put off all disguises. Moses took off his veil when he went into the presence of God. Bring not flesh and blood as your counsellors; these are no friends to a new birth. And come with love; love makes the strongest impressions upon the soul.

It might here be also worth the inquiry, why so few are renewed by the word of truth in this age; why the gospel has no more powerful effect among us, as in former ages? It is a wonder to see a man begotten by the word, as it was a wonder for the woman to bring forth a man-child, Rev. xii. When our Saviour was brought into the temple, not a man but Simeon knew him; no question but many pharisees, doctors, and gentlemen were walking there, but none but Simeon knew him, to whom he was revealed, Luke ii. 22, 25, the rest looked upon him as an ordinary child. Formerly men flocked to Christ as the doves to the windows. The sword of the Spirit was never unsheathed, but it cut some hearts, the word seems now to have lost its edge and efficacy, which ought to be considered and laid to heart.

Many causes may be rendered; I will only hint a few.

(1.) Taking religion upon trust. Old customs are hardly to be parted with: 'Every man will walk in the name of his God,' Micah iv. 5. To root out false conceptions in religion, which either education, fancy, or humour have rooted, is very difficult.

(2.) A conceit of the meanness of the word, whereby there is a secret contempt of it, and so a formal and customary use of it.

(3.) A conceit of men, that they are new born already. Many think their condition good, because of their civil honesty. Though that be a very comely and commendable thing, yet security in it kills its thousands. Many, because they are free from the common pollutions of the world, and possessed with many amiable virtues, never consider how much their hearts are stored with an enmity against God. Such count their righteousness their gain, and think it a sufficient bribe for God's mercy.

(4.) A conceit that to be new born is but to change an opinion. A change of opinion may look like faith, as presumption does, but it is not faith. The devil holds some men in the chain of sublimated speculations, which hinder the working of the most spiritual and influential truths.

(5.) Pride of reason, frequency of disputes. It is a rational age, an age overgrown with reason, and the Scripture tells us, 'not many wise,' &c. The truths of God are very much turned into scepticism.

(6.) The common atheism that so much prevails among us. How should men regard a discourse of the new birth, a begetting to God, when they scarce believe there is a God at all, but their own lusts, to be like unto? How should they be wrought upon by the word of God, that scarce believe there is any God to reveal a word, and that there is no word of God?

(7.) Hardness of heart, occasioned (through the just judgment of God) by the frequency and unprofitable hearing of the word. The word is most operative when it comes first into a nation or town. When the heart is not broken by hearing the word of truth, it becomes more hardened and compact in sin. Many other reasons might be rendered, but I have held you too long upon this subject.

## **The External and Internal Call**

**by Wilhelmus a Brakel**

Thus far we have discussed the Surety of the covenant and the partakers of this covenant, the church. We shall now proceed to consider the ways in which the Lord brings these partakers of the covenant into the covenant, and how He leads them to the ultimate goal of eternal felicity. The first aspect of this way is the calling. **The Calling: God's Declaration of the Gospel to Sinners**

The calling is a gracious work of God, whereby He invites the sinner by means of the gospel to exchange the state of sin and wrath for Christ, in order that through Him he may be reconciled to God and obtain godliness and salvation. By means of this calling He also, by the Holy Spirit, efficaciously translates His elect into this state.

The calling is a gracious work of God: "And (the king) sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:3, 14); "...Him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Pet. 1:3); "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9).

God calls neither by the law of nature nor by the works of nature, whereby, in doing good, He nevertheless does not leave Himself without witness to the heathen (Acts 14:17). "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him" (Acts 17:27). For in all this Christ is neither proclaimed to them nor are they exhorted to believe in Him. The heathen are subject to the covenant of works, and whatever God does in and toward them has reference to that covenant. They are thus obligated to live according to this rule, "Do this and thou shalt live." Therefore neither the law of nature, nor God's works belong to the calling; the heathen are not called.

This call also does not occur by way of the moral law of Scripture. The moral law must be viewed in a twofold sense: It must be viewed either in its demands, whereby it reveals the perfect conditions of the covenant of works, or in its purpose, as having been given to the church as a rule of life and as the standard for true holiness. In its first sense the law is preached to convict man of sin (Rom. 3:20), thus bringing man to despair of being saved by his works. Here the function of the law ends. If, however, Christ is simultaneously preached by means of the gospel, man, being rejected by the law, is allured by the gospel. Thus, wherever Christ is preached, the law functions as a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ (Gal. 3:24). The law, however, neither teaches about Christ nor calls to Him, and thus the moral law is not a functional element of the calling. This is different as far as the ceremonial law is concerned, which belongs to the gospel.

The true means whereby we are called, however, is the gospel. "Whereunto He called you by our gospel" (2 Th. 2:14). The word "gospel" means a good tiding, the content of which is as follows: "Poor man, you are subject to sin and to the wrath of God. You are traversing upon the way which will end in eternal perdition. God, however, has sent

His Son Jesus Christ to be a Surety; in His suffering and death there is the perfect satisfaction of the justice of God, and thus acquittal from guilt and punishment. In His obedience to the law there is perfect holiness, so that He can completely save all who go unto God through Him. Christ offers you all His merits, and therefore eternal salvation.” He calls and invites everyone: “Turn unto Me and be saved, receive Me, surrender to Me, enter into a covenant with Me and you will not perish but have everlasting life.” This declaration is recorded in the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments. The first gospel declaration is found in Genesis 3:15, where we read that the Seed of the woman will bruise the head of the serpent . Since then, God has frequently and in various ways caused the gospel to be proclaimed (Heb. 1:1). “For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them” (Heb. 4:2). Prior to the coming of Christ it was called the gospel of promises . “...separated unto the gospel of God, (which He had promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures)” (Rom. 1:1–2). Subsequent to Christ’s coming it is called the gospel of fulfillment . “Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled” (Mark 1:14–15).

## **The Distinction Between Law and Gospel**

Law and gospel are frequently placed in contradistinction to each other. If in such a contradistinction the reference is to the ceremonial law, its purpose is to refer to Christ’s coming in the flesh, whose coming was typified by the ceremonies. The gospel of fulfillment, however, declares that Christ has come . In the matter itself there can be no contradistinction, since the gospel is comprehended in the ceremonies and proclaimed by them.

However, there is an essential difference between the moral law and the gospel . The law has first of all been given by God the Lord as the sovereign, majestic, and sole Lawgiver, and is pertinent to all mankind. The gospel, however, is the manifestation of God as being “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth” (Exo. 34:6), and does not pertain to all, but only to some. Secondly, the law can partially be known by nature (Rom. 2:15), but the gospel can only be known by revelation (Eph. 3:5). Thirdly, the law is a condition of the covenant of works which promised salvation upon the perfect keeping of the law and knows of no forgiveness (cf. Rom. 10:5; Matt. 19:17). The gospel, however, is a declaration of the covenant of grace, promising believers forgiveness and salvation by Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:8–9). Fourthly, the law begets the knowledge of sin in the sinner (Rom. 3:20), confronts him with wrath (Rom. 4:15), and thus brings forth fear and trembling (Isa. 33:14). The gospel, however, is the precious administration of the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). This gospel is the means whereby God calls men unto salvation.

God could immediately and nonverbally reveal Christ to man, bring him to Christ, cause him to believe in Him, and thus lead him to salvation. It has pleased the Lord,



however, in order that His manifold wisdom be revealed and His other attributes be glorified, to make man a partaker of this salvation by means of the word of the gospel, leading rational man in a rational way. The use of this means is referred to as calling, since all men are going astray on a way which is not good and which leads to destruction. God calls out to men who are going astray that the way upon which they are traversing will make them eternally miserable, and invites them to come to Christ as the only way unto salvation.

## **The Distinction Between External and Internal Call**

Concerning this calling a distinction is made between an external and an internal call. They both proceed from God, occur by means of this Word, pertain to the same matters, and are presented equally to all. Both calls are addressed to human beings who by nature are the same. They are, however, distinguishable. The one functions externally only by means of the Word, to which also the Holy Spirit does join Himself in His common operation, resulting in common illumination and historical faith. The other, however, penetrates the very heart of man, powerfully illuminating it with wondrous light, revealing spiritual mysteries to man in their essential form, and powerfully inclines the will to embrace those mysteries in Christ, and to the obedience of faith.

There is an infinite difference between the corrupt intellect of man—that is, the Arminians and other proponents of free will—and the Holy Scriptures. The question is: Does the obtaining of salvation proceed from man? Is he the only and essential cause of his salvation, or is God the only essential cause and can man, being absolutely incapable, do nothing to obtain salvation? The Arminians will readily admit that God has prepared and accomplished salvation and that God has given and revealed Christ the Mediator. However, they attribute this acceptance and entering in upon that way to the good will and power of man. This could be likened to what transpires on a race track. The government has put the prize on display and has prepared the track. The acquisition of the prize, however, is contingent upon the runners themselves.

In order to protect the idol of man's own ability and of his good will as being the cause of his own salvation, the Arminians would prefer to do away with the distinction between the external and internal call, between the noneffectual and the effectual call. They would view them as being the same, and thus recognize only one calling. The effect would then not be due to the efficacious operation of God working more in one person than in another. Instead, it would be related to the outcome; namely, that the one person obeys the call by his free will (which enables him either to respond or to reject this call) and thus be saved. Another person will despise and reject this call by the same neutral free will. Scripture, however, rebukes and refutes such foolish thoughts and demonstrates first of all that the calling is effectual unto salvation as a

result of God's purpose, "...who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28); "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29).

The actual exercise of faith in those who are called proceeds from this purpose. "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). Scripture conveys in the second place that there is no distinction in man himself, but that this distinction originates with God. "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. 4:7). Man, however, by attributing the cause of one having more faith than another to his goodness and power, would create such a distinction. There is thus a calling which is of an effectual nature and penetrates the inner man—his intellect, will, and inclinations, changing and sanctifying them. This is the internal call. There is a calling by means of the Word of God which is not accompanied by God's effectual operation (which generates faith and love), but which comes to the external ear only. It leaves man in his natural state, who, in his wickedness, rejects this external call. He despises this call due to his free will which wills by way of necessary consequence. This is true of most who are called (Matt. 22:5, 14). We shall discuss both calls individually, considering the external call first.

### **The External Call: Not Extended to All Men**

Concerning the external call the question arises, Is this call universal; that is, does God call all men upon the face of the earth to Christ, and through Him unto salvation? The Lutherans answer in the affirmative. We maintain that this call does not come to all men. Although it does come to entire areas, nations, peoples, and languages, it does not come to all. The entire Scripture and the experience of all ages contradict this. Cain was the first to be driven away from the countenance of God, whereas the gospel remained in the genealogy of Seth. Abraham and his seed were received into the church of God and to them the oracles of God were committed, whereas God left all the heathen to walk in their own ways (Acts 14:16). "He showeth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them" (Psa. 147:19–20).

After Christ's coming, this calling has also not been universal. The entire continent of America was unknown and remained unknown for at least a thousand years and was thus deprived of the gospel. The interior is still largely unknown. There have always been countries where the gospel has not been proclaimed. Also today, most nations upon the face of the earth are deprived of the gospel. This fact is so obvious that it cannot be refuted, and it thus remains a certainty that this calling is not universal.

### **Objection #1:**

All men have been called in Adam and in Noah, as well as in other ancestors who have

had the gospel and rejected it. For this reason God removed the candlestick from them, as is evident in Revelation 2 and 3.

**Answer:**

13 It must again be remembered that this statement was made in 1700. We deny that those descendants to whom the gospel has not been proclaimed can be said to have been called simply because their ancestors were called, for it is true what the prophet says, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father" (Ezek. 18:20). Thus, the rejection of the gospel by our ancestors cannot be imputed to their descendants. We deny that all men have been called in Adam, Noah and in other ancestors, for all who are comprehended in Adam and in Noah are not comprehended in the covenant of grace, nor are they the recipients of the offer of grace. In this respect everyone must be viewed individually, none being called by the gospel but those to whom the gospel is proclaimed.

**Objection #2:**

"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4); "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11); "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). From these texts it can be concluded that the calling is universal, and that all men are individually called.

**Answer:**

The word "all" frequently means "various." Experience confirms that such is the meaning in these texts. These texts pertain to the proclamation of the gospel over the entire world, in contrast to being previously limited to the seed of Abraham. It refers to all sorts of nations without distinction, but not to every nation without exception.

**Objection #3:**

Scripture indicates that there have been many believers who did not live where the church was situated, such as Job, Melchizedek, Baalam, Cornelius, etc. This proves that the calling extends beyond the limits of the visible church, and thus is universal.

**Answer:**

From the calling of some individuals, one cannot deduce the universal calling of all. Some of these individuals lived prior to the time when Abraham's seed was set apart. Such was true in the life of Shem and the patriarchs, when the knowledge of true religion had not been entirely removed from other generations. Others, even though they did not belong to Abraham's seed, have lived where the church was situated, and

due to such circumstances became believers and proselytes.

#### **Objection #4:**

There have been many who, though living far from the church, lived godly lives and did good works. Their knowledge was consequently sufficient unto salvation. The calling is thus universal.

#### **Answer:**

The law of nature is innate in all men. From this proceeds natural religion and thus also natural virtues. In chapter one we demonstrated that this is not sufficient unto salvation. This natural knowledge, religion, and virtuousness differ in their essential nature from the true knowledge of God in Christ, and from true religion and virtuousness, so that the one does not necessarily follow the other. From all this it is certain that the calling is not universal.

#### **The External Call of the Gospel in the Old Testament Dispensation**

Others, such as the Socinians, hold to an entirely different extreme, and deny that there was a calling by the gospel prior to Christ. They will indeed admit that the gospel was known to the prophets themselves who had extraordinary revelations, unless they be so exceedingly foolish as to consider the prophets as being irrational, merely viewing them as organ pipes which unconsciously bring forth musical sounds. Even if they would admit that the prophets were acquainted with the gospel, they wish to deny that the people had any knowledge thereof. Whatever they did comprehend would then only point to future times; namely, that in the days of the Messiah the Gentiles would call out to Him. We maintain, however, that people in the Old Testament were certainly called to believe in the coming Messiah unto justification, sanctification, and salvation—as is now true in the New Testament—albeit with less light and with less efficacy.

This is evident first of all in some very clear texts. “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed” (Gal. 3:8). Abraham received the gospel and was called prior to being circumcised. From this the apostle concludes that those who are believers, though uncircumcised, are Abraham’s children. This was not only true for Abraham, but for all his seed to whom He made this known. The Lord Himself testifies of this: “And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD” (Gen. 18:17–19). God knew, chose, and called Abraham for this purpose, and

thus proclaimed the gospel to him in order that he would make this known to his children and his house after him. They therefore also had this gospel; it was also proclaimed to them.

Also consider Hebrews 4:2, “For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” We in the New Testament have the gospel as did they of the Old Testament. This manner of speech gives expression to the fact that those of the Old Testament were somewhat superior, not as far as the clarity of the gospel is concerned, but in view of the fact that they had the gospel at an earlier time. They had the gospel, and the gospel was intended for them in those days. They heard it and were obligated to embrace it by faith, and it was their sin if they did not do so.

Secondly, this is evident in all the prophetic Scriptures. It is an irrefutable fact that these Scriptures contain many predictions and descriptions of the future Messiah, as well as many exhortations to believe in Him (cf. Psalms 2, 45, 72; Isa. 40; etc). The prophetic Scriptures are summaries of the sermons which the prophets preached to the people, so that the contents of these prophecies were made known to them. They were thus obligated to repent and by means of these sermons were stirred up to believe. The gospel was thus present in the Old Testament.

Thirdly, the entire ceremonial worship confirms this. All these ceremonies were not given to Israel in order that they would end in the external, and in the performance of rituals, but these were shadows of Christ who is the substance of them (cf. Col. 2; Heb. 10:1). By way of these shadows they were thus called to look forward to the coming Messiah and to believe in Him, something which the apostle demonstrates in the entire letter to the Hebrews. Therefore these shadows are an essential element of the gospel. Since they had the one, they also had the other.

Fourthly, the believers of the Old Testament were partakers of the benefits presented and promised in the gospel. They were partakers of the covenant of grace (cf. Gen. 17; Acts 3:25); they had the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 4:13); God was their Father and they His children (cf. Rom. 9:4; Psa. 103:13; Jer. 31:20). They had the forgiveness of sins (Psa. 32:5), and furthermore they had all the benefits of the covenant of grace; they expected and obtained salvation (Heb. 11:16). Wherever all these graces are to be found, there the gospel must be as well. Since these existed in the Old Testament, the gospel was also present.

### **Objection #1:**

The gospel was concealed prior to the time of Christ. At that time believers had only the promise, but not the matter itself. This is evident from the following texts.

(1) “These all died in faith, not having received the promises” (Heb. 11:13).

**Answer:**

This text says that they did not have Christ in the flesh whose coming was then promised. We do not read, however, that they had not the gospel, nor that they were not called to believe in the Christ who was to come. We read the contrary: They believed. They were thus called by the gospel, being of identical content (1 Pet. 1:20), for faith cometh by hearing.

(2) “...according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith” (Rom. 16:25–26). Here the apostle states expressly that the gospel was kept secret since the world began and only has been revealed in the New Testament.

**Answer:**

The text itself refutes this sentiment, for the apostle speaks of a revelation to the Gentiles and not to the Jews. He says that it has been made known to the Gentiles by the prophetic Scriptures, as the gospel was contained and revealed in them. The Jews did have these Scriptures, however, and it was known to the Jews prior to this time, but was unknown to the Gentiles. Other texts also speak of this mystery which was known to the Jews but hidden from the Gentiles. “Which in other ages was not

made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph. 3:5–6). This had previously not been revealed as clearly as it is revealed at this present time. It had not been revealed to the Gentiles at all, and no one had previously witnessed the fulfillment of the promises concerning the calling of the Gentiles. The apostles, however, witnessed that the Gentiles were converted by their preaching. The same meaning is expressed in the following texts: Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:26; 2 Timothy 1:10–11; Titus 1:2.

**Objection #2:**

Moses was the mediator of the Old Testament, and Christ in the New Testament. Christ was thus not proclaimed to them, and they were not partakers of Christ.

(1) Consider John 1:17, where we read, “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

**Answer:**

(1) Moses testified of Christ and preached Christ to the people (Luke 24). The gospel was thus present during the time of Moses.

(2) The distinction here is not chronological, but pertains to the persons and their work. Moses was the means whereby God gave the law of the ten commandments as a rule of life for the partakers of the covenant and the ceremonial laws as typifying Christ. Neither Moses nor his laws were, however, the substance itself; this is true for Christ who is the same yesterday and today. Christ is the truth, the essence, and the embodiment of the matter which Moses typified.

**Additional Objection:**

Consider Galatians 3:19, “It (the law) was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.” Moses was thus the mediator of the Old Testament and Christ the Mediator of the New Testament. “By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament” (Heb. 7:22); “And for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament” (Heb. 9:15).

**Answer:**

Moses was a mediator of interposition, who transmitted words back and forth between God and the people. Christ, however, is Surety and Mediator by virtue of atonement. “And for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:15). Moses could only be a mediator as long as he lived, and this was but for a short time, so that succeeding ages did not have Moses as a mediator; Christ, however, is the same yesterday and today. In the ceremonies He has also been slain from before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). Moses being a mediator in the manner just stated made Christ known to the people on God’s behalf, and exhorted them to believe in

Christ (Luke 24:27). This was the reason why the ceremonial law was instituted. Thus, the gospel as well as the calling were a reality in the Old Testament.

**Objection #3:**

In the Old Testament people did not possess the spiritual benefits of the covenant of grace. It thus follows that they also did not have the gospel. They were therefore also not called unto salvation.

(1) This is evident in Hebrews 7:19, “For the law made nothing perfect, but the

bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.”

**Answer:**

It is true that the law in and of itself could not give man hope unto salvation; however, the ceremonies led them unto Christ, by which believers of the Old Testament had access to grace by faith. They believed in Christ, and were partakers of the benefits of the covenant as is also true for us in the New Testament (as stated above).

(2) In Hebrews 9:8 we read “that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.” “The holiest” refers to heaven. It is a known fact that the way to heaven had not as yet been made manifest. Thus, believers of the Old Testament were not called unto salvation by the gospel.

**Answer:**

First of all, the apostle says in the following verse (vs. 9) that the holiest was “a figure for the time then present.” They therefore had a figure of heaven for themselves at that time. Secondly, the Holy of Holies was separated by a veil so that one could not look into it. This meant that all the ceremonies, considered by themselves, could not open heaven. It therefore meant that one could not enter heaven by means of this way, but rather that the antitype of those ceremonies, Christ, is the only way by which one can come to God (John 14:6). Thirdly, the apostle states that the way was not manifest as yet. He does not say that the holiest was not manifest, but that in the Old Testament they did not have Christ in the flesh, who is the way. Fourthly, he says that the way was not yet manifest, which neither implies that this way did not exist as yet, nor that this way was entirely unknown to them. It merely implies that this way was not as clearly known to them as was true after Christ’s coming, for they, by way of dark shadows, had to look upon Christ who was to come. Thus in 1 John 3:2 it is written about the children of God that “it doth not yet appear what we shall be,” although we nevertheless have some knowledge of it. The text in question refers to the measure of knowledge and the various ways whereby one may get to God through Christ, which then was by way of ceremonies, and now is without them.

(3) “But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10). Behold, it was Christ who for the first time brought life to light; it was thus not known prior to this.

**Answer:**

First of all, it has been irrefutably demonstrated above that eternal life was known prior to the coming of Christ, that they sought it after this life, and that they endeavored to become partakers of that life (cf. Lev. 18:5; Matt. 19:17; John 5:39). This



text, therefore, cannot refer to a total ignorance prior to this. Secondly, Christ brought life and immortality to light by making satisfaction for sin in very deed, by delivering His people from death, and by meriting eternal life for them. Thirdly, the prophecies and ceremonies conveyed that He had not come as yet, nor had in reality accomplished this, but that He would come to accomplish all this. The gospel states that Christ has come and has accomplished everything. Fourthly, in former times everything was typified less clearly by way of shadows, which could not be as clear as the substance or the matter itself. In Christ, however, all shadows have been fulfilled so that the matter itself in its true form can be clearly discerned. Fifthly, the apostle actually applies this to the Gentiles who had not been called as yet, but were in blindness. After the coming of Christ, however, they were also called by the gospel to the light of salvation and to eternal bliss, which is evident from the verse which follows: “Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles” (2 Tim. 1:11).

(4) “And these all...received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Heb. 11:39–40). From this it appears that in the Old Testament they did not partake of the heavenly benefits.

**Answer:**

First, they had the promise of the Messiah’s coming, but they did not receive the fulfillment: Christ’s coming in the flesh. Secondly, believers in the New Testament have some better thing than those in the Old Testament. This is not true as far as the matter itself is concerned, for the spiritual benefits of the one were also the portion of the other. Rather, some better thing refers to the manner in which they became partakers of it. They became partakers by way of shadows; we, by the matter and truth itself. They anticipated Christ’s coming in the promise, and we may have the fulfillment; they possessed these benefits in hope, and we may view and possess them; they possessed these benefits to a lesser degree, and we may have all things (that is, Spirit, light, and life) in a greater measure. It has pleased the Lord not to send Christ in the flesh immediately after the promise made to Adam and Eve—or to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Then they would have already possessed it and there would have been no need for shadows. Since Christ tarried so long, however, causing His people to yearn for the time of fulfillment, and since Christ has come in our era, having accomplished everything, they were not the only partakers of true blessedness. We are partakers with them and they with us, albeit that we may be partakers of a better ministry.

(5) “By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament” (Heb. 7:22); “He is the Mediator of a better covenant” (Heb. 8:6). From this it is evident that Old Testament believers were partakers of temporal rather than spiritual benefits.

**Answer:**

We deny that the word “better” refers to the matter itself; we have shown the opposite to be true in the above. Instead, the word “better” refers to the manner in which the covenant was administered, which frequently is referred to by the name “covenant” (cf. chapter 16).

We have thus observed that since the fall God has called His people by way of the gospel. The External Call of the Gospel Comes to All who Hear the Gospel

**Question:**

Does God call all who are under the ministry of the gospel, but who as yet are not saved, or does God call the elect only?

**Answer:**

God calls all and everyone who live under the ministry of the gospel. This must be noted so that one may have liberty to receive Christ by faith, which one would not have if the gospel were not offered—and also in order that the justice of God would be acknowledged in punishing those who neglect so great a salvation and do not obey the gospel. The following must be noted in order that everyone may be convinced of this matter.

First, compare yourself with the wild Indians, who neither know Christ nor have knowledge of salvation. Do you not see that God deals differently with you than with them? Would you wish to trade places with them? Why not? Is it not because there is more hope for salvation where you are than where they are? Will not the condemnation of those who have lived under the ministration of the gospel, but who do not repent, be greater than the condemnation of the wild heathen? Why would this be if salvation had not been offered to you? This therefore proves that all who hear the gospel are called.

Secondly, everyone who is under the ministry of the gospel hears the voice of the minister as he preaches, exhorts, and rebukes. It is thus addressed to him who hears it. The minister is a servant of Christ, a “steward of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1), and an ambassador for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). Therefore he who hears the minister hears Christ, and he who rejects the minister rejects Him (Luke 10:16). Consider also that the very words of God Himself are contained in Scripture. Since, therefore, everyone hears the voice of the minister and the very words of God resound in his ears, all that is said is addressed to him who hears it and he is called by the gospel.

Thirdly, Scripture states clearly that many who perish had been called. “...many be called, but few chosen” (Matt. 20:16); “...and (he) bade many: and sent his servant at

supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse” (Luke 14:16–18); “And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come” (Matt. 22:3). Had the guest without the wedding garment been invited? He most certainly was. It was not his crime that he did not come, but rather that he came in the wrong way, that is, without a wedding garment. It is thus evident that everyone who is under the ministry is called and invited to come to Christ.

Fourthly, there is a general and unconditional declaration to all, that is, to him who thirsts, who is without money, and who wills (Isa. 55:1–2; John 7:37; Rev. 22:17). He who neither wills nor is thirsty will refrain from coming. This is his own doing and he will be responsible, having been invited and having heard this general calling.

Fifthly, since many reject the gospel, it is necessarily offered to them, for whatever is not offered cannot be rejected. “It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46). Many are disobedient to the gospel (2 Th. 1:8), and are disobedient to the Son (John 3:36). It thus follows that Christ was offered to them and they were commanded to believe in Christ.

Sixthly, the exhortations to repent and to believe are joined together. No one will be in doubt that the exhortation to repent pertains to everyone, and thus each will also have to acknowledge that the exhortation to believe pertains to everyone, for they are of equivalent importance. “...repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15).

Seventhly, unbelief is a dreadful sin; yes, it is a sin whereby we esteem God to be a liar. “He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son” (1 John 5:10); “And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin...of sin, because they believe not on Me” (John 16:8–9). If Christ were not offered to him who remains in his unbelief, he would not be accountable and his unbelief would not be a sin. Since his unbelief is a sin, however, it is clearly evident that the gospel was offered to him.

Eighthly, since a dreadful judgment awaits unbelievers, the gospel has most certainly been offered to them, and they have most certainly been called. Observe this in the following texts: “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Th. 1:8); “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin” (John 15:22). If everyone who is under the ministry of the gospel had not been not called, and Christ had not been offered to them, how can they then be punished and how can their condemnation be the heavier? Since, however, they are punished for disobedience to the gospel, and are punished more severely than others, it follows that

it was offered to them.

Since Christ is offered to all who are under the ministry, it not only follows that everyone may come and no one needs to remain behind for fear whether he is called or not; but it also follows that everyone is obligated to come to Christ and to receive Him in order to be justified, sanctified, preserved, and glorified. One must not interpret this to mean that everyone is under obligation to believe that Christ has died for him and is his Savior. Far be it from us to suggest this, for this is not the essence of faith. Faith is not assurance; for assurance is a consequence of faith. Faith consists in the translation of a soul—perplexed about his wretched condition and desirous for reconciliation, peace, holiness, and glory—from self into Christ. Faith consists in receiving Him who offers Himself and who calls and invites every sinner to Himself, the promise being added that those who will come will not be cast out. It finally consists in a reliance of the soul upon Him as the almighty, true, and faithful Savior. If, however, someone is lively in the exercise of these acts and truly perceives this to

be so within himself, only then does the assurance follow that Jesus has died for him. He who lives under the ministry of the gospel is obligated to believe in Christ. However, he is not obligated to believe that Christ has died for him and to be assured of this. Far be it from us to suggest this, for then someone could believe a lie, since faith can have nothing else but truth as its object.

## **God's Objective in Calling Men**

### **This begets another Question:**

In calling the sinner to Christ, does God aim for the salvation of all? In calling all who are under the ministry of the gospel, is it God's objective that all would become partakers of salvation?

### **Answer:**

No, for God cannot fail to achieve His objective. Then all who are called would, of necessity, have to be saved.

In order to understand this matter correctly, we should consider the following:

(1) The calling is first and foremost intended to gather in the elect. "And he gave some...pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11–12). God does not send the gospel to those geographical regions where there are no elect to be found. Furthermore, when the elect in a certain region are gathered in, God generally removes the gospel from that area. Since the elect are in the world, however, and are intermingled with others, the calling comes to all; that is, to all the elect and also to

others. By means of the calling, that is, by means of the proclamation of the gospel, God grants repentance and faith to His elect—which He withholds from others.

(2) We must make a distinction between the objective of God—He who works— and the objective of His work : the gospel. The very nature of the gospel is suited to lead man unto salvation, as it sufficiently reveals to him the way unto salvation and stirs him to be persuaded to believe. The gospel is not to be blamed when all who hear it are not saved; rather, man himself is the guilty one. He is to be blamed if he does not desire to be taught and led.

Such is the objective of the gospel. God's objective in causing the gospel to be proclaimed to the nonelect is to proclaim and acquaint man with the way of salvation, to command man to enter this way, and to display His goodness, presenting all the reasons to him for doing so and promising him salvation upon repentance and true faith in Christ. The Lord would indeed do this upon man fulfilling the condition for which He holds him accountable, and which the human nature, having been created holy in Adam had been capable of doing. If he does not accomplish this, it is not because God hinders him or deprives him of the ability to do so, but because man wills not; and thus man himself is to be blamed, for it is the goodness of God which should lead him to repentance. It is also God's objective to convict man of his wickedness in his refusal to come upon such a friendly invitation, as well as of the righteousness of God in punishing such rejecters of this offered salvation (John15:20). Such is God's purpose and objective in allowing the gospel to be proclaimed to the unconverted. It is, however, neither God's purpose and objective to give to them His Holy Spirit nor to save them. This is evident for the following reasons:

First, it would be contradictory to the omniscience of God. God knows those who are His. He knows that the reprobate will not be saved, and it cannot be His purpose or objective to save them. Man knows that a dead person will not arise; it therefore cannot be his objective to make him alive by calling him. God also knows this concerning the unconverted and the spiritually dead; this therefore cannot be His objective.

Secondly, it would be contradictory to eternal election. God has eternally chosen certain individuals by name and has appointed them to be the recipients of eternal salvation. This is in contrast to others whom He has not chosen, but concerning whom He wills that they remain in their sins and be condemned for their sins. Since He has decreed to condemn them righteously for their sins, it could not have been His objective to save them in having the gospel proclaimed to them. He had different objectives, however, which we have stated in the foregoing.

Thirdly, God cannot be thwarted in the achievement of His objective. He must of

necessity accomplish what He has purposed, since He is omniscient, all-wise, and omnipotent. “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure” (Isa. 46:10); “For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?” (Isa. 14:27). If God had purposed to save them, they of necessity would most certainly be saved. They are not saved, however, and God therefore also did not have their salvation in view.

Those who imagine that man, upon the proclamation of the gospel, has sufficient ability to repent and to believe in Christ (a matter which we shall discuss shortly), object to this. In their view nothing more is necessary than that the gospel be preached. They insist that by allowing the gospel to be preached God has as His objective and intent to save all—and if sinners do not come and believe, this is contrary to God’s objective. God thus does not accomplish what He has purposed; this, however, we have just refuted. They support their proposition as follows:

**Objection #1:**

God would act deceitfully if He were to call someone to salvation, and yet were not sincere in doing so.

**Answer:**

God calls all who hear the gospel unto salvation, and it is His objective and intent to give salvation to all who truly believe. Faith and true repentance are, however, singular gifts of God’s grace, which He gives to all whom He wills to save. Others, however, God leaves to themselves who, being unwilling—and due to their wickedness, blindness, and unwillingness, are unable—do not fulfil this condition, and thus will not be saved. Since God has prior knowledge of this and has decreed not to give them the gifts of grace, and since He cannot be thwarted in the achievement of His purpose, He therefore also cannot have their salvation in view. God nevertheless does not deal deceitfully by making the way of salvation known to them, in obligating.

them by way of many arguments to enter upon this way, promising to save them upon repentance and faith in Christ. God sincerely and truly has all this in view. In all this He has in view that the unconverted be convinced of His goodness, their wickedness, and His justice—and to punish them in consequence of this. The fact that man is not able to repent and believe is not God’s fault, but man is to be blamed. God did purpose to provide them with all the means unto salvation, withhold additional grace from them, leave them over to themselves, and condemn them for their failure to repent and for their wickedness; however, He did not purpose to save them. One matter may relate to various purposes, and thus by purposing or not purposing one thing, one cannot conclude the purposing or not purposing of something else. Here the objective relates to the means and not to the ultimate end of salvation. The gospel is an able and sufficient way unto salvation.

## **Objection #2:**

God invites everyone to come to the wedding feast, that is, salvation (cf. Matt. 22:3– 4; Luke 14:16). It must thus have been His objective that they would come.

## **Answer:**

His purpose is to invite them, obligate them to come, propose salvation upon condition of faith and repentance, and not hinder them. The invitation contained a condition to come with a wedding garment. The guest without a wedding garment could not be admitted to the wedding feast—not because he was not invited, but because by not having a wedding garment he did not meet the condition included in the invitation. It is God’s objective to provide them with all the means unto salvation and to be acknowledged and glorified in this. In calling to the wedding feast there is, however, not the objective to carry them to the wedding feast and to give them the wedding garment. It is absolutely necessary that the Lord do this for them, since they of themselves neither understand nor are willing, and thus also are not able to do so. Since, however, it is not His objective to do this for them, not being obligated to do so, it follows that it was not His objective to save them. The invitation therefore obligates them to come and to believe, and if they come in the way of repentance and faith, they will also obtain salvation. This does not imply, however, that it is God’s objective to unconditionally give them salvation or to grant them what is needed to meet the condition.

## **Objection #3:**

If God does not purpose the salvation of all who are called by the Word, no one would be able to take it seriously, and no one would dare to come, since none would know whether he were addressed by God.

## **Answer:**

God’s Word, being the truth, is sufficient for everyone. One may freely rely upon it, and one will not be deceived. That Word promises salvation to all who believe and to all who receive Christ unto justification and sanctification. This declaration is directed to everyone, and everyone must believe it, apply it to himself, and say, “If I believe and truly repent, I shall be saved.” God does have foreknowledge as to who will be unwilling to come. God leaves man over to himself, doing him no injustice by withholding renewing grace from him who once had the ability to obey God in all things. God permits man to exercise his own free will, whereby he voluntarily rejects Christ and all heavenly benefits. However, God grants to the elect, in addition to His Word, the Holy Spirit who bestows upon them faith and repentance. Since the required conditions are thus met in this way, they are saved.

From all this we observe that man from his side must respond to the Word of God and believe that he will be saved if he believes and repents. He thus need not torment himself with the question whether God addresses him personally. He must leave this matter in God's hands. This is as much as asking: "Is God willing or is He not willing to give faith and repentance to me?" A sinner has no prior knowledge of this, and the Lord will give it to those to whom He pleases. The sinner, however, must understand it to be his duty to respond to the Word of God, to believe in Christ who is offered to him, to repent, and to believe that he will be saved if he does so.

We have thus observed that God from His side has not purposed to give faith and repentance to all men, and it is therefore also not His objective to save them all, but rather the elect only. He nevertheless does not deal deceitfully with men.

## **The Internal Call**

Having dealt sufficiently with the external call, we shall now proceed to consider the internal call which in Scripture is called a heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1), a calling according to God's purpose (Rom. 8:28), the opening of the heart (Acts 16:14), a resurrection from the dead and a quickening (Eph. 2:5–6), God's drawing (John 6:44), a deliverance from the power of darkness and a translation into the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13), and a calling out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9). All this phraseology gives expression to the powerful work of the Holy Spirit who, in conjunction with and by means of the Word of God, operates upon the inner man, that is, his intellect, its eyes being enlightened eyes (Eph. 1:18). Furthermore, He operates upon the will, inclining it toward love for the heavenly benefits to be found in Christ Jesus, and to the very act of receiving Christ (Phil. 2:13).

To facilitate clear comprehension concerning this matter and to deal with points of contention related to this, we shall preface our discussion with these remarks.

First, in the internal call God works in a manner which is consistent with man's nature. Man is a rational creature who, gifted with intellect, reasons about matters which he encounters, judging whether it is needful or beneficial to have, pursue, or do such matters. If he judges affirmatively, he will also exercise judgment concerning time, place, and means; that is, when, where, and in what manner. This is referred to as one's practical judgment, for it presents and limits the matter in such a fashion to the will that the will spontaneously embraces the proposition. The will is a blind faculty which can only will that which is comprehended with the intellect, presenting the matter here and now in its desirability, necessity, and profitability. The will is thus also free and cannot be compelled to will something; it cannot be compelled to do something except (as has been stated) the matter be embraced by the intellect and is presented as being desirable. This freedom is not one of neutrality, as if it is immaterial to do or not to do something, or to either do the one thing or the contrary.



It is impossible to will and desire something the intellect perceives to be hateful and to be avoided and presents it to the will as such. This freedom, however, is one of necessary consequence, whereby the will, without external compulsion and thus due to its own inclination, wills to do one thing or the other. (For a more comprehensive treatment of this, see chapter 15.) In calling man, God works in harmony with his human nature. The Lord does not compel the will, but the Lord grants the intellect eyes to perceive the spiritual dimension of spiritual things, and by means of that light the Lord penetrates the will and inclines it to embrace the matters with which it is now acquainted and finds desirable. The Lord thus engages both the intellect and the will.

Secondly, when God calls someone internally, this rarely occurs suddenly as appears to have been the case in the conversions of Zacchaeus, the murderer on the cross, and others. Albeit that for some the act whereby a sinner is translated into the kingdom of heaven and made alive—that is, being dead one moment and alive the next moment (there being no intermediate state)—the Lord generally uses some internal and external preparations, such as poverty, tragic occurrences, loss of property or loved ones, earthquakes, war, pestilence, danger of death, illness, or other things. This causes the person to become unsettled; he begins to contemplate repentance, the Word of God takes hold, he is convinced of sin, and he begins to perceive what eternal condemnation is. He also becomes acquainted with the Lord Jesus and with the blessedness of believers, and he desires to be in such a condition. He reads the Word, prays, joins himself to the godly, escapes the gross pollutions of the world, etc. These matters are but common convictions which are experienced by the unconverted as well as the elect. Many such individuals turn back and depart from the way upon which they first seemed to have entered. When the time arrives, however, the Lord will translate His elect into His kingdom by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. These preparatory circumstances mentioned do not proceed from man, but are God's common operations. They also are not a step toward regeneration, nor are they sufficient to transform man. Under such circumstances man is not capable by the exercise of His free will to transform himself, to believe, and to repent. The efficacious and almighty power of God must join itself to such circumstances in order for him to be converted. These preparatory circumstances are but means which God gives and uses to deal with man in a manner consistent with his humanity.

Thirdly, when God calls someone internally, he will acquire a disposition which is entirely and essentially different from that which could be produced by nature or preparatory circumstances. The illumination and virtuousness of which man becomes a partaker due to the internal call does not differ from the natural state in degree, but in essence. It is not to be compared to the difference between the sun's initial rise and subsequent progression, or the beginning of a child's life and his further growth. The distinction is not by way of increase, such as with a balance. Suppose there is weight in the one scale, but gradually so much sand is added to the other scale that the weight

of the sand exceeds the weight on the other scale, causing the balance to go toward the side of the sand. This would suggest that man is born again when human virtue outweighs his flesh and corruption. Far be it from us to hold to such a view, for that would amount to overturning the entire nature of regeneration and to deem pagan knowledge and virtue as being regeneration. No, the light and virtue in regeneration are of an entirely different nature.

## **The Difference Between a Natural and Spiritual Disposition**

### **Question:**

**Is the difference between spiritual light and virtue and natural light and virtue one of degree or one of essence?**

### **Answer:**

Socinians maintain that it is one of degree, whereas we maintain that there is an essential difference. We shall first demonstrate this to be true for light and then for virtue.

First, the light of nature proceeds from the impression that there is a God, and is only increased by the Word of God itself. Spiritual light, on the contrary, proceeds from illumination of the heart, by the Holy Spirit who shines in our hearts, “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). The Lord enlightens the eyes of our understanding (Eph. 1:18), and draws them out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9). Thus, the very cause of this light is different. The most intelligent, brilliant philosophers and unconverted theologians are blind according to Scripture. “...and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Rom. 1:21–22); “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14); “And some of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these words, and said unto Him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth” (John 9:40–41).

Secondly, natural and spiritual light each focus upon a different object. The one focuses upon God as He has revealed Himself in nature and relative to the covenant of works (Rom. 2:14–15; 1:19–22), whereas the other focuses upon God as He has revealed Himself in the covenant of grace, that is, in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6). The glory of God may be seen in Him as in a mirror (2 Cor. 3:18). They have the mind of Christ and understand the truth as it is in Christ.

Thirdly, natural light perceives spiritual things in a natural sense, and reduces spiritual things to the realm of the natural, for it is not capable of spiritual

discernment (1 Cor. 2:14). “But what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves” (Jude 10). However, the spiritual man joins spiritual things to spiritual things, discerns them spiritually (1 Cor. 2:13–15), and even spiritualizes natural things.

Fourthly, natural light does not generate warmth, but leaves man cold, dead, and without faith. Spiritual light, however, generates the warmth of love and faith. “Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?” (Luke 24:32).

Fifthly, natural light does not sanctify. The external call will at best stir up man to escape the gross pollutions of the world (2 Pet. 2:20). Spiritual light, however, has a transforming effect. “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32); “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

From all this it is evident that the light found within the regenerate is of an entirely different nature than the light within the unregenerate. It therefore necessarily follows that the virtuousness of the converted and unconverted is also of a distinctly different nature. This is evident for the following reasons:

First, these virtues proceed from different causes. Natural virtue is the result of natural light and relates to the law innate in nature (Rom. 2:14–15). Spiritual virtue, however, is the result of the recreating and regenerating power of the Holy Spirit by means of the Word, and thus the result of spiritual light, life, and a spiritual conception of God (cf. John 3:5; 2 Cor. 5:17). “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph. 2:10); “Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth” (James 1:18); “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18). They are “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4); “Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20). This life, which proceeds from being a partaker of the divine nature, flows out of union with Christ and is thus of an entirely different sort from that which proceeds from the natural man.

Secondly, spiritual virtues proceed from faith which receives Christ, the life of the soul, and unites the soul to Him as such. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. 11:6); “...faith which worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6); “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:15–16). This is also confirmed in John 15:4, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of

itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.” The virtuousness of the regenerate proceeds from union with Christ. This, however, cannot be said of the unconverted, for they are without Christ. There is thus a very essential difference between them.

Thirdly, the unconverted, however great all their virtues may be, are said to be “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1); believers, however, are spiritually alive (Eph. 2:5). All that stirs within a dead body is essentially different from that which proceeds from a living body. This is also true for the virtuousness of the converted and the unconverted.

Fourthly, the spiritual virtues proceeding from union with God in Christ, and thus from faith and spiritual life, are performed in love for God, in the fear of God, and in obedience to God as their Father, and thus with the heart of a child. None but those who believe can truly love God, for “faith worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6). Whatever does not proceed from love is of no value (1 Cor. 13:1–2). Love is the fountain of virtue, and the contents of the law (Matt. 22:37). Believers are the saints who fear the Lord (Psa. 34:10). “The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death” (Prov. 14:27). They serve God as obedient children—and not as a God who is strange to them and from whom they are separated. They, in faith, serve Him as their God and Father in Christ, be this faith weak or strong. “As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Pet. 1:14–15). Since the unconverted are not united to Christ, without whom no one can come to God, their activity also does not proceed from this union, and is thus not motivated by love for God, the fear of God, nor obedience to God. From all this it is as clear as the noonday sun that the virtuousness of the converted is of a mold entirely different from that of the unconverted, and they are thus entirely different in essence. Therefore, both light and virtuousness in the converted and unconverted do not merely differ in degree, but their essential nature is different.

### **The Internal Call: A Work of God’s Grace**

Fifthly, we furthermore wish to state by way of preface that the effectual call is a work of God’s grace. The Arminians also use the word grace in order to create the illusion that they speak scripturally. They explain it in such a manner, however, that grace is no longer grace. They acknowledge grace to be nothing else but that which enables man to perform. They maintain, however, that the ability “to will and to do” originates in man himself. They reason as follows: I may thank God that I have been able to repent, but I thank myself for the fact that I was willing to repent. They make a distinction between sufficient grace and efficacious grace.

The Arminians understand sufficient grace to mean that God has given sufficient

ability to all men—great and small, young and old, Jews, Turks, heathens, and Christians—to repent and to believe in Christ. They refer to this as quickening, prevenient, operative, instructional, and suggestive grace. This grace, however, by whatever name it is called, is entirely subject to the free will of man which determines whether or not it is to be accepted. They furthermore proceed to refer to grace as being helping, cooperative, and supportive . They understand this grace to be collateral in nature; that is, operating side by side, each functioning independently and the one assisting the other. Thus, each party operates independently—God from His side and man from his side. If therefore man receives the Word of God and begins to repent, God will assist him, stir him up, and will stimulate him all the more by various motives. This operation remains external, however, and man always remains free and in control to either submit to, or to reject the divine operations. Even after he has repented and becomes a believer, he is yet equally independent and is able to overturn the work of conversion again by the exercise of his free will, which does occasionally occur.

Moreover, the Arminians understand effectual grace to refer to the result . It is not effectual by the almighty power of God who would thus in actuality convert man, but only in reference to the result. If man repents and believes in Christ, his calling is effectual because of what man has done. Others call this grace effectual due to some degree of suitability ( congruitas ), when God makes use of opportunities—either a man’s character or his condition being at its weakest and most pliable—making use of a given moment, while simultaneously holding before him and impressing upon him suitable motives which persuade and convince him. All of this, however, culminates in one thing: Free will remains lord and master, having ultimate power to either accept or reject. God is merely a servant or a friend who advises and urges him to act, whereas man himself determines whether or not he will allow himself to be persuaded. All of this we reject.

### **Over against this we maintain the following:**

(1) There must be a distinction between the gift of grace and given grace. The gift of grace is the goodness of God, the fountain from whom proceeds all the good which man receives. Given grace refers to the benefits which man receives, has, and possesses. Concerning the gift of grace we read, “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake” (Phil. 1:29). Concerning given grace we read, “For this is thankworthy, ” 14 if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. (1 Pet. 2:19).

(2) Grace is either common or special . God bestows common grace upon all men by granting them temporal benefits. “Nevertheless He left not himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven” (Acts 14:17). To this grace also belongs all the good which God bestows upon all who are called, by giving them the

Word—the means unto repentance and salvation. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11). In addition to this, God generally gives illumination, historical faith, convictions, and inner persuasion to almost become a Christian (cf. Heb. 6:4–6).

Special grace is the effectual call whereby man is illuminated with wondrous spiritual light, effectually changing his will, and thus in very deed translating him out of darkness into light, out of death to life, and from the dominion of sin and the devil to Christ and His kingdom. “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Tim. 1:9); “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son” (Col. 1:13).

From these four prefatory propositions it is evident what the nature of the internal call is. We must now furthermore observe 1) how man is involved in his conversion, and 2) what God does in this respect.

## **A Refutation of the Arminian Error that Man Has a Natural Inclination to Repent and Believe**

### **Question:**

Does man have some internal disposition, propensity, ability, or power to believe in Christ and to truly repent upon the external presentation of the gospel, however powerfully this may be declared?

### **Answer:**

The Arminians and others answer in the affirmative. We, however, answer negatively and prove this as follows:

First, man is totally blind as far as spiritual things are concerned. “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance

14 The Statenbijbel reads: “For this is grace.... that is in them” (Eph. 4:18); “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen....But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:9, 14). The apostle is here not referring to men as consisting of soul and body. This would be applicable to all men—this also being true for Adam, of whom it must be said that he comprehended spiritual matters. However, the apostle speaks in this chapter of the converted and the unconverted, stating that the converted do discern spiritual things (vss. 9–10). Concerning the unconverted he states (without making a distinction between them as being more or less evil) that

they do not discern spiritual things. He refers to the natural man as  $\Psi\upsilon\chi\iota\kappa\omicron\iota$  ( *psuchikoi* ); that is, as having a soul, and thus to men who have a natural intellect whereby they can reason, a natural will whereby they can love and hate, and natural passion whereby they can desire. He is thus in a natural state without the Spirit, of whom Jude writes, “These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit” (Jude 19). Of such the apostle says that they cannot discern spiritual things, which is not to say that it is impossible for a person to imagine them without revelations, for he speaks of such natural men who lived under the ministry of the gospel (vs. 8). This is evident from what he adds, “for they are foolishness to him.” No one can ever speak of or consider to be foolish that which he has never heard. Man is so blind that the ability to see and understand must be given unto him. This is given to some and not to others. “It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given” (Matt. 13:11). Someone who is blind to such a degree can neither will, repent of himself, nor believe in Christ, even if he hears the gospel.

Secondly, man by nature is of such a wicked and evil disposition that he is not willing to repent, nor can he will to do so, for he cannot respond with his will to that which he does not know. Even if one judges a given matter to be desirable in its very essence, he will have no interest in this now, here, and for himself, since the things of this world appear to him as being much more desirable and beneficial now, here, and for himself. Since that which is spiritual and that which is sinful stand in direct opposition to each other, one can neither delight in nor be desirous for spiritual things if he finds delight in that which is sinful and of the world. The natural man, however, loves that which is sinful and of the world, and thus he neither can nor is willing to love that which is spiritual. “And ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life” (John 5:40); “...and ye would not!” (Matt. 23:37). If the natural man perceives but a few rays of spiritual light and life, he will hate it at once. “...men loved darkness rather than light...For every one that doeth evil hateth the light” (John 3:19–20); “...haters of God” (Rom. 1:30); “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me” (John 15:18). Wherever there is such a disposition, it is impossible to be willing and to repent.

Thirdly, since man is ignorant and unwilling, he also cannot repent. “No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him” (John 6:44). The phrase “no man” is all-inclusive. Whoever a person may be, he is unable and does not come. An almighty power and drawing is necessary in order for anyone to come. “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7).

In verse 5 the apostle places the converted and unconverted in contradistinction to each other. Of the unconverted he says that they are after the flesh; of such he says that their  $\Phi\rho\acute{o}\nu\eta\mu\alpha$  ( *phronema* ) mind, will, thoughts, desires, contemplations, and wisdom are only focused upon that which is visible and sinful. They oppose God as an

enemy—they neither subject themselves to His law, nor are they able to do so. Consider also 2 Corinthians 3:5, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.” Paul here refers to both himself and the congregation, which is an “epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God” (2 Cor. 3:3). He defines what he considers himself and the congregation to be by nature. He thus states not what they are by the Spirit of God, but rather what they are capable of themselves; that is, by nature, stating that they are not sufficient to think of anything that has not been revealed. They can, however, only think of, comprehend, lovingly contemplate upon, and find delight in the spiritual things which the Spirit of God has written in the hearts of believers. He declares man to be entirely insufficient for this, and thus whatever they had and did was given of God who enabled them to do this. So much said about man’s inability.

Fourthly, as far as spiritual life is concerned, man is dead, “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). The apostle is not only referring to those who had never heard the gospel, but also to those who had heard it, for Paul includes himself. Among the Ephesians there were many Jews (Acts 19:8), and the expression used is general in nature. He is not referring to natural death, but to being spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. Spiritual death consists of the absence of union with God, for spiritual life consists of communion with God (Gal. 2:20). Those who are without such a union are ἄθεοι (atheoi), that is, atheists or without God (Eph. 2:12); those “having not the Spirit” (Jude 19). He does not speak of the punishment of sin, its wages being death, but of that death which is the very opposite of spiritual life. Since spiritual life is the very opposite of spiritual death, he speaks of spiritual death. “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ” (Eph. 2:5). Since man is dead, he can therefore not make himself alive. Both nature and Scripture teach us that a dead person cannot do this, regardless of the manner in which he is dead.

Let us draw these four arguments together and arrive at one conclusion. One who is blind and ignorant is so evil that he is unwilling and instead hates; he is so impotent that he is absolutely unable; and he is dead, has no internal disposition, propensity, ability, or power to repent and to believe in Christ.

The absolute impotence of man is also evident from all the texts which demonstrate that the declaration of the Word, however powerfully this may be done, is not sufficient to the conversion of man. Rather, in addition to the Word of God there must also be the effectual work of God in the heart of man. In 2 Timothy 2:25 we read, “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.” This refers to the Word of God and to the lively manner in which it is proclaimed. Is this sufficient however? Does this result in repentance after some time? No, but he adds, “If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.” The Word of God must thus be joined by the converting power of God. “Ye have seen all that the LORD did before



your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh,” etc.; “yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day” (Deut.. 29:2–4); “Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given” (Matt. 13:11). The Jews heard Christ preach; they had the Scriptures, and yet why did they not believe? The Lord Jesus says that more

must happen to depraved man before he will believe; there must be a divine drawing. “No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him” (John 6:44). In order for Lydia to be converted it was not sufficient for her to hear Paul preach; this had to be accompanied by the immediate operation of God. “Lydia...whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul” (Acts 16:14). Man is thus unable to bring about his own conversion.

Sixthly, consider also that conversion is a work of God, being of such a nature that it occurs without the involvement of human activity. It is referred to as a creating (Psa. 51:11), a begetting (James 1:18), the removal of a stony heart and the giving of a heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:26), the enlightening of the eyes (Eph. 1:18), a working both to will and to do (Phil. 2:13), etc. Shortly we shall discuss this more extensively.

### **Objection #1:**

“What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” (Isa. 5:4). If from His side God has done everything toward man that is necessary unto his conversion, and if He furthermore expects repentance and holiness from man, it must be within man’s power to repent.

### **Answer:**

(1) The reference is here to the church viewed in contrast to all other nations, with which He has not dealt in such a fashion (Psa. 147:20), having permitted them to walk in their own ways (Acts 14:16). This text therefore does not prove that all men have such ability, which is what they had wished to prove.

(2) The reference here is to the external means which lead unto salvation, which can be deduced from the presentation of matters in verses 1–3, and thus not to the work of conversion itself. It is the parable of a farmer who does everything that is required to make the earth fruitful and who, beyond this, can do nothing more toward the bearing of fruit, except to expect this from God. God had likewise done everything to Israel in an external sense as far as the means were concerned, and this obligated them to repent and to bear fruit, worthy of repentance. This is the objective of the parable, and we must not focus on all its particulars and look for analogies.

(3) The fact that God expected fruits neither implies that God could not enable them

to bear fruit, nor that God did not know what the outcome would be. It is also not implied that such power is to be found in man who is nothing but barren soil bringing forth thorns and thistles, in spite of the fact that it receives rain and sunshine (Heb. 6:7). It rather states that Israel was obligated to bear fruit. If they did not do this, due to their wickedness, they were to be blamed and would be worthy of being eradicated.

### **Objection #2:**

“Repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15). Since God commands man to repent and to believe, it follows that man is able to do this, for God cannot obligate man toward that which is absolutely impossible for him to do. This would be an unjust as well as futile effort.

### **Answer:**

(1) God created man so perfectly in Adam that he was able to obey and perform God’s commandments. Even though it was not possible for Adam to believe in Christ, this was not due to inability to believe if God were to have made Him known to Adam. Rather, faith in a Surety for the satisfaction of sin could not be required from him in the state of rectitude. The human nature was therefore able to believe. Since man brought himself into the state of impotence, this does not remove God’s right to demand from, and obligate man to do that which He had enabled him to do. A creditor may demand payment from a debtor even if he is unable to pay due to having wasted his resources. Such exhortations therefore do not imply what man is able to do, but rather what he is obligated to do.

(2) Man must acknowledge and approve of the fact that he is obligated not to sin, but rather to obey God. Man is so evil that he is not willing to do that which he knows to be God’s command as well as his obligation. Would God then not know what is man’s duty, when man acquiesces in the fact that he is obligated to such obedience, even if he is so evil that he is not willing to obey?

(3) Such exhortations are not in vain in spite of the fact that man, being so evil, cannot oblige, for they convince man of his duty and of the justice of God were He to punish him for his sin. It is a means which God uses to bring His elect under conviction and to lead them to repentance and faith. Christ said to the dead Lazarus, “Come forth” (John 11:43). This command did not imply what Lazarus was able to do, and yet it was not issued in vain, for it was the means unto his resurrection. Likewise the command to repent as well as the Word of God are means unto conversion in the hand of God, but not in the hand of man.

### **Objection #3:**

Even pagans, as well as many unconverted, do good works as well as the converted. It

is thus evident that man has retained the natural ability to do good works.

**Answer:**

(1) Some pagans have so exceeded in the practice of virtue that they put many Christians to shame. If such virtues had been true virtues, why would there be any need for regeneration? Since regeneration is necessary, however, it is evident that their virtues did not have the nature of true virtues.

(2) There are four types of good works: natural, civil, externally religious, and spiritual good works. Unconverted persons perform the first three types of good works, but not the fourth. Their good works are good in materialiter, that is, in a substantial sense, but not as far as essence is concerned. They are not formaliter (that is, not truly) good works. Spiritual light, life, and virtue are not distinguished from the natural in degree, but rather in essence, as we have demonstrated above. Therefore we cannot make such an inference.

**Objection #4:**

“For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath” (Matt. 13:12). This means that those who have sufficient grace—which is true for all—and who use it well, will receive more grace. It thus follows that man possesses the grace and the ability to repent.

**Answer:**

(1) The word “for” shows sufficiently that the reference is to those who are converted; that is, to whom had been given what had not been given to others as stated in verse 11, “It is given unto you to know.”

(2) It is evident that the reference is not to what man possesses by nature, but rather to what he has received by means of the Word of God. This is confirmed by the fact that this was said to the disciples who had already been called and converted, and therefore had been given the ability to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, even though they were presented by way of parables. The reference is thus to the growth and increase of truly converted persons.

(3) Those who “have not” are the unconverted who have not received grace. They are of the opinion that they are not blind; they believe they are able to understand these mysteries as well as the most eminent Christian. “Are we blind also?” (John 9:40). Those who have heard the preaching of the gospel, but do not understand it, or do not perform what they have understood, would become more blind and more hardened; their darkened heart would become even darker, and while pretending to be wise, they

would become fools (Rom. 1:21–22). Thus, from them would be taken even that which they seemed to have (Luke 8:18). The abused gifts of nature and the common gifts by way of Scripture would be taken away as a righteous judgment.

The same answer must be given in response to Matthew 25:29, where the same words are recorded, and are applied to the good and evil use of the talents. The reference there is neither to gifts which all men have by nature, nor to the good or evil use of these gifts, but the reference is to the church, the kingdom of heaven (vss. 1, 14). Within the church the Lord Jesus gives various gifts, both saving and common. Everyone is obligated to use these gifts for the benefit of others, that is, to the conversion of others. He whom the Lord gifts with grace to be faithful, and to be instrumental unto the conversion of souls, will be graciously rewarded by the Lord with a special measure of glory. The unfaithful servant, however, who had also received gifts (not graces) was cast into hell. Thus, nothing remains of the argument that there is all-sufficient grace in the state of nature.

### **Objection #5:**

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me” (Rev. 3:20). Behold, here the act of opening or of not opening is attributed to man. He must therefore possess the ability to do so.

### **Answer:**

(1) Here the church is addressed, and particularly the church of Laodicea. This therefore cannot be used to prove what ability all men possess by nature.

(2) This shows at best what man’s duty is, but not what he is able to do. This is actually a promise to those who open the door, however, without there being any mention of whether they would open it in their own strength, or whether this would occur by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

(3) The reference is to the external call which is a means used to the conversion of the elect—a means whereby the ungodly are convinced of their wickedness and of God’s justice. This call is therefore not issued forth in vain. We have, at the same time, answered the question as to why Christ calls and knocks if man is not able, and why He does knock and call if He Himself opens the door (Acts 16:14). He uses this as a means.

### **Man’s Passivity at the Moment of Regeneration**

Being as impotent as has been stated, it is clear and self-evident that man at the very first moment of his conversion is not independently active, nor does he cooperate with

the prevenient and quickening grace of God, but is a passive object and solely the recipient of the illuminating and quickening power of God . We are not speaking here of a man who already has been regenerated, but rather of an unregenerate man being regenerated. Such a person is passive rather than active.

This is first of all evident from what has been stated before concerning the impotence of man who is blind and does not know how matters ought to be; who is evil, unwilling, and hates that which is spiritual; who is impotent, thus rendering him unable; who is dead, and therefore in the initial moment of regeneration and conversion is not able to cooperate, but is merely passive. Such is the state of man according to the foregoing proposition. It thus follows that he functions neither independently nor cooperatively.

Secondly, since the difference between natural and spiritual light, life, and virtue is not one of degree, but of very essence (as stated in the foregoing), man is not able to change from one state to the other, nor is he able to cooperate in the act of translation from one state to the other. Rather, an almighty power is necessary for this. Who can change a stone into flesh, or an irrational animal into a man? Who then would also be able to change a dead person into a living person?

Thirdly, regeneration is a work that must be attributed solely to God and is an omnipotent work of God:

(1) It is a work of God: “It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture” (Psa. 100:3); “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13); “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son” (Col. 1:13); “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

(2) It is an omnipotent work, a work which has man as its only object. It is an act of creation , and by way of this creative work a new creature is formed. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17); “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph. 2:10). We know that in the act of creation a creature is brought forth without any cooperation whatsoever. Regeneration is an act of resurrection from the dead and of making alive. “And you, being dead in your sins...hath He quickened together with Him” (Col. 2:13). It is an act of being begotten, of being reborn. “Of His own will begat He us” (James 1:18); “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). All these expressions refer to the work of the Creator, the Giver of Life, and the Generator, in which the creature who is resurrected and generated is entirely excluded from any cooperation. It is thus certain that man does not cooperate in the initial moment of regeneration, but is passive, and as the object, is the recipient

of this operation. Even if, prior to this, he was human and thus functioned as a man, yet in reference to spiritual life he was dead and thus could no more cooperate in regeneration than a dead person could.

Fourthly, if man were to cooperate in the initial moment of conversion—if he were to act independently in the most significant and essential aspect of conversion; that is, to be willing of himself to come to Christ upon the invitation of the gospel due to ability which he has in common with all men and is inherent in his nature—a spiritually dead person would not only be able to be active, but would himself be the cause of his salvation and would distinguish himself from other men. This is contrary to the entire Scriptures which attribute this to God rather than to man. “For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” (1 Cor. 4:7); “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). Man, therefore, does not cooperate, but he is entirely passive in this matter.

**Objection #1:**

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities” (Rom. 8:26).

**Answer:**

The apostle does not refer to the unconverted to whom the point of contention pertains. Rather, he refers to the converted who have been saved in hope (vs. 24). The Holy Spirit teaches such persons how to pray when they know not what to pray for as they ought.

**Objection #2:**

“For we are labourers together with God” (1 Cor. 3:9); “We then, as workers together with Him...” (2 Cor. 6:1).

**Answer:**

The reference is not to man’s work in his own conversion, which is the point in question, but to the work of the ministry, that is, the proclamation of the Word of God. In that capacity ministers are the instruments of God and thus work together with Him as means to the conversion of other men. No one will maintain, however, that they are able to convert men in their own strength. They cooperate as an instrument cooperates.

**Objection #3:**

“But I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which

was with me” (1 Cor. 15:10).

**Answer:**

Paul does not refer to his labors prior to and at his conversion, but to his labors after his conversion. This labor did not pertain to himself, rather to others. He states here that his work in the ministry had not been fruitless as far as the benefit of others was concerned, but that he had been extraordinarily abundant and fruitful. However, he did not exalt himself because of this, but instead acknowledged the grace of God as having been operative in him as the cause. Thus, this text, rather than supporting this objection, states the contrary.

**Objection #4:**

If man must be viewed solely as passive in his conversion, and is but merely the object and thus the recipient of divine operation, man can only be considered to be a stock and a block.

**Answer:**

Man cooperates no more than did the body of Adam in receiving the soul, and as Lazarus did in his resurrection. Man, however, is neither a block nor a stock which is incapable of being the recipient of God’s converting power, not being a suitable object for such operation. Instead, man is rational, has intellect, a will, and inclinations, and is thus a suitable object to be the recipient of God’s operations toward conversion. Thus, God enlightens the intellect, inclines the will, and makes man willing without violation of the will. In this manner God makes man alive. It is true, however, that man can cooperate no more than that a stock or a block would be able to move from one place to another.

**Objection #5:**

Then man may as well let everything run its course and merely let God work when it pleases Him.

**Answer:**

Even though a blind and crippled person could not help himself, did this mean that he therefore did not have to avail himself of the waters at Bethesda or of a physician? Man’s impotence ought to motivate him to use the means unto his conversion and attend church with the hope that it would please the Lord to deal with him. It is also his duty to repent and to believe in Christ. If he fails to do so, he sins and acts contrary to his duty and to his own judgment. It thus remains certain that man does not cooperate.

Having observed what man neither can nor will do toward his regeneration, we shall proceed to consider God's work in the internal call and regeneration, demonstrating that God works powerfully and irresistibly.

## **The Internal Call: The Immediate and Effectual Operation of God**

### **Question:**

Is the internal call, even though it occurs by means of the Word, an immediate and effectual operation of God which is exercised upon and changes the intellect, the will, and the inclinations, thereby in a spiritual sense making man alive from the dead?

Arminians answer negatively, whereas we answer affirmatively.

Even though man cannot comprehend God's supernatural operations wherewith by means of the Word the soul is immediately wrought upon, changed, illuminated, regenerated, and endowed with spiritual life, God's Word nevertheless teaches us that God does this. He who changed Saul's heart in one moment (1 Sam. 10:9) and forms the heart of all men (Psa. 33:15), also transforms the heart of man. Man does not accomplish this himself, but God is the origin and the only cause of this. God endows man with a supernatural propensity by which man, after the endowment of this propensity and regeneration—due to divine cooperation—performs spiritual deeds. God acts in harmony with the object, but the operation itself is supernatural. God indeed uses the Word as a means, but joined to this means is an immediate, omnipotent operation which touches the soul, thereby powerfully changing the soul as far as intellect, will, and disposition are concerned.

This is first of all evident when considering the evil disposition and impotence of man prior to his conversion, as we have comprehensively shown. In order for one who is totally blind, for whom the crucified Christ is an offense and foolishness, who is only evil, is unwilling and hates that which is spiritual, and one who cannot do anything and is dead, to be converted and changed, an almighty power must be exercised which will interact immediately with him and change him. However, men are indeed converted, and this necessarily requires the exercise of almighty power.

Secondly, Scripture states plainly that the Word alone can have no effect upon the heart of such a person, but that the Word of God must be accompanied by a powerful operation of God upon the soul. He must give eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts to understand (Deut.. 29:4), and the enlightening of the eyes of the understanding (Eph. 1:18). With the revelation of Scripture, God must make the heart to burn within (Luke 24:32). His instruction must be accompanied by the gift of repentance (2 Tim. 2:25), and under the hearing of God's Word He must open the heart (Acts 16:14). This is also confirmed in 1 Corinthians 3:6–7: "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the



increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.” If man cannot accomplish this, and if the Word of God alone cannot exercise such power upon the heart of man, the Word of God must be accompanied by the immediate, almighty power of God to change the heart, which is indeed the case as these texts have shown.

Thirdly, the manner in which God’s work is denominated gives expression to such an immediate and efficacious work of God. From God’s side conversion is referred to as a creation (Eph. 2:10), as begetting (James 1:18), and as a making alive and a resurrecting from the dead (Eph. 2:5). For a more comprehensive treatment of this, please refer to the foregoing.

From the following and similar texts it is evident that God indeed promises to work in such an immediate and efficacious manner, and also that He indeed operates in this manner.

(1) God promises to do this: “I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts” (Jer. 31:33); “I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me” (Jer. 32:40); “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” (Ezek. 36:26). Neither man, nor the Word of God would do it, but God Himself would conquer all opposition. God Himself would work so efficaciously upon the heart unto repentance.

(2) God does work efficaciously upon the heart unto repentance. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). Paul writes to the believers (ch. 1:1), exhorting them (ch. 2:12) to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. He further exhorts them to be neither proud nor puffed up, to do all things without murmurings and disputings, and to walk upon the way of godliness with childlike reverence and carefulness. He stresses that their faith and activity did not proceed from them, but that they were active by the power of God, “for it is God which worketh in you,” etc. They have to avail themselves of and act upon this prevenient grace and operation, and be engaged by means of this power. God, who created the will, also recreates the will in His elect. He does not need to deal with man as one man deals with another, who can only by way of a variety of motives seek to persuade someone to be willing in regard to a certain matter. Rather, God works as God, illuminating the intellect with a new light and giving to man a will so that he wills voluntarily and with desire. God causes this willingness to be followed by working.

The apostle demonstrates this very same truth in 2 Thessalonians 1:11, “...that our God would...fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power.” They had the Word of God and it was preached to them in a most lively manner. The

apostle demonstrates this to be insufficient to bring forth believers, that faith is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8), and that the Word of God must be accompanied by an almighty power of God to thus cause man to believe. “And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power” (Eph. 1:19). The apostle says likewise, “(God) make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight” (Heb. 13:21).

Consider all this together for a moment. Man is as blind, evil, impotent, and dead as has been stated above. God permits the gospel to be preached to many, but this has no effect upon most who hear it. However, others are converted because God joins His Holy Spirit to that Word, working in them what He does not work in others. He illuminates them with a marvelous light which He does not do unto others. He removes the heart of stone from them and gives them a heart of flesh, not doing so to others. He works in them to will and to do the work of faith with power, not doing so in others. It is thus an irrefutable fact that God interacts with the heart of man in an immediate sense and thus changes it.

### **Objection #1:**

The Word of God is the seed of regeneration (1 Pet. 1:23), enlightens the eyes, converts souls (Psa. 19:8–9), is a two-edged sword, is lively and powerful, “to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit” (Heb. 4:12). The Word of God is therefore sufficient; nothing needs to be added to it, and it is not accompanied by an immediate, illuminating, and transforming power of God.

### **Answer:**

(1) All these texts indicate nothing but that God works everything by means of His Word.

(2) If the Word of God had such inherent power, it would likewise have an effect upon all who hear it, that is, upon those who are in like circumstances; however, this is not the case.

(3) Scripture states clearly that the Word of God does not have such inherent power, but that the Word of God must be accompanied by the immediate, efficacious operation of God. “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1 Cor. 3:6).

### **Objection #2:**

If the Word of God needs to be accompanied by the immediate and efficacious operation of God, man lacks a sufficient means unto salvation.

**Answer:**

It is not the means which can be the moving cause to bring forth the effect. The Word of God is not a moving cause, but only a means in God's hand. The immediate operation is not the means, but is rather the moving cause. God does not give this means, that is, the Word of God, to all men, and wherever God gives this means, He does not interact with all by way of this means, but only with those whom He pleases. If one maintains, however, that the Word of God must still be accompanied by divine operation, and that the Word of God is not sufficient unto man's salvation, we indeed agree that man cannot convert himself by means of the Word of God.

**Objection #3:**

If the Word of God must be accompanied by a work of God, man is to be excused if he does not repent, for he is not able to.

**Answer:**

(1) By way of such reasoning a heathen could also be excused for not perfectly fulfilling the law of nature, for he is not able to do so. The apostle states, however, that they are without excuse (Rom. 1:20).

(2) It is not so that man is able to progress to a point; that is, until he encounters the obstacle of his inability ; but he is already obstructed by his unwillingness . If, as some maintain, man has a neutral will enabling him to will or not to will, he has no reason to complain, for he is using his free will to avoid God and to live in sin.

**Additional objection**

It is maintained, however, that man cannot will to do so, and therefore he is to be excused.

**Answer:**

He is neither hindered nor restrained by either God, His Word, or by any creature. Instead, man is left to himself and he is so evil and hostile toward God, having such strong inclinations toward sin, that he is not able to will. He is thus to be blamed himself.

**Objection #4:**

By maintaining that there is such an efficacious and immediate operation of God upon the soul, the freedom of man's will is destroyed and removed.

**Answer:**

This we deny. God works in harmony with man's nature; however, He does not do so as one man would interact with another man. God causes man to will voluntarily, as was true when man was created. If God, who created the will in man, touches the will and the soul without removing the freedom of the will, why can this not be true in re-creation? In the first [creation], man and his will did not exist, but were created. In the second [recreation], man and his will are spiritually dead.

**Additional Objection:**

At regeneration the soul already possesses its capabilities and they are activated only in the realm of the spiritual. As the will is activated in the natural realm by natural motives, it is likewise activated in the spiritual realm by spiritual motives. It therefore cannot be maintained that there is an immediate operation of God upon the will without impinging upon the freedom of man's will.

**Answer:**

(2) In the natural realm man has some principles, enabling him to will by way of natural motives; however, in the spiritual realm man is entirely dead, entirely evil, and not able to be activated to will and to work spiritually by way of motivation. There is thus a need for an almighty, supernatural power in order to cause the faculties to be engaged in a spiritual sense.

**Objection #5:**

To hold to such an immediate interaction of God with the soul and its faculties is nothing but fanaticism.

**Answer:**

This is not so, for fanaticism adheres to revelations outside of and contrary to God's Word. It yields to passions and sudden motions which override the mind and the will, being but vain delusions and fantasies. Regeneration, however, occurs by means of the Word of God and is active according to the Word of God. If, however, one understands fanaticism to be "being driven by the spirit," <sup>12</sup> that is, to be regenerated by the Spirit and thus to live and walk by the Spirit according to the rule of God's Word, we have no objection, and the proposed absurdity is no absurdity.

We have thus demonstrated that man by nature is entirely impotent and unable. In the initial moment of his conversion he neither acts nor cooperates, but is only passive. God, by a supernatural and almighty power, interacts with and changes the intellect and will in an immediate sense, changing man from being blind to receiving

his sight, and from evil to good. That which has been said confirms the validity of the question.

## **The Irresistible Nature of the Internal Call**

Question:

Does God work irresistibly in those who are converted, conquering all the opposition of their evil nature, and in very deed translate them from a state of spiritual death to spiritual life?

**Answer:**

The Arminians deny this, but we confirm this. Man by nature hates God and is opposed to God, His Word, and the gospel. Such is the state of all men. If, however, the one person is converted and not the other, this is not to be attributed to man—as if it were true that the one accepts this grace by his free will and the other rejects it; rather this is to be attributed to the effectual operation of God, who works one thing in the one and not in the other. He not only effectually illuminates the intellect—doing so irresistibly—and irresistibly activates man’s inclinations, but He also irresistibly works upon the unwilling will in such a manner that the will wills voluntarily. This 12 The difficulty here is that the word “geestdrijverij,” translated in the dictionary as “fanaticism” or “zealotry,” can literally be interpreted as “being driven by the spirit.” When à Brakel uses this word the second time he undoubtedly interprets it in such a literal sense.

(1) Such reasoning presupposes that natural and spiritual virtue do not differ in essence but in degree. In the above we have shown this not to be so; this argument is therefore futile.

freedom is not one of neutrality (it being immaterial whether or not to do something), but one of necessary consequence, a person being willing by his own choice and inclination. This is evident from the three propositions which we have proven in the preceding material.

First, if man is blind and ignorant as to how matters ought to be; if man, who is evil and hostile towards God, hates and opposes whatever he encounters of God in His Word and in the converted; if he is entirely impotent and unable; if he is entirely dead as far as spiritual life is concerned; if he is entirely as we have proven him to be—when such a person is converted, he with all his opposition will then not be able to resist the efficacious operation of God. He will not be able to prevent himself from being changed, nor prevent the translation of his heart and will into another state—as is true for a dead person who, after having been restored to life, cannot resist being

alive. Thus, the converting, almighty power of God functions in an irresistible manner.

Secondly, if man is only passive in his conversion, and is the recipient of divine operations only as object, and therefore does not cooperate at all (as has been proven)—if such a man is converted, he is changed by an almighty, all-conquering, all-penetrating, and irresistible operation of God. Any object which is the passive recipient of action can neither oppose nor cooperate.

Thirdly, if God, in conversion, does not only illuminate the intellect by an almighty power and incline the inclinations, but also in an immediate sense interacts and changes the will, making it from unwilling to be willing—then God's operation in the conversion of man is irresistible. It is an almighty working power, a creative act, a begetting, a resurrection from the dead, a change of heart, the removal of the heart of stone and the giving of a heart of flesh, etc., as has been shown prior to this. God's operation in the conversion of men is thus irresistible, almighty, all-conquering, and all-penetrating.

Fourthly, the calling is according to God's purpose; that is, He gives specific individuals eternal life. In the way of repentance and faith He makes all those partakers of this life, and those only, whom He has elected unto that end (cf. chapter 6: Election). "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" (Rom. 8:30). Behold, there is thus an unbreakable chain: God leads His elect by way of the calling to eternal felicity. God saves them and calls them "with an holy calling...according to His own purpose and grace" (2 Tim. 1:9). If therefore they are called according to this purpose in order that they might be saved, the calling power of God cannot be resisted, for God will accomplish His purpose. He has purposed this in His decree "and who shall disannul it?" (Isa. 14:27). It is thus both clear and certain that the calling is irresistible. Let us now consider for a moment what objections are made against this.

### **Objection #1:**

There are texts which state expressly that man resists this calling, such as, "I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people" (Isa. 65:2); "Thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house" (Ezek. 12:2); "How often would I have gathered thy children together...and ye would not!" (Matt. 23:37); "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51).

### **Answer:**

All these texts do not refer to the internal call, nor to the moment of spiritual

transformation, nor to regeneration. This is, however, the point in question; namely, whether the operation of the Holy Spirit can be resisted. Instead, these texts refer to the external call and to Christ being offered unto justification, sanctification, and glorification. We readily admit that the person who is not elected resists this call, for the carnal mind is enmity against God. The natural man hates both God and holiness, and can do nothing else but reject and resist this offer. It does not follow, however, that those who are regenerated would be able to resist the omnipotent operation of the Holy Spirit, whereby He makes a dead person alive, and from being unwilling, to be willing. This we deny, and these texts do not suggest this. Concerning the distinction between the external and internal call, we refer you to that which has been stated before.

### **Objection #2:**

“For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes” (Matt. 11:21). It thus appears that man can convert himself, and if this is possible, it is his free and arbitrary choice whether or not he will repent. It therefore follows that conversion does not come about due to the irresistible power of God.

### **Answer:**

(1) This text does not refer to the true change and regeneration, but rather to an external conversion in sackcloth and ashes, which results from historical faith or as a response to miracles.

(2) This is a hyperbole whereby the Jews were convinced of their irresponsible wickedness and unbelief, this being even greater than that of the heathen. Observe this in Luke 19:40, “I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.”

### **Objection #3:**

“But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves” (Luke 7:30). If it is possible to reject the counsel of God, this counsel can be resisted.

### **Answer:**

“The counsel of God” is not to be understood to refer to God’s purpose, but rather to the external offer of the gospel which gives counsel how we may flee from the wrath of God. We fully agree that this can be resisted and is indeed resisted by the unconverted, until an all-conquering and irresistible operation of God takes place. This irresistible, divine operation, however, is manifested toward none other than the elect. It is God’s will that they will be converted and there is no one who will be able to

prevent this.

The objections which remain have already been dealt with previously. The practical application will be dealt with in the two succeeding chapters.

## **Effectual Calling**

**by Thomas Watson**

THE second qualification of the persons to whom this privilege in the text belongs, is, They are the called of God. All things work for good *"to them who are called."* Though this word *called* is placed in order after loving of God, yet in nature it goes before it. Love is first named, but not first wrought; we must be called of God, before we can love God.

Calling is made (Rom. viii. 30) the middle link of the golden chain of salvation. It is placed between predestination and glorification; and if we have this middle link fast, we are sure of the two other ends of the chain. For the clearer illustration of this there are six things observable.

**1. A distinction about calling.** There is a two-fold call.

(i.) There is an outward call, which is nothing else but God's blessed tender of grace in the gospel, His parleying with sinners, when He invites them to come in and accept of mercy. Of this our Saviour speaks: *"Many are called, but few chosen"* (Matt. xx. 16). This external call is insufficient to salvation, yet sufficient to leave men without excuse.

(ii.) There is an inward call, when God wonderfully overpowers the heart, and draws the will to embrace Christ. This is, as Augustine speaks, an effectual call. God, by the outward call, blows a trumpet in the ear; by the inward call, He opens the heart, as He did the heart of Lydia (Acts xvi. 14). The outward call may bring men to a profession of Christ, the inward call brings them to a possession of Christ. The outward call curbs a sinner, the inward call changes him.

**2. Our deplorable condition before we are called.**

(i.) We are in a state of vassalage. Before God calls a man, he is at the devil's call. If he say, Go, he goes : the deluded sinner is like the slave that digs in the mine, hews in the



quarry, or tugs at the oar. He is at the command of Satan, as the ass is at the command of the driver.

(ii.) We are in a state of darkness. "*Ye were sometimes darkness*" (Ephes. v. 8). Darkness is very disconsolate. A man in the dark is full of fear, he trembles every step he takes. Darkness is dangerous. He who is in the dark may quickly go out of the right way, and fall into rivers or whirlpools; so in the darkness of ignorance, we may quickly fall into the whirlpool of hell.

(iii.) We are in a state of impotency. "*When we were without strength*" (Rom. v. 6). No strength to resist a temptation, or grapple with a corruption; sin cut the lock where our strength lay (Judg. xvi. 20). Nay, there is not only impotency, but obstinacy, "*Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost*" (Acts vii. 51). Besides indisposition to good, there is opposition.

(iv.) We are in a state of pollution. "*I saw thee polluted in thy blood*" (Ezek. xvi. 6). The fancy coins earthly thoughts; the heart is the devil's forge, where the sparks of lust fly.

(v.) We are in a state of damnation. We are born under a curse. The wrath of God abideth on us (John iii. 36). This is our condition before God is pleased by a merciful call to bring us near to Himself, and free us from that misery in which we were before engulfed.

**3. The means of our effectual call.** The ordinary means which the Lord uses in calling us, is not by raptures and revelations, but is,

(i.) By His Word, which is "*the rod of his strength*" (Psalm cv. 2). The voice of the Word is God's call to us; therefore He is said to speak to us from heaven (Heb. xii. 25). That is, in the ministry of the Word. When the Word calls from sin, it is as if we heard a voice from heaven.

(ii.) By His Spirit. This is the loud call. The Word is the instrumental cause of our conversion, the Spirit is the efficient. The ministers of God are only the pipes and organs; it is the Spirit blowing in them, that effectually changes the heart. "*While Peter spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word*" (Acts x. 44). It is not the farmer's industry in ploughing and sowing, that will make the ground fruitful, without the early and latter rain. So it is not the seed of the Word that will effectually convert, unless the Spirit put forth His sweet influence, and drops as rain upon the heart. Therefore the aid of God's Spirit is to be implored, that He would put forth His powerful voice, and awaken us out of the grave of unbelief. If a man knock at a gate of brass, it will not open; but if he come with a key in his hand, it will open: so when

God, who has the key of David in His hand (Rev. iii. 7) comes, He opens the heart, though it be ever so fast locked against Him.

#### **4. The method God uses in calling of sinners.**

The Lord does not tie Himself to a particular way, or use the same order with all. He comes sometimes in a still small voice. Such as have had godly parents, and have sat under the warm sunshine of religious education, often do not know how or when they were called. The Lord did secretly and gradually instill grace into their hearts, as the dew falls unnoticed in drops. They know by the heavenly effects that they are called, but the time or manner they know not. The hand moves on the clock, but they do not perceive when it moves.

Thus God deals with some. Others are more stubborn and knotty sinners, and God comes to them in a rough wind. He uses more wedges of the law to break their hearts; He deeply humbles them, and shows them they are damned without Christ. Then having ploughed up the fallow ground of their hearts by humiliation, He sows the seed of consolation. He presents Christ and mercy to them, and draws their wills, not only to accept Christ, but passionately to desire, and faithfully to rest upon Him. Thus He wrought upon Paul, and called him from a persecutor to a preacher. This call, though it is more visible than the other, yet is not more real. God's method in calling sinners may vary, but the effect is still the same.

#### **5. The properties of this effectual calling.**

(i.) It is a sweet call. God so calls as He allures; He does not force, but draw. The freedom of the will is not taken away, but the stubbornness of it is conquered. *"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power"* (Psalm cx. 3). After this call there are no more disputes, the soul readily obeys God's call: as when Christ called Zacchæus, he joyfully welcomed Him into his heart and house.

(ii.) It is a holy call, *"Who hath called us with a holy calling"* (2 Tim. i. 9). This call of God calls men out of their sins: by it they are consecrated, and set apart for God. The vessels of the tabernacle were taken from common use, and set apart to a holy use; so they who are effectually called are separated from sin, and consecrated to God's service. The God whom we worship is holy, the work we are employed in is holy, the place we hope to arrive at is holy; all this calls for holiness. A Christian's heart is to be the presence-chamber of the blessed Trinity; and shall not holiness to the Lord be written upon it? Believers are children of God the Father, members of God the Son, and temples of God the Holy Ghost; and shall they not be holy? Holiness is the badge and livery of God's people. *"The people of thy holiness"* (Isaiah lxiii. 18). As chastity

distinguishes a virtuous woman from a harlot, so holiness distinguishes the godly from the wicked. It is a holy calling; *"For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness"* (1 Thess. iv. 7). Let not any man say he is called of God, that lives in sin. Has God called you to be a swearer, to be a drunkard? Nay, let not the merely moral person say he is effectually called. What is civility without sanctity? It is but a dead carcass strewed with flowers. The king's picture stamped upon brass will not go current for gold. The merely moral man looks as if he had the King of heaven's image stamped upon him; but he is no better than counterfeit metal, which will not pass for current with God.

(iii.) It is an irresistible call. When God calls a man by His grace, he cannot but come. You may resist the minister's call, but you cannot the Spirit's call. The finger of the blessed Spirit can write upon a heart of stone, as once He wrote His laws upon tables of stone. God's words are creating words; when He said "Let there be light, there was light"; and when He says, "Let there be faith", it shall be so. When God called Paul, he answered to the call. *"I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision"* (Acts xxvi. 19). God rides forth conquering in the chariot of His gospel; He makes the blind eyes see, and the stony heart bleed. If God will call a man, nothing shall lie in the way to hinder; difficulties shall be untied, the powers of hell shall disband. *"Who hath resisted his will?"* (Rom. ix. 19). God bends the iron sinew, and cuts asunder the gates of brass (Psalm cvii. 16). When the Lord touches a man's heart by His Spirit, all proud imaginations are brought down, and the fort-royal of the will yields to God. I may allude to Psalm cxiv. 5, *"What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? and thou Jordan, that thou wert driven back?"* The man that before was as a raging sea, foaming forth wickedness, now on a sudden flies back and trembles, he falls down as the jailor, *"What shall I do to be saved?"* (Acts xvi. 30). What ails thee, O sea? What ails this man? The Lord has been effectually calling him. He has been working a work of grace, and now his stubborn heart is conquered by a sweet violence.

(iv.) It is a high calling. *"I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God"* (Phil. iii. 14). It is a high calling, because we are called to high exercises of religion — to die to sin, to be crucified to the world, to live by faith, to have fellowship with the Father (1 John i. 3). This is a high calling; here is a work too high for men in a state of nature to perform. It is a high calling, because we are called to high privileges, to justification and adoption, to be made co-heirs with Christ. He that is effectually called is higher than the princes of the earth.

(v.) It is a gracious call. It is the fruit and product of free grace. That God should call some, and not others; some taken, and others left; one called who is of a more rugged, morose disposition, another of sharper intellect, of a sweeter temper, rejected, here is free grace. That the poor should be rich in faith, heirs of a kingdom (James ii. 5), and the nobles and great ones of the world for the most part rejected, *"Not many noble are called"* (1 Cor. i. 26); this is free and rich grace. *"Even so, Father, for so it seemed good*

*in thy sight*" (Matt. xi. 26). That under the same sermon one should be effectually wrought upon, another no more moved than a dead man with the sound of music; that one should hear the Spirit's voice in the Word, another not hear it; that one should be softened and moistened with the influence of heaven, another, like Gideon's dry fleece, has no dew upon him: behold here distinguishing grace! The same affliction converts one and hardens another. Affliction to one is as the bruising of spices, which cast forth a fragrant smell; to the other it is as the crushing of weeds in a mortar, which are more unsavoury. What is the cause of this, but the free grace of God? It is a gracious calling; it is all enamelled and interwoven with free grace.

(vi.) It is a glorious call. *"Who hath called us unto his eternal glory"* (I Pet. v. 10). We are called to the enjoyment of the ever-blessed God : as if a man were called out of a prison to sit upon a throne. Quintus Curtius writes of one, who while digging in his garden was called to be king. Thus God calls us to glory and virtue (2 Pet. i. 3). First to virtue, then to glory. At Athens there were two temples, the temple of Virtue, and the temple of Honour; and no man could go to the temple of honour, but through the temple of virtue. So God calls us first to virtue, and then to glory. What is the glory among men, which most so hunt after, but a feather blown in the air? What is it to the weight of glory? Is there not great reason we should follow God's call? He calls to preferment; can there be any loss or prejudice in this? God would have us part with nothing for Him, but that which will damn us if we keep it. He has no design upon us, but to make us happy. He calls us to salvation, He calls us to a kingdom. Oh, how should we then, with Bartimaeus, throw off our ragged coat of sin, and follow Christ when He calls!

(vii.) It is a rare call. But few are savingly called. *"Few are chosen"* (Matt. xxii. 14). Few, not collectively, but comparatively. The word "to call" signifies to choose out some from among others. Many have the light brought to them, but few have their eyes anointed to see that light. *"Thou hast a few names in Sardis that have not defiled their garments"* (Rev. iii. 4). How many millions sit in the region of darkness! And in those climates where the Sun of righteousness does shine, there are many who receive the light of the truth, without the love of it. There are many formalists, but few believers. There is something that looks like faith, which is not. The Cyprian diamond, says Pliny, sparkles like the true diamond, but it is not of the right kind, it will break with the hammer: so the hypocrite's faith will break with the hammer of persecution. But few are truly called, The number of precious stones is few, to the number of pebble stones. Most men shape their religion according to the fashion of the times; they are for the music and the idol (Dan. iii. 7). The serious thought of this should make us work out our salvation with fear, and labour to be in the number of those few whom God has translated into a state of grace.

(viii.) It is an unchangeable call. *"The gifts and calling of God are without repentance"* (Rom. xi. 29). That is, as a learned writer says, those gifts which flow from election.

When God calls a man, He does not repent of it. God does not, as many friends do, love one day, and hate another; or as princes, who make their subjects favourites, and afterwards throw them into prison. This is the blessedness of a saint; his condition admits of no alteration. God's call is founded upon His decree, and His decree is immutable. Acts of grace cannot be reversed. God blots out His people's sins, but not their names. Let the world ring changes every hour, a believer's condition is fixed and unalterable.

**6. The end of our effectual calling is the honour of God.** *"That we should be to the praise of his glory"* (Ephes. i. 12). He that is in the state of nature, is no more fit to honour God, than a brute is to put forth acts of reason. A man before conversion continually reflects dishonour upon God. As black vapours which arise out of fenny, moorish grounds, cloud and darken the sun, so out of the natural man's heart arise black vapours of sin, which cast a cloud upon God's glory. The sinner is versed in treason, but understands nothing of loyalty to the King of heaven. But there are some whom the lot of free-grace falls upon, and these shall be taken as jewels from among the rubbish, and be effectually called, that they may lift up God's name in the world. The Lord will have some in all ages who shall oppose the corruptions of the times, bear witness to His truths, and convert sinners from the error of their ways. He will have His worthies, as king David had. They who have been monuments of God's mercies, will be trumpets of His praise.

These considerations show us the necessity of effectual calling. Without it there is no going to heaven. We must be *"made meet for the inheritance"* (Col. i. 12). As God makes heaven fit for us, so He makes us fit for heaven; and what gives this meetness, but effectual calling? A man remaining in the filth and rubbish of nature, is no more fit for heaven, than a dead man is fit to inherit an estate. The high calling is not a thing arbitrary or indifferent, but as needful as salvation; yet alas, how is this one thing needful neglected! Most men, like the people of Israel, wander up and down to gather straw, but do not mind the evidences of their effectual calling.

Take notice what a mighty power God puts forth in calling of sinners! God does so call as to draw (John vi. 44). Conversion is styled a resurrection. *"Blessed is he that hath part in the first resurrection"* (Rev. xx. 6). That is, a rising from sin to grace. A man can no more convert himself than a dead man can raise himself. It is called a creation (Col. iii. 10). To create is above the power of nature.

**Objection.** But, say some, the will is not dead but asleep, and God, by a moral persuasion, does only awaken us, and then the will can obey God's call, and move of itself to its own conversion.

**Answer.** To this I answer, Every man is by sin bound in fetters. *"I perceive that thou*

*art in the bond of iniquity"* (Acts viii. 23). A man that is in fetters, if you use arguments, and persuade him to go, is that sufficient? There must be a breaking of his fetters, and setting him free, before he can walk. So it is with every natural man; he is fettered with corruption; now the Lord by converting grace must file off his fetters, nay, give him legs to run too, or he can never obtain salvation.

**Use. An exhortation to make your calling sure.**

*"Give diligence to make your calling sure"* (2 Pet. i. 10). This is the great business of our lives, to get sound evidences of our effectual calling. Do not acquiesce in outward privileges, do not cry as the Jews, "*The temple of the Lord!*" (Jer. vii. 4). Do not rest in baptism; what is it to have the water, and want the Spirit? Do not be content that Christ has been preached to you. Do not satisfy yourselves with an empty profession; all this may be, and yet you are no better than blazing comets. But labour to evidence to your souls that you are called of God. Be not Athenians to inquire news. What is the state and complexion of the times? What changes are likely to happen in such a year? What is all this, if you are not effectually called? What if the times should have a fairer aspect? What though glory did dwell in our land, if grace does not dwell in our hearts? Oh my brethren, when things are dark without, let all be clear within. Give diligence to make your calling sure, it is both feasible and probable. God is not wanting to them that seek Him. Let not this great business hang in hand any longer. If there were a controversy about your land, you would use all means to clear your title; and is salvation nothing? Will you not clear your title here? Consider how sad your case is, if you are not effectually called.

You are strangers to God. The prodigal went into a far country (Luke xv. 13), which implies that every sinner, before conversion, is afar off from God. "*At that time ye were without Christ, strangers to the covenants of promise"* (Ephes. ii. 12). Men dying in their sins have no more right to promises than strangers have to the privilege of free-born citizens. If you are strangers, what language can you expect from God, but this, "I know you not!"

If you are not effectually called, you are enemies. "*Alienated and enemies"* (Col. i. 21). There is nothing in the Bible you can lay claim to, but the threatenings. You are heirs to all the plagues written in the book of God. Though you may resist the commands of the law, you cannot flee from the curses of the law. Such as are enemies to God, let them read their doom. "*But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me"* (Luke xix. 27). Oh, how it should concern you therefore to make your calling sure! How miserable and damnable will your condition be, if death call you before the Spirit call you!

**Question.** But is there any hope of my being called? I have been a great sinner.

**Answer.** Great sinners have been called. Paul was a persecutor, yet he was called. Some of the Jews who had a hand in crucifying Christ, were called. God loves to display His free grace to sinners. Therefore be not discouraged. You see a golden cord let down from heaven for poor trembling souls to lay hold upon.

**Question.** But how shall I know I am effectually called?

**Answer.** He who is savingly called is called out of himself, not only out of sinful self, but out of righteous self; he denies his duties and moral endowments. *"Not having mine own righteousness"* (Phil. iii. 9). He whose heart God has touched by His Spirit, lays down the idol of self-righteousness at Christ's feet, for Him to tread upon. He uses morality and duties of piety, but does not trust to them. Noah's dove made use of her wings to fly, but trusted to the ark for safety. This is excellent, when a man is called out of himself. This self-renunciation is, as Augustine says, the first step to saving faith.

He who is effectually called has a visible change wrought. Not a change of the faculties, but of the qualities. He is altered from what he was before. His body is the same, but not his mind he has another spirit. Paul was so changed after his conversion that people did not know him (Acts ix. 21). Oh what a metamorphosis does grace make! *"And such were some of you; but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified"* (1 Cor. vi. 11). Grace changes the heart.

In effectual calling there is a three-fold change wrought:

(1). There is a change wrought in the understanding. Before, there was ignorance, darkness was upon the face of the deep; but now there is light, *"Now ye are light in the Lord"* (Ephes. v. 8). The first work of God in the creation of the world was light; so it is in the new creation. He who is savingly called says with that man in the gospel : *"Whereas I was blind, now I see"* (John ix. 25). He sees such evil in sin, and excellency in the ways of God, as he never saw before. Indeed, this light which the blessed Spirit brings, may well be called a marvellous light. *"That ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you into his marvellous light"* (1 Pet. ii. 9). It is a marvellous light in six respects. (i.) Because it is strangely conveyed. It does not come from the celestial orbs where the planets are, but from the Sun of righteousness. (ii.) It is marvellous in the effect. This light does that which no other light can. It makes a man perceive himself to be blind. (iii.) It is a marvellous light, because it is more penetrating. Other light may shine upon the face; this light shines into the heart, and enlightens the conscience (2 Cor. iv. 6). (iv.) It is a marvellous light, because it sets those who have it a marvelling. They marvel at themselves, how they could be contented to be so long without it. They marvel that their eyes should be opened, and not others. They marvel that notwithstanding they hated and opposed this light, yet it should shine in the firmament of their souls. This is what the saints will stand wondering at to all eternity. (v.) It is a marvellous light, because it is more vital than

any others. It not only enlightens, but quickens; it makes alive those who "*were dead in trespasses and sins*" (Ephes. ii. 1). Therefore it is called the "*light of life*" (John viii. 12). (vi.) It is a marvellous light, because it is the beginning of everlasting light. The light of grace is the morning-star which ushers in the sunlight of glory.

Now then, reader, can you say that this marvellous light of the Spirit has dawned upon you? When you were enveloped in ignorance, and did neither know God nor yourself, suddenly a light from heaven shined round about you. This is one part of that blessed change which is wrought in the effectual calling.

(2). There is a change wrought in the will. "*To will is present with me*" (Rom. vii. 18). The will, which before opposed Christ, now embraces Him. The will, which was an iron sinew, is now like melting wax; it readily receives the stamp and impression of the Holy Ghost. The will moves heavenward, and carries all the orbs of the affections along with it. The regenerate will answers to every call of God, as the echo answers to the voice. "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" (Acts ix. 6). The will now becomes a volunteer, it enlists itself under the Captain of salvation (Heb. ii. 10). Oh what a happy change is wrought here! Before, the will kept Christ out; now, it keeps sin out.

(3). There is a change in the conduct. He who is called of God, walks directly contrary to what he did before. He walked before in envy and malice, now he walks in love; before he walked in pride, now in humility. The current is carried quite another way. As in the heart there is a new birth, so in the life a new edition. Thus we see what a mighty change is wrought in such as are called of God.

How far are they from this effectual call who never had any change? They are the same they were forty or fifty years ago, as proud and carnal as ever, They have seen many changes in their times, but they have had no change in their heart. Let not men think to leap out of the harlot's lap (the world) into Abraham's bosom; either they must have a gracious change while they live, or a cursed change when they die.

He who is called of God esteems this call as the highest blessing. A king whom God has called by His grace, esteems it more that he is called to be a saint, than that he is called to be a king. He values his high-calling more than his high-birth. Theodosius thought it a greater honour to be a Christian than to be an emperor. A carnal person can no more value spiritual blessings than a baby can value a diamond necklace. He prefers his worldly grandeur, his ease, plenty, and titles of honour, before conversion. He had rather be called duke than saint, a sign he is a stranger to effectual calling. He who is enlightened by the Spirit, counts holiness his best heraldry, and looks upon his effectual calling as his preferment. When he has taken this degree, he is a candidate for heaven.

He who is effectually called, is called out of the world. It is a "*heavenly calling*" (Heb.



iii. 1). He that is called of God, minds the things of a heavenly aspect; he is *in* the world, but not *of* the world. Naturalists say of precious stones, though they have their matter from the earth, yet their sparkling lustre is from the influence of the heavens: so it is with a godly man, though his body be from the earth, yet the sparkling of his affections is from heaven; his heart is drawn into the upper region, as high as Christ. He not only casts off every wicked work, but every earthly weight. He is not a worm, but an eagle.

Another sign of our effectual calling is diligence in our ordinary calling. Some boast of their high calling, but they lie idly at anchor. Religion does not seal warrants to idleness. Christians must not be slothful. Idleness is the devil's bath; a slothful person becomes a prey to every temptation. Grace, while it cures the heart, does not make the hand lame. He who is called of God, as he works for heaven, so he works in his trade.

## **The Relationship Between Irresistible Grace and the Atonement**

**by John Hendryx**

In a discussion relating to particular redemption (AKA limited atonement) I discussed how all redemptive blessings are found in Christ, including the blessing of irresistible grace.

### **A visitor responded:**

*John, Please help me understand your logic here. Irresistible grace is wrought through the atonement and not election? I am under the impression that God will have mercy on whom he wills. Whether the atonement is limited or not God has chosen his elect and they are atoned for. I am not seeing how by acknowledging that "irresistible grace is found only in Christ" we "acknowledge limited atonement by default". How are the two connected?*

### **My response**

Hello \_\_\_\_\_.

Election, by itself, has never saved anyone. It is God's blueprint, so to speak, of what he intends to do in time through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. God the Father elects, the Son redeems them, and the Spirit applies the work of Christ to the same. The Trinity, in other words, works in harmony, to bring about the redemption of the elect. God the Father does not do this alone, APART from the work of the other two Persons of the Trinity. All redemptive grace is found in Christ. Ephesians 1:3 explains it thus:

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves." (Eph 1:3-6)

Please note that all spiritual blessings are IN CHRIST, that the Father chose us IN CHRIST, that He predestined us to adoption as sons IN CHRIST. So yes, you are right, God elects according to his good pleasure but he gets the job done through Jesus Christ.

Particular redemption is connected to irresistible grace in that, irresistible grace (all acknowledge) is given to the elect alone. It is not granted to the non-elect. And all spiritual blessings are found in Christ... Therefore, Christ died in a way, a redemptive way, to secure irresistible grace for the elect, that he did not for the non-elect. Irresistible grace was not purchased for the non-elect PERIOD. In other words, the redemptive blessing of irresistible grace is what Christ purchased on the cross to render certain the elect would respond positively to the **outward gospel call**. God causes the the gospel, which is preached to all creatures, to come to those He has foreknown, with the power of the Holy Spirit's convicting, regenerating work accomplish through applying Christ's redemptive benefits. No redemptive grace is to be had outside of the work of Christ. All spiritual blessings are found in Christ and Christ alone. To claim otherwise is to deny Christ as our Savior and that His work is finished. At the very least, it denies that His work is sufficient to save completely. Those who deny limited atonement may well believe Christ's atonement was necessary, but it was not sufficient. Even Roman Catholics believe the grace of Christ was necessary, but it was not enough ... they must believe and persevere to the end and thus MAINTAIN their own just standing before God. We affirm that Christ work is complete ... it is totally sufficient to save. He is the author AND perfecter of our faith. There is nothing we can do to improve upon that. 1 Peter 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, **he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.**" The Text declares that our hope in Christ comes about through the new birth, which is direct result of our being intimately joined to

Christ's resurrection.

In 529 AD the Council of Orange wrote the following;

"...if anyone affirms that we can form any right opinion or make any right choice which relates to the salvation of eternal life... that is, assent to the preaching of the gospel through our natural powers without the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit ...he is led astray by a heretical spirit." The Council of Orange, CANON 7.(529 AD)

John Owen said, "To suppose that whatever God requireth of us that we have power of ourselves to do, is to make the cross and grace of Jesus Christ of none effect."

Consider: that whatever God requires of us also includes faith. We do not have the power to believe the gospel without the the Spirit uniting us to Jesus Christ.

In Ezekiel 36:25 God says,

I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

Notice that God first gives us a new heart so that we may keep his laws. Without the Holy Spirit, the word does not find a place in our heart. Jesus told his disciples that he must go to the Father so the the Spirit would come to the whole world. So again the Bible forces us to conclude that The Trinity works together to bring about his redemptive purposes.

## **The Perseverance of the Saints**

**by Loraine Boettner**

1. Statement of the Doctrine. 2. Perseverance Does Not Depend Upon the Person's Good Works But Upon God's Grace. 3. Though Truly Saved the Christian May Temporarily Backslide and Commit Sin. 4. An Outward Profession of Righteousness

Not a Guarantee That the Person Is a True Christian. 5. Arminian Sense of Insecurity. 6. Purpose of the Scripture Warnings Against Apostasy. 7. Scripture Proof.

## **1. STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE**

The doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints is stated in the Westminster Confession in the following words: "They whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved." [Chapter XVII, Section 1.]

This doctrine does not stand alone but is a necessary part of the Calvinistic system of theology. The doctrines of Election and Efficacious Grace logically imply the certain salvation of those who receive these blessings. If God has chosen men absolutely and unconditionally to eternal life, and if His Spirit effectually applies to them the benefits of redemption, the inescapable conclusion is that these persons shall be saved. And, historically, this doctrine has been held by all Calvinists, and denied by practically all Arminians.

Those who have fled to Jesus for refuge have a firm foundation upon which to build. Though floods of error deluge the land, though Satan raise all the powers of earth and all the iniquities of their own hearts against them, they shall never fail; but, persevering to the end, they shall inherit those mansions which have been prepared for them from the foundation of the world. The saints in heaven are happier but no more secure than are true believers here in this world. Since faith and repentance are gifts of God, the bestowing of these gifts is a revelation of God's purpose to save those to whom they are given. It is an evidence that God has predestinated the recipients of these gifts to be conformed to the image of His Son, i.e., to be like Him in character, destiny, and glory, and that He will infallibly carry out His purpose. No one can pluck them out of His hands. Those who once become true Christians have within themselves the principle of eternal life, which principle is the Holy Spirit; and since the Holy Spirit dwells within them they are already potentially holy. True, they are still exercised by many trials, and they do not yet see what they shall be, but they should know that that which is begun in them shall be completed to the end, and that the very presence of strife within them is the sign of life and the promise of victory.

Furthermore, let our opponents inform us why it is that in regard to those who become true Christians, but who, as they allege, fall away, God does not take them out of the world while they are in the saved state. Surely no one will have the perversity to say that it was because He could not, or because He did not foresee their future apostasy. Why, then, does He leave these objects of His affection here to fall back into sin and to perish? His gift of continued life to those Christians amounts to an infinite curse placed upon them. Who really believe that the heavenly Father takes no better

care of His children than that? This stupid heresy of the Arminians teaches that a person may be a son of God today and a son of the Devil tomorrow, that he may change from one state to another as rapidly as he changes his mind. It teaches that he may be born of the Spirit, justified and sanctified, all but glorified, and yet, that he may become reprobate and perish eternally, his own will and course of conduct being the determining factor. Certainly this is desperate doctrine. There is scarcely an error more absurd than that which supposes that a sovereign God would permit his children to defeat His love and fall away.

In addition to this, if God knows that a certain Christian is going to rebel and perish, can He love him with any deep affection even before his apostasy? If we knew that some one who is our friend today would be led to become our enemy and betray us tomorrow, we could not receive him with the intimacy and trust which otherwise would be natural. Our knowledge of his future acts would in large measure destroy our present love for him.

No one denies that the redeemed in heaven will be preserved in holiness. Yet if God is able to preserve His saints in heaven without violating their free agency, may He not also preserve His saints on earth without violating their free agency?

The nature of the change which occurs in regeneration is a sufficient guarantee that the life imparted shall be permanent. Regeneration is a radical and supernatural change of the inner nature, through which the soul is made spiritually alive, and the new life which is implanted is immortal. And since it is a change in the inner nature, it is in a sphere in which man does not have control. No creature is at liberty to change the fundamental principles of its nature, for that is the prerogative of God as Creator. Hence nothing short of another supernatural act of God could reverse this change and cause the new life to be lost. The born-again Christian can no more lose his sonship to the heavenly Father than an earthly son can lose his sonship to an earthly father. The idea that a Christian may fall away and perish arises from a wrong conception of the principle of spiritual life which is imparted to the soul in regeneration.

## **2. OUR PERSEVERANCE NOT DEPENDENT ON OUR OWN GOOD WORKS BUT ON GOD'S GRACE**

Paul teaches that believers are not under law, but under grace, and that since they are not under the law they cannot be condemned for having violated the law. "Ye are not under law but under grace," Rom. 6:14. Further sin cannot possibly cause their downfall, for they are under a system of grace and are not treated according to their deserts. "If it is by grace, it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace," Rom. 11:6. "The law worketh wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there transgression," Rom. 4:15. "Apart from the law sin is dead" (that is, where the law is abolished sin can no longer subject the person to punishment), Rom. 7:8. "Ye were

made dead to the law through the body of Christ," Rom. 7:4. The one who attempts to earn even the smallest part of his salvation by works becomes "a debtor to do the whole law" (that is, to render perfect obedience in his own strength and thus earn his salvation), Gal. 3:10. We are here dealing with two radically different systems of salvation, two systems which, in fact, are diametrically opposed to each other.

The infinite, mysterious, eternal love of God for His people is a guarantee that they can never be lost. This love is not subject to fluctuations but is as unchangeable as His being. It is also gratuitous, and keeps faster hold of us than we of it. It is not founded on the attractiveness of its objects. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins," I John 4:10. "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life," Rom. 5:8-10. Here the very point stressed is that our standing with God is not based on our deserts. It was "while we were enemies" that we were brought into spiritual life through sovereign grace; and if He has done the greater, will He not do the lesser? The writer of the book of Hebrews also teaches that it is impossible for one of God's chosen to be lost when he says that Christ is both "the Author and Perfecter of our faith." We are there taught that the whole course of our salvation is divinely planned and divinely guided. Neither the grace of God nor its continuance is given according to our merits. Hence if any Christian fell away, it would be because God had withdrawn His grace and changed His method of procedure or, in other words, because He had put the person back under a system of law.

Robert L. Dabney has expressed this truth very ably in the following paragraph: "The sovereign and unmerited love is the cause of the believer's effectual calling. Jer. 33:3; Rom. 8:30. Now, as the cause is unchangeable, the effect is unchangeable. That effect is, the constant communication of grace to the believer in whom God hath begun a good work. God was not induced to bestow His renewing grace in the first instance, by anything which He saw, meritorious or attractive, in the repenting sinner; and therefore the subsequent absence of everything good in him would be no new motive to God for withdrawing His grace. When He first bestowed that grace, He knew that the sinner on whom He bestowed it was totally depraved, and wholly and only hateful in himself to the divine holiness; and therefore no new instance of ingratitude or unfaithfulness, of which the sinner may become guilty after his conversion, can be any provocation to God, to change His mind, and wholly withdraw His sustaining grace. God knew all this ingratitude before. He will chastise it, by temporarily withdrawing His Holy Spirit, or His providential mercies; but if He had not intended from the first to bear with it, and to forgive it in Christ, He would not have called the sinner by His grace at first. In a word, the causes for which God determined to bestow His electing love on the sinner are wholly in God, and not at all in the believer; and

hence, nothing in the believer's heart or conduct can finally change that purpose of love. Is. 54:10; Rom. 11:29. Compare carefully Rom. 5:8-10; 8:32, with the whole scope of Rom. 8:28-end. This illustrious passage is but an argument for our proposition; "What shall separate us from the love of Christ?" [*Theology*, p. 690.]

"God's love in this respect," says Dr. Charles Hodge "is compared to parental love. A mother does not love her child because it is lovely. Her love leads her to do all she can to render it attractive and to keep it so. So the love of God, being in like manner mysterious, unaccountable by anything in its objects, secures His adorning His children with the graces of His Spirit, and arraying them in all the beauty of holiness. It is only the lamentable mistake that God loves us for our goodness, that can lead any one to suppose that His love is dependent on our self-sustained attractiveness." [*Systematic Theology*, III, p. 112.]

Concerning the salvation of the elect, Luther says, "God's decree of predestination is firm and certain; and the necessity resulting from it is, in like manner, immovable, and cannot but take place. For we ourselves are so feeble, that if the matter were left in our hands, very few, or rather none, would be saved; but Satan would overcome us all."

The more we think of these matters, the more thankful we are that our perseverance in holiness and assurance of salvation is not dependent on our own weak nature, but upon God's constant sustaining power. We can say with Isaiah, "Except Jehovah of hosts had left us a very small remnant, we should have become as Sodom, we should have been like unto Gomorrah." Arminianism denies this doctrine of Perseverance, because it is a system, not of pure grace, but of grace and works; and in any such system the person must prove himself at least partially worthy.

### **3. THOUGH TRULY SAVED THE CHRISTIAN MAY TEMPORARILY BACKSLIDE AND COMMIT SIN**

This doctrine of Perseverance does not mean that Christians do not temporarily fall the victims of sin, for alas, this is all too common. Even the best of men backslide temporarily. But they are never completely defeated; for God, by the exercise of His grace on their hearts infallibly prevents even the weakest saint from final apostasy. As yet we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power (or the glory) may be of God, and not from ourselves (II Cor. 4:7).

Concerning his own personal experience even the great apostle Paul could write: "The good which I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I practice. But if what I would not, that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. . . . I find then the law, that, to me who would do good, evil is present. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see a different law in my members, warring against

the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am I who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then I of myself with the mind, indeed, serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." Rom. 7:19-25. In these lines every true Christian reads his own experience.

It is, of course, inconsistent for the Christian to commit sin, and the writer of the book of Hebrews says that those who do sin "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame" (6:6). After David had committed sin and had repented he was told by the prophet Nathan that his sin would be forgiven, but that nevertheless through it he had "given great occasion to the enemies of Israel to blaspheme," II Sam. 12:14. David and Peter fell away temporarily, but the basic principles of their natures called them back. Judas fell away permanently because he lacked those basic principles.

As long as the believer remains in this world his state is one of warfare. He suffers temporary reverses and may for a time appear to have lost all faith; yet if he has been once truly saved, he cannot fall away completely from grace. If once he has experienced the inner change which comes through regeneration he will sooner or later return to the fold and be saved. When he comes to himself he confesses his sins and asks forgiveness, never doubting that he is saved. His lapse into sin may have injured him severely and may have brought destruction to others; but so far as he is personally concerned it is only temporary. Paul taught that the life work of many people should be burned since it is constructed of wrong materials, though they themselves shall be saved "so as by fire," I Cor. 3:12-15; and it was this teaching which Jesus brought out in the parable of the lost sheep which the shepherd sought and brought back to the fold.

If true believers fell away, then their bodies, which are called "temples of the Holy Spirit," would become the habitations of the Devil, which of course would make the Devil rejoice and insult over God (I Cor. 6:19). "The Christian is like a man making his way up hill, who occasionally slips back, yet always has his face set toward the summit. The unregenerate man has his face turned downwards, and he is slipping all the way," A. H. Strong. "The believer, like a man on shipboard, may fall again and again on the deck, but he will never fall overboard." C. H. Spurgeon.

Each one of the elect is like the prodigal son in this, that for a time he is deluded by the world and is led astray by his own carnal appetite. He tries to feed on the husks, but they do not satisfy. And sooner or later he is obliged to say, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight." And he meets with the same reception, tokens of unchanging love; and a father's welcome voice echoes through the soul, and melts the heart of the poor returning backslider, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is



found." Let it be noticed that this is a thoroughly Calvinistic parable in that the prodigal was a son, and could not lose that relationship. Those who are not sons never have the desire to arise and go to the Father.

Our judgments may at times be wrong, as was that of the bewitched Galatians (3:1); and our affections may cool, as in the Ephesian Church (Rev. 2:4). The Church may become drowsy, yet her heart awakes (Song 5:3). Grace may at times seem to be lost to a child of God when it is indeed not so. The sun is eclipsed, but regains its former splendor. The trees lose all their leaves and fruit in winter, but has fresh buddings with the spring. Israel flees once, or even twice, before her enemies, and yet they conquer the land of promise. The Christian, too, falls many times, but is finally saved. It is unthinkable that God's elect should fail of salvation. "There is no possibility of their escaping the omnipotent power of God. so that, like Jonah, who fled from the will of God, which was to carry the message to Nineveh, yet was pursued even into the belly of the fish by the power of God until he willingly obeyed God's command, so they will eventually return to the Saviour, and after confession receive pardon for their sins and be saved." [F. E. Hamilton, Article, "The Reformed Faith and the Presbyterian Church."]

#### **4. AN OUTWARD PROFESSION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS NOT ALWAYS A PROOF THAT THE PERSON IS A TRUE CHRISTIAN**

We have no great difficulty in disposing of those cases where apparently true believers have gone into final apostasy. Both Scripture and experience teach us that we are often mistaken in our judgment of our fellow men, that sometimes it is practically impossible for us to know for certain that they are true Christians. The tares were never wheat, and the bad fish were never good, in spite of the fact that their true nature was not at first recognized. Since Satan can so alter his appearance that he is mistaken for an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14), it is no marvel that sometimes his ministers also fashion themselves as doers of righteousness, with the most deceptive appearances of holiness, devotion, piety and zeal. Certainly an outward profession is not always a guarantee that the soul is saved. Like the Pharisees of old, they may only desire to "make a fair show in the flesh," and deceive many. Jesus warned His disciples, "there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect," Matt. 24:24; and He quoted the prophet Isaiah to the effect that, "This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men," Mark 7:6, 7. Paul warned against those who were "false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ," II Cor. 11:13. And to the Romans he wrote, "They are not all Israel, that are of Israel: neither, because they are Abraham's seed are they all children," Rom. 9:6, 7. John mentions those who "call themselves apostles, and they are not," Rev. 2:2; and a little later he adds, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art

dead," Rev. 3:1.

But however effectively these may deceive men, God all the time knows "the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan," Rev. 2:9. We live in a day when multitudes claim the name of "Christian," who are destitute of Christian knowledge, experience, and character, in a day when, in many quarters, the distinction between the Church and the world has been wiped out. Like Samuel, we are often deceived by the outward appearance, and say, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before us," when if we really knew the motives behind their works we would conclude otherwise. We are often mistaken in our judgment of others, in spite of the best precautions that we can take. John gave the true solution for these cases when he wrote: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they all are not of us," I John 2:19. All of those who fall away permanently come under this class.

Some persons make a great profession of religion although they know nothing of the Lord Jesus in sincerity and in truth. These persons may outstrip many a humble follower in head-knowledge, and for a season they may quite deceive the very elect; yet all the time their hearts have never been touched. In the judgment day many of those who at some time in their lives have been externally associated with the Church will say, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works?" And then He will reply to them, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity," Matt. 7:22, 23; which, of course, would not be true if at some time He had known them as real Christians. When every man shall appear in his own colors, when the secrets of all hearts shall be manifest, many who at times appeared to be true Christians will be seen never to have been among God's people. Some fall away from a profession of faith, but none fall away from the saving grace of God. Those who do fall have never known the latter. They are the stony-ground hearers, who have no root in themselves, but who endure for a while; and when tribulation or persecution arises, straightway they stumble. They are then said to have given up or to have made shipwreck of that faith which they never possessed except in appearance. Some of these become sufficiently enlightened in the scheme of the doctrines of the Gospel that they are able to preach or to teach them to others, and yet are themselves entirely destitute of real saving grace. When such fall away they are no proofs nor instances of the final apostasy of real saints.

Mere church membership, of course, is no guarantee that the persons are real Christians. Not every member of the Church militant will be a member of the Church triumphant. To answer certain purposes, they make an outward profession of the Gospel, which obliges them for a time to be outwardly moral and to associate themselves with the people of God. They appear to have true faith and continue thus

for a while. Then either their sheep's clothing is stripped off, or they throw it off themselves, and return again to the world. If we could see the real motives of their hearts, we would discover that at no time were they ever actuated by a true love of God. They were all this while goats, and not sheep, ravening wolves, and not gentle lambs. Hence Peter says of them, "It has happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog turning to his own vomit again, and the sow that had been washed to wallowing in the mire," II Peter 2:22. They thereby show that they never belonged to the number of the elect.

Many of the unconverted listen to the preaching of the Gospel as Herod listened to John the Baptist. We are told that "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe. And when he heard him he was much perplexed; and he heard him gladly," Mark 6:20. Yet no one who knows of Herod's decree to put John the Baptist to death, and of his life in general, will say that he was ever a Christian.

In addition to what has been said it is to be admitted that often times the common operations of the Spirit on the enlightened conscience lead to reformation and to an externally religious life. Those so influenced are often very strict in their conduct and diligent in their religious duties. To the awakened sinner the promises of the Gospel and the exhibition of the plan of salvation contained in the Scriptures appear not only as true but as suited to his condition. He receives them with joy, and believes with a faith founded on the moral force of truth. This faith continues as long as the state of mind by which it is produced continues. When that changes, he relapses into his usual state of insensibility, and his faith disappears. It is to this class of persons that Christ referred when He spoke of those who receive the Word in stony places or among thorns. Numerous examples of this temporary faith are found in the Scriptures and are often seen in every day life. These experiences often precede or accompany genuine conversion; but in many cases they are not followed by a real change of heart. They may occur repeatedly, and yet those who experience them return to their normal state of unconcern and worldliness. Often times it is impossible for an observer or even the person himself to distinguish these experiences from those of the truly regenerated. "By their fruits ye shall know them," is the test given by our Lord. Only when these experiences issue in a consistently holy life can their distinctive character be known.

## **5. ARMINIAN SENSE OF INSECURITY**

A consistent Arminian, with his doctrines of free will and of falling from grace, can never in this life be certain of his eternal salvation. He may, indeed, have the assurance of his present salvation, but he can have only a hope of his final salvation. He may regard his final salvation as highly probable, but he cannot know it as a certainty. He has seen many of his fellow Christians backslide and perish after making

a good start. Why may not he do the same thing? So long as men remain in this world they have the remnants of the old sinful nature clinging to them; they are surrounded by the most alluring and deceptive pleasures of the world and the most subtle temptations of the Devil. In many of the supposedly Christian churches they hear the false teaching of modernistic, and therefore unchristian, ministers. If Arminianism were true, Christians would still be in very dangerous positions, with their eternal destiny suspended upon the probability that their weak, creaturely wills would continue to choose right. Furthermore, Arminianism would logically hold that no confirmation in holiness is possible, not even in heaven; for even there the person would still retain his free will and might commit sin any time he chose.

By comparison the Arminian is like the person who has inherited a fortune of, say, \$100,000. He knows that many others who have inherited such fortunes have lost them through poor judgment, fraud, calamity, etc., but he has enough confidence in his own ability to handle money wisely that he does not doubt but that he will keep his. His assurance is based largely on self-confidence. Others have failed, but he is confident that he will not fail. But what a delusion is this when applied to the spiritual realm! What a pity that any one who is at all acquainted with his own tendency to sin should base his assurance of salvation upon such grounds! His system places the cause of his perseverance, not in the hands of an all-powerful, never-changing God, but in the hands of weak sinful man.

And does not the logic of the Arminian system tell us that the wise thing for the Christian to do is to die as soon as possible and thus confirm the inheritance which to him is of infinite value? In view of the fact that so many have fallen away, is it worth while for him to remain here and risk his eternal salvation for the sake of a little more life in this world? What would be thought of a business man who, in order to gain a few more dollars, would risk his entire fortune in some admittedly questionable venture? In fact, does it not at least suggest that the Lord has made many mistakes in not removing these people while they were true Christians? The writer, at least, is convinced that if he held the Arminian view and knew himself to be a saved Christian he would want to die as soon as possible and thus place his salvation beyond all possible doubt.

In regard to spiritual matters, a state of doubt is a state of misery. The assurance that Christians can never be separated from the love of God is one of the greatest comforts of the Christian life. To deny this doctrine is to destroy the grounds for any rejoicing among the saints on earth; for what kind of rejoicing can those have who believe that they may at any time be deceived and led astray? If our sense of security is based only on our changeable and wavering natures, we can never know the inward calm and peace which should characterize the Christian. Says McFetridge, in his very illuminating little book, *Calvinism In History*, "I can well conceive of the terror to a sensitive soul of dark uncertainty as to salvation, and of that ever-abiding

consciousness of the awful possibility of falling away from grace after a long and painful Christian life, which is taught by Arminianism. To me such a doctrine has terrors which would cause me to shrink away from it for ever, and which would fill me with constant and unspeakable perplexities. To feel that I were crossing the troubled and dangerous sea of life dependent for my final security upon the actings of my own treacherous nature were enough to fill me with a perpetual alarm. If it is possible, I want to know that the vessel to which I commit my life is seaworthy, and that, having once embarked, I shall arrive in safety at my destination." (P. 112.)

It is not until we duly appreciate this wonderful truth, that our salvation is not suspended on our weak and wavering love to God, but rather upon His eternal and unchangeable love to us, that we can have peace and certainty in the Christian life. And only the Calvinist, who knows himself to be absolutely safe in the hands of God, can have that inward sense of peace and security, knowing that in the eternal counsels of God he has been chosen to be cleansed and glorified and that nothing can thwart that purpose. He knows himself to be held to righteousness by a spiritual power which is as exhaustless and unvarying as the force of gravitation, and as necessary to the development of the spirit as sunshine and vitamins are to the body.

## **6. PURPOSE OF THE SCRIPTURE WARNINGS AGAINST APOSTASY**

Arminians sometimes bring forth from the Scriptures the warnings against apostasy or falling away, which are addressed to believers, and which, it is argued, imply a possibility of their failing away. There is, of course, a sense in which it is possible for believers to fail away,---when they are viewed simply in themselves, with reference to their own powers and capacities, and apart from God's purpose or design with respect to them. And it is admitted by all that believers can fall into sin temporarily. The primary purpose of these passages, however, is to induce men to co-operate willingly with God for the accomplishment of His purposes. They are inducements which produce constant humility, watchfulness, and diligence. In the same way a parent, in order to get the willing co-operation of a child, may tell it to stay out of the way of an approaching automobile, when all the time the parent has no intention of ever letting the child get into a position where it would be injured. When God plies a soul with fears of falling it is by no means a proof that God in His secret purpose intends to permit him to fall. These fears may be the very means which God has designed to keep him from falling. Secondly, God's exhortations to duty are perfectly consistent with His purpose to give sufficient grace for the performance of these duties. In one place we are commanded to love the Lord our God with all our heart; in another, God says, "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Now either these must be consistent with each other, or the Holy Spirit must contradict Himself. Plainly it is not the latter. Thirdly, these warnings are, even for believers, incitements to greater faith and prayer. Fourthly, they are designed to show man his duty rather than his ability, and his weakness rather than his strength. Fifthly, they convince men

of their want of holiness and of their dependence upon God. And, sixthly, they serve as restraints on unbelievers, and leave them without excuse.

Nor is any more proven by the passages, "Destroy not with thy meat him for whom Christ died," Rom. 14:15; and, "For through thy knowledge he that is weak perisheth, the brother for whose sake Christ died," I Cor. 8:11. In the same manner the influence of a particular person, when looked at merely in itself, might be said to be destroying our American civilization; yet America goes ahead and prospers, because other influences more than offset that one. In these passages the principle asserted is simply this: Whatever their divine security, the responsibility of the one who casts a stumbling block in the path of his brother is not decreased; and that anyone who does cast a stumbling block in the way of his brother is doing all he can towards his brother's destruction.

## **7. SCRIPTURE PROOF**

The Scripture proof for this doctrine is abundant and clear. We shall now consider some of these passages.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness or peril, or sword? Nay, In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Rom. 8:35-39.

"Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace," Rom. 6:14. "He that believeth hath eternal life," John 6:47. "He that heareth my word, and believeth Him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life," John 5:24. The moment one believes, eternal life becomes a reality, a present possession, and not merely a conditional gift of the future. "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever," John 6:51. He does not say that we have to eat many times, but that if we eat at all, we shall live for ever. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life," John 4:14.

"Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ," Phil. 1:6. "Jehovah will perfect that which concerneth me," Ps. 138:8. "The gifts and calling of God are not repented of:" Rom. 11:29. "The witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life," I John 5:11. "These things have I written unto you that ye may know that ye have eternal life," I John 5:13. "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," Heb. 10:14. "The Lord

will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto His heavenly kingdom," II Tim. 4:18. "For whom He foreknew, He also foreordained. . . . and whom He foreordained, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified," Rom. 8:29. "Having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will," Eph. 1:5.

Jesus declared, "I give unto them (the true followers, or 'sheep') eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who hath given them unto me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand," John 10:28. Here we find that our security and God's omnipotence are equal; for the former is founded on the latter. God is mightier than the whole world, and neither men nor Devil can rob Him of one of His precious jewels. It would be as easy to pluck a star out of the heavens as to pluck a saint out of the Father's hand. Their salvation stands in His invincible might and they are placed beyond the peril of destruction. We have Christ's promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church; yet if the Devil could snatch one here and another there and large numbers in some congregations, the gates of hell would to a great extent prevail against it. In principle, if one could be lost, all might be lost, and thus Christ's assurance would be reduced to idle words.

When we are told that "There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, who shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray, IF POSSIBLE, even the elect," Matt. 24:24, the unprejudiced believing mind readily understands that it is IMPOSSIBLE to lead astray the elect.

The mystic union which exists between Christ and believers is a guarantee that they shall continue steadfast. "Because I live, ye shall live also," John 14:19. The effect of this union is that believers participate in His life. Christ is in us, Rom. 8:10. It is not we that live, but Christ that liveth in us, Gal. 2:20. Christ and the believers have a common life such as that which exists in the vine and the branches. The Holy Spirit so dwells in the redeemed that every Christian is supplied with an inexhaustible reservoir of strength.

Paul warned the Ephesians, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption," Eph. 4:30. He had no fear of apostasy for he could confidently say, "Thanks be to God who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ," II Cor. 2:14. The Lord, speaking through the prophet Jeremiah said, "I have loved you with an everlasting love," 31:3, one of the best proofs that God's love shall have no end is that it has no beginning, but is eternal. In the parable of the two houses, the very point stressed was that the house which was founded on the rock (Christ) did not fall when the storms of life came. Arminianism sets up another system in which some of those who are founded on the rock do fall. In the twenty-third Psalm we read, "And I

shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." The true Christian is no temporary visitor, but a permanent dweller in the house of the Lord. How those rob this psalm of its deeper and richer meaning who teach that the grace of God is a temporary thing!

Christ makes intercession for His people (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25), and we are told that the Father hears Him always (John 11:42). Hence the Arminian, holding that Christians may fall away, must deny either the passages which declare that Christ does make intercession for His people, or he must deny those which declare that His prayers are always heard. Let us consider here how well protected we are: Christ is at the right hand of God pleading for us, and in addition to that, the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, Rom. 8:26.

In the wonderful promise of Jer. 32:40, God has promised to preserve believers from their own backslidings: "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, and I will not turn away from following them, to do them good; and I will put my fear in their hearts, that they may not depart from me." And in Ezek. 11:19, 20, He promises to take from them the "stony heart," and to give them a "heart of flesh," so that they shall walk in his statutes and keep his ordinances, and so that they shall be His people and He their God. Peter tells us that Christians cannot fall away, for they "by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time," I Peter 1:5. Paul says, "God is able to make all grace to abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work," II Cor. 9:8. He declares that the Lord's servant "shall be made to stand; for the Lord hath power to make him stand," Rom. 14:4.

And Christians have the further promise, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, and will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it," I Cor. 10:13. Their removal from certain temptations which would be too strong for them is an absolute and free gift from God, since it is entirely an arrangement of His providence as to what temptations they encounter in the course of their lives, and what ones they escape. "The Lord is faithful and will establish you and guard you from the evil one," II Thess. 3:3. And again, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him and delivereth them," Ps. 34:7. Amid all his trials and hardships Paul could say, "We are pressed on every side, yet not straightened; perplexed, yet not unto despair; pursued, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed; . . . knowing that He that raised up the Lord Jesus Christ shall raise us also with Jesus," II Cor. 4:8, 9, 14.

The saints, even in this world, are compared to a tree that does not wither, Ps. 1:3; to the cedars which flourish on Mount Lebanon, Ps. 92:12; to Mount Zion which cannot be moved, but which abideth forever, Ps. 125:1; and to a house built on a rock, Matt. 7:24. The Lord is with them in their old age, Is. 46: 4, and is their guide even unto



death, Ps. 48:14, so that they cannot be totally and finally lost.

Another strong argument is to be noticed concerning the Lamb's book of life. The disciples were told to rejoice, not so much over the fact that the demons were subject to them, but that their names were written in the Lamb's book of life. This book is a catalogue of the elect, determined by the unalterable counsel of God, and can neither be increased nor diminished. The names of the righteous are found there; but the names of those who perish have never been written there from the foundation of the world. God does not make the mistake of writing in the book of life a name which He will later have to blot out. Hence none of the Lord's own ever perish. Jesus told His disciples to find their chief joy in the fact that their names were written in heaven, Luke 10:20; yet there would have been small grounds for joy in this respect if their names written in heaven one day could have been blotted out the next. Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Our citizenship is in heaven," 3:20; and to Timothy he wrote, "The Lord knoweth them that are His," II Tim. 2:19. For the Scripture teaching concerning the book of life, see Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12-15; 21:27.

Here, then, are very simple and plain statements that the Christian shall continue in grace, the reason being that the Lord takes it upon Himself to preserve him in that state. In these promises the elect are secured on both sides. Not only will God not depart from them, but He will so put His fear into their hearts that they shall not depart from him. Surely no Spirit-taught Christian can doubt that this doctrine is taught in the Bible. It seems that man, poor, wretched and impotent as he is, would welcome a doctrine which secures for him the possessions of eternal happiness despite all attacks from without and all evil tendencies from within. But it is not so. He refuses it, and argues against it. And the causes are not far to seek. In the first place he has more confidence in himself than he has any right to have. Secondly, the scheme is so contrary to what he is used to in the natural world that he persuades himself that it cannot be true. Thirdly, he perceives that if this doctrine be admitted, the other doctrines of free grace will logically follow. Hence he twists and explains away the Scripture passages which teach it, and clings to some which appear on the surface to favor his preconceived views. In fact, a system of salvation by grace is so utterly at variance with his every-day experience, in which he sees every thing and person treated according to works and merits, that he has great difficulty in bringing himself to believe that it can be true. He wishes to earn his own salvation, though certainly he expects very high wages for very sorry work.

## **True Grace Distinguished from the Experience of Devils**

**by Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)**

Dated September 28, 1752

***"Thou believes that there is one God; thou dost well: the devils also believe, and tremble." -- James 2:19***

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Subject: No such experiences as the devils in hell are the subjects of are any sure sign of grace.

Observe in these words, — 1. Something that some depended on, as an evidence of their good estate and acceptance, as the objects of God's favor, *viz.* a speculative faith, or belief of the doctrines of religion. The great doctrine of the existence of one only God is particularly mentioned probably because this was a doctrine wherein, especially, there was a visible and noted distinction between professing Christians and the heathens, amongst whom the Christians in those days were dispersed. And therefore, this was what many trusted in, as what recommended them to, or at least was an evidence of their interest in, the great spiritual and eternal privileges, in which real Christians were distinguished from the rest of the world.

2. How much is allowed concerning this faith, *viz.* that it is a good attainment. "Thou dost well." It was good, as it was necessary. This doctrine was one of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity and, in some respects, above all others fundamental. It was necessary to be believed, in order to salvation. To be without the belief of this doctrine, specially in those that had such advantage to know as they had to whom the apostle wrote, would be a great sin, and what would vastly aggravate their damnation. This belief was also good, as it had a good tendency in many respects.

3. What is implicitly denied concerning it, *viz.* that is any evidence of a person's being in a state of salvation. The whole context shows this to be the design of the apostle in the words. And it is particularly manifest by the conclusion of the verse, which is,

4. The thing observable in the words, *viz.* the argument by which the apostle proves that this is no sign of a state of grace, *viz.* that it is found in the devils. They believe that there is one God, and that he is a holy, sin-hating God and that he is a God of truth, and will fulfill his threatenings by which he has denounced future judgments, and a great increase of misery on them, and that he is an almighty God, and able to execute his threatened vengeance upon them.

Therefore, the doctrine I infer from the words to make the subject of my present discourse is this, *viz.* nothing in the mind of man that is of the same nature with what the devils experience, or are the subjects of, is any sure sign of saving grace.

If there be anything that the devils have, or find in themselves, which is an evidence of the saving grace of the Spirit of God, then the apostle's argument is not good; which is plainly this: "That which is in the devils, or which they do, is no certain evidence of grace. But the devils believe that there is one God. Therefore, thy believing that there is one God is no sure evidence that thou art gracious." So that the whole foundation of the apostle's argument lies in that proposition: "That which is in the devils, is no certain sign of grace." — Nevertheless, I shall mention two or three further reasons, or arguments of the truth of this doctrine.

I. The devils have no degree of holiness. And therefore those things which are nothing beyond what they are the subjects of cannot be holy experiences.

The devil once was holy. But when he fell, he lost all his holiness and became perfectly wicked. He is the greatest sinner, and in some sense the father of all sin. John 8:44, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there was no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." 1 John 3:8, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." He is often spoken of, by way of eminence, as "the wicked one." So, Mat. 13:19, "Then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart." Verse 38, "The tares are the children of the wicked one." 1 John 2:13, "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one." Chap. 3:12, "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one." Chap. 5:18, "Whosoever is born of God — keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." So the devils are called evil spirits, unclean spirits, powers of darkness, rulers of the darkness of this world, and wickedness itself. Eph. 6:12, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Therefore, surely those things which the minds of devils are the subjects of can have nothing of the nature of true holiness in them. The knowledge and understanding which they have of the things of God and religion cannot be of the nature of divine and holy light, nor any knowledge that is merely of the same kind. No impressions made on their hearts can be of a spiritual nature. That kind of sense which they have of divine things, however great, cannot be a holy sense. Such affections as move their hearts, however powerful, cannot be holy affections. If there be no holiness in them as they are in the devil, there can be no holiness in them as they are in man, unless something be added to them beyond what is in the devil. And if anything be added to them, then they are not the same things. But [they] are something beyond what devils are the subjects of, which is contrary to the supposition, for the proposition which I am upon is, that those things which are of the same nature, and nothing beyond what

devils are the subjects of, cannot be holy experiences. It is not the subject that makes the affection, or experience, or quality holy. But it is the quality that makes the subject holy.

And if those qualities and experiences which the devils are the subjects of have nothing of the nature of holiness in them, then they can be no certain signs that persons which have them are holy or gracious. There is no certain sign of true grace, but those things which are spiritual and gracious. It is God's image that is his seal and mark, the stamp by which those that are his are known. But that which has nothing of the nature of holiness, has nothing of this image. That which is a sure sign of grace, must either be something which has the nature and essence of grace, or flows from, or some way belongs to, its essence. For that which distinguishes things one from another is the essence, or something appertaining to their essence. And therefore, that which is sometimes found wholly without the essence of holiness or grace, can be no essential, sure, or distinguishing mark of grace.

II. The devils are not only absolutely without all true holiness, but they are not so much as the subjects of any common grace.

If any should imagine, that some things may be signs of grace which are not grace itself, or which have nothing of the nature and essence of grace and holiness in them; yet, certainly they will allow, that the qualifications which are sure evidences of grace, must be things that are near akin to grace, or having some remarkable affinity with it. But the devils are not only wholly destitute of any true holiness, but they are at the greatest distance from it, and have nothing in them in any wise akin to it.

There are many in this world who are wholly destitute of saving grace who yet have common grace. They have no true holiness, but nevertheless have something of that which is called moral virtue. And [they] are the subjects of some degree of the common influences of the Spirit of God. It is so with those in general that live under the light of the gospel and are not given up to judicial blindness and hardness. Yea, those that are thus given up, yet have some degree of restraining grace while they live in this world, without which the earth could not bear them, and they would in no measure be tolerable members of human society. But when any are damned, or cast into hell, as the devils are, God wholly withdraws his restraining grace and all merciful influences of his Spirit whatsoever. They have neither saving grace nor common grace; neither the *grace* of the Spirit, nor any of the common *gifts* of the Spirit; neither true holiness, nor moral virtue of any kind. Hence arises the vast increase of the exercise of wickedness in the hearts of men when they are damned. And herein is the chief difference between the damned in hell and unregenerate and graceless men in this world. Not that wicked men in this world have any more holiness or true virtue than

the damned, or have wicked men, when they leave this world, any principles of wickedness infused into them. But when men are cast into hell, God perfectly takes away his Spirit from them, as to all its merciful common influences, and entirely withdraws from them all restraints of his Spirit and good providence.

III. It is unreasonable to suppose that a person's being in any respect as the devil is, should be a certain sign that he is very unlike and opposite to him, and hereafter shall not have his part with him. True saints are extremely unlike and contrary to the devil, both relatively and really. They are so *relatively*. The devil is the grand rebel, the chief enemy of God and Christ, the object of God's greatest wrath, a condemned malefactor, utterly rejected and cast off by him, forever shut out of his presence, the prisoner of his justice, an everlasting inhabitant of the infernal world. The saints, on the contrary, are the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, members of the family of the glorious King of heaven, the children of God, the brethren and spouse of his dear Son, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ, kings and priests unto God. And they are extremely different *really*. The devil, on account of his hateful nature, and those accursed dispositions which reign in him, is called Satan, the adversary, Abaddon and Apollyon, the great destroyer, the wolf, the roaring lion, the great dragon, the old serpent. The saints are represented as God's holy ones, his anointed ones, the excellent of the earth, the meek of the earth, lambs and doves, Christ's little children, having the image of God, pure in heart, God's jewels, lilies in Christ's garden, plants of paradise, stars of heaven, temples of the living God. The saints, so far as they are saints, are as diverse from the devil, as heaven is from hell. And much more contrary than light is to darkness. And the eternal state that they are appointed to is answerably diverse and contrary.

Now it is not reasonable to suppose that being in any respect as Satan is, or being the subject of any of the same properties, qualifications, affections, or actions, that are in him, is any certain evidence that persons are thus exceeding different from him, and in circumstances so diverse, and appointed to an eternal state so extremely contrary in all respects. Wicked men are in Scripture called the children of the devil. Now is it reasonable to suppose, that men's being in any respect as the devil is can be a certain sign that they are not his children, but the children of the infinitely holy and blessed God? We are informed, that wicked men shall hereafter have their part with devils, shall be sentenced to the same everlasting fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels. Now, can a man's being like the devil in any respect be a sure token that he shall not have his part with him, but with glorious angels, and with Jesus Christ, dwelling with him, where he is, that he may behold and partake of his glory.

#### IMPROVEMENT

The *first* use may lie in several inferences, for our *instruction*.

I. From what has been said, it may be inferred, by parity of reason, that nothing that damned men *do*, or ever will *experience*, can be any sure sign of grace.

Damned men are like the devils, are conformed to them in nature and state. They have nothing better in them than the devils, have no higher principles in their hearts, experience nothing and do nothing of a more excellent kind, as they are the children and servants of the devil, and as such, shall dwell with him, and be partakers with him of the same misery. As Christ says, concerning the saints in their future state, Mat. 22:30, “That they shall be as the angels of God in heaven.” So it may be said concerning ungodly men in their future state, that they shall be as the fallen wicked angels in hell.

Each of the aforementioned reasons, given to show the truth of the doctrine with respect to devils, holds good with respect to damned men. Damned men have no degree of holiness. And therefore those things which are nothing beyond what they have, cannot be holy experiences. Damned men are not only absolutely destitute of all true holiness, but they have not so much as any common grace. And lastly, it is unreasonable to suppose that a person’s being in any respect as the damned in hell are, should be a certain sign that they are very unlike and opposite to them, and hereafter shall not have their portion with them.

II. We may hence infer, that no degree of *speculative knowledge* of things of religion is any certain sign of saving grace. The devil, before his fall, was among those bright and glorious angels of heaven, which are represented as morning-stars and flames of fire that excel in strength and wisdom. And though he be now become sinful, yet his sin has not abolished the faculties of the angelic nature. As when man fell, he did not lose the faculties of the human nature. — Sin destroys spiritual principles, but not the natural faculties. It is true, sin, when in full dominion, entirely prevents the exercise of the natural faculties in holy and spiritual understanding, and lays many impediments in the way of their proper exercise in other respects. It lays the natural faculty of reason under great disadvantages by many and strong prejudices, and in fallen men the faculties of the soul are, doubtless, greatly impeded in their exercise, through that great weakness and disorder of the corporeal organ to which it is strictly united, and which is the consequence of sin. — But there seems to be nothing in the nature of sin, or moral corruption, that has any tendency to destroy the natural capacity, or even to diminish it, properly speaking. If sin were of such a nature as necessarily to have that tendency and effect, then it might be expected that wicked men, in a future state, where they are given up entirely to the unrestrained exercise of their corruptions and lusts, and sin is in all respects brought to its greatest perfection in them, would have the capacity of their souls greatly diminished. This we have no reason to suppose, but rather on the contrary, that their capacities are greatly enlarged

and that their actual knowledge is vastly increased. And that even with respect to the Divine Being, and the things of religion, and the great concerns of the immortal souls of men, the eyes of wicked men are opened, when they go into another world.

The greatness of the abilities of devils may be argued from the representation in Eph. 6:12. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers," etc. The same may also be argued from what the Scripture says of Satan's subtlety. Gen. 3:1; 2 Cor. 11:3; Acts 13:10. And as the devil has a faculty of understanding of large capacity, so he is capable of a great speculative knowledge of the things of God, and the invisible and eternal world, as well as other things. And must needs actually have a great understanding of these things, as these have always been chiefly in his view, and as his circumstances, from his first existence, have been such as have tended chiefly to engage him to attend to these things. Before his fall, he was one of those angels who continually beheld the face of the Father in heaven. And sin has no tendency to destroy the memory, and therefore has no tendency to blot out of it any speculative knowledge that was formerly there.

As the devil's subtlety shows his great capacity, so the way in which his subtlety is exercised and manifested — which is principally in his artful management with respect to things of religion, his exceeding subtle representations, insinuations, reasonings, and temptations, concerning these things — demonstrates his great actual understanding of them. As, in order to be a very artful disputant in any science, though it be only to confound and deceive such as are conversant in it, a person had need to have a great and extensive acquaintance with the things which pertain to that science.

Thus the devil has undoubtedly a great degree of speculative knowledge in divinity, having been, as it were, educated in the best divinity school in the universe, *viz.* the heaven of heavens. He must needs have such an extensive and accurate knowledge concerning the nature and attributes of God, as we, worms of the dust, in our present state, are not capable of. And he must have a far more extensive knowledge of the works of God, as of the work of creation in particular. For he was a spectator of the creation of this visible world. He was one of those morning-stars (Job 38:4-7), "who sang together, and of those sons of God, that shouted for joy, when God laid the foundations of the earth, and laid the measures thereof, and stretched the line upon it." And so he must have a very great knowledge of God's works of providence. He has been a spectator of the series of these works from the beginning. He has seen how God has governed the world in all ages. And he has seen the whole train of God's wonderful successive dispensations of providence towards his church, from generation to generation. And he has not been an indifferent spectator. But the great opposition between God and him, in the whole course of those dispensations, has necessarily engaged his attention in the strictest observation of them. He must have a great degree of knowledge concerning Jesus Christ as the Savior of men, and the

nature and method of the work of redemption, and the wonderful wisdom of God in this contrivance. It is that work of God wherein, above all others, God has acted in opposition to him, and in which he has chiefly set himself in opposition to God. It is with relation to this affair, that the mighty warfare has been maintained, which has been carried on between Michael and his angels, and the devil and his angels, through all ages from the beginning of the world, and especially since Christ appeared. The devil has had enough to engage his attention to the steps of divine wisdom in this work. For it is to that wisdom he has opposed his subtlety. And he has seen and found, to his great disappointment and unspeakable torment, how divine wisdom, as exercised in that work, has baffled and confounded his devices. He has a great knowledge of the things of another world. For the things of that world are in his immediate view. He has a great knowledge of heaven, for he has been an inhabitant of that world of glory. And he has a great knowledge of hell, and the nature of its misery. For he is the first inhabitant of hell. And above all the other inhabitants, has experience of its torments and has felt them constantly for more than fifty-seven hundred years. He must have a great knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, for it is evident he is not hindered from knowing what is written there, by the use he made of the words of Scripture in his temptation of our Savior. And if he can know, he has much opportunity to know, and must needs have a disposition to know, with the greatest exactness; that he may, to greater effect, pervert and wrest the Scripture, and prevent such an effect of the Word of God on the hearts of men, as shall tend to overthrow his kingdom. He must have a great knowledge of the nature of mankind, their capacity, their dispositions, and the corruption's of their hearts. For he has had long and great observation and experience. The heart of man is what he had chiefly to do with, in his subtle devices, mighty efforts, restless and indefatigable operations and exertions of himself, from the beginning of the world. And it is evident that he has a great speculative knowledge of the nature of experimental religion, by his being able to imitate it so artfully, and in such a manner as to transform himself into an angel of light.

Therefore it is manifest from my text and doctrine that no degree of speculative knowledge of religion is any certain sign of true piety. Whatever clear notions a man may have of the attributes of God, the doctrine of the Trinity, the nature of the two covenants, the economy of the persons of the Trinity, and the part which each person has in the affair of man's redemption, if he can discourse never so excellently of the offices of Christ, and the way of salvation by him, and the admirable methods of divine wisdom, and the harmony of the various attributes of God in that way; if he can talk never so clearly and exactly of the method of the justification of a sinner, and of the nature of conversion, and the operations of the Spirit of God, in applying the redemption of Christ, giving good distinctions, happily solving difficulties, and answering objections, in a manner tending greatly to enlighten the ignorant, to the edification of the church of God, and the conviction of gainsayers, and the great



increase of light in the world. If he has more knowledge of this sort than hundreds of true saints of an ordinary education, and most divines; yet all is no certain evidence of any degree of saving grace in the heart.

It is true, the Scripture often speaks of knowledge of divine things as what is peculiar to true saints. As in John 17:3, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent." Mat. 11:27, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Psa. 9:10, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." Phil. 3:8, "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." But then, we must understand it of a different *kind* of knowledge from that speculative understanding which the devil has to so great a degree. It will also be allowed, that the spiritual saving knowledge of God and divine things, greatly promotes speculative knowledge, as it engages the mind in its search into things of this kind, and much assists to a distinct understanding of them. So that, other things being equal, they who have spiritual knowledge are much more likely than others to have a good doctrinal acquaintance with things of religion. But yet such acquaintance may be no distinguishing characteristic of true saints.

III. It may also be inferred from what has been observed, that for persons merely to yield a *speculative assent* to the doctrines of religion as true is no certain evidence of a state of grace. My text tells us that the devils believe. And as they believe that there is one God, so they believe the truth of the doctrines of religion in general. The devil is orthodox in his faith. He believes the true scheme of doctrine. He is no Deist, Socinian, Arian, Pelagian, or antinomian. The articles of his faith are all sound, and in them he is thoroughly established.

Therefore, for a person to believe the doctrines of Christianity merely from the force of arguments, as discerned only by speculation, is no evidence of grace.

It is probably a very rare thing for unregenerate men to have a strong persuasion of the truth of the doctrines of religion, specially such of them as are very mysterious, and much above the comprehension of reason. Yet if he be very confident of the truth of Christianity and its doctrines, and is able to argue most strongly for the proof of them, in this he goes nothing beyond the devil, who doubtless has a great knowledge of the rational arguments by which the truth of the Christian religion and its several principles are evinced.

And therefore when the Scripture speaks of *believing that Jesus is the Son of God*, as a sure evidence of grace, as in 1 John 5:1, and other places, it must be understood, not of a mere speculative assent, but of *another kind and manner* of believing, which is

called the faith of God's elect, Tit. 1:1. There is a *spiritual* conviction of the truth, which is a believing with the whole heart, peculiar to true saints, of which I shall speak more particularly.

IV. It may be inferred from the doctrine which has been insisted on that it is no certain sign of persons being savingly converted that they have been subjects of very great *distress and terrors* of mind, through apprehensions of God's wrath, and fears of damnation.

That the devils are the subjects of great terrors, through apprehensions of God's wrath, and fears of its future effects is implied in my text, which speaks not only of their believing, but *trembling*. It must be no small degree of terror which should make those principalities and powers, those mighty, proud, and sturdy beings, to tremble.

There are many terrors that some persons who are concerned for their salvation are the subjects of, which are not from any proper awakenings of conscience, or apprehensions of truth, but from melancholy or frightful impressions on their imagination, or some groundless apprehensions, and the delusions and false suggestions of Satan. But if they have had never so great and long continued terrors from real awakenings, and convictions of truth, and views of things as they are, this is no more than what is in the devils, and will be in all wicked men in another world. However stupid and senseless most ungodly men are now, all will be effectually awakened at last. There will be no such thing as slumbering in hell. There are many that cannot be awakened by the most solemn warnings and awful threatenings of the Word of God — the most alarming discourses from the pulpit, and the most awakening and awful providences — but all will be thoroughly awakened by the sound of the last trumpet and the appearance of Christ to judgment. All sorts will then be filled with most amazing terrors, from apprehensions of truth, and seeing things as they are, when “the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men (such as were the most oftly and stout-hearted, most ready to treat the things of religion with contempt) shall hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” Rev. 6:15-17. — Therefore if persons have been first awakened, and afterwards have had comfort and joy, it is no certain sign that their comforts are of the right hand, because they were preceded by very great terrors.

V. It may be further inferred from the doctrine, that no *work of the law* on men's

hearts, in conviction of guilt, and just desert of punishment, is a sure argument that a person has been savingly converted.

Not only are no awakenings and terrors any certain evidence of this, but no mere real work whatsoever, though carried to the utmost extent. Nothing wherein there is no grace or spiritual light, but only the mere conviction of natural conscience, and those acts and operations of the mind which are the result of this — and so are, as it were, merely forced by the clear light of conscience, without the concurrence of the heart and inclination with that light — is any certain sign of the saving grace of God, or that a person was ever savingly converted.

The evidence of this, from my text and doctrine, is demonstrative because the devils are the subjects of these things. And all wicked men that shall finally perish, will be the subjects of the same. Natural conscience is not extinguished in the damned in hell, but, on the contrary, remains there in its greatest strength, and is brought to its most perfect exercise, most fully to do its proper office as God's vicegerent in the soul, to condemn those rebels against the King of heaven and earth, and manifest God's just wrath and vengeance, and by that means to torment them, and be as a never-dying worm within them. Wretched men find means in this world to blind the eyes and stop the mouth of this vicegerent of a sin-revenging God. But they shall not be able to do it always. In another world, the eyes and mouth of conscience will be fully opened. God will hereafter make wicked men to see and know these things from which now they industriously hide their eyes. Isa. 26:10, 11, "Let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people, yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them." We have this expression often annexed to God's threatenings of wrath to his enemies; "And they shall know that I am the Lord." This shall be accomplished by their woeful experience and clear light in their consciences, whereby they shall be made to know, whether they will or not, how great and terrible, holy and righteous, a God Jehovah is, whose authority they have despised. And they shall know that he is righteous and holy in their destruction. This all the ungodly will be convinced of at the day of judgment, by the bringing to light of all their wickedness of heart and practice, and setting all their sins, with all their aggravations, in order, not only in the view of others, even of the whole world, but in the view of their own consciences. This is threatened, Psa. 50:21, "These things thou hast done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." Compare this with the four first verses of the Psalm. — The design of the day of judgment is not to find out what is just, as it is with human judgments. But it is to *manifest* what is just; to make known God's justice in the judgment which he will execute to men's own consciences, and to the world. And therefore that day is called "the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God," Rom. 2:5. Now sinners often cavil against the justice of

God's dispensations, and particularly the punishment which he threatens for their sins, excusing themselves, and condemning him. But when God comes to manifest their wickedness in the light of that day and to call them to an account, they will be speechless. Mat. 22:11, 12, "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment. And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless." When the King of heaven and earth comes to judgment, their consciences will be so perfectly enlightened and convinced by the all-searching Light they shall then stand in, that their mouths will be effectually stopped, as to all excuses for themselves, all pleading of their own righteousness to excuse or justify them, and all objections against the justice of their Judge, that their conscience will condemn them only, and not God.

Therefore it follows from the doctrine, That it can be no certain sign of grace, that persons have had great convictions of sin. Suppose they have had their sins of life, with their aggravations, remarkably set before them, so as greatly to affect and terrify them. And withal, have had a great sight of the wickedness of their hearts, the greatness of the sin of unbelief, and of the unexcusableness and heinousness of their most secret spiritual iniquities. Perhaps they have been convinced of the utter insufficiency of their own righteousness, and they despair of being recommended to God by it. [They] have been convinced that they are wholly without excuse before God, and deserve damnation. And that God would be just in executing the threatened punishment upon them, though it be so dreadful. All these things will be in the ungodly at the day of judgment, when they shall stand with devils, at the left hand, and shall be doomed as accursed to everlasting fire with them.

Indeed there will be no submission in them. Their conscience will be convinced that God is just in their condemnation. But yet their wills will not be bowed to God's justice. There will be no acquiescence of mind in that divine attribute, no yielding of the soul to God's sovereignty, but the highest degree of enmity and opposition. A true submission of the heart and will to the justice and sovereignty of God is therefore allowed to be something peculiar to true converts, being something which the devils and damned souls are and ever will be far from. And to which a mere work of the law, and convictions of conscience, however great and clear, will never bring men.

When sinners are the subjects of great convictions of conscience, and a remarkable work of the law, it is only transacting the business of the day of judgment in the conscience before-hand. God sits enthroned in the conscience, as at the last day he will sit enthroned in the clouds of heaven. The sinner is arraigned as it were at God's bar. And God appears in his awful greatness as a just and holy, sin-hating and sin-revenging God, as he will then. The sinner's iniquities are brought to light. His sins set in order before him. The hidden things of darkness, and the counsels of the heart are made manifest, as it will be then. Many witnesses do as it were rise up against the sinner under convictions of conscience, as they will against the wicked at the day of

judgment; and the books are opened particularly the book of God's strict and holy law is opened in the conscience, and its rules applied for the condemnation of the sinner, which is the book that will be opened at the day of judgment, as the grand rule to all such wicked men as have lived under it. And the sentence of the law is pronounced against the sinner, and the justice of the sentence made manifest, as it will be at the day of judgment. The conviction of a sinner at the day of judgment will be a work of the law, as well as the conviction of conscience in this world. And the work of the law (if the work be merely legal) is never carried further in the consciences of sinners now than it will be at that day, when its work will be perfect in thoroughly stopping the sinner's mouth. Rom. 3:19, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Every mouth shall be stopped by the law, either now or hereafter; and all the world shall become sensibly guilty before God, guilty of death, deserving of damnation. And therefore, if sinners have been the subjects of a great work of the law, and have thus become guilty, and their mouths have been stopped, it is no certain sign that ever they have been converted.

Indeed the want of a thorough sense of guilt, and desert of punishment, and conviction of the justice of God in threatening damnation is a sign that a person never was converted, and truly brought with the whole soul to embrace Christ as a Savior from this punishment. For it is easily demonstrable, that there is no such thing as entirely and cordially accepting an offer of a Savior from a punishment which we think we do not deserve. But having such a conviction is no certain sign that persons have true faith, or have ever truly received Christ as their Savior. And if persons have great comfort, joy, and confidence suddenly let into their minds, after great convictions, it is no infallible evidence that their comforts are built on a good foundation.

It is manifest, therefore, that too much stress has been laid by many persons on a great work of the law preceding their comforts, who seem not only to have looked on such a work of the law as necessary to precede faith, but also to have esteemed it as the chief evidence of the truth and genuineness of succeeding faith and comforts. By this means it is to be feared very many have been deceived and established in a false hope. And what is to be seen in the event of things, in multitudes of instances, confirms this. It may be safely allowed that it is not so usual for great convictions of conscience to prove abortive, and fail of a good issue, as for lesser convictions. And that more generally when the Spirit of God proceeds so far with sinners, in the work of the law, as to give them a great sight of their hearts, and of the heinousness of their spiritual iniquities, and to convince them that they are without excuse, and that all their righteousness can do nothing to merit God's favor. But they lie justly exposed to God's eternal vengeance with mercy — a work of saving conversion follows. But we can have no warrant to say, it is universally so, or to lay it down as an infallible rule, that when convictions of conscience have gone thus far, saving faith and repentance will surely follow. If any should think they have ground for such a determination,

because they cannot conceive what end God should have, in carrying a work of conviction to such a length, and so preparing the heart for faith, and after all, never giving saving faith to the soul, I desire it may be considered, where will be the end of our doubts and difficulties, if we think ourselves sufficient to determine so positively and particularly concerning God's ends and designs in what he does. It may be asked such an objector, what is God's end in giving a sinner any degree of the strivings of his Spirit and conviction of conscience, when he afterwards suffers it to come to nothing?

If he may give some degree that may finally be in vain, who shall set the bounds, and say how great the degree shall be? Who can, on sure grounds, determine that when a sinner has so much of that conviction which the devils and damned in hell have, true faith and eternal salvation will be the certain consequence? This we may certainly determine, that, if the apostle's argument in the text be good, not anything whatsoever that the devils have is certainly connected with such a consequence. Seeing sinners, while such, are capable of the most perfect convictions, and will have them at the day of judgment, and in hell, who shall say, that God never shall cause reprobates to anticipate the future judgment and damnation in that respect? And if he does so, who shall say to him, What dost thou? Or call him to account concerning his ends in so doing? Not but that many possible wise ends might be thought of, and mentioned, if it were needful, or I had now room for it. — The Spirit of God is often quenched by the exercise of the wickedness of men's hearts, after he has gone far in a work of conviction, so that their convictions never have a good issue. And who can say that sinners, by the exercise of their opposition and enmity against God, which is not at all mortified by the greatest legal convictions, neither in the damned in hell nor sinners on earth, may not provoke God to take his Spirit from them, even after he has proceeded the greatest length in a work of conviction? Who can say, that God never is provoked to destroy some, after he has brought them, as it were, through the wilderness, even to the edge of the land of rest? As he slew some of the Israelites, even in the plains of Moab.

And let it be considered, where is our warrant in Scripture, to make use of any legal convictions, or any method or order of successive events in a work of the law, and consequent comforts, as a sure sign of regeneration. The Scripture is abundant, in expressly mentioning evidences of grace, and of a state of favor with God, as characteristics of true saints. But where do we ever find such things as these amongst those evidences? Or where do we find any other signs insisted on, besides grace itself, its nature, exercises, and fruits? These were the evidences that Job relied upon. These were the things that the Psalmist everywhere insists upon as evidences of his sincerity, and particularly in the 119th Psalm, from the beginning to the end: these were the signs that Hezekiah trusted to in his sickness.

These were the characteristics of those that are truly happy given by our Savior in the beginning of his sermon on the mount. These are the things that Christ mentions, as

the true evidences of being his real disciples, in his last and dying discourse to his disciples, in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of John, and in his intercessory prayer, chap. 17. These are the things which the apostle Paul often speaks of as evidences of his sincerity, and sure title to a crown of glory. And these are the things he often mentions to others, in his epistles, as the proper evidences of real Christianity, a justified state, and a title to glory. He insists on the fruits of the spirit; love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance as the proper evidences of being Christ's, and living in the Spirit: Gal. 5:22-25. It is that charity, or divine love, which is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy, etc. that he insists on, as the most essential evidence of true godliness. Without which, all other things are nothing. Such are the signs which the apostle James insists on, as the proper evidence of a truly wise and good man. Jam. 3:17, "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." And such are the signs of true Christianity, which the apostle John insists on throughout his epistles. And we never have anywhere in the Bible, from the beginning to the end of it, any other signs of godliness given, than such as these. If persons have such things as these apparently in them, it ought to be determined that they are truly converted, without its being first known what method the Spirit of God took to introduce these things into the soul, which oftentimes is altogether untraceable. All the works of God are in some respects unsearchable. But the Scripture often represents the works of the Spirit of God as peculiarly so. Isa. 40:13, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counselor, hath taught him?" Ecc. 11:5, "As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: so thou knowest not the works of God, who maketh all." John 3:8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

VI. It follows from my text and doctrine, that it is no certain sign of grace that persons have earnest desires and longings after salvation.

The devils, doubtless, long for deliverance from the misery they suffer and from that greater misery which they expect. If they tremble through fear of it, they must necessarily, earnestly desire to be delivered from it. Wicked men are, in Scripture, represented as longing for the privileges of the righteous, when the door is shut, and they are shut out from among them. They come to the door, and cry, Lord, Lord, open to us. Therefore, we are not to look on all desires that are very earnest and vehement, as certain evidences of a pious heart. There are earnest desires of a religious nature, which the saints have, that are the proper breathings of a new nature, and distinguishing qualities of true saints. But there are also longings which unregenerate men may have, which are often mistaken for marks of godliness. They think they

hunger and thirst after righteousness, and have earnest desires after God and Christ, and long for heaven. When, indeed, all is to be resolved into self-love. And so [it] is a longing which arises from no higher principles than the earnest desires of devils.

VII. It may be inferred from what has been observed, that persons who have no grace may have a great apprehension of an external glory in things heavenly and divine, and of whatsoever is external pertaining to religion.

If persons have impressed strongly on their minds ideas obtained by the external senses, whether by the ear, as any kind of sound, pleasant music, or words spoken of excellent signification, words of Scripture, suitable to their case, or adapted to the subject of their meditations, or ideas obtained by the eye, as of a visible beauty and glory, a shining light, golden streets, gates of precious stone, a most magnificent throne surrounded by angels and saints in shining ranks, or anything external belonging to Jesus Christ, either in his humbled state, as hanging on the cross with his crown of thorns, his wounds open, and blood trickling down, or in his glorified state, with awful majesty, or ravishing beauty and sweetness in his countenance, his face shining above the brightness of the sun, and the like. These things are no certain signs of grace.

Multitudes that are now in hell will have ideas of the external glory that pertains to things heavenly, far beyond whatever any have in this world. They will see all that external glory and beauty, in which Christ will appear at the day of judgment, when the sun shall be turned into darkness before him, which, doubtless, will be ten thousand times greater than ever was impressed on the imagination of either saints or sinners in this present state, or ever was conceived by any mortal man.

VIII. It may be inferred from the doctrine that persons who have no grace may have a very great and affecting sense of many divine things on their hearts.

The devil has not only great speculative knowledge, but he has a sense of many divine things, which deeply affects him, and is most strongly impressed on his heart. As,

*First*, the devils and damned souls have a great sense of the vast importance of the things of another world. They are in the invisible world, and they see and know how great the things of that world are. Their experience teaches them in the most affecting manner. They have a great sense of the worth of salvation, and the worth of immortal souls, and the vast importance of those things that concern men's eternal welfare. The parable in the latter end of the 16th chapter of Luke teaches this, in representing the rich man in hell, as entreating that Lazarus might be sent to his five brothers to testify



unto them, lest they should come to that place of torment. They who endure the torments of hell have doubtless a most lively and affecting sense of the vastness of an endless eternity, and of the comparative momentariness of this life, and the vanity of the concerns and enjoyments of time. They are convinced effectually, that all the things of this world, even those that appear greatest and most important to the inhabitants of the earth, are despicable trifles, in comparison of the things of the eternal world. They have a great sense of the preciousness of time, and of the means of grace, and the inestimable value of the privileges which they enjoy which live under the gospel. They are fully sensible of the folly of those that go on in sin, neglect their opportunities, make light of the counsels and warnings of God, and bitterly lament their exceeding folly in their own sins, by which they have brought on themselves so great and remediless misery. When sinners, by woeful experience, know the dreadful issue of their evil way, they will mourn at the last, saying, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof, and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me! Pro. 4:11, 12, 13.

Therefore, however true godliness is attended with a great sense of the importance of divine things — and it is rare that men who have no grace maintain such a sense in any steady and persevering manner — yet it is manifest those things are no certain evidences of grace. Unregenerate men may have a sense of the importance of eternity, and the vanity of time, the worth of immortal souls, the preciousness of time and the means of grace, and the folly of the way of allowed sin. They may have such a sense of those things, as may deeply affect them, and cause them to mourn for their own sins, and be much concerned for others. Though it be true, they have not these things in the same manner, and in all respects from the same principles and views, as godly men have them.

*Second*, devils and damned men have a strong and most affecting sense of the awful greatness and majesty of God. This is greatly made manifest in the execution of divine vengeance on his enemies. Rom. 9:22, “What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?” The devils tremble before this great and terrible God and under a strong sense of his awful majesty. It is greatly manifested to them and damned souls now. But shall he be manifested in a further degree, in that day when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to take vengeance upon them. And when they shall earnestly desire to fly, and be hid from the face of him that sits on the throne (which shall be, “because of the glory of his majesty,” Isa. 2:10) and when they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. When Christ comes at the last day, in the glory of his Father, every eye shall see him in that glory (in this respect, that they shall see his terrible majesty), and they also that pierced him, Rev. 1:7. Both those devils, and wicked men, which tormented and insulted him when he appeared in meanness and ignominy, shall then see him in the glory of his Father.

It is evident, therefore, that a sense of God's terrible majesty is no certain evidence of saving grace. For we see that wicked men and devils are capable of it. Yea, many wicked men in this world have actually had it. This is a manifestation which God made of himself in the sight of that wicked congregation at mount Sinai, which they saw, and with which they were deeply affected, so that all the people in the camp trembled.

*Third*, devils and damned men have some kind of conviction and sense of all attributes of God, both natural and moral, that is strong and very affecting.

The devils know God's almighty *power*. They saw a great manifestation of it when they saw God lay the foundation of the earth, etc. and were much affected with it. They have seen innumerable other great demonstrations of his power, as in the universal deluge, the destruction of Sodom, the wonders in Egypt, at the Red sea, and in the wilderness, causing the sun to stand still in Joshua's time, and many others. — And they had a very affecting manifestation of God's mighty power on themselves in casting all their hosts down from heaven into hell. And have continual affecting experience of it, in God's reserving them in strong chains of darkness, and in the strong pains they feel. They will hereafter have far more affecting experience of it, when they shall be punished from the glory of God's power, with that mighty destruction in expectation of which they now tremble. So the devils have a great knowledge of the *wisdom* of God. They have had unspeakably more opportunity and occasion to observe it in the work of creation, and also in the works of providence, than any mortal man has ever had. And have been themselves the subjects of innumerable affecting manifestations of it, in God's disappointing and confounding them in their most subtle devices, in so wonderful and amazing a manner. So they see and find the infinite purity and *holiness* of the divine nature, in the most affecting manner, as this appears in his infinite hatred of sin, in what they feel of the dreadful effects of that hatred. They know already by what they suffer, and will know hereafter to a greater degree, and far more affecting manner, that such is the opposition of God's nature to sin, that is like a consuming fire, which burns with infinite vehemence against it. They also will see the holiness of God, as exercised in his love to righteousness and holiness, in the glory of Christ and his church, which also will be very affecting to devils and wicked men. And the exact *justice* of God will be manifested to them in the clearest and strongest, most convincing and most affecting, light, at the day of judgment; when they will also see great and affecting demonstrations of the riches of his *grace*, in the marvelous fruits of his love to the vessels of *mercy*, when they shall see them at the right hand of Christ, shining as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, and shall hear the blessed sentence pronounced upon them, and will be deeply affected with it, as seems naturally implied in Luke 13:28, 29. The devils know God's *truth*, and therefore they believe his threatenings, and tremble in expectation of their accomplishment. And wicked men that now doubt his truth, and dare not trust his word, will hereafter, in the most convincing, affecting

manner, find his word to be true in all that he has threatened, and will see that he is faithful to his promises in the rewards of his saints. Devils and damned men know that God is eternal and unchangeable. And therefore they despair of there ever being an end to their misery. Therefore it is manifest, that merely persons having an affecting sense of some, or even of all God's attributes, is no certain sign that they have the true grace of God in their hearts.

*Object.* Here possibly some may object against the force of the foregoing reasoning, that ungodly men in this world are in exceeding different circumstances from those in which the devils are, and from those which wicked men will be in at the day of judgment. Those things which are visible and present to these, are now future and invisible to the other. And wicked men in this world are in the body, that clogs and hinders the soul, and are encompassed with objects that blind and stupefy them. Therefore it does not follow, that because the wicked in another world have a great apprehension and lively sense of such things without grace, ungodly men in their present state may have the same.

*Ans.* To this I answer: It is not supposed that ever men in this life have all those things which have been mentioned to the same *degree* that the devils and damned have them. — None supposes that ever any in this life have terrors of conscience to an equal degree with them. It is not to be supposed that any mortal man, whether godly or ungodly, has an equal degree of speculative knowledge with the devil. And, as was just now observed, the wicked at the day of judgment, will have a vastly greater idea of the external glory of Christ than ever any have in the present state. So, doubtless, they will have a far greater sense of God's awful greatness and terrible majesty, than any could subsist under in this frail state. So we may well conclude, that the devils and wicked men in hell have a greater and more affecting sense of the vastness of eternity, and (in some respects) a greater sense of the importance of the things of another world than any here have. And they have also longings after salvation to a higher degree than any wicked men in this world.

But yet it is evident that men in this world may have things of the same *kind* with devils and damned men, the same sort of light in the understanding, the same views and affections, the same sense of things, the same kind of impressions on the mind and on the heart. The objection is against the conclusiveness of that reasoning which is the apostle's more properly than mine. The apostle judged it a conclusive argument against such as thought their believing there was one God an evidence of their being gracious, that the devils believed the same. So the argument is exactly the same against such as think they have grace, because they believe God is a holy God, or because they have a sense of the awful majesty of God. — The same may be observed of other things that have been mentioned. My text has reference, not only to the act of the understandings of devils in believing, but to that affection of their hearts which accompanies the views they have, as trembling is an effect of the affection of the

heart. Which shows, that if men have both the same views of understanding and also the same affections of heart that the devils have, it is no sign of grace.

And as to the particular degree to which these things may be carried in men in this world without grace, it appears not safe to make use of it as an infallible rule to determine men's state. I know not where we have any rule to go by, to fix the precise degree in which God by his providence, or his common influences on the mind, will excite in wicked men in this world, the same views and affections which the wicked have in another world. Which it is manifest, the former are capable of as well as the latter, having the same faculties and principles of soul, and which views and affections, it is evident, they often are actually the subjects of in some degree, some in a greater and some in a less degree. The infallible evidences of grace which are laid down in Scripture are of another kind. They are all of a holy and spiritual nature. And therefore things of that kind which a heart that is wholly carnal and corrupt cannot receive or experience, 1 Cor. 2:14. I might also here add that observation and experience, in very many instances, seem to confirm what Scripture and reason teaches in these things.

## **The Preservation of the Saints**

**by John Samson**

John Chapter 6:

**34 Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread."**

**35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst."**

**36 "But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe."**

**37 "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."**

**38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."**

**39 "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day."**

In this passage of scripture, Jesus presents the big picture perspective regarding salvation. His words are altogether clear and unmistakable, as He portrays the complete sovereignty of God in salvation. The crowd that was following Jesus

"believed" in Him as a miracle worker and as the Messiah. John 6:14 states, "Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."

However, Jesus makes it clear that this crowd did not possess true living faith - a faith that saves. They instead possessed a temporary "belief" or affection for Christ, but as the rest of the chapter shows, when Jesus finished preaching this latest message, most in the crowd were no longer following Him. John 6:66 says, "As a result of this ("this" meaning Jesus' own words) many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. "

This then is the context. Jesus is addressing this unbelieving crowd and seeks to explain to them why it is they do not believe. Lets allow Jesus to tell the redemption story from His perspective, in His own words.

Jesus starts by saying "But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe." If there was ever a claim to true faith, Jesus dismisses that idea out of hand, telling them that they did not in fact believe in Him, and He knew it. He then goes on:

"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me."

Each word here is vitally important. As we meditate on these words, we should notice the order Jesus gives us. All that the Father gives to Jesus - every single one of them - will come to Jesus. It is not the coming to Jesus of a certain group of people that prompts God to then give them to the Son. No, according to Jesus, its the other way round. Firstly, the Father gives a group of people to the Son, who will then come to the Son. It is the Father's giving that takes place before the people's coming. Jesus teaches us, in verse 37, that there is never the possibility of a single person being given by the Father to the Son who will not come to the Son.

### **Why do only some come?**

If we believe the words of the Master, we would have to say that the answer lies in the Father's Sovereign choice. The Father does not draw every human being to the Son, and remember He is addressing the crowd that does not believe in Him. It would seem the necessary implication that the reason these people had not believed was because they were not part of the group that the Father had given to the Son. Why? Because Jesus is talking directly to them and telling them they did not believe, and here He is explaining why: All that the Father gives to the Son, come to the Son, and those in this crowd had not come to the Son in true faith.

According to Jesus in John 6: 44, no one can come to the Son unless the Father draws them, and all those drawn in this way will be raised up to eternal life. Jesus confirms this in verse 65, saying that no one can come to Him unless it is given to them by the

Father.

## **The Giving and the Coming**

Jesus says that all that the Father gives to Him, will come to Him.

Of course, it is imperative that people come to Christ to be saved. But here Christ gives us the insight on why some come and others do not. It is the Father's gracious act in giving people to the Son that will without question, mean that each of these will come to the Son.

As we move from verse 37 to verse 38, Jesus explains the security of the relationship possessed by those who come to Christ. He says that He will never cast them out. In the original language, the aorist subjunctive of strong denial is used, which makes it clear that it is absolutely impossible for Jesus to reject anyone who comes to Him. He will never do it! There is no one who genuinely comes to Christ who will ever be rejected by Christ.

Why is this the case? Jesus continues, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

So, what exactly is the will of the Father? "That of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day."

Jesus' words are both remarkable and plain. There is no possibility whatsoever that Christ will fail to perform all of His Father's will. Such a thought is unthinkable. Christ is the obedient Son of His Father, and is also, as God, omnipotent in power, so that no opposition or force could stop Him from achieving His desired goals. There is simply no way at all that the Son will fail to fulfill the will of His Father. This being the case, we have Christ's own testimony that all those given by the Father to the Son, will without fail come to the Son, and will never be cast out, but raised up at the last day to eternal life.

## **The Basis**

The basis for all this is not found in us at all. Jesus makes this very clear. He gives us a God centered Gospel, and His declarations here leave us in the arms of a Father who chose a people for Himself, and gives them as a gift to the Son. These then will, in time, come to the Son. Our confidence is found in knowing that the Father's will is that none of those given by Him to the Son be lost.

These clear words give us complete and assured security in the Father (He gives His elect to His Son as a gift) and security in the Son (He will never fail to do His Father's will). God is the Redeemer. Man is the recipient of the gracious working of God. Man

is the object of salvation, but it is God, and God alone who acts to save man. That is the basis of our confidence. Like Paul, we can say, "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." (Phil. 1:6)

## **How Can We Know If We're Among The Elect?**

To the question, "can a person know they are eternally secure?" I would answer, "most definitely, yes." That's because all those given by the Father will come to the Son, and be kept by Him and raised up to eternal life. Not one of the elect... absolutely no one, falls through the cracks. But the question then becomes, "how do we know if we are numbered amongst the group?" Well, that's a fairly easy question to answer, believe it or not.

As we've seen, Jesus said, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me." Let me ask you, "have you come to Christ?" I mean, have you genuinely come to the biblical Christ, repenting of your sin and putting your faith in Him to save you? And how about your affection for Christ? Do you have a genuine love for the Lord Jesus Christ?"

If you can in all honesty say "yes" to these questions, and have indeed come to Christ, then scripture is clear that you could not have come unless you were first amongst those given by the Father to the Son (John 6:37).

If you have come, then without doubt you are numbered amongst this great company of the elect. Only the elect genuinely come. Only the elect genuinely love Christ. You would have no measure of affection for the biblical Christ unless God had first done something in your heart. By nature, we do not seek God or want Him. But the fact that you love Him, albeit imperfectly, indicates that you are one of Christ's sheep.

As you allow the clear words of the Master here in John 6:37-45 to sink down deeply in your heart and mind, your spirit will rejoice in the amazing grace He has lavished so freely upon you. As the Apostle John exclaimed, "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are." (1 John 3:1)

"Salvation is of the Lord" Jonah 2:9. To God alone belongs the credit and the glory.

## **Apostasy**

**by A. W. Pink**

## **(Hebrews 6:4-6)**

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The passage which is now to occupy our attention is one of the most solemn in the Hebrews' epistle, yea, to be met with anywhere in the New Testament. Probably few regenerate souls have read it thoughtfully without being moved to fear and trembling. Careless professors have frequently been rendered uneasy in conscience as they have heard its awe-inspiring language. It speaks of a class of persons who had been highly privileged, who had been singularly favored, but who, so far from having improved their opportunities, had wretchedly perverted them; who had brought shame and reproach on the cause of Christ; and who were in such a hopeless condition that it was "impossible to renew them again unto repentance." Well does it become each one of us to earnestly lift up his heart to God, beseeching Him to prevent us making such a shipwreck of the faith.

As perhaps the majority of our readers are aware, the verses before us have proved one of the fiercest theological battlegrounds of the centuries. It is at this point that the hottest fights between Calvinists and Arminians have been waged. Those who believe that it is possible for a real Christian to so sin and backslide as to fall from grace and be lost eternally, have confidently appealed to these verses for proof of their theory. It is much to be feared their theory prejudiced them so much, that they were incapable of examining impartially and weighing carefully its varied terms. With their minds so biased by their views of apostasy, they have rather taken it for granted that this passage describes a true child of God, who, through turning his back upon Christ, ultimately perishes. But Scripture bids us "Prove all things" (1 Thess. 5:21), and this calls for something more than a superficial and hurried investigation of what is, admittedly, a difficult passage.

If on the one hand, Arminians have been too ready to read into this passage their unscriptural dogma of the apostasy of a Christian, it must be confessed that many Calvinists have failed to grapple successfully with and interpret satisfactorily the most knotty points in these verses. They are right in affirming that Scripture teaches, most emphatically and unequivocally the Divine preservation and the human perseverance of the saints, as they have also wisely pointed out that the Word of God does not and cannot contradict itself. If our Lord asserted that His sheep should "never perish" (John 10:28), then certainly Hebrews 6 will not teach that some of them do. If through the apostle Paul the Holy Spirit assures us that nothing can separate the children from the love of their Father (Rom. 8:35-39), then, without doubt, the portion now before us does not declare that something will. It may not always be easy to discover the perfect consistency of one scripture with another, yet we must hold fast to the unerring harmony and integrity of God's Truth.

The chief difficulty connected with our passage is to make sure of the class of persons



who are there in view. Is the Holy Spirit here describing regenerated or unregenerated souls? The next thing is to ascertain what is meant by, "If they shall fall away." The last, what is denoted by "It is *impossible* to renew them again unto repentance." Anticipating our exposition, we are fully assured that the "falling away" which is here spoken of signifies a deliberate, complete and final repudiation of Christ—a sin for which there is no forgiveness. So too we understand the "impossible" to renew them again to repentance, announces that their condition and case is beyond hope of recovery. Because of this, Calvinists have, generally, affirmed that this passage is treating of mere professors. But over against this there are two insuperable objections: first, mere professors have nothing from which to "fall away"; second, mere professors have *never* been "renewed" unto repentance.

In addition to the controversy which these verses have occasioned, not a few have turned them unto an unwarrantable use. "Misapprehension of this passage has also, I believe, in many cases occasioned extreme distress of mind to two classes of persons, —to nominal professors, who, after falling into gross sin, have been awakened to serious reflection; and to real Christians, on their falling under the power of mental disease, sinking into a state of spiritual languor, or being betrayed into such transgressions of the Divine law as David and Peter were guilty of: and this has thrown all but insurmountable obstacles in the way of both 'fleeing for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them' in the Gospel. All this makes it the more necessary that we should carefully inquire into the meaning of the passage. When rightly understood, it will be found to give no countenance to any of the false conclusions which have been drawn from it, but to be like every other part of inspired Scripture, 'profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness',—well-fitted to produce caution, no way calculated to induce despair" (Dr. J. Brown).

Before attempting an elucidation of the above-mentioned difficulties, and to prepare the way for our exposition of these verses, the contents of which have so sorely puzzled many, let us recall, once more, the condition of soul into which these Hebrew Christians had fallen. They had "become dull of hearing" (Heb. 5:11), "unskillful in the Word of Righteousness" (Heb. 5:13), unable to masticate "strong meat" (Heb. 5:14). This state was fraught with the most dangerous consequences. "The Hebrews had become lukewarm, negligent, and inert; the gospel, once dearly seen and dearly loved by them, had become to them dull and vague; the persecutions and contempt of their countrymen a grievous burden, under which they groaned, and under which they did not enjoy fellowship with the Lord Jesus. Darkness, doubt, gloom, indecision, and consequently a walk in which the power of Christ's love was not manifest, characterized them. Now, if they continued in this state, what else could be the result but apostasy? Forgetfulness, if continued, must end in rejection, apathy in antipathy, unfaithfulness in infidelity.

"Such was their danger. And if they succumbed to it their state was hopeless. No other

gospel remains to be preached, no other power to rescue and raise them. They had heard and known the voice which saith, 'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest'. They had professed to believe in the Lord who died for sinners, and to have chosen Him as their Savior and Master. And now they were forgetting and forsaking the Rock of their Salvation. If they deliberately and wilfully continued in this state, they were in danger of final impenitence and hardness of heart.

"The exhortation must be viewed in connection with the special circumstances of the Hebrews. After the rejection of the Messiah by Israel, the gospel had been preached unto the Jews by the apostles, and the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit had been manifested among them. The Hebrews had accepted the gospel of the once crucified and now glorified Redeemer, who sent down from heaven the Spirit, a sign of His exaltation, and a pledge of the future inheritance. Having thus entered *into the sphere of new covenant manifestation*, any one who wilfully abandoned it could only relapse into that phase of Judaism which crucified the Lord Jesus. There was no other alternative for them, but either to go on to the full knowledge of the heavenly priesthood of Christ, and to the believer's acceptance and worship through the Mediator in the sanctuary above, or fall back into the attitude, not of the godly Israelites before Pentecost, such as John the Baptist and those who waited for the promised redemption, nor even into the condition of those for whom the Savior prayed, 'for they know not what they do'; but into a state of willful conscious enmity against Christ, and the sin of rejecting Him, and putting Him to an open shame" (Adolph Saphir).

"The danger to which this spiritual inertness exposed the Hebrews was such as to justify the strongest language of exhortation and reproof. Apostasy from Christ was a step more easy and natural to a Jewish than to a Gentile believer, because the way was always open and inviting them, as men, to return to those associations which once carried with them the outward sanctification of Jehovah's name, and which only the *power* of grace had enabled them to renounce. When heavenly realities became inoperative in their souls, the visible image was before them still, and here was the danger of their giving it the homage of their souls. If there were not an habitual exercise of their spiritual senses, the power of discernment could not remain: they would call evil good, and good evil. The ignorance which springs from spiritual neglect begins its own punishment of apathetic dullness on the once clear mind, and robs the spirit of its power to detect the wily methods of the Devil. It is in the presence of God alone that the Christian can exert his spiritual energies with effect. Abiding in Christ, maintains us in that presence. A more unhappy error cannot befall a believer than to separate, in the habit of his mind, acquired knowledge from the living Christ. Faith dies at once when separated from its object. Knowledge indeed is precious, but the knowledge of God is a progressive thing (Col. 1:10), whose end is not obtained this side of the glory (1 Cor. 8:2). The extreme experience of an advancing Christian is that of continual initiation. With a prospect ever-widening he has a daily deepening

apprehension of the grace wherein he stands, and in which he is more and more established, by the word of righteousness . . .

"A clear and *growing* faith, in *heavenly* things was needed to preserve Jewish Christians from relapse. To return to Judaism was to give up Christ, who had left their house 'desolate' (Matthew 23:38). It was to fall from grace, and place themselves not only under the general curse of the law, but that particular imprecation which had brought the guilt of Jesus' blood on the reprobate and blinded nation of His murderers" (A. Pridham). It should be pointed out, however, that it is just as easy, and the attraction is just as real, for a Gentile Christian to return to that world out of which the Lord has called him, as it was for a Jewish Christian to go back again to Judaism. And just in proportion as the Christian fails to walk with God daily, so does the world obtain power over his heart, mind and life; and a continuance in worldliness is fraught with the most direful and fatal consequences.

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened" etc. (verse 4). Here the apostle continues the digression which he began at Hebrews 5:11. The parenthesis has two divisions: the first, Hebrews 5:11-14 is reprehensible; the second, Hebrews 6:1-20 is hortatory. In chapter 6 he exhorts the Hebrews unto two duties: to *progress* in the Christian course (verses 1-11); to *persevere* therein (verses 12-20). The first exhortation is proposed in verses 1,2 and qualified in verse 3. The *motive* to obedience is drawn from the danger of apostasy (verses 4-6). The opening "For" of verse 4 intimates the close connection of our present passage with that which immediately precedes. It draws a conclusion from what the apostle had been saying in Hebrews 5:11-14. It amplifies the "if" in verse 3. It points a most solemn warning against their continuance in their present sloth. It draws a terrible contrast from the possibility of verse 3. "The apostle regards the retrogression of the Hebrews with dismay. He sees in it the danger of an entire, confirmed, wilful, and irrecoverable apostasy from the truth. He beholds them on the brink of a precipice, and he therefore lifts up his voice, and with vehement yet loving earnestness he warns them against so fearful an evil" (Adolph Saphir).

Three things claim our careful attention in coming closer to our passage: the persons here spoken of, the sin they commit, the doom pronounced upon them. In considering the persons spoken of it is of first importance to note that the apostle does *not* say, "us who were once enlightened", nor even "you", instead, he says "those". In sharp contrast from them, he says to the Hebrews, "Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you".

"Afterwards, when the apostle comes to declare his hope and persuasion concerning these Hebrews that they were not such as those whom he had before described, nor such as would fall away unto perdition, *he doth* it upon three grounds whereon they were differenced from them as: 1. That they had such things as did 'accompany

salvation'; that is, such as salvation is inseparable from. None of these things therefore had he ascribed unto those whom he describeth in this place (verses 4-6); for if he had so done, they would not have been unto him an argument and evidence of a contrary end, that these should not fall away and perish as well as those. Wherefore he ascribes nothing to these here in the text that *doth* peculiarly 'accompany salvation'. 2. He describes them by their *duties of obedience* and fruits of faith. This was their 'work and labor of love' towards the name of God, verse 10. And hereby, also, doth he differentiate them from those in the text, concerning whom he supposeth that they may perish eternally, which these fruits of saving faith and sincere love cannot do. 3. He adds, that, in the preservation of those there mentioned, the *faithfulness of God* was concerned: 'God is not unrighteous to forget'. For they were such he intended as were interested in the covenant of grace, with respect whereunto alone there is any engagement on the faithfulness or righteousness of God to preserve men from apostasy and ruin; and there is so with an equal respect unto all who are so taken into the covenant. But of those in the text he supposeth no such thing; and thereupon doth not intimate that either the righteousness or faithfulness of God was anyway engaged for their preservation, but rather the contrary" (Dr. John Owen).

It is scarcely accurate to designate as "mere professors" those described in verses 4,5. They were a class who had enjoyed great privileges, beyond any such as now accompany the preaching of the Gospel. Those here portrayed are said to have had *five* advantages, which is in contrast from the six things enumerated in verses 1, 2, which things belong to man in the flesh, under Judaism. Five is the number of *grace*, and the blessings here mentioned pertain to the Christian dispensation. Yet were they not true Christians. This is evident from what is *not* said. Observe, they were not spoken of as God's elect, as those for whom Christ died, as those who were born of the Spirit. They are not said to be justified, forgiven, accepted in the Beloved. Nor is anything said of their faith, love, or obedience. Yet *these* are the very things which distinguish a real child of God. First, they had been "enlightened". The Sun of righteousness had shone with healing in His wings, and, as Matthew 4:16 says, "The people which sat in darkness saw great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up". Unlike the heathen, whom Christ, in the days of His flesh, visited not, those who came under the sound of His voice were wondrously and gloriously illumined.

The Greek word for "enlightened" here signifies "to give light or knowledge by teaching". It is so rendered by the Septuagint in Judges 13:8, 2 Kings 12:2, 17:27. The apostle Paul uses it for "to make manifest", or "bring to light" in 1 Corinthians 4:5, 2 Timothy 1:10. Satan blinds the minds of those who believe not, lest "the light of the gospel should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4:4), that is, give the knowledge of it. Thus, "enlightened" here means to be instructed in the doctrine of the gospel, so as to have a clear apprehension of it. In the parallel passage in Hebrews 10:26 the same people are

said to have "received the knowledge of the truth", cf. also 2 Peter 2:20, 21. It is, however, only a *natural* knowledge of spiritual things, such as is acquired by outward hearing or reading; just as one may be enlightened by taking up the special study of one of the sciences. It falls far short of that spiritual enlightenment which *transforms* (2 Cor. 3:18). An illustration of a unregenerate person being "enlightened", as here, is found in the case of Balaam; Numbers 24:4.

Second, they had "tasted" of the heavenly gift. To "taste" is to have a personal experience of, in contrast from mere report. "Tasting does not include eating, much less digesting and turning into nourishment what is so tasted; for its nature being only thereby discerned it may be refused, yea, though we like its relish and savor, on some other consideration. The persons here described, then, are those who have to a certain degree understood and relished the revelation of mercy; like the stony-ground hearers they have received the Word with a transcendent joy" (John Owen). The "tasting" is in contrast from the "eating" of John 6:50-56.

Opinion is divided as to whether the "heavenly gift" refers to the Lord Jesus or the person of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps it is not possible for us to be dogmatic on the point. Really, the difference is without a distinction, for the Spirit is here to glorify Christ, as He came from the Father by Christ as His ascension "Gift" to His people. If the reference be to the Lord Jesus, John 3:16, 4:10, etc., would be pertinent references: if to the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:38, 8:20, 10:45, 11:17. Personally, we rather incline to the latter. This Divine Gift is here said to be "heavenly" because from Heaven, and leading to Heaven, in contrast from Judaism—cf. Acts 2:2, 1 Peter 1:12. Of this "Gift" these apostates had "tasted", or had an experience of: compare Matthew 27:34 where "tasting" is opposed to actual drinking. Those here in view had had an acquaintance with the Gospel, as to gain such a measure of its blessedness as to greatly aggravate their sin and doom. An illustration of this is found in Matthew 13:20, 21.

Third, they were "made partakers of the Holy Spirit". First, it should be pointed out that the Greek word for "partakers" here is a different one from that used in Colossians 1:12 and 2 Peter 1:4, where real Christians are in view. The word here simply means "companions", referring to what is external rather than internal. It is to be observed that this item is placed in the center of the five, and this because it describes the animating principle of the other four, which are all effects. These apostates had never been "born of the Spirit" (John 3:6), still less were their bodies His "temples" (1 Cor. 6:19). Nor do we believe this verse teaches that the Holy Spirit had, at any time, wrought *within* them, otherwise Philippians 1:6 would be contravened. It means that they had shared in the benefit of His supernatural operations and manifestations: "The place was shaken" (Acts 4:31) illustrates. We quote below from Dr. J. Brown:

"It is highly probable that the inspired writer refers primarily to the miraculous gifts

and operations of the Holy Spirit by which the primitive dispensation of Christianity was administered. These gifts were by no means confined to those who were 'transformed by the renewing of their minds'. The words of our Lord in Matthew 7:22, 23 and of Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:1, 2 seem to intimate, that the possession of these unrenewed men was not very uncommon in that age; at any rate they plainly show that their possession and an unregenerate state were by no means incompatible".

Fourth, "And have tasted the good Word of God". "I understand by this expression the promise of God respecting the Messiah, the sum and substance of all. It deserves notice that this promise is by way of eminence termed by Jeremiah 'that good word' (Jer. 33:14). To 'taste', then, this 'good Word of God', is to experience that God has been faithful to His promise—to enjoy, so far as an unconverted man can enjoy the blessings and advantages which flow from that promise being fulfilled. To 'taste the good Word of God', seems, just to enjoy the advantages of the new dispensation" (Dr. J. Brown). Further confirmation that the apostle is here referring to that which these apostates had witnessed of the fulfillment of God's *promise* is obtained by comparing Jeremiah 29:10, "After seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform My *good word* toward you, in causing you to return to this place".

Observe how studiously the apostle still keeps to the word "taste", the better to enable us to identify them. They could not say with Jeremiah, "Thy words were found and I did *eat* them" (Jer. 15:16). "It is as though he said, I speak not of those who have received nourishment; but of such as have so far tasted it, as that they ought to have desired it as 'sincere milk' and grown thereby" (Dr. John Owen). A solemn example of one who merely "tasted" the good Word of God is found in Mark 6:20: "for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly".

Fifth, "And the powers of the world to come," or "are to come." The reference here is to the new dispensation which was to be ushered in by Israel's Messiah according to Old Testament predictions. It corresponds with "these last days" of Hebrews 1:2, and is in contrast from the "time past" or Mosaic economy. Their Messiah was none other than the "mighty God" (Isa. 9), and wondrous and glorious, stupendous and unique, were His miraculous works. These "powers" of the new Age are mentioned in Hebrews 2:4, to our comments on which we would refer the reader. Of these mighty "powers" these apostates had "tasted", or had an experience of. They had been personal witnesses of the miracles of Christ, and also of the wonders that followed His ascension, when such glorious manifestations of the Spirit were given. Thus they were "without excuse". Convincing and conclusive evidence had been set before them, but there had been no answering faith in their hearts. A solemn example of this is found in John 11:47, 48.

"If they shall fall away". The Greek word here is very strong and emphatic, even

stronger than the one used in Matthew 7:27, where it is said of the house built on the sand, "and great was the fall thereof". It is a complete falling away, a total abandonment of Christianity which is here in view. It is a wilful turning of the back on God's revealed truth, an utter repudiation of the Gospel. It is making "shipwreck of the faith" (1 Tim. 1:19). This terrible sin is not committed by a mere nominal professor, for he has nothing really to fall away from, save an empty name. The class here described are such as had had their minds enlightened, their consciences stirred, their affections moved to a considerable degree, and yet who were never brought from death unto life. Nor is it backsliding Christians who are in view. It is not simply "fall into sin", this or that sin. The greatest "sin" which a regenerated man can possibly commit is the personal denial of Christ: Peter was guilty of this, yet was he "renewed again unto repentance". It is the total renunciation of all the distinguishing truths and principles of Christianity, and this not secretly, but openly, which constitutes apostasy.

"If they shall fall away". "This is scarcely a fair translation. It has been said that the apostle did not here assert that such persons *did* or *do* 'fall away'; but that if they did—a supposition which, however, could never be realized—then the consequence would be they could not be 'renewed again unto repentance'. The words literally rendered are, 'And have fallen away', or, 'yet have fallen'. The apostle obviously intimates that such persons might, and that such persons did, 'fall away'. By 'falling away', we are plainly to understand what is commonly called apostasy. This does not consist in an occasional falling into actual sin, however gross and aggravated; nor in the renunciation of some of the principles of Christianity, even though those should be of considerable importance; but in an open, total, determined renunciation of all the constituent principles of Christianity, and a return to a false religion, such as that of unbelieving Jews or heathens, or to open infidelity and open godlessness" (Dr. J. Brown).

"It is impossible . . . if they fall away, to renew them again unto repentance". Four questions here call for answer. What is meant by "renewed unto repentance"? What is signified by "renewed again unto repentance"? Why is such an experience "impossible"? To whom is this "impossible"? Repentance signifies a change of mind: Matthew 21:29, Romans 11:29 establish this. It is more than a mental act, the conscience also being active, leading to contrition and self-condemnation (Job 42:6). In the unregenerate, it is simply the workings of nature; in the children of God it is wrought by the Holy Spirit. The latter is evangelical, being one of the things which "accompany salvation". The former is not so, being the "sorrow of the world", which "worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:10). This kind of "repentance" or remorse receives most solemn exemplification in the case of Judas: Matthew 27:3, 5. Such was the repentance of these apostates. The Greek verb for "renew" here occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Probably "restore" had been better, for the same word is used in the Sept., for a Hebrews verb meaning to renew in the sense of restore: Psalm 103:5; 104:30;

Lamentations 5:21. Josephus applies it to the renovation of the Temple!

But what is meant by "renewing unto repentance"? "To be 'renewed' is a figurative expression for denoting a change, a great change, and a change for the better. To be 'renewed' so as to change a person's mind is expressive of an important and advantageous alteration of opinion, and character and service. And such an alteration the persons referred to had undergone at a former period. They were once in a state of ignorance respecting the doctrines and evidences of Christianity, and they had been 'enlightened'. They had once known not of the excellency and beauty of Christian truth, and they had been made to 'taste of the heavenly gift'. They once misunderstood the prophecies respecting the Messiah, and were unaware of their fulfillment, and, of course, were strangers to that energetic influence which the New Testament revelation puts forth; and they had been made to see that that 'good word' was fulfilled, and had been made partakers of the external privileges and been subjected to the peculiar energies of the new order of things. Their view, and feelings, and circumstances, were materially changed. How great the difference between an ignorant, bigoted Jew, and the person described in the preceding passage! He had become as it were a different man. He had not, indeed, become, in the sense of the apostle, a 'new creature', His mind had not been so changed as unfeignedly to believe 'the truth as it is in Jesus'; but still, a great and so far as it went, a thorough change had taken place" (Dr. J. Brown).

Now it is impossible to "renew again unto repentance" those who have totally abandoned the Christian revelation. Some things are "impossible" with respect unto the *nature* of God, as that He cannot lie, or pardon sin without satisfaction to His justice. Other things which are possible to God's nature are rendered "impossible" by His *decrees* or purpose: see 1 Samuel 15:28, 29. Still other things are "possible" or "impossible" with respect to the rule or order of all things God has appointed. For example, there cannot be faith apart from hearing the Word (Rom. 10:13-17). "When in things of duty God hath neither expressed command thereon, nor appointed means for the performance of them, they are to be looked upon then as impossible [as, for instance, there is no salvation apart from repentance, Luke 13:3. (A.W.P.)]; and then, with respect unto *us*, they are so absolutely, and so to be esteemed. And this is the 'impossibility' here principally intended. It is a thing that God hath neither commanded us to endeavor, nor appointed means to attain it, nor promise to assist us in it. It is therefore that which we have no reason to look after, attempt, or expect, as being not possible by any law, rule, or constitution of God.

"The apostle instructs us no further in the nature of future events but as our own duty is concerned in them. It is not for us either to look or hope, or pray for, or endeavor the restoration of such persons unto repentance. God gives a law unto us in these things, not unto Himself. It may be possible with God, for aught we know, if there be not a contradiction in it unto any of the holy properties of His nature; only He will not



have us to expect any such thing from Him, nor hath He appointed any means for us to endeavor it. What He shall do we ought trustfully to accept; but our own duty toward such persons is absolutely at an end. And indeed, they put themselves wholly out of *our* reach" (Dr. John Owen).

It needs to be carefully observed that in the whole of this passage from Hebrews 5:11 onwards the apostle is speaking of *his own ministry*. In God's hands, His servants are instruments by which He works and through whom He accomplishes His evangelical purpose. Thus Paul could properly say "I have *begotten you* through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15). And again, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). So the servants of God had, through the preaching of the Gospel, "renewed unto repentance" those spoken of in Hebrews 6:4. But they had apostatised; they had totally repudiated the Gospel. It was therefore "impossible" for the *servants* of God to "renew them *again* unto repentance", for the all-sufficient reason that they had no other message to proclaim to them. They had no other Gospel in reserve, no further motives to present. Christ crucified *had been* set before them. Him they now denounced as an Imposter. There was "none other name" whereby they could be saved. Their public renunciation of Christ rendered their case hopeless so far as God's servants were concerned. "Let them alone" (Matthew 15:19) was now their orders: compare Jude 22. Whether or not it was possible for God, consistently with His holiness, to shame them, our passage does not decide.

"Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh" (verse 6). This is brought in to show the aggravation of their awful crime and the impossibility of their being renewed again unto repentance. By renouncing their Christian profession they declared Christ to be an Imposter. Thus they were irreclaimable. To attempt any further reasoning with them, would only be casting pearls before swine. With this verse should be carefully compared the parallel passage in Hebrews 10:26-29. These apostates had "received the knowledge of the truth", though *not* a saving knowledge of it. Afterward they sinned "wilfully": there was a deliberate and open disavowal of the truth. The nature of their particular sin is termed a "treading under foot the Son of God (something which no real Christian ever does) and counting (esteeming) the blood of the covenant an unholy thing", that is, looking upon the One who hung on the Cross as a *common* malefactor. For such there "remaineth no more sacrifice for sins". Their case is hopeless so far as man is concerned; and the writer believes, such are abandoned by God also.

"Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame". "They thus identify themselves with His crucifiers—they entertained and avowed sentiments which were He on earth and in their power, would induce them to crucify Him. They exposed Him to infamy, made a public example of Him. They did more to dishonor Jesus Christ than His murderers did. They never professed to acknowledge His divine mission; but these apostates had made such a profession—

they had made a kind of trial of Christianity, and, after trial, had rejected it" (Dr. J. Brown).

Such a warning was needed and well calculated to stir up the slothful Hebrews. Under the Old Testament economy, by means of types and prophecies, they had obtained glimmerings of truth as to Christ, called "the word of the beginning of Christ". Under those shadows and glimmerings they had been reared, not knowing their full import till they had been blessed with the full light of the Gospel, here called "perfection". The danger to which they were exposed was that of receding from the ground where Christianity placed them, and relaxing to Judaism. To do so meant to re-enter that House which Christ had left "desolate" (Matthew 23:38), and would be to join forces with His murderers, and thus "crucify to *themselves* the Son of God afresh", and by their apostasy "put Him to an open (public) shame". We may add that the Greek word here for "crucify" is a stronger one than is generally used: it means to "crucify up". Attention is thus directed to the erection of the cross on which the Savior was held up to public scorn.

Taking the passage as a whole, it needs to be remembered that all who had professed to receive the Gospel were not born of God: the parable of the Sower shows that. Intelligence might be informed, conscience searched, natural affections stirred, and yet there be "no root" in them. All is not gold that glitters. There has always been a "mixt multitude" (Ex. 12:38) who accompany the people of God. Moreover, there is in the real Christian the old heart, which is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked", and therefore is he in constant need of faithful *warning*. Such, God has given in every dispensation: Genesis 2:17; Leviticus 26:15, 16; Matthew 3:8; Romans 11:21; 1 Corinthians 10:12.

Finally, let it be said that while Scripture speaks plainly and positively of the perseverance of the saints, yet it is a perseverance of *saints*, not unregenerate professors. Divine preservation is not only in a safe state, but also in a *holy* course of disposition and conduct. We are "kept by the power of God *through faith*". We are kept by the Spirit working in us a spirit of entire dependency, renouncing our own wisdom and strength. The only place from which we cannot fall is one down in the dust. It is there the Lord brings His own people, weaning them from all confidence in the flesh, and giving them to experience that it is when they are weak they are strong. Such, and such only, are saved and safe forever.

# **What Does the Term “Perseverance of the Saints” Mean, and Does the Bible Teach it?**

## **Monergism FAQs**

The term “perseverance of the saints” means that every true “saint,” or in other words, all who have actually been “sanctified by the offering up of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10), will certainly persevere in faith until the end, and so be finally saved. The term does not mean that true Christians will never have seasons of doubt, nor ever fall into sin, but rather that God will always cause their faith to triumph at the last, and will never allow them to remain in gross sin indefinitely, but will continue the work that he first began in them, bringing it to perfection in the Day of Jesus Christ (see Philippians 1:6). Neither does the term mean that no one who makes a profession of faith will finally fall away: on the contrary, there are many false professions, and there are different kinds of false faiths that flourish for awhile but then wither away (e.g. Matthew 7:21-23; 13:1-23); but all who have been granted true faith, which God alone can give (e.g. Joh 3:27; Phi 1:29; 2Pe 1:1; Act 16:14; 18:27; Eph 2:8-10; Act 5:31; 11:18; 2Ti 2:25-26; 1Co 4:7), will continue in the faith until they reach their blessed end in heaven.

The scriptures clearly teach certain truths which, when conflated, definitely confirm the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. The bible teaches that, what God begins (especially concerning his work of grace in the hearts of the saints), he will certainly finish (Psa 138:8; Ecc 3:14; Isa 46:4; Jer 32:40; Rom 11:29; Phi 1:6; 2Ti 4:18); that of all whom he has called and brought to Christ, none will be lost (Joh 6:39-40; 10:27-29; Rom 8:28-31, 35-39; Heb 7:25; 10:14); and that, while his preservation of the saints is not irrespective of their continuance in faith and holiness (1Co 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:5; Heb 3:14; 6:4-6; 10:26-27; 12:14; Rev 21:7-8; 22:14-15), yet he himself is the one who sanctifies them, and causes them to persevere in true faith and godliness (Joh 15:16; 1Co 1:30-31; 6:11; 12:3; 15:10; Gal 3:1-6; Eph 2:10; Phi 2:12-13; 1Th 5:23-24; Heb 13:20-21; 1Jo 2:29; Jud 1:24-25).

A denial of the final perseverance of all true saints is a very serious error for a couple of reasons; first, it logically demands that we must continue by the works of the flesh what God has begun by his gift of the Spirit – a serious error Paul addresses in Galatians 3:1-6. If God saved us by his grace alone, which was given to us in Christ Jesus, then how can we say it is up to us to continue in the faith, or that his grace alone, which was sufficient to give us faith and the Spirit at the first, is not sufficient to keep us in the faith and preserve us by his Spirit? In other words, any position which denies that Christ will persevere Christians to the end is implicitly denying that Jesus' work on the cross is sufficient to save to the uttermost ... That we must somehow maintain our own just standing before God. No small error. And second, if

the Holy Spirit does not preserve all whom the Father has elected and brought to Christ, then the persons of the Trinity are working in contradiction to each other, which is an impossibility given the precious unity of the Godhead.

### **Is perseverance of the saints the same thing as eternal security?**

It is common to hear the term “eternal security” used basically as a synonym for “the perseverance of the saints”. The former term emphasizes that all who are in Christ, that is, all the elect, who have truly been regenerated, are secure in their position forever – they will never finally fall away. The latter term, on the other hand, emphasizes the manner in which God will infallibly preserve his own – by causing their faith to persevere through every trial, until they finally apprehend the prize of the upward calling, for which they have already been apprehended by Christ (see Philippians 3:12-14). If this is all that is meant by the term “eternal security,” then it is certainly a biblical doctrine, very similar to the term “perseverance,” and complementing it.

However, the term “eternal security” is often used in a very different and unbiblical way, by Christians who adhere to a synergistic doctrine of regeneration (that is, the doctrine that man from his own nature produces faith in the gospel, and then God regenerates him in consequence of this faith – a doctrine opposed to the scriptures [see question #40, “What does monergism mean,” above]). To many of these Christians, faith is something that we ourselves contributed to our salvation by our free will, and so it is up to us whether or not we will continue to believe, as well. According to this doctrine, then, “eternal security” basically means that a person who has come to faith in Christ may fall away from that faith and turn aside to a lifestyle of willing sin, and yet he will be saved anyway, because he had faith at one time, and so he is eternally secure, no matter what his subsequent life may look like. This false doctrine, based upon a flawed understanding of “free will” (see Question #47, “Does the bible teach that man has free will,” above), contradicts many scripture passages which teach that the saints must persevere in the faith to be saved (e.g. 1Co 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:5; Heb 3:14; 6:4-6; 10:26-27; 12:14; Rev 21:7-8; 22:14-15), but that the God who first gave them faith will cause them to persevere. Hence, in common usage, the term “eternal security” can sometimes refer to a doctrine diametrically opposed to the Reformed doctrine of perseverance.

### **What is meant by the expression “once saved, always saved”?**

The expression “once saved, always saved” can simply mean that all who have been called out by the gospel of Christ, granted true faith, and saved from his wrath and the condemnation they had been under, will never more be in peril of eternal damnation, but will be saved by God's sovereign and immutable grace for all eternity. If this is all that is intended by the expression, then it is complementary to the Reformed doctrine

of perseverance, which teaches that all true saints will persevere in the faith, by God's keeping power, until they finally reach their blessed end in heaven.

However, the term is often used to mean that a Christian may be “saved” by a profession of faith, fall away to a lifestyle of open sin and unbelief of which he never repents, and still be “saved” in the last judgment because of his one-time profession. When the term is used in this way, it is in direct contradiction to many scriptural teachings about true and false faith, and the fact that God will always cause his true saints to persevere in faith and godliness. See the two questions above for a fuller treatment of this theme.

### **Is the doctrine of perseverance opposed to the doctrine of salvation by grace alone?**

One common objection to the Reformed doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is that it must be opposed to the doctrine of salvation by grace alone, inasmuch as it denies that a person may live in habitual, unrepentant sin, and still be finally saved, even if at one time he made a confession of faith in Christ (or even if he continues to profess his faith). If a person who demonstrates no good works will not finally be saved, the argument goes, then good works are necessary for salvation; hence, salvation is not by grace through faith alone, but is by faith and works together.

The problem with this objection is that it misses the kind of necessity that good works have for salvation. Works are necessary, not as the cause of salvation, but as the fruit and proof of the faith which saves. A so-called “faith” which does not show itself in true works of holiness, is dead and worthless (see James 2:17). Faith alone apprehends justification, but that same, vital faith also lays hold of godliness and true works of holiness. It is impossible that any true faith, produced in the heart by the Holy Spirit, should not show itself in works, just as it is impossible for any living person not to show his life by breathing.

The God who promises to justify and glorify all those who believe also promises to sanctify them (see, for example, Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 36:27). If one claims to have faith and justification, therefore, but evinces absolutely no sanctification, it is manifest that his faith is not genuine, and he is not justified at all. On the contrary he has only a false, dead faith, which can justify no one. So then, we are justified by grace alone, but it is grace itself that makes us desire to be obedient. Being set free from the bondage of sin is part of the package. In other words we are not only saved from the guilt of sin, but likewise from its power.

In sum, yes, our salvation is by grace alone: but the same grace that grants us faith and justification also grants us holiness and sanctification; and if we do not have the one, we are necessarily devoid of the other as well. We are saved by faith alone, but

not by a faith that is alone (for further scriptural proof of this doctrine, see question #66, “What does the term 'perseverance of the saints' mean, and does the bible teach it?”, above).

### **What is “easy-believism”?**

The term “easy-believism” is a usually derogatory label, used to characterize the faulty understanding of the nature of saving faith adhered to by much of contemporary Evangelicalism, most notably (and extremely) by such Dispensational authors as Charles Ryrie and Zane Hodges. The term was popularized in an ongoing debate between Hodges, to whose theology the label “easy-believism” was affixed, and John MacArthur, to whom the term “lordship salvation” came to be applied.

Essentially, the teaching of “easy-believism” (which proponents prefer to call “free grace,” or some similar term), asserts that the faith which saves is mere intellectual assent to the truths of the gospel, accompanied by an appeal to Christ for salvation (at the end of his life, Hodges embraced the even more extreme position that salvation requires only an appeal to Christ, even by one who does not believe the most basic truths of the gospel, such as his death, burial, and resurrection [which he clearly taught, for example, in “The Hydra's Other Head: Theological Legalism,” printed in the Grace In Focus Newsletter]). According to proponents of the “free grace” movement (i.e. “easy-believism”), it is not required of the one appealing for salvation that he be willing to submit to the Lordship of Christ. In fact, at least according to some proponents, the person appealing for salvation may at the same time be willfully refusing to obey the commands of Christ; but because he has intellectual faith, he will still be saved, in spite of his ongoing rebellion.

“Easy-believism” is usually connected with Dispensationalism, which serves as a foundational theological support for it. According to classic Dispensationalism, the gospel which Jesus proclaimed on earth was a gospel for the ethnic Jews alone, promising them earthly rewards in the Jewish millennium for their works of submitting to and following Christ; and this “gospel of the Kingdom” is categorically different from the Gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith alone which Paul later proclaimed. In this way, all of Jesus' teachings that, if anyone is not willing to leave father and mother and take up his cross and follow him, he cannot be his disciple, do not apply to the gospel of grace, but only to the gospel of the Kingdom. But contrary to this flawed method of interpretation, there is only one gospel in the New Testament, which Jesus proclaimed on earth, and which his apostles likewise proclaimed throughout the whole world after his ascension. And this gospel declares that all who repent (that is turn from sin and rebellion to Christ the Lord) and call upon the Name of Christ in true faith will be saved. Even in Paul's writings, moreover, it is clear that anyone who perverts the gospel of grace alone, and uses it to continue presumptuously in sin, is bringing just damnation upon himself (Romans 3:8).

In much of Evangelicalism, the flippant sort of “once saved, always saved” mentality, which denies that true grace will always prove itself in faith and works, is closely related to an “easy-believism” mindset, which suggests that intellectual belief alone, which does not go on to pursue a life of true holiness, is the kind of faith that saves (see questions 66-68 above). When the gospel is understood biblically, it becomes clear that both faith and obedience assume the prior existence of spiritual life. As J.I. Packer wisely commented, “sinners cannot obey the gospel, any more than the *law*, without renewal of heart.” Understanding this as foundational biblical truth, we know that salvation not only saves us from the guilt of sin but from its power.

## **What Does “Ordo Salutis” Mean, and Why is it Important?**

“Ordo salutis” is a Latin term which means “the order of salvation”. It speaks of a way of organizing all the events and realities in the process of salvation, in the order that they show up in an individual's life. This order is sometimes temporal (e.g., we are justified a certain amount of time before we are glorified in the eternal state); but sometimes it is just logical, or causal (e.g., we exercise faith as soon as God gives us a new birth, but his regeneration is the cause of our faith). The “ordo salutis” is a very important concept because the doctrine of salvation is so rich and nuanced, and involves so many different realities, that we will not understand it the way that we should if we do not define all of its elements very carefully. We grow in sanctification and holiness as we grow in our understanding of the gospel, and realize all the spiritual blessings that we have in Christ; and so, if we are unclear on the many precious things that God's Word has to say about the order of events which his salvation brings about in our lives, we will remain immature in our faith and conduct.

A simple “ordo salutis” is as follows: the first event that had to take place for us to be saved is God's unconditional love and election of us in eternity past. Then, God sent us an outward call at some point in our lives, or in other words, he brought the message of the gospel across our paths, either through the reading or the hearing of the word. Next, he gave an inward call, through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, which regenerated, or brought to life our previously dead hearts. Because of this regeneration, we experienced conversion, that is, repentance from our sin and faith in Christ. Then, in consequence of our faith, we are justified, that is, God legally declares us righteous, by imputing or reckoning Jesus' perfect righteousness to our own account. At the same time, God adopts us, making us his children and the brothers and sisters of Christ; and he also unites us with Christ, so that henceforth we are in him. Beginning at that point, and on throughout our lifetime, God sanctifies us, or makes us holy, changing us into his likeness. Throughout this time, God is also preserving us, causing us to persevere in the faith, so that we do not finally fall away.

Then, at death, we enter an intermediate state, where we are in the presence of the Lord, but without our physical bodies. And finally comes glorification, when our bodies will be resurrected and changed so that they will no longer decay, and we will inherit the new heavens and new earth, where we will live in the presence of our Immanuel for all eternity.

This first thing to remember is that we must never separate the benefits (regeneration, justification, sanctification) from the Benefactor (Jesus Christ). The entire process (election, redemption, regeneration, etc.) is the work of God in Christ and is by grace alone. Election is the superstructure of our *ordo salutis*, but not itself the application of redemption. Regeneration, the work of the Holy Spirit which brings us into a living union with Christ, has a causal priority over the other aspects of the process of salvation. God opens our eyes, we see. God circumcises/ unplugs our ears, we hear. Jesus calls a dead and buried Lazarus out of the grave, he comes; In the same way, the Holy Spirit applies regeneration, (opening our spiritual eyes and renewing our affections), infallibly resulting in faith. All the benefits of redemption such as conversion (faith & repentance), justification, sanctification and perseverance presuppose the existence of spiritual life. The work of applying God's grace is a unitary process given to the elect simultaneously. This is instantaneous, but there is definitely a causal order (regeneration giving rise to all the rest). Though these benefits cannot be separated, it is helpful to distinguish them. Therefore, instead of imposing a chronological order we should view these as a unitary work of God to bring us into union with Christ. We must always keep in mind that the orders expressed in the following articles occur together or happen simultaneously like heat and fire. All aspects of the work of God continue together throughout the life of a Christian.

Historically in the Church there has been disagreement about the order of salvation, especially between those in the Reformed and Arminian camps. The following two perspectives of God's order in carrying out His redemptive work reveals the stark contrast between these two main historic views. Keep in mind that both viewpoints are based on the redemptive work which Christ accomplished for His people in history:

In the Reformed camp, the *ordo salutis* is 1) election, 2) predestination, 3) gospel call 4) inward call 5) regeneration, 6) conversion (faith & repentance), 7) justification, 8) sanctification, and 9) glorification. (Rom 8:29-30)

In the Arminian camp, the *ordo salutis* is 1) outward call 2) faith/election, 3) repentance, 4) regeneration, 5) justification, 6) perseverance, 7) glorification.

Notice the crucial difference in the orders of regeneration and faith. While the Reformed position believes spiritual life is a prerequisite for the existence of the other aspects of salvation, the Arminians believe that fallen, natural man retains the moral



capacity to receive or reject the gospel of his own power. Even with the help of grace he still must find it within himself to believe or reject Christ. This has broad implications and raises questions like why does one man believe and not another? You might also notice that, according to Arminians, election is dependent on faith, not the other way around. This is no small matter ..understanding the biblical order, while keeping in mind its unitary process, is crucial and has a profound impact on how one views God, the gospel, and the Bible as a whole.

As Anthony Hoekema said,

"Union with Christ begins with God's pretemporal decision to save his people in and through Jesus Christ. This union, further, is based on the redemptive work for his people which Christ did in history. Finally, this union is actually established with God's people after they have been born, continues throughout their lives, and has as its goal their eternal glorification in the life to come. We go on, then, to see union with Christ as having its roots in divine election, its basis in the redemptive work of Christ, and its actual establishment with God's people in time. Union between Christ and his people was planned already in eternity, in the sovereign pretemporal decision whereby God the Father selected us as his own. Christ himself was chosen to be our Savior before the creation of the world (1 Pet. 1:20); Ephesians 1:4 teaches us that when the Father chose Christ, he also chose us. We are initially united with Christ in regeneration." [next] "We appropriate and continue to live out of this union through faith."Third, "We are justified in union with Christ."Fourth, "We are sanctified through union with Christ."Fifth, "We persevere in the life of faith in union with Christ."Finally, "We shall be eternally glorified with Christ."

## **Calling and Repentance**

### **Abraham Kuyper**

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#### **The Calling of the Regenerate**

*Whom He did predestinate, them He also called.* — Rom. viii. 30.

In order to hear, the sinner, deaf by nature, must receive hearing ears. "He that hath ears let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

But by nature the sinner does not belong to these favored ones. This is a daily experience. Of two clerks in the same office, one obeys the call and the other rejects it; not because he despises it, but because he does not hear God's call in it. Hence God's quickening act antedates the sinner's hearing, and thus he becomes able to hear the Word.

The quickening, the implanting of the faith-faculty, and the uniting of the soul to Christ, apparently three acts, are in reality but one act, together constituting (objectively) the so-called *first grace*. In the operation of this grace the sinner is *perfectly passive* and indifferent; the subject of an action which does not involve the slightest operation, yielding, or even non-resistance on his part.

In fact, the sinner, being dead in trespasses and sins, is under this first grace like a *soulless, motionless* body, with all the passive properties belonging to a corpse. This fact can not be stated with sufficient force and emphasis. It is an *absolute* passivity. And every effort or inclination to claim for the sinner the minutest cooperation in this first grace destroys the Gospel, severs the artery of the Christian confession, and is not only heretical, but anti-Scriptural in the highest sense.

This is the point where the sign-post is erected, where the roads divide, where the men of the purified, that is, the Reformed Confession, part company with their opponents.

Having stated this fact forcibly and definitely, it is of the utmost importance to state with equal emphasis that, in all the subsequent operations of grace (so-called *second grace*), this absolute passivity is made to cease by the wonderful act of the first grace. Hence in all subsequent grace the sinner to some extent cooperates.

In the first grace the sinner is absolutely like a corpse. But the sinner's first passivity and his subsequent cooperation must not be confounded. There is a passivity, after the Scripture, which can not be exaggerated, which must be left intact; but there is also a passivity which is pretended, anti-Scriptural, and sinful. The difference between the two is not that the former is partially cooperating, and the latter without any cooperation whatever. Surely by such temporizing the churches and the souls in them are not inspired with energy and enthusiasm. No; the difference between the sound and the sickly passivity consists herein, that the former, which is absolute and unlimited, belongs to the *first grace, to which it is indispensable*; while the latter clings to the *second grace, where it does not belong*.

Let there be clear insight into this truth, which is after all very simple. The elect but unregenerate sinner can do nothing, and the work that is to be wrought in him must be wrought by another. This is the first grace. But after this is accomplished he is no longer passive, for something was brought into him which in the second work of grace will cooperate with God.

But it is not implied that the elect and regenerate sinner is now able to do anything without God; or that if God should cease working in him, conversion and sanctification would follow of themselves. Both these representations are thoroughly untrue, un-Reformed, and unchristian, because they detract from the work of the Holy Spirit in the elect. No; all spiritual good is of grace to the end: grace not only in regeneration, but at every step of the way of life. From the beginning to the end and throughout eternity the Holy Spirit is the Worker, of regeneration and conversion, of justification and every part of sanctification, of glorification, and of all the bliss of the redeemed. Nothing may be subtracted from this.

But while the Holy Spirit is the only Worker in the first grace, in all subsequent operations of grace the regenerate *always* cooperates with Him. Hence it is not true, as some say, that the regenerate is just as passive as the unregenerate; this only detracts from the work of the Holy Spirit in the *first grace*. Neither is it true that henceforth the regenerate is the principal worker, only *assisted* by the Holy Spirit; for this is equally derogatory to the Spirit's work in the *second grace*.

Both these errors should be opposed and rejected. For altho, on the one hand, it is said that the regenerate, considered out of Christ, still lies in the midst of death; yet, tho he be *considered a thousand times out of Christ*, he remains in Him, for once in His hand no one can pluck him out of it. And altho, on the other hand, the regenerate is constantly admonished to be active and diligent, yet, tho the horse does the pulling, it is not the horse but the driver *who drives the carriage*.

Reserving this last point until we consider sanctification, we now consider the *calling*, for this sheds more light upon the confession of the Reformed churches concerning the *second grace* than any other part of the work of grace.

After the elect sinner is born again, i.e., quickened, endowed with the faculty of faith, and united with Jesus, the next work of grace in him is *calling*, of which Scripture speaks with such emphasis and so often. "But as He which has *called you is holy*, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation"; "Who hath *called you out of darkness into His marvelous light*"; "The God of all grace who hath *called us unto His eternal glory*"; "Whereunto He *called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*"; "Who hath *called you unto His Kingdom and Glory*"; "I beseech you to walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye were called;" and not to mention more: "Give diligence to make your *calling and election sure*; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall."

In the Sacred Scripture *calling* has, like *regeneration*, a wider sense and a more limited.

In the former sense, it means to be called to the *eternal glory*; hence this includes all

that *precedes*, i.e., calling to repentance, to faith, to sanctification, to the performance of duty, to glory, to the eternal kingdom, etc.

Of this, however, we do not speak now. It is now our intention to consider the calling in its limited sense, which signifies exclusively the calling whereby we are called from darkness into light, i.e., the call unto *repentance*.

This call unto *repentance* is by many placed upon the same level with the “drawing,” of which, e.g., Jesus speaks: “No man can come unto Me except the Father *draw* him.” This we find also in some of St. Paul’s words: “Who hath *delivered* [Dutch translation, *drawn*] us from the power of darkness”; “That He might deliver [*draw*] us from this present evil world according to the will of God and our Father.” However, this seems to me less correct. He that must be *drawn* seems to be *unwilling*. He that is *called* must be *able* to come. The first implies that the sinner is still passive, and therefore refers to the operation of the *first grace*; the second addresses the sinner himself, and counts him able to come, and hence belongs to the *second grace*.

This “calling” is a summons. It is not merely the calling of one to tell him something, but a call implying the command to come; or a beseeching call, as when St. Paul prays: “As tho God did beseech you, be ye reconciled to God”; or as in the Proverbs: “My son, give Me thine heart.”

God sends this call forth by the preachers of the Word: not by the independent preaching of irresponsible men, but by those whom He Himself sends forth; men especially endowed, hence whose calling is not their own, but His. They are the ministers of the Word, royal ambassadors, in the name of the King of Kings demanding our heart, life, and person; yet whose value and honor depend exclusively upon their divine mission and commission. As the value of an echo depends upon the correct returning of the word received, so does their value, honor, and significance depend solely upon the correctness wherewith they call, as an echo of the Word of God. He who calls correctly fills the highest conceivable office on earth; for he calls kings and emperors, standing above them. But he who calls incorrectly or not at all is like a sounding brass; as a minister of the Word he is worthless and without honor, True to the pure Word, he is *all*; without it, he is *nothing*. Such is the responsibility of the preacher.

This should be noticed lest Arminianism creep into the holy office. The preacher must be but the instrument of the Holy Spirit; even the sermon must be the product of the Holy Ghost. To suppose that a preacher can have the least authority, honor, or official significance outside of the Word, is to make the office Arminian; not the Holy Spirit, but the dominie, is the worker; he works with all his might, and the Holy Spirit may be the minister’s *assistant*. To avoid such mistake, our Reformed churches have always purged themselves of the leaven of clericalism.

And through this office the call goes forth from the pulpit, in the catechetical class, in the family, in writing, and by personal exhortation. However, not always to every sinner directly through the office. On a ship at sea God may use a godly commander to call sinners to repentance. In a hospital without spiritual supervision the Lord may use a pious man or woman, both to nurse the sick and call their souls to repentance. In a village where the quasi-minister neglects his duty, the Lord God may be pleased to draw souls to life by printed sermons and books, by a newspaper even, or by individual exhortation.

And yet in all these the authority to call reposes in the divine embassy of the ministry of the Word. For the instruments of the call, whether they were persons or printed books, proceeded from the office. The persons were themselves called through the office, and they only transmitted the divine message; and the printed books offered on paper what otherwise is heard in the sanctuary.

This calling of the Holy Spirit proceeds in and through the preaching of the Word, and calls upon the *regenerated* sinner to arise from death, and to let Christ give him light. It is not a calling of persons still unregenerate, simply because such have *no hearing ear*.

It is true that the preaching of missionary or minister of the Word addresses itself also to others, but this is not at all in conflict with what we have just said. In the first place, because there is also an outward call to the unregenerate, in order to deprive them of an excuse, and to show that they have *no hearing ears*. And second, because the minister of the Word does not know whether a man is born again or not, wherefore he *may make no difference*.

As a rule, every baptized person should be reckoned as belonging to the regenerated (but not always converted); wherefore the preacher must call every baptized person to repentance, as tho he were born again. But let no one commit the mistake of applying this rule, which applies only to the *Church as a whole*, to *every person* in the Church. This would be either the climax of thoughtlessness or a complete misunderstanding of the reality of the grace of God.

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## **The Coming of the Called**

*That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth.*— Rom. ix. 11.

THE question is, whether the elect cooperate in the call.

We say, Yes; for the call is no call, in the fullest sense of the word, unless the called one can hear and hears so distinctly that it impresses him, causes him to rise and to

obey God. For this reason our fathers, for the sake of clearness, used to distinguish between the *ordinary* call and the *effectual* call.

God's call does not go forth to the elect alone. The Lord Jesus said: "Many are called, few are chosen." And the issue shows that masses of men die unconverted, altho called by the outward, ordinary call.

Nor should this outward call be slighted or esteemed unimportant; for by it the judgment of many shall be made the heavier in the day of judgment: "If the mighty works which have been done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Therefore it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you"; "And the servant which knew the Lord's will and did not according to His will shall be beaten with many stripes." Moreover, the effect of this outward call reaches sometimes much deeper than is generally supposed, and brings one sometimes to the very point of real conversion.

The unregenerate are not so insensible to the truth as never to be touched by it. The decisive words of Heb. vi., concerning the apparently converted who have even tasted of the heavenly gift, prove the contrary. St. Peter speaks of sows which were washed and then returned to the wallowing in the mire. One can be persuaded to be *almost* a Christian. But for the selling of his goods the rich young ruler would have been won for Christ. Wherefore the effect of the ordinary call is by no means as weak and meager as is commonly believed. In the parable of the sower the fourth class of hearers alone belong to the elect, for they alone bear fruit. Still there is among two of the remaining classes a considerable amount of growth. One of them even produces high stalks and ears; only there is *no fruit*.

And for this reason the men that company with the people of God should earnestly examine their own hearts, whether their following of the Word is the result of having the seed sown in "good ground." Oh, there is so much of illumination and of delight even; and yet only to be choked, because it does not contain the *genuine* germ of life.

All these unregenerate persons lack *saving grace*. They hear only with the carnal understanding. They receive the Word, but only in the field of their unsanctified imagination. They let it work upon their natural conscience. It plays merely upon the waves of their natural emotions. Thus they may be moved to tears, and they ardently love whatever so affects them. Yea, they often perform many good works which are truly praiseworthy; they may even give their goods to the poor, and their bodies to be burned. Their salvation is therefore considered to be a matter of fact. But the holy apostle completely destroys their hope, saying: "Tho you speak with the tongues of men and of angels, tho you understand all mystery, tho you give all your goods to feed the poor, and tho you *give* your body to be burned, and have not *love*, it profiteth you nothing."

Hence to be God's child and not a sounding brass, deep insight into the divine mysteries, an excited imagination, a troubled conscience, and waves of feeling are not required, for all these may be experienced without any real covenant grace; but what is needed is true, deep love operating in the heart, illuminating and vitalizing all these things.

Adam's sin consisted in this, that he banished all the love of God from his heart. Now it is impossible to be neutral or indifferent toward God. When Adam ceased to love God, he began *to hate* Him. And it is this hatred of God which now lies at the bottom of the heart of every child of Adam. Hence conversion means this that a man get rid of that *hatred* and receive *love* in its place. He who says from the heart, "I love the Lord," is all right. What more can he desire!

But as long as there is no love for God, there is *nothing*. For mere willingness to do something for God, even to bear great sacrifices, and to be very pious and benevolent, except it spring from the right motive, is in its deepest ground nothing but a despising of God. However beautiful the veneering, all these apparently good works are inwardly cankered, sin-eaten, and decayed. Love alone imparts the real flavor to the sacrifice. Wherefore the holy apostle declares so sternly and sharply: "Tho you give your body to be burned, and have not *love*, it profiteth you *nothing*."

To perform good works in order to be saved, or to oblige God, or to make one's own piety lofty and conspicuous, is a growth from the old root and at the most but a *semblance* of love. To cherish true love for God is to be constrained by love to yield one's ego with all that it is and has, and to let God be God again. And the ordinary, the general, the outward call never has such effect; it is incapable of producing it.

Wherefore we leave the ordinary call and return to the call which is particular, wonderful, inward, and effectual; which addresses itself *not to all*, but exclusively to the *elect*.

This call, which is spoken of as "*heavenly*" (Heb. iii. i), as "*holy*" (2 Tim. i. 9), as "*being without repentance*" (Rom. xi. 29), is "*according to God's purpose*" (Rom. viii. 28), is "*from above in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Phil. iii. 14), and does not have its starting-point in the preaching. He that calls by it is *God*, not the minister. And this call goes forth by the means of two agencies, one coming to man from without and the other from within. Both these agencies are effectual, and the call has accomplished its purpose and the sinner has come to repentance as soon as their workings meet and unite in the center of his being.

Hence we deny that the regenerate, hearing the preached Word, will come of *himself*. We do not thus understand their cooperation. If the inward call is sufficient, how is it that the regenerate can sometimes hear the preaching without arising, unrepentant,

refusing to let Christ give him light? But we confess that the call of the regenerate is twofold: from without by the preached Word, and from within by the exhortation and conviction of the Holy Spirit.

Hence the work of the Holy Spirit in the calling is *twofold*: The *first work* is, as He comes with the Word: the Word which is inspired, prepared, committed to writing, and preserved by Himself, who is God the Holy Ghost. And He brings that Word to the sinners by preachers whom He Himself has endowed with talents, animation, and spiritual insight. And so wonderfully does He conduct that preaching through the channel of the office and of the historical development of the confession, that at last it comes to him in the form and character required to affect and win him.

We see in this a very mysterious leading of the Holy Spirit. Afterward a preacher will learn that, under his preaching in such a church and at such an hour, a regenerate person was converted. And yet he had not specially prepared himself for it. Frequently he did not even know that person; much less his spiritual condition. And yet, without knowing it, his thoughts were guided and his word was prepared in such a way by the Holy Ghost; perhaps he looked at the man in such a manner that his word, in connection with the Spirit's inward operation, became to him the real and concrete Word of God. We hear it often said: "That was directly preached at me." And so it was. It should be understood, however, that it was not the minister who preached at you, for he did not even think of you; but it was the Holy Spirit Himself. It was He who thought of you. It was He who had it all prepared for you. It was He Himself who wrought in you.

The ministers of the Word should therefore be exceedingly careful not in the least to boast of the conversions that occur under their ministry. When after days of failure the fisherman draws his net full of fishes, is this cause for the net to boast itself? Did it not come up empty again and again; and then was it not nearly torn asunder by the multitude of fishes?

To say that this proves the efficiency of the preacher is against the Scripture. There may be two ministers, the one well grounded in doctrine, the other but lightly furnished; and yet the former has no conversions in his church, while the latter is being richly blessed. In this the Lord God is and remains the Sovereign Lord. He passes by the heavily armed champions in Saul's army, and David, with scarcely any weapons at all, slays the giant Goliath. All that a preacher has to do is to consider how, in obedience to his Lord, he may minister the Word, leaving results with the Lord. And when the Lord God gives him conversions, and Satan whispers, "What an excellent preacher you are, that it was given you to convert so many men!" then he is to say, "Get thee behind me, Satan," giving the glory to the *Holy Spirit alone*.

However, it is not the Holy Spirit's only care in such a way and focus of life to cause



the Word to come to a regenerate person, but He adds also *a second work, viz.*, that by which the preached Word effectively enters the very center of his heart and life.

By this *second* care He so illuminates his natural understanding and strengthens his natural ability and imagination that he receives the general tenor of the preached Word and thoroughly understands its contents.

But this is not all, for even pretended believers may have this. The seed of the Word attains this growth also in those who have received the seed into a rocky ground and among thorns. Hence to this is added the *illumination* of his understanding, which wonderful gift enables him not only to apprehend the general sense of the preached Word, but also to perceive and realize that this Word comes to him directly *from God*; that it affects and condemns his very *being*, thus causing him to penetrate into its hidden essence and feel the sharp sting which effects *conviction*.

Lastly, the Holy Spirit plies this conviction — which otherwise would quickly vanish — so long and so severely, that finally the sting, like the keen edge of a lancet, pierces the thick skin and lays open the festering sore. This is in the called a very wonderful operation. The general *understanding* puts the matter before him; the *illumination* reveals to him what it contains; and the *conviction* puts the sharp two-edged sword directly upon his heart. Then, however, he is inclined to shrink from that sword; not to let it pierce through, but to let it glance harmlessly from the soul. But then the Holy Spirit, in full activity, continues to press that sword of conviction, driving it so forcibly into the soul that at last it cuts through and takes effect.

But this does not end the *calling*. For after the Holy Spirit has done all this, He begins to operate upon the *will*; not by forcibly bending it, as an iron rod in the strong hand of the blacksmith, but by making it, tho stiff and unyielding, pliant and tender *from within*. He could not do this in the unregenerate. But having laid in regeneration the foundation of all these subsequent operations in the soul, He proceeds to build upon it; or, to take another figure, He draws the sprouts from the germ planted in the ground. They do not start of themselves, but He draws them out of the germ. A grain of wheat deposited in a desk remains what it is; but warmed by the sun in the soil, the heat causes it to sprout. And so it is here. The vital germ can do nothing of itself; it remains what it is. But when the Holy Spirit causes the fostering rays of the Sun of Righteousness to play upon it, then it germinates, and thus He draws from it the blade and the ear and the corn in the ear.

Hence the yielding of the will is the result of a tenderness and emotion and affection which sprang from the implanted germ of life, by which the will, which was at first inflexible, became pliant, by which that which was inclined to the left was drawn to the right. And so, by this last act, conviction, with all that it contains, was brought into the will; and this resulted in the yielding of self, giving glory to God.

And in this way love entered the soul — love tender, genuine, and mysterious, the ecstasy of which vibrates in our hearts during all our after-life.

And this finishes the exposition of the divine work of calling. It belongs to the elect alone. It is irresistible, and no man can hinder it. Without it no sinner ever passed from the bitterness of *hatred* to the sweetness of *love*. When the call and regeneration coincide, they seem to be one; and so they are to our consciousness; but actually they are distinct. They differ in this respect, that *regeneration* takes place independently of the *will* and *understanding*; that it is wrought in us without our aid or cooperation; while in *calling*, the will and understanding begin to act, so that we *hear* with both the outward and inward ear, and with the inclined will are *willing* to go out to the light.

## The Ordo Salutis

### or, Relation in the Order of Nature of Holy Character and Divine Favor

A.A. Hodge

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Natural religion in all its forms presupposes holy character and conduct as the essential antecedent condition of God's favor. Christianity in all its genuine forms presupposed the favor of God as the essential antecedent condition of holy character and conduct.

We propose to discuss the following specific problem, involving the general principle just stated. In the application of redemption to the individual sinner, which, in the order of nature, precedes and conditions the other-justification or regeneration?

**I. All forms of Christianity necessarily recognize the fact that in general the propitiatory work of Christ precedes and conditions our salvation.**

The merits of Christ, on the ground of which God pardons our sins and effectively delivers us from their pollution and power, are equally presupposed in sanctification and in justification. All Christians alike admit in general, that as the moral and spiritual condition of the creature depends necessarily upon the communion of the Spirit of God, and this communion depends upon his favor, the favor of God, the absence of judicial condemnation, and hence forgiveness of sins, must ideally precede spiritual quickening in all its stages. The execution of penalty and the communication

of gracious influences cannot proceed at the same time with respect to the same persons; hence it follows that a state of condemnation must cease before a state of grace can be instituted.

Nevertheless the Mediæval and the Protestant forms of the doctrine of redemption appear alike, although in very different degrees, to condition the complete forgiveness of sins and the remission of condemnation upon a work of grace antecedently wrought out in the subject. This, in the Mediæval system, is regarded as a meritorious use of prevenient grace, leading to the desert of more grace, and a divine judgment of legal standing conformed to and grounded upon the degree of actual subjective righteousness attained at any moment by the subject. In the theology of the Reformed and Lutheran churches, justification, or God's sentence pronouncing the sinner released from condemnation, and entitled to the rewards promised to the obedient, is conditioned upon self-appropriating faith; and such faith is of course consequent only to spiritual regeneration.

The *ordo salutis*, therefore, according to the Catholic system, is, (1) Baptism; (2) The cleansing away of pollution of sin; (3) The infusion of gracious habits; (4) The exercise of these gracious habits in the doing of good works, which merit the favor of God, increase of grace, and finally eternal life; (5) The sacrament of penance in this life, and after death purgatory, by the pains of which the penalties incurred by our sins and the imperfections of our obedience are liquidated, and our guilt expiated, and the legal accounts of our souls finally adjusted.

The order observed in the application of redemption in the theology of the Reformers is, (1) Regeneration; (2) Faith; (3) Justification. The regeneration and faith upon which justification is conditioned begin in no sense causes, either meritorious or efficient, of the remission of sins and imputation of righteousness which ensue, but only conditions *sine qua non*, to which God has been graciously pleased to promise that remission and that imputation, and upon which he has been sovereignly pleased to make them depend.

## **II. *The problem as it stands according to the Mediæval and Romish system.***

In fact, according to the Mediæval system, this problem, in the terms of its statement, can have no existence, since they regard justification as a real subjective change of moral character, and since they hold that full remission of the penalty of sin and complete acceptance into divine favor are the result of subsequent penitential expiations and meritorious acts of obedience.

1. They define justification as “not remission of sin merely, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man, through the voluntary reception of grace, and of the

gifts whereby man of unjust becomes just, and of an enemy a friend.” “Of this justification, (1) The *final cause* is the glory of God and of Jesus Christ, and eternal life; (2) The *efficient cause* is a merciful God; (3) The *meritorious cause* is his most-beloved and only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who, when we were enemies, merited justification for us by his most holy passion on the wood of the cross, and made satisfaction for us unto God the Father; (4) The *instrumental cause* is baptism; (5) The *formal cause* is the righteousness of God – not that whereby he himself is just, but that whereby he maketh us just; that, to wit, with which we, being endowed by him, are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and we are not only reputed, but are truly called, and are just, receiving justice within us, each one according to his own measure, and according to each one’s proper disposition and co-operation. For although no one can be just but he to whom the merits of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ are communicated, yet this is done in the said justification of the impious, when by the merit of that same most holy passion the charity of God is poured forth by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those that are justified, and is inherent therein; whence man, through Jesus Christ, in whom he is grafted, receives in said justification, together with the remission of sins, all those gifts infused at once – faith, hope, and charity.” (Conc. Trent., Sess. 6, ch. 7.)

Hence justification, (1) Necessarily presupposes the satisfaction rendered by Christ for human guilt; (2) It presupposes the merit of Christ’s obedience and suffering meriting for his people grace and all things necessary for salvation; (3) Its essential nature is (a) the cleansing from pollution, (b) the infusion of grace; (4) It exists in various degrees; (5) Its reception depends upon and its degrees vary with each one’s own proper disposition and co-operation.

2. The work of Christ is the necessary presupposition of justification in the Mediæval and Catholic view of it, as well as in that of Protestant. In consequence of Adam’s sin, the whole human race is held under a sentence of forfeiture and of condemnation before God. Thomas Aquinas (“Summa Theologia,” Pars III., Qu. 48, Arts. i.-iv.; and Qu. 47, Art. 23) distinguished, in the bearing of Christ’s work upon the just and holy God, between its value as satisfaction and its value as merit: (1) As satisfaction, it expiates the guilt of sin and atones for sin as a wrong done the infinite God; (2) As merit, it deserves the favor and gracious help of God in behalf of those for whom it was wrought out. In both elements it is necessarily presupposed by God as the judicial ground of all his gracious dealings with the human race, and with each individual thereof. As satisfaction it removes the sentence pronounced against the sinner which would otherwise necessitate the expression of wrath, and prevent the exercise of grace. As merit it deserves the communication of initial grace to each designated beneficiary, which is effected in baptism, whereby the soul is cleansed from sin and habits of grace are infused; and, further, it deserves the co-operation of additional grace with the obedient will rightly using prevenient grace; and it is the ultimate and absolute meritorious basis upon which the good works of believers secondarily merit

increase of grace ultimately eternal life. Aquinas himself affirms that the satisfaction and merit of Christ necessarily antecede and constitute the foundation of any merit subsequently acquired by the believer. Hence that which is ultimately founded upon grace is all of grace, and *si gratia consideratur secundum rationem gratuiti doni, omne meritum repugnat gratia* (Qu. 113, Art.5); and hence absolutely forgiveness of sins precedes and conditions infusion of grace. And yet, with palpable inconsistency, Thomas, and after him the who Romish Church, actually reverse this fundamental order when they proceed to elucidate the actual realization of redemption by the individual believer (Qu. 113, Arts. 2-8): “Therefore the remission of sins cannot be rationally believed unless there be present (first) infusion of grace.” “In justification (in the Romish sense) therefore four points are involved: (a) The infusion of grace; (b) The movement of the free will toward God through the awakening of faith; (c) The movement of the free will against sin; (d) *The remission of guilt as the completion of justification.*” (Ritschl., “Hist. Ch. Doc. of Reconciliation,” p. 79.)

3. In the actual realization of justification by the individual, according to the Romish scheme, a distinction must be carefully observed between (a) that which in the case of an adult sinner prepares for it, (b) the realization of justification in the first instance, and (c) its subsequent progressive realization in the advance of the gracious soul toward perfection; (d) that which is necessary for the restoration to grace of the baptized Christian after backsliding into sin.

(1) The preparation of the adult sinner for justification proceeds from the prevenient grace of God, without any merit on the part of the subject. This grace conceiving faith through hearing, brings him (a) to know himself to be a sinner and to apprehend the divine justice, and (b) to consider the mercy of God, and to trust that God will be merciful to him for Christ’s sakes; and hence (c) disposes him to co-operate with that grace which inclines him to love God, and moves him to that detestation of sin and penitence which must be experienced before baptism, and finally (d) leads him to determine to receive baptism and to lead a new life. (Con. Trent., Sess. 6, chaps. 5 and 6.)

(2) The justification of the sinner according to the Romish system, as above shown, is the infusion of gracious habits, the pollution of sin having been washed away by the power of God, on account of the merits of Christ, through the instrumentality of baptism, which operates its effects by an effective energy made inherent in it by the institution of God. After this, inherent in it by the institution of God. After this, inherent sin being removed, remission of guilt follows necessarily as its immediate effect. Guilt is the relation which sin sustains to the justice of God. The thing being removed, the relation ceases *ipso facto*. (Bellarmin, “De Amissione gratia et statu peccati.”)

(3) Having been thus justified and made a friend of God, he advances from virtue to

virtue, and is renewed from day to day, through the observance of the commandments of God and of the church, faith co-operating with good works, which truly merit and receive as a just reward increase of grace, and more and more perfect justification. His *first* justification was for Christ's sake, without any co-operation of his own merit, but by consent of his own will. His continued and increasing justification is for Christ's sake, through and in proportion to his own merit, which deserves increase of grace and acceptance in proportion (a) to his personal holiness and (b) to his obedience to ecclesiastical rules. (Conc. Trent., Sess. 6, chap. 10, and can. 32.)

(4) In the case of those who, having been justified, have sinned, the grace lost is restored, for the merits of Christ, through the sacrament of penance, which is provided as a second plank to rescue those who by sin have shipwrecked grace. the penance includes (a) sorrow for sin; (b) confession of all known sins – at least the desire to do so – to a priest having jurisdiction; (c) sacerdotal absolution; (d) satisfaction by alms, fasts, prayers, etc., and finally by purgatorial fires – which all avail for the avenging and punishing of past sins, as well as for the discipleship of the new life, and are meritorious satisfactions to divine justice, canceling the *temporal* punishments involved in the guilt of the sins for which they are undergone, the *eternal* punishment whereof having been freely and at once remitted, either by the sacrament itself, or by the honest desire for it. (Conc. Trent., Sess. 6, chaps. 14 and 16, and can. 30, Sess. 14, chaps 1-9.)

This system, involving the logical contradiction already pointed out, we acknowledge to be Christian (generically), because it builds ultimately upon the satisfaction and merits of Christ, which alone it regards as absolute.

But we unhesitatingly pronounce it at the same time to be anti-Christian – *i.e.*, a system which substitutes that which is not Christ in his place and stead, inasmuch as it, (1) After building upon, overlays out of sight the true foundation with human merits and penances, without authority, destitute of all meritorious desert. (2) Because it interposes between the soul of the repentant sinner and Christ many false mediators, as Mary, the saints, and priests. (3) Inasmuch as it teaches that divine grace operates *magically*, through sacraments, *ex opere operato*; and not, as is the fact, *ethically* through the truth revealed in the inspired Word, apprehended through spiritual through spiritual illumination, and received by faith, and loved and obeyed in the heart and life.

### **III. *The problem considered in the form it has assumed in the Reformation Theology.***

1. Observe the distinctive principle of the Theology of the Reformers.

(1) The movement of Luther and Calvin, and even of Zwingli, was one primarily of

inward practical personal religious experience, and not of systematic theological thinking. The phrase “justification by faith,” therefore, in the first instance expressed a religious conviction corresponding to a felt religious necessity of baptized Christian men, already within the church and diligently serving God, who had been brought to estimate their own religious works at their true value – as imperfect, and utterly inadequate. The holiness of God condemns as worthy of reprobation the least imperfection. The whole heart and all the works of the most earnest Christian are imperfect, and worthy of condemnation. There is consequently no ground of confidence for a sinner, no matter what be the character or stage of his religious experience, but the righteousness of Christ, imputed by God and appropriated by faith. (Ritschl., “Hist. Ch. Doc. Reconciliation,” chap. iv.)

(2) In connection with this personal experience of faith appropriating the righteousness of Christ, the moral and Christian sense of the Reformers was outraged by the then prevalent abuses of papal indulgences – a corollary of the doctrine of penance, which we have shown above to be an essential element in the Mediæval and Romish doctrine of justification. The horrible immoralities inseparable from the system enabled the Reformers to estimate more adequately its essentially irreligious character. The fact that all these ecclesiastical penances are inadequate, and therefore ineffectual, led them to see more clearly that they are unauthorized, and unnecessary because anticipated by the perfect work of Christ.

Hence, from this practical ground, there was subsequently elaborated the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith, which was afterwards adjusted into its systematic relations with the scriptural teaching as to the satisfaction of Christ, Predestination, Vocation, Faith, Adoption, and Sanctification by the great systematic divines of the seventeenth century. The two principles which give character to Protestant soteriology, and distinguish it generically from Romish soteriology on the one hand, and from that of the Socinians and Rationalists on the other, are:

(1) The clear distinction emphasized between the change of relation to the law, signalized by the word justification; and the real subjective change of personal character, signalized by the words regeneration and sanctification. With the Protestants, justification is a forensic act of God, declaring that the law as a covenant of life is satisfied, and that the subject is no longer subject to its penalty, but entitled henceforth to the rewards conditioned upon obedience. Regeneration, on the other hand, is a subjective change in the moral character of the subject, the gracious commencement of his complete restoration to the moral image of God, effected by the Holy Spirit in progressive sanctification.

(2) The second characteristic mark of Protestant soteriology is the principle that the change of relation to the law signalized by the term justification, involving remission of penalty and restoration to favor, necessarily precedes and renders possible the real

moral change of character signalized by the terms regeneration and sanctification. The continuance of judicial condemnation excludes the exercise of grace in the heart. Remission of punishment must be preceded by remission of guilt, and must itself precede the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. Hence it must be entirely unconditioned upon any legal standing, or moral or gracious condition of the subject. We are pardoned in order that we may be good, never made good in order that we may be pardoned. We are freely made co-heirs with Christ in order that we may become willing co-workers with him, but we are never made co-workers in order that we may become co-heirs.

These principles are of the very essence of Protestant soteriology. To modify, and much more, of course, to ignore or to deny them, destroys absolutely the thing known as Protestantism, and ought to incur the forfeiture of all recognized right to wear the name.

2. The application of redemption to the individual beneficiary is variously conceived of by Arminian and Calvinistic Protestants.

(1) According to Arminians, Christ satisfied divine justice in behalf of all men, the fallen race in mass, so as to place all individuals whatsoever in a salvable state, and to impetrate sufficient grace, forgiveness of sins, renewal of nature, and the adoption of sons and all the means thereto for all men, subject to the use which each man makes of the “gracious ability” thus redemptively secured for him. The order, therefore, stands thus: (a) The satisfaction and merit of Christ; (b) Sufficient grace conferred upon all for Christ’s sake, and endowing each man, at least at some point of his life, with “gracious ability;” (c) The voluntary use of the gracious ability thus secured issuing in (d) regeneration, and hence (e) in faith, and hence in (f) justification and sanctification.

(2) According to Calvinists, Christ obeyed and suffered in the stead of, and in behalf of his elect, according to the terms of a covenant engagement formed in eternity between his Father and himself. He impetrated for his people individually complete salvation and all the means thereof, to be applied to them severally at such times and under such providential and gracious conditions as were determined in the covenant.

Hence the application of redemption to each beneficiary proceeds on the presupposition of a merit and right previously impetrated by Christ and conceded by the Father. Every element of God’s gracious dealings with the elect, from their birth to their glorification, is exercised toward them *in* Christ as their head, is *on account of* Christ as the one procuring it by his merit, and *through* Christ as the one efficaciously applying it. Hence the application of redemption is the designed end and effect of the impetration of it by Christ.



The parts of the application are two: (a) Union with Christ, and (b) communion in the benefits secured by his obedience and suffering.

This “union” is effected by the Holy Ghost in effectual calling. Of this “calling” the parts are two: (a) The offering of Christ to the sinner, *externally* by the Gospel, and internally by the illumination of the Holy Ghost; (b) The reception of Christ, which on our part is both passive and active. The *passive* reception is that whereby a spiritual principle is ingenerated into the human will, whence issues the *active* reception, which is an act of faith with which repentance is always conjoined.

The “communion” of benefits which results from this union involves (a) a change of state or relation, called justification; and (b) a change of subjective moral character, commenced in regeneration and completed through sanctification.

Justification is by all Calvinists defined a gracious sentence pronounced by God, whereby he pardoneth the sins of the believer and receives him as righteous in his sight only for the sake of the righteousness of Christ imputed to him as a believer. (“Medulla Amesii,” chap. 26, De Vocatione.)

3. Hence the apparent circle in the reasoning involved in the evangelical or Protestant soteriology, and the interest thence arising in the problem proposed in this article.

(1) Christ satisfies divine justice and merits grace and salvation for his elect by his sufferings on the cross.

(2) In consideration of this meritorious work of Christ, and in execution of the grace therein impetrated, God deals with the elect sinner from his birth in a method of forbearance and special providential discipline, and at the predetermined time he regenerates him as still a sinner for Christ’s sake antecedent to faith.

(3) In consideration of the same meritorious work of Christ and the grace thereby impetrated, God graciously declares the relation of the now regenerated believer to the law to be changed, and the righteousness of Christ to be credited to him, for the sake of Christ, now apprehended by faith.

Thus it follows that the satisfaction and merit of Christ are the antecedent cause of regeneration; and yet, nevertheless, the participation of the believer in the satisfaction and merit of Christ (*i.e.*, his justification) is conditioned upon his faith, which in turn is conditioned upon his regeneration. He must have part in Christ so far forth as to be regenerated in order to have part in him so far forth as to be justified.

This question is obviously one as to order, not of time, but of cause and effect. All admit, (1) That the satisfaction and merit of Christ are the necessary precondition of regeneration and faith as directly as of justification; (2) That regeneration and

justification are both gracious acts of God; (3) That they take place at the same moment of time. The only question is, What is the true order of causation? Is the righteousness of Christ imputed to us that we may believe, or is it imputed to us because we believe? Is justification and *analytic* judgment, to the effect that this man, though a sinner, yet being a believer, is justified? Or is it a *synthetic* judgment, to the effect that this sinner is justified for Christ's sake (Ritschl., chap. 6, §42). Our catechism suggests the latter by the order of its phrases. God justifies us, "only for the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us, and received by faith alone." The same seems to be included in the very act of justifying faith itself, which is the trustful recognition and embrace of Christ, who had previously "loved *me*, and given himself for *me*" (Gal. 2:20).

The biblical phrase, "justified by faith," applies strictly, of course, to our relations to God as these are realized in the sphere of human consciousness. Faith is at once the act whereby we apprehend Christ, and the effect of our being antecedently apprehended of him. The act of faith is the one thing we do, but it is preceded in the order of causation (a) by the impetration of salvation by Christ, and (b) by the first stages of the work of the Holy Spirit in applying it. Faith is the organ whereby we recognize Christ as meriting our salvation, and the Father as reconciled for Christ's sake; but, of course, the salvation was merited and the Father was reconciled, and both were long since engaged with the Holy Spirit in carrying on the work of the personal application of grace, or we could not recognize them as so doing.

4. The analogy of the imputation of Adam's sin to us and of our sins to Christ must be borne in mind when reflecting on the conditions of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to us.

However much various schools of theologians may differ as to the grounds and nature of our union with Adam, and hence as to the reason in law of our responsibility for his apostatizing act, the whole Church has always maintained that the depravity of moral nature innate in his posterity is the penal consequence of his first sin. Beza on Rom. v. expresses the faith of the whole church when he says: "As Adam, by the commission of sin, first was made guilty of the wrath of God" (*i.e.*, righteously exposed to that wrath), "then as being guilty underwent as the punishment of his sin the corruption of soul and body, so also he transmitted to his posterity a nature *in the first place* guilty, and *next* corrupted." The imputation of the guilt (just liability to punishment) of Adam's apostatizing act to his whole race in common leads judicially to the spiritual desertion of each new-born soul in particular, and spiritual desertion involves inherent depravity as a necessary and universal consequence. In like manner the imputation of our sins in common to Christ lead to his spiritual desertion (Matt. 27:46), but his temporary desertion as a man by the Holy Ghost lead in his case to no tendency however remote to inherent or actual sin, because he was the God-man. By consequence, the imputation of Christ's righteous to us is the necessary precondition

of the restoration to us of the influences of the Holy Ghost, and that restoration leads by necessary consequence to our regeneration and sanctification.

The notion that the necessary precondition of the imputation to us of Christ's righteousness is our own faith, of which the necessary precondition is regeneration, is analogous to the rejected theory that the inherent personal moral corruption of each of Adam's descendants is the necessary precondition of the imputation of his guilt to them. On the contrary, if the imputation of guilt is the causal antecedent of inherent depravity, in like manner the imputation of righteousness must be the causal antecedent of regeneration and faith.

This is obviously true in the case of a person regenerated in infancy, as must be true of all who dies in infancy, and of many others whose early regeneration is attested by their subsequent life. In their case the unquestionable order was as follows: The guilt of Adam was imputed at birth, and they at once lost original righteousness and became spiritually dead. Then the righteousness of Christ was imputed, and they were regenerated and in due course sanctified by the Holy Ghost. In the justification, therefore, of that majority of the elect which dies in infancy personal faith does not mediate. It cannot, therefore, ever mediate in the justification of any of the elect as an element *absolutely* necessary to the thing itself. In the case of the adult, faith is the first and invariable exercise of the regenerate and justified soul, whereby the righteousness of Christ imputed and the justification it effect are consciously received and appropriated, and the organ through which the Holy Spirit subsequently acts upon the soul, now spiritually alive, in, promoting its progressive sanctification.

Dr. Dorner ("Hist. of Protest. Theo.," vol. ii., pp. 156, 160) says, "It is evident that God must himself already have been secretly favorable and gracious to a man, and must already have pardoned him in *foro divino*, for the sake of Christ and his relation to human nature, in order to be able to bestow upon him the grace of regeneration." "In fact, viewed as an *actus Dei forensis*, there is a necessity that it should be regarded as existing prior to man's consciousness thereof – nay, prior to faith. For faith is nothing more than the commencement of such consciousness, and could not arise at all unless preceded objectively by justification before God – in other words, by a divine and gracious purpose, special with regard to the individual sinner, existing on God's part as an accomplished act of pardon, and then applying to man by the exhibition and offer of the benefits of redemption. The vocation of the individual to salvation could not result unless God had already, in preventing love, previously pardoned the sinner for Christ's sake, *i.e.*, for the sake of that fellowship of Christ with the sinner which the latter had not yet rejected. It is only when *Justificatio forensis* maintains its Reformation position at the head of the process of salvation that it has any firm or secure standing at all. If removed from this, it is gradually driven to a greater and greater distance, till at last, as in Storr's divinity, it takes its place at the end."

5. The solution of this problem is to be found in the fact, above mentioned, that Christ by his obedience and suffering impetrated for his own people, not only the possibility of salvation, but salvation itself and all it includes, and the certainty and means of its application also. This he did in the execution of the provisions of a covenant engagement with his Father, which provides for the application of the purchased redemption to specific persons at certain times, and under certain conditions, all which conditions are impetrated by Christ, as well as definitely determined by the covenant. The relation of a new-born elect child to Adam, and his participation in the consequences of Adam's apostasy, are the same as that of any other of his co-descendants. But his relation to the satisfaction and merits of Christ is analogous to that of a minor heir under human law to his inheritance secured to him by his father's will. As long as he is under age the will secures the inchoate rights of the heir *de jure*. It provides for his education and maintenance at the expense of the estate in preparation for his inheritance. It determines the previous installments of his patrimony to be given him by his trustee. It predetermines the precise time and conditions of his being inducted into absolute possession. His title rests from first to last upon his father's will. He possesses certain rights and enjoys certain benefits from the first. But he has absolute rights and powers of ownership only when he reaches the period and meets the conditions prescribed for that purpose by the will. The force of this analogy is not weakened, but rather augmented by the fact that the peculiarity in the case of the elect heir of Christ's redemption is that all the conditions of full possession are themselves free gifts, equally with the possession secure by the will, and parts of the inheritance itself. Hence the satisfaction and merit of Christ are imputed to the elect man from his birth, so far as they form the basis of the gracious dealing provided for him in preparation for his full possession. When that time has come, they are imputed to him unconditionally to that end, the consequence being that the Spirit, who had previously striven with him, and finally convinced him of sin, now renews his will, and works in him to act faith, whereby he appropriates the offered righteousness of Christ, and actually and consciously is received into the number, and is openly recognized and treated as one entitled to all the privileges, of the children of God. To this consummating and self-prevailing act of God theologians have assigned the title "Justification" in its specific sense. It is a pronounced judgment of God, raising the subject into the realization of a new relation, yet one long purposed and prepared for. From the first, God had regarded and treated him as an heir of Christ's righteousness. Now he regards and treats him as in the actual possession, and if an adult, he by the gift of faith brings him into conscious possession. The imputation to him as an heir and the imputation to him as in actual possession do not differ so much on God's side as it differs in its effects and consequences in the actual relations and experiences of the subject.

"This gracious sentence was (1) in the mind of God, as a concept, in his purpose to justify (Gal. 3:8). (2) It was pronounced in Christ our Head when he rose from the

dead (2 Cor. 5:19): ‘God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.’ (3) It is virtually pronounced in that first relation which arises from the generation in us of faith (Rom. 8:1). (4) It is expressly pronounced through the Spirit of God witnessing with our spirits our reconciliation to God.” (“Medulla Amesii,” chap. 27. §9.)

“It is moreover to be observed that justification, if we take it whatever can be comprised under that name, consists of various articles or periods. And *first*, God’s sentence of absolution regards (1) either all the elect in general collected into one mystical body, or (2) relates to each person in particular.”

“I observe two articles of that general sentence, the *first* of which commenced immediately upon the fall, when Christ, having entered into suretyship engagements for elect sinners, obtained . . . that Satan should be condemned in the serpent, etc. The *second* article of this general justification relates to the time when God declares that full satisfaction had been made to his justice by the dying Christ (2 Cor. 5:19).”

“The other justification, applied to every believer in particular, has its distinct articles. The *first* is when the elect person, who is redeemed, regenerated, and united to Christ by a living faith, is declared to have now actually passed from a state of condemnation and wrath to a state of grace and favor.”

“The *second* is when this sentence is intimated and insinuated to the conscience by the Holy Ghost. The *third* is when the sinner, being actively and passively justified, is admitted to familiar intercourse with God. The *fourth* is immediately after death. The *fifth* and last is on the day of judgment, when the elect shall be publicly justified.” (Witsius, “Economy of the Covenants,” book 3, chapter 8, §§ 57-63.)

***IV. There is an unhappily significant tendency observable among many modern preachers and writers to ignore, if not positively to deny, the absolute necessity of a gratuitous justification as and essential precondition of the very beginnings of all moral reformation.***

As in past times, many have made shipwreck of the faith by refusing to see that the only worthy end and complement of forgiveness of sins and divine acceptance is the actual restoration of the moral image of God, so now many make a shipwreck equally disastrous on the opposite side by refusing to acknowledge that even the first and least improvement in character and life must be preceded by atonement and reconciliation. The prime need for expiation and reconciliation is retired into the shade, ignored, or denied. The cultivation of benevolent and honorable sentiments, and the diligent performance of all the actions to which such sentiments prompt, are insisted upon as the first and last duty and interest of men. It is affirmed that as God will condemn men in proportion to their want of moral excellence, so he will extend to

them his favor in proportion as each one strives with all his ability, under present conditions, to be and to do the best that is for him possible, irrespective of his past record, or the constitutional moral defects of character thence entailed. Concerning this deplorable characteristic of some modern teaching and preaching we have space only to indicate the following unquestionable facts:

1. This characteristic is in marked contrast and in radical opposition to the preaching of the inspired and authoritative representatives of Christianity, as it was promulgated by the immediate disciples of its Founder. It is unquestionable that not the form only, but the entire logic and spirit and practical power of their preaching, was truly represented by their own frequent assertions that they preached, and that they preached *only*, “Christ,” “the cross,” “Christ crucified,” and “the resurrection of Christ” after his crucifixion. Consciousness of guilt and alienation, and the glorious fact of expiation and gratuitous reconciliation already effected, were the immediate practical impressions made on all their hearers, the realization of which was the moral power on which they relied to revolutionize character and make holy living possible.

2. As shown above, this modern tendency is in no less obvious contrast and radical opposition to all the forms which Christianity has assumed in the great historical churches. Whatever the men who thus ignore the cross may call themselves, it is clear that they differ far more radically and upon question of more instant practical importance alike from all legitimate schools of Protestants and Catholics, like Catholics and Protestants differ from each other. If the schism effected at the Reformation was justified by the character of popish errors, or by the extent of the soul-destructive mischief they effected, a more urgent demand for an equally radical purgation of so-called Protestant pulpits appeals to us now.

3. It is evident that the modern rationalistic moral legalism, just as much as the ancient Jewish ceremonial legalism, and on similar principles, makes the cross of Christ of none effect by their traditions. It is evident, also, that the same influences and the same principles which lead to the diminished emphasis or to the virtual ignoring of the great doctrine of the cross, will inevitably result soon in its open and absolute denial. Thus heresy, like sin, “when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”

4. The pretence that the modern tendency alluded to is prompted by a higher moral standard or by a superior sense of the essential importance of personal character than that which prompted the preaching of the apostles, and the creeds, hymns, and liturgies of all churches, is precisely the reverse of the truth. The genuine appreciation of the excellence of moral goodness is essentially inseparable from a corresponding appreciation of the abomination and ill-desert of moral evil. A deep sense of sin is in actual sinner the absolutely essential precondition of the first beginnings of moral improvement. A due sense of sin involves essentially a profound personal recognition of its pollution, its guilt, and its power. A man truly loving holiness and hating sin,

himself a redeemed sinner preaching to his fellow-sinners, cannot stultify himself and mock them by telling them to be good as they can with all their might, and God will bless them. He must either preach despair, or an adequate expiation and gracious reconciliation as the basis of all real reform. The opposite method, unhappily becoming less infrequent than hitherto, is an evident symptom of a miserably low moral standard. The age-spirit which doubts about the reality and eternity of future punishment naturally ceases to emphasize justification on the basis of vicarious expiation, and to postpone it as the consequent of regeneration, sanctification, and the life work which follows. The end is evident and inevitable. Without antecedent reconciliation men cannot be truly sanctified. So the same low sense of sin which leads to the ignoring of justification, or to its removal from its position as the beginning and fountain of all practical grace, will necessarily lead to the denial of the soul's need to any grace, and of its obligation to any law. Legalism makes fair professions; but, beginning with the denial of innate sinfulness and moral impotency, it proceeds logically to ignore the abomination of sin and the excellence of virtue, and ends in an abyss of license which confounds all moral distinctions.

## **The Order of Application**

**John Murray**

[from Part II "Redemption Applied" in *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*]

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THE provision which God has made in his providence for the sustenance and comfort of man and beast is not sparing or niggardly. He has made the earth to teem with good things to satisfy the needs of man and beast and to meet their varied tastes and appetites. Psalm 104 is the inspired lyric of praise and admiration. "These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season . . . thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good" (vers. 27, 28). "Wine that maketh glad the heart of man, oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart" (ver. 15). And the psalmist exclaims: "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches" (ver. 24).

The provision which God has made for the salvation of men is even more strikingly manifold. For this provision has in view the manifoldness of man's need and exhibits the overflowing abundance of God's goodness, wisdom, grace, and love. This superabundance appears in the eternal counsel of God respecting salvation; it appears in the historic accomplishment of redemption by the work of Christ once for all; and it

appears in the application of redemption continuously and progressively till it reaches its consummation in the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

When we think of the application of redemption we must not think of it as one simple and indivisible act. It comprises a series of acts and processes. To mention some, we have calling, regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification, glorification. These are all distinct, and not one of these can be defined in terms of the other. Each has its own distinct meaning, function, and purpose in the action and grace of God.

God is not the author of confusion and therefore he is the author of order. There are good and conclusive reasons for thinking that the various actions of the application of redemption, some of which have been mentioned, take place in a certain order, and that order has been established by divine appointment, wisdom, and grace. It is quite apparent to every one that it would be impossible to start off with glorification, for glorification is at the far end of the process as its completion and consummation, and it is scarcely less apparent that regeneration would have to precede sanctification. A man must surely be born again before he can be progressively sanctified. Regeneration is the inception of being made holy and sanctification is the continuance. Hence it requires no more than the most elementary knowledge of these various terms to see that we cannot turn them around and mix them up in any way we please. But we may also look at a few passages of Scripture to show that there is clearly implied an order or arrangement in the various steps of the application of redemption.

If we take, first of all, such well-known texts as John 3:3, 5, our Lord told Nicodemus that except a man be born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God and except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Obviously, seeing and entering into the kingdom of God belong to the application of redemption, and our Lord indicates that apart from the new birth, regeneration, there cannot be this seeing or entering into the kingdom of God. It follows that regeneration is prior and it would plainly be impossible to reverse the order and say that a man is regenerated by seeing or entering into the kingdom of God. No, a man enters the kingdom of God by regeneration. As Jesus says again (John 3:6), "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

We may also examine a closely related text, I John 3:9: "Every one who is born of God does not do sin, because his seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." John is dealing here, no doubt, with deliverance from the reigning power of sin. Such deliverance is part of the application of redemption. But the text demonstrates that the reason why a person is delivered from the reigning power of sin is that he is born of God, and the reason he continues in this freedom from the ruling and directing power of sin is that the seed of God abides in him. Here we have clearly the order of causation and explanation. The new birth causes and explains the state of



freedom from the domination of sin and is therefore prior to such freedom. The regenerated person does not commit the sin which is unto death (I John 5:16) and the reason is that he is born of God and God's seed is always in him to keep him from that grievous and irreparable sin.

Still further, let us look at John 1:12. We may focus our attention on two subjects with which this text deals, namely, the reception of Christ and the bestowment of authority to become the sons of God. We may properly call them faith and adoption. The text says distinctly that "as many as received him, to them gave he authority to become children of God." The bestowment of this authority, which we may for, our present purposes equate with adoption, presupposes the reception of Christ, namely, faith in his name. This is to the effect of saying that adoption presupposes faith, and therefore faith is prior to adoption. So we should have to follow the order, faith and adoption.

Finally, we may glance at one passage in Paul, Ephesians 1:13: "In whom ye also, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also having believed ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." The sealing with the Holy Spirit is that which follows upon the hearing of the word of truth and believing. Hearing and believing are therefore prior in order and cannot be made to follow the sealing of the Spirit.

These few texts have been appealed to simply for the purpose of showing that there is order which must be maintained and cannot be reversed without violating the plain import of these texts. These texts prove the fact of order and show that it is not empty logic to affirm divine order in the application of redemption. There is a divine logic in this matter and the order which we insist upon should be nothing more or less than what the Scriptures disclose to be the divine arrangement.

These texts, however, have not brought us very far in discovering what the order of arrangement is in connection with a good many of the actions which are comprised in the application of redemption. They have established a few things, indeed, but only a few. When we give a fuller enumeration of the several steps or aspects-calling, regeneration, conversion, faith, repentance, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, glorification-we can see that several questions remain undetermined. Which is prior, calling or justification? Is faith prior to justification or vice versa? Does regeneration come before calling?

There is one passage of Scripture which affords us a great deal of light on this question. It is Romans 8:30: "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." Here we have three acts of the application of redemption - calling, justification, and glorification. They appear in this text in that order. And the question arises: is this order intended to be the order of application and occurrence? Or is the

order in the text simply one of convenience so that Paul could just as well have adopted another order?

One thing must be said by way of preface; it is that even if the order had been different, justification first and calling second, the main thought of the passage would not be disturbed. The main thought is the invariable conjunction and sequence of these divine acts and their indissoluble connection with God's eternal purpose of foreknowledge and predestination. For here we have a chain of unbreakable links beginning with foreknowledge and ending with glorification.

But there are overwhelming reasons for thinking that the order Paul follows in verse 30 - calling, justification, glorification - is the order of sequence according to the divine arrangement. These reasons are not far to seek. There are so many intimations of order in this passage as a whole that we cannot but conclude that order of logical sequence is intended throughout.

1. In verse 28 there is the intimation of order in the expression, "called according to purpose." This means that purpose provides the pattern or plan according to which calling takes place. Therefore the purpose is prior to the calling, and, in this case, of course, eternally prior. The purpose is none other than that which is unfolded in verse 29 as consisting in foreknowledge and predestination. Hence we have a clear indication of order in verse 28.

2. We have the same in verse 29. It is not our interest now to expound the meaning of the word "foreknow" nor its relation to the word "predestinate." All that is necessary to note now is that there is progression of thought from foreknowledge to predestination. Here again we have an indication of order which will not allow us to reverse the elements involved.

3. In verses 29 and 30 we have a chain of events which find their spring in foreknowledge and their terminus in glorification. We cannot possibly reverse these two. There is not only priority and posteriority but a particular kind of such order, namely, foreknowledge as the ultimate fount and glorification as the ultimate end.

4. The same applies to both foreknowledge and predestination in reference to the three acts mentioned in verse 30. Foreknowledge and predestination are prior to calling, justification, and glorification, and eternally prior at that. Reversal is inconceivable.

5. Even within the acts mentioned in verse 30, acts which fall within the sphere of the application of redemption and which are therefore temporal as distinguished from those of God's eternal counsel mentioned in verse 29, we are bound to discover an order of priority. Glorification could not be prior to calling and justification; it must be

posterior to both. Hence, whatever may be true as regards the order of calling and justification in relation to each other, glorification must be after both. The only question that remains, therefore, is whether calling is prior to justification or the reverse.

We shall have to conclude that, since there are so many indications of intended order in this passage as a whole, the order which Paul follows in reference to calling and justification must be intended as the order of logical arrangement and progression. It would violate every relevant consideration to think otherwise. Consequently we must infer that Romans 8:30 provides us with a broad outline of the order in the application of redemption and that that order is: calling, justification, glorification. So we have the answer to one question, which has not so far been determined, namely, that calling precedes justification in the order of the application of redemption. And we might not have thought so if we were to rely upon our own logical reasonings.

The next question we may discuss is the relation of faith to justification. There is difference of judgment on this question among orthodox theologians, some holding that justification is prior, others the reverse. It must be understood that what we are dealing with now is not at all God's eternal decree to justify. That certainly is prior to faith, and, if we were to call that "eternal justification" (a misuse of terms), then such would be prior to faith just as God's purpose is always prior to every phase of the application of redemption. Furthermore, if we use the term justification as the virtual synonym of reconciliation (as it may be in Romans 5:9), then again such justification is prior to faith just as the accomplishment of redemption is always prior to the application of it. But we are not now dealing with the eternal decree to justify nor with the basis of justification in the work once for all accomplished by Christ but with actual justification, which falls within the orbit of the application of redemption. With reference to such justification the Scripture undoubtedly states that we are justified by faith, from faith, through faith, and upon faith (see Rom. 1:17; 3:22, 26, 28, 30; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; 3:24; Phil. 3:9). It would surely seem impossible to avoid the conclusion that justification is upon the event of faith or through the instrumentality of faith. God justifies the ungodly who believe in Jesus, in a word, believers. And that is simply to say that faith is presupposed in justification, is the precondition of justification, not because we are justified on the ground of faith or for the reason that we are justified because of faith but only for the reason that faith is God's appointed instrument through which he dispenses this grace.

There is another reason why we should believe that faith is prior to justification. We found already that calling is prior to justification. And faith is connected with calling. It does not constitute calling. But it is the inevitable response of our heart and mind and will to the divine call. In this matter call and response coincide. For that reason we should expect that since calling is prior to justification so is faith. This inference is confirmed by the express statement that we are justified by faith.

We are now in a position to give the following, slightly enlarged outline of the order in the application of redemption - calling, faith, justification, glorification.

If we think in Scriptural terms it is not difficult to insert another step. It is that of regeneration. It, in turn, must be prior to faith. Much controversy turns on this question and into all the angles of that controversy we need not enter. Still further, it will not be possible in this chapter to give all the evidence establishing the priority of regeneration. A good deal of that evidence will be presented later. Suffice it at present to be reminded that as sinners we are dead in trespasses and sins. Faith is a whole-souled act of loving trust and self-commitment. Of that we are incapable until renewed by the Holy Spirit. It was to this our Lord testified when he said that no one could come unto him except it were given unto him of the Father and except the Father draw him (John 6:44, 65). And, again, we must remember John 3:3: "Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Surely seeing the kingdom of God is the act of faith and, if so, such faith is impossible without regeneration. Hence regeneration must be prior to faith. We can affirm then on these grounds that the order is regeneration, faith, justification.

This does not settle the question as to the order in connection with calling and regeneration. Is regeneration prior to effectual calling or is the reverse the case? There are arguments which could be pleaded in favour of the priority of regeneration. No great issue would be at stake in adopting that order, that is to say, the order, regeneration, calling, faith, justification, glorification. There is, however, one weighty consideration (a consideration that will be developed later on), namely, that in the teaching of Scripture it is calling that is given distinct emphasis and prominence as that act of God whereby sinners are translated from darkness to light and ushered into the fellowship of Christ. This feature of New Testament teaching creates the distinct impression that salvation in actual possession takes its start from an efficacious summons on the part of God and that this summons, since it is God's summons, carries in its bosom all of the operative efficacy by which it is made effective. It is calling and not regeneration that possesses that character. Hence there is more to be said for the priority of calling.

If then we have the following elements and in the following order: calling, regeneration, faith, justification, and glorification, we have really settled all that is of basic importance to the question. The other steps can be readily filled in and put in their proper place. Repentance is the twin sister of faith - we cannot think of the one without the other, and so repentance would be conjoined with faith. Conversion is simply another name for repentance and faith conjoined and would therefore be inclosed in repentance and faith. Adoption would obviously come after justification - we could not think of one being adopted into the family of God without first of all being accepted by God and made an heir of eternal life. Sanctification is a process that begins, we might say, in regeneration, finds its basis in justification, and derives its

energizing grace from the union with Christ which is effected in effectual calling. Being a continuous process rather than a momentary act like calling, regeneration, justification and adoption, it is proper that it should be placed after adoption in the order of application. Perseverance is the concomitant and complement of the sanctifying process and might conveniently be placed either before or after sanctification.

With all these considerations in view, the order in the application of redemption is found to be, calling, regeneration, faith and repentance, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, glorification. When this order is carefully weighed we find that there is a logic which evinces and brings into clear focus the governing principle of salvation in all of its aspects, the grace of God in its sovereignty and efficacy. Salvation is of the Lord in its application as well as in its conception and accomplishment.

## **Appendices**

### **The Canons of Dordt**

#### ***Formally Titled***

#### ***The Decision of the Synod of Dordt on the Five Main Points of Doctrine in Dispute in the Netherlands***

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### **The First Main Point of Doctrine**

#### ***Divine Election and Reprobation***

#### ***The Judgment Concerning Divine Predestination***

#### ***Which the Synod Declares to Be in Agreement with the Word of God and Accepted Till Now in the Reformed Churches, Set Forth in Several Articles***

#### **Article 1: God's Right to Condemn All People**

Since all people have sinned in Adam and have come under the sentence of the

curse and eternal death, God would have done no one an injustice if it had been his will to leave the entire human race in sin and under the curse, and to condemn them on account of their sin. As the apostle says: The whole world is liable to the condemnation of God (Rom. 3:19), All have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), and The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).\*

--\*All quotations from Scripture are translations of the original Latin manuscript.-

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## Article 2: The Manifestation of God's Love

But this is how God showed his love: he sent his only begotten Son into the world, so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

## Article 3: The Preaching of the Gospel

In order that people may be brought to faith, God mercifully sends proclaimers of this very joyful message to the people he wishes and at the time he wishes. By this ministry people are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified. For how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without someone preaching? And how shall they preach unless they have been sent? (Rom. 10:14-15).

## Article 4: A Twofold Response to the Gospel

God's anger remains on those who do not believe this gospel. But those who do accept it and embrace Jesus the Savior with a true and living faith are delivered through him from God's anger and from destruction, and receive the gift of eternal life.

## Article 5: The Sources of Unbelief and of Faith

The cause or blame for this unbelief, as well as for all other sins, is not at all in God, but in man. Faith in Jesus Christ, however, and salvation through him is a free gift of God. As Scripture says, It is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8). Likewise: It has been freely given to you to believe in Christ (Phil. 1:29).

## Article 6: God's Eternal Decision

The fact that some receive from God the gift of faith within time, and that others do not, stems from his eternal decision. For all his works are known to God from eternity (Acts 15:18; Eph. 1:11). In accordance with this decision he graciously softens the hearts, however hard, of his chosen ones and inclines them to believe,

but by his just judgment he leaves in their wickedness and hardness of heart those who have not been chosen. And in this especially is disclosed to us his act--unfathomable, and as merciful as it is just--of distinguishing between people equally lost. This is the well-known decision of election and reprobation revealed in God's Word. This decision the wicked, impure, and unstable distort to their own ruin, but it provides holy and godly souls with comfort beyond words.

#### Article 7: Election

Election [or choosing] is God's unchangeable purpose by which he did the following:

Before the foundation of the world, by sheer grace, according to the free good pleasure of his will, he chose in Christ to salvation a definite number of particular people out of the entire human race, which had fallen by its own fault from its original innocence into sin and ruin. Those chosen were neither better nor more deserving than the others, but lay with them in the common misery. He did this in Christ, whom he also appointed from eternity to be the mediator, the head of all those chosen, and the foundation of their salvation. And so he decided to give the chosen ones to Christ to be saved, and to call and draw them effectively into Christ's fellowship through his Word and Spirit. In other words, he decided to grant them true faith in Christ, to justify them, to sanctify them, and finally, after powerfully preserving them in the fellowship of his Son, to glorify them.

God did all this in order to demonstrate his mercy, to the praise of the riches of his glorious grace.

As Scripture says, God chose us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, so that we should be holy and blameless before him with love; he predestined us whom he adopted as his children through Jesus Christ, in himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, by which he freely made us pleasing to himself in his beloved (Eph. 1:4-6). And elsewhere, Those whom he predestined, he also called; and those whom he called, he also justified; and those whom he justified, he also glorified (Rom. 8:30).

#### Article 8: A Single Decision of Election

This election is not of many kinds; it is one and the same election for all who were to be saved in the Old and the New Testament. For Scripture declares that there is a single good pleasure, purpose, and plan of God's will, by which he chose us from eternity both to grace and to glory, both to salvation and to the way of salvation, which he prepared in advance for us to walk in.

#### Article 9: Election Not Based on Foreseen Faith

This same election took place, not on the basis of foreseen faith, of the obedience of faith, of holiness, or of any other good quality and disposition, as though it were based on a prerequisite cause or condition in the person to be chosen, but rather for the purpose of faith, of the obedience of faith, of holiness, and so on. Accordingly, election is the source of each of the benefits of salvation. Faith, holiness, and the other saving gifts, and at last eternal life itself, flow forth from election as its fruits and effects. As the apostle says, He chose us (not because we were, but) so that we should be holy and blameless before him in love (Eph. 1:4).

#### Article 10: Election Based on God's Good Pleasure

But the cause of this undeserved election is exclusively the good pleasure of God. This does not involve his choosing certain human qualities or actions from among all those possible as a condition of salvation, but rather involves his adopting certain particular persons from among the common mass of sinners as his own possession. As Scripture says, When the children were not yet born, and had done nothing either good or bad..., she (Rebecca) was told, "The older will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (Rom. 9:11-13). Also, All who were appointed for eternal life believed (Acts 13:48).

#### Article 11: Election Unchangeable

Just as God himself is most wise, unchangeable, all-knowing, and almighty, so the election made by him can neither be suspended nor altered, revoked, or annulled; neither can his chosen ones be cast off, nor their number reduced.

#### Article 12: The Assurance of Election

Assurance of this their eternal and unchangeable election to salvation is given to the chosen in due time, though by various stages and in differing measure. Such assurance comes not by inquisitive searching into the hidden and deep things of God, but by noticing within themselves, with spiritual joy and holy delight, the unmistakable fruits of election pointed out in God's Word-- such as a true faith in Christ, a childlike fear of God, a godly sorrow for their sins, a hunger and thirst for righteousness, and so on.

#### Article 13: The Fruit of This Assurance

In their awareness and assurance of this election God's children daily find greater cause to humble themselves before God, to adore the fathomless depth of his mercies, to cleanse themselves, and to give fervent love in return to him who first so greatly loved them. This is far from saying that this teaching concerning election, and reflection upon it, make God's children lax in observing his



commandments or carnally self-assured. By God's just judgment this does usually happen to those who casually take for granted the grace of election or engage in idle and brazen talk about it but are unwilling to walk in the ways of the chosen.

#### Article 14: Teaching Election Properly

Just as, by God's wise plan, this teaching concerning divine election has been proclaimed through the prophets, Christ himself, and the apostles, in Old and New Testament times, and has subsequently been committed to writing in the Holy Scriptures, so also today in God's church, for which it was specifically intended, this teaching must be set forth--with a spirit of discretion, in a godly and holy manner, at the appropriate time and place, without inquisitive searching into the ways of the Most High. This must be done for the glory of God's most holy name, and for the lively comfort of his people.

#### Article 15: Reprobation

Moreover, Holy Scripture most especially highlights this eternal and undeserved grace of our election and brings it out more clearly for us, in that it further bears witness that not all people have been chosen but that some have not been chosen or have been passed by in God's eternal election-- those, that is, concerning whom God, on the basis of his entirely free, most just, irreproachable, and unchangeable good pleasure, made the following decision: to leave them in the common misery into which, by their own fault, they have plunged themselves; not to grant them saving faith and the grace of conversion; but finally to condemn and eternally punish them (having been left in their own ways and under his just judgment), not only for their unbelief but also for all their other sins, in order to display his justice. And this is the decision of reprobation, which does not at all make God the author of sin (a blasphemous thought!) but rather its fearful, irreproachable, just judge and avenger.

#### Article 16: Responses to the Teaching of Reprobation

Those who do not yet actively experience within themselves a living faith in Christ or an assured confidence of heart, peace of conscience, a zeal for childlike obedience, and a glorying in God through Christ, but who nevertheless use the means by which God has promised to work these things in us--such people ought not to be alarmed at the mention of reprobation, nor to count themselves among the reprobate; rather they ought to continue diligently in the use of the means, to desire fervently a time of more abundant grace, and to wait for it in reverence and humility. On the other hand, those who seriously desire to turn to God, to be pleasing to him alone, and to be delivered from the body of death, but are not yet able to make such progress along the way of godliness and faith as they would

like--such people ought much less to stand in fear of the teaching concerning reprobation, since our merciful God has promised that he will not snuff out a smoldering wick and that he will not break a bruised reed. However, those who have forgotten God and their Savior Jesus Christ and have abandoned themselves wholly to the cares of the world and the pleasures of the flesh--such people have every reason to stand in fear of this teaching, as long as they do not seriously turn to God.

#### Article 17: The Salvation of the Infants of Believers

Since we must make judgments about God's will from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature but by virtue of the gracious covenant in which they together with their parents are included, godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom God calls out of this life in infancy.

#### Article 18: The Proper Attitude Toward Election and Reprobation

To those who complain about this grace of an undeserved election and about the severity of a just reprobation, we reply with the words of the apostle, Who are you, O man, to talk back to God? (Rom. 9:20), and with the words of our Savior, Have I no right to do what I want with my own? (Matt. 20:15). We, however, with reverent adoration of these secret things, cry out with the apostle: Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways beyond tracing out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Or who has first given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen (Rom. 11:33-36).

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## **Rejection of the Errors**

### ***by Which the Dutch Churches Have for Some Time Been Disturbed***

**Having set forth the orthodox teaching concerning election and reprobation, the Synod rejects the errors of those**

#### **I**

**Who teach that the will of God to save those who would believe and persevere in faith and in the obedience of faith is the whole and entire decision of election to salvation, and that nothing else concerning this decision has been revealed in God's Word.**

For they deceive the simple and plainly contradict Holy Scripture in its testimony that God does not only wish to save those who would believe, but that he has also from eternity chosen certain particular people to whom, rather than to others, he would within time grant faith in Christ and perseverance. As Scripture says, I have revealed your name to those whom you gave me (John 17:6). Likewise, All who were appointed for eternal life believed (Acts 13:48), and He chose us before the foundation of the world so that we should be holy... (Eph. 1:4).

## II

**Who teach that God's election to eternal life is of many kinds: one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite; and the latter in turn either incomplete, revocable, nonperemptory (or conditional), or else complete, irrevocable, and peremptory (or absolute). Likewise, who teach that there is one election to faith and another to salvation, so that there can be an election to justifying faith apart from a peremptory election to salvation.**

For this is an invention of the human brain, devised apart from the Scriptures, which distorts the teaching concerning election and breaks up this golden chain of salvation: Those whom he predestined, he also called; and those whom he called, he also justified; and those whom he justified, he also glorified (Rom. 8:30).

## II

**Who teach that God's good pleasure and purpose, which Scripture mentions in its teaching of election, does not involve God's choosing certain particular people rather than others, but involves God's choosing, out of all possible conditions (including the works of the law) or out of the whole order of things, the intrinsically unworthy act of faith, as well as the imperfect obedience of faith, to be a condition of salvation; and it involves his graciously wishing to count this as perfect obedience and to look upon it as worthy of the reward of eternal life.**

For by this pernicious error the good pleasure of God and the merit of Christ are robbed of their effectiveness and people are drawn away, by unprofitable inquiries, from the truth of undeserved justification and from the simplicity of the Scriptures. It also gives the lie to these words of the apostle: God called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of works, but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time (2 Tim. 1:9).

## IV

**Who teach that in election to faith a prerequisite condition is that man**

**should rightly use the light of nature, be upright, unassuming, humble, and disposed to eternal life, as though election depended to some extent on these factors.**

For this smacks of Pelagius, and it clearly calls into question the words of the apostle: We lived at one time in the passions of our flesh, following the will of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in transgressions, made us alive with Christ, by whose grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with him and seated us with him in heaven in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages we might show the surpassing riches of his grace, according to his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith (and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God) not by works, so that no one can boast (Eph. 2:3-9).

## V

**Who teach that the incomplete and nonperemptory election of particular persons to salvation occurred on the basis of a foreseen faith, repentance, holiness, and godliness, which has just begun or continued for some time; but that complete and peremptory election occurred on the basis of a foreseen perseverance to the end in faith, repentance, holiness, and godliness. And that this is the gracious and evangelical worthiness, on account of which the one who is chosen is more worthy than the one who is not chosen. And therefore that faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness, and perseverance are not fruits or effects of an unchangeable election to glory, but indispensable conditions and causes, which are prerequisite in those who are to be chosen in the complete election, and which are foreseen as achieved in them.**

This runs counter to the entire Scripture, which throughout impresses upon our ears and hearts these sayings among others: Election is not by works, but by him who calls (Rom. 9:11-12); All who were appointed for eternal life believed (Acts 13:48); He chose us in himself so that we should be holy (Eph. 1:4); You did not choose me, but I chose you (John 15:16); If by grace, not by works (Rom. 11:6); In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son (1 John 4:10).

## VI

**Who teach that not every election to salvation is unchangeable, but that some of the chosen can perish and do in fact perish eternally, with no decision of God to prevent it.**

By this gross error they make God changeable, destroy the comfort of the godly concerning the steadfastness of their election, and contradict the Holy Scriptures, which teach that the elect cannot be led astray (Matt. 24:24), that Christ does not lose those given to him by the Father (John 6:39), and that those whom God predestined, called, and justified, he also glorifies (Rom. 8:30).

## VII

**Who teach that in this life there is no fruit, no awareness, and no assurance of one's unchangeable election to glory, except as conditional upon something changeable and contingent.**

For not only is it absurd to speak of an uncertain assurance, but these things also militate against the experience of the saints, who with the apostle rejoice from an awareness of their election and sing the praises of this gift of God; who, as Christ urged, rejoice with his disciples that their names have been written in heaven (Luke 10:20); and finally who hold up against the flaming arrows of the devil's temptations the awareness of their election, with the question Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? (Rom. 8:33).

## VIII

**Who teach that it was not on the basis of his just will alone that God decided to leave anyone in the fall of Adam and in the common state of sin and condemnation or to pass anyone by in the imparting of grace necessary for faith and conversion.**

For these words stand fast: He has mercy on whom he wishes, and he hardens whom he wishes (Rom. 9:18). And also: To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given (Matt. 13:11). Likewise: I give glory to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding, and have revealed them to little children; yes, Father, because that was your pleasure (Matt. 11:25-26).

## IX

**Who teach that the cause for God's sending the gospel to one people rather than to another is not merely and solely God's good pleasure, but rather that one people is better and worthier than the other to whom the gospel is not communicated.**

For Moses contradicts this when he addresses the people of Israel as follows: Behold, to Jehovah your God belong the heavens and the highest heavens, the earth and whatever is in it. But Jehovah was inclined in his affection to love your ancestors

alone, and chose out their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as at this day (Deut. 10:14-15). And also Christ: Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! for if those mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes (Matt. 11:21).

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## **The Second Main Point of Doctrine**

### ***Christ's Death and Human Redemption Through Its***

#### **Article 1: The Punishment Which God's Justice Requires**

God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. His justice requires (as he has revealed himself in the Word) that the sins we have committed against his infinite majesty be punished with both temporal and eternal punishments, of soul as well as body. We cannot escape these punishments unless satisfaction is given to God's justice.

#### **Article 2: The Satisfaction Made by Christ**

Since, however, we ourselves cannot give this satisfaction or deliver ourselves from God's anger, God in his boundless mercy has given us as a guarantee his only begotten Son, who was made to be sin and a curse for us, in our place, on the cross, in order that he might give satisfaction for us.

#### **Article 3: The Infinite Value of Christ's Death**

This death of God's Son is the only and entirely complete sacrifice and satisfaction for sins; it is of infinite value and worth, more than sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world.

#### **Article 4: Reasons for This Infinite Value**

This death is of such great value and worth for the reason that the person who suffered it is--as was necessary to be our Savior--not only a true and perfectly holy man, but also the only begotten Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Another reason is that this death was accompanied by the experience of God's anger and curse, which we by our sins had fully deserved.

#### **Article 5: The Mandate to Proclaim the Gospel to All**

Moreover, it is the promise of the gospel that whoever believes in Christ crucified

shall not perish but have eternal life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be announced and declared without differentiation or discrimination to all nations and people, to whom God in his good pleasure sends the gospel.

#### Article 6: Unbelief Man's Responsibility

However, that many who have been called through the gospel do not repent or believe in Christ but perish in unbelief is not because the sacrifice of Christ offered on the cross is deficient or insufficient, but because they themselves are at fault.

#### Article 7: Faith God's Gift

But all who genuinely believe and are delivered and saved by Christ's death from their sins and from destruction receive this favor solely from God's grace--which he owes to no one--given to them in Christ from eternity.

#### Article 8: The Saving Effectiveness of Christ's Death

For it was the entirely free plan and very gracious will and intention of God the Father that the enlivening and saving effectiveness of his Son's costly death should work itself out in all his chosen ones, in order that he might grant justifying faith to them only and thereby lead them without fail to salvation. In other words, it was God's will that Christ through the blood of the cross (by which he confirmed the new covenant) should effectively redeem from every people, tribe, nation, and language all those and only those who were chosen from eternity to salvation and given to him by the Father; that he should grant them faith (which, like the Holy Spirit's other saving gifts, he acquired for them by his death); that he should cleanse them by his blood from all their sins, both original and actual, whether committed before or after their coming to faith; that he should faithfully preserve them to the very end; and that he should finally present them to himself, a glorious people, without spot or wrinkle.

#### Article 9: The Fulfillment of God's Plan

This plan, arising out of God's eternal love for his chosen ones, from the beginning of the world to the present time has been powerfully carried out and will also be carried out in the future, the gates of hell seeking vainly to prevail against it. As a result the chosen are gathered into one, all in their own time, and there is always a church of believers founded on Christ's blood, a church which steadfastly loves, persistently worships, and--here and in all eternity--praises him as her Savior who laid down his life for her on the cross, as a bridegroom for his bride.

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# Rejection of the Errors

*Having set forth the orthodox teaching, the Synod rejects the errors of those*

## I

**Who teach that God the Father appointed his Son to death on the cross without a fixed and definite plan to save anyone by name, so that the necessity, usefulness, and worth of what Christ's death obtained could have stood intact and altogether perfect, complete and whole, even if the redemption that was obtained had never in actual fact been applied to any individual.**

For this assertion is an insult to the wisdom of God the Father and to the merit of Jesus Christ, and it is contrary to Scripture. For the Savior speaks as follows: I lay down my life for the sheep, and I know them (John 10:15, 27). And Isaiah the prophet says concerning the Savior: When he shall make himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days, and the will of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand (Isa. 53:10). Finally, this undermines the article of the creed in which we confess what we believe concerning the Church.

## II

**Who teach that the purpose of Christ's death was not to establish in actual fact a new covenant of grace by his blood, but only to acquire for the Father the mere right to enter once more into a covenant with men, whether of grace or of works.**

For this conflicts with Scripture, which teaches that Christ has become the guarantee and mediator of a better--that is, a new-covenant (Heb. 7:22; 9:15), and that a will is in force only when someone has died (Heb. 9:17).

## III

**Who teach that Christ, by the satisfaction which he gave, did not certainly merit for anyone salvation itself and the faith by which this satisfaction of Christ is effectively applied to salvation, but only acquired for the Father the authority or plenary will to relate in a new way with men and to impose such new conditions as he chose, and that the satisfying of these conditions depends on the free choice of man; consequently, that it was possible that either all or none would fulfill them.**



For they have too low an opinion of the death of Christ, do not at all acknowledge the foremost fruit or benefit which it brings forth, and summon back from hell the Pelagian error.

#### IV

**Who teach that what is involved in the new covenant of grace which God the Father made with men through the intervening of Christ's death is not that we are justified before God and saved through faith, insofar as it accepts Christ's merit, but rather that God, having withdrawn his demand for perfect obedience to the law, counts faith itself, and the imperfect obedience of faith, as perfect obedience to the law, and graciously looks upon this as worthy of the reward of eternal life.**

For they contradict Scripture: They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ, whom God presented as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood (Rom. 3:24-25). And along with the ungodly Socinus, they introduce a new and foreign justification of man before God, against the consensus of the whole church.

#### V

**Who teach that all people have been received into the state of reconciliation and into the grace of the covenant, so that no one on account of original sin is liable to condemnation, or is to be condemned, but that all are free from the guilt of this sin.**

For this opinion conflicts with Scripture which asserts that we are by nature children of wrath.

#### VI

**Who make use of the distinction between obtaining and applying in order to instill in the unwary and inexperienced the opinion that God, as far as he is concerned, wished to bestow equally upon all people the benefits which are gained by Christ's death; but that the distinction by which some rather than others come to share in the forgiveness of sins and eternal life depends on their own free choice (which applies itself to the grace offered indiscriminately) but does not depend on the unique gift of mercy which effectively works in them, so that they, rather than others, apply that grace to themselves.**

For, while pretending to set forth this distinction in an acceptable sense, they attempt to give the people the deadly poison of Pelagianism.

**Who teach that Christ neither could die, nor had to die, nor did die for those whom God so dearly loved and chose to eternal life, since such people do not need the death of Christ.**

For they contradict the apostle, who says: Christ loved me and gave himself up for me (Gal. 2:20), and likewise: Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died, that is, for them (Rom. 8:33-34). They also contradict the Savior, who asserts: I lay down my life for the sheep (John 10:15), and My command is this: Love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends (John 15:12-13).

## **The Third and Fourth Main Points of Doctrine**

### ***Human Corruption, Conversion to God, and the Way It Occurs***

#### Article 1: The Effect of the Fall on Human Nature

Man was originally created in the image of God and was furnished in his mind with a true and salutary knowledge of his Creator and things spiritual, in his will and heart with righteousness, and in all his emotions with purity; indeed, the whole man was holy. However, rebelling against God at the devil's instigation and by his own free will, he deprived himself of these outstanding gifts. Rather, in their place he brought upon himself blindness, terrible darkness, futility, and distortion of judgment in his mind; perversity, defiance, and hardness in his heart and will; and finally impurity in all his emotions.

#### Article 2: The Spread of Corruption

Man brought forth children of the same nature as himself after the fall. That is to say, being corrupt he brought forth corrupt children. The corruption spread, by God's just judgment, from Adam to all his descendants-- except for Christ alone-- not by way of imitation (as in former times the Pelagians would have it) but by way of the propagation of his perverted nature.

#### Article 3: Total Inability

Therefore, all people are conceived in sin and are born children of wrath, unfit for any saving good, inclined to evil, dead in their sins, and slaves to sin; without the grace of the regenerating Holy Spirit they are neither willing nor able to return to

God, to reform their distorted nature, or even to dispose themselves to such reform.

#### Article 4: The Inadequacy of the Light of Nature

There is, to be sure, a certain light of nature remaining in man after the fall, by virtue of which he retains some notions about God, natural things, and the difference between what is moral and immoral, and demonstrates a certain eagerness for virtue and for good outward behavior. But this light of nature is far from enabling man to come to a saving knowledge of God and conversion to him--so far, in fact, that man does not use it rightly even in matters of nature and society. Instead, in various ways he completely distorts this light, whatever its precise character, and suppresses it in unrighteousness. In doing so he renders himself without excuse before God.

#### Article 5: The Inadequacy of the Law

In this respect, what is true of the light of nature is true also of the Ten Commandments given by God through Moses specifically to the Jews. For man cannot obtain saving grace through the Decalogue, because, although it does expose the magnitude of his sin and increasingly convict him of his guilt, yet it does not offer a remedy or enable him to escape from his misery, and, indeed, weakened as it is by the flesh, leaves the offender under the curse.

#### Article 6: The Saving Power of the Gospel

What, therefore, neither the light of nature nor the law can do, God accomplishes by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the Word or the ministry of reconciliation. This is the gospel about the Messiah, through which it has pleased God to save believers, in both the Old and the New Testament.

#### Article 7: God's Freedom in Revealing the Gospel

In the Old Testament, God revealed this secret of his will to a small number; in the New Testament (now without any distinction between peoples) he discloses it to a large number. The reason for this difference must not be ascribed to the greater worth of one nation over another, or to a better use of the light of nature, but to the free good pleasure and undeserved love of God. Therefore, those who receive so much grace, beyond and in spite of all they deserve, ought to acknowledge it with humble and thankful hearts; on the other hand, with the apostle they ought to adore (but certainly not inquisitively search into) the severity and justice of God's judgments on the others, who do not receive this grace.

## Article 8: The Serious Call of the Gospel

Nevertheless, all who are called through the gospel are called seriously. For seriously and most genuinely God makes known in his Word what is pleasing to him: that those who are called should come to him. Seriously he also promises rest for their souls and eternal life to all who come to him and believe.

## Article 9: Human Responsibility for Rejecting the Gospel

The fact that many who are called through the ministry of the gospel do not come and are not brought to conversion must not be blamed on the gospel, nor on Christ, who is offered through the gospel, nor on God, who calls them through the gospel and even bestows various gifts on them, but on the people themselves who are called. Some in self-assurance do not even entertain the Word of life; others do entertain it but do not take it to heart, and for that reason, after the fleeting joy of a temporary faith, they relapse; others choke the seed of the Word with the thorns of life's cares and with the pleasures of the world and bring forth no fruits. This our Savior teaches in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13).

## Article 10: Conversion as the Work of God

The fact that others who are called through the ministry of the gospel do come and are brought to conversion must not be credited to man, as though one distinguishes himself by free choice from others who are furnished with equal or sufficient grace for faith and conversion (as the proud heresy of Pelagius maintains). No, it must be credited to God: just as from eternity he chose his own in Christ, so within time he effectively calls them, grants them faith and repentance, and, having rescued them from the dominion of darkness, brings them into the kingdom of his Son, in order that they may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called them out of darkness into this marvelous light, and may boast not in themselves, but in the Lord, as apostolic words frequently testify in Scripture.

## Article 11: The Holy Spirit's Work in Conversion

Moreover, when God carries out this good pleasure in his chosen ones, or works true conversion in them, he not only sees to it that the gospel is proclaimed to them outwardly, and enlightens their minds powerfully by the Holy Spirit so that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God, but, by the effective operation of the same regenerating Spirit, he also penetrates into the inmost being of man, opens the closed heart, softens the hard heart, and circumcises the heart that is uncircumcised. He infuses new qualities into the will, making the dead will alive, the evil one good, the unwilling one willing, and

the stubborn one compliant; he activates and strengthens the will so that, like a good tree, it may be enabled to produce the fruits of good deeds.

#### Article 12: Regeneration a Supernatural Work

And this is the regeneration, the new creation, the raising from the dead, and the making alive so clearly proclaimed in the Scriptures, which God works in us without our help. But this certainly does not happen only by outward teaching, by moral persuasion, or by such a way of working that, after God has done his work, it remains in man's power whether or not to be reborn or converted. Rather, it is an entirely supernatural work, one that is at the same time most powerful and most pleasing, a marvelous, hidden, and inexpressible work, which is not lesser than or inferior in power to that of creation or of raising the dead, as Scripture (inspired by the author of this work) teaches. As a result, all those in whose hearts God works in this marvelous way are certainly, unfailingly, and effectively reborn and do actually believe. And then the will, now renewed, is not only activated and motivated by God but in being activated by God is also itself active. For this reason, man himself, by that grace which he has received, is also rightly said to believe and to repent.

#### Article 13: The Incomprehensible Way of Regeneration

In this life believers cannot fully understand the way this work occurs; meanwhile, they rest content with knowing and experiencing that by this grace of God they do believe with the heart and love their Savior.

#### Article 14: The Way God Gives Faith

In this way, therefore, faith is a gift of God, not in the sense that it is offered by God for man to choose, but that it is in actual fact bestowed on man, breathed and infused into him. Nor is it a gift in the sense that God bestows only the potential to believe, but then awaits assent--the act of believing--from man's choice; rather, it is a gift in the sense that he who works both willing and acting and, indeed, works all things in all people produces in man both the will to believe and the belief itself.

#### Article 15: Responses to God's Grace

God does not owe this grace to anyone. For what could God owe to one who has nothing to give that can be paid back? Indeed, what could God owe to one who has nothing of his own to give but sin and falsehood? Therefore the person who receives this grace owes and gives eternal thanks to God alone; the person who does not receive it either does not care at all about these spiritual things and is satisfied with himself in his condition, or else in self-assurance foolishly boasts

about having something which he lacks. Furthermore, following the example of the apostles, we are to think and to speak in the most favorable way about those who outwardly profess their faith and better their lives, for the inner chambers of the heart are unknown to us. But for others who have not yet been called, we are to pray to the God who calls things that do not exist as though they did. In no way, however, are we to pride ourselves as better than they, as though we had distinguished ourselves from them.

#### Article 16: Regeneration's Effect

However, just as by the fall man did not cease to be man, endowed with intellect and will, and just as sin, which has spread through the whole human race, did not abolish the nature of the human race but distorted and spiritually killed it, so also this divine grace of regeneration does not act in people as if they were blocks and stones; nor does it abolish the will and its properties or coerce a reluctant will by force, but spiritually revives, heals, reforms, and--in a manner at once pleasing and powerful--bends it back. As a result, a ready and sincere obedience of the Spirit now begins to prevail where before the rebellion and resistance of the flesh were completely dominant. It is in this that the true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will consists. Thus, if the marvelous Maker of every good thing were not dealing with us, man would have no hope of getting up from his fall by his free choice, by which he plunged himself into ruin when still standing upright.

#### Article 17: God's Use of Means in Regeneration

Just as the almighty work of God by which he brings forth and sustains our natural life does not rule out but requires the use of means, by which God, according to his infinite wisdom and goodness, has wished to exercise his power, so also the aforementioned supernatural work of God by which he regenerates us in no way rules out or cancels the use of the gospel, which God in his great wisdom has appointed to be the seed of regeneration and the food of the soul. For this reason, the apostles and the teachers who followed them taught the people in a godly manner about this grace of God, to give him the glory and to humble all pride, and yet did not neglect meanwhile to keep the people, by means of the holy admonitions of the gospel, under the administration of the Word, the sacraments, and discipline. So even today it is out of the question that the teachers or those taught in the church should presume to test God by separating what he in his good pleasure has wished to be closely joined together. For grace is bestowed through admonitions, and the more readily we perform our duty, the more lustrous the benefit of God working in us usually is and the better his work advances. To him alone, both for the means and for their saving fruit and effectiveness, all glory is owed forever. Amen.

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# Rejection of the Errors

*Having set forth the orthodox teaching, the Synod rejects the errors of those*

## I

**Who teach that, properly speaking, it cannot be said that original sin in itself is enough to condemn the whole human race or to warrant temporal and eternal punishments.**

For they contradict the apostle when he says: Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death passed on to all men because all sinned (Rom. 5:12); also: The guilt followed one sin and brought condemnation (Rom. 5:16); likewise: The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

## II

**Who teach that the spiritual gifts or the good dispositions and virtues such as goodness, holiness, and righteousness could not have resided in man's will when he was first created, and therefore could not have been separated from the will at the fall.**

For this conflicts with the apostle's description of the image of God in Ephesians 4:24, where he portrays the image in terms of righteousness and holiness, which definitely reside in the will.

## III

**Who teach that in spiritual death the spiritual gifts have not been separated from man's will, since the will in itself has never been corrupted but only hindered by the darkness of the mind and the unruliness of the emotions, and since the will is able to exercise its innate free capacity once these hindrances are removed, which is to say, it is able of itself to will or choose whatever good is set before it--or else not to will or choose it.**

This is a novel idea and an error and has the effect of elevating the power of free choice, contrary to the words of Jeremiah the prophet: The heart itself is deceitful above all things and wicked (Jer. 17:9); and of the words of the apostle: All of us also lived among them (the sons of disobedience) at one time in the passions of our flesh, following the will of our flesh and thoughts (Eph. 2:3).

## IV

**Who teach that unregenerate man is not strictly or totally dead in his sins or deprived of all capacity for spiritual good but is able to hunger and thirst for righteousness or life and to offer the sacrifice of a broken and contrite spirit which is pleasing to God.**

For these views are opposed to the plain testimonies of Scripture: You were dead in your transgressions and sins (Eph. 2:1, 5); The imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil all the time (Gen. 6:5; 8:21). Besides, to hunger and thirst for deliverance from misery and for life, and to offer God the sacrifice of a broken spirit is characteristic only of the regenerate and of those called blessed (Ps. 51:17; Matt. 5:6).

## V

**Who teach that corrupt and natural man can make such good use of common grace (by which they mean the light of nature) or of the gifts remaining after the fall that he is able thereby gradually to obtain a greater grace-- evangelical or saving grace--as well as salvation itself; and that in this way God, for his part, shows himself ready to reveal Christ to all people, since he provides to all, to a sufficient extent and in an effective manner, the means necessary for the revealing of Christ, for faith, and for repentance.**

For Scripture, not to mention the experience of all ages, testifies that this is false: He makes known his words to Jacob, his statutes and his laws to Israel; he has done this for no other nation, and they do not know his laws (Ps. 147:19-20); In the past God let all nations go their own way (Acts 14:16); They (Paul and his companions) were kept by the Holy Spirit from speaking God's word in Asia; and When they had come to Mysia, they tried to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit would not allow them to (Acts 16:6-7).

## VI

**Who teach that in the true conversion of man new qualities, dispositions, or gifts cannot be infused or poured into his will by God, and indeed that the faith [or believing] by which we first come to conversion and from which we receive the name "believers" is not a quality or gift infused by God, but only an act of man, and that it cannot be called a gift except in respect to the power of attaining faith.**

For these views contradict the Holy Scriptures, which testify that God does infuse or pour into our hearts the new qualities of faith, obedience, and the experiencing of his love: I will put my law in their minds, and write it on their hearts (Jer. 31:33); I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my



Spirit on your offspring (Isa. 44:3); The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us (Rom. 5:5). They also conflict with the continuous practice of the Church, which prays with the prophet: Convert me, Lord, and I shall be converted (Jer. 31:18).

## VII

**Who teach that the grace by which we are converted to God is nothing but a gentle persuasion, or(as others explain it) that the way of God's acting in man's conversion that is most noble and suited to human nature is that which happens by persuasion, and that nothing prevents this grace of moral suasion even by itself from making natural men spiritual; indeed, that God does not produce the assent of the will except in this manner of moral suasion, and that the effectiveness of God's work by which it surpasses the work of Satan consists in the fact that God promises eternal benefits while Satan promises temporal ones.**

For this teaching is entirely Pelagian and contrary to the whole of Scripture, which recognizes besides this persuasion also another, far more effective and divine way in which the Holy Spirit acts in man's conversion. As Ezekiel 36:26 puts it: I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; and I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh....

## VIII

**Who teach that God in regenerating man does not bring to bear that power of his omnipotence whereby he may powerfully and unfailingly bend man's will to faith and conversion, but that even when God has accomplished all the works of grace which he uses for man's conversion, man nevertheless can, and in actual fact often does, so resist God and the Spirit in their intent and will to regenerate him, that man completely thwarts his own rebirth; and, indeed, that it remains in his own power whether or not to be reborn.**

For this does away with all effective functioning of God's grace in our conversion and subjects the activity of Almighty God to the will of man; it is contrary to the apostles, who teach that we believe by virtue of the effective working of God's mighty strength (Eph. 1:19), and that God fulfills the undeserved good will of his kindness and the work of faith in us with power (2 Thess. 1:11), and likewise that his divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).

## IX

**Who teach that grace and free choice are concurrent partial causes which**

**cooperate to initiate conversion, and that grace does not precede--in the order of causality--the effective influence of the will;that is to say,that God does not effectively help man's will to come to conversion before man's will itself motivates and determines itself.**

For the early church already condemned this doctrine long ago in the Pelagians, on the basis of the words of the apostle: It does not depend on man's willing or running but on God's mercy (Rom. 9:16); also: Who makes you different from anyone else? and What do you have that you did not receive? (1 Cor. 4:7); likewise: It is God who works in you to will and act according to his good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).

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## **The Fifth Main Point of Doctrine**

### ***The Perseverance of the Saints***

#### **Article 1: The Regenerate Not Entirely Free from Sin**

Those people whom God according to his purpose calls into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, he also sets free from the reign and slavery of sin, though in this life not entirely from the flesh and from the body of sin.

#### **Article 2: The Believer's Reaction to Sins of Weakness**

Hence daily sins of weakness arise, and blemishes cling to even the best works of God's people, giving them continual cause to humble themselves before God, to flee for refuge to Christ crucified, to put the flesh to death more and more by the Spirit of supplication and by holy exercises of godliness, and to strain toward the goal of perfection, until they are freed from this body of death and reign with the Lamb of God in heaven.

#### **Article 3: God's Preservation of the Converted**

Because of these remnants of sin dwelling in them and also because of the temptations of the world and Satan, those who have been converted could not remain standing in this grace if left to their own resources. But God is faithful, mercifully strengthening them in the grace once conferred on them and powerfully preserving them in it to the end.

#### **Article 4: The Danger of True Believers' Falling into Serious Sins**

Although that power of God strengthening and preserving true believers in grace

is more than a match for the flesh, yet those converted are not always so activated and motivated by God that in certain specific actions they cannot by their own fault depart from the leading of grace, be led astray by the desires of the flesh, and give in to them. For this reason they must constantly watch and pray that they may not be led into temptations. When they fail to do this, not only can they be carried away by the flesh, the world, and Satan into sins, even serious and outrageous ones, but also by God's just permission they sometimes are so carried away--witness the sad cases, described in Scripture, of David, Peter, and other saints falling into sins.

#### Article 5: The Effects of Such Serious Sins

By such monstrous sins, however, they greatly offend God, deserve the sentence of death, grieve the Holy Spirit, suspend the exercise of faith, severely wound the conscience, and sometimes lose the awareness of grace for a time--until, after they have returned to the way by genuine repentance, God's fatherly face again shines upon them.

#### Article 6: God's Saving Intervention

For God, who is rich in mercy, according to his unchangeable purpose of election does not take his Holy Spirit from his own completely, even when they fall grievously. Neither does he let them fall down so far that they forfeit the grace of adoption and the state of justification, or commit the sin which leads to death (the sin against the Holy Spirit), and plunge themselves, entirely forsaken by him, into eternal ruin.

#### Article 7: Renewal to Repentance

For, in the first place, God preserves in those saints when they fall his imperishable seed from which they have been born again, lest it perish or be dislodged. Secondly, by his Word and Spirit he certainly and effectively renews them to repentance so that they have a heartfelt and godly sorrow for the sins they have committed; seek and obtain, through faith and with a contrite heart, forgiveness in the blood of the Mediator; experience again the grace of a reconciled God; through faith adore his mercies; and from then on more eagerly work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

#### Article 8: The Certainty of This Preservation

So it is not by their own merits or strength but by God's undeserved mercy that they neither forfeit faith and grace totally nor remain in their downfalls to the end and are lost. With respect to themselves this not only easily could happen, but also undoubtedly would happen; but with respect to God it cannot possibly

happen, since his plan cannot be changed, his promise cannot fail, the calling according to his purpose cannot be revoked, the merit of Christ as well as his interceding and preserving cannot be nullified, and the sealing of the Holy Spirit can neither be invalidated nor wiped out.

#### Article 9: The Assurance of This Preservation

Concerning this preservation of those chosen to salvation and concerning the perseverance of true believers in faith, believers themselves can and do become assured in accordance with the measure of their faith, by which they firmly believe that they are and always will remain true and living members of the church, and that they have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

#### Article 10: The Ground of This Assurance

Accordingly, this assurance does not derive from some private revelation beyond or outside the Word, but from faith in the promises of God which he has very plentifully revealed in his Word for our comfort, from the testimony of the Holy Spirit testifying with our spirit that we are God's children and heirs (Rom. 8:16-17), and finally from a serious and holy pursuit of a clear conscience and of good works. And if God's chosen ones in this world did not have this well-founded comfort that the victory will be theirs and this reliable guarantee of eternal glory, they would be of all people most miserable.

#### Article 11: Doubts Concerning This Assurance

Meanwhile, Scripture testifies that believers have to contend in this life with various doubts of the flesh and that under severe temptation they do not always experience this full assurance of faith and certainty of perseverance. But God, the Father of all comfort, does not let them be tempted beyond what they can bear, but with the temptation he also provides a way out (1 Cor. 10:13), and by the Holy Spirit revives in them the assurance of their perseverance.

#### Article 12: This Assurance as an Incentive to Godliness

This assurance of perseverance, however, so far from making true believers proud and carnally self-assured, is rather the true root of humility, of childlike respect, of genuine godliness, of endurance in every conflict, of fervent prayers, of steadfastness in crossbearing and in confessing the truth, and of well-founded joy in God. Reflecting on this benefit provides an incentive to a serious and continual practice of thanksgiving and good works, as is evident from the testimonies of Scripture and the examples of the saints.

#### Article 13: Assurance No Inducement to Carelessness

Neither does the renewed confidence of perseverance produce immorality or lack of concern for godliness in those put back on their feet after a fall, but it produces a much greater concern to observe carefully the ways of the Lord which he prepared in advance. They observe these ways in order that by walking in them they may maintain the assurance of their perseverance, lest, by their abuse of his fatherly goodness, the face of the gracious God (for the godly, looking upon his face is sweeter than life, but its withdrawal is more bitter than death) turn away from them again, with the result that they fall into greater anguish of spirit.

#### Article 14: God's Use of Means in Perseverance

And, just as it has pleased God to begin this work of grace in us by the proclamation of the gospel, so he preserves, continues, and completes his work by the hearing and reading of the gospel, by meditation on it, by its exhortations, threats, and promises, and also by the use of the sacraments.

#### Article 15: Contrasting Reactions to the Teaching of Perseverance

This teaching about the perseverance of true believers and saints, and about their assurance of it--a teaching which God has very richly revealed in his Word for the glory of his name and for the comfort of the godly and which he impresses on the hearts of believers--is something which the flesh does not understand, Satan hates, the world ridicules, the ignorant and the hypocrites abuse, and the spirits of error attack. The bride of Christ, on the other hand, has always loved this teaching very tenderly and defended it steadfastly as a priceless treasure; and God, against whom no plan can avail and no strength can prevail, will ensure that she will continue to do this. To this God alone, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen.

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## Rejection of the Errors

### Concerning the Teaching of the Perseverance of the Saints

*Having set forth the orthodox teaching, the Synod rejects the errors of those*

#### I

**Who teach that the perseverance of true believers is not an effect of election or a gift of God produced by Christ's death, but a condition of the new covenant which man, before what they call his "peremptory" election and justification, must fulfill by his free will.**

For Holy Scripture testifies that perseverance follows from election and is granted to the chosen by virtue of Christ's death, resurrection, and intercession: The chosen obtained it; the others were hardened (Rom. 11:7); likewise, He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not, along with him, grant us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died--more than that, who was raised--who also sits at the right hand of God, and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? (Rom. 8:32-35).

## II

**Who teach that God does provide the believer with sufficient strength to persevere and is ready to preserve this strength in him if he performs his duty, but that even with all those things in place which are necessary to persevere in faith and which God is pleased to use to preserve faith, it still always depends on the choice of man's will whether or not he perseveres.**

For this view is obviously Pelagian; and though it intends to make men free it makes them sacrilegious. It is against the enduring consensus of evangelical teaching which takes from man all cause for boasting and ascribes the praise for this benefit only to God's grace. It is also against the testimony of the apostle: It is God who keeps us strong to the end, so that we will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:8).

## III

**Who teach that those who truly believe and have been born again not only can forfeit justifying faith as well as grace and salvation totally and to the end, but also in actual fact do often forfeit them and are lost forever.**

For this opinion nullifies the very grace of justification and regeneration as well as the continual preservation by Christ, contrary to the plain words of the apostle Paul: If Christ died for us while we were still sinners, we will therefore much more be saved from God's wrath through him, since we have now been justified by his blood (Rom. 5:8-9); and contrary to the apostle John: No one who is born of God is intent on sin, because God's seed remains in him, nor can he sin, because he has been born of God (1 John 3:9); also contrary to the words of Jesus Christ: I give eternal life to my sheep, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand (John 10: 28-29).

## IV

**Who teach that those who truly believe and have been born again can**

## **commit the sin that leads to death (the sin against the Holy Spirit).**

For the same apostle John, after making mention of those who commit the sin that leads to death and forbidding prayer for them (1 John 5: 16-17), immediately adds: We know that anyone born of God does not commit sin (that is, that kind of sin), but the one who was born of God keeps himself safe, and the evil one does not touch him (v. 18).

### V

## **Who teach that apart from a special revelation no one can have the assurance of future perseverance in this life.**

For by this teaching the well-founded consolation of true believers in this life is taken away and the doubting of the Romanists is reintroduced into the church. Holy Scripture, however, in many places derives the assurance not from a special and extraordinary revelation but from the marks peculiar to God's children and from God's completely reliable promises. So especially the apostle Paul: Nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:39); and John: They who obey his commands remain in him and he in them. And this is how we know that he remains in us: by the Spirit he gave us (1 John 3:24).

### VI

## **Who teach that the teaching of the assurance of perseverance and of salvation is by its very nature and character an opiate of the flesh and is harmful to godliness, good morals, prayer, and other holy exercises, but that, on the contrary, to have doubt about this is praiseworthy.**

For these people show that they do not know the effective operation of God's grace and the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and they contradict the apostle John, who asserts the opposite in plain words: Dear friends, now we are children of God, but what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he is made known, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure (1 John 3:2-3). Moreover, they are refuted by the examples of the saints in both the Old and the New Testament, who though assured of their perseverance and salvation yet were constant in prayer and other exercises of godliness.

### VII

## **Who teach that the faith of those who believe only temporarily does not differ from justifying and saving faith except in duration alone.**

For Christ himself in Matthew 13:20ff. and Luke 8:13ff. clearly defines these further differences between temporary and true believers: he says that the former receive the seed on rocky ground, and the latter receive it in good ground, or a good heart; the former have no root, and the latter are firmly rooted; the former have no fruit, and the latter produce fruit in varying measure, with steadfastness, or perseverance.

## VIII

**Who teach that it is not absurd that a person, after losing his former regeneration, should once again, indeed quite often, be reborn.**

For by this teaching they deny the imperishable nature of God's seed by which we are born again, contrary to the testimony of the apostle Peter: Born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable (1 Pet. 1:23).

## IX

**Who teach that Christ nowhere prayed for an unfailing perseverance of believers in faith.**

For they contradict Christ himself when he says: I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith may not fail (Luke 22:32); and John the gospel writer when he testifies in John 17 that it was not only for the apostles, but also for all those who were to believe by their message that Christ prayed: Holy Father, preserve them in your name (v. 11); and My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you preserve them from the evil one (v. 15).

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## Conclusion

### *Rejection of False Accusations*

And so this is the clear, simple, and straightforward explanation of the orthodox teaching on the five articles in dispute in the Netherlands, as well as the rejection of the errors by which the Dutch churches have for some time been disturbed. This explanation and rejection the Synod declares to be derived from God's Word and in agreement with the confessions of the Reformed churches. Hence it clearly appears that those of whom one could hardly expect it have shown no truth, equity, and charity at all in wishing to make the public believe:

**--that the teaching of the Reformed churches on predestination and on the points associated with it by its very nature and tendency draws the minds of people away from all godliness and religion, is an opiate of the**



**flesh and the devil, and is a stronghold of Satan where he lies in wait for all people, wounds most of them, and fatally pierces many of them with the arrows of both despair and self-assurance;**

**--that this teaching makes God the author of sin, unjust, a tyrant, and a hypocrite; and is nothing but a refurbished Stoicism, Manicheism, Libertinism, and Mohammedanism;**

**--that this teaching makes people carnally self-assured, since it persuades them that nothing endangers the salvation of the chosen, no matter how they live, so that they may commit the most outrageous crimes with self-assurance; and that on the other hand nothing is of use to the reprobate for salvation even if they have truly performed all the works of the saints;**

**--that this teaching means that God predestined and created, by the bare and unqualified choice of his will, without the least regard or consideration of any sin, the greatest part of the world to eternal condemnation; that in the same manner in which election is the source and cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and ungodliness; that many infant children of believers are snatched in their innocence from their mothers' breasts and cruelly cast into hell so that neither the blood of Christ nor their baptism nor the prayers of the church at their baptism can be of any use to them; and very many other slanderous accusations of this kind which the Reformed churches not only disavow but even denounce with their whole heart.**

Therefore this Synod of Dordt in the name of the Lord pleads with all who devoutly call on the name of our Savior Jesus Christ to form their judgment about the faith of the Reformed churches, not on the basis of false accusations gathered from here or there, or even on the basis of the personal statements of a number of ancient and modern authorities--statements which are also often either quoted out of context or misquoted and twisted to convey a different meaning--but on the basis of the churches' own official confessions and of the present explanation of the orthodox teaching which has been endorsed by the unanimous consent of the members of the whole Synod, one and all.

Moreover, the Synod earnestly warns the false accusers themselves to consider how heavy a judgment of God awaits those who give false testimony against so many churches and their confessions, trouble the consciences of the weak, and seek to prejudice the minds of many against the fellowship of true believers.

Finally, this Synod urges all fellow ministers in the gospel of Christ to deal with this

teaching in a godly and reverent manner, in the academic institutions as well as in the churches; to do so, both in their speaking and writing, with a view to the glory of God's name, holiness of life, and the comfort of anxious souls; to think and also speak with Scripture according to the analogy of faith; and, finally, to refrain from all those ways of speaking which go beyond the bounds set for us by the genuine sense of the Holy Scriptures and which could give impertinent sophists a just occasion to scoff at the teaching of the Reformed churches or even to bring false accusations against it.

May God's Son Jesus Christ, who sits at the right hand of God and gives gifts to men, sanctify us in the truth, lead to the truth those who err, silence the mouths of those who lay false accusations against sound teaching, and equip faithful ministers of his Word with a spirit of wisdom and discretion, that all they say may be to the glory of God and the building up of their hearers. Amen.

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## **The Covenant of Redemption between the Father and the Redeemer**

**John Flavel**

1671

SERMON III.

Isaiah 53:12

Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

In this chapter, the gospel seems to be epitomized; the "subject-matter of it is the death of Christ, and the glorious issue thereof. By reading of it, the eunuch of old, and many jews since; have been converted to Christ. Christ is here considered absolutely, and relatively. Absolutely, and so his innocency is industriously vindicated, ver. 9. Though he suffered grievous things, yet not for his own sins, for "he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth," ver. 9. But relatively considered, in the capacity of a Surety for us: so the justice of God is so fully vindicated in his sufferings; "The Lord hath laid upon him, the iniquity of us all," ver. 6. How he came to sustain this capacity and relation of a Surety for us, is in these verses plainly asserted to be by his compact and agreement with his Father, before the worlds were made, ver. 10-12.

In this verse we have, 1. His work. 2. His reward. 3. The relation of each to the other. 1. His work, which was indeed a hard work, to pour out his soul unto death, aggravated by the companions with whom being numbered with transgressors; the capacity in which - bearing all the sins of the elect, "he bare the sins of many;" and by the manner of his bearing it, namely, meekly, and forgivingly, "he made intercession for the transgressors:" this was his work. 2. The reward or fruit which is promised him for this work, "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;" wherein is a plain allusion to conquerors in war, for whom are reserved the richest garments, and most honourable captives to follow the conqueror, as an addition to his magnificence and triumph; these were wont to come after them in chains, Isa. xlv. 14; see Judg. v. 30. 3. The relation between that work and this triumph. Some will have this work to have no other relation to that glory, than a mere antecedent to a consequent; others give it the respect and relation of a meritorious cause to a reward. However, it is plain, that the Father here agrees and promises to give the elect to the Son, if he will undertake their redemption by pouring out his soul unto death; of all which this is the plain result:

**DOCT. THAT THE BUSINESS OF MAN'S SALVATION WAS TRANSACTED UPON COVENANT TERMS, BETWEEN THE FATHER AND THE SON, FROM ALL ETERNITY.**

Now, to open this great point, we will here consider, - The persons transacting one with another. - The business transacted. - The quality and manner of the transaction, which is federal. - The articles to which they agree. - How each person performs his engagement to the other. - And, lastly, The antiquity or eternity of this covenant, transaction.

I. The persons transacting and dealing with each other in this covenant. And indeed they are great persons, God the Father, and God the Son; the former as a Creditor, and the latter as a Surety. The Father stands upon satisfaction, the Son engages to give it.

II. The business, transacted between them; and that was the redemption and recovery of all God's elect: our eternal happiness lay now before them, our dearest and everlasting concerns were now in their hands. The elect (though not yet in being) are here considered as existent, yea, and as fallen, miserable, forlorn creatures: how these may again be restored to happiness without prejudice to the honour, justice, and truth of God; this, this is the business that lay before them.

III. For the manner, or quality of the transaction, it was federal, or of the nature of a covenant; it was by mutual engagements and stipulations, each Person undertaking to perform his part in order to our recovery.

IV. More particularly, we will next consider the articles to which they do both agree;

or, what it is that each Person doth for himself promise to the other. And, to let us see how much the Father's heart is engaged in the salvation of poor sinners, there are four things which he promiseth to do for Christ, if he will undertake that work.

1. He promiseth to invest him, and anoint him to a threefold office, answerable to the misery that lay upon the elect; for, if ever man be restored to that happiness, the blindness of his mind must be cured, the guilt of sin expiated, and his captivity to sin led captive. Christ must, "of God, be made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30. And he is made so to us as our Prophet, Priest, and King; but he could not put himself into either of these; for if so, he had acted without commission, and consequently all he did had been invalid; "Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son," Heb. v. 5. A commission, therefore, to act authoritatively in these offices being necessary to our recovery, the Father engages to him to seal him such a threefold commission.

He promiseth to invest him with an eternal and royal priesthood; "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec," Psa. cx. 4. This Melchisedec being king of righteousness, and king of Salem, that is, Peace, had a royal priesthood; and his descent not being reckoned, it had an adumbration of eternity in it, and so was more fit to typify and shadow forth the priesthood of Christ than Aaron's was, Heb. vii. 17. 24, 25.

He promiseth moreover to make him a Prophet, and that an extraordinary one, even the Prince of prophets; the chief Shepherd, as much superior to all others, as the sun is to the lesser stars; so it is said, "I will give thee for a light to the gentiles, to open the blind eyes," &c. Isa. xlii. 6, 7.

And not only so, but to make him King also, and that of the whole empire of the world; "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost ends of the earth for thy possession," Psa. ii. 8. Thus the Father promiseth to qualify and furnish the Son completely for the work, by his investiture with this threefold office.

2. He promiseth to crown his work with success, and bring it to a happy issue; "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand, Isa. liii. 10. He shall not begin, and not finish; he shall not shed his invaluable blood upon hazardous terms; but shall see and reap the sweet fruits thereof; as the joyful mother forgets her pangs, when she delightfully embraces her living child.

3. The Father promiseth to accept him in his work: "Surely (saith he) my work is with my God," Isa. xlix. 4. And, "I shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord," ver. 5. His faith

hath therein respect to this compact and promise. Accordingly, the Father manifests the satisfaction he had in him, and in his work, even while he was about it upon the earth, "when there came such a voice from the excellent glory, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," 2 Pet. i. 17.

4. As he engaged to reward him highly for his work, by exalting him to singular and super-eminent glory and honour, when he should have despatched and finished it. So you read, "I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," Psa. ii. 7. It is spoken of the day of his resurrection, when he had just finished his sufferings. And so the apostle expounds and applies it, Acts xiii. 32, 33. For then did the Lord wipe away the reproach of his cross. As if the Father had said, Now thou hast again recovered thy glory, and this day is to thee as a new birthday.

These are the encouragements and rewards proposed and promised to him by the Father. This was the joy set before him, as the apostle expresses it in Heb. xii. 2, which made him so patiently to "endure the cross, and despise the shame."

And in like manner Jesus Christ gives his engagement to the Father; that, upon these terms, he is content to be made flesh, to divest, as it were, himself of his glory, to come under the obedience and malediction of the law, and not to refuse any, the hardest sufferings it should please his Father to inflict on him. So much is implied in Isa. l. 5-7. "The Lord hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." And the sense of this place is well delivered to us in other terms, "Then said I, Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O God, thy law is within my heart," Psa. xl. 6-10. Oh see with what a full consent the heart of Christ closeth with the Father's offers and proposals! like some echo, that answers your voice twice or thrice over. So doth Christ here answer his Father's call, "I come; I delight to do thy will; yea, thy law is in my heart."

V. I will briefly show how these articles and agreements were on both parts performed, and that precisely and punctually.

1. The Son having thus consented, accordingly he applies himself to the discharge of his work. He took a body, in it fulfilled all righteousness; even to a tittle, Matt. iii. 15. And, at last, his soul was made an offering for sin, so that he could say, as it is, John xvii. 4, "Father, I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." He went through all the parts of his active and passive obedience, cheerfully and faithfully.

2. The Father made good his engagements to Christ, all along, with no less faithfulness than Christ did his. He promised to assist, and hold his hand, and so he did; "And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him," Luke xxii. 43. That was one of the sorest brunts that ever Christ met with; this was seasonable aid and succour. He promised to accept him in his work, and that he should be glorious in his eyes: so he did; for he not only declared it, by a voice from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased," Luke iii. 22; but it was fully declared in his resurrection and ascension, which were a full discharge and justification of him. He promised him that "He should see his seed," Isa. liii. 10, and so he did; for his very birth-dew was as the dew of the morning; and ever since his blood has been fruitful in the world. He promised gloriously to reward and exalt him; and so he hath, and that highly and super-eminently, "giving him a name above every name in heaven and, earth," Phil. ii. 9-11. Thus were the articles performed.

VI. When was this compact made between the Father and the Son? I answer, it bears date from eternity. Before this world was made, then were his delights in us, while as yet we had no existence, but only in the infinite mind and purpose of God, who had decreed this for us in Christ Jesus, as the apostle speaks, 2 Tim. i. 9. What grace was that which was given us in Christ before the world began, but this grace of redemption, which was from everlasting thus contrived and designed for us, in that way which hath been here opened? Then was the counsel, or consultation of peace between them both, as some take that scripture, Zech. vi. 13.

Next let us apply it to ourselves.

Use 1. The first use that offers itself to us from hence, is the abundant security that God hath given the elect for their salvation, and that not only in respect of the covenant of grace made with them, but also of this covenant of redemption made with Christ for them; which indeed is the foundation of the covenant of grace. God's single promise is security enough to our faith, but his covenant of grace adds further security; but both these, viewed as the effects and fruits of this covenant of redemption, make all fast and sure.

2. Moreover, hence we infer the validity and unquestionable success of Christ's intercession in heaven for believers. You read, "that he ever liveth to make intercession," Heb. vii. 25, and, that his blood speaks for good things for them, Heb. xii. 24. Now, that his blood shall obtain what it pleads for in heaven, is undoubted, and that from the consideration of this covenant of redemption. For here you see that the things he now asks of his Father, are the very same which his Father promised him, and covenanted to give him, before this world was. So that, besides the interest of the person, the very equity of the matter speaks its success, and requires performance. Whatever he asks for us, is as due to him as the wages of the hireling, when the work is ended. If the work be done, and done faithfully, as the Father hath acknowledged it

is, then the reward is due, and due immediately; and no doubt but he shall receive it from the hands of a righteous God.

3. Hence, in like manner, you may be informed of the consistency of grace with full satisfaction to the justice of God. The apostle tells us, we are saved "according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Jesus Christ before the world began," 2 Tim, i. 9, that is, according to the gracious terms of this covenant of redemption; and yet you see notwithstanding, how strictly God stands upon satisfaction from Christ. So then, grace to us, and satisfaction to justice, are not so inconsistent as some adversaries of the truth would make them; what was debt to Christ, is grace to us. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," Rom. iii. 24.

4. Hence judge of the antiquity of the love of God to believers; what an ancient Friend he hath been to us; who loved us, provided for us, and contrived all our happiness, before we were, yea, before the world was. We reap the fruits of this covenant now, the seed whereof was sown from eternity; yea, it is not only ancient, but also most free: no excellences of ours could engage the love of God; for as yet we were not.

5. Hence judge, how reasonable it is that believers should embrace the hardest terms of obedience unto Christ, who complied with such hard terms for their salvation. They were hard and difficult terms indeed, on which Christ received you from the Father's hand; it was, as you have heard, to pour out his soul unto death; "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor," 2 Cor. viii. 9. Blush, ungrateful believers; oh let shame cover your faces; judge in yourselves now, hath Christ deserved that you should stand with him for trifles, that you should shrink at a few petty difficulties, and complain, this is hard, and that is severe? Oh if you knew the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in this his wonderful condescension for you, you could not do it.

6. Lastly, How greatly are we all concerned to make it sure to ourselves, that we are of this number which the Father and the Son agreed for before the world was; that we were comprehended in Christ's engagement and compact with the Father!

Obj. Yea, but you will say, who can know that?

I answer, We know, without ascending into heaven, or prying into unrevealed secrets, that our names were in that covenant, if, (1.) You are believers indeed; for all such the Father then gave to Christ: "The men that thou gavest me, (for of them he spake immediately before,) they have believed that thou didst send me," John xvii. 6, 8. (2.) If you savingly know God in Jesus Christ, such were given him which the Father: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me," ver. 6. By this they are discriminated from the rest: "The world hath not known thee, but these have known," ver. 25. (3.) If you are men and women of another world: "They are not of the

world, even as I am not of the world," ver. 16. May it be said of you, as of dying men, that you are not men and women for this world, that you are crucified and dead to it, Gal. vi. 14, that you are strangers in it: Heb. xi. 13, 14. (4.) If you keep Christ's word: "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word," John xvii. 6. By keeping his word, understand the receiving of the word, in its sanctifying effects and influences into your hearts, and your perseverance in the profession and practice of it to the end: "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth," ver. 17. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will," John xv. 7. Blessed and happy is that soul upon which these blessed characters appear, which our Lord Jesus hath laid so close together, within the compass of a few verses, in the 17th chapter of John. These are the persons the Father delivered unto Christ, and Christ accepted from the Father, in this blessed covenant.

## **The Theology of the Reformation**

### **Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield**

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Charles Beard begins his Hibbert Lectures on The Reformation with these words: "To look upon the Reformation of the sixteenth century as only the substitution of one set of theological doctrines for another, or the cleansing of the Church from notorious abuses and corruptions, or even a return of Christianity to something like primitive purity and simplicity - is to take an inadequate view of its nature and importance." He wishes us to make note of the far-reaching changes in human life which have been wrought by what we call the Reformation, to observe the numerous departments of activity which have been at least affected by it, and then to seek its cause in something as wide in its extension as its effects. He himself discovers this cause in the "general awakening of the human intellect," which had begun in the fourteenth century and was being "urged on with accelerating rapidity in the fifteenth." In his view the Reformation was merely the religious side of what we speak of as the Renaissance. "It was the life of the Renaissance," he affirms, "infused into religion under the influence of men of the grave and earnest Teutonic race." He even feels justified in saying that, in the view he takes of it, the Reformation "was not, primarily, a theological, a religious, an ecclesiastical movement at all."

That there is some exaggeration in this representation is obvious. That this



exaggeration is due to defective analysis is as clear. And the suspicion lies very near that the defect in analysis has its root in an imperfect sense of values. To point us to the general awakening of the human intellect which was in progress in the fifteenth century is not to uncover a cause; it is only to describe a condition. To remind us that, as a result of this awakening of the human intellect, a lively sense had long existed of the need of a reformation, and repeated attempts had been vainly made to effect it, that men everywhere were fully alive to the corruption of manners and morals in which the world was groveling, and were equally helpless to correct it, is not to encourage us to find the cause of the Reformation in a general situation out of which no reformation had through all these years come. The question which presses is: Whence came the power which achieved the effect - an effect apparently far beyond the power of the forces working on the surface of things to achieve?

There is no use in seeking to cover up the facts under depreciatory forms of statement. It is easy to talk contemptuously of the "substitution of one set of theological doctrines for another," as it would be easy to talk contemptuously of the substitution of one set of political or of sanitary doctrines for another. The force of the perverse suggestion lies in keeping the matter in the abstract. The proof of the pudding in such things lies in the eating. No doubt it is possible to talk indifferently of merely working the permutations of a dial-lock, regardless of the not unimportant circumstance that one of these permutations differs from the rest in this - that it shoots the bolts. The substitution of one set of theological doctrines for another which took place at the Reformation was the substitution of a set of doctrines which had the promise and potency of life in them for a set of doctrines the issue of which had been death. What happened at the Reformation, by means of which the forces of life were set at work through the seething, struggling mass, was the revival of vital Christianity; and this is the vera causa of all that has come out of that great revolution, in all departments of life. Men, no doubt, had long been longing and seeking after "a return of Christianity to something like primitive purity and simplicity." This was the way that an Erasmus, for example, pictured to himself the needs of his time. The difficulty was that, rather repelled by the Christianity they knew than attracted by Christianity in its primitive purity - of the true nature of which they really had no idea - they were simply feeling out in the dark. What Luther did was to rediscover vital Christianity and to give it afresh to the world. To do this was to put the spark to the train. We are feeling the explosion yet.

The Reformation was then - we insist upon it - precisely the substitution of one set of theological doctrines for another. That is what it was to Luther; and that is what, through Luther, it has been to the Christian world. Exactly what Luther did was for himself - for the quieting of his aroused conscience and the healing of his deepened sense of sin - to rediscover the great fact, the greatest of all the great facts of which sinful man can ever become aware, that salvation is by the pure grace of God alone. O, but, you will say, that resulted from Luther's religious experience. No, we answer, it

was primarily a doctrinal discovery of Luther's - the discovery of a doctrine apart from which, and prior to the discovery of which, Luther did not have and could never have had his religious experience. He had been taught another doctrine, a doctrine which had been embodied in a popular maxim, current in his day: Do the best you can, and God will see you through. He had tried to live that doctrine, and could not do it; he could not believe it. He has told us of his despair. He has told us how this despair grew deeper and deeper, until he was raised out of it precisely by his discovery of his new doctrine - that it is God and God alone who in His infinite grace saves us, that He does it all, and that we supply nothing but the sinners to be saved and the subsequent praises which our grateful hearts lift to Him, our sole and only Saviour. This is a radically different doctrine from that; and it produced radically different effects on Luther; Luther the monk and Luther the Reformer are two different men. And it has produced radically different effects in the world; the medieval world and the modern world are two different worlds. The thing that divides them is the new doctrine that Luther found in the monastery at Wittenberg - or was it already at Erfurt? - poring over the great declaration in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "The righteous shall live by faith." Émile Doumergue puts the whole story into a sentence: "Two radically different religions give birth to two radically different civilizations."

Luther himself knew perfectly well that what he had done for himself, and what he would fain do for the world, was just to substitute a new doctrine for that old one in which neither he nor the world could find life. So he came forward as a teacher, as a dogmatic teacher, as a dogmatic teacher who gloried in his dogmatism. He was not merely seeking for truth; he had the truth. He did not make tentative suggestions to the world for its consideration; what he dealt in was - so he liked to call them - "assertions." This was naturally a mode of procedure very offensive to a man of polite letters, like Erasmus, say, who knew of nothing that men of culture could not sit around a well-furnished table and discuss together pleasurably with open minds. "I have so little stomach for 'assertions,'" he says, striking directly at Luther, "that I could easily go over to the opinion of the sceptics - wherever," he smugly adds, "it were allowed me by the inviolable authority of the Sacred Scriptures and the decrees of the Church, to which I everywhere submit, whether I follow what is presented or not." For this his Oliver he certainly got more than a Roland from Luther. For Luther takes occasion from this remark to read Erasmus a much-needed lecture on the place of dogma in Christianity. To say you have no pleasure in "assertions," he says, is all one with saying you are not a Christian. Take away "assertions," and you take away Christianity. No Christian could endure to have "assertions" despised, since that would be nothing else than to deny at once all religion and piety, or to declare that religion and piety and every dogma are nothing. Christian doctrines are not to be put on a level with human opinions. They are divinely given to us in Holy Scripture to form the molds in which Christian lives are to run.

We are in the presence here of what is known as the formal principle of the

Reformation. The fundamental meaning of it is that the Reformation was primarily, like all great revolutions, a revolution in the realm of ideas. Was it not a wise man who urged us long ago to give especial diligence to keeping our hearts (the heart is the cognitive faculty in Scripture), on the express ground that out of them are the issues of life? The battle of the Reformation was fought out under a banner on which the sole authority of Scripture was inscribed. But the principle of the sole authority of Scripture was not to the Reformation an abstract principle. What it was interested in was what is taught in Scripture; and the sole authority of Scripture meant to it the sole authority of what is taught in Scripture. This of course is dogma; and the dogma which the men of the Reformation found taught in Scripture above every other dogma, so much above every other dogma that in it is summed up all the teaching of Scripture, is the sole efficiency of God in salvation. This is what we call the material principle of the Reformation. It was not at first known by the name of justification by faith alone, but it was from the first passionately embraced as renunciation of all human works and dependence on the grace of God alone for salvation. In it the Reformation lived and moved and had its being; in a high sense of the words, it is the Reformation.

The confusion would be ludicrous, if it were not rather pathetic, by which the correction of abuses in the life whether of the Church or of society at-large, is confounded with the Reformation. Luther knew perfectly well from the beginning where the center of his Reformation lay, and did not for a moment confound its peripheral effects with it. Here, indeed, lay the precise difference between him and the other reformers of the time - those other reformers who could not reform. Erasmus, for example, was as clear of eye as Luther to see, and as outspoken as Luther to condemn, the crying abuses of the day. But he conceived the task of reform as a purely negative one. The note of his reform was simplicity; he wished to return to the "simplicity of the Christian life," and, as a means to that, to the "simplicity of doctrine." He was content with a process of stripping off, and he expected to reach the kernel of true Christianity merely by thoroughly removing the husk which at the moment covered and concealed it. The assumption being that true Christianity lay behind and beneath the corruptions of the day, no restoration was needed, only uncovering. When he came to do the stripping, it is true, Erasmus found no stopping-place; he stripped not only to the bone but through the bone, and nothing was left in his hand but a "philosophy of Christ," which was a mere moralism. Peter Canisius, looking at it formally, calls it not inaptly, "the theology of Pyrrhus." Luther, judging it from the material standpoint, says Erasmus has made "a gospel of Pelagius." Thus at all events Erasmus at once demonstrated that beneath the immense fabric of medieval Christianity there lay as its sustaining core nothing but a bald moralism; and by dragging this moralism out and labeling it "simple Christianity," has made himself the father of that great multitude in our day who, crying: Back to Christ! have reduced Christianity to the simple precept: Be good and it will be well with you.

In sharp contrast with these negative reformers Luther came forward with a positive

gospel in his hands; "a new religion" his adversaries called it then, as their descendants call it now, and they call it so truly. He was not particularly interested in the correction of abuses, though he hewed at them manfully when they stood in his way. To speak the whole truth, this necessary work bored him a little. He saw no pure gospel beneath them which their removal would uncover and release. He knew that his new gospel, once launched, had power of itself to abolish them. What his heart was aflame with was the desire to launch this new gospel; to substitute it, the gospel of grace, for the gospel of works, on which alone men were being fed. In that substitution consisted his whole Reformation.

In his detailed answer to the Bull of Excommunication, published against him in 1520, in which forty-one propositions from his writings were condemned, Luther shows plainly enough where the center of controversy lay for him. It was in the article in which he asserts the sole efficiency of grace in salvation. He makes his real appeal to Scripture, of course, but he does not neglect to point out also that he has Augustine with him and also experience. He scoffs at his opponents' pretensions to separate themselves from the Pelagians by wire-drawn distinctions between works of congruity and works of condignity. If we may secure grace by works, he says, it means nothing that we carefully name these works works of congruity and refrain from calling them works of condignity. "For what is the difference," he cries, "if you deny that grace is from our works and yet teach that it is through our works? The impious sense remains that grace is held to be given not gratis but on account of our works. For the Pelagians did not teach and do any other works on account of which they expected grace to be given than you teach and do. They are the works of the same free will and the same members, although you and they give them different names. They are the same fasting and prayers and almsgiving - but you call them works congruous to grace, they works condign to grace. The same Pelagians remain victors in both cases."

What Luther is zealous for, it will be seen, is the absolute exclusion of works from salvation, and the casting of the soul wholly upon the grace of God. He rises to full eloquence as he approaches the end of his argument, pushing his adversaries fairly to the ropes. "For when they could not deny that we must be saved by the grace of God," he exclaims, "and could not elude this truth, then impiety sought out another way of escape - pretending that, although we cannot save ourselves, we can nevertheless prepare for being saved by God's grace. What glory remains to God, I ask, if we are able to procure that we shall be saved by His grace? Does this seem a small ability - that he who has no grace shall nevertheless have power enough to obtain grace when he wishes? What is the difference between that, and saying with the Pelagians that we are saved without grace - since you place the grace of God within the power of man's will? You seem to me to be worse than Pelagius, since you put in the power of man the necessary grace of God, the necessity of which he simply denied. I say, it seems less impious wholly to deny grace than to represent it as secured by our zeal and effort, and to put it thus in our power."

This tremendous onslaught prepares the way for a notable declaration in which Luther makes perfectly clear how he thought of his work as a reformer and the relative importance which he attached to the several matters in controversy. Rome taught, with whatever finessing, salvation by works; he knew and would know nothing but salvation by grace, or, as he phrases it here, nothing but Christ and Him crucified. It was the cross that Rome condemned in him; for it was the cross and it alone in which he put his trust. "In all the other articles," he says - that is to say, all the others of the forty-one propositions which had been condemned in the Bull - "those concerning the Papacy, Councils, Indulgences, and other nonnecessary trifles (nugae!)" - this is the way in which he enumerates them - "the levity and folly of the Pope and his followers may be endured. But in this article," - that is, the one on free will and grace - "which is the best of all and the sum of our matter, we must grieve and weep over the insanity of these miserable men." It is on this article, then, that for him the whole conflict turns as on its hinge. He wishes he could write more largely upon it. For more than three hundred years none, or next to none, have written in favor of grace; and there is no subject which is in so great need of treatment as this. "And I have often wished," he adds, "passing by these frivolous Papist trifles and brawls (nugis et negotiis), which have nothing to do with the Church but to destroy it - to deal with this."

His opportunity to do so came when, four years afterward (1524), Erasmus, egged on by his patrons and friends, and taking his start from this very discussion, published his charmingly written book, "On Free Will." It is the great humanist's greatest book, elegant in style, suave in tone, delicate in suggestion, winning in its appeal; and it presents with consummate skill the case for the Romish teaching against which Luther had thrown himself. Separating himself as decisively if not as fundamentally on the one side from Pelagius and Scotus - in another place he speaks with distaste of "Scotus his bristling and prickly soul" - as on the other from the reformers - he has Carlstadt and Luther especially in mind - Erasmus attaches himself to what he calls, in accordance with the point of view of his time, the Augustinian doctrine; that is to say, to the synergism of the scholastics, perhaps most nearly in the form in which it had been taught by Alexander of Hales, and at all events practically as it was soon to be authoritatively defined as the doctrine of the Church by the Council of Trent. To this subtle doctrine he gives its most attractive statement and weaves around it the charm of his literary grace. Luther was not insensible to the beauty of the book. He says the voice of Erasmus in it sounded to him like the song of a nightingale. But he was in search of substance, not form, and he felt bound to confess that his experience in reading the book was much that of the wolf in the fable, who, ravished by the song of a nightingale, could not rest till he had caught and greedily devoured it - only to remark disgustedly afterward: "Vox, et praeterea nihil."

The refinements of Erasmus' statements were lost on Luther. What he wished - and

nothing else would content him - was a clear and definite acknowledgment that the work of salvation is of the grace of God alone, and man contributes nothing whatever to it. This acknowledgment Erasmus could not make. The very purpose for which he was writing was to vindicate for man a part, and that the decisive part, in his own salvation. He might magnify the grace of God in the highest terms. He might protest that he too held that without the grace of God no good thing could be done by man, so that grace is the beginning and the middle and the end of salvation. But when pressed to the wall he was forced to allow that, somewhere in "the middle," an action of man came in, and that this action of man was the decisive thing that determined his salvation. He might minimize this action of man to the utmost. He might point out that it was a very, very little thing which he retained to human powers - only, as one might say, that man must push the button and grace had to do the rest. This did not satisfy Luther. Nothing would satisfy him but that all of salvation - every bit of it - should be attributed to the grace of God alone.

Luther even made Erasmus' efforts to reduce man's part in salvation to as little as possible, while yet retaining it at the decisive point, the occasion of scoffing. Instead of escaping Pelagianism by such expedients, he says, Erasmus and his fellow sophists cast themselves more deeply into the vat and come out double-dyed Pelagians. The Pelagians are at least honest with themselves and us. They do not palter, in a double sense, with empty distinctions between works of condignity and works of congruity. They call a spade a spade and say candidly that merit is merit. And they do not belittle our salvation by belittling the works by which we merit it. We do not hear from them that we merit saving grace by something "very little, almost nothing." They hold salvation precious; and warn us that if we are to gain it, it can be at the cost only of great effort - "tota, plena, perfecta, magna et multa studia et opera." If we will fall into error in such a matter, says Luther, at least let us not cheapen the grace of God, and treat it as something vile and contemptible. What he means is that the attempted compromise, while remaining Pelagian in principle, yet loses the high ethical position of Pelagianism. Seeking some middle-place between grace and works, and fondly congratulating itself that it retains both, it merely falls between the stools and retains neither. It depends as truly as Pelagianism on works, but reduces these works on which it nevertheless depends to a vanishing-point. In thus suspending salvation on "some little thing, almost nothing," says Luther, it "denies the Lord Christ who has bought us, more than the Pelagians ever denied Him, or any heretics."

To the book in which Luther replied to Erasmus' "On Free Will," matching Erasmus' title, he gives the name of "On the Enslaved Will." Naturally, the flowing purity of the great humanist's Latinity and the flexible grace of his style are not to be found here. But the book is written in sufficiently good Latin - plain and strong and straightforward. Luther evidently took unusual pains with it, and it more than makes up for any lack of literary charm it may show by the fertility of its thought and the amazing vigor of its language. A. Freitag, its latest editor, characterizes it briefly, in

one great word, as an "exploit" (Grosstat), and Sodeur does not scruple to describe it roundly as "a dialectic and polemic masterpiece"; its words have hands and feet. Its real distinction, however, is to be sought in a higher region than these things. It is the embodiment of Luther's reformation conceptions, the nearest to a systematic statement of them he ever made. It is the first exposition of the fundamental ideas of the Reformation in comprehensive presentation, and it is therefore in a true sense the manifesto of the Reformation. It was so that Luther himself looked upon it. It was not because he admired it as a piece of "mere literature" that he always thought of it as an achievement. It was because it contained the *doctrinae evangelicae caput* - the very head and principle of the evangelical teaching. He could well spare all that he had ever written, he wrote to Capito in 1537, let them all go, except the "On the Enslaved Will" and the "Catechism"; they only are right (*justum*). He is reported in the "Table Talk" (Lauterbach-Aurifaber) to have referred once to Erasmus' rejoinder to the book. He did not admit that Erasmus had confuted it; he did not admit that Erasmus ever could confute it, no, not to all eternity. "That I know full well," he said, "and I defy the devil and all his wiles to confute it. For I am certain that it is the unchangeable truth of God." He who touches this doctrine, he says again, touches the apple of his eye.

We may be sure that Luther wrote this book *con amore*. It was not easy for him to write it when he wrote it. That was the year (1525) of the Peasants' Revolt; and what that was in the way of distraction and care, anguish of mind and soul, all know. It was also the year of his marriage, and has he not told us with his engaging frankness that, during the first year of his married life, Katie always sat by him as he worked, trying to think up questions to ask him? But what he was writing down in this book he was not thinking out as he wrote. He was pouring out upon the page the heart of the heart of his gospel, and he was doing it in the exulting confidence that it was not his gospel merely but the gospel of God. He thanks Erasmus for giving him, by selecting this theme to attack him upon, a respite from the wearing, petty strifes that were being thrust continually upon him, and thus enabling him to speak for once directly to the point. "I exceedingly praise and laud this in you," he writes at the end of his book, "that you alone, in contrast with all others, have attacked the thing itself, that is, the top of the question (*summam causae*), and have not fatigued me with those irrelevant questions about the papacy, purgatory, indulgences and such like trumperies (*nugae*) rather than questions - in which hitherto all have vainly sought to pursue me. You and you alone have seen the hinge of things and have aimed at the throat; and for this I thank you heartily."

It was in no light, however buoyant, spirit, however, that Luther entered upon the discussion. In a very moving context he writes: "I tell you and I beg you to let it sink into the depths of your mind - I am seeking in this matter something that is solemn, and necessary, and eternal to me, of such sort and so great that it must be asserted and defended at the cost of death itself - yea, if the whole world should not only be cast into strife and tumult, but even should be reduced to chaos and dissolved into

nothingness. For by God's grace I am not so foolish and mad that I could be willing for the sake of money (which I neither have nor wish), or of glory (a thing I could not obtain if I wished it, in a world so incensed against me), or of the life of the body (of which I cannot be sure for a moment), to carry on and sustain this matter so long, with so much fortitude and so much constancy (you call it obstinacy), through so many perils to my life, through so much hatred, through so many snares - in short through the fury of men and devils. Do you think that you alone have a heart disturbed by these tumults? I am not made of stone either, nor was I either born of the Marpesian rocks. But since it cannot be done otherwise, I prefer to be battered in this tumult, joyful in the grace of God, for the sake of the word of God which must be asserted with invincible and incorruptible courage, rather than in eternal tumult to be ground to powder in intolerable torment under the wrath of God." This was the spirit in which Luther sustained his thesis of "the enslaved will." It is the spirit of "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." It is the gospel which he has in his hands, the gospel for the world's salvation, and necessity is laid upon him to preach it.

The gospel which Luther had it thus in his heart to preach was, to put it shortly, the gospel of salvation through the grace of God alone. There are two foci around which this gospel revolves: the absolute helplessness of man in his sin; the sole efficiency of grace in salvation. These complementary propositions are given expression theologically in the doctrines of the inability of sinful man to good, and of the creative operation of saving grace. It is the inability of sinful man to good that Luther means by his phrase "the enslaved will." Neither he nor Erasmus was particularly interested in the psychology of the will. We may learn incidentally that he held to the view which has come to be called philosophical determinism, or moral necessity. But we learn that only incidentally. Neither he nor Erasmus was concerned with the mechanism of the will's activity, if we may be allowed this mode of speech. They were absorbed in the great problem of the power of sinful man to good. Erasmus had it in mind to show that sinful man has the power to do good things, things so good that they have merit in the sight of God, and that man's salvation depends on his doing them. Luther had it in his heart to show that sinful man, just because he is sinful and sin is no light evil but destroys all goodness, has no power to do anything that is good in God's sight, and therefore is dependent utterly on God's grace alone for salvation. This is to say, Luther was determined to deal seriously with sin, with original sin, with the fall, with the deep corruption of heart which comes from the fall, with the inability to good which is the result of this corruption of heart. He branded the teaching that man can save himself, or do anything looking to his own salvation, as a hideous lie, and "he launched point-blank his dart at the head of this lie - taught original sin, the corruption of man's heart."

Erasmus, of course, does not fail to put his finger on the precise point of Luther's contention. He complains of the new teachers that they "immensely exaggerate original sin, representing even the noblest powers of human nature as so corrupt that



of itself it can do nothing but ignore and hate God, and not even one who has been justified by the grace of faith can effect any work which is not sin; they make that tendency to sin in us, which has been transmitted to us from our first parents to be itself sin, and that so invincibly sin that there is no commandment of God which even a man who has been justified by faith can keep, but all the commandments of God serve no other end than to enhance the grace of God, which bestows salvation without regard to merits." It outraged him, as it has outraged all who feel with him up to today - as, for example, Hartmann Grisar - that Luther so grossly overdraws the evil of "concupiscence," and thus does despite to that human nature which God created in His own image. Luther was compelled to point out over and over again that he was not talking about human nature and its powers, but about sin and grace. We have not had to wait for Erasmus to tell us, he says, "that a man has eyes and nose, and ears, and bones, and hands - and a mind and a will and a reason," and that it is because he has these things that he is a man; he would not be a man without them. We could not talk of sin with reference to him, had he not these things; nor of grace either - for does not even the proverb say: "God did not make heaven for geese"? Let us leave human nature and its powers to one side then; they are all presupposed. The point of importance is that man is now a sinner. And the point in dispute is whether sinful man can be, at will, not sinful; whether he can do by nature what it requires grace to do. Luther does not depreciate human nature; his opponents depreciate the baleful power of sin, the necessity for a creative operation of grace; and because they depreciate both sin and grace they expect man in his own powers to do what God alone, the Almighty Worker, can do.

He draws out his doctrine here in a long parallel. "As a man, before he is created, to be a man, does nothing and makes no effort to be a creature; and then, after he has been made and created, does nothing and makes no effort to continue a creature; but both these things alike are done solely by the will of the omnipotent power and goodness of God who without our aid creates and preserves us - but He does not operate in us without our cooperation, seeing that He created and preserved us for this very purpose, that He might operate in us and we cooperate with Him, whether this is done outside His kingdom by general omnipotence, or within His kingdom by the singular power of His Spirit: So then we say that a man before he is renovated into a new creature of the kingdom of the Spirit, does nothing and makes no effort to prepare himself for that renovation and kingdom; and then, after he has been renovated, does nothing, makes no effort to continue in that kingdom; but the Spirit alone does both alike in us, recreating us without our aid, and preserving us when recreated, as also James says, 'Of His own will begat He us by the word of His power, that we should be the beginning of His creation' (he is speaking of the renewed creature), but He does not operate apart from us, seeing that He has recreated and preserved us for this very purpose that He might operate in us and we cooperate with Him. Thus through us He preaches, has pity on the poor, consoles the afflicted. But what, then, is attributed to

free will? Or rather what is left to it except nothing? Assuredly just nothing." What this parallel teaches is that the whole saving work is from God, in the beginning and middle and end; it is a supernatural work throughout. But we are saved that we may live in God; and, in the powers of our new life, do His will in the world. It is the Pauline, Not out of works, but unto good works, which God has afore prepared that we should live in them.

It is obvious that the whole substance of Luther's fundamental theology was summed up in the antithesis of sin and grace: sin conceived as absolutely disabling to good; grace as absolutely recreative in effect. Of course he taught also all that is necessarily bound up in one bundle of thought with this great doctrine of sin and grace. He taught, for instance, as a matter of course, the doctrine of "irresistible grace," and also with great purity and decision the doctrine of predestination - for how can salvation be of pure grace alone apart from all merit, save by the sovereign and effective gift of God? A great part of "The Enslaved Will" is given to insistence upon and elucidation of this doctrine of absolute predestination, and Luther did not shrink from raising it into the cosmical region or from elaborating it in its every detail. What it is important for us at the moment to insist upon, however, is that what we have said of Luther we might just as well, *mutatis mutandis*, have said of every other of the great Reformers. Luther's doctrine of sin and grace was not peculiar to him. It was the common property of the whole body of the Reformers. It was taught with equal clarity and force by Zwingli as by Luther, and by Martin Bucer and by John Calvin. It was taught even, in his earlier and happier period, by that "Protestant Erasmus," the weak and unreliable Melancthon, who was saved from betraying the whole Protestant cause at Augsburg by no staunchness in himself, but only by the fatuity of the Catholics, and who later did betray it in its heart of hearts by going over to that very synergism which Luther declared to be the very marrow of the Pope's teaching. In one word, this doctrine was Protestantism itself. All else that Protestantism stood for, in comparison with this, must be relegated to the second rank.

There are some interesting paragraphs in the earlier pages of Alexander Schweizer's "Central Doctrines of Protestantism," in which he speaks of the watchwords of Protestantism, and points out the distinction between them and the so-called formal and material principles of Protestantism, which are, in point of fact, their more considered elaboration. Every reformatory movement in history, he says, has its watchwords, which serve as the symbol by which its adherents encourage one another, and as the banner about which they gather. They penetrate to the very essence of the matter, and give, if popular, yet compressed and vivid, expression to the precise pivot on which the movement turns. In the case of the Protestant revolution the antithesis, Not tradition but Scripture, emerged as one of these watchwords, but not as the ultimate one, but only as subordinate to another in which was expressed the contrast between the parties at strife with respect to the chief matter, how shall sinful man be saved? This ultimate watchword, says Schweizer, ran somewhat like this: Not works,

but faith; not our merit, but God's grace in Christ; not our own penances and satisfactions, but the merit of Christ only. When we hear these cries we are hearing the very pulse-beats of the Reformation as a force among men. In their presence we are in the presence of the Reformation in its purity.

It scarcely requires explicit mention that what we are, then, face to face with in the Reformation is simply a revival of Augustinianism. The fundamental Augustinian antithesis of sin and grace is the soul of the whole Reformation movement. If we wish to characterize the movement on its theological side in one word, therefore, it is adequately done by declaring it a great revival of Augustinianism. Of course, if we study exactness of statement, there are qualifications to be made. But these qualifications serve not to modify the characterization but only to bring it to its utmost precision. We are bidden to remember that the Reformation was not the only movement back toward Augustinianism of the later Middle Ages or of its own day. The times were marked by a deep dissatisfaction with current modes of treating and speaking of divine things; and a movement away from the dominant nominalism, so far back toward Augustinianism as at least to Thomism, was widespread and powerful. And we are bidden to remember that Augustinianism is too broad a term to apply undefined to the doctrinal basis of the Reformation. In its complete connotation it included not only tendencies but elements of explicit teaching which were abhorrent to the Reformers, and by virtue of which the Romanists have an equal right with the Protestants to be called the true children of Augustine. It is suggested therefore that all that can properly be said is that the Reformation, conceived as a movement of its time, represented that part of the general revulsion from the corruptions of the day - the whole of which looked back toward Augustine for guidance and strength - which, because it was distinctively religious in its motives and aspirations, laid hold purely of the Augustinian doctrines of sin and grace, and built exclusively on them in its readjustments to life.

We may content ourselves with such a statement. It is quite true that the Reformation, when looked at purely in itself, presents itself to our view as, in the words of Fr. Loofs, "the rediscovery of Christianity as religion." And it is quite true that purely Augustinian as the Reformation is in its conception of religion, it is not the whole of Augustine that it takes over but only "the Augustine of sin and grace," so that when we speak of it as a revival of Augustinianism we must have in mind only the Augustinianism of grace. But the Augustinianism of grace in the truest sense represents "the real Augustine"; no injustice is done to historical verity in the essence of the matter when we speak of him as "a post-Pauline Paul and a pre-Lutheran Luther." We have only in such a phrase uncovered the true succession. Paul, Augustine, Luther; for substance of doctrine these three are one, and the Reformation is perceived to be, on its doctrinal side, mere Paulinism given back to the world.

To realize how completely this is true we have only to look into the pages of those

lecture notes on Romans which Luther wrote down in 1515-1516, and the manuscript of which was still lying in 1903 unregarded in a showcase of the Berlin Library. Luther himself, of course, fully understood it all. He is reported to have said in his table talk in 1538 (Lauterbach): "There was a certain cardinal in the beginning of the Gospel plotting many things against me in Rome. A court fool, looking on, is said to have remarked: 'My Lord, take my advice and first depose Paul from the company of the Apostles; it is he who is giving us all this trouble.'" It was Paul whom Luther was consciously resurrecting, Paul with the constant cry on his lips - so Luther puts it - of "Grace! Grace! Grace!" Luther characteristically adds: "In spite of the devil" - "grace, in spite of the devil"; and perhaps it will not be without its value for us to observe that Luther did his whole work of reestablishing the doctrine of salvation by pure grace in the world, in the clear conviction that he was doing it in the teeth of the devil. It was against principalities and powers and spiritual wickednesses in high places that he felt himself to be fighting; and he depended for victory on no human arm. Has he not expressed it all in his great hymn - the Reformation hymn by way of eminence? -

A trusty stronghold is our God . . .

Yea, were the world with devils filled.

## **Calvinism in History**

**by Loraine Boettner**

1. Before the Reformation. 2. The Reformation. 3. Calvinism in England. 4. Calvinism in Scotland. 5. Calvinism in France. 6. Calvinism in Holland. 7. Calvinism in America. 8. Calvinism and Representative Government. 9. Calvinism and Education. 10. John Calvin. 11. Conclusion.

### **1. BEFORE THE REFORMATION**

It may occasion some surprise to discover that the doctrine of Predestination was not made a matter of special study until near the end of the fourth century. The earlier church fathers placed chief emphasis on good works such as faith, repentance, almsgiving, prayers, submission to baptism, etc., as the basis of salvation. They of course taught that salvation was through Christ; yet they assumed that man had full power to accept or reject the gospel. Some of their writings contain passages in which the sovereignty of God is recognized; yet along side of those are others which teach the absolute freedom of the human will. Since they could not reconcile the two they would have denied the doctrine of Predestination and perhaps also that of God's absolute Foreknowledge. They taught a kind of synergism in which there was a co-operation between grace and free will. It was hard for man to give up the idea that he

could work out his own salvation. But at last, as a result of a long, slow process, he came to the great truth that salvation is a sovereign gift which has been bestowed irrespective of merit; that it was fixed in eternity; and that God is the author in all of its stages. This cardinal truth of Christianity was first clearly seen by Augustine, the great Spirit-filled theologian of the West. In his doctrines of sin and grace, he went far beyond the earlier theologians, taught an unconditional election of grace, and restricted the purposes of redemption to the definite circle of the elect. It will not be denied by anyone acquainted with Church History that Augustine was an eminently great and good man, and that his labors and writings contributed more to the promotion of sound doctrine and the revival of true religion than did those of any other man between Paul and Luther.

Prior to Augustine's day the time had been largely taken up in correcting heresies within the Church and in refuting attacks from the pagan world in which it found itself. Consequently but little emphasis had been placed on the systematic development of doctrine. And that the doctrine of Predestination received such little attention in this age was no doubt partly due to the tendency to confuse it with the Pagan doctrine of Fatalism which was so prevalent throughout the Roman Empire. But in the fourth century a more settled time had been reached, a new era in theology had dawned, and the theologians came to place more emphasis on the doctrinal content of their message. Augustine was led to develop his doctrines of sin and grace partly through his own personal experience in being converted to Christianity from a worldly life, and partly through the necessity of refuting the teaching of Pelagius, who taught that man in his natural state had full ability to work out his own salvation, that Adam's fall had but little effect on the race except that it set a bad example which is perpetuated, that Christ's life is of value to men mainly by way of example, that in His death Christ was little more than the first Christian martyr, and that we are not under any special providence of God. Against these views Augustine developed the very opposite. He taught that the whole race fell in Adam, that all men by nature are depraved and spiritually dead, that the will is free to sin but not free to do good toward God, that Christ suffered vicariously for His people, that God elects whom He will irrespective of their merits, and that saving grace is efficaciously applied to the elect by the Holy Spirit. He thus became the first true interpreter of Paul and was successful in securing the acceptance of his doctrine by the Church.

Following Augustine there was retrogression rather than progress. Clouds of ignorance blinded the people. The Church became more and more ritualistic and salvation was thought to be through the external Church. The system of merit grew until it reached its climax in the "indulgences." The papacy came to exert great power, political as well as ecclesiastical, and throughout Catholic Europe the state of morals came to be almost intolerable. Even the priesthood became desperately corrupt and in the whole catalogue of human sins and vices none are more corrupt or more offensive than those which soiled the lives of such popes as John XXIII and Alexander VI.

From the time of Augustine until the time of the Reformation very little emphasis was placed on the doctrine of Predestination. We shall mention only two names from this period: Gottschalk, who was imprisoned and condemned for teaching Predestination; and Wycliffe, "The Morning Star of the Reformation," who lived in England. Wycliffe was a reformer of the Calvinistic type, proclaiming the absolute sovereignty of God and the Foreordination of all things. His system of belief was very similar to that which was later taught by Luther and Calvin. The Waldensians also might be mentioned for they were in a sense "Calvinists" before the Reformation, one of their tenets being that of Predestination.

## **2. THE REFORMATION**

The Reformation was essentially a revival of Augustinianism and through it evangelical Christianity again came into its own. It is to be remembered that Luther, the first leader in the Reformation, was an Augustinian monk and that it was from this rigorous theology that he formulated his great principle of justification by faith alone. Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and all the other outstanding reformers of that period were thorough-going predestinarians. In his work, "The Bondage of the Will," Luther stated the doctrine as emphatically and in a form quite as extreme as can be found among any of the reformed theologians. Melancthon in his earlier writings designated the principle of Predestination as the fundamental principle of Christianity. He later modified this position, however, and brought in a kind of "synergism" in which God and man were supposed to co-operate in the process of salvation. The position taken by the early Lutheran Church was gradually modified. Later Lutherans let go the doctrine altogether, denounced it in its Calvinistic form, and came to hold a doctrine of universal grace and universal atonement, which doctrine has since become the accepted doctrine of the Lutheran Church. In regard to this doctrine Luther's position in the Lutheran Church is similar to that of Augustine in the Roman Catholic Church, that is, he is a heretic of such unimpeachable authority that he is more admired than censured.

To a great extent Calvin built upon the foundation which Luther laid. His clearer insight into the basic principles of the Reformation enabled him to work them out more fully and to apply them more broadly. And it may be further pointed out that Luther stressed salvation by faith and that his fundamental principle was more or less subjective and anthropological, while Calvin stressed the principle of the sovereignty of God, and developed a principle which was more objective and theological. Lutheranism was more the religion of a man who after a long and painful search had found salvation and who was content simply to bask in the sunshine of God's presence, while Calvinism, not content to stop there, pressed on to ask how and why God had saved man.

"The Lutheran congregations," says Froude, "were but half emancipated from superstition, and shrank from pressing the struggle to extremes; and half measures meant half-heartedness, convictions which were half convictions, and truth with an alloy of falsehood. Half measures, however, could not quench the bonfires of Philip of Spain or raise men in France or Scotland who would meet crest to crest the princes of the house of Lorraine. The Reformers required a position more sharply defined and a sterner leader, and that leader they found in John Calvin . . . For hard times hard men are needed, and intellects which can pierce to the roots where truth and lies part company. It fares ill with the soldiers of religion when 'the accursed thing' is in the camp. And this is to be said of Calvin, that so far as the state of knowledge permitted, no eye could have detected more keenly the unsound spots in the creed of the Church, nor was there a Reformer in Europe so resolute to exercise, tear out and destroy what was distinctly seen to be false so resolute to establish what was true in its place, and make truth, to the last fibre of it, the rule of practical life." [*Calvinism*, p. 42.]

This is the testimony of the famous historian from Oxford University. Froude's writings make it plain that he had no particular love for Calvinism; and in fact he is often called a critic of Calvinism. These words just quoted simply express the impartial conclusions of a great scholar who looks at the system and the man whose name it bears from the vantage ground of learned investigation.

In another connection Froude says: "The Calvinists have been called intolerant. Intolerance of an enemy who is trying to kill you seems to me a pardonable state of mind . . . The Catholics chose to add to their already incredible creed a fresh article, that they were entitled to hang and burn those who differed from them; and in this quarrel the Calvinists, Bible in hand, appealed to the God of battles. They grew harsher, fiercer, if you please, more fanatical. It was extremely natural that they should. They dwelt, as pious men are apt to dwell in suffering and sorrow, on the all-disposing power of Providence. Their burden grew lighter as they considered that God had so determined that they must bear it. But they attracted to their ranks almost every man in Western Europe that 'hated a lie.' They were crushed down, but they rose again. They were splintered and torn, but no power could bend or melt them. They abhorred as no body of men ever more abhorred all conscious mendacity, all impurity, all moral wrong of every kind so far as they could recognize it. Whatever exists at this moment in England and Scotland of conscious fear of doing evil is the remnant of the convictions which were branded by the Calvinists into the people's hearts. Though they failed to destroy Romanism, though it survives and may survive long as an opinion, they drew its fangs; they forced it to abandon that detestable principle, that it was entitled to murder those who dissented from it. Nay, it may be said that by having shamed Romanism out of its practical corruption the Calvinists enabled it to revive." [*Calvinism*, p. 44.]

At the time of the Reformation the Lutheran Church did not make such a complete

break with the Catholic Church as did the Reformed. In fact some Lutherans point out with pride that Lutheranism was a "moderate Reformation." While all protestants appealed to the Bible as a final authority, the tendency in Lutheranism was to keep as much of the old system as did not have to be thrown out, while the tendency in the Reformed Church was to throw out all that did not have to be kept. And in regard to the relationship which existed between the Church and the State, the Lutherans were content to allow the local princes great influence in the Church or even to allow them to determine the religion within their bounds a tendency leading toward the establishment of a State Church while the Reformed soon came to demand complete separation between Church and State.

As stated before, the Reformation was essentially a revival of Augustinianism. The early Lutheran and Reformed Churches held the same views in regard to Original Sin, Election, Efficacious Grace, Perseverance, etc. This, then, was the true Protestantism. "The principle of Absolute Predestination," says Hastie, "was the very Hercules-might of the young Reformation, by which no less in Germany than elsewhere, it strangled the serpents of superstition and idolatry; and when it lost its energy in its first home, it still continued to be the very marrow and backbone of the faith in the Reformed Church, and the power that carried it victoriously through all its struggles and trials." [*History of the Reformation*, p. 224.] "It is a fact that speaks volumes for Calvinism," says Rice, "that the most glorious revolution recorded in the history of the Church and of the world, since the days of the Apostles, was effected by the blessings of God upon its doctrines." [*God Sovereign and Man Free*, p. 14.] Needless to say, Arminianism as a system was unknown in Reformation times; and not until 1784, some 260 years later, was it championed by an organized church. As in the fifth century there had been two contending systems, known as Augustinianism and Pelagianism, with the later rise of the compromised system of Semi-Pelagianism, so at the Reformation there were two systems, Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, with the later rise of Arminianism, or what we might call Semi-Protestantism. In each case there were two strongly opposite systems with the subsequent rise of a compromised system.

### **3. CALVINISM IN ENGLAND**

A glance at English history readily shows us that it was Calvinism which made Protestantism triumphant in that land. Many of the leading Protestants who fled to Geneva during the reign of Queen Mary afterward obtained high positions in the Church under Queen Elizabeth. Among them were the translators of the Geneva version of the Bible, which owes much to Calvin and Beza, and which continued to be the most popular English version till the middle of the seventeenth century when it was superseded by the King James version. The influence of Calvin is shown in the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, especially in Article XVII which states the doctrine of Predestination. Cunningham has shown that all of the great theologians of the Established Church during the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI and



Elizabeth were thorough-going predestinarians and that the Arminianism of Laud and his successors was a deviation from that original position.

If we search for the true heroes of England, we shall find them in that noble body of English Calvinists whose insistence upon a purer form of worship and a purer life won for them the nickname, "Puritans," to whom Macaulay refers as "perhaps the most remarkable body of men which the world has ever produced." "That the English people became Protestant," says Bancroft, "is due to the Puritans." Smith tells us: "The significance of this fact is beyond computation. English Protestantism, with its open Bible, its spiritual and intellectual freedom, meant the Protestantism not only of the American colonies, but of the virile and multiplying race which for three centuries has been carrying the Anglo-Saxon language, religion, and institutions into all the world. [*The Creed of Presbyterians*, p. 72.]

Cromwell, the great Calvinistic leader and commoner, planted himself upon the solid rock of Calvinism and called to himself soldiers who had planted themselves upon that same rock. The result was an army which for purity and heroism surpassed anything the world had ever seen. "It never found," says Macaulay, "either in the British Isles or on the Continent, an enemy who could stand its onset. In England, Scotland, Ireland, Flanders, the Puritan warriors, often surrounded by difficulties, sometimes contending against threefold odds, not only never failed to conquer, but never failed to destroy and break in pieces whatever force was opposed to them. They at length came to regard the day of battle as a day of certain triumph, and marched against the most renowned battalions of Europe with disdainful confidence. Even the banished Cavaliers felt an emotion of national pride when they saw a brigade of their countrymen, outnumbered by foes and abandoned by friends, drive before it in headlong rout the finest infantry of Spain, and force a passage into a counterscarp which had just been pronounced impregnable by the ablest of the marshals of France." And again, "That which chiefly distinguished the army of Cromwell from other armies, was the austere morality and the fear of God which pervaded the ranks. It is acknowledged by the most zealous Royalists that, in that singular camp, no oath was heard, no drunkenness or gambling was seen, and that, during the long dominion of soldiery, the property of the peaceable citizens and the honor of woman were held sacred. No servant girl complained of the rough gallantry of the redcoats. Not an ounce of plate was taken from the shops of the goldsmiths" [Macaulay, *History of England*, I., p. 119.]

Prof. John Fiske, who has been ranked as one of the two greatest American historians, says, "It is not too much to say that in the seventeenth century the entire political future of mankind was staked upon the questions that were at issue in England. Had it not been for the Puritans, political liberty would probably have disappeared from the world. If ever there were men who laid down their lives in the cause of all mankind, it was those grim old Ironsides, whose watch-words were texts of Holy Writ, whose

battle-cries were hymns of praise." [*The Beginnings of New England*, pp. 37, 51.]

On three different occasions Cromwell was offered, and was urged to accept, the Crown of England, but each time he refused. Doctrinally we find that the Puritans were the literal and lineal descendants of John Calvin; and they and they alone kept alive the precious spark of English liberty. In view of these facts no one can rashly deny the justice of Fiske's conclusion that "It would be hard to over-rate the debt which mankind owes to John Calvin."

McFetridge in his splendid little book, "Calvinism in History," says, "If we ask again, Who brought the final great deliverance to English liberty? we are answered by history, The Illustrious Calvinist, William, Prince of Orange, who, as Macaulay says, found in the strong and sharp logic of the Geneva school something that suited his intellect and his temper; the keystone of whose religion was the doctrine of Predestination; and who, with his keen logical vision, declared that if he were to abandon the doctrine of Predestination he must abandon with it all his belief in a superintending Providence, and must become a mere Epicurean. And he was right, for Predestination and an overruling Providence are one and the same thing. If we accept the one, we are in consistency bound to accept the other," (P. 52).

#### **4. CALVINISM IN SCOTLAND**

The best way to discover the practical fruits of a system of religion is to examine a people or a country in which for generations that system has held undisputed sway. In making such a test of Roman Catholicism we turn to some country like Spain, Italy, Colombia, or Mexico. There, in the religious and political life of the people, we see the effects of the system. Applying the same test to Calvinism we are able to point to one country in which Calvinism has long been practically the only religion, and that country is Scotland. McFetridge tells us that before Calvinism reached Scotland, "gross darkness covered the land and brooded like an eternal nightmare upon all the faculties of the people." [*Calvinism in History*, p. 124.] "When Calvinism reached the Scotch people," says Smith, "they were vassals of the Romish church, priest-ridden, ignorant, wretched, degraded in body, mind, and morals. Buckle describes them as 'filthy in their persons and in their homes,' 'poor and miserable,' 'excessively ignorant and exceedingly superstitious,' 'with superstition ingrained into their characters.' Marvelous was the transformation when the great doctrines learned by Knox from the Bible in Scotland and more thoroughly at Geneva while sitting at the feet of Calvin, flashed in upon their minds. It was like the sun arising at midnight . . . Knox made Calvinism the religion of Scotland, and Calvinism made Scotland the moral standard for the world. It is certainly a significant fact that in that country where there is the most of Calvinism there should be the least of crime; that of all the people of the world today that nation which is confessedly the most moral is also the most thoroughly Calvinistic; that in that land where Calvinism has had supremest sway

individual and national morality has reached its loftiest level." [*The Creed of Presbyterians*, pp. 98, 99.] Says Carlyle, "This that Knox did for his nation we may really call a resurrection as from death." "John Knox," says Froude, "was the one man without whom Scotland as the modern world has known it, would have had no existence."

In a very real sense the Presbyterian Church of Scotland is the daughter of the Reformed Church of Geneva. The Reformation in Scotland, though coming some time later, was far more consistent and radical than in England, and it resulted in the establishment of a Calvinistic Presbyterianism in which Christ alone was recognized as the head of the Church.

It is, of course, an easy matter to pick out the one man who in the hands of Providence was the principal instrument in the reformation of Scotland. That man was John Knox. It was he who planted the germs of religious and civil liberty and who revolutionized society. To him the Scotch owe their national existence. "Knox was the greatest of Scotsmen, as Luther the greatest of Germans," says Philip Schaff. "The hero of the Scotch Reformation," says Schaff, "though four years older than Calvin, sat humbly at his feet and became more Calvinistic than Calvin. John Knox spent the five years of his exile (1554-1559), during the reign of Bloody Mary, mostly at Geneva, and found there 'the most perfect school of Christ that ever was since the days of the Apostles.' After that model he led the Scotch people, with dauntless courage and energy, from mediaeval semi-barbarism into the light of modern civilization, and acquired a name which, next to those of Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, is the greatest in the history of the Protestant Reformation." [*The Swiss Reformation*, II., p. 818.]

"No grander figure," says Froude, "can be found in the entire history of the Reformation in this island than that of Knox. . . . The time has come when English history may do justice to one but for whom the Reformation would have been overthrown among ourselves; for the spirit which Knox created saved Scotland; and if Scotland had been Catholic again, neither the wisdom of Elizabeth's ministers, nor the teaching of her bishops, nor her own chicaneries, would have preserved England from revolution. He was the voice which taught the peasant of the Lothians that he was a free man, the equal in the sight of God with the proudest peer or prelate that had trampled on his forefathers. He was the antagonist whom Mary Stuart could not soften nor Maitland deceive; he it was that raised the poor commons of his country into a stern and rugged people, who might be hard, narrow, superstitious and fanatical, but who nevertheless, were men whom neither king, noble nor priest could force again to submit to tyranny. And his reward has been the ingratitude of those who should most have done honor to his memory." [*Hist. Eng.* X. 437.]

The early Scotch reformed theology was based on the predestinarian principle. Knox had gotten his theology directly from Calvin in Geneva, and his chief theological work

was his treatise on Predestination, which was a keen, forcible and unflinching polemic against loose views which were becoming widespread in England and elsewhere. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries topics such as predestination, election, reprobation, the extent and value of the atonement, the perseverance of the saints, were the absorbing interest of the Scotch peasantry. From that land those doctrines spread southward into parts of England and Ireland and across the Atlantic to the west. In a very real sense Scotland can be called the "Mother Country of modern Presbyterianism."

## 5. CALVINISM IN FRANCE

France, too, at that time, was all aglow with the free, bounding, restless spirit of Calvinism. "In France the Calvinists were called Huguenots. The character of the Huguenots the world knows. Their moral purity and heroism, whether persecuted at home or exiled abroad, has been the wonder of both friend and foe." [Smith, *The Creed of Presbyterians*, p. 83.] "Their history," says the Encyclopaedia Britannica, "is a standing marvel, illustrating the abiding power of strong religious conviction. The account of their endurance is amongst the most remarkable and heroic records of religious history." The Huguenots made up the industrious artisan class of France and to be "honest as a Huguenot" became a proverb, denoting the highest degree of integrity.

On St. Bartholomew's Day, Sunday, August 24, 1572, a great many Protestants were treacherously murdered in Paris, and for days thereafter the shocking scenes were repeated in different parts of France. The total number of those who lost their lives in the St. Bartholomew massacre has been variously estimated at from 10,000 to 50,000. Schaff estimates it at 30,000. These furious persecutions caused hundreds of thousands of the French Protestants to flee to Holland, Germany, England, and America. The loss to France was irreparable. Macaulay the English historian writes as follows of those who settled in England: "The humblest of the refugees were intellectually and morally above the average of the common people of any kingdom in Europe." The great historian Lecky, who himself was a cold-blooded rationalist, wrote: "The destruction of the Huguenots by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was the destruction of the most solid, the most modest, the most virtuous, the most generally enlightened element in the French nation, and it prepared the way for the inevitable degradation of the national character, and the last serious bulwark was removed that might have broken the force of that torrent of skepticism and vice which, a century later, laid prostrate, in merited ruin, both the altar and the throne." [*Eng. Hist. Eighteenth Century*, I., pp. 264, 265.]

"If you have read their history," says Warburton, "you must know how cruel and unjust were the persecutions instigated against them. The best blood of France deluged the battlefield, the brightest genius of France was suffered to lie neglected

and starving in prison, and the noblest characters which France ever possessed were hunted like wild beasts of the forest, and slain with as little pity." And again, "In every respect they stood immeasurably superior to all the rest of their fellow-countrymen. The strict sobriety of their lives, the purity of their moral actions, their industrious habits, and their entire separation from the foul sensuality which corrupted the whole of the national life of France at this period, were always effectual means of betraying the principles which they held, and were so regarded by their enemies." [*Calvinism*, pp. 84, 92.]

The debauchery of the kings had descended through the aristocracy to the common people; religion had become a mass of corruption, consistent only with its cruelty; the monasteries had become breeding places of iniquity; celibacy had proved to be a foul fountain of unchastity and uncleanness; immorality, licentiousness, despotism and extortion in State and Church were indescribable; the forgiveness of sins could be purchased for money, and a shameful traffic in indulgences was carried on under the pope's sanction; some of the popes were monsters of iniquity; ignorance was appalling; education was confined to the clergy and the nobles; many even of the priests were unable to read or write; and society in general had fallen to pieces.

This is a one-sided, but not an exaggerated, description. It is true as far as it goes, and needs only to be supplemented by the brighter side, which was that many honest Roman Catholics were earnestly working for reform from within the Church. The Church, however, was in an irreformable condition. Any change, if it was to come at all, had to come from without. Either there would be no reformation or it would be in opposition to Rome.

But gradually Protestant ideas were filtering into France from Germany. Calvin began his work in Paris and was soon recognized as one of the leaders of the new movement in France. His zeal aroused the opposition of Church authorities and it became necessary for him to flee for his life. And although Calvin never returned to France after his settlement in Geneva, he remained the leader of the French Reformation and was consulted at every step. He gave the Huguenots their creed and form of government. Throughout the following period it was, according to the unanimous testimony of history, the system of faith which we call Calvinism that inspired the French Protestants in their struggle with the papacy and its royal supporters.

What the Puritan was in England, the Covenanter was in Scotland, and the Huguenot was in France. That Calvinism developed the same type of men in each of these several countries is a most remarkable proof of its power in the formation of character.

So rapidly did Calvinism spread throughout France that Fisher in his *History of the Reformation* tells us that in 1561 the Calvinists numbered one-fourth of the entire

population. McFetridge places the number even higher. "In less than half a century," says he, "this so-called harsh system of belief had penetrated every part of the land, and had gained to its standards almost one-half of the population and almost every great mind in the nation. So numerous and powerful had its adherents become that for a time it appeared as if the entire nation would be swept over to their views." [*Calvinism in History*, p. 144.] Smiles, in his "Huguenots in France," writes: "It is curious to speculate on the influence which the religion of Calvin, himself a Frenchman, might have exercised on the history of France, as well as on the individual character of the Frenchman, had the balance of forces carried the nation bodily over to Protestantism, as was very nearly the case, toward the end of the sixteenth century," (p. 100). Certainly the history of the nation would have been very different from that which it has been.

## **6. CALVINISM IN HOLLAND**

In the struggle which freed the Netherlands from the dominating power of the Papacy and from the cruel yoke of Spain we have another glorious chapter in the history of Calvinism and humanity. The tortures of the Inquisition were applied here as in few other places. The Duke of Alva boasted that within the short space of five years he had delivered 18,600 heretics to the executioner.

"The scaffold," says Motley, "had its daily victims, but did not make a single convert. . . . There were men who dared and suffered as much as men can dare and suffer in this world, and for the noblest cause that can inspire humanity." He pictures to us "the heroism with which men took each other by the hand and walked into the flames, or with which women sang a song of triumph while the grave-digger was shoveling the earth upon their living faces." And in another place he says: "The number of Netherlanders who were burned, strangled, beheaded, or buried alive, in obedience to the edicts of Charles V., and for the offence of reading the Scriptures, of looking askance at a graven image, or ridiculing the actual presence of the body and blood of Christ in a wafer, have been placed as high as one hundred thousand by distinguished authorities, and have never been put at a lower mark than fifty thousand." [*Rise of the Dutch Republic*, I., p. 114.] During that memorable struggle of eighty years, more Protestants were put to death for their conscientious belief by the Spaniards than Christians suffered martyrdom under the Roman Emperors in the first three centuries. Certainly in Holland history crowns Calvinism as the creed of martyrs, saints and heroes.

For nearly three generations Spain, the strongest nation in Europe at that time, labored to stamp out Protestantism and political liberty in these Calvinistic Netherlands, but failed. Because they sought to worship God according to the dictates of their conscience and not under the galling chains of a corrupt priesthood their country was invaded and the people were subjected to the cruelest tortures the

Spaniards could invent. And if it be asked who effected the deliverance, the answer is, it was the Calvinistic Prince of Orange, known in history as William the Silent, together with those who held the same creed. Says Dr. Abraham Kuyper, "If the power of Satan at that time had not been broken by the heroism of the Calvinistic spirit, the history of the Netherlands, of Europe and of the world would have been as painfully sad and dark as now, thanks to Calvinism, it is bright and inspiring." [*Lectures on Calvinism*, p. 44.]

If the spirit of Calvinism had not arisen in Western Europe following the outbreak of the Reformation, the spirit of half-heartedness would have gained the day in England, Scotland and Holland. Protestantism in these countries could not have maintained itself; and, through the compromising measures of a Romanized Protestantism, Germany would in all probability have been again brought under the sway of the Roman Catholic Church. Had Protestantism failed in any one of these countries it is probable that the result would have been fatal in the others also, so intimately were their fortunes bound together. In a very real sense the future destiny of nations was dependent on the outcome of that struggle in the Netherlands. Had Spain been victorious in the Netherlands, it is probable that the Catholic Church would have been so strengthened that it would have subdued Protestantism in England also. And, even as things were, it looked for a time as though England would be turned back to Romanism. In that case the development of America would automatically have been prevented and in all probability the whole American continent would have remained under the control of Spain.

Let us remember further that practically all of the martyrs in these various countries were Calvinists, the Lutherans and Arminians being only a handful in comparison. As Professor Fruin justly remarks, "In Switzerland, in France, in the Netherlands, in Scotland and in England, and wherever Protestantism has had to establish itself at the point of the sword, it was Calvinism that gained the day." However the fact is to be explained it is true that the Calvinists were the only fighting Protestants.

There is also one other service which Holland has rendered and which we must not overlook. The Pilgrims, after being driven out of England by religious persecutions and before their coming to America, went to Holland and there came into contact with a religious life which from the Calvinistic point of view was beneficial in the extreme. Their most important leaders were Clyfton, Robinson, and Brewster, three Cambridge University men, who form as noble and heroic trio as can be found in the history of any nation. They were staunch Calvinists holding all the fundamental views that the Reformer of Geneva had propounded. The American historian Bancroft is right when he simply calls the Pilgrim-fathers, "men of the same faith with Calvin."

J. C. Monsma, in his book, "What Calvinism Has Done For America," gives us the following summary of their life in Holland: "When the Pilgrims left Amsterdam for

Leyden, the Rev. Clyfton, their chief leader, decided to stay where he was, and so the Rev. John Robinson, Clyfton's chief assistant hitherto," was elected leader, or pastor by the people. Robinson was a convinced Calvinist and opposed the teachings of Arminius whenever opportunity was afforded him. "We have the indisputable testimony of Edward Winslow, that Robinson, at the time when Arminianism was fast gaining ground in Holland, was asked by Polyander, Festus Homilus, and other Dutch theologians, to take part in the disputes with Episcopius, the new leader of the Arminians, which were daily held in the academy at Leyden. Robinson complied with their request and was soon looked upon as one of the greatest of Gomarian theologians. In 1624 the Pilgrim pastor wrote a masterful treatise, entitled, "A Defense of the Doctrine Propounded by the Synod of Dort, etc.' As the Synod of Dordrecht, of international fame was characterized by a strict Calvinism in all its decisions, no more need be said of Robinson's religious tendencies.

"The Pilgrims were perfectly at one with the Reformed (Calvinistic) churches in the Netherlands and elsewhere. In his Apology, published in 1619, one year before the Pilgrims left Holland, Robinson wrote in a most solemn way, 'We do profess before God and men that such is our accord, in case of religion, with the Dutch Reformed Churches, as that we are ready to subscribe to all and every article of faith in the same Church, as they are laid down in the Harmony of Confessions of Faith, published in that name.'" (p. 72, 73.)

## **7. CALVINISM IN AMERICA**

When we come to study the influence of Calvinism as a political force in the history of the United States we come to one of the brightest pages of all Calvinistic history. Calvinism came to America in the Mayflower, and Bancroft, the greatest of American historians, pronounces the Pilgrim Fathers "Calvinists in their faith according to the straightest system." [*Hist. U. S.*, I., p. 463.] John Endicott, the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony; John Winthrop, the second governor of that Colony; Thomas Hooker, the founder of Connecticut; John Davenport, the founder of the New Haven Colony; and Roger Williams, the founder of the Rhode Island Colony, were all Calvinists. William Penn was a disciple of the Huguenots. It is estimated that of the 3,000,000 Americans at the time of the American Revolution, 900,000 were of Scotch or Scotch-Irish origin, 600,000 were Puritan English, and 400,000 were German or Dutch Reformed. In addition to this the Episcopalians had a Calvinistic confession in their Thirty-nine Articles; and many French Huguenots also had come to this western world. Thus we see that about two-thirds of the colonial population had been trained in the school of Calvin. Never in the world's history had a nation been founded by such people as these. Furthermore these people came to America not primarily for commercial gain or advantage, but because of deep religious convictions. It seems that the religious persecutions in various European countries had been providentially used to select out the most progressive and enlightened people for the colonization of



America. At any rate it is quite generally admitted that the English, Scotch, Germans, and Dutch have been the most masterful people of Europe. Let it be especially remembered that the Puritans, who formed the great bulk of the settlers in New England, brought with them a Calvinistic Protestantism, that they were truly devoted to the doctrines of the great Reformers, that they had an aversion for formalism and oppression whether in the Church or in the State, and that in New England Calvinism remained the ruling theology throughout the entire Colonial period.

With this background we shall not be surprised to find that the Presbyterians took a very prominent part in the American Revolution. Our own historian Bancroft says: "The Revolution of 1776, so far as it was affected by religion, was a Presbyterian measure. It was the natural outgrowth of the principles which the Presbyterianism of the Old World planted in her sons, the English Puritans, the Scotch Covenanters, the French Huguenots, the Dutch Calvinists, and the Presbyterians of Ulster." So intense, universal, and aggressive were the Presbyterians in their zeal for liberty that the war was spoken of in England as "The Presbyterian Rebellion." An ardent colonial supporter of King George III wrote home: "I fix all the blame for these extraordinary proceedings upon the Presbyterians. They have been the chief and principal instruments in all these flaming measures. They always do and ever will act against government from that restless and turbulent anti-monarchical spirit which has always distinguished them everywhere." [*Presbyterians and the Revolution*, p. 49.] When the news of "these extraordinary proceedings" reached England, Prime Minister Horace Walpole said in Parliament, "Cousin America has run off with a Presbyterian parson."

"The Rev. Dr. John Witherspoon, a native of Scotland and a lineal descendant of John Knox, was, in the revolutionary time, president of Princeton College, and was the only clerical member of the Revolutionary Congress. He, as might be expected, earnestly and eloquently supported every measure adopted by Congress for securing independence. When the important moment came for signing the Declaration, and some of the members were hesitating to affix their names to it, he delivered an eloquent appeal, in which he said: "That noble instrument upon your table, which insures immortality to its author, should be subscribed this very morning by every pen in the house. He that will not respond to its accents, and strain every nerve to carry into effect its provisions, is unworthy the name of a freeman. For my own part, of property I have some, of reputation more. That reputation is staked, that property is pledged, on the issue of this contest. And although these gray hairs must soon descend into the sepulchre, I would infinitely rather they should descend thither by the hand of the public executioner than desert at this crisis the sacred cause of my country." [*Scotch and Irish Seeds in American Soil*, p. 334.]

History is eloquent in declaring that American democracy was born of Christianity and that that Christianity was Calvinism. The great Revolutionary conflict which resulted in the formation of the American nation, was carried out mainly by Calvinists, many

of whom had been trained in the rigidly Presbyterian College at Princeton, and this nation is their gift to all liberty loving people.

"The Principles of the Republic of the United States," says Schaff, "can be traced through the intervening link of Puritanism to Calvinism, which, with all its theological rigor, has been the chief educator of manly character and promoter of constitutional freedom in modern times." [*Creeds of Christendom*, p. 219.]

The testimony of Emilio Castelar, the famous Spanish statesman, orator and scholar, is interesting and valuable. Castelar had been professor of Philosophy in the University of Madrid before he entered politics, and he was made president of the republic which was set up by the Liberals in 1873. As a Roman Catholic he hated Calvin and Calvinism. Says he: "It was necessary for the republican movement that there should come a morality more austere than Luther's, the morality of Calvin, and a Church more democratic than the German, the Church of Geneva. The Anglo-Saxon democracy has for its lineage a book of a primitive society the Bible. It is the product of a severe theology learned by the few Christian fugitives in the gloomy cities of Holland and Switzerland, where the morose shade of Calvin still wanders . . . And it remains serenely in its grandeur, forming the most dignified, most moral and most enlightened portion of the human race." [*Harper's Monthly*, June and July, 1872.] We feel like asking Castelar how a fountain so bitter could send forth such sweet waters.

Says Motley: "In England the seeds of liberty, wrapped up in Calvinism and hoarded through many trying years, were at last destined to float over land and sea, and to bear the largest harvests of temperate freedom for great commonwealths that were still unborn." [*The United Netherlands*, III., p. 121.] "The Calvinists founded the commonwealths of England, of Holland, and America." And again, "To Calvinists more than to any other class of men, the political liberties of England, Holland and America are due." [*The United Netherlands*, IV., pp. 548, 547.]

The testimony of another famous historian, the Frenchman Taine, who himself held no religious faith, is worthy of consideration. Concerning the Calvinists he said: "These men are the true heroes of England. They founded England, in spite of the corruption of the Stuarts, by the exercise of duty, by the practice of justice, by obstinate toil, by vindication of right, by resistance to oppression, by the conquest of liberty, by the repression of vice. They founded Scotland; they founded the United States; at this day they are, by their descendants, founding Australia and colonizing the world." [*English Literature*, II., p. 472.]

In his book, "The Creed of Presbyterians," E. W. Smith asks concerning the American colonists, "Where learned they those immortal principles of the rights of man, of human liberty, equality and self-government, on which they based their Republic, and which form today the distinctive glory of our American civilization? In the school of

Calvin they learned them. There the modern world learned them. So history teaches," (p. 121).

We shall now pass on to consider the influence which the Presbyterian Church as a Church exerted in the formation of the Republic. "The Presbyterian Church," said Dr. W. H. Roberts in an address before the General Assembly, "was for three-quarters of a century the sole representative upon this continent of republican government as now organized in the nation." And then he continues: "From 1706 to the opening of the revolutionary struggle the only body in existence which stood for our present national political organization was the General Synod of the American Presbyterian Church. It alone among ecclesiastical and political colonial organizations exercised authority, derived from the colonists themselves, over bodies of Americans scattered through all the colonies from New England to Georgia. The colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it is to be remembered, while all dependent upon Great Britain, were independent of each other. Such a body as the Continental Congress did not exist until 1774. The religious condition of the country was similar to the political. The Congregational Churches of New England had no connection with each other, and had no power apart from the civil government. The Episcopal Church was without organization in the colonies, was dependent for support and a ministry on the Established Church of England, and was filled with an intense loyalty to the British monarchy. The Reformed Dutch Church did not become an efficient and independent organization until 1771, and the German Reformed Church did not attain to that condition until 1793. The Baptist Churches were separate organizations, the Methodists were practically unknown, and the Quakers were non-combatants."

Delegates met every year in the General Synod, and as Dr. Roberts tells us, the Church became "a bond of union and correspondence between large elements in the population of the divided colonies." "Is it any wonder," he continues, "that under its fostering influence the sentiments of true liberty, as well as the tenets of a sound gospel, were preached throughout the territory from Long Island to South Carolina, and that above all a feeling of unity between the Colonies began slowly but surely to assert itself? Too much emphasis cannot be laid, in connection with the origin of the nation, upon the influence of that ecclesiastical republic, which from 1706 to 1774 was the only representative on this continent of fully developed federal republican institutions. The United States of America owes much to that oldest of American Republics, the Presbyterian Church." [Address on, "The Westminster Standards and the Formation of the American Republic".]

It is, of course, not claimed that the Presbyterian Church was the only source from which sprang the principles upon which this republic is founded, but it is claimed that the principles found in the Westminster Standards were the chief basis for the republic, and that "The Presbyterian Church taught, practiced, and maintained in fulness, first in this land that form of government in accordance with which the

Republic has been organized." (Roberts).

The opening of the Revolutionary struggle found the Presbyterian ministers and churches lined up solidly on the side of the colonists, and Bancroft accredits them with having made the first bold move toward independence. [*Hist. U. S.*, X., p. 77.] The synod which assembled in Philadelphia in 1775 was the first religious body to declare openly and publicly for a separation from England. It urged the people under its jurisdiction to leave nothing undone that would promote the end in view, and called upon them to pray for the Congress which was then in session.

The Episcopalian Church was then still united with the Church of England, and it opposed the Revolution. A considerable number of individuals within that Church, however, labored earnestly for independence and gave of their wealth and influence to secure it. It is to be remembered also that the Commander-in-Chief of the American armies, "the father of our country," was a member of her household. Washington himself attended, and ordered all of his men to attend the services of his chaplains, who were clergymen from the various churches. He gave forty thousand dollars to establish a Presbyterian College in his native state, which took his name in honor of the gift and became Washington College.

N. S. McFetridge has thrown light upon another major development of the Revolutionary period. For the sake of accuracy and completeness we shall take the privilege of quoting him rather extensively. "Another important factor in the independent movement," says he, "was what is known as the 'Mecklenburg Declaration,' proclaimed by the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians of North Carolina, May 20, 1775, more than a year before the Declaration (of Independence) of Congress. It was the fresh, hearty greeting of the Scotch-Irish to their struggling brethren in the North, and their bold challenge to the power of England. They had been keenly watching the progress of the contest between the colonies and the Crown, and when they heard of the address presented by the Congress to the King, declaring the colonies in actual rebellion, they deemed it time for patriots to speak. Accordingly, they called a representative body together in Charlotte, N. C., which by unanimous resolution declared the people free and independent, and that all laws and commissions from the king were henceforth null and void. In their Declaration were such resolutions as these: 'We do hereby dissolve the political bands which have connected us with the mother-country, and hereby absolve ourselves from all allegiance to the British crown. . . . 'We hereby declare ourselves a free and independent people; are, and of right ought to be, a sovereign and self-governing association, under control of no power other than that of our God and the general government of Congress; to the maintenance of which we solemnly pledge to each other our mutual cooperation and our lives, our fortunes and our most sacred honor.' . . . That assembly was composed of twenty-seven staunch Calvinists, just one-third of whom were ruling elders in the Presbyterian Church, including the president and secretary; and one was a

Presbyterian clergyman. The man who drew up that famous and important document was the secretary, Ephraim Brevard, a ruling elder of the Presbyterian Church and a graduate of Princeton College. Bancroft says of it that it was, 'in effect, a declaration as well as a complete system of government.' (U.S. Hist. VIII, 40). It was sent by special messenger to the Congress in Philadelphia, and was published in the Cape Fear Mercury, and was widely distributed throughout the land. Of course it was speedily transmitted to England, where it became the cause of intense excitement.

"The identity of sentiment and similarity of expression in this Declaration and the great Declaration written by Jefferson could not escape the eye of the historian; hence Tucker, in his Life of Jefferson, says: 'Everyone must be persuaded that one of these papers must have been borrowed from the other.' But it is certain that Brevard could not have 'borrowed' from Jefferson, for he wrote more than a year before Jefferson; hence Jefferson, according to his biographer, must have 'borrowed' from Brevard. But it was a happy plagiarism, for which the world will freely forgive him. In correcting his first draft of the Declaration it can be seen, in at least a few places, that Jefferson has erased the original words and inserted those which are first found in the Mecklenberg Declaration. No one can doubt that Jefferson had Brevard's resolutions before him when he was writing his immortal Declaration." [*Calvinism in History*, pp. 85-88.]

This striking similarity between the principles set forth in the Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church and those set forth in the Constitution of the United States has caused much comment. "When the fathers of our Republic sat down to frame a system of representative and popular government," says Dr. E. W. Smith, "their task was not so difficult as some have imagined. They had a model to work by." [*The Creed of Presbyterians*, p. 142.]

"If the average American citizen were asked, who was the founder of America, the true author of our great Republic, he might be puzzled to answer. We can imagine his amazement at hearing the answer given to this question by the famous German historian, Ranke, one of the profoundest scholars of modern times. Says Ranke, 'John Calvin was the virtual founder of America.'" [Id. p. 119.]

D'Aubigne, whose history of the Reformation is a classic, writes: "Calvin was the founder of the greatest of republics. The Pilgrims who left their country in the reign of James I, and landing on the barren soil of New England, founded populous and mighty colonies, were his sons, his direct and legitimate sons; and that American nation which we have seen growing so rapidly boasts as its father the humble Reformer on the shore of Lake Leman." [*Reformation in the Time of Calvin*, I., p. 5.]

Dr. E. W. Smith says, "These revolutionary principles of republican liberty and self-government, taught and embodied in the system of Calvin, were brought to America, and in this new land where they have borne so mighty a harvest were planted, by

whose hands? the hands of the Calvinists. The relation of Calvin and Calvinism to the founding of the free institutions of America, however strange in some ears the statement of Ranke may have sounded, is recognized and affirmed by historians of all lands and creeds." [*The Creed of Presbyterians*, p. 132.]

All this has been thoroughly understood and candidly acknowledged by such penetrating and philosophic historians as Bancroft, who far though he was from being Calvinistic in his own personal convictions, simply calls Calvin "the father of America," and adds: "He who will not honor the memory and respect the influence of Calvin knows but little of the origin of American liberty."

When we remember that two-thirds of the population at the time of the Revolution had been trained in the school of Calvin, and when we remember how unitedly and enthusiastically the Calvinists labored for the cause of independence, we readily see how true are the above testimonies.

There were practically no Methodists in America at the time of the Revolution; and, in fact, the Methodist Church was not officially organized as such in England until the year 1784, which was three years after the American Revolution closed. John Wesley, great and good man though he was, was a Tory and a believer in political non-resistance. He wrote against the American "rebellion," but accepted the providential result. McFetridge tells us: "The Methodists had hardly a foothold in the colonies when the war began. In 1773 they claimed about one hundred and sixty members. Their ministers were almost all, if not all, from England, and were staunch supporters of the Crown against American Independence. Hence, when the war broke out they were compelled to fly from the country. Their political views were naturally in accord with those of their great leader, John Wesley, who wielded all the power of his eloquence and influence against the independence of the colonies. (Bancroft, *Hist. U.S.*, Vol. VII, p. 261.) He did not foresee that independent America was to be the field on which his noble Church was to reap her largest harvests, and that in that Declaration which he so earnestly opposed lay the security of the liberties of his followers." [*Calvinism in History*, p. 74.]

In England and America the great struggles for civil and religious liberty were nursed in Calvinism, inspired by Calvinism, and carried out largely by men who were Calvinists. And because the majority of historians have never made a serious study of Calvinism they have never been able to give us a truthful and complete account of what it has done in these countries. Only the light of historical investigation is needed to show us how our forefathers believed in it and were controlled by it. We live in a day when the services of the Calvinists in the founding of this country have been largely forgotten, and one can hardly treat of this subject without appearing to be a mere eulogizer of Calvinism. We may well do honor to that Creed which has borne such sweet fruits and to which America owes so much.

## 8. CALVINISM AND REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

While religious and civil liberty have no organic connection, they nevertheless have a very strong affinity for each other; and where one is lacking the other will not long endure. History is eloquent in declaring that on a people's religion ever depends their freedom or their bondage. It is a matter of supreme importance what doctrines they believe, what principles they adopt: for these must serve as the basis upon which the superstructure of their lives and their government rests. Calvinism was revolutionary. It taught the natural equality of men, and its essential tendency was to destroy all distinctions of rank and all claims to superiority which rested upon wealth or vested privilege. The liberty-loving soul of the Calvinist has made him a crusader against those artificial distinctions which raise some men above others.

Politically, Calvinism has been the chief source of modern republican government. Calvinism and republicanism are related to each other as cause and effect; and where a people are possessed of the former, the latter will soon be developed. Calvin himself held that the Church, under God, was a spiritual republic; and certainly he was a republican in theory. James I was well aware of the effects of Calvinism when he said: "Presbytery agreeth as well with the monarchy as God with the Devil." Bancroft speaks of "the political character of Calvinism, which with one consent and with instinctive judgment the monarchs of that day feared as republicanism." Another American historian, John Fiske, has written, "It would be hard to overrate the debt which mankind owes to Calvin. The spiritual father of Coligny, of William the Silent, and of Cromwell, must occupy a foremost rank among the champions of modern democracy ... The promulgation of this theology was one of the longest steps that mankind has ever taken toward personal freedom." [*Beginnings of New England*, p. 58.] Emilio Castelar, the leader of the Spanish Liberals, says that "Anglo-Saxon democracy is the product of a severe theology, learned in the cities of Holland and Switzerland." Buckle, in his *History of Civilization* says, "Calvinism is essentially democratic," (I, 669). And de Tocqueville, an able political writer, calls it "A democratic and republican religion." [*Democracy*, I., p. 384.]

The system not only imbued its converts with the spirit of liberty, but it gave them practical training in the rights and duties as freemen. Each congregation was left to elect its own officers and to conduct its own affairs. Fiske pronounces it, "one of the most effective schools that has ever existed for training men in local self-government." [*The Beginnings of New England*, p. 59.] Spiritual freedom is the source and strength of all other freedom, and it need cause no surprise when we are told that the principles which governed them in ecclesiastical affairs gave shape to their political views. Instinctively they preferred a representative government and stubbornly resisted all unjust rulers. After religious despotism is overthrown, civil despotism cannot long continue.

We may say that the spiritual republic which was founded by Calvin rests upon four basic principles. These have been summed up by an eminent English statesman and jurist, Sir James Stephen, as follows: "These principles were, firstly that the will of the people was the one legitimate source of the power of the rulers; secondly, that the power was most properly delegated by the people, to their rulers, by means of elections, in which every adult man might exercise the right of suffrage; thirdly, that in ecclesiastical government, the clergy and laity were entitled to an equal and co-ordinate authority; and fourthly that between the Church and State, no alliance, or mutual dependence, or other definite relation, necessarily or properly existed." [*Lectures on the History of France*, p. 415.]

The principle of the sovereignty of God when applied to the affairs of government proved to be very important. God as the supreme Ruler, was vested with sovereignty; and whatever sovereignty was found in man had been graciously granted to him. The scriptures were taken as the final authority, as containing eternal principles which were regulative for all ages and on all peoples. In the following words the Scriptures declared the State to be a divinely established institution: "Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God; and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment. For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldst thou have no fear of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise for the same: for he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing. Render to all their dues; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor," Romans 13:1-7.

No one type of government, however, whether democracy, republic, or monarchy, was thought to be divinely ordained for any certain age or people, although Calvinism showed a preference for the republican type. "Whatever the system of government," says Meeter, "be it monarchy or democracy or any other form, in each case the ruler (or rulers) was to act as God's representative, and to administer the affairs of government in accordance with God's law. The fundamental principle supplied at the same time the very highest incentive for the preservation of law and order among its citizens. Subjects were for God's sake to render obedience to the higher powers, whichever these might be. Hence Calvinism made for highly stabilized governments.

"On the other hand this very principle of the sovereignty of God operated as a mighty defense of the liberties of the subject citizens against tyrannical rulers. Whenever sovereigns ignored the Will of God, trampled upon the rights of the governed and



became tyrannical, it became the privilege and the duty of the subjects, in view of the higher responsibility of the supreme Sovereign, God, to refuse obedience and even, if necessary, to depose the tyrant, through the lesser authorities appointed by God for the defense of the rights of the governed." [*The Fundamental Principles of Calvinism*, H. H. Meeter, p. 92.]

The Calvinistic ideas concerning governments and rulers have been ably expressed by J. C. Monsma in the following lucid paragraph: "Governments are instituted by God through the instrumentality of the people. No kaiser or president has any power inherent in himself; whatever power he possesses, whatever sovereignty he exercises, is power and sovereignty derived from the great Source above. No might, but right, and right springing from the eternal Fountain of justice. For the Calvinist it is extremely easy to respect the laws and ordinances of the government. If the government were nothing but a group of men, bound to carry out the wishes of a popular majority, his freedom-loving soul would rebel. But now, to his mind, and according to his fixed belief, back of the government stands God, and ore Him he kneels in deepest reverence. Here also lies the fundamental reason for that profound and almost fanatical love of freedom, also the political freedom, which has always been a characteristic of the genuine Calvinist. The government is God's servant. That means that AS MEN all government officials stand on an equal footing with their subordinates; have no claim to superiority in any sense whatever For exactly the same reason the Calvinist gives preference to a republican form of government over any other type. In no other form of government does the sovereignty of God, the derivative character of government powers and the equality of men as men, find a clearer and more eloquent expression." [*What Calvinism Has Done for America*, p. 6.]

The theology of the Calvinist exalted one Sovereign and humbled all other sovereigns before His awful majesty. The divine right of kings and the infallible decrees of popes could not long endure amid a people who place sovereignty in God alone. But while this theology infinitely exalted God as the Almighty Ruler of heaven and earth and humbled all men before Him, it enhanced the dignity of the individual and taught him that all men as men were equal. The Calvinist feared God; and fearing God he feared nobody else. Knowing himself to have been chosen in the counsels of eternity and marked for the glories of heaven, he possessed something which dissipated the feeling of personal homage for men and which dulled the lustre of all earthly grandeur. If a proud aristocracy traced its lineage through generations of highborn ancestry, the Calvinists, with a loftier pride, invaded the invisible world, and from the book of life brought down the record of the noblest enfranchisement, decreed from eternity by the King of kings. By a higher than any earthly lineage they were heaven's noblemen because God's sons and priests, joint heirs with Christ, kings and priests unto God, by a divine anointing and consecration. Put the truth of the sovereignty of God into a man's mind and heart, and you put iron in his blood. The Reformed Faith has rendered a most valuable service in teaching the individual his rights.

In striking contrast with these democratic and republican tendencies which are found to be inherent in the Reformed Faith we find that Arminianism has a very pronounced aristocratic tendency. In the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches the elder votes in Presbytery or Synod or General Assembly on full equality with his pastor; but in Arminian churches the power is largely in the hands of the clergy, and the laymen have very little real authority. Episcopacy stresses rule by the hierarchy. Arminianism and Roman Catholicism (which is practically Arminian) thrive under a monarchy, but there Calvinism finds its life cramped. On the other hand Romanism especially does not thrive in a republic, but there Calvinism finds itself most at home. An aristocratic form of church government tends toward monarchy in civil affairs, while a republican form of church government tends toward democracy in civil affairs. Says McFetridge, "Arminianism is unfavorable to civil liberty, and Calvinism is unfavorable to despotism. The despotic rulers of former days were not slow to observe the correctness of these propositions, and, claiming the divine right of kings, feared Calvinism as republicanism itself." [*Calvinism in History*, p. 21.]

## **9. CALVINISM AND EDUCATION**

Again, history bears very clear testimony that Calvinism and education have been intimately associated. Wherever Calvinism has gone it has carried the school with it and has given a powerful impulse to popular education. It is a system which demands intellectual manhood. In fact, we may say that its very existence is tied up with the education of the people. Mental training is required to master the system and to trace out all that it involves. It makes the strongest possible appeal to the human reason and insists that man must love God not only with his whole heart but also with his whole mind. Calvin held that "a true faith must be an intelligent faith"; and experience has shown that piety without learning is in the long run about as dangerous as learning without piety. He saw clearly that the acceptance and diffusion of his scheme of doctrine was dependent not only upon the training of the men who were to expound it, but also upon the intelligence of the great masses of humanity who were to accept it. Calvin crowned his work in Geneva in the establishment of the Academy. Thousands of pilgrim pupils from Continental Europe and from the British Isles sat at his feet and then carried his doctrines into every corner of Christendom. Knox returned from Geneva fully convinced that the education of the masses was the strongest bulwark of Protestantism and the surest foundation of the State. "With Romanism goes the priest; with Calvinism goes the teacher," is an old saying, the truthfulness of which will not be denied by anyone who has examined the facts.

This Calvinistic love for learning, putting mind above money, has inspired countless numbers of Calvinistic families in Scotland, in England, in Holland, and in America, to pinch themselves to the bone in order to educate their children. The famous dictum of Carlyle, "That any being with capacity for knowledge should die ignorant, this I call a

tragedy," expresses an idea which is Calvinistic to the core. Wherever Calvinism has gone, there knowledge and learning have been encouraged and there a sturdy race of thinkers has been trained. Calvinists have not been the builders of great cathedrals, but they have been the builders of schools, colleges, and universities. When the Puritans from England, the Covenanters from Scotland, and the Reformed from Holland and Germany, came to America they brought with them not only the Bible and the Westminster Confession but also the school. And that is why our American Calvinism never

"Dreads the skeptic's puny hands,  
While near her school the church spire stands,  
Nor fears the blinded bigot's rule,  
While near her church spire stands a school."

Our three American universities of greatest historical importance, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, were originally founded by Calvinists, as strong Calvinistic schools, designed to give students a sound basis in theology as well as in other branches of learning. Harvard, established in 1636, was intended primarily to be a training school for ministers, and more than half of its first graduating classes went into the ministry. Yale, sometimes referred to as "the mother of Colleges," was for a considerable period a rigid Puritan institution. And Princeton, founded by the Scotch Presbyterians, had a thoroughly Calvinistic foundation.

"We boast," says Bancroft, "of our common schools; Calvin was the father of popular education the inventor of the system of free schools." [*Miscellanies*, p. 406.] "Wherever Calvinism gained dominion," he says again, "it invoked intelligence for the people and in every parish planted the common school." [*Hist. Of U. S.*, II., p. 463.]

"Our boasted common-school system," says Smith, "is indebted for its existence to that stream of influences which followed from the Geneva of Calvin, through Scotland and Holland to America; and, for the first two hundred years of our history almost every college and seminary of learning and almost every academy and common school was built and sustained by Calvinists." [*The Creed of Presbyterians*, p. 148.]

The relationship which Calvinism bears to education has been well stated in the two following paragraphs by Prof. H. H. Meeter, of Calvin College: "Science and art were the gifts of God's common grace, and were to be used and developed as such. Nature was looked upon as God's handiwork, the embodiment of His ideas, in its pure form the reflection of His virtues. God was the unifying thought of all science, since all was the unfolding of His plan. But along with such theoretical reasons there are very practical reasons why the Calvinist has always been intensely interested in education, and why grade schools for children as well as schools of higher learning sprang up side by side with Calvinistic churches, and why Calvinists were in so large measure the

vanguard of the modern universal education movement. These practical reasons are closely associated with their religion. The Roman Catholics might conveniently do without the education of the masses. For them the clergy in distinction from the laity were the ones who were to decide upon matters of church government and doctrine. Hence these interests did not require the training of the masses. For salvation, all that the layman needed was an implied faith in what the church believed. It was not necessary to be able to give an intelligent account of the tenets of his faith. At the services not the sermon but the sacrament was the important conveyor of the blessings of salvation, the sermon was less needed. And this sacrament again did not require intelligence, since it operated *ex opere operato*.

"For the Calvinist matters were just reversed. The government of the church was placed in the hands of the elders, laymen, and these had to decide upon the matters of church policy and the weighty matters of doctrine. Furthermore, the layman himself had the grave duty, without the intermediation of a sacerdotal order, to work out his own salvation, and could not suffice with an implied faith in what the church believed. He must read his Bible. He must know his creed. And it was a highly intellectual error at that. Even for the Lutheran, education of the masses was not as urgent as for the Calvinist. It is true, the Lutheran also placed every man before the personal responsibility to work out his own salvation. But the laity were in the Lutheran circles excluded from the office of church government and hence also from the duty of deciding upon matters of doctrine. From these considerations it is evident why the Calvinist must be a staunch advocate of education. If on the one hand God was to be owned as sovereign in the field of science, and if the Calvinist's very religious system required the education of the masses for its existence, it need not surprise us that the Calvinist pressed learning to the limit. Education is a question of to be or not to be for the Calvinist." [*The Fundamental Principles of Calvinism*, p. 96-99.]

The traditionally high standards of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches for ministerial training are worthy of notice. While many other churches ordain men as ministers and missionaries and allow them to preach with very little education, the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches insist that the candidate for the ministry shall be a college graduate and that he shall have studied for at least two years under some approved professor of theology. (See Form of Government, Ch. XIV, sec. III & VI). As a result a larger proportion of these ministers have been capable of managing the affairs of the influential city churches. This may mean fewer ministers but it also means a better prepared and a better paid ministry.

## **10. JOHN CALVIN**

John Calvin was born July 10, 1509, at Noyon, France, an ancient cathedral city about seventy miles northeast of Paris. His father, a man of rather hard and severe character, held the position as apostolic secretary to the bishop of Noyon, and was

intimate with the best families of the neighborhood. His mother was noted for her beauty and piety, but died in his early youth.

He received the best education which France at that time could give, studying successively at the three leading universities of Orleans, Bourges, and Paris, from 1528 to 1533. His father intended to prepare him for the legal profession since that commonly raised those who followed it to positions of wealth and influence. But not feeling any particular calling to that field, young Calvin turned to the study of Theology and there found the sphere of labor for which he was particularly fitted by natural endowment and personal choice. He is described as having been of a shy and retiring nature, very studious and punctual in his work, animated by a strict sense of duty, and exceedingly religious. He early showed himself possessed of an intellect capable of clear, convincing argument and logical analysis. Through excessive industry he stored his mind with valuable information, but undermined his health. He advanced so rapidly that he was occasionally asked to take the place of the professors, and was considered by the other students as a doctor rather than an auditor. He was, at this time, a devout Catholic of unblemished character. A brilliant career as a humanist, or lawyer, or churchman, was opening before him when he was suddenly converted to Protestantism, and cast in his lot with the poor persecuted sect.

Without any intention on his part, and even against his own desire, Calvin became the head of the evangelical party in Paris in less than a year after his conversion. His depth of knowledge and earnestness of speech were such that no one could hear him without being forcibly impressed. For the present he remained in the Catholic Church, hoping to reform it from within rather than from without. Schaff reminds us that "all the Reformers were born, baptized, confirmed, and educated in the historic Catholic Church, which cast them out; as the Apostles were circumcised and trained in the Synagogue, which cast them out." [*The Swiss Reformation*, p. 312.]

The zeal and earnestness of the new Reformer did not long go unchallenged and it soon became necessary for Calvin to escape for his life. The following account of his flight from Pads is given by the Church historian, Philip Schaff: "Nicholas Cop, the son of a distinguished royal physician (William Cop of Basel), and a friend of Calvin was elected Rector of the University, Oct. 10, 1533, and delivered the usual inaugural oration on All Saints' Day, Nov. 1, before a large assembly in the Church of the Mathurins. This oration, at the request of the new Rector, had been prepared by Calvin. It was a plea for a reformation on the basis of the New Testament, and a bold attack on the scholastic theologians of the day, who were represented as a set of sophists, ignorant of the Gospel ... The Sorbonne and the Parliament regarded this academic oration as a manifesto of war upon the Catholic Church, and condemned it to the flames. Cop was warned and fled to his relatives in Basel. (Three hundred crowns were offered for his capture, dead or alive.) Calvin, the real author of the mischief, is said to have descended from a window by means of sheets, and escaped

from Paris in the garb of a vine-dresser with a hoe upon his shoulder. His rooms were searched and his books and papers were seized by the police .... Twenty-four innocent Protestants were burned alive in public places of the city from Nov. 10, 1534, till May 5, 1535....Many more were fined, imprisoned, and tortured, and a considerable number, among them Calvin and Du Tillet, fled to Strassburg . . . For nearly three years Calvin wandered as a fugitive evangelist under assumed names from place to place in southern France, Switzerland, and Italy, till he reached Geneva as his final destination." [Schaff, *The Swiss Reformation*, p. 322.]

Shortly after, if not before, the first edition of his Institutes appeared, in March, 1536, Calvin and Louis Du Tillet crossed the Alps into Italy where the literary and artistic Renaissance had its origin. There he labored as an evangelist until the Inquisition began its work of crushing out both the Renaissance and the Reformation as two kindred serpents. He then bent his way, probably through Asota and over the Great St. Bernard, to Switzerland. From Basel he made a last visit to his native town of Noyon in order to make a final settlement of certain family affairs. Then, with his younger brother Antoine and his sister Marie, he left France forever, hoping to settle in Basel or Strassburg and to lead there the quiet life of a scholar and author. Owing to the fact that a state of war existed between Charles V. and Francis I., the direct route through Lorraine was closed, so he made a circuitous journey through Geneva.

Calvin intended to stop only a night in Geneva, but Providence had decreed otherwise. His presence was made known to Farel, the Genevan reformer, who instinctively felt that Calvin was the man to complete and save the Reformation in Geneva. A fine description of this meeting of Calvin and Farel is given by Schaff. Says he: "Farel at once called on Calvin and held him fast, as by divine command. Calvin protested, pleading his youth, his inexperience, his need of further study, his natural timidity and bashfulness, which unfitted him for public action. But all in vain. Farel, 'who burned of a marvelous zeal to advance the Gospel,' threatened him with the curse of Almighty God if he preferred his studies to the work of the Lord, and his own interest to the cause of Christ. Calvin was terrified and shaken by these words of the fearless evangelist, and felt 'as if God from on high had stretched out His hand.' He submitted, and accepted the call to the ministry, as teacher and pastor of the evangelical Church of Geneva." [*The Swiss Reformation*, p. 348.]

Calvin was twenty-five years younger than Luther and Zwingli, and had the great advantage of building on the foundation which they had laid. The first ten years of Calvin's public career were contemporary with the last ten of Luther's although the two never met personally. Calvin was intimate with Melanchthon, however, and kept up a correspondence with him until his death.

At the time Calvin came upon the scene it had not yet been determined whether Luther was to be the hero of a great success or the victim of a great failure. Luther had

produced new ideas; Calvin's work was to construct them into a system, to preserve and develop what had been so nobly begun. The Protestant movement lacked unity and was in danger of being sunk in the quicksand of doctrinal dispute, but was saved from that fate chiefly by the new impulse which was given to it by the Reformer in Geneva. The Catholic Church worked as one mighty unit and was seeking to stamp out, by fair means or foul, the different Protestant groups which had arisen in the North. Zwingli had seen this danger and had tried to unite the Protestants against their common foe. At Marburg, after pleadings and with tears in his eyes, he extended to Luther the hand of fellowship regardless of their difference of opinion as to the mode of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper; but Luther refused it under the restraint of a narrow dogmatic conscience. Calvin also, working in Switzerland with abundant opportunity to realize the closeness of the Italian Church, saw the need for union and labored to keep Protestantism together. To Cranmer, in England, he wrote, "I long for one holy communion of the members of Christ. As for me, if I can be of service, I would gladly cross ten seas in order to bring about this unity." His influence as exerted through his books, letters, and students, was powerfully felt throughout the various countries, and the statement that he saved the Protestant movement from destruction seems to be no exaggeration.

For thirty years Calvin's one absorbing interest was the advancement of the Reformation. Reed says, "He toiled for it to the utmost limit of his strength, fought for it with a courage that never quailed, suffered for it with a fortitude that never wavered, and was ready at any moment to die for it. He literally poured every drop of his life into it, unhesitatingly, unsparingly. History will be searched in vain to find a man who gave himself to one definite purpose with more unalterable persistence, and with more lavish self-abandon than Calvin gave himself to the Reformation of the 16th century." [*Calvin Memorial Addresses*, p. 34.]

Probably no servant of Christ since the days of the Apostles has been at the same time so much loved and hated, admired and abhorred, praised and blamed, blessed and cursed, as the faithful, fearless, and immortal Calvin. Living in a fiercely polemic age, and standing on the watchtower of the reform movement in Western Europe, he was the observed of all observers, and was exposed to attacks from every quarter. Religious and sectarian passions are the deepest and strongest, and in view of the good and the bad which is known to exist in human nature in this world we need not be surprised at the reception given Calvin's teachings and writings.

When only twenty-six years of age Calvin published in Latin his "Institutes of the Christian Religion." The first edition contained in brief outline all the essential elements of his system, and, considering the youthfulness of the author, was a marvel of intellectual precocity. It was later enlarged to five times the size of the original and published in French, but never did he make any radical departure from any of the doctrines set forth in the first edition. Almost immediately the Institutes took first

place as the best exhibition and defense of the Protestant cause. Other writings had dealt with certain phases of the movement but here was one that treated it as a unit. "The value of such a gift to the Reformation," says Reed, "cannot easily be exaggerated. Protestants and Romanists bore equal testimony to its worth. The one hailed it as the greatest boon; the other execrated it with the bitterest curses. It was burnt by order of the Sorbonne at Paris and other places, and everywhere it called forth the fiercest assaults of tongue and pen. Florimond de Raemond, a Roman Catholic theologian, calls it 'the Koran, the Talmud of heresy, the foremost cause of our downfall.' Kampachulte, another Roman Catholic, testifies that 'it was the common arsenal from which the opponents of the Old Church borrowed their keenest weapons,' and that 'no writing of the Reformation era was more feared by Roman Catholics, more zealously fought against, and more bitterly pursued than Calvin's Institutes.' Its popularity was evidenced by the fact that edition followed edition in quick succession; it was translated into most of the languages of western Europe; it became the common text-book in the schools of the Reformed Churches, and furnished the material out of which their creeds were made." [*Calvin Memorial Addresses*, p. 20.]

"Of all the services which Calvin rendered to humanity," says Dr. Warfield, "and they were neither few nor small the greatest was undoubtedly his gift to it afresh of this system of religious thought, quickened into new life by the forces of his genius." [Article, "The Theology of Calvin", p. 1.]

The Institutes were at once greeted by the Protestants with enthusiastic praise as the clearest, strongest, most logical, and most convincing defense of Christian doctrines since the days of the Apostles. Schaff characterizes them well when he says that in them "Calvin gave a systematic exposition of the Christian religion in general, and a vindication of the evangelical faith in particular, with the apologetic and practical aim of defending the Protestant believers against calumny and persecution to which they were then exposed, especially in France." [*The Swiss Reformation*, p. 330.] The work is pervaded by an intense earnestness and by fearless and severe argumentation which properly subordinates reason and tradition to the supreme authority of the Scriptures. It is admittedly the greatest book of the century, and through it the Calvinistic principles were propagated on an immense scale. Albrecht Ritschl calls it "the masterpiece of Protestant theology." Dr. Warfield tells us that "after three centuries and a half it retains its unquestioned preeminence as the greatest and most influential of all dogmatic treatises." And again he says, "Even from the point of mere literature, it holds a position so supreme in its class that every one who would fain know the world's best books, must make himself familiar with it. What Thucydides is among Greek, or Gibbon among eighteenth-century English historians, what Plato is among philosophers, or the Iliad among epics, or Shakespeare among dramatists, that Calvin's 'Institutes' is among theological treatises." [*Calvin and Calvinism*, pp. 8, 374.] It threw consternation into the Roman Church and was a powerful unifying force



among Protestants. It showed Calvin to be the ablest controversialist in Protestantism and as the most formidable antagonist with which the Romanists had to contend. In England the Institutes enjoyed an almost unrivaled popularity, and was used as a text book in the universities. It was soon translated into nine different European languages; and it is simply due to a serious lack in the majority of historical accounts that its importance has not been appreciated in recent years.

A few weeks after the publication of the Institutes, Bucer, who ranks third among the Reformers in Germany, wrote to Calvin: "It is evident that the Lord had elected you as His organ for the bestowment of the richest fulness of blessing to His Church." Luther wrote no systematic theology. Although his writings were voluminous, they were on scattered subjects and many of them deal with the practical problems of his day. It was thus left to Calvin to give a systematic exhibition of the evangelical faith.

Calvin was, first of all, a theologian. He and Augustine easily rank as the two outstanding systematic expounders of the Christian system since St. Paul. Melancthon, who was himself the prince of Lutheran theologians, and who, after the death of Luther, was recognized as the "Preceptor of Germany," called Calvin preeminently "the theologian."

If the language of the Institutes seems harsh in places we should remember that this was the mark and weakness of theological controversy in that age. The times in which Calvin lived were polemic. The Protestants were engaged in a life and death struggle with Rome and the provocations to impatience were numerous and grievous. Calvin, however, was surpassed by Luther in the use of harsh language as will readily be seen by an examination of the latter's work, *The Bondage of the Will*, which was a polemic written against the free-will ideas of Erasmus. And furthermore, none of the Protestant writings of the period were so harsh and abusive as were the Roman Catholic decrees of excommunication, anathemas, etc., which were directed against the Protestants.

In addition to the Institutes, Calvin wrote commentaries on nearly all of the books of both the Old and New Testaments. These commentaries in the English translation comprise fifty-five large volumes, and, taken in connection with his other works, are nothing less than marvelous. The quality of these writings was such that they soon took first place among exegetical works on the Scriptures; and among all the older commentators no one is more frequently quoted by the best modern scholars than is Calvin. He was beyond all question the greatest exegete of the Reformation period. As Luther was the prince of translators, so Calvin was the prince of commentators.

Furthermore, in order to estimate the true value of Calvin's commentaries, it must be borne in mind that they were based on principles of exegesis which were rare in his day. "He led the way," says R. C. Reed, "in discarding the custom of allegorizing the

Scriptures, a custom which had come down from the earliest centuries of Christianity and which had been sanctioned by the greatest names of the Church, from Origen to Luther, a custom which converts the Bible into a nose of wax, and makes a lively fancy the prime qualification of an exegete." [*Calvin Memorial Addresses*, p. 22.] Calvin adhered strictly to the spirit and letter of the author and assumed that the writer had one definite thought which was expressed in natural everyday language. He mercilessly exposed the corrupt doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. His writings inspired the friends of reform and furnished them with most of their deadly ammunition. We can hardly overestimate the influence of Calvin in furthering and safeguarding the Reformation.

Calvin was a master of patristic and scholastic learning. Having been educated in the leading universities of his time, he possessed a thorough knowledge of Latin and French, and a good knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. His principal commentaries appeared in both French and Latin versions and are works of great thoroughness. They are eminently fair and frank, and show the author to have been possessed of a singular balance and moderation in judgment. Calvin's works had a further effect in giving form and permanence to the then unstablized French language in much the same way that Luther's translation of the Bible moulded the German language.

One other testimony which we should not omit is that of Arminius, the originator of the rival system. Certainly here we have testimony from an unbiased source. "Next to the study of the Scriptures," he says, "I exhort my pupils to pursue Calvin's commentaries, which I extol in loftier terms than Helmick himself (Helmick was a Dutch theologian); for I affirm that he excels beyond comparison in the interpretation of Scripture, and that his commentaries ought to be more highly valued than all that is handed down to us by the library of the fathers; so that I acknowledge him to have possessed above most others, as rather above all other men, what may be called an eminent gift of prophecy." [Quoted by James Orr, *Calvin Memorial Addresses*, p. 92.]

The influence of Calvin was further spread through a voluminous correspondence which he carried on with church leaders, princes, and nobles throughout Protestant Christendom. More than 300 of these letters are still preserved today, and as a rule they are not brief friendship exchanges but lengthy and carefully prepared treatises setting forth in a masterly way his views of perplexing ecclesiastical and theological questions. In this manner also his influence in guiding the Reformation throughout Europe was profound.

Due to an attempt of Calvin and Farel to enforce a too severe system of discipline in Geneva, it became necessary for them to leave the city temporarily. This was two years after Calvin's coming. Calvin went to Strassburg, in southwestern Germany, where he was warmly received by Bucer and the leading men of the German Reformation. There he spent the next three years in quiet and useful labors as professor, pastor, and

author, and came into contact with Lutheranism at first hand. He had a great appreciation for the Luthern leaders and felt closely allied to the Lutheran Church, although he was unfavorably impressed with the lack of discipline and with the dependence of the clergy upon the secular rulers. He later followed the progress of the Reformation in Germany step by step with the warmest interest, as is shown in his correspondence and various writings. During his absence from Geneva affairs reached such a crisis that it seemed that the fruits of the Reformation would be lost and he was urgently requested to return. After repeated urgings from various sources he did so and took up the work where he had left off before.

The city of Geneva, located on the shores of a lake which bears the same name, was Calvin's home. There, among the snow-capped Alps, he spent most of his adult life, and from there the Reformed Church has spread out through Europe and America. In the affairs of the Church, as well as in the affairs of the State, the little country of Switzerland has exerted an influence far out of proportion to its size.

Calvin's influence in Geneva gives us a fair sample of the transforming power of his system. "The Genevese," says the eminent church historian, Philip Schaff, "were a light-hearted, joyous people, fond of public amusements, dancing, singing, masquerades, and revelries. Recklessness, gambling, drunkenness, adultery, blasphemy, and all sorts of vice abounded. Prostitution was sanctioned by the authority of the State, and superintended by a woman called the Reine de bordel. The people were ignorant. The priest had taken no pains to instruct them, and had set them a bad example." From a study of contemporary history we find that shortly before Calvin went to Geneva the monks and even the bishop were guilty of crimes which today are punishable with the death penalty. The result of Calvin's work in Geneva was that the city became more famed for the quiet, orderly lives of its citizens than it had previously been for their wickedness. John Knox, like thousands of others who came to sit as admiring students at Calvin's feet, found there what he termed "the most perfect school of Christ that ever was on the earth since the days of the Apostles."

Through Calvin's work Geneva became an asylum for the persecuted, and a training school for the Reformed Faith. Refugees from all the countries of Europe fled to this retreat, and from it they carried back with them the clearly taught principles of the Reformation. It thus acted as a center emanating spiritual power and educational forces which guided and moulded the Reformation in the surrounding countries. Says Bancroft, "More truly benevolent to the human race than Solon, more self-denying than Lycurgus, the genius of Calvin infused enduring elements into the institutions of Geneva and made it for the modern world the impregnable fortress of popular liberty, the fertile seed-plot of democracy." [*Miscellanies*, p. 406.]

Witness as to the effectiveness of the influences which emanated from Geneva is

found in one of the letters of the Roman Catholic Francis de Sales to the duke of Savoy, urging the suppression of Geneva as the capital of what the Romish Church calls heresy. "All the heretics," said he, "respect Geneva as the asylum of their religion.... There is not a city in Europe which offers more facilities for the encouragement of heresy, for it is the gate of France, of Italy, and of Germany, so that one finds there people of all nations Italians, French, Germans, Poles, Spaniards, English, and of countries still more remote. Besides, every one knows the great number of ministers bred there. Last year it furnished twenty to France. Even England obtains ministers from Geneva. What shall I say of its magnificent printing establishments, by means of which the city floods the world with its wicked books, and even goes the length of distributing them at the public expense? ....All the enterprises undertaken against the Holy See and the Catholic princes have their beginnings at Geneva. No city in Europe receives more apostates of all grades, secular and regular. From thence I conclude that Geneva being destroyed would naturally lead to the dissipation of heresy." [*Vie de ste. Francois de Sales, par son neveu, p. 20.*]

Another testimony is that of one of the most bitter foes of Protestantism, Philip II of Spain. He wrote to the king of France: "This city is the source of all mischief for France, the most formidable enemy of Rome. At any time, I am ready to assist with all the power of my realm in its overthrow." And when the Duke of Alva was expected to pass near Geneva with his army, Pope Pius V asked him to turn aside and "destroy that nest of devils and apostates."

The famous academy of Geneva was opened in 1558. With Calvin there were associated ten able and experienced professors who gave instruction in grammar, logic, mathematics, physics, music, and the ancient languages. The school was remarkably successful. During the first year more than nine hundred students, mostly refugees from the various European countries, were enrolled, and almost as many more attended his theological lectures preparing themselves to be evangelists and teachers in their native countries and to establish churches after the model which they had seen in Geneva. For more than two hundred years it remained the principal school of Reformed Theology and literary culture.

Calvin was the first of the Reformers to demand complete separation between Church and State, and thus he advanced another principle which has been of inestimable value. The German Reformation was decided by the will of the princes; the Swiss Reformation, by the will of the people; although in each case there was a sympathy between the rulers and the majority of the population. The Swiss Reformers, however, living in the republic at Geneva, developed a free Church in a free State, while Luther and Melancthon, with their native reverence for monarchical institutions and the German Empire, taught passive obedience in politics and brought the Church under bondage to the civil authority.

Calvin died in the year 1564, at the early age of fifty-five. Beza, his close friend and successor, describes his death as having come quietly as sleep, and then adds: "Thus withdrew into heaven, at the same time with the setting sun, that most brilliant luminary, which was the lamp of the Church. On the following night and day there was intense grief and lamentation in the whole city; for the Republic had lost its wisest citizen, the Church its faithful shepherd, and the Academy an incomparable teacher."

Schaff describes Calvin as "one of those characters that command respect and admiration rather than affection, and forbid familiar approach, but gain upon closer acquaintance. The better he is known, the more he is admired and esteemed." And concerning his death Schaff says: "Calvin had expressly forbidden all pomp at his funeral and the erection of any monument over his grave. He wished to be buried, like Moses, out of reach of idolatry. This was consistent, with his theology, which humbles man and exalts God." [*The Swiss Reformation*, p. 826.] Even the spot of his grave in the cemetery at Geneva is unknown. A plain stone, with the initials "J. C.," is pointed out to strangers as marking his resting-place, but it is not known on what authority. He himself requested that no monument should mark his grave. His real monument, however, says S. L. Morris, is "every republican government on earth, the public school system of all nations, and 'The Reformed Churches throughout the world holding the Presbyterian System.'"

We must now consider an event in the life of Calvin which to a certain extent has cast a shadow over his fair name and which has exposed him to the charge of intolerance and persecution. We refer to the death of Servetus which occurred in Geneva during the period of Calvin's work there. That it was a mistake is admitted by all. History knows only one spotless being the Savior of sinners. All others have marks of infirmity written which forbid idolatry.

Calvin has, however, often been criticized with undue severity as though the responsibility rested upon him alone, when as a matter of fact Servetus was given a court trial lasting over two months and was sentenced by the full session of the civil Council, and that in accordance with the laws which were then recognized throughout Christendom. And, far from urging that the sentence be made more severe, Calvin urged that the sword be substituted for the fire, but was overruled. Calvin and the men of his time are not to be judged strictly and solely by the advanced standards of our twentieth century, but must to a certain extent be considered in the light of their own sixteenth century. We have seen great developments in regard to civil and religious toleration, prison reform, abolition of slavery and the slave trade, feudalism, witch burning, improvement of the conditions of the poor, etc., which are the late but genuine results of Christian teachings. The error of those who advocated and practiced what would be considered intolerance today, was the general error of the age. It should not, in fairness, be permitted to give an unfavorable impression of their

character and motives, and much less should it be allowed to prejudice us against their doctrines on other and more important subjects.

The Protestants had just thrown off the yoke of Rome and in their struggle to defend themselves they were often forced to fight intolerance with intolerance. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries public opinion in all European countries justified the right and duty of civil governments to protect and support orthodoxy and to punish heresy, holding that obstinate heretics and blasphemers should be made harmless by death if necessary. Protestants differed from Romanists mainly in their definition of heresy, and by greater moderation in its punishment. Heresy was considered a sin against society, and in some cases as worse than murder; for while murder only destroyed the body, heresy destroyed the soul. Today we have swung to the other extreme and public opinion manifests a latitudinarian indifference toward truth or error. During the eighteenth century the reign of intolerance was gradually undermined. Protestant England and Holland took the lead in extending civil and religious liberty, and the Constitution of the United States completed the theory by putting all Christian denominations on a parity before the law and guaranteeing them the full enjoyment of equal rights.

Calvin's course in regard to Servetus was fully approved by all the leading Reformers of the time. Melancthon, the theological head of the Lutheran Church, fully and repeatedly justified the course of Calvin and the Council of Geneva, and even held them up as models for imitation. Nearly a year after the death of Servetus he wrote to Calvin: "I have read your book, in which you dearly refuted the horrid blasphemies of Servetus .... To you the Church owes gratitude at the present moment, and will owe it to the latest posterity. I perfectly assent to your opinion. I affirm also that your magistrates did right in punishing, after regular trial, this blasphemous man." Bucer, who ranks third among the Reformers in Germany, Bullinger, the close friend and worthy successor of Zwingli, as well as Farel and Beza in Switzerland, supported Calvin. Luther and Zwingli were dead at this time and it may be questioned whether they would have approved this execution or not, although Luther and the theologians of Wittenberg had approved of death sentences for some Anabaptists in Germany whom they considered dangerous heretics, adding that it was cruel to punish them, but more cruel to allow them to damn the ministry of the Word and destroy the kingdom of the world; and Zwingli had not objected to a death sentence against a group of six Anabaptists in Switzerland. Public opinion has undergone a great change in regard to this event, and the execution of Servetus which was fully approved by the best men in the sixteenth century is as fully condemned in the nineteenth century.

As stated before, the Roman Catholic Church in this period was desperately intolerant toward Protestants; and the Protestants, to a certain extent and in self-defense, were forced to follow their example. In regard to Catholic persecutions Philip Schaff writes as follows: "We need only refer to crusades against the Albigenses and Waldenses,

which were sanctioned by Innocent III, one of the best and greatest of popes; the tortures of the Spanish Inquisition, which were celebrated with religious festivities; and fifty thousand or more Protestants who were executed during the reign of the Duke of Alva in the Netherlands (1567-1573); the several hundred martyrs who were burned in Smithfield under the reign of bloody Mary; and the repeated wholesale persecutions of the innocent Waldenses in France and Piedmont, which cried to heaven for vengeance. It is vain to shift the responsibility upon the civil government. Pope Gregory XIII commemorated the massacre of St. Bartholomew not only by a Te Deum in the churches of Rome, but more deliberately and permanently by a medal which represents 'The Slaughter of the Huguenots' by an angel of wrath." [*History of the Swiss Reformation*, II, p. 698.]

And then Dr. Schaff continues: "The Roman Church has lost the power, and to a large extent also the disposition, to persecute by fire and sword. Some of her highest dignitaries frankly disown the principle of persecution, especially in America, where they enjoy the full benefits of religious freedom. But the Roman curia has never officially disowned the theory on which the practice of persecution is based. On the contrary, several popes since the Reformation have indorsed it .... Pope Pius IX., in the Syllabus of 1864, expressly condemned, among the errors of this age, the doctrine of religious toleration and liberty. And this pope has been declared to be officially infallible by the Vatican decree of 1870, which embraces all of his predecessors (notwithstanding the stubborn case of Honorius I) and all his successors in the chair of St. Peter," (p. 669). And in another place Dr. Schaff adds, "If Romanists condemned Calvin, they did it from hatred of the man, and condemned him for following their own example even in this particular case."

Servetus was a Spaniard and opposed Christianity, whether in its Roman Catholic or Protestant form. Schaff refers to him as "a restless fanatic, a pantheistic pseudo-reformer, and the most audacious and even blasphemous heretic of the sixteenth century." [*The Creeds of Christendom*, I., p. 464.] And in another instance Schaff declares that Servetus was "proud, defiant, quarrelsome, revengeful, irreverent in the use of language, deceitful, and mendacious"; and adds that he abused popery and the Reformers alike with unreasonable language. [*The Swiss Reformation*, II., p. 787.] Bullinger declares that if Satan himself should come out of hell, he could use no more blasphemous language against the Trinity than this Spaniard. The Roman Catholic Bolsec, in his work on Calvin, calls Servetus "a very arrogant and insolent man," "a monstrous heretic," who deserved to be exterminated.

Servetus had fled to Geneva from Vienne, France; and while the trial at Geneva was in progress the Council received a message from the Catholic judges in Vienne together with a copy of the sentence of death which had been passed against him there, asking that he be sent back in order that the sentence might be executed on him as it had already been executed on his effigy and books. This request the Council refused but

promised to do full justice. Servetus himself preferred to be tried in Geneva, since he could see only a burning funeral pyre for himself in Vienne. The communication from Vienne probably made the Council in Geneva more zealous for orthodoxy since they did not wish to be behind the Roman Church in that respect.

Before going to Geneva Servetus had urged himself upon the attention of Calvin through a long series of letters. For a time Calvin replied to these in considerable detail, but finding no satisfactory results were being accomplished he ceased. Servetus, however, continued writing and his letters took on a more arrogant and even insulting tone. He regarded Calvin as the pope of orthodox Protestantism, whom he was determined to convert or overthrow. At the time Servetus came to Geneva the Libertine party, which was in opposition to Calvin, was in control of the city Council. Servetus apparently planned to join this party and thus drive Calvin out. Calvin apparently sensed this danger and was in no mood to permit Servetus to propagate his errors in Geneva. Hence he considered it his duty to make so dangerous a man harmless, and determined to bring him either to recantation or to deserved punishment. Servetus was promptly arrested and brought to trial. Calvin conducted the theological part of the trial and Servetus was convicted of fundamental heresy, falsehood and blasphemy. During the long trial Servetus became emboldened and attempted to overwhelm Calvin by pouring upon him the coarsest kind of abuse. [See Schaff, *The Swiss Reformation*, II., p. 778.] The outcome of the trial was left to the civil court, which pronounced the sentence of death by fire. Calvin made an ineffectual plea that the sword be substituted for the fire; hence the final responsibility for the burning rests with the Council.

Dr. Emile Doumergue, the author of *Jean Calvin*, which is beyond comparison the most exhaustive and authoritative work ever published on Calvin, has the following to say about the death of Servetus: "Calvin had Servetus arrested when he came to Geneva, and appeared as his accuser. He wanted him to be condemned to death, but not to death by burning. On August 20, 1553, Calvin wrote to Farel: 'I hope that Servetus will be condemned to death, but I desire that he should be spared the cruelty of the punishment' he means t of fire. Farel replied to him on September 8th: 'I do not greatly approve that tenderness of heart,' and he goes on to warn him to be careful that 'in wishing that the cruelty of the punishment of Servetus be mitigated, thou art acting as a friend towards a man who is thy greatest enemy. But I pray thee to conduct thyself in such a manner that, in future, no one will have the boldness to publish such doctrines, and to give trouble with impunity for so long a time as this man has done.'

"Calvin did not, on this account, modify his own opinion, but he could not make it prevail. On October 26th he wrote again to Farel: 'Tomorrow Servetus will be led out to execution. We have done our best to change the kind of death, but in vain. I shall tell thee when we meet why we had no success.' (Opera, XIV, pp. 590, 613-657).



"Thus, what Calvin is most of all reproached with the burning of Servetus Calvin was quite opposed to. He is not responsible for it. He did what he could to save Servetus from mounting the pyre. But, what reprimands, more or less eloquent, has this pyre with its flames and smoke given rise to, made room for! The fact is that without the pyre the death of Servetus would have passed almost unnoticed."

Doumergue goes on to tell us that the death of Servetus was "the error of the time, an error for which Calvin was not particularly responsible. The sentence of condemnation to death was pronounced only after consultation with the Swiss Churches, several of which were far from being on good terms with Calvin (but all of which gave their consent) .... Besides, the judgment was pronounced by a Council in which the inveterate enemies of Calvin, the free thinkers, were in the majority." [Doumergue, Article, "What Ought to be Known About Calvin", in the *Evangelical Quarterly*, Jan. 1929.]

That Calvin himself rejected the responsibility is clear from his later writings. "From the time that Servetus was convicted of his heresy," said he, "I have not uttered a word about his punishment, as all honest men will bear witness." [*Opera*, VIII., p. 461.] And in one of his later replies to an attack which had been made upon him, he says: "For what particular act of mine you accuse me of cruelty I am anxious to know. I myself know not that act, unless it be with reference to the death of your great master, Servetus. But that I myself earnestly entreated that he might not be put to death his judges themselves are witnesses, in the number of whom at that time two were his staunch favorites and defenders." [*Calvin's Calvinism*, p. 346.]

Before the arrest of Servetus and during the earlier stages of the trial Calvin advocated the death penalty, basing his argument mainly on the Mosaic law, which was, "He that blasphemeth the name of Jehovah, he shall surely be put to death," Lev. 24:16 a law which Calvin considered as binding as the decalogue and applicable to heresy as well. Yet he left the passing of sentence wholly to the civil council. He considered Servetus the greatest enemy of the Reformation and honestly believed it to be the right and duty of the State to punish those who offended against the Church. He also felt himself providentially called to purify the Church of all corruptions, and to his dying day he never changed his views nor regretted his conduct toward Servetus.

Dr. Abraham Kuyper, the statesman-theologian from Holland, in speaking to an American audience not many years ago expressed some thoughts in this connection which are worth repeating. Said he: "The duty of the government to extirpate every form of false religion and idolatry was not a find of Calvinism, but dates from Constantine the Great and was the reaction against the horrible persecutions which his pagan predecessors on the Imperial throne had inflicted upon the sect of the Nazarene. Since that day this system had been defended by all Romish theologians and applied by all Christian princes. In the time of Luther and Calvin, it was a

universal conviction that that system was the true one. Every famous theologian of the period, Melancton first of all, approved of the death by fire of Servetus; and the scaffold, which was erected by the Lutherans, at Leipzig for Kreel, the thorough Calvinist, was infinitely more reprehensible when looked at from a Protestant standpoint.

"But whilst the Calvinists, in the age of the Reformation, yielded up themselves as martyrs, by tens of thousands, to the scaffold and the stake (those of the Lutherans and Roman Catholics being hardly worth counting), history has been guilty of the great and far-reaching unfairness of ever casting in their teeth this one execution by fire of Servetus as a crimen nefandum.

"Notwithstanding all this I not only deplore that one stake, but I unconditionally disapprove of it; yet not as if it were the expression of a special characteristic of Calvinism, but on the contrary as the fatal after-effect of a system, grey with age, which Calvinism found in existence, under which it had grown up, and from which it had not yet been able entirely to liberate itself." [*Lectures on Calvinism*, p. 129.]

Hence when we view this affair in the light of the sixteenth century and consider these different aspects of the case, namely, the approval of the other reformers, a public opinion which abhorred toleration as involving indifference to truth and which justified the death penalty for obstinate heresy and blasphemy, the sentence also passed on Servetus by the Roman Catholic authorities, the character of Servetus and his attitude toward Calvin, his going to Geneva for the purpose of causing trouble, the passing of sentence by a civil court not under Calvin's control, and Calvin's appeal for a lighter form of punishment, we come to the conclusion that Calvin, in so far as he is chargeable with the affair, acted from a strict sense of duty, and that his responsibility is much less than has been commonly assumed. Furthermore, we are glad to say that while there was only one instance of this kind there was only one with which Calvin was in any way connected.

## **11. CONCLUSION**

We have now examined the Calvinistic system in considerable detail, and have seen its influence in the Church, in the State, in society, and in education. We have also considered the objections which are commonly brought against it, and have considered the practical importance of the system. It now remains for us to make a few general observations in regard to the system as a whole.

A sure test of the character of individuals or of systems is found in Christ's own words: "By their fruits ye shall know them." By that test Calvinists and Calvinism will gladly be judged. The lives and the influences of those who have held the Reformed Faith is one of the best and most conclusive arguments in its favor. Smith refers to

"that divinely vital and exuberant Calvinism, the creator of the modern world, the mother of heroes, saints and martyrs in number without number, which history, judging the tree by its fruits, crowns as the greatest creed of Christendom." [*The Creed of Presbyterians*, p. vii.] The impartial verdict of history is that as a character builder and as a proclaimer of liberty to men and nations Calvinism stands supreme among all the religious systems of the world. In calling the roll of the great men of our own country the number of Presbyterian presidents, legislators, jurists, authors, editors, teachers and business men is vastly disproportionate to the membership of the Church. Every impartial historian will admit that it was the Protestant revolt against Rome which gave the modern world its first taste of genuine religious and civil liberty, and that the nations which have achieved and enjoyed the greatest freedom have been those which were most fully brought under the influence of Calvinism. Furthermore that great life-giving stream of religious and civil liberty has been made by Calvinism to flow over all the broad plains of modern history. When we compare countries such as England, Scotland and America, with countries such as France, Spain and Italy, which never came under the influences of Calvinism, we readily see what the practical results are. The economic and moral depression in Roman Catholic countries has brought about such a decrease even in the birth rate that the population in those countries has become almost stationary, while the population in these other countries has steadily increased.

A brief examination of Church history, or of the historic creeds of Protestantism, readily shows that the doctrines which today are known as Calvinism were the ones which brought about the Reformation and preserved its benefits. He who is most familiar with the history of Europe and America will readily agree with the startling statement of Dr. Cunningham that, "next to Paul, John Calvin has done most for the world." And Dr. Smith has well said: "Surely it should stop the mouths of the detractors of Calvinism to remember that from men of that creed we inherit, as the fruits of their blood and toil, their prayers and teachings, our civil liberty, our Protestant faith, our Christian homes. The thoughtful reader, noting that these three blessings lie at the root of all that is best and greatest in the modern world, may be startled at the implied claim that our present Christian civilization is but the fruitage of Calvinism." [*The Creed of Presbyterians*, p. 74.]

We do but repeat the very clear testimony of history when we say that Calvinism has been the creed of saints and heroes. "Whatever the cause," says Froude, "the Calvinists were the only fighting Protestants. It was they whose faith gave them courage to stand up for the Reformation, and but for them the Reformation would have been lost." During those centuries in which spiritual tyranny was numbering its victims by the thousands; when in England, Scotland, Holland and Switzerland, Protestantism had to maintain itself with the sword, Calvinism proved itself the only system able to cope with and destroy the great powers of the Romish Church. Its unequalled array of martyrs is one of its crowns of glory. In the address of the

Methodist Conference to the Presbyterian Alliance of 1896 it was graciously said: "Your Church has furnished the memorable and inspiring spectacle, not simply of a solitary heroic soul here and there, but of generations of faithful souls ready for the sake of Christ and His truth to go cheerfully to prison and to death. This rare honor you rightly esteem as the most precious part of your priceless heritage." "There is no other system of religion in the world," says McFetridge, which has such a glorious array of martyrs to the faith. "Almost every man and woman who walked to the flames rather than deny the faith or leave a stain on conscience was the devout follower, not only, and first of all, of the Son of God, but also of that minister of God who made Geneva the light of Europe, John Calvin." [*Calvinism in History*, p. 113.] To the Divine vitality and fruitfulness of this system the modern world owes a debt of gratitude which in recent years it is slowly beginning to recognize but can never pay.

We have said that Calvinistic theology develops a liberty loving people. Where it flourishes despotism cannot abide. As might have been expected, it early gave rise to a revolutionary form of Church government, in which the people of the Church were to be governed and ministered to, not by the appointees of any one man or set of men placed over them, but by pastors and officers elected by themselves. Religion was then with the people, not over them. Testimony from a remarkable source as to the efficiency of this government is that of the distinguished Roman Catholic, Archbishop Hughes of New York: "Though it is my privilege to regard the authority exercised by the General Assembly as usurpation, still I must say, with every man acquainted with the mode in which it is organized, that for the purpose of popular and political government its structure is little inferior to that of Congress itself. It acts on the principle of a radiating center, and is without an equal or a rival among the other denominations of the country." [*Presbyterians and the Revolution*, p. 140.]

From freedom and responsibility in the Church it was only a step to freedom and responsibility in the State; and historically the cause of freedom has found no braver nor more resolute champions than the followers of Calvin.

"Calvinism," says Warburton, "is no dreamy, theoretical creed. It does not, despite all the assertions of its adversaries, encourage a man to d his arms in a spirit of fatalistic indifference, and ignore the needs of those around him, together with the crying evils which lie, like putrifying sores, upon the open face of society." [*Calvinism*, p. 78.] Wherever it has gone marvelous moral transformations have followed in its wake. For purity of life, for temperance, industry, and charity, the Calvinists have stood without superiors.

James Anthony Froude has been recognized as one of England's most able historians and men of letters. For a number of years he was professor of History at Oxford, England's greatest university. While he accepted another system for himself, and while his writings are such that he is often spoken of as an opponent of Calvinism, he

was free from prejudice, and the ignorant attacks upon Calvinism which have been so common in recent years aroused in him the learned scholar's just impatience.

"I am going to ask you," says Froude, "to consider how it came to pass that if Calvinism is indeed the hard and unreasonable creed which modern enlightenment declares it to be, it has possessed such singular attractions in past times for some of the greatest men that ever lived; and how being we are told, fatal to morality, because it denies free will the first symptom of its operation, wherever it established itself, was to obliterate the distinction between sins and crimes, and to make the moral law the rule of life for States as well as persons. I shall ask you, again, why, if it be a creed of intellectual servitude, it was able to inspire and sustain the bravest efforts ever made by man to break the yoke of unjust authority. When all else has failed, when patriotism has covered its face and human courage has broken down, when intellect has yielded, as Gibbon says, 'with a smile or a sigh,' content to philosophize in the closet, and abroad worship with the vulgar, when emotion, and sentiment, and tender imaginative piety have become the handmaids of superstition, and have dreamt themselves into forgetfulness that there is any difference between lies and truth, the slavish form of belief called Calvinism, in one or other of its many forms, has borne ever an inflexible front to illusion and mendacity, and has preferred rather to be ground to powder like flint than to bend before violence or melt under enervating temptation." [*Calvinism*, p. 7.]

To illustrate this Froude mentions William the Silent, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Coligny, Cromwell, Milton, and Bunyan, and says of them: "These men are possessed of all the qualities which give nobility and grandeur to human nature, men whose life was as upright as their intellect was commanding and their public aims untainted with selfishness; unalterably just where duty required them to be stern, but with the tenderness of a woman in their hearts; frank, true, cheerful, humorous, as unlike sour fanatics as it is possible to imagine anyone, and able in some way to sound the keynote to which every brave and faithful heart in Europe instinctively vibrated." [*Calvinism*, p. 8.]

We shall now turn our attention to Calvinism as an evangelizing force. A very practical test for any system of religious doctrine is, "Has it, in comparison with other systems, proved itself a success in the evangelization of the world?" To save sinners and convert them to practical godliness is the chief purpose of the Church in this world; and the system which will not measure up to this test must be set aside, no matter how popular it may be in other respects.

The first great Christian revival, in which three thousand people were converted, occurred under the preaching of Peter in Jerusalem, who employed such language as this: "Him being delivered up by the determinate council and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hands of lawless men did crucify and slay," Acts 2:23. And the company of

disciples, when in earnest prayer shortly afterward, spoke in these words: "For of a truth in this city against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel foreordained to come to pass," Acts 4:27, 28. That is Calvinism rigid enough.

The next great revival in the Church, which occurred in the fourth century through the influence of Augustine, was based on these doctrines, as is readily seen by anyone who reads the literature on that period. The Reformation, which is admitted by all to have been incomparably the greatest revival of true religion since New Testament times, occurred under the soundly predestinarian preaching of Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin. To Calvin and Admiral Coligny belongs the credit of having inspired the first Protestant foreign missionary enterprise, the expedition to Brazil in 1555. True, the venture proved unsuccessful, and the religious wars in Europe prevented the renewal of the enterprise for a considerable period.

McFetridge has given us some interesting and comparatively unknown facts about the rise of the Methodist Church. Says he: "We speak of the Methodist Church beginning in a revival. And so it did. But the first and chief actor in that revival was not Wesley, but Whitefield (an uncompromising Calvinist). Though a younger man than Wesley, it was he who first went forth preaching in the fields and gathering multitudes of followers, and raising money and building chapels. It was Whitefield who invoked the two Wesleys to his aid. And he had to employ much argument and persuasion to overcome their prejudices against the movement. Whitefield began the great work at Bristol and Kingswood, and had found thousands flocking to his side, ready to be organized into churches, when he appealed to Wesley for assistance. Wesley, with all his zeal, had been quite a High-Churchman in many of his views. He believed in immersing even the infants, and demanded that dissenters should be rebaptized before being taken into the Church. He could not think of preaching in any place but in a church. 'He should have thought,' as he said, 'the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church.' Hence when Whitefield called on John Wesley to engage with him in the popular movement, he shrank back. Finally, he yielded to Whitefield's persuasions, but, he allowed himself to be governed in the decision by what many would rate as a superstition. He and Charles first opened their Bibles at random to see if their eyes should fall on a text which might decide them. But the texts were all foreign to the subject. Then he had recourse to sortilege, and cast lots to decide the matter. The lot drawn was the one marked for him to consent, and so he consented. Thus he was led to undertake the work with which his name has been so intimately and honorably associated ever since.

"So largely was the Methodist movement owing to Whitefield that he was called 'the Calvinistic establisher of Methodism,' and to the end of his life he remained the representative of it in the eyes of the learned world. Walpole, in his Letters, speaks

only once of Wesley in connection with the rise of Methodism, while he frequently speaks of Whitefield in connection with it. Mant, in his course of lectures against Methodism, speaks of it as an entirely Calvinistic affair. Neither the mechanism nor the force which gave rise to it originated with Wesley. Field-preaching, which gave the whole movement its aggressive character, and fitted and enabled it to cope with the powerful agencies which were armed against it, was begun by Whitefield, whilst 'Wesley was dragged into it reluctantly.' In the polite language of the day 'Calvinism' and 'Methodism' were synonymous terms, and the Methodists were called 'another sect of Presbyterians.' ....

"It was Calvinism, and not Arminianism, which originated (so far as any system of doctrine originated) the great religious movement in which the Methodist Church was born.

"While, therefore, Wesley is to be honored for his work in behalf of that Church, we should not fail to remember the great Calvinist, George Whitefield, who gave that Church her first beginnings and her most distinctive character. Had he lived longer, and not shrunk from the thought of being the founder of a Church, far different would have been the results of his labors. As it was, he gathered congregations for others to form into Churches, and built chapels for others to preach in." [*Calvinism in History*, pp. 151-153.]

Furthermore, when we come to a study of foreign missions we find that this system of belief has been the most important agency in carrying the Gospel to the heathen nations. St. Paul, whom the more liberal opponents of Calvinism admit to have been responsible for the Calvinistic cast of the theological thought of the Church, was the greatest and most influential of missionaries. If we call the roll of the heroes of Protestant Missions we find that almost without exception they have been disciples of Calvin. We find Carey and Martyn in India, Livingstone and Moffat in Africa, Morrison in China, Paton in the South Seas, and a great host of others. These men professed and possessed a Calvinism which was not static but dynamic; it was not their creed only, but their conduct.

And in regard to foreign missions, Dr. F. W. Loetscher has said: "Though like all our sister Churches we have reason, in view of our unprecedented resources and the appalling needs of heathen lands, to lament that we have not accomplished more, we may at least thank God that our venerated fathers made so good a beginning in establishing missions all over the world; that the Calvinistic Churches today surpass all others in their gifts to this cause; and in particular that our own denomination has the unique honor and privilege of discharging her far-reaching responsibilities by actually confronting every one of the great non-Christian religions, and preaching the gospel on more continents, and among more nations, peoples, and tongues, than any other evangelical Church in the world." [Address before the General Assembly of the

Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., 1929.]

Although to some it may sound like an unwarranted exaggeration, we have no hesitation in saying that through the centuries Calvinism, fearlessly and ringingly polemic in its insistence upon, and defense of, sound doctrine, has been the real strength of the Christian Church. The traditionally high standards of the Calvinistic Churches in regard to ministerial training and culture have borne a great harvest in bringing multitudes to the feet of Jesus, not in temporary excitement, but in perpetual covenant. Judged by its fruits Calvinism has proven itself incomparably the greatest evangelizing force in the world.

The enemies of Calvinism are not able honestly to confront the testimony of history. Certainly a glorious record belongs to this system in the history of modern civilization. None more noble can be found anywhere. "It has ever been a mystery to the so-called liberals," says Henry Ward Beecher, "that the Calvinists, with what they have considered their harshly despotic and rigid views and doctrines, should always have been the staunchest and bravest defenders of freedom. The working for liberty of these severe principles in the minds of those that adopted them has been a puzzle. But the truth lies here: Calvinism has done what no other religion has ever been able to do. It presents the highest human ideal to the world, and sweeps the whole road to destruction with the most appalling battery that can be imagined.

"It intensifies, beyond all example, the individuality of man, and shows in a clear and overpowering light his responsibility to God and his relations to eternity. It points out man as entering life under the weight of a tremendous responsibility, having on his march toward the grave, this one sole solace of securing heaven and of escaping hell.

"Thus the Calvinist sees man pressed, burdened, urged on, by the most mighty influencing forces. He is on the march for eternity, and is soon to stand crowned in heaven or to lie sweltering in hell, thus to continue for ever and ever. Who shall dare to fetter such a being? Get out of his way! Hinder him not, or do it at the peril of your own soul. Leave him free to find his way to God. Meddle not with him or with his rights. Let him work out his own salvation as he can. No hand must be laid crushingly upon a creature who is on such a race as this a race whose end is to be eternal glory or unutterable woe for ever and ever." [*Plymouth Pulpit*, article, "Calvinism".]

"This tree," to adopt the eloquent paragraph of another, "may have, to prejudiced eyes, a rough bark, a gnarled stem, and boughs twisted often into knotted shapes of ungraceful strength. But, remember, it is not a willow-wand of yesterday. These boughs have wrestled with the storms of a thousand years; this stem has been wreathed with the red lightning and scarred by the thunderbolt; and all over its rough rind are the marks of the battle-axe and the bullet. This old oak has not the pliant grace and silky softness of a greenhouse plant, but it has a majesty above grace, and a



grandeur beyond beauty. Its roots may be strangely contorted, but some of them are rich with the blood of glorious battlefields, some of them are clasped around the stakes of martyrs; some of them hidden in solitary cells and lonely libraries, where deep thinkers have mused and prayed, as in some apocalyptic Patmos; and its great tap-root runs back, until it twines in living and loving embrace around the cross of Calvary. Its boughs may be gnarled, but they hang clad with all that is richest and strongest in the civilization and Christianity of human history." [*Power and Claims of a Calvinistic Literature*, p. 35, quoted from Smith, *The Creed of Presbyterians*, p. 105.]

This is no vain and empty eulogy of Calvinism. With the above facts and observations every enlightened and impartial reader of history will agree. Furthermore, the author would say of this book what Dr. E. W. Smith in his book, "The Creed of Presbyterians," said at the close of the chapter on, "The Creed Tested By Its Fruits," namely that these facts and observations are "set forth, not to stimulate denominational vanity, but to fill us with gratitude to God for that past history and that present eminence which should be to every one of us.

'A vantage-ground for nobleness'; and above all to kindle in our hearts a holy enthusiasm for that Divine system of truth, which, under God, has been the foremost factor in the making of America and the modern world."

In conclusion we would say that in this book the reader has found some very old-fashioned divinity divinity as old as the Bible, as old and older than the world itself, since this plan of redemption was hidden in the eternal counsels of God. No attempt has been made to cloak the fact that the doctrines advocated and defended in these pages are really wonderful and startling. They are enough to electrify the sleepy sinner who has taken it for granted all his life long that he can square matters with God any time he pleases, and they are sufficient to horrify the sleepy "saint" who has been deluding himself in the deadening repose of a carnal religion. But why should they not cause astonishment? Does not nature teem with wonders? Why should not revelation? One needs to read but little to become aware that Science brings to light many astonishing truths which an uneducated man finds it hard, if not impossible, to believe; and why should it not be so with the truths of Revelation and the spiritually uneducated? If the Gospel does not startle and terrify and amaze a man when presented to him, it is not the true Gospel. But who was ever amazed at Arminianism with its doctrine that every man carves out his own destiny? It will not suffice merely to ignore or ridicule these doctrines as many are inclined to do. The question is, Are these doctrines true? If they are true, why ridicule them? If they are not true, disprove them. We close with the statement that this great system of religious thought which bears Calvin's name is nothing more or less than the hope of the world.

## **What is the difference between the Covenant of Works, the Covenant of Grace, and the Covenant of Redemption?**

Covenant Theology sees three basic, comprehensive covenants which structure all of redemptive history from eternity past to eternity future. All of these covenants, though each one is distinct, are very closely interconnected. The most fundamental of these three covenants is what theologians call the “Covenant of Redemption”. This refers to the inter-trinitarian pact made in eternity past, in which the Father designed, the Son agreed to undertake, and the Spirit agreed to apply the results of redemption. In this first divine covenant, every person whom Christ would redeem, and whom he would be given as the reward for his sufferings, was chosen by the Father before the worlds were ever created.

The Covenant of Works is related to the Covenant of Redemption in that it sets the stage for the work that the Son undertook to accomplish, and gives the terms of what he would have to do in the pursuance of the redemption that he had covenanted with the Father to provide for his people. In this covenant, the Father lays certain stipulations upon man, his climactic creature formed in his image, with the promise of eternal life in his most blessed presence as the outcome of successfully fulfilling his terms. If Christ would accomplish what the Covenant of Redemption requires of him, then, he must fulfill the terms of the Covenant of Works perfectly; he must do so as a man; and he must do so as the federal head or representative of the people he had covenanted to save.

Finally, the Covenant of Grace, is closely related to the Covenant of Works, in that, it is basically a republication of that Covenant, and promises the same end of eternal life in God's presence, on the condition of the perfect fulfillment of God's commands. However, it has an added proviso: because Adam, the first federal head of the human race, failed to keep the terms of the covenant, God freely promised to send a new federal head, the Christ, to do what Adam had failed to do, and to win the rewards of the covenant that Adam had broken. Of course, as this broken Covenant already demanded punishment, the Christ was also required to satisfy the curse that Adam had called down upon himself and his descendants. In the Covenant of Grace, God unilaterally promises the reward of his eternal, favorable presence, and he pledges by his own person and at his own expense to do so. This may be seen in the animal he provided and killed to clothe Adam's shame, in the bow drawn back against himself after Noah's flood, in his walking alone through the severed animal halves before Abraham, etc. And ultimately, it was fulfilled when Christ underwent the covenant curses for us who had merited them in Adam; and won for us as our new federal head, by a life of perfect obedience, all the covenant blessings. All of the historical covenants mentioned in the scriptures are organically-connected expressions or administrations

of the Covenant of Grace.

## **Doctrines of Grace – Categorized Scripture List**

**by Nathan Pitchford**

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God has recently given us the opportunity to discuss some theological issues with other Christians who believe differently than we do on a number of points, most notably the doctrines of grace. In such a circumstance, given the overwhelming supply of scriptural evidence that comes to bear on the topic, it seemed to me that the best approach would be a simple categorized scripture list: the fact that the entire paper would be scriptures, with the exception of a few brief explanatory notes, would underscore the truth that this is God's own word and teaching; and the fact that it would be categorized would facilitate the ready comparison of scripture with scripture so as to lead one to a full-orbed understanding of the biblical teaching. Although I found a few good scripture lists of that nature available online, none of them was laid out in quite the progression that I was looking for, and so I developed my own. I'm posting it here with just the scripture references. Below, for your convenience I have provided a condensed version and a full version of the study. The study is also available in print from Monergism Books.

## Unconditional Election

**God is Sovereign** Exo 15:18; 1Chr 29:11-12; 2Chr 20:6; Psa 22:28

1. He exercises that sovereignty in actively ordaining everything  
Deu 32:39; 1Sam 2:6-8; Job 9:12; Job 12:6-10; Psa 33:11; Psa 115:3; Psa 135:6; Isa 14:24; Isa 45:7; Act 15:18; Eph 1:11
  - Including matters of “chance”  
Pro 16:33; 1Ki 22:20, 34, 37
  - The wicked actions of men  
Gen 45:5; Gen 50:20; Exo 4:21; Jdg 14:1-4; Psa 76:10; Pro 16:4; Isa 44:28; Amos 3:6; Act 2:22-23; Act 4:27-28
  - The actions of evil spirits  
1Sam 16:14-16; 1Ki 22:19-23; 1Chr 21:1/2Sam 24:1
  - The good actions of men  
John 15:16; Eph 2:10; Phi 2:12-13
  - The actions of good angels  
Psa 103:20; Psa 104:4
  - The actions of animals  
Num 22:28; 1Ki 17:4; Psa 29:9; Jer 8:7; Eze 32:4; Dan 6:22
  - The operations of all creation  
Gen 8:22; Psa 104:5-10; Psa 104:13-14; Psa 104:19-20; Mark 4:39
2. *Man is not permitted to question his sovereign acts*  
Job 33:12-13; Isa 29:16; Isa 45:9-10; Mat 20:1-16; Rom 9:19-24

**God elects [i.e. chooses, predestines, foreordains]**

1. *His angels*  
1Tim 5:21
2. *His peculiar people, Israel*  
Exo 6:7; Deu 7:6-8; Deu 10:14-15; Psa 33:12; Isa 43:20-21
3. *Individuals to salvation*  
Psa 65:4; Mat 24:24; John 6:37; John 15:16; Act 13:48; Rom 8:28-30; Rom 9:10-24; Rom 11:5-7; Eph 1:3-6; Eph 1:11-12; 1The 1:4; 1The 5:9; 2The 2:13-14
4. *Individuals to condemnation*  
Exo 4:21; Rom 9:13; Rom 9:17-18; Rom 9:21-22; 1Pet 2:8

## **His motivation in election**

1. *His own good pleasure*  
Eph 1:5; 2Tim 1:9
2. *The display of his glory*  
Isa 43:6-7; Rom 9:22-24; 1Cor 1:27-31; Eph 2:4-7; Pro 16:4
3. *His special love*  
Deu 7:6-8; 2The 2:13
4. *His foreknowledge*  
Rom 8:29; 1Pet 1:2
  - Which means his special love  
Jer 1:5; Amos 3:2; Mat 7:22-23; 1Cor 8:3; 2Tim 2:19; 1Pet 1:20
  - *But not:*
  - Any good [nobility, wisdom, power, choice, seeking] he foresees in anyone  
Deu 7:7; Rom 9:11-13; Rom 9:16; Rom 10:20; 1Cor 1:27-29; 1Cor 4:7; 2Tim 1:9

## **Total Depravity**

***Man is constituted a sinner by his relationship with Adam Psa 51:5; Psa 58:3; Rom 5:18-19 He is therefore unable***

1. *To do anything good*  
Gen 6:5; Job 15:14-16; Psa 130:3; Psa 143:2; Pro 20:9; Ecc 7:20; Isa 64:6; Jer 13:23; John 3:19; Rom 3:9-12; Jam 3:8; 1John 1:8
2. *To believe in God (or come to him)*  
John 6:44; John 6:65; John 8:43-45; John 10:26; John 12:37-41
3. *To understand the truth*  
John 14:17; 1Cor 2:14
4. *To seek God*  
Rom 3:10-11

**He is dead in sins** Gen 2:16-17; John 3:5-7; Eph 2:1-3; Col 2:13 **He is blinded and corrupt in his heart** Gen 6:5; Gen 8:21; Ecc 9:3; Jer 17:9; Mark 7:21-23; John 3:19-21; Rom 8:7-8; Eph 4:17-19; Eph 5:8 **He is captive to sin and Satan** John 8:34; John 8:44; Rom 6:20; 2Tim 2:25-26; Tit 3:3; 1John 5:19 **He performs actions freely according to his nature, but his nature is wholly evil** Job 14:4; Mat 7:16-18; Mat 12:33; Mark 7:21-23; Jam 1:13-14

## **Limited Atonement**

**God purposed to redeem a certain people and not others** 1Chr 17:20-21; Mat 22:14; 1Pet 2:8-9 [see “God elects individuals to salvation”/God elects individuals to condemnation”]

1. *It is for these in particular that Christ gave his life*  
Isa 53:10-11; Mat 1:21; John 6:35-40; John 10:3-4, 11, 14-15; Act 20:28; Eph 5:25 [we are commanded to love our wives in the same way that Christ loved the church and gave himself for it; therefore, if Christ loved and gave himself for all people in the same way, we are commanded to love all women in the same way that we love our wives]; Heb 2:17; Heb 9:15
2. *It is for these in particular that Christ intercedes*  
John 17:1-2; John 17:6-12; John 17:20-21, 24-26; Rom 8:34
3. *The people for whom Christ intercedes are the same as the people for whom he offered himself up as a sacrifice*  
Heb 7:24-27; Heb 9:12 [note context, in which entering into the holy place is explicitly for the purpose of intercession], 24-28 [For a fuller understanding of the indissoluble connection between sacrifice and intercession, read Hebrews chapters 7-10]

### **The atonement of Christ is effective**

1. *To justify*  
Isa 53:11 [the single effective cause of justification in view here is the bearing of iniquities; all whose iniquities Christ bore must be justified]; Rom 8:34 [the argument here is that the fact of Christ's death, resurrection, and intercession is in itself an incontrovertibly effective reason for non-condemnation; if this verse is true, then no one for whom Christ died and was raised to intercede may be condemned]
2. *To redeem and cleanse from sins*  
Eph 5:25-27; Tit 2:14

3. To propitiate the Father

1John 2:2 [“propitiation” means “the turning away or appeasement of wrath”; therefore, by definition, the Father has no more wrath against those whose sins have been propitiated]; 1John 4:10

4. To raise to new life

2Cor 5:14-15 [the argument is a simple “if/then” proposition: “if” Christ died for someone, “then,” with no other conditions, that person died with him and was raised again]; 1Pet 3:18

[See also, “Jesus’ death purchased for his people a new heart; – faith; – repentance”. Jesus died in order to establish the New Covenant (Mat. 26:26-29, etc.); the New Covenant promised faith, repentance and knowledge of God (Jer. 31:33-34, Ez. 36:26-27, etc.); therefore, Jesus died in order to provide faith, repentance, and knowledge of God, as the fulfillment of a unilateral promise. This means that his death had a definite purpose which was intended for some and not others. His death effectively purchased faith; not all have faith; and so his death had an effective intent that was limited to certain persons.] **Those whom God purposed to redeem include all who believe** John 3:16

1. From every nation

Rev 5:9

2. From every class

Gal 3:28; 1Tim 2:1-6 [the first “all men” is explicitly tied to all classes of men, which gives warrant for understanding the second “all men” in the same way]

3. Therefore, Christ’s saving work is commonly spoken of in terms of “all,” “world,” etc.

John 1:29; Tit 2:11-14 [in the context of “all men” is the delimiting concept of a peculiar people, zealous of good works]; Heb 2:9-10 [notice that the many sons whom Christ brings to glory gives a contextual delimiter to the term “every”]; 2Pet 3:9 [note that this desire is explicitly limited to “us” (Peter was writing to fellow-believers) in the context]; 1John 2:2 [propitiation means “appeasement of wrath”; either Jesus appeases God’s wrath against all, and therefore hell (which is the place where God’s wrath resides) is non-existent; or the “whole world” means something different than “every individual who ever lived”. See John 11:51-52, and “The word ‘world’ is often used in the sense of ‘many,’ or ‘all of a set’”]

4. The word “all” is often used to indicate all of a set, or even many representatives of a set

Mat 10:22; 1Cor 6:12; 1Cor 15:22; Mat 2:3; John 4:29; Act 10:39; Act 17:21; Act 21:28; Act 26:4

5. Or, to indicate all “classes” or “nations,” not all individuals

Mat 5:11; Act 2:17; Act 10:12

6. The word “world” is often used in the sense of “many,” or “all of a set”

*Luk 2:1-2; John 6:33; John 12:19; Act 19:27; Rom 1:8*

## ***Additional reasons that the atonement of Christ is not for all the sins of all people***

- 1. God punishes people in hell, which would be unjust if their sins were atoned for  
Mark 9:43-44*
- 2. If one were to say, "their sins are atoned for, but that atonement is not applied because of unbelief," he fails to realize that unbelief is likewise a sin  
Heb 3:12 ["The Father imposed His wrath due unto, and the Son underwent punishment for either: 1) All the sins of all men; 2) All the sins of some men; or 3) Some of the sins of all men. In which case it may be said: 1) If the last be true all men have some sins to answer for, and so none are saved; 2) That if the second be true, then Christ, in their stead suffered for all the sins of the elect in the whole world, and this is the truth; 3) But if the first is the case, why are not all men free from the punishment due unto their sins? You answer, Because of unbelief. I ask, Is this unbelief a sin, or is it not? If it be, then Christ suffered the punishment due unto it, or He did not. If He did, why must that hinder them more than their other sins for which He died? If He did not, He did not die for all their sins!" – John Owen, The Death of Death in the Death of Christ]*
- 3. God bears eternal wrath against people, which by definition means that his wrath against them has not been propitiated [appeased]  
1The 2:16; 2The 1:6-9*

## ***Intentions of Christ's death other than atonement***

- 1. To make a public display of demons  
Col 2:13-15*
- 2. To rule over everyone  
Rom 14:9*
- 3. To redeem creation  
Isa 35:1-4; Rom 8:20-23*
- 4. To lay the foundation for a genuine gospel call  
John 6:39-40; John 7:37-38*
- 5. To provide temporal mercies for the non-elect  
Mat 5:45; 1Tim 4:10*

## ***Irresistible Grace***

***Faith and Repentance (as well as the new heart which is able to produce them) are themselves gifts of God***



1. *A new heart*

*Deu 30:6; Eze 11:19; Eze 36:26-27*

2. *Faith*

*John 3:27, 6:63-65; Phi 1:29; 2Pet 1:1; Act 16:14; Act 18:27; Eph 2:8-10*

3. *Repentance*

*Act 5:3; Act 11:18; 2Tim 2:25-26; 1Cor 4:7*

***The Father writes his own word upon (places the fear of himself in, etc.) his people's hearts Jer 31:33; Jer 32:40; Mat 16:15-17; Luk 10:21; John 6:45; 2Cor 4:6 The beginning of salvation is the sovereign impartation of spiritual life into a heart which had been dead, thereby causing it to exercise faith 1John 5:1; Eze 37:3-6, 11-14; John 1:11-13; John 3:3-8; John 5:21; Eph 2:1-5; Jam 1:18; 1Pet 1:3; 1John 2:29 True offers of grace in the outward gospel call may be resisted by men who do not have this new heart Act 17:32-33 In fact, true offers of grace will always be resisted by such men John 10:24-26; John 12:37-40 But there are some whom God causes to come to him Psa 65:4; Psa 110:3; John 6:37-40; Rom 9:15***

## ***Perseverance of the Saints***

***What God begins, he finishes Psa 138:8; Ecc 3:14; Isa 46:4; Jer 32:40; Rom 11:29; Phi 1:6; 2Tim 4:18 Of all whom he has called and brought to Christ, none will be lost John 6:39-40; John 10:27-29; Rom 8:28-31; Rom 8:35-39; Heb 7:25; Heb 10:14 God's preservation of the saints is not irrespective of their continuance in the faith 1Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:5; Heb 3:14; Heb 6:4-6; Heb 10:26-27; Heb 12:14; Rev 21:7-8; Rev 22:14-15 However, it is God who sanctifies us and causes us to persevere John 15:16; 1Cor 1:30-31; 1Cor 6:11; 1Cor 12:3; 1Cor 15:10; Gal 3:1-6; Eph 2:10; Phi 2:12-13; 1The 5:23-24; Heb 13:20-21; 1John 2:29; Jud 1:24-25.***

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***Full Version***

## ***DOCTRINES OF GRACE: CATEGORIZED SCRIPTURE LIST***

### ***Unconditional Election***

## 1. **God is Sovereign**

*Exo 15:18 The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.*

*1Ch 29:11-12 Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.*

*2Ch 20:6 And said, O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?*

*Psa 22:28 For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations.*

A) *He exercises that sovereignty in actively ordaining everything*

*Deu 32:39 See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.*

*1Sa 2:6-8 The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them.*

*Job 9:12 Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What doest thou?*

*Job 12:6-10 The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly. But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.*

*Psa 33:11 The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart*

to all generations.

*Psa 115:3 But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.*

*Psa 135:6 Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.*

*Isa 14:24 The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand:*

*Isa 45:7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.*

*Act 15:18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.*

*Eph 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:*

· *Including matters of “chance”*

*Pro 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.*

*1Ki 22:20 And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead?...1Ki 22:34 And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded. ...1Ki 22:37 So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria.*

· *The wicked actions of men*

*Gen 45:5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.*

*Gen 50:20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*

*Exo 4:21 And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.*

*Jdg 14:1-4 And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in*

*Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife. Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well. But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.*

*Psa 76:10 Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.*

*Pro 16:4 The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.*

*Isa 44:28 That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.*

*Amo 3:6 Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?*

*Act 2:22-23 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:*

*Act 4:27-28 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.*

### *The actions of evil spirits*

*1Sa 16:14-16 But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him. And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.*

*1Ki 22:19-23 And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee.*

*1Ch 21:1 And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel./2Sa 24:1 And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.*

*The good actions of men*

*Joh 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

*Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

*Phi 2:12-13 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

*The actions of good angels*

*Psa 103:20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.*

*Psa 104:4 Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire:*

*The actions of animals*

*Num 22:28 And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto*

*Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?*

*1Ki 17:4 And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.*

*Psa 29:9 The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory.*

*Jer 8:7 Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD.*

*Eze 32:4 Then will I leave thee upon the land, I will cast thee forth upon the open field, and will cause all the fowls of the heaven to remain upon thee, and I will fill the beasts of the whole earth with thee.*

*Dan 6:22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.*

#### *The operations of all creation*

*Gen 8:22 While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.*

*Psa 104:5-10 Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever. Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains. At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them. Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth. He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills.*

*Psa 104:13-14 He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth;*

*Psa 104:19-20 He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.*

*Mar 4:39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.*

B) *Man is not permitted to question his sovereign acts*

*Job 33:12-13 Behold, in this thou art not just: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man. Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.*

*Isa 29:16 Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?*

*Isa 45:9-10 Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?*

*Mat 20:1-16 [Parable of the laborers of the vineyard]*

*Rom 9:19-24 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*

**2. God elects [i.e. chooses, predestines, foreordains ]**

A) *His angels*

*1Ti 5:21 I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.*

B) *His peculiar people, Israel*

*Exo 6:7 And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.*

*Deu 7:6-8 For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that*

are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

*Deu 10:14-15 Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.*

*Psa 33:12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.*

*Isa 43:20-21 The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.*

### C) Individuals to salvation

*Psa 65:4 Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.*

*Mat 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*

*Joh 6:37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

*Joh 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

*Act 13:48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*

*Rom 8:28-30 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, 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.*

*Rom 9:10-24 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (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;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*

*Rom 11:5-7 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.*

*Eph 1:3-6 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

*Eph 1:11-12 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in*

Christ.

*1Th 1:4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.*

*1Th 5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,*

*2Th 2:13-14 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

#### *D) Individuals to condemnation*

*Exo 4:21 And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.*

*Rom 9:13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*

*Rom 9:17-18 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.*

*Rom 9:21-22 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:*

*1Pe 2:8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.*

### **3. His motivation in election**

#### *A) His own good pleasure*

*Eph 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*

*2Ti 1:9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,*

## B) The display of his glory

*Isa 43:6-7 I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.*

*Rom 9:22-24 What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*

*Eph 2:4-7 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

*1Co 1:27-31 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*

*Pro 16:4 The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.*

## C) His special love

*Deu 7:6-8 For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*

*2Th 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren*

*beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:*

*D) His foreknowledge*

*Rom 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

*1Pe 1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.*

· *Which means his special love*

*Jer 1:5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.*

*Amo 3:2 You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.*

*Mat 7:22-23 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

*1Co 8:3 But if any man love God, the same is known of him.*

*2Ti 2:19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

*1Pe 1:20 Who verily was foreordained [Greek, "foreknown"] before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,*

*E) But not:*

· *Any good [nobility, wisdom, power, choice, seeking] he foresees in anyone*

*Deu 7:7 The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:*

*Rom 9:11-13 (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;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the*

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

*Rom 9:16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.*

*Rom 10:20 But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.*

*1Cor 1:27-29 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.*

*1Cor 4:7 For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?*

*2Ti 1:9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,*

## **Total Depravity**

### **1. Man is constituted a sinner by his relationship with Adam**

*Psa 51:5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

*Psa 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.*

*Rom 5:18-19 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

### **2. He is therefore unable**

*A) To do anything good*

*Gen 6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

*Job 15:14-16 What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?*

*Psa 130:3 If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?*

*Psa 143:2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.*

*Pro 20:9 Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?*

*Ecc 7:20 For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.*

*Isa 64:6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*

*Jer 13:23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.*

*Joh 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

*Rom 3:9-12 What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

*Jam 3:8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.*

*1Jo 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

*B) To believe in God (or come to him)*

*Joh 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

*Joh 6:65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.*

*Joh 8:43-45 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.*

*Joh 10:26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.*

*Joh 12:37-41 But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.*

### *C) To understand the truth*

*Joh 14:17 "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.*

*1Co 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

### *D) To seek God*

*Rom 3:10-11 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*

## **3. He is dead in sins**

*Gen 2:16-17 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

*Joh 3:5-7 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

*Eph 2:1-3 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

*Col 2:13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;*

#### **4. He is blinded and corrupt in his heart**

*Gen 6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

*Gen 8:21 And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.*

*Ecc 9:3 This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.*

*Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

*Mar 7:21-23 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.*

*Joh 3:19-21 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in [by] God.*

*Rom 8:7-8 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

*Eph 4:17-19 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding*



*darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*

*Eph 5:8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:*

## **5. He is captive to sin and Satan**

*Joh 8:34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*

*Joh 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*

*Rom 6:20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.*

*2Ti 2:25-26 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.*

*Tit 3:3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.*

*1Jo 5:19 And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.*

## **6. He performs actions freely according to his nature, but his nature is wholly evil**

*Job 14:4 Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.*

*Mat 7:16-18 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*

*Mat 12:33 Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.*

*Mar 7:21-23 "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, "thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. "All these evil things come from within and defile a man."*

*Jam 1:13-14 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*

## **Limited Atonement**

### **1. God purposed to redeem a certain people and not others**

*1Ch 17:20-21 O LORD, there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. And what one nation in the earth is like thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem to be his own people, to make thee a name of greatness and terribleness, by driving out nations from before thy people, whom thou hast redeemed out of Egypt?*

*Mat 22:14 For many are called, but few are chosen.*

*1Pe 2:8-9 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*

*[see "God elects individuals to salvation"/God elects individuals to condemnation"]*

*A) It is for these in particular that Christ gave his life*

*Is 53:10-11 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.*

*Mat 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*

*Joh 6:35-40 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth*

*me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

*Joh 10:3-4 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice....Joh 10:11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep....Joh 10:14-15 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.*

*Act 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

*Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; [we are commanded to love our wives in the same way that Christ loved the church and gave himself for it; therefore, if Christ loved and gave himself for all people in the same way, we are commanded to love all women in the same way that we love our wives]*

*Heb 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.*

*Heb 9:15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.*

**B) It is for these in particular that Christ intercedes**

*Joh 17:1-2 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.*

*Joh 17:6-12 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept*

*thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.*

*Joh 17:20-21 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*

*Joh 17:24-26 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.*

*Rom 8:34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

C) *The people for whom Christ intercedes are the same as the people for whom he offered himself up as a sacrifice*

*Heb 7:24-27 But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.*

*Heb 9:12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. [note context, in which entering into the holy place is explicitly for the purpose of intercession]*

*Heb 9:24-28 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

*[For a fuller understanding of the indissoluble connection between sacrifice and intercession, read Hebrews chapters 7-10]*

## **2. The atonement of Christ is effective**

### **A) To justify**

*Isa 53:11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. [the single effective cause of justification in view here is the bearing of iniquities; all whose iniquities Christ bore must be justified]*

*Rom 8:34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. [the argument here is that the fact of Christ's death, resurrection, and intercession is in itself an incontrovertibly effective reason for non-condemnation; if this verse is true, then no one for whom Christ died and was raised to intercede may be condemned]*

### **B) To redeem and cleanse from sins**

*Eph 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

*Tit 2:14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

### **C) To propitiate the Father**

*1Jo 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. [“propitiation” means “the turning away or*

*appeasement of wrath”; therefore, by definition, the Father has no more wrath against those whose sins have been propitiated]*

*1Jo 4:10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

*D) To raise to new life*

*2Co 5:14-15 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. [the argument is a simple “if/then” proposition: “if” Christ died for someone, “then,” with no other conditions, that person died with him and was raised again]*

*1Pe 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:*

*[See also, “Jesus’ death purchased for his people a new heart; – faith; – repentance”. Jesus died in order to establish the New Covenant (Mt. 26:26-29, etc.); the New Covenant promised faith, repentance and knowledge of God (Jer. 31:33-34, Ez. 36:26-27, etc.); therefore, Jesus died in order to provide faith, repentance, and knowledge of God, as the fulfillment of a unilateral promise. This means that his death had a definite purpose which was intended for some and not others. His death effectively purchased faith; not all have faith; and so his death had an effective intent that was limited to certain persons.]*

**3. Those whom God purposed to redeem include all who believe**

*Joh 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.*

*A) From every nation*

*Rev 5:9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;*

*B) From every class*

*Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

*1Ti 2:1-6 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. [the first “all men” is explicitly tied to all classes of men, which gives warrant for understanding the second “all men” in the same way]*

C) *Therefore, Christ's saving work is commonly spoken of in terms of “all,” “world,” etc.*

*Joh 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

*Tit 2:11-14 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. [in the context of “all men” is the delimiting concept of a peculiar people, zealous of good works]*

*Heb 2:9-10 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. [notice that the many sons whom Christ brings to glory gives a contextual delimiter to the term “every”]*

*2Pe 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. [note that this desire is explicitly limited to “us” (Peter was writing to fellow-believers) in the context]*

*1Jo 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. [propitiation means “appeasement of wrath”; either Jesus appeases God's wrath against all, and therefore hell (which is the place where God's wrath resides) is non-existent; or the “whole world” means something different than “every individual who ever lived”. See John 11:51-52, and “The word 'world' is often used in the sense of 'many,' or 'all of a set”]*

D) The word “all” is often used to indicate all of a set, or even many representatives of a set

*Mat 10:22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.*

*1Co 6:12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.*

*1Co 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

*Mat 2:3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.*

*Joh 4:29 Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?*

*Act 10:39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree:*

*Act 17:21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)*

*Act 21:28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.*

*Act 26:4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews;*

E) Or, to indicate all “classes” or “nations,” not all individuals

*Mat 5:11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of [“manner of” is not in the Greek] evil against you falsely, for my sake.*

*Act 2:17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:*

*Act 10:12 Wherein were all manner of [“manner of” is not in the Greek] fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.*

F) The word “world” is often used in the sense of “many,” or “all of a set”



*Luk 2:1-2 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)*

*Joh 6:33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.*

*Joh 12:19 The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.*

*Act 19:27 So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.*

*Rom 1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.*

#### **4. Additional reasons that the atonement of Christ is not for all the sins of all people**

A) *God punishes people in hell, which would be unjust if their sins were atoned for*

*Mar 9:43-44 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

B) *If one were to say, “their sins are atoned for, but that atonement is not applied because of unbelief,” he fails to realize that unbelief is likewise a sin*

*Heb 3:12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*

*[“The Father imposed His wrath due unto, and the Son underwent punishment for either:*

- 1) All the sins of all men;*
- 2) All the sins of some men; or*
- 3) Some of the sins of all men.*

*In which case it may be said:*

- 1) If the last be true all men have some sins to answer for, and so none are saved;*
- 2) That if the second be true, then Christ, in their stead suffered for all the sins of the elect in the whole world, and this is the truth;*

3) But if the first is the case, why are not all men free from the punishment due unto their sins? You answer, Because of unbelief. I ask, Is this unbelief a sin, or is it not? If it be, then Christ suffered the punishment due unto it, or He did not. If He did, why must that hinder them more than their other sins for which He died? If He did not, He did not die for all their sins!" – John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*

C) *God bears eternal wrath against people, which by definition means that his wrath against them has not been propitiated [appeased]*

*1Th 2:16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.*

*2Th 1:6-9 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;*

## **5. Intentions of Christ's death other than atonement**

A) *To make a public display of demons*

*Col 2:13-15 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

B) *To rule over everyone*

*Rom 14:9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.*

C) *To redeem creation*

*Isa 35:1-4 The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.*

*Rom 8:20-23 For the creature [in Greek, same word as “creation,” verse 22] was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature [in Greek, same word as “creation,” verse 22] itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

*D) To lay the foundation for a genuine gospel call*

*Joh 6:39-40 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

*Joh 7:37-38 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*

*E) To provide temporal mercies for the non-elect*

*Mat 5:45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

*1Ti 4:10 For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.*

## **Irresistible Grace**

**1. Faith and Repentance (as well as the new heart which is able to produce them) are themselves gifts of God**

*A) A new heart*

*Deu 30:6 And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.*

*Eze 11:19 And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of*

*flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.*

*Eze 36:26-27 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

## **B) Faith**

*Joh 3:27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.*

*Phi 1:29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;*

*2Pe 1:1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:*

*Act 16:14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.*

*Act 18:27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:*

*Eph 2:8-10 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

*John 6:63-65 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64 But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) 65 And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."*

## **C) Repentance**

*Act 5:31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.*

*Act 11:18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.*

*2Ti 2:25-26 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.*

*1Co 4:7 For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?*

**2. The Father writes his own word upon (places the fear of himself in, etc.) his people's hearts**

*Jer 31:33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

*Jer 32:40 And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.*

*Mat 16:15-17 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*

*Luk 10:21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.*

*Joh 6:45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.*

*2Co 4:6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

**3. The beginning of salvation is the sovereign impartation of spiritual life into a heart which had been dead, thereby causing it to exercise faith**

*1Jo 5:1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.*

*Eze 37:3-6, 11-14 And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD....Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD.*

*Joh 1:11-13 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

*Joh 3:3-8 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

*Joh 5:21 For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.*

*Eph 2:1-5 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his*

great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

*Jam 1:18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

*1Pe 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*

*1Jo 2:29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.*

**4. True offers of grace in the outward gospel call may be resisted by men who do not have this new heart**

*Act 17:32-33 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. So Paul departed from among them.*

**5. In fact, true offers of grace will always be resisted by such men**

*Joh 10:24-26 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.*

*Joh 12:37-40 But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.*

**6. But there are some whom God causes to come to him**

*Psa 65:4 Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.*

*Psa 110:3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.*

*Joh 6:37-40 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

*Rom 9:15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*

## ***Perseverance of the Saints***

### **1. What God begins, he finishes**

*Psa 138:8 The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.*

*Ecc 3:14 I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.*

*Isa 46:4 And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.*

*Jer 32:40 And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.*

*Rom 11:29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*

*Phi 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*

*2Ti 4:18 And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

### **2. Of all whom he has called and brought to Christ, none will be lost**

*Joh 6:39-40 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and*



*believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

*Joh 10:27-29 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*

*Rom 8:28-31 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, 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. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

*Rom 8:35-39 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

*Heb 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

*Heb 10:14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*

### **3. God's preservation of the saints is not irrespective of their continuance in the faith**

*1Co 6:9-10 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*

*Gal 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

*Eph 5:5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor*

covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

*Heb 3:14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;*

*Heb 6:4-6 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*

*Heb 10:26-27 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.*

*Heb 12:14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:*

*Rev 21:7-8 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

*Rev 22:14-15 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.*

#### **4. However, it is God who sanctifies us and causes us to persevere**

*Joh 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

*1Co 1:30-31 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*

*1Co 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

*1Co 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.*

*1Co 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

*Gal 3:1-6 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*

*Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

*Phi 2:12-13 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

*1Th 5:23-24 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.*

*Heb 13:20-21 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

*1Jo 2:29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.*

*Jud 1:24-25 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*

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