

*God's Sovereignty  
and Glory  
in the Election  
and Salvation  
of  
Lost Men*

R. A. Huebner

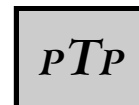
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## Preface

Have you been taught that lost man has moral free will towards God? Have you been taught that God has limited Himself so as not to interfere with that supposed moral free will? And, have you been taught that one is saved through an act of human faith exercised by his own will? Have you also been taught that once saved, a Christian **cannot** be lost again by the exercise of that same moral free will? In other words, God says to lost man, if you exercise your free will to believe what I say to you, i.e., if you choose Me, then I choose you; and if I choose you, I will force you into incapacity to un-choose Me. Is that what you have been, in effect, taught?

Frequently, persons hold certain unscriptural teachings because they think they are protecting or honoring the character of God. For example, those holding the notion of man's moral free will towards God think that it would be immoral of God to expect payment from man if man has not the ability to pay. Inability to pay God means no responsibility to pay, they say. Should we expect such to say to someone who owes them one million dollars, and has not one cent to pay, "Inability to pay means no responsibility to pay, so you do not owe me anything"?

Similarly, many say that God would never command men to do anything that man cannot perform. But did any man but Christ ever keep the law perfectly? Well, we will consider such matters. The sovereignty and the glory of God have a claim upon every believer that we should honor Him in His sovereignty and glory.

In speaking of God's sovereignty, what is meant is that His will is supreme and He is in control of everything -- whoever it be and whatsoever it be:

... till thou shalt know that the Most High ruleth over the kingdoms of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will (Dan. 4:25).

The king's heart in the hand of Jehovah is [as] brooks of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will (Prov. 21:1).

He that dwelleth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision (Psa. 2:4).

The kings of the earth were there, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ . . . to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel had determined before should come to pass (Acts 4:26-28).

... but God has thus fulfilled what he had announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer (Acts 3:18).

... for I [am] God and there is none else; [I am] God, and there is none like me; declaring 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 (Isa. 46:9, 10).

The glory of God seems more difficult to Christians to apprehend. The word itself (*doxa*) indicates an honor rendered. I suggest to the reader that the glory of God involves what He is in His nature. He is two things: light and love (and in that moral order as revealed in the Word). God always acts in accordance with what He is. Thus, in all His ways He acts in moral excellence consistently with what He is as light and love. All that proceeds from God, proceeds forth in moral excellence, always consistent with what He is as light and love. His election and salvation of lost men displays this infinite, moral excellence. If we think of the cross, we see there God as light judging sin and sins, root and fruit, providing a righteous basis upon which His love can go out to the lost and upon which He can be just in justifying the sinner whose faith rests in the Person and work of Christ. He must be just in justifying the sinner, else it would be evil and a disgrace rather than glory.

For the work on the cross to glorify God -- to express the moral excellency of what He is in His nature as light and love, thus glorifying Him -- the sacrifice on the cross must be of such a moral character, be of such moral excellence, that it can meet that glory of God. Yes, indeed, that glory of the sacrifice must be of commensurate glory with the glory of God. It is the Person of Christ as the God-man Who is commensurate in glory and could do such a God-glorifying work. Why so? It is because the glory and virtue of His Person was imparted to the work. Christ's whole pathway here glorified God as did His work on the cross, as indicated in John 17:4. As has been pointed out, this glory was typified in Lev. 16 on the day of atonement.

Let us ever keep before us the great fact that every word, way and work of the Lord Jesus had a divine spring. This is so because of the union in Him of the human and divine -- two natures, one Person. The Son of God took humanity into His Person. His death was a human death, but it was not a death accomplished in independence of deity. The accomplishment of that death had a divine spring, which imparted to that death all the value of His Person. So was it with the atoning sufferings and the abandonment. It was as man He bore this, but not as man apart from deity. The value of His infinite Person imparted infinite value to the sufferings and abandonment. The stream of blood and water from His side has all the value of His death in it; and the death has in it all the value of His atoning sufferings and abandonment during the three hours of darkness. It is all one great whole having the infinite value of His Person. This is typified in Lev. 16, where the cloud of incense rose up from the incense upon the coals of fire from the altar before Jehovah -- and that cloud of the incense covered the mercy-seat which was upon the testimony (Lev. 16:12, 13). There was another cloud present upon that occasion: "for I will appear in the cloud

upon the mercy seat” (Lev. 16:2). This is the Shekinah of glory bespeaking all the glory of God. What could possibly meet that glory? One has well said that righteousness can meet the claims of righteousness, but only a cloud could meet a cloud! And here two clouds met. One cloud was brought before the other. The cloud brought into the sanctuary rose up from the incense upon the burning coals. It signifies the glory of our Beloved coming up from the burning coals of Calvary before the God of glory. The rising up of His glory, so to speak, before the Shekinah of glory, and what answers to the blood sprinkled on and before the mercy-seat, all took place on the cross. The work entailed the three hours of suffering, the voluntary death, and the bloodshedding (accompanied by the water of cleansing). The blood has all the value of this work comprehended in its value -- which necessarily contains the value and glory of His Person. The blood rent the veil, so to speak. The rending of the veil, consequent upon the finishing of that work of infinite value to God, was the response of the Shekinah of glory, for God was infinitely glorified. Glory had met glory. “I have glorified thee on the earth, I have completed the work which thou gavest me that I should do it” (John 17:5). The abandonment, then, experienced as man, had all the value and glory of His Person before God. As a consequence of God being so glorified, it is the glory of God to justify sinners who trust the Person and finished work of Him Who brought such infinite glory to God. It is the glory of God to save lost men who will not come to Christ by their own will, doing so in a way consistent with His glory, and glorifying Himself in doing so.

The first topic to consider is the testing of man from the fall of Adam until the cross – to see if he was recoverable. No one asked God to do this. He exercised His sovereignty to test fallen man as an act of His own will. This, as all else, has in view the exhibition of His glory. It is important to understand the character of this trial of the fallen “first man,” its objective, and the conclusion to be understood from the completed testing. So, ch. 1 will briefly survey this subject. Then in ch. 2 we will consider Luke 13, 14, with emphasis on the parable of the great supper. This will examine the moral character of man in his response to God’s *invitation* as well as God’s sovereignty in view of man’s moral character displayed in refusal to come. How does God provide His great supper with participants? This helps us to understand the sovereignty and glory of God in the salvation of sinners. Subsequent chapters will examine the subject as given in a number of NT books.

While we will touch on some Arminian and Calvinistic views, the readers who are especially in mind in writing this book include those who, while accepting the truth of eternal security, also hold that man has free moral will towards God and who claim that faith is of human origin, not divinely implanted faith, but human will exercised in virtue of that alleged moral free will towards God.

This view has been set forth again, by Norman Geisler in *Chosen But Free* (1999). This book was subsequently reprinted in 2000<sup>1</sup> with some additions; and in giving the page numbers of quotations from this work, the page for the later edition is in brackets [ ]. <sup>1</sup> I expect that his arguments for this view will be popular with those who hold both moral free will towards God and also eternal security. I will notice his more important points made concerning various Scriptures.

The truth set out in the book in the reader’s hands is that unconditional election of the saints is taught in Scripture, along with the fact that man is totally lost. That is, his will is controlled by “sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3) and thus he does not have moral free will towards God. At the same time, the Calvinistic doctrine of an eternal decree of reprobation is rejected herein and this teaching will receive some notice in body of the book. Also, appendix one gives some attention to that subject.

Appendix two presents Dr. Norman Geisler’s statement of “Moderate Calvinism” along with a few observations thereon.

Appendix 7 discusses and rejects the idea of the corporate election of the church.

Other appendices touch on subjects related to what we are considering concerning God and His sovereignty.

A Subject Index and a Scripture Index are added to, hopefully, make this book useful as a reference.

Our subject is also related to the doctrine of the atonement. That subject has been considered in detail in a previous volume, *The Work of Christ on the Cross and Some of Its Results*.

What is enclosed in braces { } has been added by me.

Scripture quotations are from the translation by J. N. Darby.

Finally, I owe much thanks to D. Ryan for editorial work on this book.

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1. His book was answered from the Calvinistic standpoint by James R. White, *The Potter’s Freedom*, Amityville: Calvary Press publishing, 2000. Dr. Geisler’s 2001 edition contains a new appendix (13) being a response to Dr. White’s book.

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## Chapter 1

### *God's Sovereignty in the Testing of Lost Man*

#### *The Significance of the Two Adams*

(45) Thus also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul; the last Adam a quickening spirit. (46) But that which is spiritual [was] not first, but that which is natural, then that which is spiritual: (47) the first man out of [the] earth, made of dust; the second man, out of heaven. (48) Such as he made of dust, such also those made of dust; and such as the heavenly [one], such also the heavenly [ones]. (49) And as we have borne the image of the [one] made of dust, we shall bear also the image of the heavenly [one] (1 Cor. 15:45-49).

The importance and bearing of the two Adams, the first man and the second man, was brought out by J. N. Darby, and the subject is found throughout his writings. He remarked:

The first great idea that stamps its character on the revelation of God, is that of *the two Adams*: -- the first man and the Second; the responsible man, and the Man of God's counsels, in whom God, whilst confirming the principle of responsibility, reveals Himself, as well as His sovereign counsels and the grace which reigns through righteousness. These two principles predominate throughout the contents of the Bible. But although, in the ways of God, His goodness showed itself continually until His Son came, yet grace, in the full force of the term, was only prophetically revealed, and withal veiled so as not to interfere with the then subsisting relations of man with God, and often in forms which can only be understood when the New Testament has furnished us with the key to them. <sup>2</sup>

Though "grace, in the full force of the term," was "veiled so as not to interfere with the then subsisting relationships of man with God," until the Son came; when the Son did come, there was One here on earth "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). He was then presented to the first man, as fallen, in

responsible Adamic standing under testing, to see if he was recoverable. The testing (by the presentation of such a One to man's responsibility) happened *before the cross*. Hating Him, and the Father in Him (John 14:9-11; John 15:24), man put Him on the cross, thus getting rid of grace and truth (John 1:14), for if man is religious at all, he wants a religion of self-effort and works, not of grace and truth. Such is the first man. In the ways of God, then, God began with the first man:

God did not begin with bringing out His counsels; <sup>3</sup> He created the first man in responsibility, and He went on with that until the cross. Then we have the supplementary testimony of Stephen rejected, and then, the foundation having been laid in righteousness, the counsels of God that were before the world was came out. It is quite a distinct thing, these counsels of God and what He gives, from our responsibility: the history of the first man is the history of our responsibility as such. There is no reason why I should have the same glory as the Son of God; this has nothing to do with my responsibility. We get both through the cross -- our responsibility met, and the foundation for the counsels of God laid (2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:2). A man's debts may be all paid, and yet he may have nothing. This is not the way in which God has dealt with us; our debts are paid, and God gives us "to be conformed to the image of his Son" too. <sup>4</sup>

We need to recognize that by nature we are ranged under the headship of the first Adam, the first man. God's testing of man in the OT means the testing of men as ranged under the first man as fallen, whatever forms that testing took. There are only two men before God. Thus, the testing in the OT is the testing of the first man, but as fallen, to see if man, in fallen Adamic standing, was recoverable; not to educate God about this, but to prove that he was not recoverable. That testing of the fallen first man was completed in the first man putting the second man on the cross. The testing of the first man, as fallen, whose standing before God was in the first Adam, as fallen, to see if he was recoverable, has also been examined in several publications available from Present Truth Publishers. <sup>5</sup> That material, as presented in the context of dispensational truth, will not be covered again here. Rather, other considerations bearing on this matter will be reviewed in connection with the general subject of this book.

3. {The word "counsels" is often used by JND and therefore it is well to note here the distinction between the words "purpose" and "counsel." These two words differ in this respect, that God has an *intention of His will*, i.e., His *purpose* (πρόθεσιν) that He intends to bring to pass, and in doing so He acts according to the *wisdom of His mind*, i.e., His *counsel* (βουλήν).}

4. J. N. Darby, *Collected Writings* 34:403

5. This includes *J. N. Darby's Teaching Regarding Dispensations, Ages, Administrations and the Two Parentheses; Elements of Dispensational Truth*, vol. 1.

2. J. N. Darby, "Introduction to the Bible," *Collected Writings* 34:2.

## *God Is Not the Author of Evil*

. . . God, who cannot lie . . . (Titus 1:2).

Let no man, being tempted, say, I am tempted of God. For God cannot be tempted by evil things, and himself tempts no one (James 1:13).

Be ye holy, for *I* am holy (1 Pet. 1:16).

The word “holy” is *hagios* which J. N. Darby defines in a footnote to Heb. 7:26:

This, when applied to God, designates him as holy, knowing good and evil perfectly, and absolutely willing good and no evil.

Why was Christ abandoned on the cross in the three hours of darkness?

And thou art holy, thou that dwellest amidst the praises of Israel (Psa. 22:4).

There He was made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21) and also bore our sins in His own body on the tree (1 Pet. 2:24). There what God is as light was displayed, and what is the message?

And this is the message which we have heard from him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).

Darkness is the absence of light. God is light, and thus implicitly there cannot be darkness in Him, yet we are additionally assured that there is no darkness at all in Him. If He had created moral evil, <sup>6</sup> God would not be light and there would be darkness in Him. Rather, God judges *moral evil* -- never creates it. God is not limited because He does not (really, He *cannot*) create moral evil. J. N. Darby remarked:

It is a blunder to suppose that not being the author of evil limits Him. He can, as to power, do anything; but limiting means a stop being put to something in the direction in which it tends or might continue; whereas no evil is in God to be stopped. Power does not create evil. Were God the author of evil (save physical evil or punishment), it would be a limit to what He is -- good. <sup>7</sup>

Look up the references in the Scriptures to the words holy and holiness as used of God and of the Lord Jesus. For example, the holy angels (i.e., the elect angels) pronounce triple holiness concerning Jehovah (Isa. 6:2, 3; and see Rev. 4:8).

W. Kelly observed:

Evil has nothing to do with creation, save as it is an inconsistency with it. The

6. Calamities brought about by God, called “evil” in Isa. 45:7, are said to be created by Him (this passage is commented upon in footnote 10 on p. 5). Sometimes such calamities are called *temporal* evil. That is not what is meant by *moral* evil in which man engages by his wickedness.

7. *Collected Writings* 32:41.

question now is not of evil in the sense of physical punishment; for this is pre-eminently sent of God. But moral evil in any being is a contradiction of the relationship in which God set that being. It is therefore neither in God nor of God, being failure relative to what previously existed as the fruit of God's pleasure, Who nevertheless permits it in view of government and redemption. Thus the angels left their first estate. Satan stood (or stands) not in the truth, and Adam fell from his original innocence. This is in no way a limitation of Divine power; but, contrariwise, the error I am combating does limit His goodness or His truth. Impossible that there can be in or from God the contrary of what He is, and He is good, He only; in the creature it can easily be, and it is, where creation is not sustained by God, or delivered by His grace. <sup>8</sup> ♦

God did not make man in the condition in which he is now; He did not throw the world into its moral confusion, not to speak of its physical misery. He that can conceive a divine being to have made man as he is, and the world as it is, must have the notion of a demon, an Ahriman, instead of the true God. That infinite power should create man to be the victim of such sorrow, to have his heart distracted with varied, intense, and ceaseless misery -- to have, according to the word of God itself, evil inbred in his very nature (a doctrine enforced by the facts of every day), he that could conceive God to have so made man in such a world has the least worthy notion of God that even Rationalism could conceive. The word of God alone supplies the key, and explains this otherwise inscrutable riddle. According to that word He made man upright; the world and every creature in it He formed good; but man departed from God, and lost Him morally. No wonder, if foundations are out of course -- God left and man fallen through self-exalting rebellion, that there should be misery; for the only possible spring of happiness is in the communion of God with His creatures. Sin necessarily destroys it; and man having lost Him becomes a prey to all the evil that the enemy of God can bring into the world, more deeply and if possible irreparably, to sever man from God. This is the account of the Scriptures, and there is none other that can compete with it or explain all, so as either to justify God or to clear up the state of man. To make God Himself the author of man's moral evil is heinous wickedness, and man's conscience knows it, even when he might wish it to excuse himself. Here then at the outset the immense and singular value of God's word comes in . . . <sup>9</sup> ♦

Moreover, it is the exercise of the independence of will that is the root of evil:

The spirit of obedience is the great secret of all godliness. The spring of all evil from the beginning has been independence of will. Obedience is the only rightful state of the creature, or God would cease to be supreme -- would cease to be God. Where there is independence, there there is always sin. This

8. *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, London: Race, sec. Ed., 1908, p. 10, note.

9. Article “Rationalism,” in *Pamphlets*, Winschoten: Heijkoop, p. 59, 1971 reprint.

rule, if remembered, would wonderfully help us in guiding our conduct.<sup>10</sup> ♦

The once anointed, covering cherub (Ezek. 28:14), who fell from his place and became the power behind the prince of Tyre (Ezek. 28:2) in the world in which he deceived the woman (Eve), had originally engaged in independence of will. This independence of will he insinuated into man in the garden of Eden, through the woman; and Adam, it appears, followed her with his eyes open (1 Tim. 2:14). Adam had no ‘old nature’ before the fall. He exercised his will in disobedience -- and there is the essence of sin in its activity. Adam’s progeny have ever since (Rom. 5:12) been the slaves of independence of will, as may be seen in Rom. 8:7; 3:10-18. There has only been one Man who has never done so (John 8:29; 17:4), and He is now the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), the head of another race, so to speak.

### *The Character of the Fall*

#### IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN, ADAM HAD MORAL FREE WILL TOWARDS GOD

In Adam unfallen there was no evil within him. There was no internal disposition to evil. He was in the place of subjection to God and was given *one* command (one law, if you will, and *only one*), a command that he freely chose to disobey. The Enemy came from without and began with the woman, who was deceived (see 1 Tim. 2:14), aiming at Adam, the head of the earthly order so that all under his headship might become fallen. The Word does not speak of Adam being deceived, but it is stated that he was disobedient (Rom. 5:19). He went into sin with his eyes open that he was disobeying. This was the result of not maintaining obedience but instead, exercising his will in disobedience. Adam did not fall through any coercion from God, or through some necessity imposed upon him by God. It was the exercise of moral free will towards God.

#### IN THE FALL, ADAM LOST MORAL FREE WILL TOWARDS GOD AND ACQUIRED “SIN IN THE FLESH”

The result of the fall was to bring the will into bondage to what Rom. 8:3 calls “sin in the flesh,” something that was not part of himself before the disobedience. We call this the old nature. Thus, *God has already tested moral free will in man*; and after man had fallen, testing of a totally different

10. *Collected Writings* 28:103. In addition, JND remarked: “Evil subserving some good purpose (otherwise God would never have permitted it), or, say, “I form peace, and I create evil,” {Isa. 45:7} just shows the false use he makes of Scripture. He does not create moral evil: it is temporal evil as contrasted with peace -- not with good” (*Collected Writings* 31:113).

character began, namely, to see if man was recoverable. The history of the OT to the cross is the history of this testing under its varied forms.

The fact is that man lost moral free will toward God and the ability to obey. He became the slave of “sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3) as Rom. 6 makes quite clear. Man’s will after the fall came under the motivations of “sin in the flesh” and this is a different state entirely from that of Adam before the fall. “Sin in the flesh” is found in all of Adam’s progeny.

The book of Romans deals with sins up to Rom. 5:11 and in Rom. 5:12-ch. 8 sin, the *root*, called sin in fallen man, is dealt with. Rom. 5:12-21 considers the two heads, Adam and Christ; Rom. 6:1 - 7:6 considers two masters; Rom. 7:7-25 speaks of two natures and deliverance from the bondage of “sin in the flesh,” which we call *the old nature*; Rom. 8 speaks of Christian liberty. “Sin in the flesh” remains in unaltered character during the Christian’s life here (Rom. 7:25). A “law” is a fixed principle of operation and “sin’s law” has its fixed character. The race of men is fallen in its head; namely, Adam-fallen.

It is well to understand that Adam was *not holy* before the fall. He was ignorant of good and evil and this is what is intended by saying that Adam was *innocent*. *Holiness* is not ignorance of good and evil. God is holy. The Lord Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He was born holy (Luke 1:35). God has the knowledge of good and evil and inherently rejects evil. Adam held humanity in an innocent state before the fall. In the innocent state there is not the knowledge of good and evil.<sup>11</sup> As a consequence of the fall Adam acquired the knowledge of good and evil, as the serpent had said, but no longer had moral free will towards God so as to please Him. “Sin in the flesh” now had power over his will. There was now within him a new principle of action that brought man into bondage to what Scripture calls “sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3). This was not in man when he stood in innocence with moral free will towards God. It was now in him (and in Eve), and consequently in all his progeny. Through the fall of the head,

sin entered into the world, and by sin death; and thus death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned (Rom. 5:12).

That very thing called “sin in the flesh” is a moral nature -- utterly in contrast with the moral nature we receive from God in the new birth, when we are born of God. Besides the human nature that man has, whether fallen or unfallen, the believer has two natures: what we call “the old nature” (i.e., sin

11. If Eccl. 7:29 is to be brought into this matter, the distinction between “upright” and innocence is that while by innocence we mean ignorance of good and evil, upright refers to being blameless. This does not mean that man was created holy.



in the flesh) received from Adam fallen, and the new nature, received from God in the new birth.<sup>12</sup>

### MAN IS TOTALLY LOST -- TOTALLY RUINED

Adam's state changed from innocence to evil and he lost the free will that he had before the fall. Adam lost innocence and it is unrecoverable. Men are unable to recover it. Innocence was totally lost and totally ruined. Moral free will towards God was totally lost, totally ruined, and it is unrecoverable.

There was now a great gulf between Adam's having had free will and subsequently having his will under the control of "sin in the flesh." The claim that man now has moral free will towards God is, in effect, the denial of the true character of the fall. In effect, this view denies that man is lost. Since Scripture does say that man is lost, those who want it so that man has moral free will towards God have to think that man *is* 'lost -- but not *that* lost.' He is not totally lost; he is only partially lost. He *is* recoverable if he but exercises his moral free will towards God.

The words "total depravity" will not be used in this book to describe man's lost condition. "Lost" describes it. It is a shame that we need to say "totally lost" to describe the true state of man as "lost," but this is necessitated because of the Arminianization of the word "lost" to mean 'lost, but not *that* lost.' By "lost" and "totally lost" the same thing is meant in this book, namely that man is estranged from God in such a way that he is *unable* (inability) to find his way back even when light is put before him. This estrangement from God is presented in Romans: fallen men are alive "in the flesh" (concerning their standing before God, as standing in responsibility in Adam fallen, controlled by "sin in the flesh" according to Rom. 8:3 and ch. 6, with this sentence against them:

Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God; for neither indeed can it be: and they that are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:7, 8).

"Neither indeed can be" is a direct statement of *inability*. Romans views the sinner, then, as alive in the flesh and running away from God. Eph. 2:1-5 presents another aspect of man's *inability*. He is viewed as spiritually dead in offences and sins, and vv. 5 and 10 show that those thus dead need quickening (making alive) and the *creative act* of God. We shall see more Scriptures that teach inability and no amount of quoting God's appeals to man to believe the gospel changes the Scripture teaching of this fact. God's appeals place man on

12. Many of the "reformed" (and thus Calvinists) do not accept it that the believer has these *two* natures.

responsibility and expose his lost condition.

An objection is raised against the fact of man's *inability* because salvation is a gift, and the objection is: "What ability is needed to accept a gift?" The Arminian answer is "None, of course." The answer *assumes* what needs to be proven. The question and answer show abject ignorance of what it means to be lost. The answer is that *moral ability* is needed to accept God's gift of salvation -- and lost men do not have the moral ability because their wills are under the domination of "the law of sin" (Rom. 8:3; cp. 8:7, etc.) which is in them.

I do not think that J. N. Darby used the words "total depravity" in his writings, but rather that man is "totally lost." Also, this is the case with W. Kelly, but he often used "total ruin." Man's relationship with God was totally ruined and he is totally lost. Adam's innocence and moral free will towards God were lost, gone, totally ruined. Man's condition is this:

being darkened in understanding, estranged from the life of God by reason of the ignorance which is in them, by reason of the hardness of their hearts (Eph. 4:18).

As JND rightly said:

. . . the doctrine of free will ministers to the pretension of the natural man not to be entirely lost, for that is just what it amounts to.<sup>13</sup>

So Adam lost his moral free will towards God, his will being bound by sin in the flesh. His progeny have within them the same sin in the flesh and are likewise bound. They are *lost* and do not have moral free will towards God, it having been lost in the fall, and they are bound by sin in the flesh. And so it is important to see that there are only two men before God, the first man and the second man, Adam and Christ (1 Cor. 15:47). All men naturally born into the world are before God in the first man, as fallen. Thus there are two Adams (1 Cor. 15:45)<sup>14</sup> and men are under the headship of Adam *as fallen*. He had no progeny in innocence, only when fallen. His progeny partake of the fall and its results, and are viewed as in him in their standing before God, which is one of responsibility.

Let us remind ourselves that in Adam, innocence and moral free will towards God were tested in the most favorable circumstances and both were lost. The testing of Adam fallen, to see if he was recoverable, was then begun and *that* testing ended at the cross. The first man was in a fallen, evil state and

13. *Letters* 3:314.

14. Christ is called "the last Adam" because there will never be another head after Him. There are only the two heads. And so there are two men, the first man and the second man, that answer to this.

was not recoverable.

We should notice something concerning states of humanity before further considering the old nature. Humanity might be in an innocent state, a fallen state, a holy state, and a glorified state. The second man, the Lord Jesus was “that holy thing” (Luke 1:35) and held humanity in a holy state.<sup>15</sup> Now, additionally, He is in a glorified state. We shall be conformed to His image in due time (Rom. 8:29), being completely in both a holy and a glorified state.

#### WHAT IS “SIN IN THE FLESH” AND HOW DOES IT CONTROL THE PERSON?

In the fall, man acquired a disposition toward evil. The disposition toward evil is an active (what shall we call it?) principle of opposition to God that now resides in the soul, along with the will. The soul is the seat of identity, the affections, and the will. We refer to this disposition toward evil, acquired in the fall, as “the old nature.” It is not what is meant by human nature, or by “nature” in 1 Cor. 11 (i.e., the created order), but something added to a person in the fall. Moreover, this active principle of opposition to God, which is the fallen nature in us, affects the will so that the will is morally disposed against God. This old nature has the three characteristics found in 1 John 2:16. The will in fallen man, then, is not neutral. Thus, the will in man, controlled by the old nature, expresses itself according to these three motivations. Fallen man does not have moral free will towards God. He has a moral disposition that governs his will (not free) to reject obedience to God. The disobedience of Adam has fastened itself upon man. He has a morally-bound will, because of these three motivations (1 John 2:16) that reside in his soul consequent upon the fall. Examination of Gen. 3:6 in the light of 1 John 2:16 shows that these three motivations were combined in Eve’s taking the forbidden fruit. These three motivations were presented by Satan to the Lord Jesus in the temptations in the wilderness. And, they may be seen in the excuses given by those invited to the great supper (Luke 14:17-20), when, without exception, all refused to come. God never constrains any one to sin. But man (i.e., Adam) fell from the place of having moral free will toward God and then his will came under the constraint of the three motivations seen operative in Gen. 3:6. Free will was thus tested in Adam innocent and he fell.<sup>16</sup> Thus his will is not now free as it was in Adam innocent, although it is free to move within

15. The Lord Jesus did not have a free moral will towards God that could be exercised in disobedience. The Son of God took holy humanity (Luke 1:35) into His Person, indissolubly so. He is impeccable. See, *Could Christ Sin?*, available from the publisher.

16. This is not what we mean by the trial, testing, of the first man. The first man in this regard is Adam *as fallen*, and our natural standing before God is in Adam-fallen. Innocence is not part of this because Adam never passed on innocence to any of his descendants.

the bondage of the old nature, i.e., “sin in the flesh.”<sup>17</sup> He chooses what pleases himself. Pleasing oneself is the essence of sin. The fact that man fell does not relieve him from the responsibility to obey. He is responsible to obey God but wills not to do so. Unbelief is in the soul, by the old nature, though he knows not his heart’s incurability (Jer. 17:9). Man freely wills to destroy himself. God does not constrain man to do that. Such is man since the fall, standing before God in Adamic responsibility, as fallen, and placed under testing to see if he was recoverable -- not, of course, to educate God about that matter, but that He might display His ways in bringing to pass His purpose.

When a sinner wills, or chooses, and acts, that is an act of the person, an act for which he is accountable to God. He chooses and acts without being in subjection to God. This is the very essence of sin. It is to act without reference to the will of God. That is what is meant by lawlessness:

Everyone that practices sin practices also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness  
(1 John 3:4).

If a law is violated, the sinful act takes on the additional character of *transgression*. But there need be no transgression in order to be guilty of lawlessness. An illustration might be this: a believer, constrained by the love of Christ, helps a person in difficulty by giving him \$100.00; while an unbeliever does the same thing because of “the milk of human kindness” in him. He is merely being a philanthropist. The second person is not acting in the will of God, though God may use the act for His own purpose. The Lord Jesus was not like that and did not do anything merely as “the milk of human kindness.” He always, and only, did those things that pleased the Father, as directed by Him.

Concerning fallen man’s “good” deeds and philanthropy, these have motives known to God. They do not spring from the new nature in a lost person because a lost person has no new nature. The best that could be said of such acts is that they are amiable, or religious, like the “certain ruler” in Luke 18:18-26. But Christ Himself is the true test of the state of the soul, as it was in that man’s case, showing that what he practiced did not come from a new nature. Are Rom. 14:23 and Heb. 11:6 helpful here?

The soul, then, is the seat of the faculty called the will (where the old nature is, i.e., where “sin in the flesh” is), and the will determines actions as controlled by the old nature. The unbeliever orders his life according to his will as motivated according to 1 John 2:16 and the person is held responsible for the actions expressing that will.

17. God acts within what is proper to His nature as light and love.

See also Appendix 6: “Sin in the Flesh.”

### MAN NEEDS A NEW NATURE

There are two natures in a child of God and we call one of them the old nature (“sin in the flesh”) and the other the new nature -- implanted by God in the new birth. The words “inward man” in Rom. 7:22 refer to what is given to us in the new birth. This is also called “his seed” in us (1 John 3:9). The new nature implanted in us by God is holy and blameless. We are made partakers of [the] divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4); i.e., we partake of the *moral nature* of God (we do not partake of deity).

Just as the old nature is not the human nature, the new nature also is not the human nature, but it is something God has sovereignly implanted into the soul. As part of the new nature there is a new motivation implanted -- the pleasure of God. The new nature affects the will and directs it to produce what is for God’s pleasure. The “I” of identity may now regard itself as identified with this new nature (we see this characteristically in 1 John).

OT saints had a new nature from God. That is why there was anyone who could please God. However, that was the result of the sovereign grace of God implanting the new nature. Thus, during the time of the testing of fallen man, God had witnesses of His will and this stood in contrast with the generality of men.

### THE OLD NATURE AND THE NEW NATURE ARE DISTINCT FROM HUMAN NATURE

Reformed Theology does not accept this heading. The Calvinist, R. C. Sproul, wrote:

Of course reformed theology agrees that regeneration is creative and that it results in a fundamental change in the individual. It involves a new nature. But this new nature is a new *human* nature; it is not a divine nature . . . The idea that regeneration involves a kind of apotheosis is not without precedent in church history . . .<sup>18</sup>

“Apotheosis” means a deification, an elevation to divine status. Perhaps a few persons can be found to utter such nonsense but it is hardly becoming, or seemingly, to make a general charge that those who believe in the two natures believe in an elevation to divine status. Can Dr. Sproul be serious? I suppose so -- and it is the looking at this matter through the lens of Reformed theology that causes so serious a distortion concerning the new birth.

The fact is that there are three things that we ought to speak of concerning the word “nature” and man as saved. Adam had human nature

before the fall. He was the same Adam after the fall concerning human nature. However, there was *added* to Adam “sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3), and this “sin in the flesh” is what we mean by the old nature. We have already considered this above, but here we must sharply focus on the distinction between that and the human nature. When we are quickened we receive another life. We are born of God. We refer to this as receiving a new nature. The new nature is not “a new *human* nature.” And Reformed theology’s “new *human* nature” is, in reality, something still evil that must be moderated and overcome through spiritual exercise, being viewed as having a new element in it such that there is still only one nature -- human nature. As to the gratuitous charge of “apotheosis” we answer with Peter’s words:

As his divine power has given to us all things which relate to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us by glory and virtue, through which he has given to us the greatest and precious promises, that through these ye may become partakers of [the] divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Pet. 1:3, 4).

One of the things that “his divine power” has given us that relates to life and godliness is a new nature. The new nature gives the person the capacity, the enablement, to love and enjoy God. It gives a new desire -- to please God. Sin can never come from this nature, only what pleases God. The new birth brings no one into Godhead, nor does it communicate incommunicable deity to the soul, nor does it deify, nor does it elevate to divine status. What we partake of by “his divine power” is *moral in character*. The definite article “the” is not found before the words “divine nature.” This fact indicates that *moral character*, or moral qualities, is in view. We are partakers of divine nature, of moral qualities that God has, not of deity.<sup>19</sup>

The important thing to understand is that being born anew is entirely a sovereign operation of God’s will and is the implantation of a new nature into the soul. It is God’s act. He implants a new life and faith. This we have besides the human nature that is ours, as well as the old nature -- which remains in incorrigible character.

### *Adam Lost the “Likeness” to God*

We must touch on the matter of the image and likeness of God, which has nothing to do with anthropomorphism, in which Adam was created (Gen.

19. More is found on this and such things as how regeneration differs from new birth, what it means that God’s seed in us cannot sin, what being washed all over (John 13:7-11) means, and that the new birth is not baptism or by baptism, in *From New Birth to New Creation*, available from the publisher.

18. *Willing to Believe*, Grand Rapids: Baker, p. 198, 1997.

1:26). Those who hold to moral free will towards God sometimes claim that man being created in the image of God means that we have such free will. That claim indicates confusion about the meanings of image and likeness. W. Kelly has nicely summarized the difference:

The usage throughout the O. and N. Testaments seems to indicate that “image” represents, and “likeness” resembles. Thus the “image” of the world-power in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream represented the succession of Gentile empires from first to last: likeness could not be the point. So it is “image” in the plain of Dura (Dan. 3), the proportions of which exclude a human figure, or the resemblance of any living creature. Whatever it might not be like, it definitely represented what the monarch commanded to be an object of worship. Again, in the NT the denarius our Lord asked for had on its face the image and superscription of Caesar. It might have been a faulty likeness, but was an indisputable image of the Roman emperor. It expressed his authority and represented his claim over the Jews because of their departure from God, ill as they liked to own either.

So men (Gen. 1:26) are said to have been made in God’s image, after His likeness, as the former is emphatically repeated in v. 27: not in His likeness, after His image. *In* God’s image is the truth insisted on, though here also man is declared to be made after or according to His likeness. To man only was it given to represent God here below. Angels are never called to such a place. They excel in might. They fulfil God’s word, they hearken unto the voice of His word. Yet no angel rules in His name, nor does he represent Him, as a center of a system subjected to Him, and looking up to Him. But man was made to represent God in the midst of a lower creation dependent on him; though in order to be created in God’s image, he was also made “after His likeness,” without evil and upright. But even when through sin the likeness existed no more, he abode His image; however inadequate to represent God aright, he was still responsible to represent Him. Hence in Gen. 5:1, 2, we read that God made man in His likeness; male and female created He them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam in the day of their creation. But it is significantly added in ver. 3 that Adam begat in his likeness. Seth resembled his father, now fallen, as well as represented him. Again, when after the deluge animals were given for the food of man, blood was interdicted, and the most jealous care of human life insisted on; for in the image of God made He man. To kill him was rebellion against God’s image, though a man was now anything but like God.

The NT fully sustains the same distinction far beyond Caesar’s case already referred to. Thus the man in 1 Cor. 11 is distinctively called God’s image and glory, as publicly representing Him; and Christ, the incarnate Son, is styled “image of the invisible God.” His not being called “likeness”

only confirms the truth.<sup>20</sup> If so entitled, it would deny His deity. For He is God, instead of being only like God. Compare for the Christian now, Col. 3:10, as well as 2 Cor. 3:18; and for the glorious result, Rom. 8:29, and 1 Cor. 15:49.

On the other hand we must not confound the state of Adam unfallen with the *new* man which “after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.” This is descriptive of the new creation, not of the first Adam state where all was mere innocence, but the knowledge of good and evil along with the power by grace which abhors evil and clings to good that is implied in righteousness and holiness of the truth. This is not nature, but supernatural in believers, who become partakers of a divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4).<sup>21</sup>

Thus, the will is connected with “likeness,” not with “image.” It is true to say that the “image of God” (i.e., representation) is not effaced but wrong to say that therefore moral free will towards God is not effaced -- because “image” does not address the matter of the state of the will. It is true to say that likeness to God (i.e., sinlessness) has been lost and correct to say that the original state of the will has been effaced -- it is under the power of the old nature.

### *The Standing of Fallen Man*

As indicated above, Adam fell from an innocent state to a fallen state, having acquired the knowledge of good and evil, with the will now under the direction of the evil moral nature also acquired in the fall. Adam, as fallen, is viewed in Scripture as head of a fallen race. We speak of two men because Scripture does (1 Cor. 15:47). Natural man is a replication of Adam fallen. The second man

20. {W. Kelly also noted this:

It has been well remarked that in Ephesians Christ is never spoken of as the image of God; He is so, very expressly, in Colossians. If we may discriminate, what we have in Ephesians is more Christ showing me what God is -- not His image, but His moral likeness reflected in Christ. Hence it is said, “Be ye imitators of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us.” It is more the notion of resemblance than representation. Still, although you can say of Christ, He is the image of God, He is never said to be in the likeness of God, just because He *is* God. In Colossians we hear repeatedly of the image of God. Here, for instance, the new man is said to be “after the image of him that created him”; as in the first chapter Christ is said to be the image of the invisible God. The two ideas of likeness and image may often be confounded in our minds, but not so in Scripture, where likeness simply means that one person resembles another; image means that a person is represented, whether it be like him or not -- both of course may be together (*Epistle of Paul to the Colossians*).}

21. From *In the Beginning and the Adamic Earth*. See also the article “Likeness and Image” in *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 13:232-235; also 26:255256; *Letters* 2:466.

is out of heaven. This does not mean that His humanity came from heaven (it came from Mary) but that His *moral origin* is heaven, and so He is not of the world (John 17:14). So He is the heavenly One (1 Cor. 15:47, 48). And, there are two Adams, two heads. The Lord is called the “last Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45) assuring us that there will never be another head after Him.

Men are viewed, then, under the first man, Adam, *after he had sinned*. Up to the cross God put fallen man under probation, under testing, to see if fallen man is recoverable. It is well to understand that this position before God is a *standing*, a standing in the flesh.<sup>22</sup> The epoch of probation, that ran from Adam fallen to the cross, was not to educate God concerning what result there might be -- which would be a ludicrous thought about the omniscient One -- it was to fully demonstrate that fallen man was not recoverable, and to conclude that he was “lost,” etc. The sorry spectacle is that most professed Christians have not learned the lesson. At any rate, this testing took many forms which have been reviewed in numbers of books and papers, and runs throughout the writings of J. N. Darby, and will not be repeated here. The final test was the revelation of the Father in the Son:

. . . but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father (John 15:24; see also 14:9-11).

This was the result of the climactic test of fallen man. This means the test of man, standing in fallen, Adamic responsibility, to see if he was recoverable from the fall. The answer is a conclusive **no**: *man was not recoverable*. This answer is not understood by most who profess to know the Lord. Moreover, the testing of man was *concluded* at the cross.

For myself, I see in the word, and I recognize in myself, the total ruin of man. I see that the cross is the end of all the means that God had employed for gaining the heart of man, and therefore proves that the thing was impossible. God has exhausted all His resources, and man has shown that he was wicked, without remedy, and the cross of Christ condemns man -- sin in the flesh. But this condemnation having been manifested in another's having undergone it, it is the absolute salvation of those who believe; for condemnation, the judgment of sin, is behind us; life was the issue of it in the resurrection. We are dead to sin, and alive to God in Jesus Christ our Lord {Rom. 6:11}. Redemption, the very word, loses its force when one entertains these ideas of the old man.<sup>23</sup> It becomes an amelioration, a

22. The standing “in the flesh” is noticed in Rom. 7:5; 8:8. The reader will find an explanation of this in *From New Birth to New Creation*, available from the publisher.

23. {“The old man” is a *generic* expression, pointing to the *standing* in Adam as fallen. It is not the same as the old nature within us. Just so, “the new man” is a generic expression, pointing to the standing we have in Christ. It is not identical to the new nature within us. See F. G. Patterson, (continued...)

practical deliverance from a moral state, not a redeeming by the accomplished work of another person. Christianity teaches the death of the old man and his just condemnation, then redemption accomplished by Christ, and a new life, eternal life, come down from heaven in His person, and which is communicated to us when Christ enters us by the word. Arminianism, or rather Pelagianism,<sup>24</sup> pretends that man can choose, and that thus the old man is ameliorated by the thing it has accepted. The first step is made without grace,<sup>25</sup> and it is the first step which costs truly in this

23. (...continued)

*A Chosen Vessel*, ch. 6 -- found reprinted in *Collected Writings of F. G. Patterson*, pp. 228, 229, available from the publisher.}

24. {Pelagius had views on man and election diametrically opposed to the views of Augustine. Pelagius taught that man's will is unconditionally free and has no bias in favor of wrongdoing (which denies man's state before God). And so, man can take the steps towards salvation without divine grace being involved.

Semi-Pelagianism is:

The doctrines on human nature upheld in the 4th and 5th cents. by a group of theologians who, while not denying the necessity of Grace for salvation, maintained that the first step towards the Christian life were ordinarily taken by the human will and that Grace only supervened later. Their position was roughly midway between radically opposed doctrines of St. Augustine and Pelagius (*The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 1258, 1978, sec. ed.).

A judgment concerning “roughly midway between” may depend on one's own viewpoint. Arminianism is certainly semi-Pelagian -- and so I regard four-point Arminianism. Not only are the doctrines of man's will, what “lost” means, what election and predestination are, etc., but these systems of doctrine affect the work of Christ on the cross very much. The reader might obtain *The Work of Christ on the Cross and Some of Its Results*, available from Present Truth Publishers.}

25. To talk about the Spirit's help and inducements, and however else it is sought to disguise the fact that the first step is made without God in sovereign grace implanting a new nature, does not change the fact. Arminianism is built on alleged free will morally towards God. It is the denial that the first man is really lost, giving an unscriptural meaning to “lost.” It is helpful to have the case baldly illustrated. Here is an example from *Words in Season*, Oct. 2001, article “Election (2),” by Dr. H. A. Cameron:

Two preachers were discussing difficulties in theology: one was a white and the other a black brother. Said the white preacher: “Brother Johnson, don't you have any trouble about election?” “No sah,” replied the other, “I has no trouble about election. You see this is how I looks at it. God, He votes to save my soul: and the Devil, he votes to damn my soul; and it depends on how I vote, as to how the election goes.” This easy solution of course will not satisfy the hardshelled predestinationist, but is there not scriptural warrant to justify the brother's simple position? “God willeth not the death of any. God will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” On the other hand “The thief cometh not, but to to steal, and to kill, and to destroy,” and the final decision is made by the sinner. “Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life.” “How often would I . . . but ye would not” (p. 204).

So anyone who disagrees with this silly story and the misuse of the texts cited (concerning their (continued...))

case.<sup>26</sup>

## *The Issue of Responsibility*

### MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY IS AN IMPORTANT MATTER

. . . the question of responsibility . . . lies at the root of Calvinism and Arminianism. Responsibility there must and ought always to be; but in respect of acceptance, the first man was the responsible man, and his story ended at the cross, though each has to learn it personally. Our standing is in the Second, who charged Himself indeed with our failures in responsibility (Himself perfect in every trial in it), but laid the ground of perfect acceptance before God: lost on the ground of the first, we are before God on the ground of the finished work of the second {last} Adam -- not a child of Adam, as to our place, but a child of God, "the righteousness of God in him." Before the cross, and up to it, responsibility developed; after it, righteousness revealed, and the original purpose of God, which was in the second {last} Adam, could then be brought out. This opens out what was purely of God, which we have mainly in Ephesians, though elsewhere; and conduct is the display of the divine nature as in Christ. This last is a blessed part of it. The study of what He is is surely the food of the soul. His Person, His work, may carry us deeper in the apprehension of what God is, for it was met and glorified there, and we worship and praise; but with Him we can walk, and know, and learn that none is so gracious as He. What will it not be to see Him as He is!<sup>27</sup>

### CONFOUNDING RESPONSIBILITY AND POWER

J. N. Darby wrote:

"All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." These words (the response of the people with one voice, when Moses had taken the book of the covenant and read in their audience, Ex. 24) were the complete confounding of two very distinct principles, which man has been continually mistaking and confounding since the fall of Adam -- responsibility and power. Man is responsible to keep the law perfectly, but by the fall he has lost the power {cp. Rom. 8:7}. This the natural heart cannot understand. One man denies

25. (...continued)

true bearing) is a "hardshelled predestinationist," a very indiscriminating phrase as well as a caricature. How well this illustrates JND's observation: "It is the first step which costs truly in this case."

Moreover, we are sorry to hear that the devil has a vote that is equal to God's alleged vote. Did God give the devil that vote?

Election is the utter condemnation of fallen man and his stubborn will. Arminianism sets up that fallen will as the final arbiter and ultimate controller in salvation. What we have just seen is an excellent illustration of this fact.}

26. *Collected Writings* of J. N. Darby 10:186.

27. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:477, 478.

his responsibility, and another assumes his power; grace, and this only, puts a man right on both points.<sup>28</sup>

The reason that "grace, and this only, puts a man right on both points," will be seen before the end of this book. He further noted this:

The principle that responsibility depends on the power of the responsible person is false, save so far as the alleged responsible person is in his nature such as to negative the claim. A stone cannot be responsible nor even a beast, for moral conduct, because they are not in the relationship to which responsibility can attach. But obligation flows from relationship, and where the relationship exists which constitutes it, the obligation subsists: the power to fulfil it has nothing to do with it. The obligation gives a claim to the person to whom the obliged is responsible. I had put the case: A man owes me a thousand pounds; you are a spendthrift, and have not a penny, you have not power to pay really -- therefore I have no claim nor you responsibility. That will not do. Romans cut off their thumbs, and could not hold a spear, to avoid military service: were they held irresponsible?

Man takes another ground of reasoning against God I know, that God put him into this place, or he was born in it, and therefore he is not responsible. This raises another point, that moral responsibility attaches to will, not to power. We do what our own consciences condemn because we like it. My child refuses to come when I call him to go with me; I am going to punish him because he would not: he pleads that he was tied or could not open the door. But I punish him because he refused as to his will to yield to the obligation: I had a knife ready to cut what bound him, a key to open the door: he by his will refused the claim. In a word, responsibility flows from the claim on us arising from the relationship in which we stand. There is not a man in Glasgow that would hold that he had no claim on a man who owed him a thousand pounds because he had no ability to pay it. It has nothing to do with responsibility. We may lightly treat God so, alas! and say, "The woman that thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat"; but he pleads his sin as his excuse. God says, "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree," etc., therefore.<sup>29</sup>

### GOD REQUIRES FROM MAN WHAT HE IS NOT ABLE TO PERFORM

In the second part of Romans (5:12 - ch. 8), where "sin in the flesh" (the old nature) is especially in view, we read:

Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (Rom. 8:7).

Man's position before God is stated to be "in the flesh," and man cannot (inability) please God (Rom. 8:8). Yet God holds man responsible. Arminians

28. *Collected Writings* 12:276, note.

29. *Letters* 2:168. Read also the letter on pp. 501, 502.

*reason* on this and say that such a thing cannot be. Their notion, arrived at by the fallen human mind is that if a man cannot pay what is owed to God, then he could not be held responsible. We might expect that they would not so view the matter if someone owed them a huge, personal debt that could not be paid. If a man owed an Arminian \$10,000,000 and could not pay one cent, the consistent Arminian would say to the man, ‘since you cannot pay, then you do not owe anything.’

The Arminian, recognizing that man owes a debt, *infers* from this fact that man has the ability to pay. If God commands repentance, the Arminian *infers* from this that man is able to repent. If God says, “whosoever will may come,” the Arminian *infers* from this that man has the ability to come. If God says believe the gospel, the Arminian *infers* from this that man can exercise human faith and believe. And if God says, keep the law, is it to be inferred that man can keep the law? So the Arminian produces numbers of Scriptures, from which he *infers* these things, and then claims that those Scriptures *prove* what we really know are false inferences. It is circular reasoning that proves nothing but the self-deception of such circular reasoning. J. L. Stauffer, an Arminian Mennonite does this, citing in ‘proof’ a quantity of texts.<sup>30</sup> In reality, ***such texts only show that man is responsible, not that he has moral free will towards God.***<sup>31</sup>

Note Deut. 30:19, which is cited. With Deut. 30:19, compare Ezek. 3:21; 18:9,21, etc.; 20:11, 21; 33:11; 2 Chron. 6:36; Psa. 130:3; Prov. 20:9. In citing Deut. 30:19, did the Arminian writer think that by choosing life, *eternal life* was meant? The truth is that if one kept the law his *natural life* would continue -- he would not die, he would not earn the wages of sin which is death (Rom. 6:23). Choosing life was by keeping the law perfectly. That cannot give divine life, i.e., the new birth, to a soul. Listen:

For law works wrath (Rom. 4:15).

30. Isa. 1:18; 55:1; Matt. 11:28; Deut. 30:19; Ezek. 18:30; Matt. 11:21; John 3:18,19; Rom. 1:26, 28; 14:12; 2:6; Matt. 23:37; 1 Tim. 2:4; John 5:40; 8:24; 1:12 (*The Eternal Security Teaching*, Harrisonburg: Christian Light Publications, 1976).

31. N. Geisler holds this falsehood that God does not command what is impossible:

Further, PF {i.e., *The Potters Freedom*, by James R. White} is seemingly unashamed to acknowledge that God commands what is impossible (108), being apparently oblivious to the irrationality this attributes to God (op. cit., p. 260, sec. Ed. 2001).

Dr. Geisler is “apparently oblivious to the” undermining of the sovereignty of God in which he is engaged. It appears, then, that he thinks fallen men could keep the law. In fact, it is implicit in the notion of moral free will towards God that God would not command men to do that which they cannot do -- and therefore it is implicit in that teaching that fallen man could keep the law. Well, persons are free to believe any foolishness they want, though ultimately answerable to God for it.

. . . that sin by the commandment might become exceedingly sinful (Rom. 7:13).

Wherefore by works of law no flesh shall be justified before him (Rom. 3:20).

For if a law had been given able to quicken, then indeed righteousness were on the principle of law (Gal. 3:21).

. . . if righteousness [is] by law, then Christ has died for nothing (Gal. 2:21).

Was Israel’s history a history of persons choosing life (cp. Deut. 31:16-21; Ezek. 18:25-28; 2 Chron. 36:15, 16; Matt. 21:33-46)? “Quicken” means to make alive, the very action those dead in offences and sins need (Eph. 2:1-5; note the correlative terms -- dead and quicken). Scripture tells us that the law cannot quicken (Gal. 3:21). So when God said choose life, He was speaking of continuance of natural life.<sup>32</sup> Concerning the misuse of such Scriptures someone wrote a letter to a friend that was published under the title, “No Man Becomes a Child of God by an Act of His Own Will.” In this letter, the writer addressed the matter we are considering:

. . . And if you should enquire, as some did in the Apostle’s days, “Wherefore then the law?” let the Apostle answer: “It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made” (Gal. 3:19). And if you should still say, Why added because of transgressions? take for answer the same Apostle’s words in another place, “For by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). And again, “Moreover, the law entered that the offence might abound” (Rom. 5:20). And again, “I had not known sin, but by the law” (Rom. 7:7). And again, “But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful” (v. 13). Yet once more, “The law worketh wrath” (Rom. 4:15). Now,

32. Observe well that God said “choose life.” The position of the writer cited above is that man has free moral agency and can do what God says. God addressed the law to Israel to keep it. Does that mean, according to the writer, that it could be kept? What kind of a God would that be according to the Arminian system of reasoning and inferences, that would command men to do what they cannot do? Their position is that God does not do such a thing; nay, could not without violating man’s free moral agency.

The patent fact is that no sinner ever chose life. No sinner ever kept the law. All have physically died. The trouble is not in the law (Rom. 7:10-12). The truth is that the sinner **cannot** choose life even in the sense meant in the passage -- cannot keep the law. It is not merely that universal death testifies to the fact that man **cannot** keep the law; man’s inability is expressly declared in Scripture:

Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God; for neither indeed can it be (Rom. 8:7).

“Neither indeed can be” are words that express inability. So God gave the law, told Israel to keep it, while knowing this was impossible. There it is: proof that God does do such things; and proof that man cannot obey, yet is responsible.

it seems to me a serious thing, in the face of all these inspired declarations of what ends the law was designed to answer, to affirm that any were saved by “choosing life” according to the tenor of the words of Moses, which have been quoted. Life was then offered them on condition of obedience to the law; and the Holy Ghost solemnly assures us, that “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified” (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16, 21; 3:11); that is, in other words, *they could not have life on the terms proposed by Moses.*

Of this, Moses himself was quite aware. In the very next chapter to that from which his words are quoted, we find that the Lord appeared and said unto him,

Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them (Deut. 31:16).

They had already broken one covenant of works, in token of which Moses brake the two tables of the law, which were in his hands, when he came down from the mount (see Ex. 32:19). With an unchanged nature, and placed under a similar covenant of works, what could be expected now? What but the results which the Lord assures Moses, and Moses assures the people, would actually ensue?

Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel. For when I shall have brought them into the land which I sware unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant. And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed; *for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I sware* (Deut. 31:19-21).

Can anything be more solemn or decisive than these last words? God declared to Moses, that instead of choosing life that they might live, the people would turn to other gods, provoke Him, and break His covenant; and He speaks of these future acts of evil, as only the display of what he knew to be *at the then present time* working in their hearts. “I know their imagination,” &c. Hence, Moses says to them, “Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the Ark of the covenant of the Lord your God.” Why? That they might choose life, and live by keeping it? Nay, but “that it may be there for a witness against thee.” “For I know thy rebellion,” he proceeds, “and thy stiff neck; behold, whilst I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death” (vv. 26, 27). “For I know,” says he again to them, “that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall

you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands” (v. 29). Surely we need no further answer to those who use Moses’ words to prove that salvation depends on human will. If it did, who could be saved?

Joshua’s words are sometimes quoted for this purpose, as well as those of Moses; and with as little reason or force. After reminding Israel of the condition in which their fathers were, serving other gods, when the Lord took Abraham from the other side of the flood; after rehearsing to them the wonders which God had wrought, and many of which their eyes had beheld; he exhorts them to fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth, and put away other gods; and then he adds,

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (Josh. 24:15).

The fact is, he does not call upon them to choose between the Lord and idols. He says, “*If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord*, choose ye,” whether ye will serve this class of idols, or that. He, through grace, as we know, was resolved on serving the Lord. But when the people, with good intentions, perhaps, but in a spirit of self-sufficiency, declare that they too will serve the Lord, how does Joshua receive their protestations?

And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good (v. 19).

And when the people still vow and protest “Nay; but we will serve the Lord,” Joshua says to them,

Ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses” (vv. 21, 22).

Ah, yes; to have our words witness against us, is the only result that can flow from our declaring that we choose the Lord and his service. And as though to show in what a poor condition they were for taking such vows upon them, Joshua immediately exhorts them:

Now, therefore, put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel (v. 23).

There were, then, strange gods among them! Their hearts, too, needed inclining to serve the Lord! Plain proof that they were, as we know the human heart ever is, averse to His service.

Of this we have still further evidence in that part of their history which immediately succeeds. The Book of Judges is but the history of their sins, and of the calamities which these brought upon them, with the Lord’s merciful interpositions for their deliverance. Into this I do not now enter. Nor shall I



pursue the thread of their history throughout. It would lead me too far. One point, however, must not be omitted; I refer to the ministry of the prophets. It differed materially from the law simply considered. The law left no room for repentance. It demanded obedience, but failing to obtain that, it had nothing to pronounce or bestow but condemnation and the curse. It was obedience, uniform, unvarying obedience, which the law required; not repentance and a return to obedience. But the prophets were sent to propose, as it were, new terms.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon (Isa. 45:7).

Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to Me, saith the Lord (Jer. 3:1).

Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause Mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever, O house of Israel. Is not my way equal? Are not your ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them -- for his iniquity that he hath done he shall die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live -- he shall not die (Ezek. 18:25-28).

Such was the ministry of the prophets. But was this to prove, any more than Moses' or Joshua's language respecting the law, that it was possible for man, of his own will, so to turn from his wickedness and do that which is lawful and right, {so} as to live thereby? Surely not. It was a further test -- a milder one -- to prove whether it was in the heart or will of man to turn to God, and serve and obey him. It was as though God said, I will not rigorously enforce the claims of my law. It claims uninterrupted and universal obedience. That you have utterly failed to render, and the law knows nothing of repentance. But now I give you an opportunity to begin again.

If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done, he shall live {Ezek. 18:21, 22}.

It was a fair offer to blot out all the past, and begin over again; and this offer was made, be it remembered, to those who were complaining that their destinies were not in their own hands. Could a fairer offer have been made? But need I ask you, my brother, whether it were possible for any fallen man to be saved thus? What! by keeping all God's statutes, and doing for the time to come, that which is lawful and right! Surely this would have been for the

doer of these things to live by them, which Paul declares to be the righteousness which is of the law. It was simply affording to those who thought they would have done better than their fathers, an opportunity of showing what they could do!

And what was the issue of this trial of man by the new proposals of repentance and amendment of life!

And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people and on His dwellingplace: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy (2 Chron. 36:15, 16).

These patient dealings of God with Israel were resumed after the captivity; and John the Baptist was the last of the long line of those who were thus sent to Israel. "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matt. 11:13). Did I say, the last in the line? Yes, he was the last in the line of servants who were thus employed; but there was One greater than all these servants of God, who came after them all, on the same errand. Will you turn, my brother, to Matt. 21:33 - 22:14, where you will find the summing up of all we have now been considering together, and that from the lips of our blessed Lord Himself. You know the two parables which constitute this passage. A certain householder plants a vineyard, and lets it out to husbandmen. When the time of the fruit draws near, he sends his servants to the husbandmen, that they may receive it. The husbandmen take the servants, beat one, kill another, and stone another. Again he sends other servants more than the first, and they do to them likewise. Last of all, he sends his son, saying, "They will reverence my son." So that one object for which the Son of God was sent, was to seek fruit of those to whom the vineyard had been entrusted. How was He received?

But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

The meaning of this cannot be mistaken. The Jewish nation were the husbandmen. All the privileges God had bestowed upon them were the vineyard. The obedience He required was the fruit, which they ought to have rendered. The law demanded it, but in vain. Prophet after prophet came seeking it; but maltreatment or death was all that they received. Last of all came Jesus, the heir. Him, also, they put to death . . .

No man becomes a child of God by an act of his own will!

"No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the holy Ghost."

"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 you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him"

“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.”

“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus.”

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.”

“Of His own will begat lie us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures.”

“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

With these quotations, the letter comes to an end. Yet, still the disbelieving reasoning proceeds to question how a man can be held responsible for his sin if he is not a free moral agent. Well, the fact is that the Word of God does hold him responsible and the Word of God rejects the notion that the sinner has moral free will towards God. Adam unfallen had it and lost it. It has not been recovered by fallen man. If the Word of God teaches both truths, namely, that man is not a free moral agent and yet is responsible, it is our part to bow to those facts and not complain, as the writer cited above does, about manufacturing difficulties. We are, as Christians, to believe and receive what God says, even if our carnal minds rebel at it. That is how we receive light from Scripture. Moreover, people usually do not reason in this Arminian manner when it comes to their own pocketbook. Let us remind ourselves of this once more:

But in the reasoning of Arminians there is a totally false principle, namely, that our responsibility depends on our power. If I have lent £100,000 {British pounds} to any one, and he has squandered it all, certainly he is not able to pay, but has his responsibility come to an end with his ability? Certainly not. Responsibility depends on the right of the person who has lent it to him, not on the ability of the one who has wrongfully wasted the money.<sup>33</sup>

## RESPONSIBILITY AND GRACE

We have noted that not having the moral power to pay does not relieve from responsibility. God gave the law knowing that man could not keep it (Rom. 8:7, 8), yet they were held responsible for breaking it. Sovereign grace can meet man's lost condition.

Man in responsibility always fails. Man was never in his innocence the head of a people; and as for Noah, he was, so to speak, a drunken head over the world. In Adam there is only and total failure and judgment executed. Created in innocence and beauty, he distrusts God and listens to the devil, who said that God had jealously kept back the best thing: then lust comes in, next

transgression, and all is over as to his state; he shrinks from God, and is turned out of Paradise. The world goes on and is so wicked that God brings in the flood. After that Noah fails directly. And as I have said, the priests never put on their garments of glory and beauty except when consecrated; and the Jews were a law-breaking people. In every place of responsibility the first thing we hear is man's utter failure. Not that there were not exceptions through grace; but, as to man, the inevitable result of responsibility is failure. As to principle Cain completed the sin of man: the main feature of Adam's sin was sin against God, that of Cain's was sin against his neighbor; and these two make up the sum of all sins.

In Paradise we get side by side the two principles about which men have been fighting ever since, namely, man's responsibility and simple communicated grace; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life. We find these two trees in Eden: the tree of responsibility, or the knowledge of good and evil; and the tree of life. In Christ alone are both principles fully brought to an issue, God glorified as to them, and blessing secured. He has met the failure in the fruit of the tree of responsibility, and secured eternal life, and the accomplishment of God's counsels in sovereign grace, and that in righteousness. God shut man out of Eden before he ate of the tree of life, and thus reserved His principle of grace for fuller hopes. Indeed to perpetuate life in sin would hardly have been in the ways of God.<sup>34</sup>

This book is about God aboundingly acting in sovereign grace after the testing of the first man was completed with the cross -- in spite of the fact that the first man had rejected grace displayed so fully in the Son when He was here. Man had, really, rejected God's grace in rejecting His Son. The issue involved was the presentation of God's grace to man *while under probation* by presenting the Son to man's responsibility to accept Him. Part of that testing was by the Son of God being here as the expression of God's grace and by the revelation of the Father in the Son (John 14:9-11). Both were hated (John 15:24). That hatred received its fullest expression in putting Christ on the cross, yet God used that expression of the wrath of man to praise Him (cp. Psa. 76:10). God has so wrought that sin is His servant. This reminds me of the lines in the hymn by J. G. Deck:

The very spear that pierced Thy side,  
Drew forth the blood to save.

That illustrates something of the character of God's use of man for His own glory. It was consequent upon the rejection of Christ, the crowning evil act of the first man, that there followed the unfolding of God's purpose from eternity

33. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:501.

34. *Collected Writings* 32:232, 233.

concerning the Man of His purpose.<sup>35</sup>

The first man put the Son on the cross,<sup>36</sup> refusing thus the manifestation of God's grace in His Person. Man had been tried by grace before the cross (John 1:14, etc.) and there is presently no 'age of grace' as if man is under trial now regarding grace. The trial of the first man to see if he was recoverable ended at the cross.

## *Man's Status and Responsibility Now*

### MAN'S PRESENT RESPONSIBILITY CONTRASTED WITH THE PAST

It is important to understand that the first man is no longer under probation, under testing, to see if he is recoverable. The cross ended that testing and the verdict of the trial of the first man has been rendered: he is unrecoverable; he is lost, he is dead (2 Cor. 5:14). It was J. N. Darby who brought before God's people the truth about the probation of the first man and its character, its end at the cross, God's governmental and dispensational ways, etc. Here we will consider some statements of his concerning the probation of man being ended and how man is now regarded by God

In v. 11 the "ends of the world" is the completion of the ages {i.e., the ages of trial of the first man}. To me the world now is not under any dispensation {the Mosaic age continues on}, but the whole course of God's dealings with it are over until He comes to judgment {at the appearing of Christ to smite the nations}. Man was under responsibility from Adam to Christ {in fallen Adam, a standing in the flesh}, and then our Lord says, "Now is the judgment of this world" {John 12:31}. Historically I see this: up to the flood no dealings of God, but a testimony in Enoch. We see a man turned out of paradise, and presently God comes in by a solemn act, and puts that world all aside. Then after the flood we see various ways of God with the world. He begins by putting it under Noah {the first administration -- government}. He gave promises to Abraham, then law raising the question of righteousness {the Mosaic administration}, which promise did not. Law was brought in to test flesh, and see whether righteousness could be got from man for God. Then God sent prophets until there was no remedy, and then He says there is one thing yet I may still do: I will send My

35. See *Collected Writings* 26:256, etc.

36. The Lord Jesus was the second man when here in the world, as to His Person. But He took the place of the second man in resurrection. There are two things about this to note here: (1) the first man cast out the second man; (2) the second man, in resurrection, has displaced the first man. The first man, the man under probation, has been judged by God in the cross. The Christian, as such, is identified with the second man, on the other side of death. A line of truth that has been referred to as "identification truth" was brought out by J. N. Darby in the 1800s (though not labeled in just that way) -- and, I might add, free of the attendant baggage added by some who would not be identified with JND ecclesiastically.

Son; and when they saw the Son, they said, "This is the heir, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours," {Matt. 21:38} and then, so far as responsibility went, God was turned out of the world. Then comes the cross, and atonement for sin, and a foundation for a new state of things altogether, and that was the completion of the ages {i.e., the ages of testing}. God is not now dealing with man to try if he is lost or not, and so in John's Gospel man is gone from chapter 1. The first three Gospels present Christ to man, and then He is rejected; but in John 1 {1:11-13},

He came to 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.

There we find God's power coming into the world, and the Jews all done with: only some receive Him who have been born of God, and so John's Gospel is thoroughly what men call Calvinistic.<sup>37</sup> ♦

The history of man in responsibility goes on up to the cross; but, since the cross, a man, though individually he goes through the discovery of what he is, is not in a state of probation at all; responsibility in that sense is over. Here is a man who, say, has been trading, and has not a farthing left. It is of no use saying to him, "Take care of your money." He could only say, "I have no money to take care of."

So, as a present thing, when I have really found out my state, I find I am lost. Christ came to seek and to save the lost, not those who are in a state of probation. Still, I personally must go through the learning process.

I see I am lost already, my state is enmity against God; that is a present fact, i.e., in my unconverted state.

Now, when in my enmity I rejected Christ, God gave Christ to cleanse me from it, and I am brought to own this. As a man, I am done with, and I am no more in the flesh, for it was condemned in the cross; but I am clear now, and through the rent veil I go into the holiest as white as snow.<sup>38</sup> ♦

Man is preached to as lost; Christ (when the full truth came out, man having been tested by grace as well as law) came to seek and to save that which was lost. The law may be presented to a man now to prove it. It is made for the unrighteous, as the enlightened saint taught by the word knows. Christ may be presented to the sinner too; but if grace works not, he will none of Him; he will prove in his particular case-what the word has proved of the world in its history -- he is a wilful doer of his own lawless (ἄνομος) will, and a hater of God, even if He come in grace {John 1}. And if God gives every evidence, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life" (John 5). Thus the principle of man's

37. *Collected Writings* 26:248.

38. *Notes and Jottings*, p. 33. See also p. 321.

responsibility was fully tested in every way.<sup>39</sup> ♦

Thus since the cross man's responsibility, as such, is over; it is not that he has not debts and sins, or that he was not responsible: all that is true, but God was rejected finally, and God comes and works His own work all alone by Himself. When that is done, He tells out His counsels and what He is going to do. At the beginning of Titus, we read "the acknowledging of the truth" -- the gospel comes and man is responsible to own his ruin -- "in hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began, but hath in due time manifested His word through preaching which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Savior."<sup>40</sup> ♦

Now, although the ground of man's responsibility is over in the sense of having wholly failed under it, when proved in every possible way, yet as to moral dealing with each individual, the responsibility is there to the full; and as an individual under moral dealing, a man has to go through the history of the process of responsibility and its failure; but he goes through it to bring out this, that he is lost already. He has to prove the truth of God's verdict that in man there is no good thing; and so the result of the principle of responsibility is for him to find out that he is lost, that the responsibility is over; not as if it was not true, but because he is lost and ruined, as the man who has lost all his money by foolish ways. It is important to keep up responsibility, but the individual is brought to the consciousness that on that ground it is all up with him. Man is lost. We have spent every farthing, and have only debts; these we have if that is any good. It is all over with the first man, and no mending of him will do: he is lost and ruined; but Christ came to save the lost.

Now the Second Man is set up. It is not a mending of the first man, but the substitution of the Second. There is no improvement or correction of the first man (although we are practically changed if we come to Christ), but the sins of the first Adam are all cleared away; and, secondly, the tree itself is cut down by the roots for faith. In the cross we see the responsibility met completely; Christ has met all the failure, the fruit of the tree of responsibility {i.e., the tree of the knowledge of good and evil}, and has glorified God in so doing. Man has brought in confusion; but Christ came, met the case, and cleared the scene, and triumphed over all. When He came, God's character as to facts was compromised, and there was no escape. If He had saved none, but at once cast off sinners, it were righteousness, but there would have been no love. If He had let all pass, when man was a sinner, and in such sort saved all (which man would call love, but which would not have been divine love, for God is holy), where were the righteousness? But Christ came. Well, surely in the cross there is righteousness against sin, as nowhere else, yet there is the infinite love of God to sinners.

In Him, in Christ, I get both the trees of Paradise united, fulfilled in grace, bearing our sins and putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and becoming

life according to righteousness. I am brought to the discovery of what I am, and then I see Christ has died on the cross and has taken the whole thing on Himself. When I see Him -- the Son of God -- dying on the cross, I say if this is not righteousness -- judgment against sin -- I do not know what is. But whom is He dying for? -- the guilty sinner. Well, if this is not love, I do not know what is.<sup>41</sup> ♦

The cross met our responsibility; there the first man, whether Gentile or Jew, came to the last pitch of wickedness. This closed all the history of responsibility. Now, when my mind is open through grace to look at my responsibility, it is not a question whether I can stand in the day of judgment; the gospel starts with the declaration that I am lost. I have lots of debts, and not a penny to pay: it is all over with me on that ground; but Christ "came to seek and to save that which was lost." "Lost" was never said till man had rejected Christ, though it was true before. When the glorified Christ was preached by the apostles, the history of responsibility was closed. In that work on the cross Christ met our responsibility, and laid the foundation for all the counsels of God. This is summed up in Acts 7. "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." They had broken the law, killed the prophets, crucified Christ, and resisted the Holy Ghost. The Lord said on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Then came the testimony of a glorified Christ; it was rejected, and that closed altogether not responsibility, but the history of it. Then in the cross Christ has perfectly glorified God Himself in the place of sin, where He was "made sin." He goes into God's glory, which was the foundation for the counsels of God. Then the whole mystery of the church could come out.<sup>42</sup> ♦

### SATAN HAS GIVEN A CHARACTER TO FALLEN MAN

The Lord Jesus pointed out to those who opposed him that they did what they had seen with their father (John 8:38); and that they did their father's works (John 8:41); and that "Ye are of the devil, as [your] father" (John 8:44). Moreover:

He that practices sin is of the devil; for from [the] beginning the devil sins (1 John 3:8).

Indeed:

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the wicked [one] (1 John 5:19).

Since the cross, Satan is called the god of this world, and is engaged in blinding the thoughts:

. . . in whom the god of this world has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving . . . (2 Cor. 4:4).

And so Satan is:

. . . the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience: among whom we

39. *Collected Writings* 10:275.

40. *Collected Writings* 26:256.

41. *Collected Writings* 32:236.

42. *Collected Writings* 34:403..

all had our conversation in the lusts of our flesh, doing what the flesh and the thoughts willed to do . . . (Eph. 2:2, 3).

Note well what the thoughts and the flesh *willed* to do. Man's thoughts and the flesh never *will* to believe the gospel! Man is a *slave* to sin (Rom. 6:20) as is the devil himself.

#### THE PERFECT WORK OF CHRIST SETTLED THE MATTER OF RESPONSIBILITY

Man's history was thus closed at the cross. First, lawlessness, then law-breaking, and then enmity to God; then comes that blessed perfect work of the last Adam, who met the need in His own Person, and brought in the full accomplishment of the purposes of God. He has brought man into an entirely new sphere by death and resurrection, and eventually glory, and has settled the whole question of responsibility.<sup>43</sup>

#### THE NATURAL FIRSTBORN IS DISPLACED

There is a fact to be observed with attention in the book of Genesis the special blessing is not given to the firstborn son. This setting begins with Cain and is seen in every case where there is sufficient information given so that this phenomenon in Genesis may be observed. We should see in this a foreshadow that God's purpose is to set aside the firstborn. In connection with the last Adam, Christ, it is written:

The first man Adam became a living soul; the last Adam<sup>44</sup> a quickening spirit. But that which is spiritual [was] not first, but that which is natural, then that which is spiritual: the first man out of [the] earth, made of dust; the second man out of heaven (1 Cor. 15:45-47).

The setting aside of the first man is woven into the fabric of Genesis. Note that Genesis does not directly speak of the fact but it is there for our observation and attention. The matter of the rejection of the firstborn comes out more openly in Exodus. Why? God's judgment on the first man is seen (typically) in Exodus, the book of *redemption*. We see how appropriate this is when we realize that in the cross of Christ, where redemption was wrought, God has ended the standing of the first man as fallen, as under trial, to see if he was recoverable. Note well that the destroying of the firstborn took *place in immediate connection with the Passover* (Ex. 12). This is of great typical significance.

The Pharaoh of the Exodus was not a firstborn. And though Pharaoh may have had a divine status in the eyes of Egyptians, he is compelled, so to speak, to acknowledge the superior power (Ex. 12:31, 32), like those in the future who will be compelled to bow the knee to Christ, even infernal beings (Phil. 2:10). The work of Christ has also provided for deliverance from the power

of sin dwelling in us ("sin in the flesh," Rom. 8:3) and so the power of this taskmaster was overthrown in the Red Sea -- typifying Christ's death and resurrection for us. Thus, the complex of the Passover and crossing of the Red Sea must be taken together to set forth typically the redemption from Egypt, for in Scripture redemption involves a transfer from a state of bondage to one of liberty. And that brings us to the first recorded song in Scripture, the song of redemption and deliverance (Ex. 15) that filled the mouths of the Israelites that day. What have the world's songs to do in the mouth of the redeemed? Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!

The fullest OT significance of the smiting of Egypt's firstborn is given in Psa. 136:10 (see also Psa. 78:51; 105:36; 135:8):

To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn, for his loving-kindness [endureth] forever.

The significance of the smiting of the firstborn is that *Egypt was smitten*. It is the judgment of and setting aside of Egypt. Thus has God done in the cross of Christ. The first man is judged, set aside, and has no longer the standing before Him as under trial to see if he was recoverable. God is done with the first man, as such.

The ten plagues divide into three groups of three (dealing with sin in its origin, character, and consequences)<sup>45</sup> and then the final, the tenth judgment, the striking down the firstborn of Egypt, Jehovah sending "the destroyer of the firstborn" (Heb. 11:28) -- signifying the final removal of the first man into the "gloom of darkness" (Jude 13). See Matt. 22:13, where it is "outer darkness" -- totally away from God. God had just previously given a foreshadow of this in the ninth plague, in awful darkness. No one moved from his place, nor repented, either. There is no fellowship in the "gloom of darkness." Fellowship is in the light (1 John 1:7). Let the redeemed of the Lord say so! Psa. 150.

God has made Christ the firstbegotten, or firstborn -- speaking not of priority in time, but of pre-eminence in all spheres and spiritual relationships (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15, 18; Rev. 1:5)<sup>46</sup> as come in holy manhood and accomplishing His will. Thus, He displaces Adam who had the pre-eminence of a firstborn in the natural order (concerning having a standing before Him as under trial to see if he was recoverable); because, first is the natural and afterwards the spiritual (1 Cor. 15:46, 47). Moreover, the Christian in his

45. A chart of this may be found at the website, [presenttruthpublishers.com](http://presenttruthpublishers.com).

46. "Only-begotten Son" speaks of underived, unacquired, unique, eternal relationship with the Father. "Firstborn" is connected with acquired glories as man, in spheres wherein He must have pre-eminence.

43. *Collected Writings* 34:296.

44. {He is called the *last* Adam because there will never be another head.}

special relationship to Christ the Firstborn is among “the assembly of the firstborn” (Heb. 12:23). We are under the headship of the last Adam, the true Firstborn, who has displaced the first Adam regarding a standing before God. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!

### *Conclusion: Man, in Adam, is a Bad Tree*

And already the axe is applied to the root of the trees; and every tree therefore not producing good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire (Matt. 3:10).

Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt. For from the fruit the tree is known (Matt. 12:35).

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and have set you that ye should go and [that] ye should bear fruit, and [that] your fruit should abide (John 15:16).

For we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before prepared that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10).

So then [it is] not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy (Rom. 9:16).

Let the Redeemed of the Lord say so!

### *Addendum: Which Is First, Faith or New Birth?*

Since this matter will be on the minds of some readers, it might be well to indicate the understanding of this that appears in this book, though it will be noticed later. Arminians will say that faith is first, meaning a human faith, not a divinely implanted faith. The Calvinist will say that regeneration precedes faith. *Neither is true.*

God implants both faith and a new nature *simultaneously* -- through the instrumentality of His Word used by the Spirit of God acting on the person. Hopefully, this will become clear as we consider God’s sovereign action and glory in the salvation of lost men.

### *Note*

The following two charts give somewhat of a summary of the bearing of matters discussed in this chapter.

### *End of the Testing of the First Man*

. . . that which is spiritual (was) not first . . .

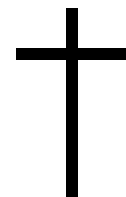
The first man out of (the) earth, made of dust, . . .

**FINAL TESTING**  
**BY THE PERSON OF THE SON, THE SECOND MAN**  
**And at last He sent to them His Son (Matt. 21:37).**

The perfect King and the kingdom (Matt.)  
 The perfect Servant and perfect service (Mark)  
 The perfect Man and perfect dependency (Luke)  
 The only-begotten, full of grace and truth (John 1:14)

**The revelation of the**  
**Father in the Son (John 15:24)**

**The first man**, in the persons of the Jews, **was tested by the kingdom** in the offer of the King; and **was tested by grace** in the Person of the Son. Man is not now being tested by grace, nor will he be tested by the kingdom in the future. God has concluded testing of the first man, having shown all to be under sin (Rom. 3:9)



#### *The First Man*

**TESTED UNDER**  
**Conscience**  
 (lawlessness)  
**Government**  
**Law**  
**Priesthood**  
**Judges**  
**Kings**  
**Prophets**  
**THE SON**  
 (the Second Man)

**“The fulness of the time” (Gal. 4:4)**  
**“In due time” (Rom. 5:6)**  
 (at the end of the time of testing)

**“Yet sinners” (Rom. 5:8)**  
**“Still without strength” (Rom. 5:6)**  
 (conclusion at the end of testing)

**“Consummation of the ages”**  
**(Heb. 9:26)**  
 (Ages of testing)

### *The Second Man Established in His Place*

. . . then that which is spiritual (1 Cor. 14:46)

. . . the second man, out of heaven (1 Cor. 15:47)

#### **NOW**

The Second Man has displaced the first man.

In view of the end of the testing  
of the first man, God declares:

Wrath of God revealed from heaven (Rom. 1:18)

All under sin (Rom. 3:9; Gal. 3:22)

Every mouth stopped (Rom. 3:20)

All the world under judgment (Rom. 3:20)

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23)

For God has shut up together all in unbelief, in order that he might show  
mercy to all (Rom. 11:32).

Man is the slave of sin (Rom. 6:20)

Thoughts of the unbelieving are blinded (2 Cor. 4:4)

All are dead (2 Cor. 5:14; Eph. 2:1; John 5:24, 25; 1 John 3:14)

Now is the judgment of this world (John 12:31)

In due time Christ died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6)

Christ died for all (1 Tim. 2:6)

Christ gave Himself a ransom for all (1 Tim. 2:6)

Christ is the propitiation for the world (1 John 2:2)

The whole world lies in the wicked One (1 John 5:19)

Satan declared to be the God of this age (2 Cor. 4:4)

NOW: Rom. 3:21; 2 Tim. 1:9-10; Eph. 3:10; Heb. 9:26

God **“NOW** enjoins that they shall  
all everywhere repent” (Acts 17:30)

**“Upon whom the ends of the ages are come” (1 Cor. 10:11)**

(ages of testing)

## Chapter 2

### *God's Invitation To Ruined Man*

*Luke 14:15-24*

#### *The Great Supper of Luke 14:15-24 Contrasted with Matt. 22:1-14*

Matthew emphasizes dispensational changes and dispensational connections of the events and teachings presented. Luke has an order also, of course, but the emphasis is on moral connections of the events presented and the moral bearing of the teachings. This does not exclude moral teaching and bearing in Matthew any more than it excludes dispensational aspects in Luke. It is a matter of emphasis and characteristics of the gospels.

Thus, the parable in Matthew has features in keeping with the dispensational character of his gospel. In Matt. 22:7 we can see the governmental consequence upon Israel, the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70). We see good and bad brought in (with judgment at the end of the wicked) and we have here bondmen (plural), depicting human agency used in bringing persons to the wedding feast.

In contrast with that, in Luke there is but one bondman, a picture of the Holy Spirit. Another remarkable feature in Luke is the detail of excuses that are given. Each moral state of soul is exhibited with respect to God's invitation. Moreover we find that the one bondman *brings* and *compels* them to come. And so we see, looking at the matter from the divine standpoint, that an invitation to lost man is not enough. It is God's own action, by the Spirit, that furnishes the great supper with guests.

The point especially brought out is man's moral state of soul with respect to God's invitation, and with no one responding to the invitation, God sovereignly undertakes to furnish His great supper with a house full of persons (v. 23).

*God's Sovereignty in Luke, Matthew, and John*

And this brings us to notice how God's sovereignty is brought out in Luke. You should notice that the word "certain" is a characteristic word in this gospel. It directs our attention to God's particular, sovereign dealings with respect to the moral state of man in the circumstances in which he is found. He sovereignly addresses those particular situations, circumstances, and persons. In this parable man's lost condition is emphasized, yet God's purpose to furnish the great supper with guests will not thereby be frustrated.

In Matthew we see not only great dispensational changes and actions of God, we see also His divine government in Matt. 22:7. In emphasis, Matthew is governmental as well as dispensational. God's sovereignty is displayed in His governmental dealings and ways as well as in His ways dispensationally.

In John we see the action of the Father and the Son (always, of course, in the power of the Spirit). We very much see the revelation of the Father in the Son, by the Spirit. Thus, we note the Father drawing persons, and giving persons, to the Son, and the Son giving eternal life to persons so drawn, and so given to Him. This is another aspect of sovereignty of God in salvation.

#### *The Place of this Parable in Luke 13-14*

Luke 13-14 is a section of events and parables that are morally connected in that they bring out the moral state of ruined man and God's sovereign dealing with that moral state, and His sovereign, gracious intervention for His own glory and for the salvation of those He causes to be blessed.

#### **LUKE 13: SIX LESSONS ON MAN'S TOTALLY RUINED CONDITION**

1. **Luke 13:1-5.** The lesson to be learned here is that all are sinners and all shall perish unless there is repentance. We do not learn here what the ultimate source of repentance is.

The Lord used these cases as representative of coming judgment. See how He used the news report: every man is ruined (totally, really).

2. **Luke 13:6-9.** God is patient but man must be cut down. Favored Israel, the cultivated fig tree, was fruitless, and should be cut down. The Lord sought fruit during His ministry here, but the cultivation of man does not produce fruit for God. The vine-dresser is a picture of the Spirit, Who says to give the tree one more year during which He will cultivate it. The end of the three years looking for fruit ended with the crucifixion, and the year of grace from that point ended with the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7). There is a reference to Stephen in Luke 19:14. He is the embassy the citizens sent after the man who went to another country. It is sending Stephen, by his martyrdom, after the rejected Christ then above in the glory. The citizens would not have Christ down here, and they would not have Him in the glory either.



We must keep in mind that favored Israel was part of the testing of the first man to see if he was recoverable. The cross was the end of the testing. The special year of grace, up to Stephen, was meant to confirm that state. It was not part of the testing. Man's ruin is not helped by cultivation.

**3. Luke 13:10-17.** Though all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and though man is fruitless and needs to be cut down, God has resource in Himself. What is manifested here is man's inability to help himself in any way, illustrated by this woman's condition, as "bent together and wholly unable to lift her head up." This goes further than Luke 13:1-5, where we see that there is no difference among men, as Rom. 3:22 states it, and where all need repentance. Many Christians erroneously believe that they can have faith to believe and repent. They have no more ability to do so than she had to straighten herself and lift up her head to God. Moreover, the power of the Enemy is involved (v. 16) in man's condition. As the tower fell on 18 persons, so she was bound 18 years. Three in Scripture is used in connection with manifesting something, and six is often connected with evil. Eighteen is 3 x 6 and indicates, in keeping with the subject of Luke 13, the manifestation (3) of the evil, moral state of man (6). And no sooner did the blessed Lord heal her than the wicked heart of man, who finds something he thinks is religiously unacceptable, objects to this outflow of sovereign grace (Luke 13:14).

The Lord declares her to be a daughter of Abraham (v. 16). Surely she was of the physical seed of Abraham, but just as surely the Lord did not refer to that (for there were many ill daughters of Abraham in the ethnic sense) but that she was of Abraham's faith. This He said of Zacchaeus likewise (Luke 19:9). They were, happily, of the same family -- spiritual seed of Abraham.

The ruler of the synagogue, the representative of Israel's condition, hated the grace manifested by the Lord Jesus. This is characteristic of those who look to works for salvation. The Lord rebuked the hypocrite. As J. G. Bellett somewhere said of the Lord Jesus, "We have to do with a *faithful* friend, not a *flattering* friend."

Man, in total ruin, is not able to lift himself up. We see this also in the ruler of the synagogue who could not lift himself up above those words he uttered in v. 14.

**4. Luke 13:18-21.** And what should the kingdom of God be like (in the mystery form it has now) in the hands of such as objected to his healing the woman on the Sabbath? In the first of the two similitudes, it is like a worldly kingdom where Satan's ministers are (depicted by the birds lodging there). Here, *the man* is noted, thus indicating the public aspect of the kingdom. The second parable pictures the professing church (*the woman*, depicting the internal aspect) leavening the food of God's people, the three measures of meal, depicting

especially the doctrine of Christ. Such is man! The religion of totally lost man is devil-ridden and filled with evil.

**5. Luke 13:22-30.** And so the question arises, "Sir, [are] such as are to be saved few in number?" The Lord Jesus never directly answered such a question. Rather, he responded to the moral state of the questioner. He was concerned about the inquirer rather than the inquiry. Therefore, He addressed the questioner's conscience. He puts the man on his responsibility. Whether he can actually discharge that responsibility is another matter. Moreover, the fact is that a huge amount of religiousness is, in reality, the working of iniquity (Luke 13:27). Such are of Cain's religion. They set aside the blood (Heb. 11:4). They are debarred from enjoying the future coming kingdom of God on earth, though there will be those there from the east and from the west -- no doubt Gentiles. All enjoying the kingdom come in through the "narrow door" (v. 23). The lying down at table (v. 29) is a figure for the rich communion in the grace of God that was above all the evil in man.

**6. Luke 13:31-35.** "Certain" Pharisees come to get the Lord out of the path of God's will by using intimidation. Notice that they really preferred the fox (v. 32) to the hen (v. 34). Such is the moral state of man's heart. But His pathway, and its timing, was under sovereign control, and He would walk until the appointed time, knowing full well the outcome of that path leading to the cross. Then would the captain of our salvation be perfected (v. 32).

He would be judged at Jerusalem that kills the prophets (even as they stoned Stephen about a year later). The wicked will of man comes out in the statement, "ye would not" (v. 34). The Lord said, "how often I would have gathered thy children together." But that was the time of the testing of the first man and his state was brought out fully. The time will come when Jerusalem's children will be gathered together -- as the new Israel under the new covenant. So there is also the sovereignty of God in Israel's salvation, yet to come, spite of the "ye would not":

I say unto you, that ye shall not see me until it come that ye say, Blessed [is] he that comes in the name of the Lord" (Luke 13:35).

He will bring them into the bond of the covenant (Ezek. 20:37) when He turns away ungodliness from Jacob (Rom. 11:26). Then all Israel will be saved -- they shall all be righteous (Isa. 60:21). It is very strange if salvation depends on man's alleged free will that they *all* will be righteous. Rather than human will, it is God sovereignly undertaking on their behalf according to the seven times repeated "I will" in Gen 17 and in Ex. 6. He does this when He makes good His unconditional promises for Israel under the new covenant. This He will do though Israel's house is now a total ruin, but there is, meanwhile, a "remnant according to election of grace" (Rom. 11:5; cp. 9:11). The national adoption, as well as other things, belongs to Israel (Rom. 9:4), and securing them cannot

be by the human will.

#### LUKE 14: FIVE LESSONS ON GOD'S SOVEREIGN INTERVENTION TO BRING MEN TO HIS GREAT SUPPER.

1. **Luke 14:1-6.** The Son of man has the divine prerogative of sovereignty to heal as He will. The Lord answered His own question about if it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not. Met by silence, He healed the dropsical man. Then He questioned them again, thus once again addressing their state of soul. They reflect in their state of soul what the dropsical man's condition represents. He had edema, a *swelling* up. Man is *full of himself* in His self-willed pride of heart. But divine power can remedy this state. The words are so precious:

And taking him he healed him and let him go (Luke 14:4).

It was all His action. It is sorrowful to note that Christians also may have spiritual edema. In extreme cases it is called Narcissism. The same One has the remedy for it today.

2. **Luke 14:7-11.** Notice now how the state of spiritual edema manifests itself in the souls of those invited. Their souls were full of self and so they chose out the first, or chief, places. It is self exaltation when there should have been humility. He takes the occasion to bring out that great moral principle in the dealings of God (Luke 14:11) of which He Himself is the great example. The Lord is commenting on *man's supper*:

It is *his* {man's} supper. He therefore calls in his "friends, brethren, kinsmen and rich neighbors," i. e. those of a similar moral standing. Did any one ever see such "in lowliness of mind, esteeming others better than themselves?" Nay, but each one filled with self seeks out the "chief room." What a scene for God's contemplation! Men, with hearts as they appear before Him, pretending to a high seat! Yet, go where you please, ask the first man you meet, and, except he have been taught of God that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," you will find him a guest at the Pharisee's supper, and looking out for a chief room. He will represent you heaven as an inclined plane, and all doing their best to get a good seat in it.

This is natural religion; what suits the infidel Sadducee as well as the orthodox Pharisee, because it never stirs up the conscience nor reaches the heart . . .

Moreover, the character of such as sit at that feast is shown by the Master's words, "Go and sit down in the lowest room." *Grace* seeking out and meeting their need, has made them conscious of their ruined condition, and they are effectually humbled. They can "rejoice evermore," because "they know they have eternal life" (1 John 5:13), they know they "have redemption through His word, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:14), but they walk with their heads low because they also know and often feel "that in them, that is in their flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). These are

the ones who can "esteem others better than themselves," not in word, but in truth.<sup>47</sup>

"He that abases himself shall be exalted" means that God will sovereignly intervene in His time. It is a general moral principle. And that is the only way such exaltation comes to pass.

3. **Luke 14:12-14.** Before the Lord's presentation of God's great supper, He next speaks of the principle upon which God sovereignly bases His choice of sinners. While we will find in the next parable that God's *invitation* to the great supper is not in itself enough to bring any one to the great supper, here the Lord enunciates a principle of action for His host in view of the coming resurrection of the just. That is the time for recompense. But man wants to be paid in some form *now*. God's sovereign intervention begins with His choice of guests without considering a recompense.

4. **Luke 14:15-24.** In v. 15 we note that someone says, "Blessed [is] he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God" (i.e., what we call the millennial kingdom).<sup>48</sup> To this the Lord speaks a parable to show that man does not want this on God's terms. How God sovereignly furnishes the great supper with guests will be seen in detail below.

5. **Luke 14:25-35.** God's sovereign intervention brings souls into the place of discipleship. The fact is that there are also those who profess to be Christians but are really not. They, as well as believers, are in the place of profession, thus in the place of *discipleship* -- which is here addressed by the Lord. It is not now to the point to go into the instructive things He brings to bear on this.

### *The Parable of Furnishing the Great Supper with Guests*

(15) And one of those that were at table with [them], hearing these things, said to him, Blessed [is] he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. (16) And he said to him, A certain man made a great supper and invited many. (17) And he sent his bondman at the hour of supper to say to those who were invited, Come, for already all things are ready. (18) And all began, without exception, to excuse themselves. The first said to him, I have bought land, and I must go out and see it; I pray thee hold me for excused. (19) And another said, I have

47. *Helps by the Way*, New Series 2:323-325.

48. What this person said was in keeping with the earthly calling of Israel. There will be the rule of God on the earth and this will be for man's happiness in a human way. It is right in its own place but the Lord, by grace, was going to bring in another calling, even the heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1). The great supper involves the change to bring in a new calling, while the earthly calling of Israel is in suspension until God's present work is completed.

bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee hold me for excused. (20) And another said, I have married a wife, and on this account I cannot come. (21) And the bondman came up and brought back word of these things to his lord. Then the master of the house, in anger, said to his bondman, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring here the poor and crippled and lame and blind. (22) And the bondman said, Sir, it is done as thou hast commanded, and there is still room. (23) And the lord said to the bondman, Go out into the ways and fences and compel to come in, that my house may be filled; (24) for I say to you, that not one of those men who were invited shall taste of my supper.

### THE KINGDOM OF GOD HAD DRAWN NEAR

One of those that were at table with the Lord expressed the blessedness of eating bread in the kingdom of God. He had in mind the kingdom under Messiah's reign, the rule of God on earth. We call it the millennial kingdom. Both John the Baptist and the Lord had announced that the kingdom had drawn nigh. But what was the moral state of those who heard this? Unless God had sovereignly wrought belief in the soul, the kingdom, as presented to them in the Person of the lowly Lord Jesus, was rejected. The fact is that most individuals rejected Him, though by God's grace some individuals accepted Him. The facts have been reviewed in detail in *Elements of Dispensational Truth*, vol. 1. In this parable we see the moral state of the individual rejecters exposed, along with God's response to that state.

Someone had spoken of that future blessedness when Messiah would reign. But there was another feast that God had in view meanwhile, before that day of blessing on earth. Sinners were to come to His great supper.

### A NEEDS-BE IN THE HEART OF GOD

In Matt. 22:1-10 it is said that a feast was made for the king's son. But in Luke the great supper is for the satisfaction of God's own heart. He must satisfy His desire to give, to bless, and to enjoy His provision for those He would bless. Man's incorrigible state will not be permitted to frustrate His thought.

### THE EXCUSES

**Only Three Excuses.** Really, the excuses present man in a 'good' light, so to speak. They were not excuses in order to do wicked deeds. They were all natural things to man and have their place in the created order. *The evil is in the refusal to heed the invitation.* These excuses expose the state of soul regarding man's response to God's invitation. If all depended on *invitation*, there would not be one guest at the great supper. The house would be altogether empty. The fact is that "all began, without exception, to excuse themselves" (v. 18). Every last one of those invited refused to come, but only three excuses are listed. Why only three? because they sum up the three-fold character of what controls fallen, totally lost man. We see these three things in the garden of Eden and in the

testing of the Lord in the wilderness, and in 1 John 2:16 where they are presented as the motivations characterizing the world. These motivations are constitutional in what we call the old nature (i.e., the flesh), acquired in the fall of man, and actuating man ever since. The old nature dominates man. His will is *subject* to these motivations. They have power over the person -- over the "I." The will is biased against God. It is not really morally free to choose God. The will is in bondage to the old nature and is actuated by these three motivations, some persons more from one than from another motivation.

Scripture distinguishes spirit, soul, and body in man (1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12). In his soul man is viewed by God as the responsible "I" and that is where the will resides. As W. Kelly remarked:

But Scripture abundantly proves its seat to be in the soul. The spirit is inner capacity *as to* which man is responsible to God; but the soul is that *in* which he is so; and the body is the outer vessel which displays the result, whether by grace for God's will or by self-will in Satan's service. To the soul belongs the working of the will, and now also since the fall the instinctive knowledge of good and evil; so that one is enticed into fleshly lusts which degrade man, as well as reasonings of the spirit and every high thing that lifts itself up against the knowledge of God. Hence we read of soul-salvation or "salvation of souls." <sup>49</sup>

The soul is the seat of affections and appetites. The will is morally bound against God by the three great motivations in the old nature that have self as the object, not God. Thus man is morally bound against God in the very seat of his responsible being. If the great supper is to be furnished with the full complement of guests, if the house is to be filled -- nay, if there is to be even *one* person there -- God must act sovereignly to do this, for man **will not** come, as we shall see.

Another preliminary matter to observe is the fact that the invitation to the great supper does not imply that man is able to respond to that invitation. The great supper is the enjoyment of, and fellowship in, the grace of God, which alone meets man's need. It is the opposite of the law which requires from man. The law requires man to bring something to God. God's grace brings *all* to man. Man could not keep the law. We have the direct statement of Scripture saying so in Rom. 8:7:

Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God; for neither indeed can it be.

Thus, the self-willed reasoning of the flesh (in Christians) that God would not

49. *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 4:79.

command man to do something that he is not capable of doing, is utterly false.<sup>50</sup> When faced with this some may shuffle and shift, and may say, "but that incapacity to be subject to God was under law, not under grace." The opposing principle is "God will not command man to do what he is not capable of doing." When faced with the plain, Scripture disproof of the false notion, why then shift ground? How can we expect to learn from the Word when we engage in such conduct? Have we never learned what God's testing and exposure of man in his fallen, Adamic standing of responsibility to see if he was recoverable, really is? Have we not learned the lesson of man's moral distance from God, that he is totally lost? Ruined man can no more respond to the invitation of grace than he can obey the commands of God through Moses. Before we look at the three excuses, a quotation about the testing of man under law is appropriate here.

Though God has no respect of persons, He nevertheless does heed His ways that He has Himself established. This makes so much less excusable the lack of faith on the part of the Jew. God never fails -- man always does. Favored man {the Jew, under testing to see if fallen man was recoverable} only makes the greater show of his own unbelief. Here the message to them was, "Come, for all things are now ready." Such is the invitation of grace. The law makes man the prominent and responsible agent; it is man that is to do this, and yet more, man must not do that. Man therein is commanded to love God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his strength, and with all his mind. But the commandment, just as it is, is wholly unavailing, because in this case man is a sinner and loveless. No law ever produced or called out love. It may demand but cannot create love; it is not within the nature or power of the law to do so. God knew this perfectly; and in the gospel *He* becomes Himself the great Agent. It is He that loves, who gives according to the strength of that love in sending His only begotten Son with eternal life in Him -- yea, also to die in expiation of sin. Law demonstrated that man though responsible had no power to perform. He was incapable of doing God's will because of sin; but his pride was such that he did not, would not, feel his own incapability, or its cause. Were he willing to confess it, God would have shown him grace. But man felt no need of grace anymore than his own guilt and powerlessness to meet law. So he slights the call to come, though all things are now ready.<sup>51</sup>

Let us now look at the three excuses and keep in mind that we should see what we, not the Jews only, are by nature, as fallen.

#### Excuse 1.

The first said to him, I have bought land, and I must go out and see it; I pray thee to hold me for excused (v. 18).

50. Think of the absurd statement quoted by Samuel Fisk, "God's commands are enablings . . ." (*Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom*, Neptune: Loizeaux, p. 50, 1973).

51. *The Bible Treasury* 8:179.

He was polite in returning his answer, but the answer is quite stupid, yet he thinks it a reasonable basis to be held excused. He bought first and goes to look at it later. Even so, he had an invitation and could see the land at any other time. He had to *see* it; that is *the lust of the eyes*.

Moreover, there are the world, the devil, and the flesh. What overcame the first to be invited was **the world**.

#### Excuse 2.

And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee to hold me for excused (v. 19).

He also was polite in his answer, though it was just as stupid as the first. He could have "proved" them later. Notice *he* had to prove them. This is *the pride of life*. Moreover, oxen in Scripture represent service. Perhaps a man is ensnared by religious or humanistic works. In Scripture the number five may be used to represent responsibility manward. All this may serve as a convenient, self-serving excuse to reject God's invitation to His great supper.

The first great act of pride was when the covering cherub of Ezek. 28 lifted himself up. What overcame this man was the sin of **the devil**.

#### Excuse 3.

And another said, I have married a wife, and on this account I cannot come (v. 20).

It has been observed that:

There is such a thing as "*a moral cannot*," as well as "*a physical cannot*." In the former, our *wills*, tastes, affections, thoughts, and he who rules us by these, are often stronger than our judgments. Awful state! if our being subject to God is in question. "I have married a wife, and cannot come" told a tale about the want of *heart* and *will*, not of external ability.<sup>52</sup>

Nor was this as polite an answer as in the first two cases. What we have here is *the lust of the flesh*. Marriage was instituted by God and is to be held in honor in every way, and the bed be undefiled, for fornicators and adulterers God will judge (Heb. 13:4). But marriage is no excuse to refuse God's invitation. This one was overcome by **the flesh**.

There is a further truth that comes out in this man's answer: "I cannot come." The first two cases illustrate the words of the Lord Jesus in John 5:40:

and ye will not come to me that ye might have life.

This third case illustrates the words of the Lord Jesus in John 6:44:

No one can come to me except the Father who has sent me draw him . . .

52. H. P., *The Present Testimony*, 8:318.

Interestingly, the order of John 5, before John 6, is the order of the three cases here; (1) "will not" and (2) "cannot." "Cannot" expresses incapacity to do it. "Will not" shows the hostility of the will under the control of the old nature and its three strong motivations. That is why man "cannot." He is a slave to sin in the flesh.

Note well that these excuses do not depict man as engaging in gross practices. He is presented as engaging in normal activities. We are to learn that man in his best estate will not come to the great supper though invited to come. Observe that ground, oxen, and wives are all gifts of God. These things are not sin. They are of nature. Notice a progression in the three things that are of nature. A man obtains a piece of ground. He then plows it. And he marries and wants a home. These things are not in themselves sinful, but he uses them to sinfully refuse God's invitation. And so, man turns God's very gifts into an excuse not to come to His gracious, great supper. How forcefully this parable brings out the moral state of man as totally lost! He wants his portion here apart from God's great supper. He does not want God's grace.

As to these three activities used as excuses to refuse God's invitation, note that Adam was in the garden of Eden and was there to till it and to keep it, and be with his wife. But since the fall these very things are used by man as excuses to refuse the invitation of grace. The three excuses are a moral summary of the character of man's refusal to come and indicate the total ruin of man. The excuses, we saw, involve the world, the devil, and the flesh. Moreover, the three controlling forces in the old nature named in 1 John 2:16 are likewise seen in the three excuses, as they are seen at work in the garden of Eden, and in the temptations presented to the Lord in the wilderness.

#### THE HOUSE FILLED WITH THOSE BROUGHT IN ON ANOTHER BASIS THAN AN INVITATION TO COME

The Israelites had the first claim upon the great supper, but the bulk of the leaders and the nation rejected the Lord Jesus. In their being tested by the offer of the kingdom as embodied in His lowly Person here, the leaders and the people are looked at as invited to the great supper. God's invitation exposes the moral state of the heart of man. The conclusion is:

for I say to you, that not one of those who were invited shall taste of my supper (v. 24).

The awfulness of eternal, conscious punishment awaits these rejecters of grace. This is the moral result of God's invitation to man, for we must see that Israel was but representative of "the first man," man viewed in the fallen Adamic standing, under test, under the law, but in the most favorable circumstances.

Just as in the case of "whosoever will may come," man refuses. God hinders no one from coming. It is self-will that is indulged instead of coming.

This is universal. But God will have the house filled. Note the response to the refusal; "Then the master of the house, in anger, said . . ." <sup>53</sup> He turns from the invited to have the servant take action that his house be filled. Yet there is room, for the master has not yet arisen to shut the door (Luke 13:25).

Note again that there is but one servant. It is a mistake to bring God's human servants into this matter. It is the Spirit of God that answers to the one servant. We do not have in this parable a lesson about how Christians should do gospel work. God is light and God is love. This parable is about God satisfying Himself concerning His being love. We know that it was love that provided the sacrifice of Christ. God is light, and as such Christ was judged for us. God, thus satisfied, and glorified, is just in justifying the believer. He is righteous in having the Spirit compel persons to come to the great supper. God is love, and He will have before Himself, eternally, objects of His sovereign grace. <sup>54</sup>

Besides Israel and its leaders, we have two more cases presented in this parable. The second case is given in vv. 21, 22. This refers to God's work regarding certain individuals of Israel. While this still goes on, it had special application to the testimony in Acts up to the stoning of Stephen. In Matt. 21:31 the Lord warned the hearers that the publicans and harlots would go into the kingdom before they would. Here it is the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. No doubt this description uses these conditions to represent moral conditions, not actual physical conditions. There is *poverty*, no resources; *maimed* so as not to be able to serve God; *lame* so as not to be able to walk acceptably before God; and *blind* also, having no divine light in the soul. The servant sent, i.e., the Spirit of God, can discover this to our souls in His sovereign action to bring souls to the great supper. But this class has in view especially the work of the Spirit in individuals in Israel. Therefore we read in Rom. 11:5 of "a remnant according to election of grace." That is, of course, the elect of Israel while the leaders and mass are rejected.

The third case is the Gentiles (v. 23). The order followed is the Jew first and then the far-off Gentiles (Acts 13:46; 28:23-28).

For to you is the promise and to your children, and to all who [are] afar off, as many as [the] Lord our God shall call (Acts 2:37).

But now in Christ Jesus ye who were afar off are become nigh by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13).

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53. Here we find anger expressed concerning man's refusal to come to His provision of grace. In Luke 15, in contrast, we find "joy" and "merry" in connection with that three-fold parable showing the divine Persons engaged in finding sinners and bringing them -- where? -- into the house.

54. God is *light*, also, and there will be in the *outer darkness* (note the contrast) those who will not be at the great supper.

There is thus a moral order to God's ways in what we have just considered.

### COMPEL TO COME IN, THAT MY HOUSE MAY BE FILLED

The death of Christ is not presented in this parable though that is, we are sure, the basis for all His display of grace towards man. The great supper is the enjoyment and celebration of His grace. The house is a figure for the place where God's order and will are carried out.

Blessed be God, His house will be filled. Man's refusal of His invitation cannot frustrate the purpose of grace. Christians who believe in man's moral free will (as do philosophers and free-thinkers) are offended by the idea that God should "violate man's will." "God cannot violate man's free will" it is said. Well, man's alleged free will, morally speaking, is only freedom to choose which excuse he makes in refusing God's invitation to the great supper. It is just there that we see the operation of man's will. In the words "bring here" (v. 21) and "compel to come in" (v. 23), we see *God's will*, by the Spirit. It is clear that "compel" in this context must be understood as an action differing from the invitation to come. And, obviously, physical coercion is not meant. It is easily explained in the light of Phil. 2:13:

for it is God who works in you both the willing and the working according to [his] good pleasure.

Regarding the words "work" and "working," J. N. Darby's footnote to the translation of this verse says:

Internal operation of power, though seen in results, as Matt. 14:2; Col. 1:29.  
Not as 'work out' in ver. 12.

And John 1:11-13 and James 1:18 show that man's will is excluded and that the new birth is by the will of God. God sovereignly implants a new nature that loves His will. It is not man's will that begins the work (nor completes it):

. . . he who has begun in you a good work will complete it unto Jesus Christ's day (Phil. 1:6).

J. G. Bellett wrote:

There must be more than an invitation. God must fill the chairs as well as the table. He must force His guests in as well as fill the board. He sends His servant, and says, "*Compel* them to come in, that my house may be filled." There is a peep into heaven. Did you ever know such a place in all your life? The richest feast ever seen, and not one at it that has not been compelled to come in! And does God put up with this? If there had only been the mission of the Son, there would never have been a single guest. If there had only been the mission of the Holy Ghost, there would have been no feast spread. What a wonderful exhibition of the love of God! If you had prepared a kindness for another, would you like to find an indisposed heart in him? *No*, you would not ask him again, but would say, let him go and get what he values more. But there is the double mission of the Son and the Spirit. The Son prepares

the feast and the Spirit prepares the guests. So there is not a single merely bidden guest there; they are compelled guests. What a wretched exhibition of the heart you carry! One has bought a piece of ground, another has bought five yoke of oxen. Anything but the Lord's feast. This is the contrast between God's table and man's.<sup>55</sup>

Another wrote:

Think, dear reader, O, think for a moment of what salvation has cost God. And is the One who has so faithfully "finished the work He was given to do" going to get nothing? Shall the obedient Lamb go empty and the "roaring lion" get all, because man's will is for evil? Verily this would be making man the potter and God the clay {see Rom. 9:20, 21}. Thank God it is not so. Thy blood, Thy cross, Thy agony, Lord Jesus, have not been in vain, for God has ordained that Thou "shalt see of the travail of thy soul and be satisfied" (Isa. 53:11). Accordingly the servant is sent out with the admonition, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, etc." The command is carried out, the servant returns with the word, "Yet there is room," and again he is sent out with the order, "Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in." God in love provides salvation for a lost world. The world answers by rejection. Faithful to His Son, He will now provide for Him by election. His sovereign grace will now call out of the world (John 17). Amazing ways of God! Short-sighted man may form religious parties out of pieces of truth which he isolates from the rest, but, viewed as a whole, how beautiful! Every individual saved being a direct act of God's sovereign and gracious will, which, instead of limiting a salvation more free than the air, but reveals man's wilful and universal rejection of it.

Some precious soul may ask here, but is a sinner saved against his will? To this I reply: Why is it you were in such distress for weeks and months before you found peace with God? Your will, your wretched, wicked will, had to be broken before you would bow to God's will, and be saved through Jesus Christ. There was no *need* of your suffering so. There was nothing in it for God. Christ had done it all. But the Shepherd was after you, while you held out against Him as long as you could. All the children of God will find out some day that this is all the part they acted in their salvation, and their walk on the earth is not a little influenced by their recognizing it at the start.<sup>56</sup>

Look at that last sentence again. It has been observed that the nearer we are (practically speaking) to God, the more we realize the moral distance from Him that there is in the lost state.

Well did Charles Stanley, of Rotherham, quote a stanza from a hymn:

55. *Notes on the Gospel of Luke*, Bible Truth Publishers: Oak Park, p. 57, n.d.

56. *Helps by the Way*, New Series 2:326-328 (1880).

Not only is this great supper spread, but the outcasts of the highways and hedges are compelled to come in. Oh, how they sing,

'Twas the same love that spread the feast,  
That sweetly forced <sup>57</sup> me in,  
Else I had still refused to taste,  
And perished in my sin. <sup>58</sup>

As C. H. Mackintosh said, everyone of us is brought or compelled, else we had remained outside:

Thus, in every volume of man's history the history of the human race in every section, every page, every paragraph, every line, we read of his total ruin, his utter alienation from God. We are taught in the most distinct manner possible that, if left to himself, he never could and never would though most surely he should turn to God and do works proper for repentance. And in perfect keeping with all this, we learn from our Lord's parable of the great supper in Luke 14 that not so much as a single merely invited guest will be found at the table. All who sit down there are "brought" or "compelled." Not one ever would come if left to himself. Grace, free grace, must force them in; and so it does, blessed forever be the God of all grace! <sup>59</sup>

Concerning the notion that God cannot violate man's free will, while Phil. 2:10, 11 does not use the word that every knee will be *compelled* to bow, do you think that the eternally impenitent will bow voluntarily? Or, will God violate their alleged moral free will and compel them to do it? Will it be any man's will to enter conscious, eternal punishment? Is God going to violate their will by putting them in conscious, eternal punishment? How blessed it is to own one's own total ruin by nature and that God has sovereignly intervened on our behalf to compel us to come in. He has overcome our morally bound will by the sweet compulsion of sovereign grace. The principle of Phil. 2:13 is found in Rom. 9 also.

So it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy (Rom. 9:16).

"Not of him that *wills*" shows that mercy from God is not obtained by

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57. {In answer to a question concerning how the servant (the Spirit) compels, H. S. Paisley wrote:

He compels by causing those invited, who are poor, maimed, halt and blind to feel their need and in doing so, causes them in their distress to come for relief to the feast (*Words in Season*, Nov. 2001, p. 235).

"Those *invited*" all, without exception, excused themselves, as we saw in the parable's statement. All others were "brought" and "compelled." Besides his distortion of the facts, he quoted the hymn and changed the word "forced" to "drew." When considering sovereignty in John we shall see that all drawn by the Father come to Christ, and only those drawn by the Father do come. The Father's *drawing* is involved in the Spirit's *compelling* and the Son's *quickening* of dead sinners.

58. *Selected Writings of Charles Stanley* 1:188, Bible Truth Publishers: St. Louis, n.d.

59. "Responsibility and Power," *Short Papers*.

something within man, while "nor of him that *runs*" shows that no activity on man's part can secure God's mercy. His mercy is sovereignly given.

According to his own will begat he us by the word of truth . . . (James 1:18).

This is the new birth, which will be considered in the next chapter. Here, we note that it was He that begot us, through using the Word of God. It is sovereignly implanted in our souls along with faith.

Wherein lies the problem with owning that man is totally lost, involving total moral inability to come? As someone noted, the closer we practically draw near to God, the more we see the immense moral distance that the natural man is from God.

### THE WORD COMPEL

At this point, there is a phenomenon to which we should direct our attention, namely, the attempt by those who believe in moral free will towards God to circumvent the Scripture use of words like "compel" and "dead" (as describing man's spiritual state towards God). Here, we will look at some samples regarding the word "compel." When we consider John 5:24, 25 and Eph. 2:1-5, we will observe the circumvention of the correlative words "dead" and "quickening." Regarding "compel," why else than the need to maintain the notion of moral free will towards God would N. Crawford write:

But does the Holy Spirit compel sinners to come against their will? No, but by His awakening {what is this? he cannot mean quickening} and convicting power He makes them willing and anxious to flee from the wrath to come (John 16:8-11).

We must never read into the word "compel" (*anankazō*) the thought of "irresistible grace." The Spirit does not use force, but he does constrain sinners to come, in spite of their reluctance, urging them by His patient strivings. <sup>60</sup>

What is "awakening"? In both John 5 and Eph. 2 we find two correlative terms: *dead* and *quickening*. If the dead are awakened, they are ipso facto quickened; and if thus quickened from spiritual death towards God, that is the initial work in the soul and ipso facto the person is made willing and thus is compelled to come to the great supper. Moreover, it is semantic nonsense to say that "The Spirit does not use force, but he does constrain sinners to come." *Constrain* means:

1. to compel or force; to urge with irresistible power . . .
2. to confine by force; to restrain from escape or action; to repress; to bind or confine . . .

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60. *Luke*, in The Ritchie New Testament Commentaries series, John Ritchie, Kilmarnock, p. 250, 1989.

3. To get or produce by force or strain, as a person's consent, an unnatural laugh, etc.<sup>61</sup>

Others tell us that God does not "coerce" sinners. Why use the word "coerce" when Scripture uses "compel"? The same *Dictionary* says *coerce* means:

1. to restrain by force; to keep from acting by force, especially by legal authority; to repress.
2. to compel; to constrain.

At bottom, the objection means that man is capable of choosing to believe God. It is the notion of moral free will towards God no matter how the notion is dressed up regarding the matter of the Spirit of God. What the notion means, in effect, is that God is not really sovereign in the salvation of sinners. It is, in reality, defiance of such Scriptures as James 1:18; John 1:13; etc. By sovereign grace in salvation we do mean that it is *grace that prevails over the sinner*. The new birth is the result of the sovereign action of the will of God, Who implants a new nature, and faith, and grants repentance. The Spirit's compelling is the sweet compulsion of grace. Without this, we would go down into the pit.

The editor of *Truth and Tidings*, Dr. A. J. Higgins, wrote:

Made in the image of God, he is a free-will agent (Sept. 2001, p. 229).<sup>62</sup>

So says N. Geisler:

Since free will is a part of the image of God . . . (*op. cit.*, p. 259, sec. ed. 2001).

This false notion about "image" was dealt with in Chapter one. The well-known "progressive dispensationalist," Darrell L. Bock shows in one sentence how he misses the parable's lesson on the sovereign action of the Spirit and the totally lost condition of man:

He is not going to force anyone to come, as his response to the original invitees shows.<sup>63</sup>

Now, why did he say "not going to force" instead of saying that God would not "compel anyone to come"? The same *Dictionary* says of *force*:

1. To compel; to make (a person or animal) do something by force; as, masters *forced* their slaves to labor.

God's compelling here is not at all like man's. In quickening, (making alive of the spiritual dead, i.e., those who have no moral ability towards God) God graciously delivers the enslaved will, enslaved to the old nature, by implanting

a new nature so that the will, as directed by the new nature, loves and does the will of God. This is the beginning of the work referred to in Phil. 1:6. Quickening is attended by faith, which faith is also simultaneously implanted in a person by God. The person thus has worked in him the willing and the working of Phil. 2:13. The person thus has been made partaker of the divine nature and is able to repent. Quickening, accompanied by faith (which at this point may not have laid hold on all that it should) precedes repentance. The person, now having the new nature has the moral ability to repent. He is willing to repent. God has caused him to be willing. This is what the word "compel" involves. All this involves the recognition that man does not accept God's invitation by his alleged moral free will towards God.

Of course, those who believe man has the moral ability to exercise faith and believe the gospel do not look at it that way. They put faith (it is human faith, not an implanted faith from God) before "regeneration" (we would say *quicken* instead). If God sets us free from our enslavement to sin in the flesh in the way described in the above paragraph, that is regarded by free-willers as a violation of man's freedom. This notion is astonishing and only can be by maintaining that man is not really spiritually dead and in need of quickening, and is not the slave of sin in the flesh, but rather he is morally able to choose to believe or not -- *a denial that man is totally lost*. In effect, all this affirms that man does, in fact, respond to God's invitation and denies that anyone is compelled to come to the great supper. This is of the essence of Arminianism and semi-Pelagianism.

Finally, *context* has a bearing on the use of a word and *compel* should be seen in its bearing in this parable in contrast to the *invitation* refused without exception.

## THE CALL OF INVITATION AND THE EFFECTUAL CALL

We have seen how all who were invited refused to come -- *without exception*. Is there no solemn teaching here regarding man's totally lost condition? Let us designate this as a call of invitation, or the *gospel call*, to differentiate it from the case of those brought and compelled to come in. Concerning those, let us designate that the *effectual call*, or the call of compulsion, or the call of divine choice, involving quickening power on those spiritually dead towards God. And these designations will help us in understanding this:

For many are called ones, but few chosen ones (Matt. 22:14; see 20:16).

61. From *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged*, sec. ed., 1975.

62. See the notes on the subject of the image of God in chapter 1.

63. *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Grand Rapids: Baker, p. 1277, 1996.



## Chapter 3

### *God's Sovereignty in John's Gospel*

The subjects of John's gospel include man's moral state of darkness towards God and man's need of the sovereign action of God to implant a new nature. The Father and the Son draw, give, quicken, give eternal life, and hold the believer secure. These things run through the gospel of John in this order:

1. Man's state of moral darkness (John 1:4-10).
2. Christ rejected (John 1:10-11).
3. The Spirit of God must sovereignly cause the new birth (John 1:11-13; John 3).
4. The Father and Son quicken the spiritually dead (John 5:24).
5. The Father draws and speaks to sinners, and gives them to the Son; and the Son gives them eternal life (John 6:39, 44, 45, 65).
6. The Son sovereignly chooses (John 6:70).
7. The believer sees the Son and hears His voice (John 9:39-41).
8. The believer is secure in the hand of the Father and of the Son (John 10:28-30).

It is not surprising to observe that these are all interlocking truths.

#### *1. Man's State of Moral Darkness*

(4) In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light appears in darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, his name John. He came for witness, that he might witness concerning the light, that all might believe through him. *He* was not the light, but that he might witness concerning the light. The true light was that which, coming into the world, lightens every man.<sup>64</sup> He was in the world, and the world had

64. {Cp. John 3:19; 12:46; 1 John 2:8. The translation of this verse is considered by W. Kelly in some detail in *The Bible Treasury* 13:318-319. See also his exposition of John, *in loco*.}

[its] being through him, and the world knew him not (John 1:4-10).

#### LIFE AND LIGHT

This is what the Word is in relation to God. Moreover, it is an immense contrast with men. He is the light; men are the darkness. He is the life; men are the darkness. Men have neither light nor life. Herein is the key to vv. 4-13. We are going to consider the new birth. Those who are not born of God do not have light and life. They have only darkness. When a person is born of God (born again), God implants a new life into the soul, and with that life there is light, as well as faith. The born again one has what the darkness does not have. Moreover, the darkness does not apprehend the light.

#### NO APPREHENSION OF THE LIGHT

Men love darkness (John 3:19), walk in darkness (John 8:12), and will be permanently overtaken so as to be seized by darkness (John 12:35) eternally, and meanwhile they abide in darkness (John 12:46). Ultimately they will be cast into the outer darkness (Matt. 25:30) outside the new heavens and earth, into the gloom of darkness eternally (Jude 3). The darkness is not passive as we see from John 3:19. Men love darkness because their deeds are evil. Indeed, the darkness is aggressive in evil. When we think of darkness as contrasted with physical light, we understand that darkness is the absence of light. The spiritual darkness that we are considering is, certainly, the absence of spiritual light; but it has the added characteristic of opposition and hostility to the light.

(19) And this is the judgment, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light; for their works were evil. (20) For every one that does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light that his works may not be shown as they are (John 3:19, 20).

Men love darkness and hate the light, for man would indulge the old nature acquired in the fall. His will follows the three motivations of the old nature given in 1 John 2:16, by which he is controlled. He freely follows his old nature. What are the works he produces?

(11) . . . the unfruitful works of darkness . . . (12) for the things that are done by them in secret it is shameful even to say. (13) But all things having their true character exposed by the light are made manifest; for that which makes everything manifest is light (Eph. 5:11-13).

As life and light characterize the Person of the Son (John 1:4), so darkness characterizes the state of men's souls. The darkness is not an environmental influence. The inability of the darkness to apprehend the light is declared preparatory to the statements in vv. 10, 11 that (1) "the world knew him not" as well as that (2) "his own received him not." In the first case it is dark failure to recognize Him and in the other it is dark rejection of Him. All men are thus accounted for and have the character of spiritual darkness as the constitution of

their spiritual state. In John we find man blind, deaf, and dead. (Dead Lazarus was all three at the same time, and serves as an illustration of the power of the Son as the resurrection and the life).

We Christians are stated to have once been darkness:

for ye were once darkness, but now light in [the] Lord (Eph. 5:8).

In 2 Cor. 4:3, 4 we read:

(3) But if also our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in those that are lost; (4) in whom the god of this world has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving, so that the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ, who is [the] image of God, should not shine forth [for them].

Those who are darkness are here seen as blinded in their thoughts so that light might not enter them.

We certainly must acknowledge the force of the word *apprehend*.<sup>65</sup> Darkness is the moral state of man consequent upon the fall. That true Light that came into the world is infinite. Man cannot *comprehend* what is infinite, cannot comprehend God -- meaning that man cannot take God in, because God is infinite and man is finite. Man lacks that capacity. However, we may perhaps think that man can *apprehend something* about God, i.e., be able to take in something about him into our souls, *morally speaking*.<sup>66</sup> But it is not so, because man's state that is here described is darkness. It is universal in mankind. And, there is no *apprehension* by that darkness of the light. It is a state completely at variance with the nature of God, in whom is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).

The moral darkness of man towards God that is brought before us here answers to Luke 14:18:

And all began, without exception, to excuse themselves.

In the system which believes that the faith spoken of in Eph. 2:8 is human faith, exercised by the human will, the will of man cannot be in such moral darkness

65. F. F. Bruce wrote:

The exact force of the aorist *katelaben* must be determined by the context; this suggests that 'overcame' (cf. RSV) or 'mastered' (NEB) is preferable to 'comprehended' (AV) or 'apprehended' (RV) (*The Gospel of John*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p. 34, 1983).

I believe that understanding the context suggests that the word means *apprehend*, contrary to the notions that some expositors have. Specifically, the thought is not that the power of darkness fails to overcome the light -- though that in itself is true, but that is not the teaching here. Here we have something like 1 Cor. 2:14, where we learn that the natural man "does not receive the things of the Spirit" and "he cannot know them." *Cannot* means *inability*. The darkness really cannot apprehend the light.

66. This is not what is meant by Rom. 1:19, "his eternal power and divinity." Those things only make the case worse for man.

that does not apprehend the light. Since moral free will towards God is viewed as being in every man, it follows that no man's will is in such moral darkness that it cannot apprehend the light. The meaning of the notion of moral free will towards God is that each human will *is* capable of apprehending the light -- a notion which contradicts this Scripture.

### THE TRUE LIGHT CAME INTO THE WORLD

The true light<sup>67</sup> was that which, coming into the world, lightens every man. He was in the world . . . (John 1:9, 10).

First of all, we should note that the Son is presented as the true light in connection with His personal glory.

This verse is not speaking of every man coming into the world<sup>68</sup> but rather of the Word coming into the world as light:

And this is the judgment, that light is come into the world (John 3:19).

I am come into the world as light (John 12:46).

The coming of the true light, the Son here in holy manhood, is connected with the testing of the first man. He himself is the final test. This involves the revelation of the Father in the Son. The rejection of the Son involved the rejection of the Father Who was perfectly displayed in the Son. Those that saw the Son saw the Father (John 14:9). Those who rejected the Son rejected the Father:

(23) He that hates me hates also my Father. (24) If I had not done among them the works which no other one has done, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father (John 15:23, 24).

John begins with the rejection of the Word, the revealer of the Father (John 1:10, 11), and the character of the gospel agrees with this important fact -- thus taking in so largely the *world*, and not merely Jewish particularism.

The cross was a great turning point. Consequent upon the crucifixion of Christ, the whole world is stated to lie in the wicked one (1 John 5:19). Eph. 6:12 speaks of "the universal lords of this darkness." And so the believer is spoken of as "delivered from the authority of darkness" (Col. 1:13), and thus we are not "in darkness" (1 Thess. 5:4) and not "of darkness" (1 Thess. 5:14). We have been "called out of darkness to his wonderful light" (1 Pet. 2:9). We walk in the light where God Himself is (1 John 1:5, 6), Him in Whom is no darkness.

67. The darkness claims to have light -- from man's reason or religion. For example, Masons speak of being illuminated. New Agers seek the inner light. The light of the Gnostics and their modern counterparts is darkness. All this is *false* light, which is not light, but is part of the darkness and opposition to the *true* light.

68. See *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 7:3, 4; *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 3:58.

Concerning practice, what fellowship is there of light with darkness (2 Cor. 6:14)? The Spirit said, "Ye were once darkness, but now light in the Lord; walk as children of light . . ." (Eph. 5:8). Hence we ought to "cast away therefore the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light" (Rom. 13:12). God will "bring to light the hidden things of darkness" (1 Cor. 4:5).

(7) Be not ye therefore fellow-partakers with them; (8) for ye were once darkness, but now light in [the] Lord; walk as children of light, (9) (for the fruit of the light [is] in all goodness and righteousness and truth,) (10) proving what is agreeable to the Lord; (11) and do not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather also reprove [them], (12) for the things that are done by them in secret it is shameful even to say. (13) But all things having their true character exposed by the light are made manifest; for that which makes everything manifest is light (Eph. 5:8-13).

God has brought all this out regarding man's totally lost condition consequent upon the closing of the testing of the first man with the crucifixion of Christ. Indeed, before the cross Satan was not called the god of this world as he now is (2 Cor. 4:4), nor the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:1).

#### WHAT DOES "LIGHTENS EVERY MAN" MEAN?

Now, the Son, come as the true light, "coming into the world, lightens every man." What is intended by this is that the true light has shined on man and has exposed the moral state of every man towards God. Light has shined upon man in his lost condition, upon man's state. Thus, every man's individual, moral state Godward is exposed. That state is spiritual darkness and that spiritual darkness does not apprehend the light. There are no exceptions.

One who believes in moral free will towards God must find ways to get around what is taught in this passage. Thus, in opposition to the real meaning of the spiritual darkness, concerning v. 9, the Mennonite Arminian, D. D. Whedon wrote:

The best commentators render this verse, *That was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlighteneth every man* . . .

Every human being is endowed by the Logos with a preparatory light, so that he need not be in *that* darkness which comprehends not the light.<sup>69</sup>

This is a pretension of the first man not to be totally lost. The error is that every person since Adam has "preparatory light" and that must be true also of those that "need not to be in *that* darkness which comprehends not the light." And, is there another spiritual darkness that is not "*that* darkness"? The fact is that there is only one spiritual darkness and it is devoid of "preparatory light"

69. Whedon's *Commentary Revised, The Gospels Luke - John*, Harrisonburg: Christian Light Publications, p. 231, 1981 [1860, 1888].

supposedly "endowed by the Logos." The Lord never spoke of, or appealed to, a "preparatory light." It is a myth of free-willism. You will see from 1 John 1:5, 6 that one either walks in the light or he walks in darkness. The unbeliever abides in darkness and blindly walks there:

I am come into the world [as] light, that everyone that believes on me may not abide in darkness (John 12:46).

Yet a little while is the light amongst you. Walk while ye have the light, that darkness may not overtake<sup>70</sup> you. And he that walks in the darkness does not know where he goes (John 12:35).

Concerning v. 5, Dr. Whedon wrote:

*Light shineth in darkness* -- Not only was there from the Logos a moral consciousness created in man's original nature; but when, nevertheless, the moral and spiritual consciousness of men through sin again became dark and inert, the Logos, Christ, shed the beams of truth and love into it, unappreciated and unaccepted. This shining and rejecting existed in all ages; but especially during the incarnation, of which John is about to write.<sup>71</sup>

Thus is the Scripture boldly eviscerated by free-willism. "The best commentators" must be those who join in undermining Scripture teaching on the true spiritual state of man as darkness not apprehending the light. Man apprehended preparatory light and beams of truth and love in his heart! It is well to have before us the true character of this opposition to God's Word.<sup>72</sup>

70. The sense is 'overtake so as to seize upon you,' as Mark 9:18; 1 Thess. 5:4 {JND footnote.}.

71. *Op.cit.*, pp. 231, 230, respectively.

72. "Prevenient grace" is an expression used to signify the Arminian notion that God has provided to all men a grace that is sufficient for man to be able to exercise his moral free will towards God so as accept God's salvation. From *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology*, Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1983, we learn that prevenient grace is part of the same grace God is always showing (1:485). Prevenient grace is:

. . . a universal benefit of the Atonement, removing the racial guilt related to Adam's sin, making all men salvageable . . . restoring a sufficient degree of moral ability to permit moral action in real freedom, either to respond to the convicting of the Spirit or to resist. The grace is indispensable but not irresistible. God's will is that all should respond, but His will has elected to permit people not to respond. He would rather have some choose Him freely and serve Him because they love Him than to have the elect serve Him on a predetermined, puppetlike basis or to have *all* flock to Him on a morally unconditioned basis (2:64, 65).

Thus, man is viewed as extensively depraved but not "totally intensively depraved" (2:268). That is, man is not totally lost -- which is implicit in the notion of moral free will towards God. "Preparatory light" and "prevenient grace" are inventions of the flesh in order to deny that man is totally lost. In effect, this affirms that light is working within the spiritual darkness. It should also be realized that when man's true condition is not acknowledged, the doctrine of the atonement is necessarily affected also.

(continued...)

"Lightens every man," then, does not mean everyone has some "preparatory light," but rather that light shines on man's state so as to expose it:

But all things having their true character exposed by the light are made manifest; for that which makes everything manifest is light (Eph. 5:13).

#### WHAT IS THE ANSWER FOR THIS DARKNESS?

Because [it is] the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts . . . (2 Cor. 4:6).

Every saint was "once darkness, but now light in [the] Lord" (Eph. 5:8). How did that come about? You who believe in moral free will toward God think (in effect) that you apprehended the light (contra John 1:5) by your free will (your pretension not to be totally lost), not that God sovereignly implanted it into you. The fact is, it was accomplished by the God who spoke in Gen. 1, "let there be light." "And there was light." And just so did He speak light into our souls by His own sovereign will. Yes, He "has called you out of darkness to his wonderful light" (1 Pet. 2:9). Man is blind to the light and his eyes need to be opened (Acts 26:18). The Savior does it through His Word, as He Himself opened the eyes of the physically blind when here on earth, as in John 9.

#### LIGHT THAT IS DARKNESS

(22) The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body will be light: (23) but if thine eye be wicked, thy whole body will be dark. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great the darkness! (Matt. 6:22, 23).

(34) The lamp of the body is thine eye: when thine eye is simple, thy whole body also is light; but when it is wicked, thy body also is dark. (35) See

72. (...continued)

Those maintaining moral free will towards God sometimes argue that the fact that God gives commands shows that man has the ability to respond. I would have thought that the inability of man to carry out the law would have kept persons from making such a claim. Man does not have "preparatory light" of "prevenient grace" that enabled anyone to keep the law.

John 12:32, which will be discussed later, does not really support the idea either. Nor does Titus 2:11, which says:

For the grace of God which carries with it salvation for all men has appeared . . .

There is nothing here about imparting to all men a grace sufficient to enable them to believe. The atonement has not affected all lost men, whose moral state constitutes the darkness, so as to restore "a sufficient degree of moral ability to permit moral action in real freedom." It is an invention designed to support moral free will, which free will is used to solve the alleged problem of how God could hold men responsible if they cannot obey. That would mean God is immoral, so free will must be true. The truth is that man in the garden was free, fell, and acquired the sinful nature. Man follows the old nature and will not come to Christ but is responsible to do so. The history of the testing of the first man shows that he is not recoverable.

therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. (36) If therefore thy whole body [is] light, not having any part dark, it shall be all light as when the lamp lights thee with its brightness (Luke 11:34-36).

In John the Son is presented as light in connection with His personal glory. It speaks of the perfection of His Person. "God is light" (1 John 1:5). We partake of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), i.e., of God's moral qualities. If we are born of God we have the faculty to apprehend the "true light." In Matt. and Luke the seeing faculty is brought especially before us. Note that it is not said that the body will be full of light. It is that the body will glow. "Thy whole body will be light" if the eye is single. On the other hand, if the eye is wicked, "thy whole body will be dark." There will be no glow of the light. The question is, is a person glowing with the light or is he dark?

There is another matter. The light that is darkness is not the light from God. It might be the 'light' of religion, or the 'light' of reason, or new-age 'enlightenment.' Such things in a person are darkness. How great such darkness is! The single eye is when God opens our eyes to see Christ, the "true light" and the focus becomes single upon Him; and simple, unmixed. It is a test for us how much we glow. Is any part dark? Is the eye single? Is it simple? There is no "true light" but One who reveals the Father.

In Matt. 5:13, 14 the Lord says to His disciples that they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. They are the preservative through separation from evil unto Himself and they are light. Let us not disjoin these two, the salt and the light. They both express Himself.

## 2. Christ Rejected

While the first three gospels trace the rejection of the Lord Jesus, the Gospel of John assumes that rejection at the very beginning of the book. Thus we read:

The world knew him not (John 1:10).

He came to his own, and his own received him not (John 1:11).

He has come as light into the world, and as the true light, He has exposed the state of every man. He is the final test for the first man. The first man is in a state of spiritual darkness and does not apprehend the light. "The world knew him not." Besides that matter of the world, the first man, under testing in the persons of the specially favored people, did not receive Him. Man's will was exposed in its implacable hatred of God in not receiving Christ.

In order to receive Christ God must sovereignly cause a man to be born again so that there might be a new nature that receives Christ. J. N. Darby wrote:

But there is a fundamental error in your reasoning, as if faith in a human

testimony, with respect to temporal things, was the same thing as faith that receives the word of God in the heart. There is no enmity in the heart against temporal things, but "the mind of the flesh is enmity against God." You say that man if he wished could believe, but he never wishes, because the object of faith is hateful to him; and, further, if he believed with this natural faith only, it would be worth nothing. Many believed in Jesus (John 2:23, 24), but Jesus had no confidence in this faith.<sup>73</sup> You forget that the one who believes with a true faith has everlasting life (John 3:36). See 1 John 5:15. Likewise, they are not born of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but they are born of God. And therefore it is said (Gal. 3:26), "Ye are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Now this true faith, the fruit of the operation of the Holy Ghost, has not been found in any man. It is said (Isa. 1:2), "Wherefore when I came was there no man?" John the Baptist says (John 3:32), "And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth: and no man receiveth his testimony"; also the Lord Himself says (John 3:11), "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen, and ye receive not our witness." That it is the work of God is clear according to the word (James 1:18), "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." In Galatians we read (1:15), "When it pleased God . . . to reveal his Son in me." God gives us eternal life. "He that hath the Son hath life," says the apostle John. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" -- an entirely new thing in man. Christ Himself is our life, and we have not this life before receiving Christ. The testimony, then, is clear and certain that we are children of God through faith, and born, not of the will of man but of God.

You say that he has faith -- 'may it not be that he opens his hand to receive?' But hearts are not so disposed; they will not open the hand. Everything is done, as far as the heart is concerned, when it is disposed to receive Christ. He complains that when He came there was no man. You acknowledge that he has salvation, but, if a man is disposed to open his hand, conversion comes from the will of man. You say that as soon as a man believes we find that God renews his mind. But, if he believes, it is already renewed, since Christ is precious to him, while before he saw no beauty in Him that he should desire Him; already he knows that he is a sinner, and needs a Savior, and he has found Him if he believes. Observe that Jesus says, "You will not come." I believe fully that they are responsible for it; but where do you find, You will? The word of God expressly says, No. "There is none that seeketh after God." He came to seek them, thank God, but when He came He was rejected; He was not received save by those who are born of God. This is said by the Spirit in Isa. 1, by John the Baptist, by the Lord,

73. {It was a mere human belief, founded on the signs, not founded on the reception of the Word.

But Jesus did not trust himself to them, because he knew all [men], and that he had not need that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man (John 2:24, 25).

And what was in man that he knew was there? "Preparatory light"? "Prevenient grace"? Or was it the spiritual darkness without any light whatsoever?}

and by the apostle John. Now certainly God does not hinder any one from coming, but such is the disposition of the heart of man that he will not. This is why the work of God is necessary, and why it is said, "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Perhaps you will say, Every one is drawn. No, because the one who is drawn comes, and Jesus will raise him up at the last day: he is saved, see John 6:39. Therefore it is said (v. 37), "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." The Lord then expressly says what you say He does not say, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him," and He repeats (v. 65), "Therefore said I unto you that no man can come unto me except it were given unto him of my Father." Also it is written, "But ye do not believe, because ye are not of my sheep. My sheep hear my voice . . . and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish."<sup>74</sup>

### 3. God Must Sovereignly Cause the New Birth

. . . but to as many as received him, to them gave he [the] right to be children of God, to those that believe on his name; who have been born, not of blood, nor of flesh's will, not of man's will, but of God (John 1:12,13).

#### BEING BORN OF GOD IS A SOVEREIGN ACTION NOT DEPENDENT ON MAN

The fact that the true light came into the world is a revelation of the light, but more than that was needed because of the state of man as blind, deaf, and lying in a state of spiritual death towards God, three of the ways in which man's spiritual condition is given in John. Therefore we have the quickening power of God in John's gospel so that the lost one, quickened (and thus born of God) may see, hear, and be in a state of spiritual life towards God. *Quickening* is a correlative expression with *death*, whether applied to the body or to the soul (John 5). This will be considered more fully under point four of this chapter. Here we draw attention to the connection of quickening and new birth. Quickenings means making alive, and the new birth speaks of the impartation of a new life to the sinner.

In the parable of the great supper we observed that the invitation first went out to those who are here called "his own." We also saw that all, without exception, made excuse not to come. Then we saw that there was a servant who *brought and compelled* persons, from Jews and Gentiles, to come in. In John 1:13 we see that those who are "born . . . of God" (this refers to the new birth) were not born of God by anything of human origin. Three things (which covers everything) are denied as a source in man for being born of God:

74. *Letters* 2:478, 479.

**1. Not of blood.** This refers to the fact that the new birth cannot be received from parents or some blood-line; for example, from being in the Jewish line.

**2. Nor of flesh's will.** Flesh here refers to man as fallen. The will is under bondage to the flesh ("sin in the flesh") -- by three great motivations discussed when we considered the parable of the great supper (found in 1 John 2:16). The flesh's will refers to the will in the person, not to what is external to himself.

**3. Nor of man's will.** This refers to the will of man that is external to the person.

**"But of God."** God can act sovereignly and cause the new birth and that is what we have here. And so says James 1:18:

According to his own will begat he us through the word of truth.

The natural will of man contributes nothing except opposition to God's gracious invitation, without exception. It is the divine will that produces the new birth, which is the implantation of a new life in the person. It is a divine act. Instrumentalities used of God in accomplishing this are given in John 3:5-8, as James 1:18 also shows the use of the Word of God.

We saw in vv. 10, 11 that the world knew Him not and His own received Him not. Then v. 12 says "But as many as received him . . ." The question is, why did any receive Him? Arminians answer, because they exercised their moral free will towards God to believe. The truth is that v. 13 gives the answer to why any believed, why any received Him. To believe on His name is to be born of God. To receive Him is to be born of God. Faith does not precede new birth but rather faith and life are implanted by God into the soul *simultaneously*. The order of vv. 12 and 13 does not mean that new birth comes after receiving Him. Verse 13 explains *why* anyone received Him. Anything human is excluded but some received <sup>75</sup> Him because they have been born of God.

James 1:18 shows that God uses His Word instrumentally in effecting the new birth. That Word is not received by human faith of free moral will towards God.

A man can receive nothing unless it be given him out of heaven (John 3:27).

It is given to the soul to receive His word and to receive Christ. It is given by God in the new birth.

So then [it is] not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy (Rom. 9:16).

75. The reader should consult the remarks on 2 Pet. 1:1, given later in this book, and other passages that use the word receive, as well as the next footnote.

## THE NEW BIRTH

(5) Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except any one be born of water and of 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. Do not wonder that I said to thee, It is needful that ye should be born anew. The wind blows where it will, and thou hearest its voice, but knowest not whence it comes and where it goes: thus is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said to him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said to him, Thou art the teacher of Israel and knowest not these things! (John 3:5-8).

**Nicodemus Did Not Know That a New Heart Was Needed.** With Ezek. 36:25-27 before us, showing Israel to have a heart of stone, we can see why the Lord expected a teacher in Israel to know that a momentous change, morally and spiritually, was needed for Israel to be under the new covenant when Messiah reigns before His ancients in glory, in the millennium. They need a new heart. They need the new birth.

**A New Nature in the Soul.** The water is a figure for the Word of God. It is through the truth, instrumentally, that we are born of God (see James 1:18). <sup>76</sup>

76. N. Geisler eviscerates James 1:18, as he does all such texts, by constantly repeating the same refrain, namely, that God does not save apart from faith (Eph. 2:8), which faith is, in his view, the *free choice of the sinner*, not from God implanting faith in the soul. Thus:

Our salvation is "through the Word" (Rom. 10:17; James 1:18), but the Bible declares that the Word must be received by faith (Acts 2:41; Heb. 4:1-2) to be effectual (*op. cit.*, p. 94 [96]).

So, when the Word says we are born of God's will we may expect the eviscerating free-willism response to be, yes, but it is God's will that the means be by the exercise of man's moral free will towards Him. *There is no Scripture that cannot be undermined by such a process of thinking.* Thus is it in the case of John 1:12, 13 where the three human agencies are first excluded, and then we are told "but of God." Here is how he does this on the basis of two considerations:

First, verse 12 makes it plain that the means by which this new birth is obtained is by "all who *receive* him [Christ]." This involves an act of free will (p. 58 [59]).

No, it involves an uncontingent, sovereign act of God's will for the sinner to receive Christ -- as the very next verse (v. 13) shows. Christ is received (v. 12) because God has caused the new birth (v. 13). **Of course we believe and receive. But why?**

For it is God who works in you both the willing and the working according to [his] good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).

He who has begun a good work in you will perform it unto Jesus Christ's day (Phil. 1:6).

N. Geisler's other argument is:

Second, this passage is simply denying that there is any other source of the new birth other than God Himself. It is not "of" (Greek: *ek*, out of) human sources, whether parents, husband, or ourselves. No one can save us but God. God is the *source* by

(continued...)

The Spirit is the Spirit of God. The Spirit takes the Word and puts it into the soul, through the conscience. The soul is the dwelling place of truth -- as J. G. Bellett pointed out, the ear and the mind are but the gates. Truth enters the soul through the conscience, as is clearly seen in John 4 regarding the Lord's dealing with the woman's conscience -- not through man's will. It is in the soul, where the will is, that there must be a new nature implanted. J. N. Darby has a footnote to the words "born anew":

Not only "again," but "entirely afresh," as from a new source of life and point of departure; translated in Luke 1:3, "from the origin." It is a new source and beginning of life.

God, of course, is the source. God works in us both the willing and the doing of His good pleasure -- for He has placed a new nature in the soul and also seals us with the Spirit as power so that the person then wills and acts in accordance with the new nature from God, a nature that loves only to do God's holy will. Let us have Phil. 2:13 before us:

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76. (...continued)

which the new birth is given (v. 13), but free will is the *means* by which it is "received" (v. 12). It is "by" grace but "through" (Greek: *dia*) faith that we are saved (Eph. 2:8) (pp. 58, 59 [60]).

John 1:13 uses *ek* three times: nor *ek* flesh's will, nor *ek* man's will, but *ek* God. So the new birth is not "out of" the flesh's will, not "out of" man's will, but "out of" God's will. Dr. Geisler reduces this to mean that God is the *source*, and moral free will the *means*. Rather, the new birth is determinatively out of God's will. His will is both the source and the means. In John 3:5 we have "born *ek* the Spirit." And what is born *ek* the flesh is flesh. We have also "born *ek* water." Water refers figuratively to the Word of God which is the *instrumentality* used by God. Just so, man's will is not the instrument, but God's will, through the Word, is how the new birth is brought about. This is taught also in James 1:18, to which JND has this footnote:

'Having so purposed' or 'willed it.' It was the fruit of His own mind, and so a free gift.

W. Kelly translates:

Having purposed He begot us by [the] word of truth . . .

Marshall, in his *Interlinear*, translates:

Having purposed he brought forth us by a word of truth . . .

It is the sovereign, determinative will of God by which one is born of God -- not contingent on the flesh's will, nor on man's will, nor of blood. But for free-willers, notice, obedience to God and saving faith is in the will of man -- and so the new birth is not necessary in order to obey and have saving faith. What is the necessity for the new birth?

We will examine Eph. 2:8, regarding faith not being of ourselves, in the chapter on Ephesians. Here we may observe why, for believers in moral free will towards God, Eph. 2:8 must not mean that faith is the gift of God. It is of the essence of Arminianism, and semi-Arminianism, to deny that faith is implanted into the soul by God. That would mean that the new birth is an unconditional, sovereign act of God. Acts 13:48 states: "and believed, as many as were ordained to eternal life." Consult the notes on that text. It is spiritually painful to see the ways in which that passage is eviscerated in keeping with the notion of moral free will towards God.

So that, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much rather in my absence, work out <sup>77</sup> your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works <sup>78</sup> in you both the willing and the working according to [his] good pleasure.

Whatever comes out for His pleasure is because of what He has wrought in us in internal power. The old nature remains incorrigible, remains in its fixed, moral character of hostility to God (cf. Rom. 7:25), and it remains in the Christian on earth (1 John 1:8 refers to sin as the root within us) after being born anew. <sup>79</sup> The idea that somehow the sinful nature is changed flies in the face of such a Scripture as it also does of Rom. 7:23, and cp. Rom. 8:7. The flesh will never be gone until we pass out of this world or when we are transformed (Phil. 3:21). But there are now new motives in the soul (see 1 Cor. 2:11-16), not merely those three great motivations of the natural man (see 1 John 2:16).

The being born anew is, then, another birth, and it concerns a spiritual nature: "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." What is imparted "partakes of the nature of that of which it is born," <sup>80</sup> thus called *spirit* here.

The other element of the new birth and the power by which it is wrought is, according to scripture, the Holy Spirit. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit," as that which is born of the flesh is flesh. And "so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." That new nature or life given to us, which is contrasted with the flesh, is attributed to the Spirit, divinely and essentially so. Every life has its nature from that of which it is born. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. You cannot thus speak of water: it is not the communication of a nature, but cleansing power. As far as it represents anything, it represents unequivocally death, not life, for we are baptized into Christ's death. "That which is born of water is water" would be nonsense. It is not presented as the communicator of a nature; the Spirit is. It is a divine life-giving Spirit. So of Christ, who acts as well as the Father in it, He is a quickening Spirit. <sup>81</sup>

A Christian, then, has these two natures. Of course, many do not believe this. Here is an interesting analogy:

Ques. Has a Christian a new heart ?

Yes. But that is not a cleansing of the old one, just as if this table, say,

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77. {"To work out in result." as Rom. 7. 8, 13, 15," JND footnote.}

78. {"Internal operation of power, though seen in results, as Matt. 14:2; Col. 1:29. Not as 'work out' in ver. 12," JND footnote, also for the word "works" in v. 13.}

79. The doctrine of the Wesleyans on perfectionism is excellently dealt with in *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 3:164-205.

80. *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 20:205.

81. *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 15:324.

was very dirty, and then the mahogany was well cleaned. That is the Wesleyan or Arminian idea of a new heart.

Ques. Then instead of mahogany, you would have rosewood?

{Yes,} Only the mahogany is there still.<sup>82</sup>

What is offered against God initiating this apart from human will? Why, John 3:16. It is for whosoever believes; and that is, allegedly, an act of faith in the human will as its source. This is free-willism reasoning, namely that belief is *ipso facto* an act of moral free will towards God. The truth is that God gives the belief:

A man can receive nothing unless it be given him out of heaven (John 3:27).<sup>83</sup>

### Partakers of the Divine Nature.

(3) As his divine power has given to us all things which relate to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us by glory and virtue, (4) through which he has given to us the greatest and precious promises, that through these ye may become partakers of [the] divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Pet. 1:3, 4).

One of the things that "his divine power" has given us that relates to life and godliness is a new nature. The new nature gives the person the capacity, the enablement, to love and enjoy God. It gives a new desire -- to please God. Sin can never come from this nature, only what pleases God.

The new birth brings no one into Godhead nor does it communicate incommunicable deity to the soul. 2 Pet. 1:4 presents that of which we partake by "his divine power" in a *moral character*. The definite article "the" is not found before the words "divine nature." This fact indicates that *moral character*, or moral qualities, is in view. We are partakers of divine nature.<sup>84</sup>

The important thing to understand is that being born anew is entirely a sovereign operation of God's will and is the implantation of a new nature into the soul. It is God's act. He implants a new life and faith.

82. *Notes and Jottings of J. N. Darby*, p. 44.

83. N. Geisler gives this objection:

In fact it says we are to "receive" it. This implies a free act of the will that can either accept or reject God's offer (*op. cit.*, p. 94 [96]).

This is right in the face of "unless it be given him out of heaven." On no other basis is it received. To insert "and unless he has a free will" into John 3:27 is to add to God's Word what is not there.

84. More is found on this and such things as how regeneration differs from new birth, what it means that God's seed in us cannot sin, what being washed all over (John 13:7-11) means, and that the new birth is not baptism or by baptism, in *From New Birth to New Creation*, available from the publisher.

## GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD

When considering the true light in John 1, we saw from John 1:10 that "the world knew him not." That does not mean 'the world of the elect.' Nor does John 3:16 mean the world of the elect, as v. 17 also does not. John 1:29 speaks not of sins (conduct and fruit) but of sin (the root). The Lamb of God did the work for, laid the foundation for, the removal of sin, but that actual removal awaits the coming of the new heavens and the new earth. In John 4:42 we have Christ presented as the Savior of the world. See also John 12:47. There is none else to look to. Those actually saved are the elect, of course. Though He gives His life for the world (John 6:51), the world does not appropriate His work. In John 8:23 we see that those opposed to Christ are of the world. This world has a ruler, even Satan (John 14:30). The action of the Spirit regarding the world, consequent upon Christ's rejection, is given in John 16:8. The world rejoices that Christ is not here (John 16:20). It is where the believer has tribulation (John 16:33). There are men given by the Father to the Son, out of the world. In John 17:21 and 23 it is also the people that is meant. And this is the use of the word world in John unless something physical is meant (cp. John 17:11, 13), or the world system (possibly John 17:14, 16). John's Gospel has the world (of people) in view while affirming that none come to Christ except they are drawn by the Father and given by Him to the Son. While there are Calvinists who take John 3:16 to mean 'the world of the elect,' John Calvin did not take it that way, as his commentary on John shows.

### *The world never means the elect.*

As whosoever looked upon the uplifted serpent (John 3:14 -- a figure of Himself though inherently sinless, as made sin ) was delivered from death, so whoever believes on the only-begotten Son, shall not perish. It is as lifted up that He is the attractive One for the entire world. See notes on John 12:32.

## 4. The Father and Son (and the Spirit) Quicken

### THE WORD QUICKEN INDICATES MAKING ALIVE FROM DEATH

Quickening is applied to the body in John 5:21, Rom. 4:17 and 8:11. Quickening is, elsewhere in the NT, used of the new birth looked at in reference to being made alive from a state of spiritual death.<sup>85</sup> The Father, Son and Spirit quicken (John 5:21; 6:63). All quickened souls are children of God, and this is

85. "Quickening with Christ" (Eph. 2) brings in additional things beyond mere quickening, but discussion of this is reserved until later. Obviously there is a difference. OT saints were quickened, but could not have been *quickened together with Christ*, who had not yet come, died, and risen from the dead.



true in all ages, for such are children of God (John 11:52; Rom. 9:7),<sup>86</sup> though OT saints did not know that truth, since it was not a revealed ground of relationship. Consult the word "Quicken" in *Morrish's Bible Dictionary* for the use of the word quicken in the OT.

### DEAD AND QUICKEN ARE CORRELATIVE TERMS

We will return again to the point that man is dead towards God and in need of quickening when we come to Eph. 2:1-5. A half-dead person, or an unconscious person, or a person who appears to be about to drown, is not in need of quickening, i.e., making alive -- because they are not dead. The force of the words dead and death must not be mitigated so as to mean man is not really spiritual dead toward God.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that he that hears my word, and believes him that has sent me, has life eternal, and does not come into judgment, but is passed out of death into life (John 5:24).

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death (1 John 3:14).

For the love of Christ constrains us, having judged this: that one died for all, then were all dead (2 Cor. 5:14).

And *you* being dead in your offences and sins . . . has quickened us with the Christ (Eph. 2:1, 5).

Before having divine life, before being quickened, before being born again, the person is in a state of death; spiritual death; clearly, not physical death. This answers to the darkness of John 1:5. How, then, does the transition from death to life take place? Why, the very next verse after John 5:24 just quoted above explains how this happens:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that an hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard shall live (John 5:25).

How do the spiritually dead hear? Is that a valid objection? How did dead Lazarus hear when the Son called, "Lazarus, come forth"? Hearing was implanted.<sup>87</sup> Hearing, faith, and life (new birth) are simultaneously divinely

86. See *Notes and Jottings*. p. 41.

87. Not surprisingly, an objection is made to making a parallel between a physically dead man and a spiritually dead man. It is not surprising because the truth of the spiritually dead state of man towards God is not really believed by free willers, as we shall see more fully when considering Eph. 2:1-5, and observe how they try to circumvent such Scriptures. The argument that if a dead man cannot accept Christ, then a dead man cannot reject Christ either, has no merit. The answer is, as pointed out earlier, that in Romans man is presented as alive in the flesh (Rom. 8:7, 8), under the power of "sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3; ch. 6). One in that condition rejects

(continued...)

implanted.

### PHYSICAL QUICKENING IS ILLUSTRATIVE OF SPIRITUAL QUICKENING

In John 6:63 and 2 Cor. 3:6 we see that the Spirit quickens. In 1 Cor. 15:45, Christ as the last Adam is called a quickening spirit. It is divine Persons who quicken, i.e., make alive, the spiritually dead. The spiritually dead do not contribute to, or assist at, their own quickening. It is to cause to pass "out of death into life."

The quickening from physical death (John 5:21) serves as a pattern of spiritual quickening. The one that "hears my word, and believes on him that has sent me" (v. 24) does so because the "voice of the Son of God" makes him hear and believe. The spiritually dead do not have the faculty for spiritual hearing, nor for seeing spiritually. Thus, quickening power must be applied. Having noticed that quickening has application both to physical and spiritual death, let us consider the case of dead Lazarus. In John 11:25 the Lord Jesus declared Himself to be the resurrection and the life. This has in view both the physically dead (the resurrection) and the spiritually dead (the life). While Lazarus was restored to natural life, his case illustrates the Lord's power as the resurrection and the life:

Of course, the loudness of the Lord's words was not to make Lazarus hear -- a foolish notion. The loudness was for the crowd. The voice of power and command spoke hearing ability, seeing ability, and life, into Lazarus (yes, and even transported Lazarus right into His presence where He was standing (cf. v. 45). And when the Lord calls forth the sinner from his state of spiritual death, He gives him hearing, seeing, and life. He is quickened by the Son's power. The quickened one thus has a new nature and faith. All is from a divine source. And this answers to the word "compel" in the parable of the great supper.<sup>88</sup>

87. (...continued)

Christ. This does not set aside other Scriptures that present man as spiritually dead towards God, and who cannot accept Christ. In fact, these two presentations of the same person illustrate John 5:40 and John 6:44 respectively.

88. N. Geisler wrote:

Moving the coercive {he should use the Scripture word: *compel*, or *compelling*} act of God to the point of regeneration {*quicken* is the word} does not make it less violent, for the totally dead person being regenerated {*quicken* is the word} is both unaware and unwilling of the operation of God upon him that is totally against his will and desires (*op. cit.*, p. 261, sec. ed., 2001)

Substitute the illustrative case of Lazarus into this. Was raising Lazarus from the dead a "coercive" act of the Son's power, as He quickened Lazarus to life? An invitation to Lazarus to live would have fallen upon deaf ears (John 8:43; 5:24, 25; cp. 6:45) *just as was the case morally*

(continued...)

## MAN'S WILL IS EXCLUDED

There are Scriptures which *expressly* exclude man's will, and assert that it is God's will that causes quickening and the new birth.

A man **can receive nothing** unless it be given him out of heaven (John 3:27).

**No one can** come to me except the Father who has sent me draw him . . . (John 6:44).

Therefore said I unto you, that **no one can** come to me unless it be given to Him from the Father (John 6:65; see 17:2).

Why do ye not know my speech? Because **ye cannot** hear my word (John 8:43).

. . . the Spirit of truth, whom the world **cannot** receive (John 14:17).

Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God; for **neither indeed can it** be (Rom. 8:7).

They that are in the flesh **cannot** please God (Rom. 8:8).

And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and **every imagination of the thought of his heart only evil continually** (Gen. 6:5; see 8:21; Eccl. 9:3).

The heart is deceitful above all things, and **incurable**; who can know it? (Jer. 17:9).

. . . for we being **still without strength**, in [the] due time Christ died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6).

And you, **being dead** in offenses and sins . . . (Eph. 2:1).

88. (...continued)

concerning those who were invited to the great supper; not a one came. Those compelled came. It requires the quickening power of the voice of the Son of God, whether to quicken the sinner who is spiritually dead, or a dead body. These two cases (i.e., the physical and the spiritual) are brought together in John 5:21-29.

The fact is that free willers do not really believe that men are spiritually dead. They cannot so believe without giving up their notion of moral free will towards God. Such is the case with Dave Hunt, *What Love Is This?*, p. 363, who, quoting John 5:24, explains it away, as so many texts are explained away, by saying:

Again, hearing and believing precede receiving eternal life, which come through the new birth.

So then the spiritually dead person, the person without life or motion towards God, believes while he is in the spiritually dead state. Thus we see that he does not believe man is really dead towards God. Spiritual death means, to them, something else -- certainly not *inability*. And such a view really does not want Lazarus' case brought into this, because their notions do not work in Lazarus' case -- but the Lord brings the case of both the spiritually dead and the physically dead together in the same passage (John 5:21-29) in connection with His quickening power. The cases are, in fact, analogous, but that is unsuitable to the moral free will notion. Hearing and life are divinely implanted simultaneously, and for the spiritually dead, along with faith at the same instant. All is the work of God.

Read Rom. 3:10-20 and Psalm 14:2, 3.

And all began, **without exception**, to excuse themselves . . . Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring here . . . **COMPEL to come in**, that my house may be filled (Luke 14:18-23)

So then [it is] **not of him that wills**, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy (Rom. 9:16).

. . . who have been born, not of blood, nor of flesh's will, **nor of man's will**, but of God (John 1:13).

According to **his own will** begat he us by the word of truth . . . (James 1:18).

For ye are saved by grace, through faith: **and this not of yourselves**; it is God's gift; not on the principle of works, that no one might boast. For we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before prepared that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:8-10).

If the will of a man is set to have it be otherwise, he finds ways to satisfy himself that he has explained all this so as to still have his alleged moral free will towards God exercise human faith. But more, he will complain that no one has brought forward passages that express man's *inability*.

Scripture denies that man has a morally free will towards God, and it shows that a man is born again by a sovereign act of God's will planting within him a new nature and faith, giving life where there had been death. Another wrote:

You may say, But is it not also true, that when a sinner is converted to God, he does will? Yes, he does then will and desire to be saved, and to serve God. If it is not his own free choice as a lost sinner, how is it? This is the scriptural answer: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). This, you notice, is the very explanation how those that are saved and sanctified in Christ are to work out their own salvation. It is God that works in them to will. He gives them a new will, and works in them by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Cp. Rom. 8:2 . . .

It may be asked, How then is this new will, or new nature, imparted? It is the direct operation of the Spirit of God. How? "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" . . .

Now would it not be absurd to say that the new nature was begotten by the free will of our old evil nature? But what saith the scripture: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1:18). Do you see the difference? Then again, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3). "Being born again, not of

corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (v. 23).<sup>89</sup>

Another summed up thus:

Will any still object and say they cannot reconcile the two things -- man's powerlessness and man's responsibility? Let them bear in mind that it is none of our business to reconcile them. God has done that for us by placing them side by side in His own eternal word. It is ours to submit and believe, not to reason. If we listen to the conclusions and deductions of our own minds, or the dogmas of the conflicting schools of divinity, we shall ever be in a muddle and a jumble, and perplexed and confused. But if we simply bow to Scripture, we shall know the truth. Men may reason and rebel but the question is whether man is to judge God or God to judge man. Is God sovereign or is He not? If man is to sit in judgment on God, then God is no longer God. "O man who art thou that repliest against God?" This is the great question. Can we answer it? The plain fact is that this question of power and responsibility is all a complete mistake, arising from ignorance of our own true condition and our want of absolute submission to God. Every soul in a right moral condition will freely own his responsibility, his guilt, his utter powerlessness, his exposure to the just judgment of God and that if it were not for the sovereign grace of God in Christ he should inevitably be damned. Anyone who does not own this, from the very depths of his soul, is ignorant of himself, and virtually sitting in judgment upon God.<sup>90</sup>

A. H. Rule wrote:

The life is communicated to us through the Word and by the Spirit, the Spirit being the divine agent by whom the Word is made effective in the soul (John 3:5; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23; John 5:24-25). Man is in a state of death, and if he is to have life, God must act sovereignly. God begins. Man himself is as powerless as was dead Lazarus, until the life-giving word is spoken. The power of God acts upon the dead soul by the Word, and God gives the faith that receives it. It is all above and beyond human reason. None can understand or explain. Humanly speaking a dead man cannot hear or believe; nor could man or angel make him hear or believe. But God moves in the scene of death, and all is changed. He who created when only Himself existed, and at whose word worlds sprang into existence, can make His word heard in the soul of a dead sinner. Dead Lazarus heard the voice of the Son of God, and came forth from the dead; and dead souls now hear His voice and live. The Word accompanied by the power of God produces its own effect in the soul; and this is so right on to the end. God acts in us by His Word, whether as dead sinners needing life, or as saints needing instruction and warning. We are vessels of mercy. But if He has wrought in us by His

89. "Freewill," *Things New and Old* 33:26, 29.

90. "Responsibility and Power," *Things New and Old* 17:61, 62.

Word, that word has been received in the soul. It has been believed. If God gives, we receive, believe, though even this be by grace from Him, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). But man cannot explain the how of these things, any more than he can explain the mystery of natural life (John 3:18; Eccl. 11:5).

Notice, too, when the Lord is speaking of life, He says: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" . . .<sup>91</sup>

While quickening indicates making one alive, new birth speaks of the fact that a new nature is communicated.

## CONVERSION

*Conversion* means that one is turned about towards God. All persons born anew are both quickened and converted. All quickened souls are both born anew and converted. One who is a child of God as Peter, having failed as he did, may upon repentance of that sin be, not born anew a second or third, etc., time but, converted (Luke 22:32). In such a case it means freshly turned about to God, from the sin; but there is no such thing as another new birth. Peter remained a child of God all through the sifting.

## THE FATHER, SON, AND SPIRIT SEEN QUICKENING

In John 5 we see that wonderful unity of action of the Father and the Son:

(17) But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto and I work . . . For even as the Father raises the dead and quickens [them], thus the Son also quickens whom he will (John 5:17-21).

The works of the Son were the works of the Father (John 5:20; 10:25, 37; 14:10). They act according to the distinction of Person but are one in will and purpose. The Son can do nothing from Himself independently, but does those things that He sees the Father do. Moreover, the Father shows the Son all things that He Himself does, and whatever He sees the Father do, the Son does. This is infinite unity of action and power. The Son and the Father are equally God. And so, as the Father raises the dead and quickens them, the Son also quickens whom He will. All is done in unity. The raising of the dead and the quickening here speak of the physically dead, as we noted above.

Each and every action of the Son exhibits what He sees the Father do. There is the perfect revelation of the Father in the Son:

the Father who abides in me, he does the works (John 14:10).

He that has seen me has seen the Father (John 14:9).

And, if the Son quickens, the Father in Him does the work. And what of the

91. *Selected Ministry of A. H. Rule* 2:210.

## Spirit of God?

It is the Spirit which quickens, the flesh profits nothing: the words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life (John 6:63).

For the letter {i.e., the law} kills, but the Spirit quickens (2 Cor. 3:6).

The Son spoke the Father's words. The truth is that the three Persons act in unity in all things. The instrumentality of quickening is the Word of God. The flesh profits nothing. It is vain to pretend that the will is not controlled by the flesh and that it acts of itself freely towards God to believe.

The Lord spoke of a coming hour. It is the present time. When He rose from the dead He took the *place* of the last Adam (*last* -- there will not be another such head after Him) and as such he is called "the last Adam, a quickening spirit" (1 Cor. 15:46). He quickens, the Father quickens, and the Spirit quickens. The Word is the instrumentality used.

## DOING THE WORK OF GOD

Those who believe in man's free will morally towards God say that the faith in Eph. 2:8 is human faith; i.e., it is not the gift of God. (We shall look at that more fully in another chapter.) But if that is the case, then faith is a *work* and Scripture says "not of works." So, of course, effort is made to explain how the exercise of mere human faith in obedience to God is not a work. Now, faith involves believing on Christ. We read in John 6:29:

Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom *he* has sent.

So belief on Christ is indeed a work; it is the work of God. To attribute faith to the human will as its source would make believing a work of the flesh.

## THE SON MAKES US FREE

Men are in bondage to sin; i.e., they are slaves to sin and are not free. If men had moral free will towards God, they would not really be slaves as Scripture says that they are. Moreover, there is a belief on Christ which is not really the work of God. It is a belief that is merely mental assent. Faith is tested, and so is mental assent. We read of persons having mental assent, and the Lord's not trusting Himself to them, in John 2:23-25:

(23) And when he was in Jerusalem, at the passover, at the feast, many believed on his name, beholding his signs which he wrought. (24) But Jesus himself did not trust himself to them, because he knew all [men], (25) and that he had not need that any should testify of man, for himself knew what was in man.

This is evidence of His omniscience. Their belief was founded on the wrong thing. In John 8:30-36 we see this happening again and in this case it becomes clear that those guilty of this did not acknowledge that they were slaves of sin.

(30) As he spoke these things many believed on him. (31) Jesus therefore said to the Jews who believed him, If ye abide in my word, ye are truly my disciples; (32) and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free. (33) They answered him, We are Abraham's seed, and have never been under bondage to any one; how sayest thou, Ye shall become free? (34) Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say to you, Every one that practises sin is the bondman of sin. (35) Now the bondman abides not in the house for ever: the son abides for ever. (36) If therefore the Son shall set you free, ye shall be really free.

Man's will is in bondage to "sin in the flesh." He sets us free from the bondage of the will to the evil nature that we have. He does not look down the avenue of time and say, there is a sinner who has morally free will towards God and who is going to exercise human faith to believe, so I will set him free. If he had moral free will toward God he was already free and did not need the Son to set him free from the bondage to "sin in the flesh."

### 5. *The Father Draws and Speaks to Sinners, Gives Them to the Son, and the Son Gives Them Eternal Life*

## YE WILL NOT COME TO ME

. . . ye will not come to me that ye might have life (John 5:40).

Such is the state of man's will. It is not morally free towards God but rather **man's will is bound by his fallen nature. It is free to act within the bounds of the fallen nature which controls the will**, the nature acquired when man fell. The fallen nature, controlling the will, does not want the Son. If having life means coming to the Son, man will not have it so. So powerful is the control of the old nature on the will, that man rejects the Son, and he cannot come to Christ, and therefore *the Father's drawing is needed* in order for a person to come to the Son. God must implant a new nature that affects the will.

We saw this self-will in the parable of the great supper, where all invited refused to come -- without exception. This unwillingness to come the Lord pointed out in John 5 before He brought out what we have in John 6, namely, that none *can* come except the Father draw Him. Such is the fearful state of man's will, a will which dares to say that it is free and can choose Christ by an act of the human will <sup>92</sup> and that God cannot violate that freedom! Why, that

92. Even John 5:40 has been pressed into supporting free will. An example, *Uplook*, Oct. 2001, p. 27 says:

makes a contingent God. Well did JND say ironically:

... God ... cannot act freely in respect of my freedom! I am free, and He is not. Then certainly I am God, not He.<sup>93</sup>

Elsewhere he wrote:

In the Gospel of John He {Christ} is presented at the outset as God Himself {John 1:1}, and consequently as already rejected, as He is seen in John 1:10, 11. The Jews from the beginning, and throughout the whole of this Gospel, are treated as reprobates. The necessity of the divine work in its two parts, the new birth and the cross, is asserted. Election and the sovereign action of grace, and its absolute necessity for salvation, are brought out everywhere. No one can come to Jesus, unless the Father, who hath sent Him, draw him. His sheep receive eternal life and shall never perish.<sup>94</sup>

One more matter should be noted here. While the Gospel of John brings before us so often, and clearly, the divine, sovereign operations of God in the sinner's salvation, the condition of man's will and man's responsibility to believe is also brought out as here in John 5:40, for example. That sovereign operations are required for man's salvation does not remove man's responsibility.

#### NO ONE CAN COME TO THE SON IF THE FATHER HAS NOT DRAWN HIM

No one can come to me except the Father who has sent me draw him, and I will raise him up in the last day (John 6:44).

"No one can" *does* means *inability* to do so.<sup>95</sup> No one can come to Christ by his

92. (...continued)

Scripture emphasizes that God has sovereignly granted man the ability to make free choices ... This principle is stated by our Lord Himself in His interview with Pilate ... (John. 19:10-11) ... (Prov. 1:29-30) ... (John 5:40 ... (Matt. 23:37).

Since "Scripture emphasizes" free choices, this must be the cream of the proof. What has been presented is really evidence of refusal of Christ and the act of a wicked governor. God does indeed allow man to go on in evil and refuse Christ. Of course, how these Scriptures demonstrate that man by his alleged moral free will toward God actually chooses Christ by the exercise of human faith is hidden from many of us.

93. *Collected Writings* 9:163.

94. *Collected Writings* 30:272.

95. J. N. Darby has given an excellent survey of the issue involved and comments on the force of "can":

Usually when we speak of *free* and *can* ... the absence of compulsion, and the presence of power are confounded. I say 'every one can come to the meeting,' meaning it is open to every one. I am told it is not true, for such an one has broken his leg and cannot. I take a plain case, to show what I mean. Thus where the Lord says, "No one can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him" [John 6:44]; it is not that God prohibits or hinders, but that man is so wicked in will and corrupt, that unless a power outside himself act on him he cannot come -- he is never morally so disposed. Man is perfectly free to come now as far as God is concerned, and invited to come,

(continued...)

supposed moral free will towards God. It requires the Father's drawing him. Free-will advocates respond by claiming that the Father draws everyone, or Christ draws everyone and that *draw* is used in the sense of persuading. But, clearly, that is not so. Concerning those whom the Father draws, Christ said:

I will raise him up in the last day.

It is exactly, and only, the drawn ones that will be raised up. Those raised up in the last day are the drawn ones. But not all men will be raised up in the last day for blessing; thus, since all drawn by the Father are raised up in the last day, it is clear that not all are drawn by the Father.

Being drawn by the Father means that it is *given* to the drawn ones to come to Christ:

Therefore said I unto you, that no one can come to me unless it be given to him from the Father (John 6:65).

Moreover, *hearing* from the Father, and *learning* from Him are included:

Every one that has heard from the Father [himself], and has learned [of him], comes to me (John 6:45).

The order is clear. The sinner does not come to Christ and then hears and learns from the Father. The hearing and learning from the Father and the coming to Christ are linked together; really, this is simultaneous. The giving of the sinner by Father to the Son is first, *then* the Father gives to the sinner

95. (...continued)

yea, besought; and the precious blood of Christ {is} there on the mercy-seat, so that moral difficulty is removed by God's own grace as regards the holy One receiving a sinner. In this sense he is perfectly free to come. But then there is the other side, man's, own will and state. There is no will to come, but the opposite. Life was there in Christ. "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." ... "It is simple nonsense to talk of freedom when applied to man's actual condition, if he is already inclined to evil; admitting him more than free to come, invited and besought by every motive, all made ready -- but which proves that he *will* not, and that no motive induces him. I have yet *one son*, says God, but that is over. To say he is not inclined to evil, is to deny all scripture and all fact; to make him free to choose he must be as yet indifferent, indifferent to -- having no preference for -- good and evil, which is not true, for evil lusts and self-will are there, the two great elements of sin, and if it were true would be perfectly horrible ...

Freedom is the fruit of deliverance by Christ. First, in His death the old man, sin in the flesh, is dead for faith; we are crucified with Him, and I have life in the power of the Spirit in Christ, and then I am free (*Letters* 2:164, 165).

How helpful those remarks are in contrast to Dave Hunt's using John 5:40 against this:

Men fail to come to Christ not because they *cannot*, but because they will not ... John 5:40 (*What Love is This?*, p. 98).

Then faced with the *cannot* Scriptures, such say that all are drawn. The truth is that man both *will* not and *cannot*.

the faith to believe, those so given to the Son are hearing and learning from the Father, thus coming to Christ. The Scripture teaching is that everyone *given* by the Father to the Son do come to Christ:

All that the Father gives me shall come to me . . . (John 6:37).

The result of the Father's giving to the Son is that all those given to the Son, the Son gives them eternal life:

. . . as thou hast given him authority over all flesh, that [as to] all that thou hast given to him, he should give them eternal life (John 17:2).

How good, and God-honoring, it is to acknowledge that:

A man can receive nothing unless it be given him out of heaven (John 3:27).

It is a sorry spectacle to see Christians strenuously fighting against these wonderful truths. <sup>96</sup> It is the exaltation of the will of man (bound by "sin in the

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96. Thus, for example, Dave Hunt says that the Lord said it was those who do come that will be raised up on the last day (*What Love Is This?*, p. 234). But that does not really address the issue. The issue is: why do they come? The answer is:

No one can come to me except the Father who has sent me draw him, and I will raise him up in the last day (John 5:44).

In voiding the force of John 5:65, he offers this:

Surely it is justifiable to take what He says in verse 65 as at least a *possible* indication of what Christ meant by the Father drawing: i.e., that the Father *gives* the opportunity to come . . . (*ibid.*, p. 344).

Then he attempted to turn the "possibility" into the fact of the case. Any person who hears the gospel is not prohibited by God from responding. But that is not what John 6 is about. The idea of moral free will towards God demands the explaining of these things in line with an *opportunity*-to-believe notion, thus deliberately removing the sovereign actions of the Father and the Son regarding the divine implantation of faith and life.

Moreover, he repeats that absurd notion that:

One cannot be held responsible for what one cannot do . . . (*ibid.*, p. 345).

No one could keep the law but that did not hinder God from giving it and demanding obedience. But, the notion quoted is *implicit* in the moral-free-will-notion, and it is contrary to Scripture. I am not aware that the above writer has dealt with Rom. 8:7 in his book. This Scripture expressly declares the *inability* of the mind of the flesh to be subject to the law of God. There is the direct statement of Scripture that the sinner cannot obey the law -- yet God gave it. Why?

Now we know that whatever things the law says, it speaks to those under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world be under judgment to God. Wherefore by works of law no flesh shall be justified before him; for by law is knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:19, 20).

"Be under judgment to God" means the world is in that state before God. It is the lesson of the trial of the first man in the persons of the Jews under the law. They were a sample of the first man, and the consequence of the trial brought the whole world under the sentence of judgment to God. How dare any professed Christian say, "One cannot be held responsible for what one

(continued...)

flesh") over the sovereignty and glory of God in the salvation of lost men.

The Father's drawing is not a plea, not an influence, not persuasion. It is an *effectual* action such as we read of in the parable of the great supper where sinners were brought and compelled to come in. We see that the drawing results in being raised up in the last day for blessing, showing that the drawing is selective, not universal. It is the elect individuals (not a "corporate election") that are drawn by the Father and are given by the Father to the Son. This is the "compel them" in the parable of the great supper. God implants a new nature, having His moral qualities, and this nature can act upon the will so as to please Him.

We learn the same fact of *inability* in connection with the Spirit of God:

. . . the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see him nor know him . . . (John 14:17).

John views the sinner as blind (here; John 3:3, 36; 9:39; 12:40; cp. 9:25), deaf (John 5:25, 37, cp. 45, 60; 8:43, 47; 18:37), and dead (John 5:25). The disciples were able to see (spiritually) the Son and the Father (John 14:7, 9). In John 15:24 we have a *seeing by the evil eye* of fallen man; and it is a responsible seeing that *is not the true seeing* when the Son opens the eyes to see, as He did with the man born blind in John 19. It is horrible to think that those in spiritual darkness saw things with *their father* while in contrast the Son saw with *His* Father (John 8:38).

We have considered a number of texts together in the above section in order to see their connection. Next, we will look at some of this again under distinct headings.

## HEARING, AND LEARNING, FROM THE FATHER

It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Everyone that has heard from the Father [himself], and has learned [of him], comes to me (John 6:45).

It is not surprising that the Lord's reference to Isa. 54:13 has been pressed into the service of making the Father's drawing mean that the Father draws all -- because the prophet said that all shall be taught of God. Though that is not a surprising use, it nonetheless is quite an ignorant use. Clearly, Isa. 54:13 refers to Israel in the coming day when all Israel shall be saved (Rom. 11:26),

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96. (...continued)

cannot do"? Where is the Scripture statement that "One cannot be held responsible for what one cannot do"? The notion flies in the face of Scripture every time it is uttered by five-point, or four-point, or three-point Arminians. Moreover, I doubt they would say to someone that owes them a million dollars, but who is bankrupt and cannot pay: "One cannot be held responsible for what one cannot do."

when they shall all be righteous (Isa. 60:21). And the reason for it is that they shall all have been taught of God. Thus, everyone taught of God in Israel is saved, and only such will be saved. If the Father now draws everyone, and obviously everyone is not saved, then Isa. 54:13 is misused to make it mean essentially the same thing as the Father's drawing. It is merely a desperate misuse of Isa. 54:13. The Lord quoted it for the principle in it; namely, that those actually blessed are taught of God, and those taught of God are in fact blessed. So, the Christian believer has heard from the Father and has learned of Him, and therefore came to Christ. The fact is that those drawn by the Father have been taught of God. They have heard from the Father and have learned from Him. It is such a sweet thing to our souls and fills us with joy to know such things. Before turning to the next point, a footnote to J. N. Darby's translation of John 6:45, regarding the word "from," should be noted:

*Para* with a genitive (as 'of' God, v. 46). It is what is received directly from the Father. I add 'himself' that its immediateness may be felt, which is the point of the sentence.

#### ALL GIVEN BY THE FATHER TO CHRIST WILL BE RAISED IN THE LAST DAY

All that the Father gives me shall come to me, and him that comes to me I will not at all cast out (John 6:37).

And this is the will of him that has sent me, that of all that he has given me I should lose nothing, but raise it up in the last day (John 6:39).

Note that this is interlocked with what we have just seen. Those drawn by the Father will be raised by Christ in the last day for blessing. Not all persons will be so raised; thus, not all are drawn by the Father. The Father's **drawing** and the Father's **giving** to the Son are interlocked. It is those *drawn* by the Father who are *given* by the Father to the Son, and all such the Son will raise up in the last day, and such have eternal life. The Father neither draws everyone nor gives everyone to the Son.

#### NONE CAN COME TO CHRIST UNLESS IT IS GIVEN TO HIM TO COME

Therefore said I unto you, that no one can come to me unless it be given to him from the Father (John 6:65).

We may notice the use of the word "can" in John 6:44 and 65. "No one can." That expresses *inability*. The will of man is morally bound against God by sin in the flesh; he is totally lost, totally ruined morally towards God, and except the Father draw him, and gives him to Christ, he stays in that awful condition. It is the given ones that come; clearly, those who do not come were not given by the Father. Clearly, the Father does not give all. And the coming to Christ is itself a gift given by the Father to the one who comes to the Son.

#### ALL GIVEN BY THE FATHER TO CHRIST DO, IN FACT, COME TO CHRIST

All that the Father gives me shall come to me, and him that comes to me I will not at all cast out (John 6:37).

And this is the will of him that has sent me, that of all that he has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up in the last day (John 6:39).

My Father who has given [them] to me . . . (John 10:29).

. . . that [as to] all thou hast given to him, he should give them eternal life (John 17:2)

I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world. They were thine, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word (John 17:6).

I do not demand concerning the world, but those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine, (and all that is mine is thine, and [all] that is thine mine,) and I am glorified in them (John 17:9).

Father, [as to] those thou hast given me (John 17:24).

[As to] those thou hast given me, I have lost not one of them (John 18:9).

We ought to see that the Father does not give all to Christ because if the Father did that, then all would come to Christ. The same thing is true in connection with the Father's drawing. It is certain that the Father has given the believer to the Son and that all are not given by the Father: hence, not all have eternal life.

The complex action is that they are drawn by the Father, are given by the Father to the Son, and the Son gives them, every one of them that the Father gives to Him, eternal life. Moreover, concerning those given by the Father to the Son, it is the will of the Father that none such should be lost. This is what we mean by "eternal security." Notice that this is bound up together with the fact that it is the Father that gives them to the Son. Note well that "eternal security" and the Father's drawing and giving the believer to the Son, are bound up together. To believe both in "eternal security" as well as in moral free will towards God is contrary to Scripture. Observe the connection with John 10:28, 29:

(28) . . . and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall seize them out of my hand. (29) My Father who has given [them] to me is greater than all, and no one can seize them out of the hand of my Father. I and the Father are one.

Yes, "eternal security" excludes the supposed moral free will of man towards God as exercised in appropriating salvation.

#### RECEIVE AND GIVE

John answered and said, A man can receive nothing unless it be given him out of heaven (John 3:27).

One does not obtain eternal life by receiving it because of an act of his own will. The *receiving* is given to him out of heaven. *All is of God*. The fleshly minded Corinthians needed to be reminded of that great fact:

For who makes thee to differ? And what hast thou which thou hast not received? (1 Cor. 4:7).

"Oh," says someone, "I have not received faith from God. That came from my own will!"

But [the] natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him; and he cannot know them because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14).<sup>97</sup>

That is a statement concerning the state of lost man. Have you confessed before the Father that that is what you are by nature? Salvation is one of the things of the Spirit of God. Thank God, He brings and compels sinners to come to the great supper.

Clearly, all drawn by the Father are given to the Son and the Son gives them eternal life. Whoever believes has life. The person believes because he has been drawn by the Father and given to the Son. It is not a human choice by moral free will towards God. There is no such thing.

#### JOHN 12:32 CANNOT CONTRADICT WHAT WE HAVE JUST SEEN

The advocates of moral free will towards God hold that the Father draws everyone, and they bring in John 12:32 to show this. But we have just seen, above, that the Father neither draws, nor gives, all men to the Son. Thus, to

97. In seeking to overcome the force of the Scriptures which describe man as spiritually dead, Dave Hunt wrote:

Where does the Bible make this distinction that the spiritually dead can "believe all sorts of things" but not "those things that are pleasing to God"? (*What Love Is This?*, p. 317).

That is not an inquiry. It is a rhetorical question meaning there is none. Thus, if a text is brought forward that answers the question, free-willers simply declare a restriction on such texts. In this case, referring to 1 Cor. 2:14, "But [the] natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God . . .," Dave Hunt says:

Yes . . . However, this cannot be speaking of the gospel.

"Yes" the natural man cannot receive the things Paul spoke of, but the natural man can receive the gospel, he says. (We must suppose, then that the gospel is not one of the things of the Spirit of God!) And what proof are we offered that the natural man has the ability to receive the gospel? Are we offered an express statement of Scripture that men are able to do so? -- No; instead, we are told that the proof is that "the gospel is plainly offered to the whole world" (*What Love Is This?*, p. 97). This is a typical example of how the statements of Scripture are circumvented. So, no amount of proof from Scripture will be enough before such methods of circumventing its force.

The truth is that the gospel goes out freely and the elect believe it through the sovereign implantation of faith and life.

bring in John 12:32 into the matter of the *Father's* drawing, is manufacturing a contradiction in Scripture. In John 12:32 the Lord Jesus said that if He was lifted up He would *Himself* (not the Father) draw all men unto Himself. This is not the same subject as the Father's drawing. It is Christ as *lifted up* on the cross (v. 33) drawing all men. The Jews were not expecting the Messiah to be crucified. His listeners objected, saying they heard out of the law that Christ abides forever (v. 34).<sup>98</sup> What, then, is this about the Son of Man being lifted up? It did not fit their scheme of how matters should be. When Christ was living, the middle wall of partition (Eph. 2:14) remained between Jew and Gentile. To be the attractive One for all men, Jew and Gentile, He must be lifted up. The cross ended the fact that He was the Christ only for the Jews. J. N. Darby remarked:

He is "lifted up" in John 3, in connection with dying men, like the brazen serpent, and as introducing to heavenly things; He is "lifted up" in John 8 in connection with the utter rejection of the Jews; He is "lifted up" in John 12, drawing all men unto Him -- the wide sphere of application here below -- all this by His death. These are the only cases of the use of the word regarding Christ.<sup>99</sup>

And it is on the rejection of the Jews, as such, for rejecting His word, that He says "when lifted up" they would "know it was he." When too late they would know whom they had rejected. So it was with the altar -- it was not in the camp but in the court of the tabernacle, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation (of meeting). Only in ch. 8, He is the Word, I Am, whom they have rejected. It was one coming from the camp towards the Tabernacle (Heaven) who found the altar the first thing heavenward -- so Christ on the Cross, lifted up, the Witness, dying, that we were dead in sin, but find it in grace in a sacrifice for sin. We go further -- we enter into the holiest through the rent veil, but here was the meeting place, but it {is} as having done consequently with the world (the first Adam) as Christ had there done with it -- He was lifted up from the earth and all became heavenly but judgment, and that is so to us.<sup>100</sup>

Finding "draw" in both texts does not mean the reference is to the same drawing, any more than because Noah was in an ark and Moses was in an ark, that the two arks are the same thing. Care must be exercised not to force a false notion on the text so as to support the idea of moral free will towards God, thus leading not only to contradiction of passages but to absurdity.

98. They might appeal to such Scriptures as 1 Chron. 17:12; Psa. 89:24, 29; Psa. 110:4; Isa. 9:7; 53:8; Ezek. 37:25; Dan. 7:14; Micah 4:7 -- while ignoring the predictions of His death and resurrection.

99. *Notes and Comments* 2:299; see also *Collected Writings* 26:356.

100. *Notes and Comments* 2:288.



Because the Father has drawn us and given us to the Son, we are in the good of redemption and that we are reconciled to God. He has caused us to hear spiritually, and implanted in us a new nature, along with faith, all at the same time, which leads on to repentance, etc.<sup>101</sup> Our hearts rise up in worship to the Father Who has given us as a love-gift to His beloved Son.

## 6. The Son Chooses

### JUDAS CHOSEN FOR SERVICE, NOT SALVATION

There are several references to choosing in John's Gospel. The first one involves Judas:

Have not I chosen you the twelve? And one of you is a devil. Now he spoke of Judas . . . (John 6:70).

This was not a choosing for salvation but for service. The Lord Jesus knew from the beginning who would deliver Him up (John 6:64) but chose Judas anyway. Judas, being what he was, was to be used in God's ways for bringing about the cross. All the twelve were "with me from [the] beginning" (John 15:27). So it is clear that the Lord knew Judas' case when Judas was chosen. Well, of course! One of the things that is shown in John's gospel is the Lord's omniscience.

Speaking anticipatively, in view of His giving Himself on the cross, the Lord said to the Father:

When I was with them I kept them in thy name; those thou hast given me I have guarded, and not one of them has perished, but the son of perdition,<sup>102</sup> that the scripture might be fulfilled (John 17:12).

Judas was lost. It is quite clear that he was not one of those given by the Father to the Son:

[As to] those whom thou hast given me, I have not lost one of them (John 18:9).

The eleven were "clean" as we learn in John 13, where we see that Judas was not clean:

and ye are clean but not all (John 13:11).

Acts 1:17 also bears on the point that Judas was chosen for service (not salvation):

101. See *From New Birth to New Creation*, available from the publisher.

102. JND has a footnote to the word perdition:

'Perished' and 'perdition' are verb and noun from one Greek root: they show what Judas belonged to.

for he was numbered amongst us, and had received a part in this service.

The Lord Jesus had said that His sheep hear His voice and that He knows them (John 10:27). But Judas was only a professor without possession, and is of the class noted in Matt. 7:21-23, where He says of those, "I never knew you." He could not say that to Judas if Judas was one of His sheep. He would have to say to Judas, 'I knew you once, but I do not know you anymore.' Such would fit the notion of conditional security of the Arminians. But there is no such thing as Christ's knowing those whom He has chosen, and then subsequently having to say to them "I never knew you." The Lord warned that many fit in this class of mere profession without reality. They never were His, spite of their pretense -- and even their claim to have worked miracles!

### I KNOW THOSE WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN

I speak not of you all. I know those whom I have chosen; . . . (John 13:18).

. . . but I have called you friends, for all things which I have heard of my Father I have made known to you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and have set you that ye should go and [that] ye should bear fruit, and [that] your fruit should abide . . . (John 15:15, 16).

Judas was not among the elect -- really, he never was among the elect, never was chosen as these Scriptures speak of it. "I speak not of you all" (John 13:18) was said when Judas was present. Judas, having received the morsel, left (John 13:30). When the Lord spoke the words in John 15:15, 16, Judas was not there. "Have set you . . . [that] ye should bear fruit" is His divine action, as is His choosing them and affirming that they did not choose Him. Thus is their will excluded in the choosing.<sup>103</sup>

Moreover, of these elect ones, the Lord said:

If the world hate you, know that it has hated me before you. If ye were of the

103. N. Geisler made a remarkable attempt to circumvent the true force of this. He wrote:

The context here favors it being a reference to Jesus' choice of the Twelve to be His disciples, not God's choice of the elect to eternal salvation. After all, Jesus is speaking to the eleven apostles (John 15:8; 16:7). In addition, the word "chosen" by God is used of persons who are not the elect. Judas, for example, was "chosen" by Christ but was not one of the elect: "Jesus replied, 'Have not I chosen you the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!'" (John 6:70) (*op. cit.*, p. 72 [73, 74]).

One part of the context is that Judas is absent. Moreover, He had already spoken of the choice of the twelve to be His disciples in John 6, with the clear notice that it was not sovereign election to life or fruit-bearing because Judas' true state is noted. The context here is fruit-bearing and that He had "set you that ye should go and [that] ye should bear fruit." It was a certainty from which Judas is necessarily excluded. The context is sovereign choosing and sovereign appointment to fruit-bearing. The context is also vv. 18, 19. Judas could not be said to be "not of the world" (v. 19). It is the eleven of whom it is said, "chosen you out of the world" (v. 19). That the word *choose* can be used in more than one context does not negate any of this.

world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, on account of this the world hates you (John 15:18, 19).

Judgment is pronounced on the world because light came (i.e., Christ came) "and men have loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:19; see 12:31). It was part of the testing of the first man to see if he was recoverable. And so these that are chosen by Christ are those given to him by the Father, out of the world (John 17:6). Such are not of the world as He is not of the world (John 17:14).

What about the rest of men? Is there a parallel choosing, or election, that prevents them from coming to the light? Where in John is there even a hint of such a thing? The rest of men are left where they were, in their self-willed refusal of the light. They are left in their responsibility – a responsibility that is never met.

## 7. *The Believer Sees the Son and Hears His Voice*

### WE SEE THE SON BECAUSE HE OPENS THE SPIRITUAL SIGHT

Those opposed to the Lord said, "What sign doest thou that we may see and believe?" The question is about seeing with physical eyes, no doubt. In connection with the Lord's healing of the man born blind (John 9), a physical thing with a spiritual lesson in it, the Lord said this:

(39) And Jesus said, For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not may see, and they which see may become blind. (40) And [some] of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things, and they said to him, Are we blind also? (41) Jesus said to them, If ye were blind ye would not have sin; but now ye say, We see, your sin remains. (John 9:39-41).

Here we pass to the matter of spiritual sight. The unbeliever is blind, as we saw in considering John 1.

. . . in whom the god of this world has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving, so that the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ, who is [the] image of God, should not shine forth [for] them (2 Cor. 4:4).

Surely John 9 has the lesson that the Son of God is the One who opens the eyes of the blind -- and the lesson is applied in vv. 39-40. Even in v. 5 He pointed out that He was the light of the world. He opens the eyes to see the light. It is His action. Fallen man does not have the faculty to "see." This is imparted by the Son of God. Here is the will of the Father about this:

For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees {beholds} the Son, and believes on him, should have life eternal; and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:40).

And he that beholds me, beholds him that sent me (John 12:45).

This also is not a mere physically seeing the Lord Jesus. Again, it is connected with Himself as light, as the next verses show:

(45) and he that beholds me, beholds him that sent me. (46) I am come into the world [as] light, that every one that believes on me may not abide in darkness (John 12:45, 46).

He imparts the faculty of spiritual light and we behold both Him and the Father.

### WE HEAR THE SON BECAUSE HE OPENS THE SPIRITUAL HEARING

So faith then [is] by a report, but the report by God's word (Rom. 10:17).

The Son uses the Word of God instrumentally in causing the spiritually dead to hear His voice. And with that hearing there is faith. John 5:24 says:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that he that hears my word, and believes him that has sent me, has life eternal, and does not come into judgment, but is passed out of death into life.

A person is here seen in a state of spiritual death. The dead cannot hear. The spiritually dead are caused by the Son of God to hear. Hearing His word is hearing the Word of God. It is the result of His power put forth to quicken the spiritually dead as He brought dead Lazarus to life by the word of His power. Lazarus did not have the faculty of hearing, nor did he respond to the voice of the Son of God as an act of his own 'moral free will' towards God. In connection with the Son's speaking life into him, he heard. So is it with God's implanting a new nature into the sinner's soul. Then the person has *life*, *sees* and *hears* and *has faith* -- believes.

God did not supply dead Lazarus with prevenient grace so that he of his 'free will' was capable of responding to Christ's offer of life. Well, of course there was no 'offer of life' to Lazarus on Christ's part. It was rather the Son's voice of power and command.

As the Lord implants the faculties of spiritual sight and spiritual hearing, so He opens the heart (Acts 16:14).

## 8. *The Believer is Secure in the Hand of the Father and of the Son (John 10:28-30)*

### "CONDITIONAL SECURITY" CONTRADICTS THE WORDS OF THE SON

It is not true that both moral free will towards God and the eternal security of the believer are taught in the Word of God. Yes, eternal security *is* taught, but not the other. Moreover, holding both things is like claiming that one obtains

salvation by exercising his moral free will towards God, but he is not able to exercise his moral free will in changing his mind and deciding not to be saved. Once saved, such a one cannot use his alleged free moral will to become unsaved. Is it because he loses his moral free will? Such is the meaning of believing both teachings. The Arminian is consistent in his error when he says that a believer may become an unbeliever

Eternal security is bound up with the fact that a person is born again by an act of God's will, as we have seen (John 1:13; James 1:18). God initiates and God maintains:

. . . he who has begun in you a good work will complete it unto Jesus Christ's day (Phil. 1:6).

In John's Gospel we see the hands of the Lord Jesus working in unity with the Father, whether the text refers to His physical hands or whether it is figurative. For example, John 8:6-8 shows Him writing with his finger, on the ground. He Who in John is presented to us as the great "I am" is Jehovah, Who wrote the law with "the finger of God." In John 8 He maintains the law against those who wanted to pit Him against Moses so as to have a ground of complaint, yet acts in grace to the woman, defeating their evil scheme. To His own He presented His hands and His side (John 20:20-27). The Father has given all things into the Son's hand:

The Father loves the Son, and has given all things [to be] in his hand (John 3:35; see John 13:3).

And that is where the believer is:

(27) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; (28) and I give them life eternal; and they shall never perish, and no one shall seize them out of my hand. (29) My Father who has given [them] to me is greater than all, and no one can seize them out of the hand of my Father. (30) I and the Father are one (John 10:27-30).

Let us consider an illustration concerning the difference between viewing this according to eternal security and "conditional security." Here is something from A. Roach in a letter dated July 13, 1979:

I shall contrast here what Scripture says with what Arminianism says.

JOHN 10 SAYS	ARMINIANISM {IN EFFECT} SAYS
I give eternal life	Christ is wrong, you can lose it; it is not eternal
Never perish	Christ is wrong -- you can perish

None can pluck them out of my hand	Christ is wrong. You are stronger than He is and can wiggle out of the strongest hand in the universe
None can pluck out of my Father's hand	Christ is wrong again, for weak as you are you are stronger than the Father's hand and can pluck yourself out

It is strange that Arminianism will allow that the devil cannot take you out of Christ's hand but you who are considerably weaker than the devil can take yourself out. This isn't even rational. *It is an absurdity.*

### THE WOLF CANNOT SEIZE US OUT OF THE HAND OF THE FATHER AND THE SON, NOR CAN ANY OTHER

But what Scripture does anyone have for saying that the devil cannot seize, or take, the sheep out of the hands of the Father and the Son? Perhaps John 10:28, 29? The word *seize* is the same word as in John 10:12:

but he who serves for wages, and who is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf seizes them and scatters the sheep.

The wolf can seize the sheep and scatter them but he cannot seize them out of the hands of the Father and the Son. Indeed, no one can do that. No, not even oneself, because oneself is "one" of those designated in these verses: "no one can seize them out of my hand."

### THE SON KNOWS THE SHEEP AS HE KNOWS THE FATHER : JOHN 10:14, 15

(14) I am the good shepherd; and I know those that are mine, and am known of those that are mine, (15) as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Those spoken of in Matt. 7:21-23 were never known by Christ and so cannot refer to persons once saved and then lost again. There are no such persons. Here we have His knowing those that are His. This means much more than that He happens to know which people are His among the world's population. This is a knowing in accordance with the words, "as the Father knows me and I know the Father." This is not speaking of being acquainted. It is divine knowledge of One Another. And the good Shepherd has divine knowledge of those that are His; and they have divine knowledge of Him. This has been implanted into them by Himself and this knowing will subsist eternally, just as in the case of the Father and the Son knowing One Another.

There is a knowing between the Shepherd and the sheep as there is between the Father and Him. This refers not to the measure of knowing but to the *character* of it. Moreover, this knowing is *the knowing of the person*, not knowing

*about* the person. As Paul said, "I know whom I have believed" (2 Tim. 1:12). He knew the Person. This is exceedingly precious to our souls. The world knows Him not (John 1:10; 17:25; 1 John 3:2). There is a divine knowledge that we have. See John 6:69 and 1 John 2:13, 14; 5:20.

There were unbelievers that He addressed (v. 26). Why did they not believe?

. . . but ye do not believe, for ye are not of my sheep, as I told you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them . . .

They did not believe because they were not of His sheep. If they were of His sheep they would hear His voice. They were spiritually dead. Like dead Lazarus, they did not hear. How could dead Lazarus hear? He heard the voice of the One who is the resurrection and the life because that One gave Lazarus hearing. It was a divine action:

(24) Verily, verily, I say unto you, that he that hears my word, and believes him that has sent me, has life eternal, and does not come into judgment, but is passed out of death into life. (25) Verily, verily, I say unto you, that an hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard shall live (John 5:24, 25).

And this is what produces the new life in the soul. It was not the result of an alleged human act of their will. They were dead and in need of quickening (cp. Eph. 2:1-5, where the *two correlative terms* are used: *dead* and *quicken*). It is a divine, sovereign action of the Son, as also in the case of dead Lazarus, who is such a wonderful illustration of these blessed powers of the Son as both the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). And this is why the sheep have eternal life. This is why they know Him. This is why they hear His voice. He has sovereignly brought this about apart from human faculty or human agency.

No wonder that we have such words regarding the security of the sheep in John 10:28-30. No one, no demonic being, nor any one else, including of course oneself, can seize the believer out of the hands of the Father and the Son. And what is bound up with this expression of the divine preservation of the believer is the Lord's statement:

I and the Father are one.

Thus is the blessed and infinite unity of purpose of the Father and the Son brought before us as bearing on the divine preservation of the believer. This is an example of John 5:19-20:

The Son can do nothing of himself save whatever he sees the Father doing: for whatever things *he* does, these things also the Son does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son and shews him all things which he himself does . . .

See John 17:10. The Son does not act independently but only does what He sees the Father doing; and the Father shows the Son *all things* that He Himself does. Here we see the action of the divine Persons carried out in infinite unity. This involves omnipotence and omniscience. And this undergirds the

preservation of the saints. Although it may not have been intended, the idea of "conditional security" libels the Father's and Son's omnipotence and unity of purpose. The only condition is Their ability to preserve the saints, and that ability is unquestionable. That any professed Christian dreams that he has the inherent ability to keep himself saved is absurd; but that is just what "conditional security" pretends is possible.

## Chapter 4

### *God's Sovereignty in the Book of Acts*

#### *Some Words Relating to Sovereignty Used in Acts*

##### INTRODUCTION

The rejection of the Son has taken place by the first man (see 1 Cor. 15:45-47), representatively in the persons of the favored nation (Israel):

... but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father (John 15:24).

This was the climax of the testing of the first man. It is good for our hearts to know that God controls everything:

... for I [am] God and there is none else; [I am] God, and there is none like me; declaring 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 (Isa. 46:9, 10).

In Acts 15:17, 18 we read:

... [the] Lord, who does these things known from eternity.

God does not have after-thoughts. He controls all as Acts 4:28 clearly shows.

There are numbers of statements in the book of Acts that have the same truth in them. Elsewhere we noted that the Gospels of Luke and of John have an emphasis on the sovereignty of God. The same is true in the Acts. The word *horizo*, meaning to *determine*, is used eight times in the NT, five of which are in Acts:

Acts 2:23; 10:42; 11:29; 17:26; 17:31.<sup>104</sup>

*The Englishman's Greek Concordance* (p. 720) indicates that *tassō* (meaning to *appoint*) is used eight times in the NT, four of which are in Acts:

Acts 13:48; 15:2; 22:10; 28:23.

The word *proorizō*, meaning to mark out, or determine, beforehand, is used once Acts (4:28) and elsewhere by Paul, with whom Luke traveled, in Rom.

104. See *The Englishman's Greek Concordance*, p. 538. The other Scriptures are: Luke 22:22; Rom. 1:4; Heb. 4:7.

8:29, 30; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:5, 11.

##### THOSE THAT WERE TO BE SAVED

Concerning Acts 2:47, W. Kelly remarked:

What is the meaning of "such as should be saved"? It means those in Israel destined to be saved -- those Jews whom grace was looking upon and dealing with in their souls. In the approaching dissolution of the Jewish system God reserved to Himself a remnant according to the election of grace. There was always this remnant, which a time of declension and ruin served but to define. Thus, during the Lord's lifetime the disciples were the remnant, or "such as should be saved." All those that were soon to confess Jesus as Messiah by the Holy Ghost were "such as should be saved"; but there was no such thing yet as the church to add them to. Now, at the time referred to in Acts 2, the assembly or church was there to which they might be added. Coincident with the Holy Ghost's presence, we have the church; and this agrees with 1 Cor. 12:13, where it is said that "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body"; that is to say, the formation of the body depends upon the baptism of the Spirit. Acts 1 shows that the baptism of the Spirit had *not* yet taken place; Acts 2 shows that it *had*; and immediately the fact is apparent that the church was there as a thing actually found upon the earth, to which "such as should be saved" were being added by the Lord. That is, the Lord now had a house upon the earth.<sup>105</sup>

There is a helpful footnote to this phrase in J. N. Darby's translation. And it may be added that these are among "the election of grace" (Rom. 11:5), among "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16). This is the portion of saved Jews now, but the godly remnant after the rapture will be part of the nation, the new Israel under the new covenant, when Israel realizes "the adoption" (Rom. 9:4).

##### GIVEN UP BY THE DETERMINATE COUNSEL AND FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD (ACTS 2:23; 4:28)

... him, given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye, by [the] hand of lawless [men], have crucified and slain (Acts 2:23).

This does not say 'the determinate counsel and *the* foreknowledge.' God's determinate counsel and foreknowledge are connected together by the use of only one "the."

Scripture speaks of God's "purpose" and of His "counsel." These two words differ in this respect, that God has an *intention of His will*, i.e., His *purpose* (πρόθεσιν) that He intends to bring to pass, and in doing so He acts according to the *wisdom of His mind*, i.e., His *counsel* (βουλήν). Here we

105. *Lectures on the Church of God*, Lecture 3, *in loco*.

read of his “determinate counsel.” “Determinate” (ὁρισμένη) notes the fixity of the wisdom of His mind in so ordering. This determination is seen also in Luke 22:22 and in Acts 17:31 (“appointed”). God’s foreknowledge is intimately linked with this. First, then, we see sovereign determination here, i.e., predetermination by the will of God.<sup>106</sup> Christ was “given up,” “given up by the determinate counsel . . .,” by God, to provide for Himself a Lamb. Here we see coupled together two things: (1) the fixity of the wisdom of God’s mind concerning this matter and (2) God’s selective, discriminatory foreknowledge of His Christ as being given up, by God’s own action, to the evil will of Jew and Gentile.<sup>107</sup> This use of the word “foreknowledge” will

106. Here is the way N. Geisler handles predetermination:

Whatever God foreknows must come to pass (i.e., is predetermined).

Such things involve semantic word-play. It is meant to avoid God actually, sovereignly choosing. No, it might be replied, God chose to do it that way. *That* is God’s choice. What such reasoning is about is to get rid of unconditional election of the saints and maintain moral free will towards God. To the above quoted statement he had this footnote:

By “determined” here we do not mean that the act is directly caused by God. It was caused by human choice (which is a self-determined act). By “determined” it is meant that the inevitability of the event was fixed in advance since God knew infallibly that it would come to pass. Of course, God predetermined that it would be a self-determined action. God was only the remote and primary remote cause. Human freedom was the immediate and secondary cause (*Chosen But Free*, p. 44).

In the first line substitute for the words “the act” these words: “belief of the gospel”; or, “faith.” Thus you will see what fathers this system of limiting God in this way. I do not deny that God is omniscient, of course, nor do I say that He is the author of sin; but what we have here is an absolute system stated, a system which undermines God actually predetermining anything. Thus Luke 22:22 cannot mean that God decreed the death of Christ. Acts 10:42 cannot mean that God decreed that Christ would be judge of living and dead; and etc. We will touch on such points in the body of the text.

107. There are two words that have to do with God’s foreknowledge (see *The Englishman’s Greek Concordance*, p. 654). One is used here and in 1 Pet. 1:2. Concerning this, W. E. Vine wrote:

PROGNŌSIS (πρόγνωσις), a foreknowledge . . ., is used only of divine foreknowledge, Acts 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:2. Foreknowledge is one aspect of omniscience; it is implied in God’s warnings, promises and predictions. See Acts 15:18. God’s foreknowledge involves His electing grace, but this does not preclude human will. He foreknows the exercise of faith which brings salvation . . . (*Vine’s expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, under Foreknow).

To the distinction he made concerning God’s foreknowledge he has gratuitously added man’s moral free will towards God, namely, that faith is an act of moral free will. The effect is that what one hand gave the other took away.

Dave Hunt will not even allow what the one hand gave. Contradicting W. E. Vine, he wrote:

We simply can’t find a verse anywhere that uses “foreknowledge” in any other way than to express the fact of knowing in advance (*What Love Is This?*, p. 227).

(continued...)

be more fully discussed when considering God’s sovereignty in Romans.

What about the case of the Lord Jesus? Did God look down the avenue of time, see what the Lord Jesus would do, and after that by “determinate counsel” decree that such and such would be the case? In Isa. 42:1 (and cp. 1 Pet. 2:6) He is called Jehovah’s elect in whom His soul delighted. Was the Lord Jesus the elect because God saw beforehand what He would do and so decided to elect Him? Or is the case this?:

For in truth against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou hadst anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with [the] nations, and peoples of Israel, have been gathered together in this city to do whatever thy hand and thy counsel {βουλή} had determined before should come to pass (Acts 4:27, 28).

Did God look down the avenue of time, see what would be done to the Lord Jesus, and *then* by His counsel determine<sup>108</sup> what should come to pass? Surely we know that is not so (Matt. 16:21; Luke 22:22; Isa. 46:9, 10).

Besides Peter’s pointing to God’s determinate counsel, he refers also to God’s foreknowledge:

. . . but by precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, [the blood] of Christ, foreknown indeed before [the] foundation of [the] world, but who has been manifested at the end of times for your sakes . . . (1 Pet. 1:19).

And in keeping with His determinate counsel and foreknowledge, God

announced beforehand by the mouth of all his prophets, that his Christ should suffer (Acts 3:18).

God determined that the awful deed would be done, yet man<sup>109</sup> is held responsible for the deed (Acts 2:23),<sup>110</sup> though grace could count it as

107. (...continued)

Why “can’t” he? The fact is that the inverse of what he claims is true. “Foreknowledge” as used in Scripture *never* means merely God’s omniscience. Foreknowledge is included in omniscience but has a discriminatory bearing in connection with determinate counsel. We will consider this more when we look at Romans, where we shall also see that God’s *knowing* is sometimes used with a discriminatory bearing also and not as if it meant merely omniscience or prescience. God’s uncontenting choice is involved in such cases

108. The word *determined* is from a Greek word also found in Rom. 8:29, 30 (predestinated), 1 Cor. 2:7 (predetermined), and Eph. 1:5, 11 (marked out beforehand).

109. Peter had no problem, as many modern persons do, concerning who was responsible for Christ’s death. He charged: “ye, by [the] hand of lawless [men], have crucified and slain” -- clearly meaning the Jews, using the Romans, and both guilty, i.e., Jew and Gentile, each having their particular responsibility.

110. There are expositors who speak of God’s sovereignty and man’s “moral free will” meeting in the crucifixion of Christ, and speak of it as a paradox. There is nothing about moral free will

(continued...)

manslaughter (Acts 3:17), allowing them to run into the city of refuge (Christ). They were guilty (Acts 2:36; 4:10; 5:30; 10:39). If not availing themselves of the city of refuge, then there was only the avenger for them. And as to God's governmental ways with such as did not repent, see Matt. 22:1-13 -- this passage actually carries us beyond governmental wrath (Matt. 21:7) to what is eternal (Matt. 21:13).

The Jews are charged with the crime, having rejected Christ (cp. John 1:11), through the instrumentality of lawless men, the Romans -- who, through Pilate's evil use of governmental power of empire committed first to the Babylonian, Nebuchadnezzar, included the world in the guilt (cp. John 1:10). Cp. Luke 18:32. This is not to deny that the world is guilty before God on other grounds also, but here the action of lawless Gentiles against God's Christ is noted.

#### DETERMINATELY APPOINTED TO BE JUDGE

The One who died in accordance with the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God is also

. . . determinately appointed of God [to be] judge of living and dead (Acts 10:42).

See also Acts 17:31; John 3:35; 5:22. Not a single person due for judgment will escape. God's determinate appointment is involved.

#### JESUS CHRIST FOREORDAINED FOR YOU

Acts 3:20 speaks of the fact that Jesus Christ "was foreordained for you." The force of this foreordination should be clear to us after considering the above Scriptures. It is a determination from the divine side, not contingent on man, though God uses sinners to carry out His determination.

#### THE BELIEVER ORDAINED TO ETERNAL LIFE

Acts 13:48 is, as we might expect, a battle ground of the subject of election. The passage is quoted here at some length because of the efforts made to use the context to evacuate the force of the words "*were ordained*," which point to God's sovereign election of the saved:

(46) And Paul and Barnabas spoke boldly and said, It was necessary that the word of God should be first spoken to you; but, since ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the nations; (47) for thus has the Lord enjoined us: I have set thee for a light of the nations,

110. (...continued)

towards God in the matter. It is just words, used to maintain the erroneous notion of moral free will towards God. But it is, at the least, an admission that the determinate counsel of God is a fact.

that thou shouldest be for salvation to the end of the earth. (48) And [those of] the nations, hearing it, rejoiced, and glorified the word of the Lord, and believed, as many as were ordained to eternal life (Acts 13:46-48).

Simon has related how God first visited to take out of the nations a people for his name (Acts 15:14).<sup>111</sup>

That is the translation of one quite capable in the Greek language. And another who was very capable in the Greek language, W. Kelly translates v. 48:

And the Gentiles on hearing rejoiced, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

J. N. Darby wrote:

But still the grace of God, mingled with faith, was necessary to make the truth enter the heart, so that it might be born of God. This is what happens here. The power of God accompanied the word and "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." The result is this: -- opposition on the part of the Jews, testimony throughout all the earth (except at Jerusalem, chap. 15), and the operation of grace in the heart, whereby it is led to the acceptance of the gospel.<sup>112</sup>

**What Does the Word Ordained (τεταγμένοι) Mean?** This word is derived from τάσσω which means to appoint:

to bring about an order of things by arranging, arrange, put in place.<sup>113</sup>

In addition to being used of such things as Claudius' edict banishing Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2), *tassō* denotes God's appointment of "the powers that be" (Rom. 13:1), of a career of service for Paul (Acts 22:10), and of individual persons to attain eternal life through believing the gospel (Acts 13:48) . . .<sup>114</sup>

While it may be admitted that *tassō* means to appoint, attempts are made to evacuate the true force of this:

In the NT we find "to determine" in Acts 15:2, "to appoint" in 28:23, and "to order" in Matt. 28:26. God orders or appoints (passive voice) in Acts 22:10. Christians are ordained to eternal life in Acts 13:48; conferring status rather than foreordination is the point.<sup>115</sup>

So what does Acts 13:48 mean? something like 'and believed, as many as had

111. This verse shows that God acts sovereignly to secure for Himself a people.

112. *Collected Writings* 25:371.

113. Fredrick William Danker, *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 991, third ed., 2000.

114. Colin Brown, ed., *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, vol. 1, p. 476, 1975.

115. Geoffrey W. Bromily's abridgment in one volume of Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p. 1157, 1985.

a status conferred on them to eternal life'? Really, the notion is a ploy to get around the meaning of appointment by God, to eternal life. It is the advocacy of the Arminian and semi-Pelagian free will that is at the bottom of circumventing the plain force of the statement by Luke, which rather is quite in keeping with the emphasis on the sovereignty of God which characterizes his writings, some of which we saw in Ch. 2. There are a number of other ways by which advocates of moral free will towards God attempt to circumvent the bearing of this text. Some persons would like to reverse the sense and read it as if it said that God knew who would believe and then as a consequence of foreseeing their faith, exercised by their moral free will towards God (mere human faith), ordained them to eternal life.<sup>116</sup>

It is instructive to compare Acts 13:48 (τεταγμένοι, "were ordained," JND) and Rom. 13:1 (τεταγμένοι, "set up," JND). W. Kelly translates "ordained" in both cases. But Alfred Marshall's Interlinear says "*having been* disposed" for Acts 13:48 and "*having been* ordained" in Rom. 13:1. That does seem like an attempt to escape the force of Acts 13:48.<sup>117</sup> The word in

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116. Here is an Arminian example of how this is done:

Luke's statement, and **as many as were ordained to eternal life believed**, receives a most illuminating treatment by Dummelow;

This expresses the Pauline and Apostolic doctrine of predestination, according to which God desires the salvation of all men (1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10, etc.), but insofar as He foresees that some (in the exercise of their free will) will actually repent and believe, while others will refuse to do so, He ordains the former to eternal life, and the latter to eternal death (Rom. 8:28-30, etc.)

... it must be observed that God neither ordains the "act of believing" nor the "act of unbelief" (*The Wesleyan Bible Commentary*, Grand rapids: Baker, p. 572, 1966.

As the Calvinist has his philosophical symmetry in "double predestination" by claiming there is a decree of reprobation, here the Arminian has his philosophical symmetry in the act of disbelieving and the act of believing, anchoring both in the alleged free moral will of man towards God. The Word does not teach the decree of reprobation; nor does it teach that God ordained the "act of unbelief." However, with the believer it is otherwise: they *are* ordained to eternal life and thus the act of believing is by God-implanted faith.

117. G. Campbell Morgan said that "the word ordained has no reference to any act of God. It refers to the attitude of the *men themselves*," and then quotes Rotherham's translation, "*disposed to eternal life*" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, London: Pickering and Inglis, p. 261, 1948 [1924]). The reader should try that reasoning on Rom. 13:1.

I am sorry to see that A. C. Gaebelein fell in with this method of circumventing the force of this Scripture, quoting Dean Alford for "disposed to eternal life" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, New York: Loizeaux, p. 248, 1961 [1912]).

William MacDonald, while acknowledging sovereign election is taught here, nonetheless insists on free will:

(continued...)

question signifies appointing.<sup>118</sup> Unbelievers are not disposed to eternal life nor are they disposed to believing. The inverse is true; they are disposed to unbelief and die in their sins except God sovereignly interposes in accordance with sovereign election. Thus we saw in the parable of the great supper that they all, without exception, made excuse. In John we saw that the Father must draw, and must give the sinner to the Son, and the Son gives them eternal life.

Rightly, Stanley D. Toussaint wrote:

**The Gentiles** rejoiced in this turn of events **and all who were appointed for eternal life believed**. It is difficult to miss the doctrine of God's election here; the words "were appointed" come from the verb *tassō*, a military word meaning "to arrange" or "to assign." Luke used it here to show that God's elective decree included Gentiles.<sup>119</sup>

Simon J. Kistemaker wrote:

"And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Luke adds a sentence in which he uses the passive voice *were ordained*. The implication is that God is the agent, for only he grants eternal life (Matt. 25:46; John 10:28; 17:2). In the Greek, the form *were ordained* is a passive participle in the perfect tense. The perfect denotes the action that took place in the past but is relevant for the present. In the past, God predestined the salvation of the

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117. (...continued)

This verse is a simple statement of the sovereign election of God. It should be taken at its face value and believed. The Bible teaches definitely that God chose some before the foundation of the world to be in Christ. It teaches with equal emphasis that man is a free moral agent . . . Divine election and human responsibility are both scriptural truths . . . (*Believer's Bible Commentary, New Testament*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, p. 439, 1990).

Observe here the implicit notion that without moral free will towards God there is no responsibility; i.e., if a man owed him \$1,000,000 and could not pay, he would not have any responsibility to pay! Or would he? Does incapacity to pay really cancel responsibility to pay? *Forgiving* a debt owed affirms that there is responsibility to pay.

Dave Hunt, after citing Greek scholars for the purpose of having the text say that these Gentiles were disposed to eternal life, though admitting that Greek scholars differ about this, says that though that is the case, the gospel is offered to whoever will believe, in dozens of passages, and therefore we ought not to adopt a questionable interpretation here against such an amount of Scriptures (*What Love Is This?*, p. 210).

This claim about the dozens of passages is not proof. He *assumes*, according to his doctrine of moral free will towards God, that these passages prove man has the moral free will towards God to believe. It is circular reasoning, not proof. And he uses this argument repeatedly. Moreover, God has given proof of its falsity in all the appeals He made to Israel under the law. None could keep it. The repeated appeals do not prove that they could do so. What harmonizes with the rest of Scripture is, in reality, that God ordains some to eternal life.

118. See the usage in *The Englishman's Greek Concordance*, p. 721.

119. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Wheaton: Victor Books, p. 390, 1983.



Gentiles.<sup>120</sup>

**What About the Context?** The argument is that the notice of human agency in v. 46 militates against the idea of divine agency in v. 48. Allegedly, because the Jews acted on their own choice in v. 46, therefore it follows that v. 48 also refers to human choice. Samuel Fisk has gathered together a series of quotations from others and here are several:

In v. 46 we are told that the Jews had judged themselves unworthy of eternal life, and all that is meant by the words in this verse {46} is the opposite of that expression {J. R. Lumby, *The Cambridge Bible, The Acts of the Apostles*}.

It would seem much more relevant and accordant with the context to understand the word rendered 'ordained' as meaning 'adapted' or 'fitted,' than to find in it a reference to divine foreordination . . . The reference then would be to the 'frame of mind of the heathen, and not to the decrees of God' {Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of the Holy Scripture*, Acts 2:48}.

Man's choice regarding the things of God is always wrong. In John 1:11 we saw that the Jews rejected Christ, except for those upon whom God sovereignly acted. But the nation rejected Him. In the preaching of the gospel consequent upon Christ's sacrifice, in the ways of God the gospel went first to the Jew. They confirmed the rejection of Christ and the gospel went to the Gentiles. There was, of course, from among the Jews an election of grace:

Thus, then, in the present time also there has been a remnant according to election of grace (Rom. 11:5).

The frame of mind of the heathen is the same as the frame of mind of the Jews. The Gentiles are not saved because they have a different frame of mind. The notion violates the "no difference" teaching of Romans. The salvation of the Gentiles now, as well as the salvation of the Jews saved, is the result of God's purpose sovereignly implemented in spite of man being totally lost.

The fact is that both books written by Luke *do* lay emphasis on the sovereignty of God and *do* set forth that doctrine. It is one of the objects of the Spirit of God in the two books by Luke to emphasize this. And when we considered Luke 13, 14 (Ch. 2) we saw what the alleged "free self-determination" amounts to. Invited man is determined not to come to God's great supper -- **without exception** (Luke 14:18).

Let us look at one more of the quotations gathered by Samuel Fisk:

These words {v. 46} have been wrested to teach the doctrine of predestination in the rigorous sense which they do not necessarily bear . . . *had marshaled themselves* on the side of, or rather with a view to capture, eternal life {B.

Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 221}.<sup>121</sup>

Speaking of wresting words, look how this quotation wrests the words "were ordained." It is a form of spiritual alchemy to transmute the words "were ordained" into what is alleged here.

The quotations from advocates of "free self-determination" are examples of how the Scriptures are handled by those who force upon the Word of God the doctrine of man's alleged moral free will towards God.

### *Paul's Christian Blessings Were Predetermined and He was Chosen Beforehand*

The book of Acts dwells at length on the history of the apostle Paul, the model believer. All the truths that apply to all believers apply in particular to Paul. So let us go outside of Acts for a moment to touch on a few Scriptures that apply to every believer, including Paul. Christian blessing is predetermined:

But we speak God's wisdom in [a] mystery, that hidden [wisdom] which God had predetermined before the ages for our glory . . . (1 Cor. 2:7).

This comes out more fully in Eph. 1:

Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ; according as he has **chosen us in him before [the] world's foundation**, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love; **having marked us out beforehand** for adoption through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure<sup>122</sup> of his will, to [the] praise of [the] glory of his grace, wherein he has taken us into favour in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of offences, according to the riches of his grace; which he has caused to abound towards us in all wisdom and intelligence, having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself for [the] administration of the fulness of times; to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth; in him, in whom we have also obtained an inheritance, **being marked out beforehand** according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his own will, that we should be to [the] praise of his glory who have pre-trusted in the Christ . . . (Eph. 1:3-11).

The emphasis is, of course, added. What a stunning exhibition of

121. Samuel Fisk, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom*, Neptune: Loizeaux, pp. 110, 120, 1974.

122. {It is well if our souls rest in the fact that God acts according to the good pleasure of His will, acknowledging that we are not privy to the reasons for His choice, other than that it pleased Him to do so.}

120. *New Testament Commentary: Acts*, Grand Rapids: Baker, p. 496, 1990.

unconditional, sovereign grace we have unfolded here. Being chosen, and for what purpose, are linked together. Not only is the Christian chosen by God for blessing, but those blessings themselves have been chosen by God -- before the world ever existed.

Because whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated [to be] conformed to the image of his Son, so that he should be [the] firstborn among many brethren. But whom he has predestinated, these also he has called; and whom he has called, these also he has justified; but whom he has justified, these also he has glorified (Rom. 8:29, 30).

Notice something here which will be elaborated in the chapter on Romans: *foreknowledge of persons* means that every one of them is predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. Look at it again: "whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated . . ." If foreknowledge here meant the same as omniscience then God foreknows every one and everyone would be glorified. Contrariwise, this is particular, a selective foreknowledge, and it applies to Paul as much as any believer.

#### PAUL CHOSEN BEFOREHAND TO . . . (ACTS 22:14, 15)

Paul's case is remarkably and instructively consistent with God's predetermination of all believers:

The God of our fathers has chosen thee beforehand to know his will, and to see the just one, and to hear a voice out of his mouth; for thou shalt be a witness for him to all men of what thou hast seen and heard (Acts 22:14, 15).

Was the case this -- did God see that Paul would choose Christ of his own will, and know God's will, and that Paul would see Christ in glory on the Damascus road, and that Paul would hear a voice out of Christ's mouth, and *therefore* He chose Paul for these things beforehand? Clearly, it is the other way around. God had predetermined these things and struck Paul down right while He was headed to persecute Christians. The plain fact is that God *does* predetermine such things. But many want to hang on to the notion that God has not predetermined their salvation in the way that He has predetermined these things in Paul's case. Do you think that God *did* actually predetermine these things in Paul's case, but *did not* predetermine Paul's salvation? I suppose that if you insist on the notion of moral free will towards God you are bound to say that Paul's salvation was not predetermined by God. I understand Peter to view Paul's salvation as predetermined of God, just as the other things in Acts 22:14, 15:

. . . elect according to [the] foreknowledge of God [the] Father, by sanctification of [the] Spirit, unto [the] obedience and sprinkling of [the] blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied (1 Pet. 1:2).

This election is according to that particular, selective foreknowledge, noted

above, where all persons foreknown are predestinated to be conformed to His image.

## Repentance

### GOD NOW COMMANDS ALL MEN EVERYWHERE TO REPENT

God therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, now enjoins men that they shall all everywhere repent (Acts 17:30).

A five point Calvinist might say that "all everywhere" means only all the elect everywhere (although Calvin did not say that). An Arminian would say that this text shows that "all everywhere" means all people and that therefore all *can, of their own free will* repent because God would not command men to do something they cannot do.<sup>123</sup> The fact is that "all everywhere," without exception, are placed on responsibility before God to repent -- just as the case of "whosoever will may come" puts man on responsibility. However:

And all began, without exception, to excuse themselves (Luke 14:18).

Ye will not come to me that ye might have life (John 5:40).

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123. Commenting on Acts 17:30, Dave Hunt wrote:

To say that God commands men to do what they cannot do without His grace, then withholds the grace they need and punishes them eternally for failing to obey, is to make a mockery of God's word . . .

Then as showing man is not unable, he cites Psa. 10:4. I suppose the words "will not" in this verse are taken to imply that the wicked *could* seek God. Thus, the wicked could (*ability*) seek after God. But in fact, the Scripture declares:

They have all gone aside, they are together become corrupt; there is none that doeth good, not even one (Psa. 14:2; see Psa. 53:2, 3).

. . . there is none that seeks after God (Rom. 3:11).

Not only do *these texts imply inability*, Rom. 8:7 *affirms* the **inability** of the mind of the flesh to be subject to the law of God. Rom. 8:8 declares that those "in the flesh {the standing of the wicked in their fallen-Adam responsibility} cannot {*inability*} please God." So the wicked will not and cannot (and this order reminds us of John 5:40 and John 6:44), for we are taught that not one ever sought God, if we believe the express statements of Scripture about it. It is **good** to believe God, to have faith, to bow to His word. "There is none that doeth **good**." Man's will is bound by "sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3) and "captivity to the law of sin which exists in my members" (Rom. 7:23). D. Hunt's inference is false, just as false as is the parading of all the gospel appeals as evidence that man could of his own alleged moral free will respond. The answer why a man seeks God, why he believes God, is because God implants life and faith into the soul. And that is why he can repent. It is the notion of moral free will towards God that makes a mockery of God's sovereignty, a mockery of the true character of His mercy, love, and grace, to ever rescue even one wicked person. It is the overthrow of God's testimony to the condition of man, particularly in view of the trial of the first man coming to an end in the cross. Thank God I was compelled to come in to the great supper of the celebration of His grace (Luke 14). My soul shall bow in everlasting gratitude for it.

No one can come to me except the Father who has sent me draw him, and I will raise him up in the last day (John 6:44).

### REPENTANCE IS GRANTED BY GOD

But without faith [it is] impossible to please [him] (Heb. 11:6).

So without faith being there, repentance cannot please God. Of course, there is no true repentance without faith being there. Moreover, faith cannot precede the new birth because of the moral disposition of the old nature controlling the will. *Hearing* (John 5:25), *new birth*, and *faith* are all communicated together by the operation of the Spirit upon the soul, using the Word of God. Thus, having the new nature, the person is in a position to repent. Faith, the gift of God, **precedes** repentance, something which pleases God. Thus, what pleases God has its source in God. So, we read:

... the goodness of God leads thee to repentance (Rom. 2:4).

Note also that Acts 11:18 shows that God *grants* repentance:

... Then indeed God has to the nations granted repentance to life.

It is not said in Acts 11:18 that 'God has to the nations granted *an opportunity* of repentance to life.' Suppose we were to treat 2 Tim. 2:25 in the same way:

... if God perhaps may give them repentance to acknowledgment of [the] truth ...

Does this say, 'if God may give them *an opportunity* for repentance'? The idea of making an *opportunity* out of these verses is fathered by the desire to maintain the notion of moral free will towards God.<sup>124</sup>

He has "granted repentance to life." Obviously this does not mean to every last Gentile. It refers to persons of the nations. Those who are saved are saved because God has granted to them repentance to life.

Acts 5:31 is a different case and will be fulfilled for Israel in a coming day (Rom. 11:26), but we do learn that it is God who gives repentance:

... to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins.

This has the nation, as such, in view. Meanwhile, at the present time the election of grace (Rom. 11:5-7) has repentance and remission of sins for those who have pre-trusted in Christ (Eph. 1:12), i.e., before the millennial blessing for Israel.

124. N. Geisler wrote:

This clearly does not mean that all Gentiles will be saved but that all will have the opportunity to be saved (*op. cit.*, p. 185 [192]).

I was not aware that all Gentiles have the opportunity to be saved. I did not know that every one has heard the gospel these last 2000 years.

Just as "your fruit unto holiness" (Rom. 6:22) does not mean that fruit precedes holiness, just so "repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18) does not mean repentance precedes life.

... it {repentance} is a fruit of faith and of life, and not a condition to be fulfilled before these.<sup>125</sup>

Like faith, repentance comes from God. It is "granted." So we see in 2 Tim. 2:25, where it is God Who gives repentance. On the other hand, there are works worthy of repentance (Matt. 3:8; Acts 26:20). These follow repentance.

The reader will find more, concerning the order of God's dealing with the soul concerning new birth, faith, and repentance in *From New Birth to Eternal Life*, Chapter 1.2, "When Does Repentance Take Place," available from the publisher.

### REPENTANCE BEFORE FAITH MEANS BELIEVING NOTHING AT ALL

J. N. Darby put it quite trenchantly:

But all who know what grace is believe that faith precedes repentance, and everything else that is good and right in man. Otherwise he would have what is good before he believed the truth at all; he would have it without God. And as to repentance, substantially the whole moral change, the essence and substance of his return to God, would have been effected without any truth at all. For if he repents through the truth, he must believe the truth in order to repent. Nothing can be more absurd than putting repentance before faith; for a man then repents believing nothing at all. The word of God has not reached his soul, good or bad; for if it has, he is an infidel, or he believes it, and it has thus wrought repentance. That a man does not understand redemption and salvation before repentance, be it so; certainly, he does not really know it for himself. But that does not say faith does not precede it.<sup>126</sup>

### WHAT REPENTANCE IS

W. Kelly concisely remarked about what repentance is:

It is not correct to confound repentance with conversion to God, which is surely a turning from sin with earnest desire for holiness. Repentance is the soul as born of God sitting in judgment on the old man and its acts, its words and its ways. And as repentance for remission of sins was to be preached in Christ's name, so He was exalted to give both. It is not a changed mind however great about God in Christ, which is rather what faith is and gives; it is the renewed mind taking account of the man and his course according to God's word and nature. Hence it is said to be not about God, but "toward God" or Godward; for the conscience then takes His side in self-judgment before Him, and all is

125. *Helps by the Way*, New Series 3:5.

126. *Collected Writings* 10:128. See also "Does Faith Go Before Repentance?" *Things New and Old* 23:18-24.

weighed as in His sight. It is of course of the Spirit, not intellectual but moral. "Surely after that I was turned, I repented." It follows conversion and consequently that application of the word which arrests the soul by faith, though it be not yet the faith of the word of truth, the gospel of salvation, which brings into peace.<sup>127</sup>

A very wholesome answer was given to a question regarding repentance, one that takes into account the total ruin of man and the incapacity of the flesh:

Repentance involves the moral judgment of ourselves under the action of the word of God, by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is the discovery of our utter sinfulness, guilt, and ruin, our hopeless bankruptcy, our undone condition. It expresses itself in these glowing words of Isaiah -- "Woe is me; I am undone"; and in that touching utterance of Peter -- "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Repentance is an abiding necessity for the sinner, and the deeper it is the better. It is the ploughshare entering the soul, and turning up the fallow ground. The ploughshare is not the seed, but the deeper the furrow, the stronger the root. We delight in a deep work of repentance in the soul. We fear there is far too little of it in what is called revival work. Men are so anxious to simplify the gospel, and make salvation easy, that they fail to press upon the sinner's conscience the claims of truth and righteousness. No doubt salvation is as free as the grace of God can make it. Moreover, it is all of God, from first to last. God is its source, Christ its channel, the Holy Ghost its power of application and enjoyment. All this is blessedly true; but we must never forget that man is a responsible being -- guilty sinner -- imperatively called upon to repent and turn to God. It is not that repentance has any saving virtue in it. As well might we assert that the feelings of a drowning man could save him from drowning; or that a man could make a fortune by a deed of bankruptcy filed against him. Salvation is wholly of grace; it is of the Lord in its every stage and every aspect. We cannot be too emphatic in the statement of all this; but at the same time we must remember that our blessed Lord and His apostles did constantly urge upon men, both Jews and Gentiles, the solemn duty of repentance. No doubt there is a vast amount of bad teaching on the subject, a great deal of legality and cloudiness, whereby the blessed gospel of the grace of God is sadly obscured. The soul is led to build upon its own exercises instead of on the finished work of Christ -- to be occupied with a certain process, on the depth of which depends its title to come to Jesus. In short, repentance is viewed as a sort of good work, instead of its being the painful discovery that all our works are bad, and our nature incorrigible. Still, we must be careful in guarding the truth of God; and, while utterly repudiating Christendom's false teaching on the important subject of repentance, we must not run into the mischievous extreme of denying its abiding and universal necessity.<sup>128</sup>

## REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD AND FAITH IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

We close these brief observations concerning repentance with a quotation from J. N. Darby regarding Acts 20:21:

One text remains which gives its character and full force to repentance, "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). He looked, not merely that crimes and wickedness should be judged, but that a man should judge all his state in the light of God's own presence, and in reference to His divine character and authority over him, and in the thought of His goodness. This is true repentance; man judged and judging himself in the presence of God, to whom he belongs and to whose nature he has to refer with mercy before him. Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ meets this; because there God has judged sin according to His own nature and authority, and His love is perfect, and we are reconciled to God according to that nature and righteous claim. But this requires a word of explanation. It is not that repentance comes first by itself and then in an absolute way faith. But that repentance, the judgment of what we are before God and in God's sight, is one great effect of the truth; it refers to God as God with whom we have to do; whereas faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is faith in that sovereign intervention of God in which in grace He has met our state in the gift of His Son. Repentance is not change of mind as to God, though this may produce it, but self-judgment before Him, the soul referring to Him who is over us, with whom we have to do. It is not that repentance precedes faith. We shall see that it is not so: but it is first the heart returned into divine light, and then faith in the blessed intervention of God that fitted the state it finds itself in.<sup>129</sup>

127. *Notes on 2 Corinthians*, London: Morrish, p. 152, 1882. See also *Collected Writings of F. G. Patterson*, "Repentance," pp. 83-84, available from the publisher; *The Bible Treasury* 5:306.

128. *Things New and Old* 19:223, 224. See also an article by E. Dennett, "Repentance and (continued...)

128. (...continued)

Faith," *The Christian Friend* 1886, pp. 152-158.

129. *Collected Writings* 10:223.

## Chapter 5

### *God's Sovereignty in the Book of Romans*

#### *Man's Condition as Presented in Romans*

A major division in the book of Romans occurs at the end of Rom. 5:11. Up to that point sins are dealt with. This is sins as actions and conduct. In Rom. 5:12 through Rom. 8, the subject is "sin in the flesh." This has to do with the root within us, i.e., the evil nature acquired through the fall. Much confusion results from not seeing the difference between *sin* in the flesh and *sins* produced from that root.

Concerning sins, in Romans man is looked at as alive in sins, and running from God as fast as he can (Rom. 1). The Jew is judged in Rom. 2. Rom. 3 concludes all under sin. In keeping with what we read in Luke 14:18:

And all began, without exception, to excuse themselves,  
we read in Rom. 3:10-12:

There is not a righteous [man], not even one; there is not the [man] that understands, there is not one that seeks after God. All have gone out of the way, they have together become unprofitable; there is not one that practices goodness, there is not so much as one . . .

Old Testament saints had faith. If they had faith because of their human will, that would have been good, and would have pleased God (but see Rom. 8:8). But God implanted faith and life into souls during the trial of the first man in His fallen-Adam standing of responsibility, else there never would be a saint. The fact is there was no initiative in man to seek after God.

Moreover, man is declared in Rom. 5:6 to be "still without strength." He is like the woman in Luke 13 who was bound down and in need of the Lord's intervention of sovereign grace. And have you ever wondered why the word "still" is in the sentence? God had tested man under varied circumstances up to and including the revelation of the Father in the Son (John 15:24). Man had every opportunity to show he had strength toward God. But after all the opportunity under trial he was shown to be "still without strength."

Concerning sin in the flesh, it is plain from reading Rom. 6 and 7 that

man is in bondage to the law of sin and death. A law is a fixed principle of operation. And man is under the power of the law of sin that is within himself and is a slave of sin. He is morally bound regarding God. His will is controlled by the law of sin working in himself. Hence we have in this section death with Christ. Sins are forgiven, but forgiveness does not apply to a nature, in particular to the old nature. God's does not forgive the old nature. But I, as identified with the old nature, in responsible Adamic standing (as fallen), can be removed from before God by the death of Christ and then I may be identified with the new position before God:

So also ye, reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:11).

Romans looks at the sinner as *alive in sins* and needing death, and then being alive in Christ Jesus. We have died with Christ and now reckon ourselves to be *alive unto God*. In Eph. 2 the sinner is looked at as **dead** in trespasses and sins and in need of **quickenings**. They are both true views and the doctrines of Romans and of Ephesians are complementary in character. We may not set some Scripture against the fact presented in Eph. 2 and complain, "How can a dead man believe?" Face it! He cannot, and therefore he is in need of the quickening power of God, Who implants faith and a new nature. Physically dead Lazarus also could not hear. But the voice of power of the Son of God gave him hearing. These things are the operations of God.

#### *A "Called Apostle" Wrote to "Called Saints"*

But we *do* know that all things work together for good to those who are called according to purpose (Rom. 8:28).

#### EFFECTUAL CALLING IS DIVINE AND NON-CONTINGENT

There is a call of invitation, as we saw in the parable of the great supper. Many were invited, but all, without exception, made excuse. This is seen in the following Scripture:

For many are called ones, but few chosen ones (Matt. 22:14; see 20:16).

The chosen ones are those brought and compelled in the parable of the great supper. The call of invitation is the call of the gospel to come to Christ. None do so except God sovereignly intervenes. The call of invitation is in contrast to the effectual calling of divine sovereignty. By "effectual calling" is meant the choice of God that is divine, non-contingent upon man's will, and effective in its operation producing the intent of God that the person be saved. Let us consider the apostle Paul as an example, being a called apostle:

Paul, bondman of Jesus Christ, [a] called apostle, separated to God's glad tidings . . . (Rom. 1:1).

The meaning is that Paul was an apostle by divine calling. He had nothing to say about it. The Lord made him an apostle, a gift to the body (Eph. 4:8-11). Men speak of being "called" by a church to be its "minister" (a thing foreign to Scripture and subversive of its teachings on ministry) but calling in Scripture has nothing to do with what men and "churches" do. The apostle Paul also has told us this about himself:

But when God, who set me apart [even] from my mother's womb, and called [me] by his grace . . . (Gal. 1:15).

Concerning calling, Paul was personally called to know Christ as savior. Thus the called apostle wrote to the Roman saints as being "called saints."

. . . among whom are ye also [the] called of Jesus Christ: to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called saints (Rom. 1:6, 7).

"Called saints" does not mean that they are to be referred to as saints.<sup>130</sup> It is vastly more than that. They are saints by calling. This does not mean merely that they were called in the sense of being invited to become saints. The call of God constituted them saints. They were saints by virtue of His call, just as Paul was an apostle by virtue of God's call. It is not a question of manner of life (that is an additional consideration) but of position before God. Saints are 'holy ones' positionally. How they answer in practice to this standing is another matter.

### *"Those Who Are Called According to Purpose"*

#### CALLED ACCORDING TO PURPOSE

In contrast to the general call of invitation noted in Matt. 20:16, here in Rom. 8:28 we have the effectual call, the *call according to purpose*. This text is a comfort to many a saint in trial. It asserts the control of God over circumstances in which the believer finds himself, not by accident but by the

130. In his introduction to the Vevay NT (French) J. N. Darby wrote:

The equivocal meaning of the word "call," which signifies alike "to give a name," or "to invite a person to come to us, or into some position," makes the use of this word difficult when it is attached to the term "saint" or "apostle." In the absence of a better expression we have nevertheless retained it. Rom. 1:6, 7; 8:28; 1 Cor. 1:1, 2, 24; Jude 1; Rev. 17:14. To translate it, as has been done, by "called [to be] saints," is to pervert the sense; "who are called saints" is still worse. To give the exact meaning, it should be said "saints by call," the persons in question having become saints by the call of God; and the reader will do well to remember this in the passages we have named (*Collected Writings* 13:197).

God of circumstances. And, he sees that he is one who is "called according to purpose {*ρπόθεσιν*}." "Purpose" is used also in Rom. 9:11; Eph. 1:11; 3:11; and in 2 Tim 1:9 concerning God's effectual intention. This *calling* is a sovereignly forged link in the unbreakable chain of Rom. 8:30. This *calling* flows from God's purpose. This calling gives effect to God's purpose. Our calling has a number of features, or characters, or aspects, to it, one of which is stated in 2 Tim. 1:9:

. . . who has 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 of time . . .

The point is not only the non-contingent purpose and grace (true as that is) but also how calling is linked -- named here "a **holy calling**." Well, certainly it is implicitly a holy calling, since God's effectual call is necessarily holy; and, accordingly, "called saints" are 'called holy ones' as to standing before Him. How we reflect the holy calling in our walk is another question and a matter for which we shall give an account of ourselves to God (Rom. 14:12). Considering the tracing of the development of evil in Christendom in 2 Timothy, the reminder that the calling is a holy calling will be seen to be very appropriate in view of such defiling conditions and associations from which we are to be separate. That it *is* a holy calling is consistent with God's sovereign purpose.

In Hebrews it is a "heavenly calling" (Heb. 3:1). These Hebrew saints had been used to the thought of an earthly calling as Israelites.

The calling is also a **calling on high** (Phil. 3:14). Thinking of vv. 1, 2, 18, 19, the upward calling stands in stark contrast with boasting in the flesh and glorying in shame. Such aspects of our calling are instructive. It is well to trace the word calling in Scripture as applied to our effectual calling by God, to consider all the things that God speaks of as consistent with our calling. Such truth is meant to act upon our walk.

There is also "the **hope of his calling**" and "what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:18). Observe that it is "his calling." The calling takes its character from Him, as does the inheritance, as J. N. Darby noted:

We find, it appears to me, the two things which, in the previous part of the chapter, we have seen to be the saint's portion -- the hope of the calling of God, and the glory of His inheritance in the saints. The first is connected with vv. 3-5, that is, our calling; the second, with v. 11, that is, the inheritance. In the former we have found grace (that is, God acting towards us because He is love); in the latter, the glory -- man manifested as enjoying in His Person and inheritance the fruits of the power and the counsels of God . . . By the calling of God we are called to enjoy the blessedness of His presence, near to

Himself, to enjoy that which is above us. The inheritance of God applies to that which is below us, to created things, which are all made subject to Christ, with whom and in whom we enjoy the light of the presence of God near to Him. The apostle's desire is, that the Ephesians may understand these two things.<sup>131</sup>

This hope is referred to again in Eph. 4:3, designated "the hope of your calling." Eph. 4 begins the part of the epistle regarding the practice of the deep truths presented in the earlier part of the book. This is clear in Eph. 4:1 where we are exhorted to "walk **worthy of the calling** wherewith you have been called."

No doubt all saints in OT times, as now, have been called in some particular character, though the matter of calling was first brought out in Gen. 12 in Abraham's call. This matter is important but not our subject here.<sup>132</sup> "Calling" has numerous aspects<sup>133</sup> but we will not consider it all here. However, before passing on we should note 2 Pet. 1:3, 4, 10.

(3) As his divine power has given to us all things which relate to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us by glory and virtue, (4) through which he has given to us the greatest and precious promises, that through these ye may become partakers of [the] divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

(10) Wherefore the rather, brethren, use diligence to make your calling and election sure, for doing these things ye will never fall; (11) for thus shall the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be richly furnished unto you.

131. *Synopsis, in loco.*

132. See J. N. Darby's *Teachings Regarding Dispensations, Ages, and Administrations and the Two Parentheses*, available from the publisher.

133. For example, a question was answered in *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 5:64:

Q. What is the difference between the calling and the inheritance as in the Epistle to the Ephesians, from the same terms in the First Epistle of Peter?

A. The Apostle Paul was given to reveal the calling and the inheritance in all the height and depth, length and breadth of the glory of Christ, the Son and glorified man in the heavenlies, the Head over all things and Heir of all things, our portion one with Himself and joint-heirs with Him.

The Apostle Peter was inspired to present rather the Christian's heavenly calling and place, and God's family, His priests and kings, in contrast with Israel's hopes; and therefore to an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance reserved in *the heavens* for those that are here, guarded by God's power through faith for the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. It is not a great mystery as in Eph. 5:32, respecting Christ and respecting the church; any more than the mystery of God's will and purpose (Eph. 1:9, 10) in setting Christ at the head of the universe heavenly and earthly, the inheritance in its fullest extent.

We are **called by glory and virtue** (v. 3). We notice here that all is given to us that pertains to life and godliness. The new birth is a new life and this is given to us by "divine power." The glory and virtue is His and it is by His glory that He has called us. This is meant to have an effect on our walk. Just so His calling us by His *virtue*. I suggest that this indicates God's *moral excellency*. In v. 4 we are made partakers of [the] divine nature (not partakers of deity). We partake of the moral features of God; yes, partakers of His moral excellency as having the divine nature. We have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. A call by such glory and such moral excellence is necessarily an effectual call, or else the glory and excellence are not worthy of God.

In v. 10 we are to "use diligence to **make your calling and election sure**." Why does the calling precede the election here? This exhortation follows upon what the apostle had said in vv. 5-9 concerning our walk, which in turn was said because we are partakers of [the] divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), i.e., we partake of the moral qualities of God. This should be displayed in our practical conduct, thus making our calling and election sure in our hearts and evidenced in our walk:

It is plain that the fresh appeal is to our state and consequent course and character of walk. The very order of the terms indicates this; for on the side of divine grace election according to scripture necessarily precedes calling. God's choice of the Christian is in eternity; as His calling of us is in time out of darkness into His wonderful light (1 Pet. 2:9). So in the opening of the First Epistle the saints were said to be elect according to God the Father's foreknowledge; but it was in virtue of the Spirit's sanctification that they were separated unto the obedience and blood-sprinkling of the Lord Jesus Christ . . . The order is as clearly of God's grace; as that in our text, where calling comes before election, is of its actual application to man. And this is in keeping with the context which deals with the present moral government of souls . . .

Here Christian responsibility is pressed, that there should not be inconsistency in our ways. His calling like His election is a matter of sovereign grace, and admits no question. But the case is different when we hear of our calling and election. Here negligence disorders the walk, and compromises our profession of His name, takes away our joy and enfeebles or hinders our testimony, and all the more if our conscience be tender. The heart condemns us, as is said in 1 John 3:20; and how much more does God, who greater than our heart knows all things, and draws us into self-judgment, so that it should not condemn us!

Practical fidelity, then, is urged the more with diligence to make our calling and election sure; "for doing these things" which please God, and are His will concerning us, they are made firm to our enjoyment, instead of being loose and unstable by a careless state; and so one may add, they are to others

who look for our ways agreeing with our words.<sup>134</sup>

Carrying out these things in our practical conduct, thereby giving expression to the divine nature God has planted within us,

thus shall the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be richly furnished to you (2 Pet. 1:11).

So walking in dependance and obedience, we give evidence first of all that God has called us. Then, also, it becomes apparent that He has chosen us (election) before the world was.

In 2 Pet. 1:3 we see that God called us *by* glory, not *to* glory. However, it is true that in a complementary way we are also **called to glory**:

. . . ye should walk worthy of God, who calls you to his own kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2:12).

But the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus . . . (1 Pet. 5:10).

Here are some wholesome words from J. N. Darby in keeping with the kingdom and glory to which we are called:

If my assurance and comfort or hope be drawn from the experience of what passes within me, though it may be verified against cavils thereby, as in the first epistle of John, then it is not the righteousness of God by faith; for the experience of what passes in my soul is not faith. I repeat, that by looking to the work of Christ the standard of holiness is exalted; because, instead of looking into the muddled image of Christ in my soul, I view Him in the Spirit, in the perfectness of that glory into the fellowship of which I am called; and therefore, to walk worthy of God, who hath called me to His own kingdom and glory. I forget the things behind, and press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; and my self-examination becomes, not an unhappy inquiry whether or not I am in the faith, never honoring God in confidence after all that He has done, but whether my walk is worthy of one who is called into His kingdom and glory. But the disconnection of Christ from the operations of the Spirit is an evil, and tends to the same point, though the application be not so immediate.

In the teaching of ordinary evangelicalism, a man is said to be "born of the Spirit," its need perhaps shown from what we are, and its fruit shown, and the inquiry stated -- Are you this? for then you will go to heaven. These things have a measure of truth in them. But are they thus presented in Scripture? There I find these things continually and fully connected with Christ, and involving our being in that blessed One, and He in us; and consequently not merely an evidence by fruits that I am born of the Spirit of God, but a participation in all of which He is the Heir, as the risen man (in

the sure title of His own sonship), as quickened together with Him -- a union of life and inheritance, of which the Holy Ghost is the power and witness.<sup>135</sup>

You get the word "worthy" in three ways. In Thessalonians, "Walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory." In Ephesians it is the same thing practically: "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Here, in Colossians, it is, "Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." Did He ever do His own will in anything? No, He did His Father's. Are you content never to do your own will, but to take Christ's will as that which is to be the spring and motive of all you do? Then communion is not interrupted; and it is joy and blessing beyond all human thought. You say, "Am I never to do what I like?" Like! Do you like not to be always with Christ? This detects the workings of the flesh.<sup>136</sup>

### CONSIDER YOUR CALLING, BRETHREN

Since we are considering our calling here, we should refer to 1 Cor. 1:26-29:

(26) For consider your calling, brethren, that [there are] not many wise according to flesh, not many powerful, not many high-born. (27) But God has chosen the foolish things of the world, that he may put to shame the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world, that he may put to shame the strong things; (28) and the ignoble things of the world, and the despised, has God chosen, [and] things that are not, that he may annul the things that are; (29) so that no flesh should boast before God.

"Not many" leaves room for *some* wise, etc., to be called. God has so worked the matter that "no flesh should boast before God." It is not the supposed moral free will towards God that has secured the result "that no flesh should boast before God." Here may be a good place to draw attention to a prayer that C. H. Spurgeon proposed as suitable for those who believe in such free will:

An Arminian on his knees would pray desperately like a Calvinist. He cannot pray about free-will: there is no room for it. Fancy him praying, 'Lord, I thank Thee I am not like those poor Calvinists. Lord, I was born with a glorious free-will; I was born with power by which I can turn to thee myself; I have improved my grace. If everybody has done the same with their grace that I have, they might all have been saved. Lord, I know thou dost not make us willing if we are not willing ourselves. Thou givest grace to everybody; some do not improve it, but I do. There are many that will go to hell as much bought with the blood of Christ as I was; they had as much of the Holy Spirit given to them; they had as good a chance, and were as much blessed as I am. It was not thy grace that made us to differ; I know it did a great deal, still I turned the point; I made use of what was given me, and others did not -- that

135. *Collected Writings* 3:76, 77.

136. *Collected Writings* 21:354.

134. W. Kelly, on 2 Peter, *in loco*.



is the difference between me and them.' That is a prayer for the devil, for nobody else would offer such a prayer as that. Ah! When they are preaching and talking slowly, there may be wrong doctrine; but when they come to pray, the true thing slips out; they cannot help it. (*Freewill-- A Slave*).

In chapter after chapter in 1 Cor., the Apostle strikes down some aspect of the working of the flesh in the carnal Corinthians. In chapter 1 he does so using the character of God's calling. But persons vaunt their alleged free will anyway. In 1 Cor. 2 the Apostle tells those so called by God about the incapacity, the inability, of the natural man to receive the things taught by the Spirit:

(12) But *we* have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which [is] of God, that we may know the things which have been freely given to us of God: (13) which also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, communicating spiritual [things] by spiritual [means]. (14) But [the] natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him; and he cannot know [them] because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:12-14).

"He cannot know [them] because they are spiritually discerned." God communicates, implants, the capacity to know spiritual things. Claiming to recognize within ourselves free moral will towards God does not come from spiritual discernment when we consider our calling. Rather, we fall on our knees and thank God for His sovereign grace to us.

### *Romans 8:29-30*

Because whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated [to be] conformed to the image of his Son, so that he should be [the] firstborn among many brethren. But whom he has predestinated, these also he has called; and whom he has called, these also he has justified; but whom he has justified, these also he has glorified (Rom. 8:29, 30).

Those spoken of here are the "called according to purpose" (v. 28).

### THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN ELECTION AND PREDESTINATION

W. Kelly noted:

Election is to fitness for His presence with a nature like His own.  
Predestination is to a relationship, as like as possible to His Son's.<sup>137</sup>

This distinction is very important to observe. Why? Because there may be saints who are equally elect but are not predestinated to the same thing. For example, the OT saints (holy ones), as elect, are fit for God's presence with

a nature like His own, as having been born again. They were children of God (John 11:52; Rom. 9:7; Gal. 4:3) -- though that was not a *revealed* ground of relationship in the OT while the fallen first man had a standing under probation. However, OT saints were not predestinated to the place *we* have in *Christ*. Moreover, the church will have an eternally distinct place (Eph. 3:21). Saints in the millennium are also among the elect. When we consider Eph. 1:4, 5 we will find the above distinction applicable. In Eph. 1:4 we are holy and blameless; we are fit for God's presence, as having a *nature* like His own. However, we observe a distinctive feature in the election of the Christian: "chosen us in him." Moreover, in Eph. 1:5 we will see predestination to *sonship*, a special relationship for Christians that gives them the Beloved's place before the Father.<sup>138</sup>

It is also important to keep in mind that in Scripture the word predestination is never used in connection with the eternally lost. The word predestination when used regarding persons is used in connection with a place of blessing before God.

### FOREKNOWN AND PREDESTINATED

Comparison of Rom. 8 and Eph. 1. J. N. Darby observed:

The object of Eph. 1 and Rom. 8 is I think clearly to show what we are predestinated to, but when it says predestinated us, it is hard to say it does not refer to persons: "Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate." Now this shows that in the main the object was to teach what they were predestinated to, but then it is affirmed of the persons whom He foreknew, that is a distinct class of persons so foreknown<sup>139</sup> -- not, predestinated those whom He

138. Is it not obfuscation to claim that in Scripture the words predestination and election are used interchangeably? (Dave Hunt, *What Love Is This?*, p. 219).

139. James Moffat, *Predestination*, New York: Loizeaux Brothers, p. 7 (n.d.), holding moral free will towards God, after writing about foreknowledge, election, and predestination, rejects the thought that the reference is to a distinct class of persons so foreknown:

The lack of deliberate intention to foreknow comes out better in Rom. 8:29. When it is translated, as it should be, thus -- "For whom He *foreknew* them also He did predestinate." There was no prompting or extraordinary working of His selective will. According to His own attribute, He foreknew them by the ordinary process of His own prescience, from which no future thing could hide itself or be hid.

What this quotation means is that the teaching of the text is this: 'In accordance with *what* He foreknew he did predestinate.' That would be "the ordinary process of His own prescience . . ." We do not deny God's omniscience and prescience, but do affirm His foreknowledge of *persons* as in Christ, a class of persons -- and that is the result of, to use his words, the "working of His selective will." For this class of persons, i.e., Christians, foreknowledge, election, predestination, and calling are interlocked in God's sovereign purpose. Thus, we are "called according to purpose" (Rom. 8:28). In Eph. 1:11 we read: ". . . in whom {i.e., in Christ} we have also

(continued...)

137. *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 6:104.

foreknew would be conformed (which was the Arminian scheme); but those whom He foreknew He predestinated to be conformed. Election supposes a large number out of whom God chooses; and if we take it as eternal, or no time with God, still a number are in view out of whom a choice is made. Predestination is the proper purpose of God as to these individuals: even supposing there were no others, God had them in His mind -- surely for something, which is thus as we see connected with it; but it is a blessed idea that God had His mind thus set on us without thinking of others. "The good pleasure of his will" is connected with it, and if we ascribe it to grace that we are elect, that thought, though we stop in it, does suppose others. We are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." . . .

The main object of the apostle in both Ephesians and Romans are those that are members of the church, but the passages do not go into church privileges as such, but children's and brethren's place. Election properly is more in Eph. 1:4, and in v. 5 the peculiar place belonging to these {i.e., predestination to}; and in both, though the principle go beyond, the apostle is speaking actually only of us: not that I exclude others, but these were then occupying the apostle's mind. He is always practical. Rom. 8:28-30 does not say us. In v. 31 he begins with us: it is applied.

It thus involves and supposes the persons as you say -- "not persons, but rather the state and conditions to which they are brought"; but then "they" are persons, and some special ones. Now in Ephesians he only actually speaks of "us": in Romans it is general . . . <sup>140</sup>

### Everyone Foreknown Christian is also Predestinated to be Conformed to the Image of His Son.

Because whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated [to be] conformed to the image of his Son . . . (Rom. 8:29).

It is a fact that not everyone is predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. This means that God has not foreknown those who die in their sins. How is it that God does not foreknow them? Does He not foreknow all? Does he not foreknow all in advance? The answer is that the text does not refer to God's omniscience and prescience, <sup>141</sup> to His knowing everything, else all

139. (...continued)

obtained an inheritance, being marked out beforehand according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his own will." The "counsel of his own will" excludes other wills. His *own* will is not contingent upon man's supposed moral free will towards God. "So then [it is] not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy" (Rom. 9:16).

140. *Letters* 1:476.

141. Dave Hunt's view is that God's foreknowledge in Scripture is simply God's knowing in advance what would be, and nothing else than that. Moreover, God's knowing in advance that certain persons would believe the gospel is His reason for electing/predestinating them (*What Love Is This?*, p. 226, 227).

(continued...)

persons would end conformed to the image of His Son. It is very important to note that this text tells us that all foreknown are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. This is a particular and discriminatory foreknowledge of *persons*: *whom* he has foreknown. Every foreknown person is predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. He is foreknown *in Christ*.

The use of the word foreknown in regard to the salvation of souls is not that God knows everything ahead of time. It does not mean that He has foreknowledge (prescience) of everyone. The words "whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated [to be] conformed to the image of his Son" are discriminatory and selective. It is a selection of persons that are said to be foreknown by Him. Moreover, we do not read, "whose faith he has foreknown." That may be the way an advocate of moral free will towards God may read it, but that is not what the text states. The "called according to purpose" (Rom. 8:29) are those "foreknown" in v. 30. Again, "*whom* he has foreknown" is not the same as saying '*what* He foreknew.' Foreknowledge of persons, select persons, is not about what God would see them do; it is about knowing them, foreknowing them, in the place for which His purpose has destined them; *in Christ*. Perhaps 1 Pet. 1:20 may help us to see this:

. . . Christ, foreknown indeed before the foundation of [the] world . . .

This has nothing to do with any such thing as if God 'looked down the avenue of time' to see what Christ would do, and then God would do such and such contingent on what He saw Christ would do. In Chapter 7 we will see from 1 Peter that Christ and the Christian are bound up together in the same bundle of divine sovereignty regarding "election," "chosen," and "foreknown." All three words are used of Christ and of the Christian in 1 Peter. The fact that these words are used of Christ gives a character to them such that we need to keep that character in mind when looking at the application of these words to the Christian. Not only do these things have nothing to do with the imagined moral free will of man towards God, they are strikingly in opposition to the notion. God's (1) purpose, (2) foreknowledge, (3) election/choosing, (4) predestination, and (5) calling according to purpose are in no way contingent

141. (...continued)

He has made foreknowledge to mean the same thing as God's general omniscience, God's prescience. But he has here, in effect, confined this foreknowledge to a select group -- those who would believe, a thing read into the passage. But in fact *it actually is* a select group, namely those sovereignly, unconditionally, elected. The truth is that foreknowledge is not used in the same way that we think of God's general omniscience.

Besides that obfuscation, his obfuscation concerning the distinction between election and predestination, cited in a note above) is carried into various points that he makes, as we see here when he says "election/predestination." They are not the same thing. We shall see below how the distinction is true also in some cases of God's *knowing*.

upon man's will.

Rom. 8:29, 30 presents to us an unbreakable chain forged in the irresistible will of God. The chain reaches from eternity to eternity, if we may so speak. Beginning with foreknowledge of persons, it ends with glorification of those persons. Yes, we are not yet actually glorified, but the text states explicitly that we *are* glorified. So is it the fact in the mind of God. It is all accomplished in the divine point of view. And this is meant to command our faith, resting on what God has declared, knowing thus the certainty of our being in the glory above.

**God's Foreknowledge of Israel.** Since we are considering foreknowledge, rather than consider the case of Israel later, we will look at it here. The selective and discriminatory character of foreknowledge is seen also in Rom. 11:2:

God has not cast away his people whom he foreknew {προέγνω}.

Did God merely look down the avenue of time and see that Israel would believe? We know what the history of that people was and that of old there was an election among them. The nation is presently set aside, though there are presently Jews called "an election of grace" (Rom. 11:5). But God is not done with Israel as a nation. His dealing with Israel has two phases. The first was dealing with them in responsibility, in Adamic standing, under the law. The last phase is when all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:26). Do you really dream that every last one of them will be righteous because they all decided to exercise their alleged moral free will towards God? They will all be saved in the millennium when His purpose for them will be realized. But why will they all be saved?:

According as it is written, the deliverer shall come out of Zion: he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Rom. 11:26).

Giving my laws into their mind, I will write them also upon their hearts (Heb. 8:10).

Thy people also shall be all righteous (Isa. 60:21).

Rom. 11:26 shows that God will sovereignly undertake it to do this. Heb. 8:10 refers to divine implantation into them. Isa. 60:21 indicates the result. In connection with this we may read Amos 3:2:

You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities.

The selectiveness of God's *knowing* is quite clear here, just as is His *foreknowledge* of them noted in Rom. 11:2. Did God in His omniscience and prescience not know the other nations? Yes, of course. But that is not the teaching we have here. That is not the sense in which "You only have I

known" is used here. "Known" is used in accordance with the character of "foreknowledge" that we have been observing. The same is true of Rom. 11:2. His foreknowledge of Israel was selective and discriminatory. See also Deut. 4:37.

Comparing the present situation of the believing Jews with the 7000 in Elijah's day, who had not bowed the knee to Baal, Paul wrote:

Thus, then, in the present time also there has been a remnant according to the election of grace (Rom. 11:5).

We see from the word *also* that those 7000 represented an election according to grace. Thus, *within the nation* of Israel there was an election of grace. The election of the 7000 was not a corporate election, or rather a national election, as it should be called. It was an election of individuals. There is now such an election of grace and those who compose it now are also members of the body of Christ. There shall be a remnant during the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Dan. 9 also. The *elect nation* shall not come into existence as such before the appearing of Christ in glory. But before that appearing, and after the removal of the church, there will be elect persons among the Jews. They are designated as "elect" in Matt. 24:22, 24, 31. Any of the elect who are not martyred during that period, and do not die, shall form the nation of Israel when the deliverer comes out of Zion and turns away ungodliness from Jacob. Then *all Israel* will be saved (Rom. 11:26). They shall all be righteous (Isa. 60:21). They are all elect (Isa. 65:22). The ungodly will have been removed (Ezek. 20; Zech. 14).

Rom. 9:5 states that the "adoption" is Israel's. This is a national adoption -- for the earth -- when Israel will have supremacy. They shall all be saved because the Deliverer will turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Rom. 11:26). It is divine action that brings this about. The will of God will cause this to occur.

"Foreknew" in Rom. 11:2 is the same word as in Rom. 8:29 (but the word predestinate is not used here as there). He foreknows them as His people and that is why they will be His people. Israel's future place is sovereignly determined. In Rom. 11:25-36 we can see the greatness of God's sovereign control and sovereign mercy, for the gifts and calling of God are not subject to repentance and we ought to Join the Apostle Paul in exclaiming:

(33) O depth of riches both of [the] wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable his judgments, and untraceable his ways! (34) For who has known [the] mind of [the] Lord, or who has been his counselor? (35) or who has first given to him, and it shall be rendered to him? (36) For of him, and through him, and for him [are] all things: to him be glory for ever. Amen.

**We Are Known of God.** We are observing that the election of the believer is according to selective and particular foreknowledge of persons. It is not

general omniscience and prescience. *Foreknowledge used in connection with this subject never means merely omniscience or prescience.*

This use of the word *know* is seen also in Matt. 7:23:

And then I will avow unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, workers of lawlessness.

These were not at one time sheep of Christ who were lost again; because, the Good Shepherd said:

I know those that are mine (John 10:14).

My sheep hear my voice and I know them (John 28).

If those professors of Matt. 7:23 had once been saved, He would have had to say, 'I knew you once, but I do not know you now.' Not only does the Good Shepherd know His sheep, in 1 Cor. 8:3 we read:

But if any one love God, *he* is known of him.

Though God is omniscient and knows all, this is a selective knowing just as His foreknowledge of persons is selective. Oh, you may say, we loved Him before He knew us. He looked down the avenue of time, saw that we would decide to love Him, and therefore He decided to know me. This is the Arminian mantra that is used against all Scriptures that assert God's unconditional sovereignty in the salvation of lost men. Gal. 4:9 says:

. . . but now, knowing God, but rather being known by God . . .

"But rather" is exceedingly precious to us. It is clear that God's *knowing* is being used in a restricted sense, a particular sense, having to do with a personal election of us, and not merely God's prescience of all things. Our knowing God is contingent on His knowing us, not the other way around. See also John 13:8 and Jer. 1:5.

Evidence for un contingent, selective foreknowledge of persons is clear from Scripture and leads on to glorification.

#### UNCONTINGENT GLORIFICATION IS THE COMPLEMENT OF UNCONTINGENT FOREKNOWLEDGE OF CHRISTIANS

To set poor worms, and dying worms, in the same glory as the Son of the Father has nothing to do with responsibility, or meeting it; although the act by which our failure in it was met did lay the ground for it, in that Man perfectly glorified God; and hence Man is set in God's glory. Our sins and our sin were met on the cross, as we have seen. But besides that God was glorified; and man, exalted to His right hand, entered into the glory as our forerunner. For, besides His personal and eternal title, it is because of what He did for us that Christ is entered into the glory. Here then we pass beyond responsibility and get on purpose: only that in this epistle we do not go farther than the individual place. We are to be conformed to the image of God's Son.

And so scripture constantly testifies. "We have borne the image of the earthy," says 1 Cor. 15, and "we shall bear the image of the heavenly Adam." "When he shall appear, we shall be like him," says the apostle John; 1 John 3. "He will change our body of humiliation, and fashion it like his glorious body," says our apostle; Phil. 3. Such as to this point is the wondrous counsel of God. For how, as to state, could we conceive anything more glorious, more blessed, than to be conformed to the image of God's Son; to see Him as He is, and be like Him?

The Spirit then blessedly states the security of those whom God has predestinated to be so conformed, stating the steps by which they are brought to the great result, only omitting wholly the work in us, which had been fully stated previously, because He is speaking of that which God is for us in His own purpose as its source (and securing that purpose in grace up to its accomplishment), and not of man's responsibility and the necessary requirement of God's nature and righteousness. These have been discussed in the previous part, both as to guilt and righteousness, and as to nature and state, so as to render it possible to have to say to the holy God. Grace has wrought that, but has wrought what was needed that we might be reconciled to God. Here (as already stated), alone in Romans, he touches on purpose and counsels. So in Eph. 1:4. There it is so according to the purpose of His own will. Men must be holy and in love to be before Him; but making us sons is according to the purpose of His own will. He might have made us something lower -- could not, indeed, if we think of Him. It was part of His perfection to think and purpose thus. But we can think as a fact of a lower place. But His counsel was to make us sons, "that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us by Christ Jesus." Part of His glory -- of what angels learn -- would have been lost else; part of the glorious offering of the atonement. This could not be. Well, He called them, justified them, and brought all to perfection in His plan -- He glorified them. It is not as yet in historical accomplishment, but all one unbroken chain with God.

We have then the great and blessed truth derived from it all -- God is "for us": if so, "who shall be against us?" It is the great central truth of grace: God is for us. He is for us, in giving, in justifying, and in securing that in all difficulties nothing shall separate us from His love. And first, in giving, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us": with Him given, we can reckon on receiving everything else. No gift like this: how should He then not give everything else? Again, it is God Himself who justifies. It is not here justified before Him, but He justifies us Himself -- little matter who condemns us then. God is for us in this also. <sup>142</sup>

### *The Place of Romans 9-11*

In view of the “no difference” teaching in Rom. 3:22, 23 regarding Jews and Gentiles concerning guilt, and that all the world is under judgment to God (Rom. 3:19), what becomes of God's promises to the fathers and to Israel? This is answered in Rom. 9-11. God will make good those ancient promises for Israel when all Israel shall be saved (Rom. 11:26). “For the gifts and the calling of God [are] not subject to repentance” (Rom. 11:29).

In the development of the teaching in Rom. 9-11, the sovereignty of God necessarily is emphasized, for He must sovereignly undertake to make good those ancient promises, in view of the universal failure of man. Thus, it is made clear in Rom. 9 that blessing is conferred by sovereign choice and election. That being true as regards the Jew, it is also brought out that blessing to Gentiles is on the same basis. All blessing is the result of God acting sovereignly from Himself. That this applies to both Jew and Gentile is clear in Rom. 10:12 where we read about another “no difference”:

For the scripture says, No one believing on him shall be ashamed. For there is no difference of Jew and Greek; for the same Lord of all [is] rich towards all that call upon him. For every one whosoever, who shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved (Rom. 10:11, 12).

It is not intended to go through Rom. 9-11 other than to take up some sovereign actions of God in view of the subject we are considering.

### *“So Then [it is] not of Him That Wills, Nor of Him That Runs”*

#### ROMANS 9:16

So states Rom. 9:16. *Willing* it is an internal thing in a person; *running* is activity. You will observe that the way this is stated is in accordance with the view of man presented in Romans, namely that he is viewed as alive in sins and is under bondage to the law of sin that is within him (Rom. 6; 8:3). Neither of these two things -- willing and running -- is the source, causative agency, or contributor concerning salvation. Really, John 1:13 makes it quite clear, spite of the will of the flesh in us wanting to have the matter be otherwise than it is. Let us have that Scripture before us again:

He came to his own, and his own received him not; but to as many as received him, to them gave he [the] right to be children of God, to those that believe on his name; who have been born, not of blood, nor of flesh's will, not of man's will, but of God (John 1:11-13).

So said James:

According to his own will begat he us by the word of truth . . . (James 1:18).

So said Paul:

. . . for it is God who works in you both the willing and the working according to [his] good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).

So then [it is] not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy (Rom. 9:16).

Why is it that the human will is set against this? It is the pretension of the first man not to be entirely lost.<sup>143</sup>

In chapter one we noted that in the book of Genesis the line of blessing was not in the firstborn and that this was consonant with God's purpose regarding the first man and the second Man. It is a foreshadow. In Rom. 9:7 we see that not all the seed of Abraham are “children.” “The children of the promise” (Rom. 9:8) are the seed of Abraham in the spiritual sense. Such are elect. In Rom. 9:6-13 we have two particular cases, of two sets of brothers, brought forward, showing God's freedom and sovereignty in His choice “that the purpose of God according to election might abide, not of works, but of him that calls” (Rom. 9:11). Isaac was a child of the promise and so was Jacob. Rom. 9:16 is the conclusion drawn from the purpose and call of God. The case of Jacob and Esau is subsequent to, and parallel with, the case of Isaac and Ishmael.<sup>144</sup>

143. See the penetrating letter on this pretension in *Letters of J. N. Darby* 1:314-316.

144. There are some amazing comments by N. Geisler on this text (Rom. 9:16):

Again, the Greek word for “of” here is *ek*, which means “out of.” It is a reference to the *source* of salvation, not the *means* by which we receive it -- this means it is a *free act* of our will in receiving it (John 1:12; Eph. 2:8, etc.) (*op. cit.*, p. 59 [60]).

1. *Ek* is not found at all in the sentence. The word translated “of” is τοῦ (three times).
2. John 1:13 uses *ek* three times: nor *ek* flesh's will, nor *ek* man's will, but *ek* God. So the new birth is not “out of” the flesh's will, not “out of” man's will, but “out of” God.
3. John 1:12 and Eph. 2:8 do not refer to “a *free act* of our will.” That is an Arminian imposition.

## THE CHILDREN OF PROMISE ARE RECKONED AS SEED

That is, [they that are] the children of the flesh, these [are] not the children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned as seed. For this word [is] of promise, According to this time I will come, and there shall be a son to Sarah. (Rom. 9:8, 9).

Clearly, God did not “look down the avenue of time” and see that Isaac would be a child of God and therefore God could promise him as a child of promise before Isaac was conceived. And from this case, the apostle next goes to the case of Jacob and Esau.

## THE PURPOSE OF GOD ACCORDING TO ELECTION

And not only [that], but Rebecca having conceived by one, Isaac our father, [the children] indeed being not yet born, or having done anything good or worthless (that the purpose of God according to election might abide, not of works, but of him that calls), it was said to her, The greater shall serve the less: according as it is written, I have loved Jacob, and I have hated Esau (Rom. 9:10-13).

“And not only” that case of Isaac, but there is the instructive case of Jacob and Esau. There is a story of a woman that came to Spurgeon and complained that she could not understand how God could hate Esau. Spurgeon replied that what *he* could not understand was how God could love Jacob! Likely, his point was, how could God love any of us.

Now reader, let us bring into this the notion of God ‘looking down the avenue of time’ and seeing what would happen, then electing Jacob.<sup>145</sup> You

145. Appendix 7 considers “corporate election” in some detail (the election of Israel is a *national* election). Here, we need to touch on it in connection with Jacob. The case regarding the election of Jacob must be quite troubling for some who believe in moral free will towards God, as indicated in the claim that:

God is not here speaking about the *individual* Jacob but about the *nation* of Jacob (Israel). In Genesis when the prediction was made (25:23 NKJV), Rebekah was told, “Two *nations* are in your womb, two *peoples* shall be separated from your body . . . And the older shall serve the younger.” So the reference here is not to individual election but to the *corporate* election of a nation – the chosen nation of Israel (N. Geisler, *op. cit.*, p. 82 [84]).

This seems to be standard Arminian-type fare (so in Dave Hunt, *What Love Is This?*, pp. 263, 264, citing others also). First of all, Gen. 25:23 is *not* proof that individual are not meant here. And, Abraham, Isaac, Sarah, and Rebecca are named individuals. Then Rom. 9:10, 11 speaks of the two brothers in the womb. Verse 12 was stated before the two children were born. In this “corporate election” scheme we are to believe that the next two names, Jacob and Esau (in v. 13) mean, not the two sons of Rebecca that God was just speaking about, but two corporate entities suddenly named. Then the passage returns to the individuals, Moses and Pharaoh; besides whom, Hosea and Isaiah are quoted. All names of persons in the passage are of individuals; but not in

(continued...)

cannot see how such a notion evacuates the text of meaning? That is just an attempt to get rid of the truth of election; namely, that God can predetermine of His own will who will be saved. What is the point to referring to them “being not yet born, or having done anything good or worthless”? The point is that the issue does not hinge in any way on *time* -- “being not yet born” -- nor on their *conduct* -- “or having done anything good or worthless.” The issue, then, is *God's election, God's sovereign choice*:

that the purpose of God according to election might abide, not of works, but of him that calls.

The “*purpose of God*” is the explanation for what He does. It is not the purpose of God to act contingently. That is what the notion of free will morally towards God really means. The notion of moral free will towards God makes God's actions in purpose and in salvation contingent on what man does. But this text is very clearly against the notion.

Esau was born first. In our text, as the firstborn he is called the greater. In the book of Genesis wherever we can find out who the firstborn was, we see that he is set aside. This is warp and woof of the book of Genesis. It is in keeping with the fact that the first man was to be set aside and displaced by another (cf. 1 Cor. 45-47). This is in the purpose of God -- and His election encompasses the display of this truth. It is important for the soul to apprehend this truth. Esau and Jacob illustrate God's purpose to displace the first man and establish the second man, our Lord Jesus Christ.

What a sorry spectacle Isaac is in Gen. 27, being belly-minded! The six-fold mention of the *savory dish*, such as he loved, is most ominous. In his occupation with his stomach, he failed to heed the word of Jehovah in

145. (...continued)

v. 13? The reasoning that Jacob and Esau means two nations exposes the desperation of the case for corporate election here.

Some use this as a way to get rid of the election of the individual by making v. 13 mean no more than a corporate status or privilege conferred on one compared to the other.

Perhaps an uneasiness concerning the thought that if this is not corporate then an unconditional election of Jacob is meant is seen in this remark:

So even though Israel as a nation was elect, nonetheless, each individual had to accept God's grace by “faith” in order to be saved (11:20) (*ibid.*).

He holds that faith is not the gift of God but rather the expression of moral free will. Clearly, this is an effort to get rid of the force of Jacob's unconditional election. He is, of course, aware that the time will come when all Israel will be saved according to Rom. 11:26 (*ibid.*), but does not deal with the passage. “All Israel shall be saved.” Notice how Rom. 11:26 uses Jacob in a collective sense: the deliverer “shall turn ungodliness away from Jacob.” Every one of them that form the nation will be saved. I suppose Arminian-type reasoning says we are to believe that it is so because every one of them will exercise moral free will to believe.

Gen. 25:23. And his wife, and son, Jacob, conspired to deceive him so that the principal blessing would fall upon Jacob. Now, we might rightly perceive that Jacob wanted to be in the line of blessing and that was well, but the deception was not in keeping with the faith he had. He never saw his mother again. She died before he returned home some 20 years later. These are matters in God's governmental/disciplinary ways with His own, as was all that he passed through under Laban. Esau, however, despised the birthright (Heb. 12:16, 17). None of this, however, caused God's purpose to be what it was. *He* had a purpose according to election.

Because the statement, "I have loved Jacob, and I have hated Esau," troubles some, let us hear from W. Kelly on this:

In this case how unbecoming the language of Israel: "Wherein hast thou loved us?" What was it for Israel to ask such a question of Jehovah? Yet He deigns to answer in grace: "I have loved you, saith Jehovah; yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?" Jehovah, as usual, rises up to the source of things. "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith Jehovah: yet I loved Jacob." Then He adds, "and I hated Esau." I do not think it would be true to draw this inference at the beginning of their history. But it is just an instance of what the best of men do in their haste. God withholds the sentence of hatred till it is evidently justified by the conduct and ways of Esau, more particularly towards Jacob, but indeed towards Himself. In short, it would be quite true to say that God loved Jacob from the first, but that He never pronounces hatred until that be manifest which utterly repels and rejects Himself with contempt, deliberately going on in pursuit of its own way and will in despal of God. Then only does He say, "I hated Esau." Along with this He draws attention to the fact that He "laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness." Thus, apart from such profanity, if God "despiset not any," we may be perfectly sure He hates not any. Such an idea could not enter a mind which was nurtured in the word of God, apart from the reasonings of men. I say not this because of the smallest affinity with what is commonly called Arminianism; for I have just as little affinity with Calvinism. I believe the one to be as derogatory to God's glory as the other, though in very different ways -- the one by exalting man most unduly, and the other by prescribing for God, and consequently not saying the thing that is right of Him.

. . . At the beginning of the history of Jacob and Esau we find the purpose of God before the children were born. Indeed to make election a question of the deserts in the two parties is simply to destroy its nature, if allowed in word. Election is necessarily from God entirely apart from those that are the objects of it, as it means the exercise of His sovereign choice. If there is the smallest ground in the party chosen because of which God chooses, it is not His choice, but rather a moral discernment, which, far from being sovereign, is only an appraisal whether the person deserves or not. One may hold then as strongly as the stoutest Calvinist the free sovereign choice of God, but the reprobation of the wicked which the Calvinist draws from it, as an equally

sovereign decree, is in my judgment a grave error. I do not therefore scruple to say a word upon it now, inasmuch as it is an important thing in both doctrine and practice. The idea that, if God chooses one, He must reprobate another whom He does not choose, is a fallacy and without, yea against, scripture. This is exactly where human influence comes in; that is, the petty self-confidence of man's mind. Now I do not see why we as believers should be petty; there is every reason why we should gather what is great for God. To be simple is all well; but this too is a very different thing from being petty, and no reason why we should limit ourselves to ourselves; for what does God reveal His mind for? Surely that we should know Him, and be imitators of Him.

To my own mind then it is full of the deepest interest, that while God chose before the children were born, and decided what was to be the lot of the one relatively to the other, He never made any man to be a sinner. No doubt the children of Adam are conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity; mankind are born in that condition. Their whole being is lost in it. It is no question therefore of making man a sinner, because since the fall he departed from God and the race is evil without exception. Man belongs to a stock now wholly depraved -- evil the sad and universal heirloom. God's election is entirely independent of what He finds, and spite of all evil. He elects angels no doubt that never fell: even so they had nothing to do with determining the rest who were not so kept. In every case it is simply a question of God's choice. But the fallen condition of man gives to God's election, where sinners are the only possible objects, an exceeding beauty and very deep moment. He chooses entirely apart from anything that deserves it, in the face of all that is out of harmony with Himself. It is not so where He judges and rejects.

When He says "Esau have I hated," He waits to the last moment, till Esau has shown what he is. The first book of the Bible lets us see His choice of Jacob. Only the last book tells us of His hatred of Esau. I do not say that we do not find His moral condemnation of Esau's spirit long before this, but He is patient in the execution of judgment. Long-suffering belongs to God, and is inseparable from His moral nature, while He delays to execute judgment on evil. All-powerful and good, He is nevertheless for that very reason perfect in patience. Now the sentence comes forth from His lips, and may well be felt to be a serious matter.

Yet Esau's ill-conduct to Jacob was not the only or the worst element of evil which comes into judgment. He was profane Godward, despising everything done on God's part, save that which brought sensibly before him the greater dignity to which his brother was promoted. Then he who sold it for a morsel of meat in the hour of want feels and resents keenly his loss of place and honor, even though he seemed one of those characters devoted only to that which man can do in this present life. He had no confidence in God: beyond this life no thought, no desire. If he could live in ease and honor, not without energy and action, that was enough for Esau. Why should he seek more than to enjoy present life, or, if needful, carry his point by main force?

But that is practically a denial of God, particularly of His goodness and His sovereign choice. It is also a denial of one's own sin, of the real import of death, of resurrection, and of glory. There was undoubtedly a great deal unsatisfactory enough in Jacob, just as there is alas! in most of us. There is a great deal beyond question which proves how brittle and broken we are as men. Jacob shows us the difference by comparison with one who walked with God, and hence styled with singular beauty the friend of God. Jacob stands in painful contrast with Abraham in many respects. Though Abraham, we know, failed gravely now and then, still failure was not what characterized him in the same way as it checkered (we will not say characterized) Jacob. Intercourse with God stamped its attractive, softening, ennobling influence with a wonderful disinterestedness on Abraham's life and ways; whereas Jacob has the feebleness that belongs to one who knew not so to walk with God by faith. Craft, or a mind ever seeking to manage and so accomplish his ends, belongs to such as he. Self tarnished, but did not shut out God, with nothing but will to govern: this {the shutting out of God} is rather what we see in Esau. Jacob was really a different man. Even when going on with his devices to benefit himself, he looked to God for a blessing of which he realized the need. Thus it was certainly by no means the happiest form of the life of faith -- far from it; hence a great deal takes the shape of warning to us in Jacob as in most, but genuine faith was there spite of all. Thus, not having a good conscience, he fell into a sort of fraud on his brother Esau in the first instance, and not much better when we last hear of the brothers meeting each other. We must remember he was a man naturally timid: only dependence on God does not find but make us what we should be.

"And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness." God was against him. "Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places." Thus we see the strength of will to the last: he would fight it out even with God. "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom Jehovah hath indignation for ever. And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, Jehovah will be magnified from the border of Israel." <sup>146</sup>

On the other hand, there is no ground favorable to that absolute reprobation which Calvin deduces from this place . . . Man hastily infers reprobation of the one from the choice of the other. This is unfounded. <sup>147</sup>

These are wholesome, instructive words, so opposite of "Salvation Is Not The Subject." <sup>148</sup>

146. *Introductory Lectures to the Study of the Minor Prophets*, Malachi, pp. 505-512.

147. *Notes on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, London: Morrish, p. 174, n.d. See the passage.

148. Dave Hunt, *What Love Is This?*, p. 262. As W. Kelly pointed out above:

if God "despise not any," we may be perfectly sure He hates not any.

(continued...)

## TO WHOM HE WILL HE SHOWS MERCY, AND WHOM HE WILL HE HARDENS

So then, to whom he will he shows mercy, and whom he will he hardens (Rom. 9:18).

**Is God Unrighteous?** In view of what the apostle stated, there arises in the human mind the thought that God is unrighteous (Rom. 9:14). Really, it is man who is unrighteous and he unrighteously thinks to sit in judgment on God. Fallen man does not penetrate to the depth of his own lost condition:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and incurable; who can know it? I Jehovah search the heart, I try the reins . . . (Jer. 17:9, 10).

That deceitfulness remains in the Christian and he needs to bow to the light of God's Word about the depth of the evil. In ch. 1 we saw that God did not create moral evil. Here, in Rom. 9:14, anticipating an objection, we read:

[Is there] unrighteousness with God?

Perhaps the reader will see that the idea that God created moral evil, or 'before prepared' a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction, is excluded by this verse. It excludes the notion that God created Pharaoh's stubbornness.

If it were true, as Calvin says, that those who perish were destined to destruction by the will of God, the case were hard indeed. But scripture never really speaks thus, and the language of the texts usually cited in support of such a decree, when closely as well as fairly examined, invariably avoids such a thought, however near it may seem to approximate.

In truth it is but the expression of the heart anxious to gather an excuse for its own wilful evil and a plea against judgment from the irresistible will of God. Yet better is known in the heart of hearts all the while. It is never said in scripture that sin was God's purpose; but man fallen under sin is the platform where He does display His ways, counsels, and even Himself. God did not make any man to be evil; but from all (being evil already) He does choose according to His sovereign will and show mercy to some, not all, though all be no more guilty than the some may have been. It would be perfectly just to destroy all. But if pleased to spare whom he will, who shall say to Him, nay? It would be to set up a claim of superiority over God, and is really an attempt to judge Him. Now whenever a sinner is converted, he feels and owns the just judgment of God, even though such a recognition sanctions the execution of the divine sentence against one's self, yet withal never quits in despair, but looks and cries, feebly at first perhaps but with

148. (...continued)

He means that God did not hate by some decree from eternity, but expressed Himself in this way regarding Esau *after* Esau had manifested himself as a profane person (cp. Heb. 12:16, 17). But this fact does not set aside the words "that the purpose of God might stand."



increasing earnestness, for mercy.<sup>149</sup>

Of course the last received their wages thankfully {Matt. 20:1-16}. But when the first heard about it, they began to think themselves entitled to more -- they who had borne the burden and heat of the day. But the master reminds them that all was a settled thing before they entered on their work. In their selfishness, they forgot both the terms and the righteousness of him with whom they had to deal. If, out of the liberality of his heart, the householder was pleased to give others, who had worked the twelfth part of what they had done, as much as he gave themselves, what was that to them? God maintains His own rights.

It is of greatest importance for our souls that we hold to the rights of God in everything. Persons will argue as to whether it is righteous for God to elect this person or that. But on the ground of righteousness all are lost, and for ever. Now, if God is pleased to use His mercy according to His wisdom, and for His glory, toward these poor lost ones, who is to dispute with Him? "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" God is entitled to act according to what is in His heart: and "shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" Is He entitled to act from Himself? He cannot act from man on the grounds of righteousness. There is no foundation on which he can thus deal; it is entirely a question of His own good pleasure. And we must remember that there is not a man that is lost but rejects the mercy of God -- despises it, or uses it for his own selfish purposes in this world. The man that is saved is the only one that has a true sense of sin, that gives himself up as lost; but then he falls back upon His infinite mercy in Christ to save a lost sinner.<sup>150</sup>

Commenting on the sovereign choice of Isaac and Jacob, J. N. Darby remarked:

But now, to go further down in your history, and then you have Jacob and Esau; and if you go by descent, you must let in the Edomites by the same tide as yourselves. But in vv. 8, 9, it says, "the children of the promise are counted for the seed": so that it must rest on Isaac and Jacob, and Ishmael and Esau remain outside; therefore your mouth must now be closed as to descent, for your mouth is bound up by God's saying, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." He has chosen, according to His sovereign title, to bless you, and on that alone your blessing depends; as your own history shows, your own prophetic testimony proves, you cannot rest it on a mere title by descent. But is there then unrighteousness with God? for such is the natural objection of the flesh. No: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." If we begin to ask, Is there unrighteousness with God, as really calling Him in question, we are seeking to judge God, instead of God's judging us. Whenever the sovereignty of God is called in question, it is the

soul saying, in effect, I am to judge God, and not that God is to judge me. But further, see how their mouth is stopped; for when did God say, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy"? When every Israelite had lost all title to everything God had to give, then God retreated, if I may use the expression, into His own sovereignty, that He might not cut them off.<sup>151</sup>

We might pause to notice once again that there are those who say election is only corporate,<sup>152</sup> thus getting rid of God's sovereign election of individuals. Isaac and Jacob are examples of individual, sovereign choice, there being no corporate nation of Israel at that time.

To return; do *you* accept it that God has the right to have mercy on whom He will choose to have mercy? and to have compassion on whom he chooses to have compassion? This is a test for one's state of soul.

So then [it is] not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy (Rom. 9:16).<sup>153</sup>

We cannot obtain the blessing by *willing* to have it or by any *running* (activity, actions) in order to obtain it. It is sovereignly given.

Arthur Pridham observed:

The suggestion, therefore, as to the possibility of there being unrighteousness with God, after calling forth from the apostle his usual exclamation of indignant repudiation, becomes an occasion for the more distinct and emphatic enunciation of the doctrine of mercy as a particular aspect of the electing will of God:

"For he saith unto *Moses*, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," &c. (v. 15).

It was to the lawgiver of Israel that Jehovah revealed the secret of His way, in sovereign elective grace, after the nation had for ever forfeited all claim of *legal* blessing by their breach of the covenant of works.<sup>154</sup> After having been

151. *Collected Writings* 33:395. See the further comments on this on p. 398.

152. The notion of "corporate election" of the church is a device to get rid of individual election, the total lostness of man, and to maintain the idea of moral free will towards God. This notion is considered in Appendix 7. To use the words "corporate election" both of Israel and the church is preposterous. The nation of Israel has a national election to supremacy under Messiah's reign. There is no analogy with the church.

153. See *Collected Writings* 26:179.

154. Ex. 22, 23, *passim*, and Acts 7:42. The force of this allusion to so important a crisis in the national history is obvious. The Jewish mind, in order to be delivered from the inveterate notion of self-righteousness, needed to be taught or reminded, by such references, that the principle to which it clung with such infatuate tenacity had been disallowed from the very first. Long-suffering, mercy, and faithfulness had been the security of a stiff-necked people, whom righteous judgment, untempered by mercy, must have blotted from the earth.

149. W. Kelly, *Notes on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, London: Morrish, p. 182, n.d.

150. *Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew*, London: Rouse, 1896, p. 105.

for a moment admitted to a higher moral elevation than other men, by virtue of their promised obedience to the Law, they are precipitated by their sin to the ordinary level of an ungodly world (Amos 9:7, 8). But the common guilt and consequent ruin of the creature having been once proved, the question of *justice* is necessarily excluded from any display of Divine favor towards such. That is, considered in themselves and with reference to their own works, the entrance of God into judgment with men must destroy all hope. For vengeance against sin is the natural march of Divine justice. But this would involve the destruction of all, for all have sinned. Power belongs to God, and the natural condition of man as a sinner provokes the exercise of that power in wrathful indignation. But mercy also belongeth unto Him. Now this must in its nature of necessity be controlled and directed by the will of Him who shows mercy. It is drawn by no attraction of desert. Moreover, human wretchedness, being in itself the natural effect of Divine judgment against sin, is no compelling cause of mercy. Its deep and blessed spring is to be sought for and found (if indeed that depth be searchable) in the mystery of the love of God -- in God Himself, whose name is Love.

Nor is this all. The objective display of mercy, when revealed in its full brightness in the person of Jesus, is not enough to secure the blessing of the chosen vessels of God's grace. Nature can never believe the truth of God, whether for good or for evil. "*Because* I tell you the truth, ye believe me not" (John 8:45), is the expostulation of Truth itself, when dishonored and withstood by those who, as touching the flesh, nevertheless stood near to God {i.e., the Jews}. The vessels, therefore, of Divine mercy must be fitted to receive mercy. Truth must act subjectively on the heart and conscience by the power of the Holy Ghost, or all promise and testimony alike will fail of their effect. And so, he adds, "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

Now it was to Moses the man of God that the secret of electing mercy was declared. Its grand exemplification to Israel will be in the day when, having wearied itself in the greatness of its way (Isa. 57:10), the scattered and dispersed nation shall again be brought into its own land. For the mercy which their sin under the old covenant had caused to depart, will yet again revive when the time of promise shall have come. "I will have mercy on her that had not obtained mercy" (Hos. 2:23), is the word spoken concerning her who had first been put away for her sins. Moreover, the Lord will yet return with mercies to *Jerusalem*. His house shall be built in it, and a line stretched forth upon Jerusalem (Zech. 1:16). For a small moment He has forsaken Zion, but with great mercies He will gather her (Isa. 54 *passim*). Thus we find, first, the solemn assertion of the sovereign will of Divine mercy as the alone condition of blessing; and secondly, the distinct assurance that the good pleasure of that will is to show mercy unto Israel in the latter day

Verses 17, 18. It is in close connection with what goes immediately

before, and in further illustration of the doctrine of Divine *mercy*,<sup>155</sup> that the manifestation of righteous power in the way of judgment is next exemplified: -- "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh," &c., &c. The same Holy One, who reserves to Himself the sovereign prerogative of mercy, is equally God in the just infliction of His vengeance upon rebellious sinners. The question, "who is the Lord," which was asked by Pharaoh in his pride of heart, -- a question which, whether audibly expressed or not, lurks always in the depths of unregenerate nature, -- must one day receive its decisive answer. As it has happened to Pharaoh and his host, the fame of whose catastrophe has filled all lands, in lasting testimony both to the power and the faithfulness of God, so will it again be done when the "sudden destruction," which has so long impended over an unrepentant world, shall be at last permitted to descend (1 Thess. 5:3; 2 Thess. 2:8-12).<sup>156</sup>

**Man Has a Hard Heart to Begin With.** It is noted in Ezek. 36:26 that man has a stony heart. We must remember that Israel is representative of the first man, under testing, under probation, to see if he was recoverable from the fall. Regarding Israel, Arthur Pridham wrote:

The apostle's summary, in Rom. 9:18, conducts us to the point beyond which no created mind can ever advance. The will of God is affirmed to be the ultimate and sufficient reason of the opposite conditions of good and evil, as they are exemplified among men:

Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.

. . . we have only to recall to our minds the earlier teaching of the apostle as to the intrinsic qualities of corrupted nature, in order to see clearly that, independently of positive judicial blindness, -- itself the beginning of that everlasting punishment which is awarded to obdurate sinners, -- whenever God refrains from *softening* the heart, he *hardens* it:<sup>157</sup> i.e. if left to its natural tendencies, the various dealings of God, whether in goodness or in judgment, serve only to evince more decidedly the native contrariety of the unregenerate will to that of God. For, as has been shown already, the natural mind can never be subject to the Law of God.

Accordingly, this mode of expression is continually employed by the Spirit of God, when describing the way of evil men, whether Jew or

155. Compare Psa. 136:10-21, where Jehovah's mercy to His chosen is declared to be the motive and measure of His righteous acts of judgment, whether upon the Egyptian or the Amorite.

156. *Notes and Reflections on the Epistle to the Romans*, London: Yapp, pp. 192-194.

157. If He leaves it to itself, He suffers it to harden, and is so said by His own act to harden it. In Rom. 1 & 2, the same point is clearly illustrated. In Rom. 1, it is God who gave up the Gentiles to a reprobate mind; but it was through their own lusts that their dishonor came. And so in Rom. 2:5, the hardness and impenitency of men are charged entirely upon themselves.

Gentile.<sup>158</sup> So long as Israel remains under the old covenant, the heart of the nation is declared to be a *stony* heart, to exchange which for a heart of flesh is the promised effort of regenerative grace (Ezek. 36:26). While the special visitation of judicial blindness is announced in such words as these --

He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart," &c. (John 12:40),

the cause of their infatuation is by the same Spirit referred solely to themselves:

They refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, *they made their* hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law and the words (Zech. 7:11, 12).

For it is a fearful truth, that the more plainly and directly the voice of God addresses itself to the natural heart, the more decided and manifest will be the evidences of intentional resistance to His will. And so it is that we find the same repentant people, who, when their eyes are opened to behold the Light of Israel, make such confessions as these: --

All we like sheep have gone astray -- *we have turned* every one to his own way, &c.;

expostulating with Jehovah when first awakened to a sense of their ruin and distance from Him in the following strain: --

O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our hearts from thy fear?" &c. (Isa. 53:5, 6, and 63:17; cp. also 64:6).

So true is it, that when that "strong delusion" comes, which is to seal up for judgment those who have so long trifled with the overtures of grace, the depraved will of man will be the ready medium through which the art of the deceiver will effect his aim. If men are led to destruction, it is by the cords of their own unhallowed lusts.

We have seen thus how the sovereign attributes of elective purpose, of absolute mercy, and of judicial power, not only appertain to God, but are severally associated with His name as the God of Israel, the pledged fulfiller of the mercy promised to the fathers.<sup>159</sup>

And as an example of God's hardening, Pharaoh of the Exodus is cited.

## *The Hardening of Pharaoh*

Before looking at an article dealing at some length with Pharaoh's case, here are some general remarks by J. N. Darby on hardening:

Turn now to Pharaoh's history. "The scripture saith, 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." And here, I would say, I do not wish to enfeeble or escape the full plain sense of this passage, because it has been made a doctrinal question. There is a hardening in certain cases. It is impossible that God can make or tempt a person to be wicked; but He can harden, and give up the sinner judicially to blindness. I would here speak with reverence; but the scripture is very plain. Mark God's ways, and first with the natural man, and how it ends. See Rom. 1. After giving a long detail of wickedness, he says, in v. 24, "wherefore God *gave them up* to a reprobate mind to work all uncleanness." In v. 25, "they changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator." "For this cause God gave them up to vile affections." And then in v. 28, "even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind." Now in all this history, it is to be observed, that God does not make man wicked, but simply gives man up to what he is. Again, of Israel God says, "make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes." And so with professing Christians in this last dispensation of mercy, "Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." It would be a horrible blasphemy to say that God made them wicked. But those who received not the love of the truth were judicially sent strong delusion.<sup>160</sup>

A Calvinist will, of course, reject this because he connects hardening with his idea about an election of reprobation. Thus, the hardening does not follow after the fact (as we just saw actually is the case in Rom. 1) but is part of the decree of reprobation. And so it will not be allowed that Pharaoh first hardened his heart and then God hardened it. James R. White wrote:

To say the Pharaoh hardened his own heart first 1) ignores Exodus 5:1, 2 and assumes that this is *not* the fulfilment of Exodus 4:21 and 2) assumes that the hardening of his heart by God is somehow "based upon" or dependant on Pharaoh's actions.<sup>161</sup>

The reverse is the case. 1) it is *he* that *assumes* -- assumes that Ex. 5:1, 2 fulfils Ex. 4:21; and, 2) appears to do so because he *assumes* the case is in accord with the Calvinistic election of reprobation -- a teaching which is not

158. Though more frequently of the Jew, as might be expected; inasmuch as it was the position of the latter, as standing in a covenant relation to God, that gave such occasion for the manifestation of this hardness.

159. *Op. cit.*, pp. 194-196.

160. *Collected Writings* 33:398, 399. See *Notes and Comments* 1:208, 209 for a discussion of words in Hebrew for harden; and p. 280 for Jannes' and Jambres' role, by Satan.

161. *Op. cit.*, p. 221.

true. The fact is that Pharaoh's hardening by God is *a judicial act of God's moral government in the world*. In Ex. 3:19 it is stated by Jehovah that the King of Egypt would not let them go. That was indeed the case, but the fact is that God acted upon a heart already hard, the hardening by God being historically noted as occurring *after* the notice that Pharaoh hardened his heart (though God predicted that He would harden Pharaoh's heart) -- and that is the patent fact. God does not make the heart evil, but it being evil and manifesting its hardness in rejecting the testimony brought to that heart, God confirms such a one in his manifested obduracy. Psa. 105:25 and Ex. 12:36, do not alter this fact, nor does Prov. 21:1. God hardened Sihon also (Deut. 2:30) as he subsequently did with Canaanites (Josh. 11:19, 20). In cases such as Pharaoh's, where sufficient particulars are given, we can see that God's judicial act of His moral government in hardening fell upon them after certain conduct. This is quite evident in Rom. 1:24 ("wherefore God gave them up . . ."), 1:26 (for this reason God gave them up . . .), and 1:28 ("And according as they did not think good to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind . . ."). If it was not for the notion of a decree of reprobation, why would any man endeavor to find hardening connected with a decree of God in eternity?

**Hardening, then, follows man's manifested infidelity in view of some testimony that God has provided.**

Judas is a most awful case:

But nearness to Jesus, without faith in Him, if the heart overcomes the influence of His presence, hardens in a terrible manner; the morsel which showed that one was eating of the same dish, the morsel which Judas received, dipped by His hand, is but the sign of Satan's entering into his heart. Satan enters into this heart to harden it, even against every amiable sentiment of nature, against every remembrance of that which could act upon the conscience. There are many unconverted persons, who would not betray an intimate companion by covering him with kisses; many wicked people that would have remembered the miracles they had seen -- perhaps done themselves. Covetousness had been there, it had never been repressed; then Satan suggests to Judas the means of satisfying it. For myself I have no doubt that Iscariot thought that the Lord would escape out of the hands of men, as He had done, when His hour was not yet come: his remorse, when he knew that Jesus was condemned, makes me think it -- a remorse which only found other hearts as hard as his own, and indifferent to his misery; an appalling picture of man's heart under the influence of Satan. Then, almost the final phase of this influence, Satan hardens Judas against all feeling of humanity, and of man towards the man of his acquaintance, and finishes all by

abandoning him, giving him up to despair in the presence of God.<sup>162</sup>

Man's continued indulgence of "sin in the flesh" hardens the conscience. Stephen charged his hearers with stiff-neckedness (Acts 7:51). The history of Israel under the law was a history of this:

. . . ye do always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers, ye also (Acts 7:51).

This is exactly what the first man uniformly does. Stephen addressed their consciences, but they hardened their hearts and killed him. God does warn against hardening one's heart (Heb. 3:8, 15; 4:7). This does not hinder God's acts of hardening in due time if He so wills. Moreover, He utilizes evil for the accomplishment of His holy will (Judg. 9:23; 1 Chron. 21:1; Judas' case; etc.) though He does not create moral evil. That would be contrary to what He is: light (1 John 1:5).

W. Kelly observed:

Anything that distorts or even ignores the revealed character and mind of God is false, and will always be found to issue in wrong deductions. But in general the fault does not so much consist in mistaken deductions from scripture, as in human preconceptions and mere theorizing. There are Calvinistic speculations just as much as Arminian. It seems to me that both schemes are beyond question partial and do violence to the truth. The practical lesson is to cherish confidence only in God's word. We may safely rest, as we are bound to rest, in His revelation.<sup>163</sup>

### *The Sovereignty of God and the Responsibility of Man*

From *The Bible Treasury* 9:345-347

The accompanying table was drawn up in order to resolve the difficulties of a person who insisted that if by the decree or sovereignty of God a certain number of men only were to be saved, by a natural conclusion, the rest by a similar decree were lost, it mattered not what their opinions or ways were.

Assuredly, if we draw our deductions according to man's ideas, this would be the case. But this does not rest upon deductions, whilst drawing them: we often meet with plain texts which contradict men. There are many things in nature which we see and believe, but do not understand, and cannot reason upon. If our minds are formed by and according to the word of God, we shall find that man is always held for a responsible being, and is judged and condemned for his own sins, and not by any pre-determined decree of God.

162. *Collected Writings* 33:244.

163. *Introductory Lectures to the Minor Prophets*, "Obadiah."

Before proceeding farther, it may be well to examine the table itself, which exhibits in a marked way the purposes of God, and the responsibilities of man. Of the nineteen passages in Exodus presented to our view, all the authorities agree, that nine of them, namely, numbers 1, 2, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, attribute the hardening of Pharaoh to the will of Jehovah. Number 19 says nothing of Pharaoh himself; but only of the Egyptians in general. Of the rest, Numbers 6, 7, 10, attribute the hardening to the king himself. To these last however we must add number 16, which, whether by the rendering of Mr. Young,<sup>164</sup> or that of the *Englishman's Hebrew Concordance*, is clearly the act of Pharaoh. For the rest, numbers 4, 5, 8, 11, mention the hardening as a matter of fact without determining the agency.

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164. Mr. Young's translation, which obtains favor more especially in Scotland, is made upon a rigid adherence to certain views of the Hebrew tenses, with which the reader need not here be troubled. His translation is inserted as original, and to arrest attention.

Eighteen of our numbers are thus accounted for. The only one that remains, number 3, is exactly of the same form in Hebrew as 5 and 11, and should be added to those numbers, and are so translated accordingly by Mr. Young, the Vulgate, and Arias Montanus.<sup>165</sup> Thus to sum up the hardening of Pharaoh is in nine instances attributed to the Lord; with one more number 19, of the Egyptians in general; four to Pharaoh himself; and five with the agency not stated.

The Lord ever acts for His own glory or name.

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 the earth (Rom. 9:17).

Yet the king of Egypt was responsible, even his own people and the surrounding nations being witnesses. First we have Ex. 8:19;

Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God.

Secondly, (Ex. 9:20),

He that feared the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses.

Thirdly (Ex. 10:7),

Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God.

Fourthly (Ex. 11:3),

Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people.

Sufficient evidence this, that these judgments were telling upon the people of all classes, increased and deepened eventually by the judgment on the firstborn, and more terribly still by the overthrow in the Red Sea, when the Lord said (Ex. 14:4),

I will be honoured upon Pharaoh; that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord;

and again when the people said (Ex. 14:25),

Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians.

Did not this great deliverance for Israel form the never ending theme of praise from Ex. 15 to the end of their history? See Psa. 78; 105; 106; &c.

What now did the nations of the earth think of this deliverance, whether

as to spreading the name of the Lord, or as to Pharaoh himself? Did they look upon him as a stock or a stone, without responsibilities, in short like a beast without any conscience? Let scripture testify. First, there are the bolts and bars on the gates of Jericho and the witness of Rahab,

I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us . . . for we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you, when ye came up out of Egypt. . . And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt . . . for the Lord even God, he is God in heaven above, and in the earth beneath:

a rebuke indeed to the Israelites for not having gone up in the first instance, as if God, when He gives a command, does not put things in train for its fulfilment. This woman mentions the passage of the Red Sea, which had happened forty years before, as filling the Canaanitish nations with terror, so that from the first the way was open into the land.

The Philistines afford us another striking witness against Pharaoh. The ark of God was with them, and it was a question how to get quit of it, and of an offering to the Lord (1 Sam. 6:6). The priests and diviners are called for. They recommend the people to

give glory unto the God of Israel . . . Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go and they departed?

Here is not only a witness three hundred and fifty years after, of the fact of the Exodus, but it is an acknowledgment from the priests of a foreign nation of the perverse conduct of Pharaoh. It is a conclusion drawn by the natural enemies of Israel, whatever the secret purposes of the Lord might be as known to Moses, that the king was righteously judged, as having hardened his heart against the God of Israel. An oppressor, before the Lord interfered judicially on behalf of His people, when this interference took place, Pharaoh still refused to own the hand of One mightier than he, in spite of the testimony of the magicians and of his nobles, and of the devastation and misery which his obstinacy was causing. His feeling still was,

Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go (Ex. 4).

A few words more will suffice on the subject of God's purpose of sovereignty and man's responsibility, which quotation from Rom. 9 gives occasion for, as showing that whilst the elect are vessels afore prepared unto glory, it is not so with the wicked, as to being afore prepared to destruction, but they are judged for their conduct.

What if God willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known,

165. If the Authorized Version {KJV} be the right translation, the antecedent to "be hardened" would be found as far back as v. 10.

endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath (margin made up, καταρτισμένα) to (or, for) destruction, and that he might make known the riches of his glory on vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory? (Rom. 9:22, 23).

In the case of the wicked, so far from being elected to eternal misery, we find that God endures them -- vessels of wrath -- with much longsuffering, fitted not by Him but by their own deeds for destruction. The word καταρτίζω means to correct, repair, mend; then in its participial form fitted, prepared. The word does not suppose a decree of God, but a work of man. So that, whilst it be true that Christians are "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4), and are "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (v. 6); and whilst also it is true that during their lives they receive the call ("Whom he did predestinate them he also called," Rom. 8:30), again "Us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles" (Rom. 9:24), yet it would never be right to say, that lost sinners were in a parallel way elected to reprobation. No. Putting aside for the present the case of the heathen, we can say at all events as to Christendom,

For this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned that believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. 2:11, 12).

It is evident that the condemned ones are so dealt with because they believe not the truth, not that they were elect for condemnation. This leads on to one point further concerning the wicked. It is clear that there is a judicial hardening after much longsuffering on the part of God. It was so of Pharaoh. It was so of the Jewish nation when Christ was in the land.

For this people's heart is waxed gross lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them (Isa. 6).

This prophecy of their blinding, written more than seven hundred years before, took effect at last by the mouth of Christ; and Paul, in pursuing them into distant countries, used it again of them in Rome,

Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias, the prophet, unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear and not understand, &c. (Acts 28:25-28).

And is it not a very solemn fact, that this will be the last condition of Christendom, as we quoted but now from 2 Thess. 2:7-12? A judicial blindness and hardening, after much longsuffering on God's part, yea, for centuries. Will there be a single person amongst those who have lived in the midst of gospel privileges -- who will blame God Himself for this

condemnation? No, every mouth will be stopped -- men will depart into a place originally prepared, not for the wicked and impenitent, but for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41).

Let us observe, whilst we believe both statements, namely, of divine sovereignty and human responsibility, we are not pretending in a logical way to reconcile them. Perhaps it is never intended as finite beings that we should in this world. There are abundance of paradoxes within the sphere of our own existence which we believe but do not reconcile. If this be the case in the affairs of the lower world, shall there be nothing for us to believe without reconciling in the regions of the upper? No; let us yield unhesitating obedience to, and have unshaken confidence in, the word of the living God -- believe what we find there, and leave to our blessed Lord to explain to us the apparent discrepancies therein further or not as He will. Difficulties there will be, and "things hard to be understood"; but it is only the unlearned and unstable who "wrest them unto their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:16).

Finally, it may be held as certain that those who are saved are saved by grace, through the electing love of God, and that those who, in the very precincts where that grace is operating are lost, are lost by their own fault. ♦

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One further point should be noted. A Calvinist, wanting to prove that God hardens a heart before man hardens his heart, might claim that Ex. 5:1, 2 is the fulfilment of Ex. 4:21, 22. That is, God's hardening Pharaoh's heart preceded, not followed, Pharaoh's hardening his heart. The reader should see that this is an assumption in accordance with the Calvinistic view of hardening. Nor is Ex. 7:13 so clear and explicit (see Young's translation) that it resolves the issue on the side of the Calvinist. Hardening is a judicial action of God's moral government upon man's conduct and Ex. 9:12, etc., is the fulfilment of Ex. 4:21, 22.

### *Vessels Before Prepared for Glory, Vessels of Wrath fitted to Destruction*

This matter was briefly alluded to in a quotation above, but here the distinction between the vessels will be emphasized. Also, the closing paragraph in the above quotation is much to be observed. God's election has never hindered anyone from coming to Christ.

#### IS GOD'S ELECTION A HINDRANCE TO ANYONE?

The following is very old (1700s?) and the author is unknown:

But doesn't the Bible tell us of God's eternal election?

It does; but what of that?

Why, if I am not elected I must perish.

I suppose, then, that you wish the doctrine of election were not in the Bible.

I do.

Why, would it mend the matter? would it give you a better chance of being saved?

I think it would.

How?

If election were taken away, I think I might repent of myself.

I do not see that. Is it election that gives you that hard heart?

No, certainly.

Would the taking away of election take away your hard heart?

No, it would not.

If, then, all your impenitence and hard-heartedness and unbelief would remain as before, of what use would be the putting away of election? It would make your case not a whit better.

But election does seem to me a hindrance.

No; it is your hard heart that is the hindrance, not election. You may quarrel with your hard heart, but you cannot quarrel with election.

But are not they only who are elected saved?

Yes, indeed, that is true; but how does this make election a hindrance? It seems to me as if it were a help, and not a hindrance. Take away election, will you be any better? Will you be more able to repent? Will you have a better chance of being saved?

Put in this light, certainly election seems to be the sinner's friend, not his enemy; and to take it away would be to take his only chance of being saved.

Most true; take it away, and you cast away the cable which is thrown out to you, and by which only you have any hope of reaching the shore. I admit that if man be not wholly depraved and evil, if he has still some strength and goodness left, election would be a hindrance and discouragement; but so long as man is wholly lost and ungodly, it is the sinner's only hope.

But does it not discourage?

Not as I understand it. It hinders no one. It does not prevent you from repenting if you like. If you can repent of yourself, you need not mind election, it will do you no harm; but if you cannot, oh, then it is your only hope.

How then should I use it?

In this way, you ought to learn your utterly lost estate that required such a salvation. You ought to see God's free love in it. You ought to be led by the knowledge of it to put yourself calmly and simply into the hands of God, and this is salvation. You ought to remember that it never, never can in any way, or at any time, interfere with the blessed truth, 'Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out.'

### ENDURED WITH MUCH LONG-SUFFERING VESSELS OF WRATH FITTED TO DESTRUCTION

(22) And if God, minded to show his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction; (23) and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared for glory . . . (Rom. 9:22, 23).

**Finding Fault With God.** It seems almost universal in Christendom to find fault with God's sovereign election of sinners from eternity. Hence the effort that goes into circumventing this truth and to maintain the notion of moral free will towards God. J. N. Darby remarked:

It would be a horrible blasphemy to say that God made them wicked. But those who received not the love of the truth were judicially sent strong delusion. And here, observe, it is not said that God fitted the vessels of wrath to destruction, but "what if he *endured with much longsuffering* the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction"; that is, after long sufferance, God makes an example of what righteous judgment is; as He says to Pharaoh, "even for this cause have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee." And in effect says, Now you shall see who Jehovah is; for Pharaoh had said, "who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?" That is not your business to inquire; you are but a man, and yet you are replying against God! shut your mouth, for God gives no account of His matters to man. The first of all justice is, that God should have His rights; and if God have not His rights, who ought to have, who shall have? It is morally important that you should take your place, and leave God His place; you are but a mere man, and therefore it is not your place to be replying against God; you are to hold your tongue when God speaks.<sup>166</sup>

**The Potter and the Clay.** Rom. 9:21 applies the rights of a potter to God, to do as He pleases with the clay. It is not stated that He has acted in the way described in v. 21, but His right to do so is asserted. Why would we deny His right to do so? God maintains His rights though man will not do so. See Jer. 18:3-6; Isa. 29:16; 45:9. J. N. Darby remarked:

. . . Of course the potter has power to make what he pleases; but if we do

166. *Collected Writings* 33:399. See also 26:180.



not let God have His right and proper place, who is to set things in order when sin has brought in disorder? The mark that a soul is right, morally right, is saying, I am a sinner, deserving everlasting destruction, and all my trust is in sovereign goodness. Faith says, I was bringing on myself "swift destruction," but God's grace stopped me; this is taking my true place before God. It is always seen (even in those systems which differ in this) that individual faith feels and acknowledges itself to be a debtor to sovereign mercy alone. But again, "hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour?" Now, in this passage, though we have strongly asserted the absolute title of God to do what He pleases, it is not said that He made any vessels to dishonour; but the passage simply asserts His prerogative, His title to make of the same lump what He pleases, and that unqualifiedly and fully. But God does bear with these wicked men, as He said to Israel, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, "thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities" (ch. 43:24). Then again by the prophet Amos, "behold I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves" (ch. 2:13).<sup>167</sup>

**Vessels of Wrath Fitted to Destruction.** The state of the lost is here described. The way in which their state was brought about is not expressed. It is not indicated how they were fitted to destruction.<sup>168</sup> God looks upon the

167. *Collected Writings* 33:399. See also 26:106, 107.

168. Calvinists will say something like this:

The expression then refers to the wrath of reprobation. It denotes the ungodly as the Most High ordained them from before the foundation of the world to be the manifestations and objects of his righteous wrath (Herman Hoeksema, *God's Eternal Good Pleasure*, Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, p. 75, 1979).

James R. White says that "there are only three logical possibilities here," namely, that all were prepared for glory, or all prepared for destruction, or:

some vessels are prepared for glory and some are prepared for destruction and it is *the Potter* who decides which are which. Why is there no fourth option, one in which the pots prepare themselves based on their own choice? Because pots don't have such a capacity! Pots are pots! Since God wishes to make known the "riches of His grace" to His elect people (the vessels prepared of mercy), there *must* be vessels prepared for destruction (*The Potter's Freedom*, Amityville: Calvary Press Publishing, p. 214, 2000).

I cannot understand one saying this, except that the doctrine of the election of reprobation is in control and it is clear from these remarks that he believes that God in eternity prepared these vessels for destruction by a decree. The text states no such thing, nor implies it. He is not satisfied with how the text actually states the difference between the two kinds of vessels. Every man sins because he chooses to do so. Certainly the vessel has the capacity to choose to sin.

In a footnote he adds that "Others argue the term should be translated as a middle so that these are vessels who 'prepared themselves for destruction.'" See the rebuttal of this viewpoint by Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 417-418). I will (continued...)

sinner and sees him as fitted for destruction. Men are ready for destruction. It is not stated that they were *before prepared* for destruction, as if there is a decree of reprobation. Moreover, He endures them. The state of mankind is given in Eph. 2:3 also:

. . . and were children, by nature, of wrath, even as the rest . . .

Concerning "the rest," eternal wrath shall lie upon them as they remain eternally obdurate in their stony heart. Such is man's perverseness against God, universally, willfully, refusing to come to the great supper (Luke 14).

He never made them as they are; but the sin of man now fallen He endured spite of countless and constant provocation. They sinned, they transgressed, they despised His mercy, they braved His wrath; but He endured with much long-suffering.<sup>169</sup>

When we think of God's long-suffering, we should keep in mind 2 Pet. 3:15.

#### VESSELS OF MERCY, WHICH HE HAD BEFORE PREPARED FOR GLORY

Now we come to vessels that are of God's preparation. We read of these being "before prepared." What are they prepared for? Why has God prepared them? When considering the great supper, we saw that the supper was for the display of, and celebration of, God's grace. He would express Himself in grace and would have His house full of celebrants of His sovereign grace. And here we see the same blessed truth:

that he might make known the riches of his grace upon vessels of mercy (Rom. 9:23).

What if He endured vessels fitted for destruction? not which He had fitted, but, like Pharaoh, showing His wrath on these already such; and then make known the riches of His glory on vessels of mercy. And now the work on them was His doing, which He had afore prepared for glory. They were vessels of mercy, and He prepared them for glory itself. So with us who have believed through grace. The others were vessels of wrath, and in them (fitted for destruction) He displayed His wrath and made His power known, as in Pharaoh. All were evil to begin with. He displayed His divine title and ways in both mercy and glory. He is sovereign in Himself, preparing for glory "even us," says the apostle, "whom he hath called of Jews and

168. (...continued)

merely say to this last remark that J. N. Darby and W. Kelly were both very capable Greek scholars and found no such teaching in the passage that the vessels of wrath were before prepared for destruction. There is nothing about the vessels of wrath being before prepared. God comes and finds them so fitted.

169. W. Kelly, *Notes on the Epistle of Paul, the Apostle, to the Romans*, London: Morrish, p. 185, n.d.

Gentiles.”<sup>170</sup>

But when speaking of mercy, the apostle instantly brings God in; “that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.” It is moral dealing here, and not mere cold barren doctrine. We see how God deals with these vessels which He had afore prepared unto glory, and then how He endures with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. And again, mark, that it does not say that these vessels of wrath were afore prepared for destruction, neither does it merely say that the vessels of mercy were fitted unto glory. No; for the vessels of mercy were afore prepared of God unto glory, while the vessels of wrath are fitted to destruction by their iniquities having come to the “full.” But whatever there is of good must come from God, and God only; the evil, alas! is already in us. But if the question still be put, Why has God been bearing with this wickedness, and only at last shown out His wrath in those vessels fitted to destruction? The answer is, that after He has proved the ways of men, and shown all shut up under judgment, He then comes in with mercy, sovereign mercy; and so the apostle applies it. Cannot He then let in the Gentiles? Surely; for if God is setting up vessels of mercy, He can prepare a Gentile as well as a Jew.<sup>171</sup>

Jews and Gentiles are now called (Rom. 9:24) to participate in this mercy; mercy which is something undeserved, but which is sovereign in God's ways, both governmental (in His dispensational dealings), and individual (bringing sinners into the place where they become the display of the riches of His grace). Indeed, concerning the body which will be fashioned to be like Christ's body of glory (Phil. 3:21), we learn in 2 Cor. 5:5 that God

has wrought us for this very thing.

Every blessing we have is part of the “riches of His grace.” The believer is a vessel of election and all operations of grace in us, from the very first, are God's doing, excluding man's will:

For we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works . . . (Eph. 2:10).

All evil will be used of God for His own glory, whether in His ways dispensationally in time, or in eternity. He shows His sovereignty both in mercy and in judgment, both for time and for eternity.

Regarding the erroneous notion of corporate election only, note that these are *individual* vessels of mercy just as the vessels of wrath fitted for

destruction are individual vessels.<sup>172</sup> Sovereign preparation for glory “before” does have individual vessels in view. Romans does not speak of a corporate election of the church, though it does speak of a national election of Israel in Rom. 11, a national election to supremacy over the nations, which will be realized when the deliverer shall come out of Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Rom. 11:26). Meanwhile, regarding ethnic Jews:

Thus, then, in the present time also there is a remnant according to election of grace (Rom. 11:5).

“Also” indicates that it was so also in Elijah's time (Rom. 11:4). Thus, in his time there was also a remnant according to election of grace. But that did not, obviously, mean the entire nation of Israel. It is not a reference to corporate -- rather, national -- election, either in his day or in the present time. Presently, then:

What Israel seeks for, that he has not obtained, and the rest have been blinded, according as it is written, God has given to them a spirit of slumber, eyes not to see, and ears not to hear, unto this day . . . (Rom. 11:7, 8).

170. *Collected Writings* 26:180.

171. *Collected Writings* 33:400

172. Individuals are elect, as in Mark 13:20, 22, 27; Luke 18:7; as well as the “elect lady” (2 John 1) and the elect sister (2 John 13).

## Chapter 6

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### *God's Sovereignty in the Book of Ephesians*

#### *Surpassing Power Towards Us Who Believe*

At the beginning of considering Romans, the distinction between how the sinner is viewed in Romans and in Ephesians was noted. Romans looks at the sinner as *alive in sins* and needing death. We have died with Christ and reckon ourselves to be *alive unto God*. In Eph. 2 the sinner is looked at as dead in trespasses and sins and in need of quickening. They are both true views and what we have in Romans and Ephesians is complementary in character. We may not set some Scripture against the fact presented in Eph. 2 and complain, "How can a dead man believe?" Face it! He cannot, and therefore he is in need of the quickening power of God, Who implants faith and a new nature. However, the sinner is looked at in Romans as under the power of the law of sin and so death must be applied to him. All of these things are the operations of God.

Yes, the sinner can no more hear than dead Lazarus could hear. But the Son's power could make him hear. And as Lazarus responded to the power of the voice of the Son of God and came forth, so is it with the sinner. Moreover, Eph. 2 takes the sinner all the way from quickening out of death into new creation in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:10). All is of God -- in initiation and in accomplishment. The Christian is viewed in Eph. 2:6 as "seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." Christ's place is the Christian's place, for he is "taken into favor in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6). It is being taken into favor in Him Who is fully in His favor, we thus having the same place of favor. It is *in the Beloved*, the object of the Father's love, that we are thus taken into favor.

In Eph. 1:19, 20 we see that the *surpassing* greatness of God's power which wrought in Christ's resurrection is towards us also. What does it surpass? Creatorial power. What is moral exceeds the physical creation. Indeed, the instant Christ rose from the dead, He was head of the new creation. This exceeds the first creation by surpassing power. And into this new creation the saint sealed with the Spirit (Eph. 1:13) is brought (Eph. 2:9).

The new creation was not brought into being until the testing of the fallen,

first man to see if He was recoverable (to instruct man, not God) culminated in the rejection of the revelation of the Father in the Son (John 15:23, 24) and the work on the cross was accomplished. Then in resurrection power God introduced the new creation. The dead sinner is taken from his spiritual state of death toward God by "the surpassing greatness of His power . . . in which He wrought in the Christ [in] raising him from the dead, and set him down in the heavenlies" (Eph. 1:19-21) and he is likewise seated in the heavenlies. This is all the operation of God. There is no room at all for the human will which is bound by "sin in the flesh." Observe that God is not modifying the old creation but has introduced what is altogether new. The new creation required the surpassing greatness of His power.

It has been observed that Romans begins with the responsibility of man but in Ephesians we get what was in the mind of God concerning His purpose.

I would first remark, this epistle has this distinct difference from Romans: it begins with the counsels of God; Romans begins with what man is, takes him up as a sinner, in the condition of man, and shows how God has met that condition by the blood of Christ. The question had been, how can a man be just with God? Romans shows that man is a sinner, and it shows also how in the gospel God's righteousness meets man's sin. In Ephesians, the apostle begins with the counsels of God, and therefore he can open out far more fully what the blessings of the children of God are. Consequently, the Epistle to the Romans as to doctrine takes the fact of Christ's death and resurrection, in virtue of which man is justified; here, in addition, he not only dwells on Christ's ascension, but shows that the Holy Ghost has come, and unites us with Christ as members of His body, which is not found in the doctrinal part of Romans at all.

In Ephesians you get the unfolding of God's whole thought towards man, in view of His own glory, but nothing of justification. Man is looked at as a new creation, and does not want {need} to be justified; he is looked at in Romans as living in sins, needing justification. Here he is looked at as "dead in sins," and the largeness and fulness of the blessing is brought out. It is not so much what we need, as the blessedness of God towards us, and it does give in a wonderful way the place we are given "in Christ." <sup>173</sup>

It is important to realize that Ephesians is not about the benefits of man; it is an exposition of God's grace, purpose, and glory.

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173. *Words of Truth* 5:61 (1879).

### *Chosen in Him, Marked Out Beforehand, and the Glory of His Grace*

Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ; (4) according as he has chosen us in him before [the] world's foundation, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love; (5) having marked us out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) to [the] praise of [the] glory of his grace, wherein he has taken us into favour in the Beloved . . . (Eph. 1:3-6).

We are about to be introduced to what a Christian is in the place where God has put him; namely, put him *in Christ*. When God looks at the Christian, He sees Christ. Christ as man, through the God-glorifying work on the cross, has title to be over all, in heaven and on earth.<sup>174</sup> He had glorified the Father on the earth, and finished the work given to Him to do (John 17:4), and He was raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father (Rom. 6:4). All that God is in His nature is His glory; and this was brought into action in the resurrection of Christ. God has given Him glory, and this glory Christ shares with God's heirs, and His joint-heirs (Rom. 8:17). There is, of course, that which is un-shareable given in John 17:5, for the Son has taken manhood up into the very glory He had with the Father before the world was.

Let us note here, in an introductory way, that in v. 4, God makes us holy and blameless in love, as Christ was here on earth, and as God Himself is. Then He places us in sonship (v. 5). And then He tells us a secret, how He will glorify Himself in Christ as head over the heavenly and earthly sphere (v. 9, 10). And after that He shows that we too have an inheritance, and that it is in Christ that we have it (v. 11), and that we should be to the praise of His glory (v. 12). Thus, we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

What we have brought before us in Eph. 1:1-14 is individual; it is not corporate. The matter of our union in one body in Christ is brought out subsequently to our being according to God's nature (v. 4) and our relationship to the Father in sonship (v. 5), both being so regarded as *in Christ*. Of course, without this there could be no union in one body in Him. But union is corporate and these other matters are individual. We should be clear about it that sonship and union are not the same thing, though there is no union without sonship being true of those who are united in one body in Christ. This is emphasized in opposition to the notion that election of

174. As creator, He has creator-rights over all. As man, having accomplished the work of the cross, He has title over all -- not, of course, as man apart from what He is as God. All that He does in manhood has a divine spring because of the unity of the deity and manhood in Him.

Christians is only a corporate thing (one of the number of ways in which the notion of moral free will towards God is supported). The individual is chosen in Christ! So, in Ephesians, in the way in which the Spirit unfolds truth, there is to be the establishment of the individual in the truth that Christ's place is his place, before the Spirit unfolds what is corporate. Eph. 1:1-14, a section in the book, is all individual, including the sealing of the individual in v. 13. Take the words "holy and blameless" in Eph. 1:4. This is said of the individual. In Eph. 5:27 these same words are found, but there it has to do with what is corporate. The order is, first the individual and then the corporate. Let us be quite clear about it; sonship for the Christian is individual, and the being chosen in Christ and the predestination that leads to sonship is individual.<sup>175</sup>

#### VERSE 3: BLESSED BE . . . WHO HAS BLESSED US

**The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.** The Spirit's reference to God and to the Father<sup>176</sup> corresponds, respectively to, to v. 4 and to v. 5 in this manner:

175. It is not to be passed over, that, whatever the corporate blessings of Church -- and they are very great and eminent -- individual relationship of the saint holds the first place, and that the action of the members of the body as is for the perfecting of the saints individually. Indeed, seeing the place that God must have, and the unutterable obligation and relationship in which we stand to Him, -- we may add, the very place Christ Himself has with God as man, this could not be otherwise, whatever peculiar privileges the counsel of God gave to us in union with Christ. Thus, in the first chapter of Ephesians, we find saints presented in relationship to the names and nature of God, as revealed in that He bears towards Christ, as denoting our proper calling, and what characterizes us as saints -- our relationship to that which is above us. And then all things being centered up in and gathered into one under Christ, we become joint-heirs so as to have the glorious place due to God's children towards that which is below us. It is only at the close of the chapter {Eph. 1}, where he speaks of the power exercised towards those that believe, that he introduces, after exaltation of Christ, Himself raised from the dead, the union of saints with Him, their identification with Him as objects of the operation of the same power by which He was raised and exalted. They are not merely morally and gloriously like Him; they are raised up with Him, His body, the fulness of Him who fills all. The general purpose of God had been stated in the tenth verse of the first chapter. This especial part of it, the union of the body with the head, and the body itself, and the forming of a dwelling-place of God on the earth, by the Holy Ghost, with its various consequences and aspects, and the obligations that flow from this great fact, are unfolded from Eph. 1:22 through Eph. 4:16. The whole of the second and third chapters, and the fourth down to the end of verse 16, may be considered as a kind of parenthesis, in which the doctrine of the Church is richly developed with the exhortations which flow from it; not separated, of course, from the doctrine of the whole Epistle, but forming a special body of teaching within it, we are not viewed as the fruit of Christ's position in union with Him. It is at the same time remarkable, how, through the vastness of the place and counsel of God, these truths are interwoven ("Ephesians," *The Present Testimony* 10:304, 305).

176. See also Eph. 1:17 and 3:14. He is known to us in this way. Cp. John 20:17.

God -- nature		Father -- relationship	
according as he has chosen us in him before [the] world's foundation, that we should be <b>holy and blameless</b> before him in love (v. 4).	Our Lord Jesus Christ was perfect man before God, holy and blameless before Him in love.	having marked us out beforehand for <b>adoption</b> {sonship} through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will (v. 5).	Our Lord Jesus Christ was (and is) Son with the Father.
We are in Him Who was the perfect expression of these things and			
we partake of the divine nature		and we are placed into sonship.	

Thus, we are before our God and Father as our Lord Jesus Christ was, and is. We are *in* Him, though not yet *with* Him, and so the time will come when this will touch our bodies of humiliation which shall be transformed to be like His body of glory (Phil. 3:21).

We shall consider how the name "God" bears on v. 4, where He has brought us into conformity to His nature as God, while Father bears on v. 5 where we are brought into sonship. The Lord Jesus Christ displayed these things in His life here, in every word and work.

**Our Blessing.** Our distinctive blessings are in the heavenlies in Christ. There are blessings that the Jews will have in the earthlies, so to speak, in the day of Christ's millennial glory.

There is a range of blessings in the heavenlies, not merely one. There is not a single one of the blessings in the heavenlies that any believer does not have. There is not a single communicable blessing that has been withheld from us.<sup>177</sup> That is the force of "every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." There does not exist a "blessing in the heavenlies in Christ" which any believer does not have. Ignorance about them, feebleness in apprehending them, failure in displaying them, is another matter, but that is not the subject

177. The personal glory of Christ is not a communicable thing. Speaking anticipatively, the Lord Jesus said:

And the glory thou hast given me I have given them . . . (John 17:22).

And why? The world must know that we are loved by the Father as He loves the Son.

in this passage.

Christ is at the center of the display of God's glory. It is God's purpose to glorify Himself in Christ, in two spheres: the heavenly and the earthly. Christians are connected with the heavenly display of God's glory in Christ and Israel is connected with the display of God's glory in Christ, in the earthly sphere. In Ephesians, we have the heavenlies. Necessarily this is all **in Christ**. This expression brings out the manner in which God works regarding the display of His glory concerning the heavenly sphere and in redemption. All is through Him, whether heavenly or earthly, and for the heavenly it is also "in him" (see v. 4) and "in whom" (vv. 7, 11, 13). This designation also brings out what is *positional* for us. We are in Christ and thus before God in all that this means.

#### VERSE 4: CHOSEN US IN HIM BEFORE THE WORLD'S FOUNDATION

**Chosen When?** The blessing described in v. 3 was before God eternally.

If God were to choose a part of the world now, it would be as sovereign as doing so before the world: I know in His holy wisdom He does not, but it would be as sovereign as doing it before the world. But He has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world; and the effect is, He has chosen us for what is not of the world, but far above the world and all consequences of our responsibility, even if we had fulfilled it; namely, to be before Him as sons, like Christ Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. This was sovereign goodness, giving us a place according to His own counsels.<sup>178</sup>

It is important to bear in mind that election from *before* the foundation of the world<sup>179</sup> (cp. 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:2, 3<sup>180</sup>) has to do with the distinctive place

178. *Collected Writings* 10:272.

179. When speaking to the Father about "thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me" (John 17:23) -- unspeakable love -- He also says that "thou lovedst me before [the] foundation of [the] world" (John 17:24). We are bound up in *that* bundle of love, with the Son, regarding that eternal love of the Father for the Son. In Eph. 1:4 we read: "he has chosen us in him before [the] world's foundation . . ." In Whom? in "Christ, foreknown indeed before the foundation of [the] world" (1 Pet. 1:20). This all 'pre-dates' (so to speak) the foundation of the world. These things concern the saints of God's present work. In contrast, the kingdom prepared for those who receive the future gospel of the kingdom is stated to be "prepared for you from the [the] world's foundation" (Matt. 25:34). This phrase appears in Heb. 4:3 where it has in view Israel's future rest in the kingdom. In Heb. 9:26, the earthly priesthood is connected with this phrase. But Christ's present heavenly priesthood is of another character, while in the millennium it is after the order of Melchisedec.

Concerning Rev. 13:8, the better translation is: "[every one] whose name had not been written from [the] founding of [the] world in the book of life of the slain lamb." See also Rev. 17:8. No doubt all saints are written in the book of life (a figure, no doubt), but it is not stated

(continued...)

the Christian has in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6), in contrast to Israel's place in the earthlies, so to speak. This involves the eternally distinct place that the church has (Eph. 3:21). In the point of view presented in Ephesians, we are seated there (Eph. 2:6). In Hebrews, where we are looked at as in the wilderness, on our way home, we are partakers of the heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1), which at the same time is an upward calling (Phil. 3:14) and a holy calling (2 Tim. 1:9). The distinct place for Israel is not stated to be from *before* the world's foundation. Thus, we are a *distinctive* heavenly people.

The Lord spoke anticipatively of the Christian not having his moral source from the world (John 17:14) even as He was not of the world.<sup>181</sup>

### Chosen from the Beginning to Salvation.

But we ought to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of [the] Lord, that God has chosen you from the beginning to salvation in sanctification of [the] Spirit and belief of the truth: whereto he has called you by our glad tidings, to [the] obtaining of [the] glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 2:12).

J. N. Darby observed:

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179. (...continued)

that *we* were written from the founding of the world. And there we may leave the matter.

180. "... in [the] hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the ages of time" (Titus 1:2). An important point is that this was determined before time began by the One who cannot lie. In contrast to this, there also were promises made by God after time began, such as to Abraham. These promises made in time are for the earth, in contrast to those made before time -- being made for the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. 2 Tim. 1:1 speaks of this promised life: "according to the promise of life, the [life] which [is] in Christ Jesus." See also 1 John 2:25. But, no matter what promises of God there are, all are made good by Christ (2 Cor. 1:20). Regarding the question, "To whom did God make the promise," the answer may be left with this: "... that [they who are of] the nations should be joint heirs, and a joint body, and joint partakers of [his] promise in Christ Jesus by the glad tidings" (Eph. 3:6).

It is remarkable how the word "promise" is used in connection with the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, He being the power of these promises that are of the heavenly order. See Luke 24:9; Acts 2:23; Gal. 3:14; Eph. 1:13.

181. It is altogether wrong to say:

By God's sovereign election, those who are saved were placed in eternal union with Christ before creation ever took place (John MacArthur, *Ephesians*, Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, p. 11 (1986).

Christ is God and man in one Person and that union of the two natures did not exist until the incarnation. To speak of our union with Him before creation would involve the Christian being in deity, for the Son had not then taken humanity into union with His Person. Our union with Christ is consequent upon the seal with the Spirit and is in connection with His risen manhood (John 12:24).

There are persons who obey not the gospel; but you, Thessalonians, you have obeyed it. But this was before ordained of God, because He has chosen you from the beginning (according to a counsel determined before all ages), in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, which are things accomplished in time.

"Chosen you to salvation" -- such is the object which God has purposed in Himself. "In sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" -- such is the effect produced in the elect, conformably to God's purpose. "Our gospel" -- such is the means used of God to produce that effect.<sup>182</sup>

God's choosing was from the beginning, the same beginning as in John 1:1.<sup>183</sup> The Word was there eternally; so was the purpose of God there. It is part of the purpose of the ages (Eph. 3:11), i.e., the eternal purpose. Our time-bound minds cannot comprehend such a thing. In Eph. 1:4 we are told that we were chosen in Christ before the world's foundation. Before time ever began, yes, eternally, so to speak, this was before God. The question, why did God choose to create *when* He did is a time-bound question expressing the limitation of our finiteness in the face of what is infinite and outside of time. It is really a meaningless question.

So, here we see we were chosen in eternity and effectually called by the gospel, in time. All of this is God's non-contingent purpose, choice, and calling.

The setting us apart to God by the Spirit and the belief of the truth are noted here. This has to do with the operations of God to bring His purpose to pass. The glad tidings was that by which God sealed home to the sinner his salvation, and this has in view our obtaining of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are brought into the co-heirship of this glory, with Him.

God's choosing His elect is not confined to the present work of the Spirit in connection with Assembly formed at Pentecost. But God's connecting His elect of the present work of the Spirit with the glory of Christ *is* confined to such saints. We see elect ones of the coming godly Jewish remnant in the future 70<sup>th</sup> week of Dan. 9 in Mark 13:20, where chosen and elect are noted:

but on account of the elect whom he has chosen, he has cut short those days.

Indeed, all saints of all times are called and chosen:

and they [that are] with him called, and chosen, and faithful.

Such are the saints who form the train of the Lamb when He appears in glory, whatever distinctive differences in glory and calling they may have.

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182. *Collected Writings* 27:304

183. "From [the] beginning" in 1 John 1:1 is not the same beginning. That reference is to the beginning of God's ways in grace with Christ come into the world. Cp. John 1:17.

As with the word call and calling, the reader may trace the use of “chosen” using a suitable concordance.

**Chosen Why? To be Holy and Blameless Before Him in Love.** Note that v. 3 had opened with the words, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Verse 4 brings out some things in accordance with the blessed One as God, while v. 5 unfolds some things in accordance with that blessed One as Father. Eph. 1:4, then, has in view God’s nature. God is light and God is love. That is what He is stated to be in His nature. The nature of God as light and love, and *in that order* (as is presented in 1 John) is found in v. 4 in this way:

holy	and	blameless	in love
character		conduct	
God is light (1 John 1:5)			God is love (1 John 4:8)

Notice that in 2 John 3 we have “the Son of the Father, in truth and love.” Failure to heed this order leads to failure in our practice as Christians.

We have been made holy and blameless in love -- and this is because of being chosen *in Him*, in Christ. God is holy in character and all His conduct is blameless. Christ in all His ways, words, and works here on earth was holy in character and blameless in conduct. We, viewed in Him, are holy and blameless also. We are made partakers of [the] divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). The reason for the brackets is that the word for “the” is not in the original. We are not accustomed to speak in English that we are partakers of divine nature, but that is the thought. No participation in deity is meant; rather, there is participation in the moral qualities of God, which is what “holy and blameless” refer to. This has to do with the truth that in His nature “God is light.” Thus God has us before Himself reflecting His own nature. We are of His nature, holy and blameless. He shall have us before Himself eternally, eternally reflecting what He is. Sovereign grace has taken us up, in spite of what we were as fallen, and in spite of our refusal of the invitation to His “great supper.” “Grace is God for us in all that He is, in spite of what we are in ourselves.” It required the Person and work of Christ for God to do this on a righteous basis, for He acts without blame. Before going to the cross, the Lord Jesus in His holy and blameless walk displayed God, expressed God, perfectly so, and the heavens were opened to declare Him the beloved Son! He glorified the Father on the earth and finished the work He was given to do (John 17:4).

Concerning the holy and blameless walk of our Beloved, He has left us a model that we should follow in His steps (1 Pet. 2:21). Would it be right to

lower the standard, to suit our convenience, so that the standard would not be a reflection of the nature of God as holy and blameless?

Accordingly, the Christian walks “in the light as he is in the light” (1 John 1:6). In this text it is not a question of *how* the Christian walks, but of *where* he walks. God is in the light, perfectly so, and the Christian is there in the light with Him, just the way God is in the light -- perfectly so. This is position, not practice. The practice is that our walk should display these things. The nature we have from God delights in Him, and in the Son, and feeds on Christ, finding its satisfaction there. And God delights in us.

The words in v 4, “in love” has to do with the nature of God as love: “God is love.” In Scripture, we learn that God is light before we learn that God is love. Is there nothing to be learned from the way in which God presents truth?

“In love,” then, we are holy and blameless. That is true of us in Christ, but alas, so often untrue of us in practice. Much that passes for “love” is at the expense of holiness in character and is not blameless in conduct. Thank God, that what is true of us in Christ will be altogether true of us when we are in glory above.

When considering the great supper of Luke 14, we had before us the thought that the great supper is the celebration of God’s grace. It is His supper and it expresses His grace, His acting in sovereignly bestowed blessing according to what He is. In Eph. 1:6 we read of the fact that the divine choosing and marking us out beforehand is “to [the] praise of the glory of His grace.” There is also this, that “we should be holy and blameless before him in love” (v. 4). It has been well pointed out that God satisfies His love. God acts in accordance with what He is, and He is light and He is love.

Accordingly, He would form us in practice, He would have our hearts and thoughts, our all, according to what He is. He is the measure, and Christ expressed that here on earth in His walk.

#### VERSE 5: HAVING MARKED US OUT BEFOREHAND

“Having marked us out beforehand,” or “predestinated” (W. Kelly), goes back before time, into a timeless eternity. This is all part of God’s eternal purpose (Eph. 3:11) in Christ Jesus. Regarding Christians and the church, all is ‘dated,’ so to speak in our inadequate, time-bound way, from before the world; and the Christian is not of the world (John 17:14), even as the Lord Jesus was not of the world. *In this sense* the Christian’s origin is before the world, and he is not of it. Accordingly, the Christian has a heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1) when looked at as in pilgrimage on his way to the glory above, but positionally he is seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:7), a position

that will never change even when he will be physically in glory. Our place, then, is attributed to God's predestination.

**Having Marked Us Out Why? for Sonship.** In v. 4 we were considering that what was brought out was connected with the nature of God as light and as love. In v. 5 our place of sonship is noted and this brings us to the second thing with which v. 3 opened, namely, . . . *the Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ. In v. 4 it was "that we should be holy and blameless before him in love," and such was the Lord Jesus Christ when here on earth. In v. 5 we are seen in the place of adoption,<sup>184</sup> i.e., sonship. We have been predestinated to a relationship, that of sons. On earth the Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of the Father. Sonship is our place now and it will be our place eternally.<sup>185</sup> *Christ's place is our place.* The immensity of such blessing is staggering to think of. He is Himself the measure of our place before our God and Father.

His position as Son, and what belongs to Him being Man, is then stated. His

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184. The expression, "the adoption of children," might give rise to erroneous thoughts, thoughts that might (unintentionally I do think) end in God loving some sons more than others. It is not so; we are all equally loved (cp. John 17:26), though I do not doubt that God may take more pleasure in some than in others, concerning their walk.

I heard an illustration of something (whatever it was) about two boys in a home. In an altercation, one said to the other, 'you were born into this family and they *had to take you*, but I was adopted and they *chose me*.' This bit of sentimentality has nothing to do with divine truth. It is false that some Christians are born into the family while other Christians enter the family by adoption. There are several things wrong here:

1. The societal practice of adopting someone else's child is read into the use of the word adoption in Scripture -- which indicates son-placement, indicating a status, such as when the Jews have a Bar Mitzvah for a son at 12 years of age. The Bar mitzvah did not bring him into the family; it conferred a status upon him. Cp. Rom. 8:15 and Gal. 4:6.
2. What is the story supposed to illustrate? -- that some in the family are appreciated, or loved, more than others?
3. The illustration about adoption means there is no link of nature between the adopted one and the one doing the adoption. But we are partakers of [the] divine nature, and as such are holy and blameless before Him in love.

Christ's place is our place and it has but one measure. Our place is measured by being taken into favor in the Beloved. That is the one and only measure.

Adoption is the portion of the future, new Israel, under the new covenant, when Messiah reigns before His ancients in glory. It signifies a national adoption (Rom. 9:5). Moreover, Isa. 43:6 does not indicate the sonship that the Christian has as "in Christ." This is of a heavenly order while the reference in Isaiah has to do with status in the earth. And then adoption is used in Rom. 8:23 in connection with the fact that our bodies will be brought into conformity to Christ's own body of glory. That will indeed be a new status for our bodies of humiliation.

185. Our bodies will be brought into the good of this (Rom. 8:23) when our bodies are transformed to be like Christ's body of glory (Phil. 3:21). But the manifestation awaits the appearing of Christ in glory (Col. 3:4).

rights are twofold: He has power over all flesh, but with the object of giving eternal life to those whom the Father has given Him. His title to power with regard to man is universal. If the first man should have power according to nature, the Son, become man, has it in a supernatural manner. But here, in the words of the Savior, one of the most precious truths for us comes to light. There are those whom the Father has given to the Son. It is the thought and settled purpose of the Father. They are given to the Son; the Father has committed them to His hands, in order that He may bring them into the glory, in order that He may fit them for the presence, the nature, and the glory of God, for all that was in this settled purpose; and that He may place them, according to God's infinite love, in a position which should satisfy this love, and which is that of the Son, become Man to this effect. We can add that it is a position that answers to the value and efficacy of the work of the Son to place them there, not only externally (which, however, would be impossible), but in endowing them with a nature fit for such a position. Marvelous grace, of which we are the objects! This position is eternal life, a word of which we must examine a little the meaning. It is spiritual and divine life -- a life capable of knowing God and of enjoying Him, as answering morally to His nature, "holy and without blame before him in love." Eternal life, that is to say, a life not merely immortal, but which belongs to a world that is outside the senses; for "the things that are not seen are eternal."<sup>186</sup>

The only place where we read of the Lord Jesus saying "Abba, Father," is in the garden of Gethsemane, recorded in Mark's gospel -- who presents the Servant-Son. We have been brought into that place of nearness to the Father so that we also can cry Abba Father. This is why it is stated that "God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba Father" (Gal. 4:6). What the Lord Jesus did and said was always by the Spirit, and just so was the case in His addressing the Father, "Abba Father." That same Spirit is in our hearts, "the Spirit of His Son," and thus we too may address the Father as Abba Father. Such is our place before God.<sup>187</sup> It is unspeakable, sovereign grace which has accomplished all these things. What is there in the heart of the Father that He has withheld from us?

Remark here, that there is not as yet a word about the inheritance. I dwell on that, as showing how the affections of the saint are formed. If I speak of the inheritance, it is something below me. All prophecy concerns the inheritance. But I am looking at what is above me, and my own blessedness

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186. *Collected Writings* of J. N. Darby 33:276.

187. Paul speaks both of children and sons. In his gospel and epistles John does not. The word he uses should always be translated children. Child is relationship in nature; son speaks of status and dignity. Angels are referred to as "sons of God" in the OT, but never, of course, as children. They have a status in the hierarchy of creation, but are not children of God.



is in what is above me. Subjects connected with the church, blessed as they are, as prophecy, etc., are below. He will exercise us about these things, but let me first get my relationship with my Father known. Do not talk of me, what I have, but of what Christ is, and what He has. My soul must enjoy the love that has given it all. The love that has saved is more than the things given. It is of importance to the saints to feel this in the presence of God. It is not mental power, but the heart right -- a single eye -- that is the great thing. Unless a soul gets its intelligence and direction from God, it never understands the ways and affections of God. His own affections must be known and valued. If I have not known my place in the affections of my Father, I am not in a position to have the communion of His thoughts and purposes. When we were dead in sins, His heart was exercised for us. The sinner is here looked at as dead, not "living" in sins (as in Colossians) and chastening, etc., for that, but in Ephesians "dead," {Eph. 2:1} not a movement of life, when God comes and creates and blesses according to His own will. When our souls have known the value of Christ's sacrifice bringing us to God, we are seen not in ourselves at all, but only in Christ. Then there is perfect rest.<sup>188</sup>

**Through Jesus Christ to Himself.** Expressions such as "in him," "in whom," "in Christ," and "in Christ Jesus" are characteristic expressions in Ephesians having to do with our position in Him as glorified above. Our position before our God and Father is expressed in connection with these designations of Who it is in Whom we have that position. Here the order is changed to Jesus Christ. This may be so because of what He was for the Father here below is included in the words "through Jesus Christ." For example, "Jesus Christ, Son of God" (Mark 1:1) spoke the words "Abba, Father," addressed to the Father when He was here; and Mark is the gospel of the Servant-Son.

**According to the Good Pleasure of His Will.** It pleased the Father to do this with you, not because He foresaw that you would exercise human faith of your supposed free will (you thus being wiser and/or better than your neighbor who will not believe), and so not being totally lost and ruined. No, we are told that placing us in sonship before Himself was according to the good pleasure of His will. Exactly there is the place to look for the reason. How can we comprehend the reason, as we attempt to do in human matters?

The "good pleasure of his will," that which God takes delight in, is the ministering of the fulness of His blessing to us. Here the soul gets established. It is quite evident, that the measure of His goodness cannot be, in any sense, the measure of what we are, as deserving at His hands; while it is His good pleasure, it is the good pleasure of His grace. And further,

188. *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 27:114.

whilst I have need, for the establishment of my soul, to learn what He is, to be delighting in the goodness of God, it is this too which sanctifies. If I could be always thinking of what He is, I should be perfectly happy, and there would be the reflection in me of that with which my soul was occupied.<sup>189</sup>

It is the good pleasure of His will to do as He has done and there we must leave the matter. The Lord Jesus Himself spoke of what was well-pleasing to the Father (Matt. 11:26). See also Luke 12:32; Phil. 2:13; 2 Thess. 1:11; also Matt. 11:27 and Luke 10:22; Gal. 1:16; Col. 1:19.

**To (the) Praise of the Glory of His Grace.** There is not, and never will be, one atom of praise to the glory of supposed moral free will towards God.

This expression embraces the grace displayed in Eph. 1:3-5. God's grace has its glory. The thought is that our God and Father is displayed in grace; this is the Father's glory. He glorifies Himself in the display of His grace. How is this grace to be measured? Christ the Son is the measure of it. He reveals God, reveals the Father, and accomplishes His will. Our God and Father is revealed in Christ and in His work on the cross. He has thus glorified Himself in His grace in connection with the unfolding of His purpose. We are included in that purpose and the place that He has brought us into is to the praise of the glory of His grace. We are in God's presence conformed to His nature (v. 4), and before the Father in sonship as to relationship (v. 5), all "in Christ." Our God and Father is the gracious source and our Lord Jesus Christ is the One through Whom all is made good.

We have been brought into Christ's place as (1) holy and blameless before Him, and (2) as a son (as having received sonship). Thus we are before God in accordance with Christ's place. Let it be repeated and repeated: *Christ's place is our place*. Surely it is the glory of God's grace<sup>190</sup> to do such a thing, something that overwhelms our minds.

**Wherein He has taken Us into Favor in the Beloved.** The word "wherein" refers to "grace." As A. C. Brown often said, 'Grace is God for us in all that He is, in spite of what we are in ourselves.' That is more than 'unmerited favor,' though unmerited favor is encompassed in this broader view of grace.

189. *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 27:129.

190. "To [the] praise of [the] glory of his grace" (v. 6) refers to vv. 4 and 5 regarding God's purpose in *eternity past*, so to speak. The expression, "to [the] praise of his glory" in vv. 12 and 14 refer, respectively, (1) to the Jews of the election of grace (Rom. 11:5) who "pre-trusted" (v. 12) in Christ, i.e., *presently*, before the advent of the millennium when the new Israel will be under the new covenant., and (2) when the presently saved Jew and Gentile, as heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17), take the inheritance *in the future*.

Regarding the word “favor,” there is a footnote to JND’s translation that says:

ἐχαρίτωσεν, ‘taken us into his favor,’ ‘put us into a position of grace and favor.’ ‘Accepted us’ is too formal a doctrine here, not so general as χαριτῶ. But ‘shown us grace or favor’ does not give the force of the word. ‘In the Beloved’ is then merely in an instrumental way; whereas it is in the Beloved that we enter into favor. If we accept ἡς, which seems to be the best attested reading, we should say ‘the favor or acceptation in grace, which he has freely bestowed upon us . . .’<sup>191</sup>

*Beloved* brings before us the Father’s delight in, and love for, the Son. *In the Beloved* expresses the fact that we are in the place where the Father loves us as He loves the Son. *Christ’s place is our place*. Cp. John 17:23. And all are alike taken into the same favor in the Beloved. God loves His own equally (though He may take pleasure in the conduct of some more than others). That love wherewith He loves us is the love He has for “the Son of His love” (Col. 1:13). And this will be our place eternally (Eph. 3:21). This is part of the glory of His grace.

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The consequence of an increased apprehension of the place into which we have been brought ought to be attended by a commensurate apprehension of the moral distance we were from God in our self-will. It was further than we can comprehend -- totally lost, totally ruined.

### *The Riches of His Grace in Redemption*

(7) in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of offences, according to the riches of his grace; (8) which he has caused to abound towards us in all wisdom and intelligence, (9) having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself (10) for [the] administration of the fulness of times; to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth; in him (Eph. 1:7-10).

#### VERSE 7: REDEMPTION AND THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE

The subject is not the justification of the believer and the righteousness of God as in Romans. The passage is not about the sinner’s need. It is about God’s purpose and counsels and grace and glory, about Himself and Christ’s glory and His glory in Christ. May the fact that the great supper (Luke 14) is the celebration of God’s grace lay hold of our souls. It is about God! Here also the

point is the riches of His grace. It is of His grace and glory that redeemed sinners be part of the display of His grace and His glory. It is part of His glory and grace that redeemed sinners be co-heirs with Christ in the display of His glory when He takes the inheritance. Jacob is part of His inheritance, but we, rather, share with Him as heirs of the inheritance noted in v. 11. The great supper was furnished with redeemed ones, and their right occupation is with the grace of Him Who furnished the great supper, not with themselves or where they came from. Does this occupy our hearts while waiting to be with Christ?

The place of redemption in the purpose of God is that the riches of God’s grace<sup>192</sup> be displayed; and, that Christ might have co-heirs concerning the inheritance which is His. Meanwhile as we await that time, we have the Holy Spirit Who is the earnest (the down-payment and pledge) of the inheritance (Eph. 1:14). Thus we have the assured expectancy while awaiting Christ’s taking the inheritance.

**In Whom.** “In whom” refers back to “the Beloved.” It is in such a One as that -- the Beloved -- the One in Whom the Father delights. This speaks of the love expressed. “In whom” tells us that we have redemption in Him. God connects the redemption with our place in Him. *Redemption* is more than *purchase*, or being bought. Purchase, by Christ’s death, brings everything under His ownership as man, even the wicked (cp. 2 Pet. 2:1). Thus all belong to Him as property and all men are really His slaves.<sup>193</sup> Redemption

192. There is much about “riches” in Ephesians. See Eph. 1:18; 2:7; 3:8 and 16. In Eph. 1 we see surpassing power and in ch. 2:7 surpassing grace, while in ch. 3 there is the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge. See also 1 Cor. 12:31; 2 Cor. 3:10; 4:17; Phil. 4:7; 1 Tim. 1:14. Such are the things into which God has brought us.

193. The following remarks by W. Kelly direct attention to a very important common fault in both Arminianism and Calvinism, and that is the distinction between purchase (or, bought) and redemption.

Let me then point out the difference between what scripture calls being “bought” or purchased, as distinct from redeemed. It is a familiar fact that the words of the Spirit are not really the same, though frequently confounded in our justly prized English Bible. The translators seem never to have suspected that there was any substantial distinction; and the mass of expositors and preachers have followed in their wake.

Take for instance in Rev. 5:9, “redeemed us to God.” Here it is ἀγοράζω the word not for redemption, but for purchase; and compare Rev. 14:3, 4. It is, “Thou hast bought us to God.” In our chapter {1 Cor. 7} it is translated aright, as in 1 Cor. 6:20. The word “bought” does not mean redeem; but so thoroughly had these two thoughts been identified in the minds of Christians generally that even the difference was quite ignored by the two parties who stand most opposed to one another as they have been for 1400 years. I refer to the old Pelagian struggle in the fifth century (between those who contended for grace in God to meet the sinner’s ruin, and those who held up man’s

(continued...)

191. From the third ed. of the NT, 1884.

goes further and makes us Christ's freedman (cp. 1 Cor. 7), though in the other point of view (purchase) we are His slaves. In Scripture usage of words, Christ's *blood* is not connected with purchase; it is connected with *redemption*. Where a word speaks of something concerning the work of Christ on the cross in connection with purchase (or, bought), the word death is used. He has purchased all things by His death; His saved ones are redeemed by blood. Such is the exactness of the Scripture usage of these words.<sup>194</sup> Thus, as here, we have "redemption through his blood." Moreover, *all* our offences are forgiven. What is the measure with which God has so acted toward us?

**The Blood.** That blood has all the value of Christ's death and the sufferings under God's judgment during the three hours of darkness. These things have the value and glory of His Person, thus they are infinite in value and glory. Such is His precious blood through which we have redemption.

**The Riches of His grace.** We want to see in Eph. 1:7 the distinction between the *glory of His grace* (v. 6) and the *riches* of His grace. Of course, both the glory and the riches are exhaustless, yet there is a difference to be observed. Because the need of the sinner is now touched on for the first time in Eph. 1, there is the riches of God's grace to meet the need. "The glory of His grace" is the display of His purpose while "the riches of His grace" has to do with the sinners need of redemption. Thus, "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offences," is according to those exhaustless riches.

And only in v. 7 does He come to what met our responsibility and ruin. After he has put us completely in the place as it is in God's mind, then he says, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." It does not say "the glory of His grace" here, but "according to the riches of His grace"; it is given to us according to the wealth of God. When we come for this redemption we must come according to our wants; but our wants are not the measure of what we have got in the cross. There we have God spending His own Son for us according to the riches of His grace.

193. (...continued)

ability to please and serve God if he liked), or, when you come down to later times, to what is commonly called the Arminian and Calvinistic controversy. The remarkable fact is that both agree in taking these two words as equivalent; so that there has been no thought of discriminating, but the habitual confusion of the two ideas "purchase" and "redemption." The effect of this has been most disastrous; because it hinders, not only the settlement of the question, but all clear and sound discernment of the truths revealed. It is the confounding of the two that makes the chief difficulty. It does not seem to have occurred to any engaged in the ancient or the modern strife to distinguish between the truths conveyed by these words (*The Bible Treasury* 16:277)..

Well, it certainly "occurred" to J. N. Darby, who brought out the distinction.

194. These matters are considered in detail in the book *The Work of Christ on the Cross and Some of Its Results*, available from the publisher.

When I do come to Him, I find I have forgiveness according to what God is, and not merely according to what I wanted. He meets our poverty, but He meets it according to His own riches. It is striking how every word has its weight in this passage. I am "accepted in the Beloved," not merely that the sins are blotted out.<sup>195</sup>

#### VERSE 8: ABOUND TOWARDS US IN ALL WISDOM AND INTELLIGENCE

It is the riches of His grace which He has caused to abound towards us in all wisdom and intelligence. What exhaustless supply is in that word "abound." It is like the work of Christ -- which is infinite in value and glory because the value and glory of His person is imparted to the work. That is limitless and unfathomable. And thus the riches of God's grace is furnished by, and commensurate with, the person and work of Christ. Concerning wisdom and intelligence, another wrote:

σοφία is the mind conceiving all things rightly; φρονήσις is the activity of the mind seizing the objects presented to it.<sup>196</sup>

#### VERSE 9: HIS GOOD PLEASURE AND PURPOSE IN HIMSELF

Not only is the redemption, the forgiveness of offences, according to the riches of His grace, but the riches of that grace has brought it about that He has made known to us the mystery of His will. God acts according to His good pleasure (and always as *light* and *love*). It is His purpose to glorify Himself, in Christ, in two spheres, the heavenly and the earthly (Eph. 1:10). See Isa. 14:26. The church is specially connected to the heavenly, and Israel to the earthly. God does as He wills, according to His good pleasure. There are numerous things which it is His pleasure to do -- and to give account to no man. See Luke 12:32; Phil. 2:13; 2 Thess. 1:11; Psalms 149:4; Isaiah 46:10; Isaiah 53:10; etc.

Christ must be glorified in order that God be glorified.

#### VERSE 10: THE HEAVENLY AND THE EARTHLY HEADED UP IN THE CHRIST.

The administration of the fulness of times speaks of what we call the millennium, the 1000 year reign of Christ. At that time heaven and earth will be headed up in the Christ. The OT foresaw that the earth would be under the dominion of the Son of man (see Psalm 8), but the heading up of the things in the heavens was not foreseen. This is why it is called "the mystery of His will." The NT mysteries were not revealed in the OT and were not foreseen by the prophets. What constitutes the mystery is not the earthly millennial reign (which was foreseen by the OT prophets) but the universal heading up

195. J. N. Darby in *The Christian Friend*, 1882, pp. 215, 216.

196. *The Bible Treasury* 10:15.

of all in the Christ. The church as one body was not revealed in the OT, nor foreseen by the prophets. This God has made known to us -- the mystery of His will.

### *Marked out Beforehand According to the Purpose*

(11) in him, in whom we have also obtained an inheritance, being marked out beforehand according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his own will, (12) that we should be to [the] praise of his glory who have pre-trusted in the Christ . . . (Eph. 1:11-12, JND).

(11) in him in whom we have also obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to [the] <sup>197</sup> purpose of him that worketh all things according to the counsel of his will, (12) in order that we should be unto [the] praise of his glory, that have fore-trusted in Christ (Eph. 1:11, 12, W. Kelly).

#### IN HIM

We have noted how often we have such words as in Christ, in whom, in the Beloved, etc. The purpose of God centers in Christ but has its origin in Himself. It is in Christ that God glorifies Himself. Who else could secure and display the glory?

#### IN WHOM WE HAVE ALSO OBTAINED AN INHERITANCE

Yes, it is "in him" that what we have in vv. 9, 10 is made good -- "in whom" there is more yet, for we have also obtained an inheritance in Him. The thought is that we have been made to have our inheritance in Him. The inheritance involves our being placed before our God and Father as we have been considering, so as to be to the praise of the glory of His grace. Moreover, it involves sharing all that has been acquired by Christ, in whom we have this inheritance.

The inheritance is not spoken of until after redemption (v. 7) is spoken

197. Notice that W. Kelly has the word "the" bracketed. I do not know why JND did not bracket the word, yet the following quotation from him indicates that it should have been bracketed:

Verse 11. Again we have the unusual form κατὰ πρόθεσιν τοῦ. But κατὰ πρόθεσιν denotes the nature of the predestination, and connects itself with predestinated. We are predestinated according to purpose (not the particular purpose) of Him who, etc. And then we have again the article associated with this work in God where it has its source, and it is presented as a positive object of the mind. We are merely characterized, and our predestination by purpose. Our predestination was not δι' ἔργα, but κατὰ πρόθεσιν, and that of Him who, etc. (*Collected Writings* 13:49).

of. It is through that work that there are others who share in the inheritance. We share the inheritance; we are not the inheritance. Israel will be part of the inheritance, but the church is not part of the inheritance. We are joint-heirs with Christ. The Bride, the Lamb's wife, will share all with Him.

BEING MARKED OUT BEFOREHAND ACCORDING TO THE PURPOSE OF HIM WHO WORKS ALL THINGS ACCORDING TO THE COUNSEL OF HIS OWN WILL (V. 11)

There are three words used here regarding God's intention.

1. The first of the three is "being marked out <sup>198</sup> beforehand"; or, "predestinated." This word, προοριθέντες, brings before us the determinative will of God. See Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29, 30; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:5, 11. It was not contingently determined; i.e., it was not dependent on foreseeing some action of the alleged moral free will of sinners and that will then determining what God would do. It is solely according to the good pleasure of His will.

2 and 3. The second and third words are "purpose" and "counsel." These two words differ in this respect, that God has an *intention of His will*, i.e., His *purpose* (πρόθεσιν) that He intends to bring to pass, and in doing so He acts according to the *wisdom of His mind*, i.e., His *counsel* (βουλῇ).

Returning now to predestination, and its being "according to the purpose," we see that the predestination is in accordance with the non-contingent, determinative will of God. Moreover, God predestines both persons and events. When predestination of persons is spoken of, what they are predestined to is coupled with His speaking about it. Concerning what the predestined person is predestined to is quite clear here:

predestinated . . . in order that we should be to [the] praise of his glory.

Note well the fact that it is stated that it is persons who are predestinated.

198. In the second ed., revised, of JND's translation of the NT, London: Morrish, n.d.) a note remarks upon why he used "marked out":

'Predestinated' refers only to the intention as to the person; but here that to which they are foreordained is still more in view: hence I have said 'marked out.'

The third ed., revised, is dated 1884, and it omits this note. However, that edition contains the following helpful footnote to "beforehand" in v. 5:

Προορίσας involves purpose. It is not βούλομαι, 'counsel,' though it is κατὰ, 'according to the counsel βούλή of his own will.' The passive of ὀρίζω is 'marked out,' 'determined,' as in Rom. 1:4; here προ --, 'beforehand' is prefixed. It refers generally to persons, but is applied to things as in 1 Cor. 2:7. But when applied to persons, always, I think, adding that to which they are destined.

Persons are predestinated; *and*, they are predestinated in order to be something -- something in which God is glorified. This predestination is not corporate, it is individual, just as in Rom. 9. Moreover, as we saw in considering Rom. 8:29, foreknowledge of persons cannot refer to God's general omniscience and prescience, but it is particular and discriminatory.

Note also that we are "called according to purpose" (Rom. 8:28). In Eph. 1:11 we see that according to his purpose the One Who works all things does so according to "the counsel of his *own* will." That excludes other wills (cp. Rom. 9:16; James 1:18; John 1:12, 13) as well as speaking of the wisdom of His mind concerning what He does.

#### THAT WE SHOULD BE TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY

In Eph. 1:12 we read of those who have "pre-trusted in the Christ." This refers to the Jewish election of grace (Rom. 11:5). These have trusted in Christ before (hence, pre-trusted) the Jewish nation does so; i.e., before the new Israel under the new covenant receives the national adoption (Rom. 9:4) when the Deliverer shall have turned away ungodliness from Jacob and all Israel shall be saved (Rom. 9:26; Isa. 60:21; cp. Ezek 20). Though those who pre-trusted will not participate in the earthly glory that shall be Israel's, there is the sharing of the glory of Christ in the administration of the fulness of times. This is implicit in having obtained an inheritance in Christ, Who is the heir of all and we joint-heirs with Him as heirs of God. Thus they will "be to the praise of his glory" for God is glorified in the Heir and the joint-heirs.

And then in v. 13,

in whom *ye* {note the change from "we" in v. 12} also [have trusted], having heard the word of the truth, the glad tidings of your salvation, having believed, ye have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is [the] earnest of our inheritance to the redemption of the acquired possession to [the] praise of his glory' (Eph. 1:13, 14).

The Gentiles are brought into this wonderful place also. The Spirit is called the "Holy Spirit of promise" so that we connect the matter of sealing with what the Spirit did at Pentecost, He having been promised to the Lord's own who waited at Jerusalem for His coming. Each sealed one is connected with what happened at Pentecost, namely the formation of the body of Christ. He has been given to us as the earnest, the pledge, of what lies ahead regarding the redemption of the acquired possession. Christ owns everything, for His death has purchased everything. The title is His. He will soon take it in power, and we with Him, to the praise of the glory of God. So, we will be manifested jointly with Christ as possessing the inheritance, and this will be to the praise of God's glory. (Cp. Col. 3:4). Is it not so that then will be manifested that the Father loves us as He loves the Son?

We are, right now, to the praise of the glory of His grace, as at this present time redeemed; in the future, at the redemption of the acquired possession, we shall be to the praise of His glory (as well as His grace).

In Eph. 3:14 we read of the riches of His glory, as we do in Rom. 10:23 concerning the before-prepared vessels of mercy. The Father already works in us (by the Spirit indwelling) according to the riches of His glory as we await the manifestation of Christ and the sons of God.

\* \* \* \* \*

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has determined, chosen, predestinated, and purposed without consulting the alleged moral free will of man towards God. Fallen man has no such faculty to be consulted, upon which God must act contingently. The invitation to the great supper only brought out that "all began, without exception, to excuse themselves" (Luke 14:18). And so we learn in Scripture that God acts freely from Himself and furnishes His great supper with those brought and compelled to come in. Eph. 1 shows the same thing, as we also saw in John's gospel, as well as in Acts and Romans. We shall now look at Eph. 2:1-10 where again we see that all is of God -- even faith.

### *From Death in Offences and Sins to Seating in the Heavenlies in New Creation Eph. 2:1-10*

The various books of the NT have their distinctive character and presentation of truth,<sup>199</sup> yet forming a whole. Whatever the instrument the Spirit used, He

199. In Ephesians Christ's coming is not even spoken of, because they were seated in heavenly places; and therefore all that was spoken to them was about the inheritance; the thing set before us is the inheritance in heaven, the possession, not the glory or translation. In Colossians it is "the hope which is laid up for you in heaven." Why? Because they were not holding the Head, but holding angel-worship and all sorts of things. They had slipped down from the full possession of their place, and he is getting them back. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." In Ephesians they were going on properly, and he could unfold to them all. In Peter it is "to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled . . . reserved in heaven for you" -- "ready to be revealed." In Peter they are seen as begotten again, walking towards heaven, and therefore the word is "as pilgrims and strangers in the earth," in virtue of the resurrection. If the flesh be not judged, one will not stand. The coming of the Lord is the proper hope of the soul to be converted to; as in Thessalonians, "to wait for his Son from heaven."

It is of the utmost importance that we should thoroughly get hold of what the church is and its identification with the Lord Jesus. Its importance may be gathered from the very many and various ways the enemy seeks to attack that truth, and it is always liable to be let slip, for it is

(continued...)

ultimately is the Author of it all. We should note again some differences between Ephesians and Romans in view of the fact that Eph. 2:1 looks at the sinner as **dead** in offences and sins.<sup>200</sup> That is not the presentation as given in Romans. We have already noted the matter of the emphasis on the purpose of God in Ephesians. And that is how Ephesians opens. Not so the epistle to the Romans. We find in Rom. 1 the departure from the knowledge of God. Rom. 2 takes up the case of the Gentile condition first (vv. 1-16) and next the Jew (vv. 17-29). Then the totally lost condition of man is stated. Then we have what meets this totally lost condition, even the righteousness of God in justifying the sinner.

In Romans the sinner is looked at as alive in sins (not dead as in Ephesians). This is found in the first major division of the book, which ends at Rom. 5:11. Then Rom. 5:12 – Rom. 8 takes up the matter of *sin in the flesh*, the root principle at work inside the sinner. Sins are the fruit of that root. Sins are like the fruit on an apple tree, while sin is like the root of the apple tree. Sins are forgiven, but a nature (i.e., sin in the flesh) is not forgiven. How, then, did God deal with sin in the flesh? Rom. 8:3 answers.

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199. (...continued)

easily lost. To have the one truth, that I am in and associated with Christ, uppermost in my thoughts, is a most difficult thing, and the easiest lost of any, because it is a thought, of course, of the Spirit, and nature will always sink the soul down into something in which it is to satisfy God. I am to understand that the power working in my soul is “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.” And it will not do if the soul has not taken up its position with Christ. One need not speak of hypocrisy, but sincerity will not do. I ought to crucify the world . . .

*Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 21:238, 239.

200. W. Kelly wrote:

Calvinism clogs and obscures the gospel by teaching that Christ suffered to reconcile His Father to us, and by its decree of reprobation. For God so loved the world that He gave His own Son, not only that the believer might have eternal life, but that his sins should be effaced by His sacrifice. And Rom. 9:22, 23 is conclusive, that while *He* before prepared vessels of mercy for glory, He endured with much long suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. They were fitted by their own sins and unbelief, not by God, who is not the author of evil and is righteous in judgment.

The Arminian scheme necessarily fails by making man guilty and sinful, to go as partner with God in his own salvation. But if it be true as scripture plainly declares, that man *is* dead in trespasses and sins, not the Gentile only but the favored Jew too, that question is decided. Arminianism is farther from the truth than Calvinism.

*The Gospel of God.*

“Our old man”<sup>201</sup> (Rom. 6:6) is not “sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3); it is not what we call the old nature. “Our old man” refers to Adam-fallen, standing in responsibility before God to see if He was recoverable. Each person has his standing before God as in Adam. “Our old man” is a generic term referring to that standing. Rom. 6 goes on to point out that we have died with Christ. Viewed thus, that old standing is gone. We have a new standing before God. Moreover, so viewed by God as dead, we are to reckon ourselves dead to sin (i.e., sin in the flesh) and alive unto God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:11). So the sinner previously alive in sins is, concerning his standing before God, dead unto that which produced those sins, and is now alive unto God *in Christ Jesus*.

In Rom. 7:7-25 we have a parentheses occupied with God's deliverance from captivity to the law of sin in the flesh (Rom. 7:23, 24) of one who has the “inward man” (Rom. 7:22). It is part of the *ways of God* with souls.<sup>202</sup> In Ephesians we have not this dealing with man's condition and such *ways of God* with souls. Man is viewed as dead in offences and sins and in need of the “surpassing power” that wrought in Christ in raising Him from among the dead and seating Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies (Eph. 1:19). Eph. 2:1-10 is an expansion of Eph. 1:19 as applied to the sinner to take him from the state of spiritual death to being seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, and being part of the new creation. There are no *ways of God* with sinners in Ephesians because it is a matter of divine purpose, choosing, predestination and God's glory.

It is important for saints of God to understand the distinction between the *purpose of God* and the *ways of God*. These two lines of truth are well illustrated by God's dealings with Israel in bringing them out of Egypt and into Canaan. Canaan was His purpose, and it is spoken of several time (Ex. 6:6-8; it is celebrated as if accomplished in Ex. 15:13; see also v. 17).<sup>203</sup> What about the wilderness, then? The wilderness is part of *His ways*, not His purpose. His purpose was to bring them out of Egypt and into Canaan. In Ephesians we are not viewed as in the wilderness (as we are in Hebrews and Peter, for example); we are viewed as seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.

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201. Such language as “my old man,” and “my new man” are erroneous. These are generic expressions referring respectively to Adam (fallen) and to Christ, having to do with the subject of one's standing before God.

202. Rom. 7, and many other subjects are considered in detail in *From New Birth to New Creation*, available from the publisher.

203. Psa. 78 reviews His ways with them in the wilderness as does Psa. 106; Psa. 105:39-41 only briefly mentions His ways with them, and only in the character of His provision for them in accomplishing His purpose.

Ephesians answers to the book of Joshua. Hence, in Eph. 6:10-20 we see that there is spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies, as there was the power of the enemy in Canaan.

Ephesians, then, gives us the purpose of God. His purpose for us involves taking us from spiritual death (Eph. 2:1) and seating us in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6), “created in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:10), we thus being in the new creation.

Eph. 2:1-10, an expansion of Eph. 1:19, displays “surpassing greatness of his power,” even that “which he wrought in the Christ [in] raising him,” etc. The power surpasses creatorial power that brought the universe into existence. The reason is that while the creation evidences God’s “eternal power and divinity” (Rom. 1:20), the “surpassing greatness of his power” is evidenced by bringing about the new creation, begun the instant Christ rose from the dead and resulting in His being seated above. Let us get hold of the fact that this is “surpassing greatness of his power towards us who believe” (Eph. 1:19), and that this is displayed in Eph. 2:1-10. ***It is all of God!*** There is no room at all for human will and action in this.

#### FREE-WILLERS SIDESTEP THE CORRELATIVE EXPRESSIONS: DEAD – QUICKENED

In Eph. 2:1-5 we have two correlative expressions,<sup>204</sup> i.e., two expressions that correspond to each other because they have a mutual relationship:

And *you* being ***dead*** in your offences and sins . . . has ***quicken***ed us with the Christ.

The correlative expressions have been placed in bold-faced italics. Persons who are half-dead, or who are unconscious, do not require quickening, which means to make alive. It is dead persons who need to be made alive. The dead in v. 1 are spiritually dead towards God. Thus, they cannot exercise faith toward God. It is quite instructive that this status of deadness and the need of being made alive is in the same passage that tells us that faith is the gift of God (v. 8). We should understand that faith being the gift of God is correlative with the fact that the spiritually dead need to be made alive by the surpassing power by which God wrought in Christ in raising Him from among the dead. In connection with the quickening power upon the spiritually dead, God implants faith into the person. The implantation of faith has a mutual relationship with the quickening. Arminians and semi-Arminians, who all claim that lost man has free will morally towards God and has a human

204. When considering John 5:24, 25, we also saw the correlative expressions, dead and quickening.

capability of exercising faith toward God, not only deny that faith is the gift of God, but in effect they deny that man is dead as described here -- the moral free-will idea *requires* this implicitly. Below, we will show this to be the case. ***The spiritual deadness is the context in which to view faith***, which is the gift of God. Even the good works are those “which God has before prepared that we should walk in them” (Eph. 1:10). All is of God.

Accordingly, we are co-quickenened with Christ (v. 5), co-raised up with Christ (v. 6), and co-seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus (v. 7). All flows from sovereign grace. All is divine action. The *purpose* of God, not the *ways* of God with His people, is seen here. Thus, salvation, grace, and faith all are from God. By the surpassing greatness of His power He has lifted us out of spiritual death and seated us in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. To bring man’s alleged moral free will towards God into this matter injects a fog, a spoiling of it. It lowers the intent of the statement in Eph. 2:7, “the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.” It is really to inject into this matter an obligation on God’s part to honor man’s alleged free-will choice. I am sorry that there are so many who cannot see that spoilation.

We ought to look at some circumventions of Eph. 2:1 caused by maintaining that man is not really spiritually dead. Most people realize that if man is really spiritually dead, then he has no moral free will towards God. Here are several ways of circumventing the implications of the sinner’s being dead in offences and sins. First, a Mennonite Arminian cites the fact that there are those who hold eternal security and that believe that a dead man cannot repent (the position in the book that you are reading), but who nonetheless preach to sinners to “believe.” He says:

We would like to enquire as to how a dead man can believe?<sup>205</sup>

Clearly, he does not really believe the statement in God’s Word. The sinner cannot believe, but the sinner is responsible to believe what God has said. In preaching to sinners, it may please God by the instrumentality of the Word preached to quicken the sinner. Is that really so difficult to understand? The writer of the quotation does not believe what God has said in Eph. 2:1 -- since it conflicts with his notion of man’s free moral agency. He realizes that if Eph. 2:1 means what it states, then there is no free will morally towards God, and that faith is indeed the gift of God, implanted into the soul. Therefore, there is a need to circumvent the force of the word “dead” (and, really, the correlative word “quicken”).

Henry C. Thiessen, a noted evangelical who is not a full Arminian, has

205. J. L. Stauffer, *The Eternal Security Teaching*, Harrisonburg: Christian Light Publ., Inc..

another way of supporting free moral agency while admitting that Eph. 2:1 does teach that man is spiritually dead towards God. Observe how he tries to get around the force of being dead in offences and sins. He wrote:

Although we are nowhere told what it is in the foreknowledge of God that determines his choice, the repeated teaching of Scripture that man is responsible for accepting or rejecting salvation necessitates our postulating it: man's reaction to the revelation God has made of Himself is the basis of His election. May we repeat: Since mankind is hopelessly dead in trespasses and sins and can do nothing to obtain salvation, God graciously restores to all men sufficient ability to make a choice in the matter of submission to Him. This is the salvation bringing grace of God that has appeared to all men. In His foreknowledge He perceives what each one will do with this restored ability, and elects men to salvation in harmony with His knowledge of their choice of Him. There is no merit in this transaction, as Buswell has clearly shown in his allegory of the captain who is beaten into unconsciousness by the crew on deck of his vessel, if that captain is revived by restoratives and then accepts the proffered leadership of a captain from another vessel who has come to his rescue. J. O. Buswell, *Sin and Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Brothers, 1937), pp. 112-114.<sup>206</sup>

Is it so that 'faith comes by hearing, and hearing by postulating'? Saying that a dead man can do nothing, he then invents a notion that "God graciously restores to all men sufficient ability to make a choice in the matter of submission to Him." So God restores the spiritually dead to a condition that actually contradicts what He has said in Eph. 2:1. Thus, it follows that man is not really as described in Eph. 2:1. Dr. Thiessen's man is really only part-dead. He was dead but God put a bit of life in him -- so he is, perhaps, almost dead, but not quite. These notions are theological contradictions of God's Word fathered by insisting on free will morally towards God. Dr. Buswell's captain is merely unconscious, not dead. Lazarus' case is an example of our Lord's being both the resurrection and the life. Relating his case to these explanations of "dead" would make Lazarus not really dead, actually only unconscious, and the Lord did not cause him to become alive. Really, at bottom, neither of these two evangelical, semi-Arminians believes that man is actually dead in trespasses and offences, any more than do full Arminians, as is shown by their circumventions of the force of Eph. 2:1. We reject this reasoning just as we do the Calvinistic reasoning on the doctrine of a decree of reprobation. Note, then, that the condition described in Eph. 2:1 requires *quicken*ing (Eph. 2:5), which means to make alive. Quickening does not mean that Dr. Buswell's unconscious captain needs a whiff of ammonia to wake him up.

206. *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, pp. 344, 345, 1949.

Let us take other contradictions, by Dr. Norman Geisler, who considers himself to be a "moderate Calvinist" whereas he is, at best, a moderate Arminian. He considers the view herein taken of Eph. 2:1-5, "This extreme Calvinistic interpretation." His first argument is that:

it does not mean a total destruction of all ability to hear and respond to God, but a complete separation of the whole person from God.<sup>207</sup>

This fails to do justice to the *remedy*, which is *quicken*ing, i.e., making alive. This view of the matter would mean that quickening is a restoration to fellowship rather than making alive. He also cites Isa. 59:2, which states the fact of the separation. But in Eph. 2:1 we learn that man is dead in offences and sins -- *besides* being separated from God. For separation from God, reconciliation is needed (Rom. 5:10, 11; 2 Cor. 5:18; Col. 1:22). For death, quickening is needed.

Dr. Geisler's second objection is that the spiritually dead can perceive the truth of God as evidenced in Rom. 1:20 because:

. . . God's truth is "clearly seen" by them so that they are "without excuse" (p. 58 [59]).

Previously, it was pointed out that Romans views man as alive *in sins*, and fleeing from God. Rom. 1:19, 20 shows man's inexcusable guilt, for even what might be known of God, outside of the Word of God, man has departed from. This does not show that man is not completely spiritually dead towards God, which is what the author is trying to show, but the reverse! He also cites Gen. 3:10 and says:

Their reaction shows that they understood the meaning of the words.

207. *Op. Cct.*, p. 57 [58]. D. A. Waite defines the sinner's deadness as, "We are dead in the sense that we cannot do anything to save ourselves" (*Ephesians*, Collingswood: The Bible for Today Press, p. 39, 2002). Instead of leaving to Calvinists their phrase "total depravity," he must distort its traditional meaning: "I believe in the total depravity of man, but I do not believe in the total inability of man" (*ibid.*). This is really obfuscation, thought to be clever, perhaps, but not sober dealing with the matter. The truth is that we are spiritually dead toward God, totally lost, having total inability to believe on the Son of God, for the will is under bondage to "the law of sin" in our members. Faith *is* a work, as we read in John 6:29, the Lord replying to those who wanted to know what they should do to work the works of God:

Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom *he* has sent.

Of course, without having the new nature, they could not do this work. Still, man is in a responsible position before God. Inability to pay a debt does not cancel a debt. So, God implants faith and the new nature simultaneously. Dr. Waite does not believe that the sinner is totally lost -- totally spiritually dead towards God. Dead Lazarus serves as an example for the Resurrection and the Life to speak the Word into the soul and bring the person into His presence. Such is the quickening power of the Son regarding the spiritually dead towards God.



So a sinners understanding the meaning of some of God's words proves that he has moral free will towards God? proves that he is not spiritually dead towards God? How simple, after all, to show that *dead* does not mean *dead*, and that quicken means, well, whatever it means! I once quoted John 14:6 to an unbeliever, and reacting very angrily, he threatened to beat me up if I ever said that to him again. He said that that was my interpretation of the passage. But all I did was *quote* the verse to him. He had discerned that what was said meant that Christ was the only way to God, and he believed in many ways. Man in the flesh *understands the fact* -- but he can not respond in faith; he "cannot know" (1 Cor. 2:14). It is merely a fallacious free-willism notion that if the man could understand the fact therefore he must have moral free will towards God to obey the gospel. Free-willism is built on just this kind of "therefore." Thus, according to Dr. Geisler, I should have discerned from that conversation that the man was not spiritually dead-dead. Perhaps he was alive-dead. We must leave to such their free-willism reasoning.

In the third place, we have the sickness model of sin brought forward, with reference to Matt. 9:12, and the conclusion that:

In short, depravity involves the corruption of life but not its destruction (p. 58 [59]).

What *life*? He did not say. But his view is that *dead* in trespasses and offences means *corruption of life*, not that the person is dead. Is then the quickening (v. 5), meaning to make alive, another way of saying *removal of corruption of life*?

The next (fourth) objection, stunningly, is:

Fourth, if spiritually "dead" amounts to a kind of spiritual annihilation, rather than separation, then the "second death" (Rev. 20:10) would be eternal annihilation, too -- a doctrine rejected by extreme Calvinists (p. 58 [59]).

We have already noted that separation from God is true, but not a substitute for being spiritually dead towards God -- which indicates that there is no spiritual motion towards God -- indeed, there cannot be any. We reject his either/or as a ploy, not a fact. There is *now* no spiritual motion towards God by the sinner who is dead in offences and sins, nor will there *then* be any such motion towards God when the sinner is in hell for eternity -- for the very same reason *then* as now, namely, that man remains in the fixed state of spiritual death towards God for all eternity. Is God going to prohibit the sinner in hell from exercising his Arminian, moral free will, to accept Christ? Of course

not. Moreover, using the word annihilation<sup>208</sup> is merely playing with words. Spiritually "dead" amounts to being spiritually "dead" towards God. If persons cannot (or will not) understand that, it is pitiable. It is the insistence on the untrue notion of moral free will towards God that drives them to these things. In connection with the fourth objection, an illustration was given:

Like a drowning person, a fallen person can reach out and accept the lifeline even though he cannot make it to safety on his own (p. 58 [59]).

A drowning person is not a dead person. A dead person needs quickening, not a *lifeline* or a *life* preserver thrown towards him. Now, I do not accept the Calvinistic idea that Christ did not die for every person; but if He died for all, then all men were dead:

For the love of Christ constrains us, having judged this: that one died for all, then all have died (2 Cor. 5:14).

J. N. Darby has a helpful footnote on "have died":

Or, 'had died.' It is the aorist, and refers to the state Christ's *death proved them to be in*, in a state of nature. To make it the consequence of Christ's death is, I judge, an utter blunder.

Yes, the teaching of Scripture is that man is in a state of spiritual death before God. The notion of free moral will towards God is a refusal to believe this fact.

Then we come to the final (fifth) objection:

Finally, in the parallel passage (Col. 2:12-13) Paul speaks of those "dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature" being able to believe. For he said, you have been "raised with him through *your faith* in the power of God" (p. 58 [59]).

Let us have v. 13 before us:

And you, being dead in offences and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he has quickened together with him . . .

It is instructive to see what words he left out of the discussion, namely, "he has quickened together with him." Here again we have those two correlative words: *dead* and *quicken*. The same reply may be given here as in the answer to his first objection. He has not shown that dead does not mean dead, and he has not accounted for the word quicken, i.e., to make alive. Moreover, he adds a piece of circular reasoning. His argument is that the presence of faith

208. On p. 227 he wrote that "'dead' means separation from God, not annihilation." In hell the sinner will be eternally separated from God. He will not have moral free will towards God so as to be able to accept the gospel -- just as he does not have it now. Bringing in the word annihilation is merely obfuscation.

within a person proves that faith was there because of the exercise of man's moral free will towards God. The mere fact of the presence of faith does not prove how it came to be there. Is that really so difficult to understand? The truth is that the spiritually dead towards God have never exercised such faith, and for all eternity in hell they never shall. It is man's fixed condition as totally lost, and unless God graciously intervenes *now*, the sinner will be in that eternally-fixed, horrible condition, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, cast away into the outer darkness, which answers to the spiritual state of darkness.

In Jude 12 we read of those who had gotten into the profession of Christianity who are called "twice dead." They were dead in sins and they were also dead in their profession of Christianity. The only remedy for both is the implantation of a new life by the gracious act of God.

The fact is that those who hold to moral free will towards God do not really believe that man is spiritually dead towards God. Oh yes, they say he is dead, because Scripture so states, but they explain dead in such a way that the person is really alive. How can a dead man believe? it is asked. A dead man cannot believe any more than dead Lazarus could hear and obey the Lord's command, "Lazarus, come forth," but the quickening power of the Son of God is equal to the matter both in the physical and the spiritual sphere (John 5:21-30). The Son of God gives the hearing to the dead.

Finally, as we saw in the effort to overthrow the force of the word "compel" when we considered the parable of the great supper, so here we see the inability of these advocates of moral free will towards God to deal with the two correlative words, *dead* and *quicken*. They actually give illustrations of what dead means by cases of persons not dead. In the face of this sidestepping the force of the two correlative words, *dead* and *quicken*, by those quoted above -- including Dr. Geisler himself, who has the effrontery to say:

Likewise PF {*The Potter's Freedom*, by James R. White} sidesteps the force of all the many passages that depict fallenness in terms of sickness, blindness, and pollution (as opposed to its mistaken understanding of "dead" as the destruction of ability to respond positively to God).<sup>209</sup>

Those who share the truth set out in this book have no difficulty at all seeing fallenness in those terms as well as effects of sin. The problem lies with those who circumvent the truth of being spiritually dead and in need of quickening -- and it is quite clear that the truth of being dead and in need of quickening is the death knell of the notion of moral free will towards God -- and that is the reason for the desperate distortions that we have reviewed above.

209. *Op. cit.*, p. 261, sec. ed., 2001.

Often, what is not apprehended is the distinct way in which Romans presents man's condition and the way in which Ephesians presents man's position. Both are true at the same time. It has already been pointed out that lost man is looked at as alive in sins in Romans, and running from God. What he is "in the flesh" needs to be put to death with Christ that He might be alive unto God in Christ Jesus. In Ephesians he is dead and in need of quickening. It is quite obvious that if this is the case, there is no room for the notion of moral free will towards God, and that faith is the gift of God. Before passing on, let us observe how Dave Hunt seeks to circumvent the plain implications of man being dead. Keep in mind that this system does not make the distinction between the matter as presented in Romans and in Ephesians. Thus, it is said that the dead one does believe some things and that is offered in proof that dead does not mean incapacity to believe. The person is dead, but not that dead. The person is lost, but not that lost. The natural man does not receive many things (see 1 Cor. 2:14) but he receives the gospel, etc., etc. Rejecting the Scripture teaching that man is spiritually dead and cannot respond, Dave Hunt wrote:

Aren't the Ten Commandments given to spiritually dead mankind and don't the spiritually dead understand the moral issues and often keep some of the commandments? Paul says that even the spiritually dead ungodly "shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another) . . . (Romans 2:14-15). Doesn't God appeal to every man's conscience continually?<sup>210</sup>

A characteristic phenomenon of his book is the many rhetorical questions, but we cannot direct faith by rhetorical questions. He, of course, has not claimed that the natural man kept *all* the law -- and *that failure is fatal*, of course, to the free-willers' notion that 'God's commands are man's enablings.' God commanded the entire law to be obeyed! What this objection is about was concisely noted by J. N. Darby when he wrote:

. . . the doctrine of free will ministers to the pretension of the natural man not to be entirely lost, for that is just what it amounts to.<sup>211</sup>

Now, note how the objection reveals not seeing the difference between the way man's state is presented in Romans and in Ephesians. Another area of

210. *What Love Is This?*, p. 319. The work of the law is to convict the conscience and heart of sin, and failure, and falling short. *All* have sinned and *come short* of the glory of God. "Often keep some of the commandments" is not good enough. Why were all not kept, always? Does God's appeal to every man's conscience continually, enable him to keep the law? No! God's commands are not man's enabling. What a ludicrous concept to think that God's commands are man's enablings. God's appeals bring out man's responsibility, stubbornness, and incorrigibility.

211. *Letters* 3:314.

truth involved is that the law addressed man in the fallen Adamic responsibility as alive "in the flesh." The way the condition of man is described in John <sup>212</sup> and Ephesians is the consequence of the end of the trial of the first man standing in responsibility to see if he was recoverable. It is in view of the end of that trial that man is pronounced dead in offenses and sins.

The trial of man under the law exposed man's state. The notion that if God commands, the receiver of the command has power to comply is absurd. As in the case of the law, so when God commands all everywhere to repent, that does not imply that man has the power of moral free will towards God to comply. But this is a major part of the system -- if God says 'do it,' man can do it, because God would not command man to do what he cannot do. We must conclude, if free-willers are correct, that all men have the moral free will to keep the law. Strange it is, then, that the best that can be offered is

... and don't the spiritually dead understand the moral issues and often keep some of the commandments?

That is another rhetorical question which merely obfuscates the issue -- but acknowledges that no natural man did fully keep the law.

Before leaving this, note more error packed into that brief quotation -- namely, concerning Rom. 2:14-15 -- illustrating the power of the moral free will notion to distort Scripture. The error is that they have a conscience addressed by God and therefore are not spiritually dead -- at least not *that* dead! So, what does the rhetorical question, "Doesn't God appeal to every man's conscience continually?" prove? You are correct if you said that it does not prove that because God addresses man's conscience (the Romans view) that he is not dead in offenses and sins and in need of quickening (Eph. 2:1-5 view of man's state).

And what does Rom. 2 show is the result of God's addressing the conscience? that man responded? Rom. 2:1-16 deals with the Gentile and Rom. 2:17-29 with the Jew. The conclusion is given in Rom. 3:9-20. It is recommended that W. Kelly's *Notes on the Epistle to the Romans* be read for help on Rom. 2 and 3.

Dave Hunt's reasoning process in divine matters has even taken him to the point of denying that OT saints were born again:

Surely the new birth was unknown before the day of Pentecost, yet many

212. The character of John's Gospel is that the rejection of Christ is assumed in John 1:10, 11, and the truth presented is in view of the establishment of the new order brought in consequent upon the death and resurrection of Christ.

prior to that time knew God and looked forward to the Messiah. <sup>213</sup>

Apparently he wants to have persons be able to know God and look forward to the coming of Messiah without being born of God. You see, then, how spiritually dead persons can know God without even being born of God. What we really see is a denial that man is spiritually dead and that he is totally lost.

The denial that OT saints were born again is stunning. Nicodemus, before the cross, should have known man needed such a change (John 3). OT saints are called "saints" (holy ones) in the OT and "elect." The NT refers to them as "children of God (John 11:52; Rom. 9:7, 8). All this, we are to believe, without being born again?

He quotes Eph. 5:14, coupled with numerous rhetorical questions and asks:

Are they *physically* dead or *spiritually* dead? Obviously not the former; but if the latter, this presents problems for the Calvinist. How can the spiritually dead even be addressed, much less respond and arise from the dead?

Are Christians dead and yet exhorted to raise themselves from the dead -- or are they just acting like those who are dead? . . . Or is this metaphorical language, and "dead" doesn't really mean *dead*, but asleep? After all, Paul says, Awake thou that sleepest . . . <sup>214</sup>

He then complains that various Calvinist writings he consulted have not addressed this and thinks this odd. Though not Calvinists we will address this simple text, though he, with all the rhetorical obfuscating, has not really explained it, but leaves it as if what he said was a crushing blow to Calvinism. The text says:

Wherefore he says, Wake up, [thou] that sleepest, and arise from among the dead, and the Christ shall shine upon thee (Eph. 5:14).

Desiring to obtain something useful for our souls in cutting through this obfuscating, let us hear some words from J. N. Darby:

Thus assurance of salvation is connected with Christ, and, in one sense, it is the very essence of it; because we are brought into the presence of God, and the effect of this in our new nature, the divine nature that is in us being in God's presence, is to make us judge about good and evil. His presence makes us judge it, just because we are there and have a title to enjoy everything that is there. If a man is walking with God, he has the light of God upon his path: no part is dark. And this is what Luke himself tells us. "The light of the body is the eye; therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light," etc. "Awake, thou that sleepest and arise from among the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Paul speaks there of a real Christian who has got

213. *What Love Is This?*, p. 321.

214. *What Love Is This?*, p. 321.

asleep, who needs this perfection of Christ as the light of his path. Are you then thus gone to sleep? You are not dead really as to your condition before God, but you are walking like a dead man. You must awake and rise from among these dead people, and you will have the perfect light of Christ.

But supposing I have been asleep, and I wake up and find myself to have been walking among the dead, what is the effect of this light? It is to bring in the light of God upon the conscience, perhaps to the extent of clouding all joy, or even for the moment causing me to doubt of salvation. But the exercises of the soul that is holding fast the certainty of salvation, founded upon the word of God (which is the real starting-point of the Christian, and in virtue of which it is that he gets any exercises of soul), flow from this -- that he looks at the inward state of his soul, and sees that it ought to be up to that full character of the presence of God in which we are placed. It is there that our daily exercises go on. God has brought us to Himself -- brought us all to Himself, because this is the very position of the Christian.<sup>215</sup>

#### DOING WHAT THE THOUGHTS AND THE FLESH WILLED TO DO

. . . sons of disobedience: among whom *we* also once all had our conversation in the lusts of our flesh, doing what the thoughts willed to do, and were children, by nature, of wrath, even as the rest (Eph. 2:3).

"Sons" speaks of status while "children" speaks of nature. Not necessarily childish in his sins, he is a child of wrath as to his nature controlled by "sin in the flesh." Lost man has a matured status concerning disobedience. All of us had our manner of life in such a character of disobedience to God. This involved both the "lusts of our flesh" as well as intellectual pursuits, "what the thoughts willed to do." Our condition as lost was that we were children of wrath. In the eyes of God a person who later becomes a Christian was not different from any other sinner. All this answers to the darkness we were considering in John 1, where we saw that the darkness was the spiritual state of the lost. In connection with the sons of disobedience, Eph. 5:6-17 says:

(6) Let no one deceive you with vain words, for on account of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. (7) Be not ye therefore fellow-partakers with them; (8) for ye were once darkness, but now light in [the] Lord; walk as children of light . . . (17) For this reason be not foolish, but understanding what [is] the will of the Lord.

"Doing what . . . the thoughts willed to do" (Eph. 2:3) is *not* to choose to believe the gospel. Instead, the thoughts manifested the old nature ("sin in the flesh," Rom. 8:3) acquired in the fall. In fallen man, "sin in the flesh" controls the will,<sup>216</sup> and he has sinful desires and thoughts. Fallen man is in

215. *Collected Writings* 16:381.

216. Human nature, controlled by "sin in the flesh," is often referred to as "the flesh" in the NT.

bondage to "sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:1-3).

Let us now turn to the matter of faith being the gift of God for those who are spiritually dead towards him and in need of sovereign quickening and sovereign implantation of faith.

### *Faith, the Gift of God*

#### WE RECEIVE ALL BY GOD'S GRACE

This is more than saying that God is gracious; it means that everything we receive is by His instrumentality and divine action -- yes, even faith. His grace is the basis and cause of all blessing for us:

"believed through grace" (Acts 18:27)

"saved by grace, through faith (Eph. 2:8)

"a remnant according to election of grace" (Rom. 11:5)

"called us . . . according to [his] own purpose and grace" (2 Tim. 1:9)

"being justified freely by his grace" (Rom. 3:24; see also Titus 3:7)

"so also grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life" (Rom. 5:21).

#### BELIEF -- FAITH -- IS GIVEN FROM GOD

Scripture does teach that belief is given by God:

. . . because to you has been given, as regards Christ, not only the believing on him but the suffering also (Phil. 1:29).

. . . to them that have received like precious faith (2 Pet. 2:1)

. . . and the faith which is by him (Acts 3:16)

Even for the use of "gifts" God gives faith:

*God has dealt to each a measure of faith*" (Rom. 12:3).

Why so if faith is merely the act of libertarian free will? Moreover, the exercise of "gift" is to be proportional to the faith given (Rom. 12:6).

Even repentance is given by God:

. . . Then indeed God has to the nations also granted repentance to life (Acts 11:18).

. . . if God perhaps may sometime give them repentance to acknowledgment of [the] truth (2 Tim. 2:25).

It is often claimed that though faith is from the human will, it is not a work -- no doubt because Scripture says "not of works." The Lord Jesus said:

This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom *he* has sent (John 6:29).

Everything that the Christian has that is brought before us in Eph. 2:1-10 comes from God. Faith is not an exception. The idea that faith means something activated by man's alleged moral free will towards God is *required* for the preservation of the erroneous idea. If faith indeed is implanted by God, then gone is the alleged moral free will towards God. And it is contrary to the entire context of Eph. 2:1-10, where all actions are on God's part. Nevertheless, Eph. 2:1-10 itself has somewhat to say about the notion that faith is the action of human, moral free will towards God.

### FAITH IS DIVINE IN SOURCE AND CHARACTER

Many think that Eph. 2:8 does not mean that faith is the gift of God. They will have it that salvation is the gift of God, given by Him, but that they had faith to believe, probably viewing this as helped by God in that direction -- for God must be given *some* credit, must He not? Now, I do not doubt that salvation is a gift from God, but also do not set that in opposition to the fact that faith is a gift from God. The denial that faith is the gift of God is required in the attempt to maintain the idea of free moral will towards God. Not only is this a denial that man is totally lost, it is completely opposed to the fact with which this very chapter opens -- that man is dead in trespasses and sins and is in need of being made alive -- *quickening*. And not only that, but "we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works . . ." (Eph. 2:10; see John 15:16). Quickening and creation are acts of God. We are not the workers, God is. The entire context is about the actions of God. For example, we are told:

For ye are saved by grace, through faith; and this not of yourselves; it is God's gift: not on the principle of works, that no one might boast. For we are his workmanship . . . (Eph. 2:8, 9, 10; see John 15:16).

Someone wrote:

Divine faith is, in a special sense, "the gift of God." It is imparted by Him, the work of His own Spirit. It is something additional to nature, and it is not one of what man calls "natural gifts." Its possession is evidenced by accrediting God rather than man. The natural mind credits natural facts, but by divine faith the mind of man credits God . . .

It is sometimes said by teachers of the gospel and others that God and His word are to be believed just as men believe one another, or the facts of nature and of history. But this is not so. The *action* of the natural mind is, no doubt the same; but the power is *totally* different; in the one case it is a natural, in the other it is a spiritual power, and this is proved not only by the word of God (1 Cor. 2:14) . . . no mere effort of their minds could have enabled them to receive the simple statements of the gospel as to the value of the work of Christ, until "faith came." Though the *facts* were not disputed; the *value* of His atoning work, though equally set forth in the Scriptures, was

not apprehended, and never can be except "by faith." <sup>217</sup>

The writer called it "divine faith." Yes, indeed it is; and what is opposed to this is, in reality *human* faith. No amount of adding to human faith some gracious urgings in the soul by the Spirit changes the source and character of the faith in such a view, namely, *the human will*. Concerning this, W. Kelly well said:

Grace did not need to be said "not of ourselves," for grace means God's unmerited favor to us. <sup>218</sup> But faith might be, as it has often been, argued to be of ourselves, because it is a subjective work of the Spirit in the heart. Therefore the apostle carefully declares that this thing faith, is not of us, but God's gift, that he might counteract and preclude that proneness which is in man to boast of something in himself. <sup>219</sup>

### THE GENDER ARGUMENT

And J. N. Darby remarked:

Another question is, if this faith is of me, or of God -- which I by no means doubt . . . I know well it is said that "that" does not agree grammatically with faith -- be it so, but not with grace either -- and to say that grace is not of ourselves is nonsense, <sup>220</sup> for grace means of another, but one might say to oneself without doubt, but faith is on our part, as is said; this is why the apostle asserts, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. <sup>221</sup> ♦

I am quite aware of what critics have to say here as to gender; but it is equally true as to grace, and to say, "by grace . . . and that not of yourselves," is simply nonsense; but by faith might be supposed to be of ourselves, though grace cannot. Therefore the Spirit of God adds, "and that [not it] not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." That is, the believing is God's gift, not of ourselves. And this is confirmed by what follows, "not of works." But the object of the apostle is to show that the whole thing was of grace and of God -- God's workmanship -- a new creation. So far, grace and faith and all go together. <sup>222</sup> ♦

Now as to the passage in Eph. 2:8, it is very simple. What is said of the neuter is this: the adversaries of this truth say that τούτο ("that") cannot agree with "faith," because the latter is feminine; but in the same way it cannot agree with "grace" (χάρις) because it is feminine. Then they say, It is true, but it agrees with the whole thing, salvation; but this has no sense.

217. G., "Thoughts on Faith," *The Present Testimony*, New Series 2:96, 97.

218. A. C. Brown said to me that "Grace is God for us in all that He is, in spite of what we are in ourselves."

219. *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 4:192.

220. {It is also nonsense to regard this as saying that salvation is not of ourselves.}

221. *Letters* 2:146.

222. *Synopsis* 4:301, note.

"By grace ye are saved through faith, and that (this salvation) not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Certainly salvation by grace is not of ourselves, otherwise it would not be grace -- impossible to suppose that grace is of myself, so that in this case "and that" has no meaning. But it may well be supposed that faith is of ourselves, as you say; therefore when he has said that it is by faith he adds, "and that, not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

223 ♦

You say that he has faith - 'may it not be that he opens his hand to receive?' But hearts are not so disposed; they will not open the hand. Everything is done, as far as the heart is concerned, when it is disposed to receive Christ. He complains that when He came there was no man. You acknowledge that he has salvation, but, if a man is disposed to open his hand, conversion comes from the will of man. You say that as soon as a man believes we find that God renews his mind. But, if he believes, it is already renewed, since Christ is precious to him, while before he saw no beauty in Him that he should desire Him; already he knows that he is a sinner, and needs a Savior, and he has found Him if he believes. Observe that Jesus says, "You will not come."

223. *Letters* 2:480. Dr. D. A. Waite works around faith being the gift of God in this way::

First of all, both "grace" and "faith" are in the feminine gender in the Greek language . . . In the Greek grammatical construction, the gender endings must match up with the gender endings of the words they modify. Generally there have to be feminines with feminines and masculines with masculines. The word "*that*" is a demonstrative pronoun. As such, it must reach back to a noun of the same gender. It is neuter in gender. Therefore, it cannot refer either to "*faith*" or "*grace*" which are both feminine in gender. What does it refer to? It refers to the whole concept of "*salvation*." "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that*" [meaning the whole idea of being saved] is "*not of yourselves*." The word for "saved," SESOSMENOI, is a perfect passive participle. That makes sense. Salvation is "*not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*" (*Ephesians*, Collingswood: The Bible for Today Press, p. 49, 2002).

He is saying that we are not being told that grace is "not of yourselves." Yet it certainly is not of ourselves. It is merely an effort to avoid faith being not of ourselves.

This is similar to the argument by N. Geisler, *op. cit.*, p. 182 [189]. Besides the gender objection, the other point he makes is that "not of works" means "Salvation is 'not of works.'" That is not the point in the text. Dr. Geisler's point was that faith, though of self, was not of works. The fact is that faith *is* a work, but it is the work of God:

Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom *he* has sent (John 6:39).

Belief on the Son of God, then, *is* a work, but it is a work of God, not of self. And this we find that Eph. 2:8 is also telling us. Four-point Arminians agree, of course with full Arminians that faith is not a work -- else there would be a meritorious work for salvation. John 6:39 and Eph. 2:8 show that faith is not a human work -- it is "not of yourselves," but of God!

For a survey of several views on the issue, and with a specific rejection of the notion of A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* 4:525, see W. Hendriksen, *Galatians and Ephesians*, Baker: Grand Rapids, 1990, pp. 120-123. For a more extensive survey, see John Eadie, *Ephesians*, Baker: Grand Rapids, 1979 reprint, *in loco*.

I believe fully that they are responsible for it; but where do you find, You will? The word of God expressly says, No. "There is none that seeketh after God." He came to seek them, thank God, but when He came He was rejected; He was not received save by those who are born of God. This is said by the Spirit in Isa. 1, by John the Baptist, by the Lord, and by the apostle John. Now certainly God does not hinder any one from coming, but such is the disposition of the heart of man that he will not. This is why the work of God is necessary, and why it is said, "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Perhaps you will say, Every one is drawn. No, because the one who is drawn comes, and Jesus will raise him up at the last day: he is saved, see John 6:39. Therefore it is said (v. 37), "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." The Lord then expressly says what you say He does not say, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him," and He repeats (v. 65), "Therefore said I unto you that no man can come unto me except it were given unto him of my Father." Also it is written, "But ye do not believe, because ye are not of my sheep. My sheep hear my voice . . . and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish." 224

## GRACE, SALVATION, AND FAITH -- NOT OF OURSELVES

It is obvious that neither grace nor salvation is of ourselves. But faith? The person, pretending not to be totally lost, will say that 'I did exercise faith myself, even if the Spirit helped me.' 'Yes, I believe man is lost, because Scripture says so, But man is not *that* lost!' 'God cannot make a person believe.' At bottom, this allegation really means that man is *not* lost and the human will *is* morally free to exercise faith. Persons do not want to hear, and certainly refuse to believe, the true meaning of this which is, as J. N. Darby well pointed out:

. . . God . . . cannot act freely in respect of my freedom! I am free, and He is not. Then certainly I am God, not He. 225

Yes, for God to have to implant the faith means that I am not morally free. The complaint of "flesh's will" (for that is where this objection comes from, let it be said) is that by implanting the necessary faith He would violate my freedom. It is claimed that God is not free to do that. With respect to faith, I am free and God is not. Looking the meaning of such a notion in the face results in the conclusion of JND just noted.

C. H. Mackintosh, who did not believe in moral free will towards God, wrote:

Now, we thoroughly believe that faith is the gift of God, and that it is not

224. *Letters* 2:479.

225. *Collected Writings* 9:163.

according to man's will or by human power. And further, we believe that not a single soul would ever come to Christ if not drawn, yea, compelled by divine grace so to do; and therefore all who are saved have to thank the free and sovereign grace of God for it; their song is, and ever shall be, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake."

And this we believe not as part of a certain system of doctrine, but as the revealed truth of God.<sup>226</sup>

Arthur Pridham well stated the matter in summary:

But a further question yet remains. For faith may be allowed to be the instrumental means of salvation, and room still be left for a wholly false opinion as to the true nature and origin of such faith. Is saving faith, then, as is often assorted, a natural and independent effort of the human will? or, to put the question in another way, Is the record which God has given of His Son, a communication credible to the natural man? A clear and explicit negative to both these inquiries is given in the latter clause of the verse before us: "and that not of yourselves; it is the *gift* of God." It is scarcely needful to remind the Christian reader that none can really have faith in God who have not first been born of God. For it is a standing axiom of Scripture that the natural man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God {1 Cor. 2:14}. Accordingly, when the true origin of the believer is inquired for, it is discovered in such expressions as refer us immediately either to the *electing love* of God, His *calling*, or His *quickening* grace and power. While, therefore, faith on the sinner's part is the sole means by which salvation can be reached, both the Lord himself in the days of His flesh, and His Spirit afterwards by the testimony of the Apostles, have expressly referred that saving faith to *the immediate gift of God*.<sup>227</sup> ♦

To assert, therefore, as is sometimes done, that saving faith is something natural to man, is both to oppose the plainest words of Scripture, and to falsify the testimony which God has borne to the entire *helplessness* as well as sinfulness of man. That which is naturally dead in sins, *cannot* arouse itself to spiritual life. And if, while reflecting on these things, we find ourselves tempted to echo the half-despairing question of the disciples, "Who then can be saved?" the answer they received may well suffice for us: "With *men* this is impossible, but not *with God*; for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:26, 27). Salvation is of the Lord (Psa. 3:8), to whom *power* alone belongs, whether to save or to destroy. And if it again be asked, Why, then, is the Gospel preached, and that by the command of God, to every nation that is under heaven? there is a double answer: 1st., the Gospel is the instrument by means of which God works his saving work; and 2nd., God is chargeable

with no injustice (for He is the God of *grace* towards the people of His choice) in yet more completely demonstrating the native enmity of the heart of man towards Himself, by leaving His blessed Gospel to be accepted or rejected, as men list, while He entreats them to receive salvation in His Son. All, therefore, who are willing, may take freely of the waters of salvation. But who among us all was willing, until made so by the pressure of that thirst which the Holy Ghost alone produces in our souls?<sup>228</sup> ♦

Where did the faith come from that was exercised by the man healed in Acts 3?

. . . and the faith which is by him has given him this complete soundness in the presence of you all (Acts 3:16).

It was by God's servant, Jesus (Acts 3:13). Just so it is given to us to believe on Christ:

. . . because to you has been given, as regards Christ, not only the believing on him but the suffering for him also . . . (Phil. 1:29).

The Word of God, has, then, made clear that we *receive* faith:

Simon Peter, bondman and apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have received like precious faith with us . . . (2 Pet. 1:1).<sup>229</sup>

1 Cor. 2:14, as other Scriptures, bears directly on the matter that faith must be imparted by God and cannot come from the natural man:

But [the] natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him; and he cannot know [them] because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14).

"Cannot know" means inability, incapacity, to know. Thus, there must be the implantation of the new nature and faith, by the Spirit. The person must be "born of the Spirit" (John 3:6). Thus does one *receive* the new nature and faith by the operation of the Spirit. It is God who causes us to be willing:

for it is God who works in you both the willing and the working according to [his] good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).

This is part of God's "good pleasure" (Eph. 1:5, 9, with which see 2 Thess.

228. Arthur Pridham, *Notes and Reflections on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, London: Yapp, sec. ed., revised, 1862, pp. 118, 119.

229. The statement that we have received faith is so clear that it is revealing to read N. Geisler's effort to overcome this fact. He wrote:

Peter claims only that they have "received" or "obtained" (NKJV) their faith, but does not inform us exactly how they got it (*op. cit.*, p. 187 [195]).

I suppose he must think that they received it from themselves (?) Why did he not state so since he believes that faith is in the human will as its source. Knowing that faith is the gift of God we know "how they got it" and why the Word states that they received it.

226. This is the second paragraph in his paper, *One Sided Theology*.

227. John 1:12, 13. Compare, for a further confirmation of the Apostles' doctrine, that faith is the gift of God, John 6:65; Acts 27:27; Phil. 1:29; and 1 Cor. 4:7.

1:11) that has to do with election of believers.

Yes, faith is the gift of God, but it does not follow that therefore “regeneration precedes faith.” The new birth and the reception of faith occurs simultaneously. The notion that “belief precedes new birth” is likewise at fault. They occur simultaneously. The new life and faith accompany each other. John 6:47 -- “He that believes [on me] has life eternal” -- does not prove this false. The belief and the eternal life are present simultaneously. Belief in the gospel comes through grace; i.e., faith comes through grace, not through man's will:

{Apollos} who being come, contributed much to those who believed through grace (Acts 18:27).

But the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus . . . (1 Pet. 5:10).

I wonder that ye thus quickly change, from him that called you in Christ's grace . . . (Gal. 1:6).

But when God, who set me apart [even] from my mother's womb, and called [me] by his grace . . . (Gal. 1:14).

#### ALL IS OF GOD

The fact is that *all* is entirely of God: grace, salvation, and faith. Concerning those that believe on His name, Scripture excludes all agency but One:

who have been born, not of blood, nor of flesh's will, nor of man's will, but of God (John 1:13).

The new birth is (1) not by blood relationship, (2) not by one's own flesh's will, (3) nor by any man's will, **but of God**. All agency is excluded but the divine will. Thus, take as an example:

. . . what hast thou but what thou hast received? (1 Cor. 4:17).

Well, the force of this must be thwarted -- the “flesh's will” and “man's will” elaborate arguments against this because ‘it violates man's freedom’ if we have received everything, even faith. It cannot mean we have received everything from God (including faith) because that would violate man's freedom. How, then thwart it? That is easy. Say that the text makes no application to receiving faith. Then make it refer to the gifts in 1 Cor. 12:4-11; etc.<sup>230</sup> The truth is that man is not morally free. He is totally lost, totally ruined, and bound morally.

C. H. Mackintosh observed:

Sadly, there is a fearful amount of darkness and error in the professing

230. N. Geisler, *op. cit.*, p. 184 [190].

Church as to this simple truth of the gospel. Man's total ruin is denied or reasoned away in one way or another . . .<sup>231</sup>

J. N. Darby wrote:

Not only Christ is my life, but I am crucified with Him. I am the same person living by the life of Christ, not by my own life. As a child of Adam I own myself totally lost.<sup>232</sup> God comes and gives me a new life in Christ. All Christ's death is available for me; so I reckon myself crucified with Christ. I not only have a new life, but I reckon the old one dead. I say to the flesh, You have been judged on the cross, I have nothing more to say to you. Then I ought to be “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,” always living in this way. I am not in the flesh before God; I am in Christ, and I know it in the Holy Ghost. Col. 3:3 is God's statement about death. Rom. 5, we believe it, reckon it true. 2 Cor. 4, we carry it out in practice.<sup>233</sup>

#### ETERNAL SECURITY

There are many who believe that faith is not the gift of God, (because, at bottom, that would violate man's alleged free will) and who also hold that once they are saved they *cannot* be lost again. They will not acknowledge it to be so that if they *cannot* be lost again, they are believing in a violation of their alleged free will. They were saved by an act of their own fickle will, but *cannot* be lost by another act of that fickle will! They were saved by an act of mere human faith, but cannot be lost again by any failure in mere human faith. It is obvious that they believe *what they want to believe*.

Let us hear D. Hunt quote Robert M. Zins and answer the question, “how can you be sure that some time you may decide to say no to God -- even in eternity in heaven”:

It is ironic that many . . . who adamantly argue that God forces no one to come to Him have no problem believing that God forces those who have come to Him *to stay with Him*. For most evangelicals, free will mysteriously disappears after one chooses salvation . . . “God will not make you come, but He will make you stay,” might be their theological argument {Zins}.

Al asked Jan about this, and her reply was as simple as the Bible itself: “Why would I ever want to give up heaven. There would be nothing to tempt me away from our Lord, who is so wonderful that nothing could!”<sup>234</sup>

Notice that he confined this non-answer to heaven (which does not change the matter anyway), avoiding to answer for the time here on earth -- where there

231. *Short Papers*.

232. See also *Letters* 1:315; *Collected Writings* 34:264; 10:186.

233. From *Helps in Things Concerning Himself* 2:124-132.

234. *What Love is This?*, p. 411.



clearly *is* temptation. What else is clear is that R. Zins' characterization of the notion of coupling moral free will towards God and the doctrine of eternal security is exactly described by the words "God will not make you come, but He will make you stay." How blessed it is that:

. . . it is God who works in you both the willing and the working according to his good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).

### OBEY THE GOSPEL

**No Choice.** I was in my twenties when I discovered from reading the Word of God that the gospel comes as a matter of obedience to it, not as a choice. In particular, I saw that using Josh. 24:15,

. . . choose you this day whom ye will serve . . . ,

in gospel preaching was falsifying the claims of the gospel. The phrase is thus taken and falsified in two ways, for it is taken from its immediate context, which is that of choosing which gods they would choose to serve if serving Jehovah seemed evil to them. The conclusion of this matter was that Joshua declared:

Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you Jehovah, to serve him (Josh. 24:22).

Alas, it was but human choice and witnessed, not for, but against them; and thus the matter rested on shifting sand as their history demonstrated.

Concerning obeying the gospel we read:

. . . in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who know not God, and those who do not obey the glad tidings of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1:8).

But they have not all obeyed the glad tidings (Rom. 10:16).

. . . what [shall be] the end of those that obey not the glad tidings of God? (1 Pet. 4:17).

. . . obedience of faith among all the nations (Rom. 1:5).

Even the *mystery* is a matter of obedience:

. . . which has now been made manifest . . . made known for the obedience of faith to all the nations (Rom. 16:25).

In *Scripture*, the gospel is presented as something to be obeyed. It is never a choice. Souls need to learn this at the *start* of the Christian pathway: **no choice!** God is to be obeyed! In keeping with this is Acts 17:30:

God . . . now enjoins men that they shall everywhere repent . . .

These things address man's responsibility to obey. Inability to pay does not relieve from responsibility! You yourself do not go to one who owes you \$100,000 and has nothing at all, and say that that is alright -- since you cannot pay, therefore you are not responsible to pay! Inability to pay does not relieve

from the responsibility to pay.

It is God Who implants, by sovereign grace, faith and the new nature into the soul. Thus the soul can obey. The action of the divine Persons in salvation is wonderfully stated in 1 Pet. 1:2:

elect according to [the] foreknowledge of God [the} Father, by sanctification of [the] Spirit, unto [the] blood of Jesus Christ . . .

**Lazarus' Case a Helpful Illustration of Death and Quickening.** God uses His Word in connection with the implantation of faith and the new nature (Rom. 10:17). This is how the soul receives life from God. The bringing back Lazarus to life is illustrative of this. But first we must observe what the Son of God said in John 5:25, where we learn that sinners are viewed as dead:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that an hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard shall live.

The "hour" refers to the epoch of Christianity on the earth. Here, sinners are viewed similarly to Eph. 2:1. It is obvious that the divine power of the Son's Word is what gives life in the soul. The reason the spiritually dead hear is because the divine power of the Son's Word gives the hearing, gives life, and gives faith, gives the new nature. This is illustrated by the restoration of Lazarus to life. This command of the Son of God was specific:

Lazarus, come forth. And the dead came forth, bound feet and hands with graveclothes . . . (John 11:44).

His life was immediately in him and by the Son's power he was transported into His presence. How did Lazarus hear? You know how he heard. The voice of power of the Son of God gave him the hearing, and gave him the life. And this is illustrative of John 5:25.

It is claimed that repentant faith precedes the new birth. It seems that this idea is implicit in all denials of unconditional election. Thus, someone referring to John 5:25 wrote:

Note that Christ did not say that the regenerated shall hear! They are dead when they hear!

It is not clear if he meant that they are dead when they hear the gospel. But that is entirely beside the mark. Lazarus was dead when he heard the command. How did he hear? The hearing and the implantation of life were simultaneous. So is the case with quickening. Speaking of this spiritual matter the Lord said:

. . . the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard shall live (John 5:25).

The hearing the voice of the Son of God and the impartation of life go

together, as this text shows. Quickening (making alive) is simultaneous with hearing the voice of the Son of God. Lazarus' case illustrates the fact. Bear in mind that the impartation of life to the dead sinner is the new birth.

"Hear" in John 5:25 cannot mean simply hearing the gospel because "they that have heard shall live" and not everyone who hears the gospel lives. "The voice of the Son of God" in this text refers to the commanding power which implants life. Having this life, having the new nature, the person repents.

## CONCLUSION

Well did C. H. Mackintosh write:

Thus, in every volume of man's history the history of the human race in every section, every page, every paragraph, every line, we read of his total ruin, his utter alienation from God. We are taught in the most distinct manner possible that, if left to himself, he never could and never would though most surely he should turn to God and do works proper for repentance. And in perfect keeping with all this, we learn from our Lord's parable of the great supper in Luke 14 that not so much as a single merely invited guest will be found at the table. All who sit down there are "brought" or "compelled." Not one ever would come if left to himself. Grace, free grace, must force them in; and so it does, blessed forever be the God of all grace!<sup>235</sup>

### 235. "Responsibility and Power," *Short Papers*.

{It is difficult to help those people who liken sin in the flesh to a disease so that the sinner may, as a sinner, ask God to "heal," or "cure" him. Such persons do not see that one asks God for help because God has first implanted a new nature, with accompanying faith, into a person. Most do not even want to see that great, God-honoring fact.

Sin is not a disease that gets healed by God. The saved have "sin in the flesh" remaining in them just as before, as Rom. 7:25 shows. The two natures are both present in their respective, fixed, moral character. Did God forget to heal it? Salvation does not modify "sin in the flesh" in any way, or degree, whatsoever. The "disease" idea of lost man's spiritually dead condition is nothing but another effort to overthrow the truth of unconditional election and the truth that man's will is morally bound by the old nature.

Sin is a working of moral corruption in the soul. In us is "the law of sin" (Rom. 7:23) and it held the man in Rom. 7 captive. A "law" is a fixed principle of operation. By "fixed" is meant the unvarying character of operation, which is what is meant by a "law." The reason the man in Rom. 7 wants deliverance (Rom. 7:24) is because he has "the inward man" (Rom. 7:22), i.e., he has the new nature. He needs to be set free by looking to the true character of the finished work, though he is looking to the Person Who did the work. When he rests on the finished work, he is sealed, and gets into the joy of Rom. 8:1-3. Thus he is free from the law of sin and of death -- i.e., he is free from its mastery over him (as in Rom. 7). This does not mean that the law of sin and of death has been eradicated, nor has it been modified in any manner. That in *God's sight*, in virtue of the value and power of the blood of Christ we have a perfect standing, does not affect the fact that here on earth we continue to have "sin in the flesh" in us.

Most Christians do not understand that God implants a new nature, with accompanying faith,  
(continued...)

And this is the judgment, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light; for their works were evil (John 3:19).

. . . but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father (John 15:24).

. . . there is not one that seeks after God. All have gone out of the way, they have together become unprofitable; there is not one that practices goodness, there is not so much as one (Rom. 3:11, 12).

For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, good does not dwell (Rom. 7:18).

. . . and they that are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:8).

Considering Eph. 4:17-20, how gracious it is of God to implant a new nature, with accompanying faith, into our souls.

. . . he who has begun in you a good work will complete it unto Jesus Christ's day (Phil. 1:6).

. . . you, who are kept guarded by [the] power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in [the] last time (1 Pet. 1:5).

This divinely given faith is the instrument through which God so works.

## *The Purpose of the Ages*

. . . according to [the] purpose of the ages, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:11).

The purpose of the ages means an eternal purpose. It does not mean that God had a purpose to unfold salvation during the various ages. The purpose of the ages being "purposed in Christ Jesus" shows that this purpose of the ages is eternal. This is not a reference to when Christ was here on earth. God's purpose is to glorify Himself in Christ, in two spheres, the heavenly and the earthly. It is the heavenly side which is brought out in Ephesians and involves the church as connected with Christ, we being seated in the heavenlies, in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6).

God's glory in Christ, in the earthly places, has Israel connected with Christ. That aspect of His purpose will be realized in the millennium. It is spoken of in Isa. 14:24-27:

(24) Jehovah of hosts hath sworn saying, Assuredly as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, it shall stand: (25) to break the Assyrian in my land; and upon my mountains will I tread him under foot; and his yoke shall depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their

### 235. (...continued)

and when hearing this doctrine, reject it. See *From New Birth to New Creation* for much more on these things.}

shoulders. (26) This is the counsel which is purposed concerning the whole earth; and this is the hand which is stretched out upon all the nations. (27) For Jehovah of hosts hath purposed, and who shall frustrate [it]?

And finally God will clear the universe of all evil, creating the new heavens and the new earth, the church having eternally its distinctive place before Him (Eph. 3:21), while the earthly distinctions will pass away. This is seen in Rev. 21:1-8 where the "tabernacle of God," i.e., the church, is "with men." And God Himself will tabernacle with them, and they shall be His people. The tabernacle of God is the holy city, new Jerusalem, which is the bride, the Lamb's wife (Rev. 21:9, 10).

## Chapter 7

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### *God's Sovereignty in Peter: Election and Foreknowledge*

#### *Elect According to the Foreknowledge of God the Father*

The Epistles of Peter, as also Hebrews, view the saints as pilgrims and strangers in this world. These books answer to the type of the wilderness journey of Israel. God's sovereignty is an encouragement to His own who are now on the journey in wilderness circumstances. Thus, the subject of God's government is seen, in 1 Peter in support of His own, and in 2 Peter as against the world and evil. 1 Peter begins with a most precious truth for the pilgrims and strangers in this world:

. . . elect according to [the] foreknowledge of God [the] Father, by sanctification of [the] Spirit, unto [the] obedience and sprinkling of [the] blood of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:2).

This epistle is addressed to the sojourners of the Jewish dispersion (the diaspora) who, really, are those spoken of in Rom. 11:5:

Thus, then, in the present time also there has been a remnant according to the election of grace.

Besides that fact, these are also the "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16). This is not to say that 1 Pet. 1:2 has no application to Gentile believers. Moreover, while an elect one may not be part of a remnant, election itself is always of grace. Considering the text, we may view 1 Pet. 1:2 in three parts, forming one whole.

#### **ELECT ACCORDING TO (THE) FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD (THE) FATHER**

Later we will look at 1 Pet. 1:20 where the word "foreknown" is used. What is said there has a bearing on the use and intent of the word "foreknowledge" used here, as does Rom. 8:29, 30. Peter had also used the word in Acts 2:23 as had Paul in Rom. 8:29 and Rom. 11:2.

Here we have not the *national election* of Israel as in Rom. 11:2. Now, the gifts and calling of God are without repentance (Rom. 11:29), i.e., they are unalterable and sure, and the ancient promises will be made good to the new Israel under the new covenant when Messiah reigns before His ancients in glory (Isa. 24:23). Here in 1 Pet. 1:2 we have not the choice of the people by Jehovah to be an earthly people for Himself. Here we have *individual election*. Of course it is individual. There is no such thing as a "corporate election" of the church. The *national* election of Israel is easy to show (see Rom. 11:2; Amos 3:2), but election is not said in the Word of God of the church, as such. Another remarked:

It would not be correct to speak of the church as "elect," though it be true of all the members who compose it. Here some fail in their apprehension of the mind of God. They like to think of the church as a whole as elect, leaving it an open question as to individual believers, who may, in their judgment, be finally disowned<sup>236</sup> after all. But Scripture is decisive and clear. Election is a truth of God, but it concerns individual believers, not the church as such.<sup>237</sup>

These Hebrew Christians were those who, as we saw from Eph. 1:12, had "pre-trusted" in Christ, i.e., before (pre-) the reign of Messiah in the millennium. But we Gentiles share in the blessedness of 1 Pet. 1:2.

The epistle of Peter views the Christian as in the wilderness, hence the words to them about their being strangers and sojourners (1 Pet. 2:11) and the other features of the book that denote this view. Not having obtained the national blessing, they have been brought into something higher and they are immediately directed into the blessed truth of v. 2. This is not presented as in Eph. 1 where the glory of God is repeatedly brought before us in connection with our place before Him (Christ's place being our place) and in view of Christ and the inheritance. Here, election is a great comfort for the pilgrim pathway. The Father has elected each one according to His foreknowledge, that particular and discriminatory foreknowledge that we observed when considering Rom. 8:29, 30, and wrought/worked by the Spirit to bring the lost one to a place before Himself characterized by two things in *Christ's own pathway* when on earth: namely, the obedience of Christ and the sprinkling of the blood of Christ.

Note well, in view of those whom Peter directly addresses, this is not law-obedience and it is not the blood of Jewish sacrifices. It seems that "sprinkling

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236. {Be "finally disowned" is referring to the idea of being lost again. That is because the doctrine of moral free will towards God is involved with the notion of a corporate election of the church.}

237. *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 1:330.

of [the] blood" has in view the OT sprinkling of blood, but not that Christ's blood has been literally sprinkled. It speaks of the value of the blood of Christ and the believer's place before the Father according to the value of that blood.

#### BY <sup>238</sup> SANCTIFICATION OF [THE] SPIRIT

Those to whom Peter wrote were not sanctified by ordinances. Briefly, this setting the believer apart to God (sanctification) by (ἐν), i.e., by virtue of, or in the power of, the Spirit, is positional sanctification <sup>239</sup> and has an object -- pointed out below. Positional sanctification is a position of being set apart to God, referred to in other passages also (Heb. 10:10, 14 for example <sup>240</sup>), into which all are brought, though some passages (1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 12:14) speak of progressive sanctification in the life of the believer. This non-progressive, positional setting apart to God is true from the instant of the new birth, whatever the ways of God with the soul subsequently.

#### UNTO (THE) OBEDIENCE AND SPRINKLING OF (THE) BLOOD OF JESUS

238. W. Kelly's critical comments on "by" or "in" are collected together in *Two Nineteenth Century Versions of the New Testament*, pp. 642-644 (available from the publisher) as well as comments on "unto" the obedience, etc.

239. W. Kelly remarked:

To speak of "imputed sanctification" is to diverge from scriptural truth. But sanctification is not merely in practice, which is always imperfect and admits of varying degrees. Mr. G. and his defender were not aware that the word of God speaks of a sanctification by a new nature coincident with being born anew, and antecedent not only to practical holiness but even to justification, of which popular theology is wholly ignorant. It is identical with saintship. This is meant in 1 Cor. 6:11: "But ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The order stated is exact; but it perplexes all who draw their doctrines from man instead of from scripture. 1 Pet. 1:2 may make this truth clear to those that doubt: "elect according to foreknowledge of a Father God, by (or, in) sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ." Here too the ordinary teaching is at sea. Yet the truth revealed is certain and plain. Election as God's children is shown in sanctification of the Spirit for obeying as (not the Jews, but) Christ obeyed, and His blood-sprinkling which cleanses from all sin, that is, for justification. There is a real and vital sanctifying by the Spirit when we are converted to God before we obey as God's sons and know ourselves justified. It is a life setting-apart to God, which precedes acceptance, and is overlooked by universal theology, Arminian and Calvinistic; but Scripture, as here shown, makes much of it.

240. "By the which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10). This is one among the number of "once for all" things stated in Hebrews, a characteristic of the book. Also, "For by one offering he has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified" (v. 14). If sanctified, you are perfected in perpetuity, which is quite contrary to the notion of being lost again, unless perpetuity means temporarily -- which it does not.

#### CHRIST

"Unto" (εἰς) indicates that the objective is obedience . . . of Jesus Christ. Now, note that the order in 1 Pet. 1:2 states the reverse of what is said by those who allege man's moral free will towards God. Their view really is that a person is elected because of his free-willed obedience to the gospel; that in God's foreknowledge He saw that they would obey the gospel and therefore He elected them. This is the inverse of the direct statement, here, about the matter. Obedience is the *result*, not the *cause*, of the election and foreknowledge. Look again: "elect . . . unto [the] obedience . . . of Jesus Christ." That is the opposite of saying 'elect . . . on account of obedience' of the sinner.

The obedience in view has a character, and that character is the character of Christ's obedience, noted in the quotation below. God has sanctified us to obedience of the same character as Christ showed here on earth.

And also we stand in the value of the blood. These two things (Christ's obedience and Christ's blood) stand in contrast with Ex. 24, where there was only, really, an external separation to Jehovah, for law-obedience, with the blood signifying death.

The sprinkling of the blood in 1 Pet. 1:2 is used with reference to salvation. There is never re-sprinkling of the blood. There is the sprinkling of the blood of the covenant (the covenant sealed), and the leper sprinkled, and the priest sprinkled; but there is no re-sprinkling. In Num. 19 when a man had to be restored, the ashes were put into running water, and then he was sprinkled with it. The Spirit of God brought to remembrance what the blood had done in putting away sin long ago. For a ground of communion, the blood was always there before God, seven times sprinkled. The ashes were brought, to say, Sin was dealt with long ago: how came you to defile yourself, forgetting that you were purged? Leviticus is the book of the offerings, but we have this in Numbers as it applied to our path and journeyings.

In "sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood," we are sanctified to the obedience and blood-sprinkling of Christ; and Christ's obedience is not what we are apt to think of as obedience, but in its nature quite different from legal obedience, because the law of God meets a will of mine and says, You must not do this or that. But Christ says, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." And in Christ's obedience the will of the Father was His motive. Suppose my child was anxious to run out and see the judges come in, and I say, Sit down and do your lesson; and he then does so cheerfully. This is all well, but Christ never obeyed in that way. He had no will of His own to be first stopped. I have a will, and it is obedience, when it is checked, to stop. The only apparent case of anything of the kind in Christ was when wrath was coming in, and in itself He could not desire that; yet He adds, "not my will but thine be done." In ourselves we never ought to do

anything, except because it is positively God's will. In the passage, the object is put first, and the blood sprinkling next.<sup>241</sup>

See also the notes on "foreknown" in the discussion of Rom. 8:29 where we saw that the foreknowledge, being foreknowledge of persons, was selective and discriminatory, not the general prescience or omniscience of God. Similarly, this foreknowledge is not about conduct, but of persons, and persons foreknown of Him as in Christ.

### *Christ, Foreknown Indeed Before [the] Foundation of the World*

. . . but by precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, [the blood] of Christ, foreknown indeed before [the] foundation of the world, but who has been manifested at the end of times for your sakes . . . (1 Pet. 1:20).

We must distinguish between blessings connected with the expression "from the world's foundation" compared with what is stated to be from "before the foundation of the world." What is for the nation of Israel, as such, is said to be from the foundation of the world. Here, the Hebrew believers, i.e., those chosen according to the election of grace as individuals, are brought into present blessings. Well did W. Kelly remark:

Such language is never employed about the divine dealings with Israel. Rich and large as are the promises to the fathers, they never go back into eternity as here. Men may reason in an abstract manner on prescience and omniscience; but the fact is plain, that God did not speak to the fathers nor through the prophets of blessings before the world's foundation. They were made in time, however enduring they may be.<sup>242</sup>

In passing, we may observe that the national blessings for Israel endure as long as the present sun and moon endure, not in the eternal state. However, the church shall have a distinct, eternal place (Eph. 3:21, etc.).

But let us come to the issue; Christ was foreknown from eternity, really. "Foreknown" concerns His Person, not the blood (though omnisciently God knows all) -- as the words "who has been manifested" show. "Who" refers back to Christ, foreknown. Did God "look down the avenue of time" to see what Christ would do and then respond to that as if He is a contingent God? Really, it is a terrible thought. Really, it involves quite bad and unacceptable thoughts about Christ that lower His glory as God and man, for in Him

241. *Collected Writings* 26:310, 311. See also 34:303; 16:184-185, 192-194.

242. *Exposition of 1 Peter, in loco*.

Godhood and manhood are indissolubly united from the moment of conception by the overshadowing power of the Spirit. The manhood that the Son took into His Person was in itself holy (Luke 1:35).

The wonderful fact is that as Christ was foreknown from before the world's foundation, so were we foreknown. God's foreknowing us is of the same character as His foreknowing Christ. Think of such a thing. It is part of Christ's place before the Father being our place also, as we considered in looking at Eph. 1 and 2. "Chosen us in him before [the] world's foundation" (Eph. 1:4). Oh, how sweet to our souls is such wonderful truth. So much are we bound up with Christ that we read:

Because whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated [to be] conformed to the image of his Son, so that he should be the firstborn of many brethren (Rom. 8:29).

There will be many brethren before the Father, like His beloved Son, conformed to His image; Who, of course, as firstborn, has the preeminence.

Let us rejoice in the truth, then, that the character of God's foreknowledge of Christ is the character of His foreknowledge of those who are to be conformed to the image of His Son. This is a *specific aspect* of God's foreknowledge in connection with those He purposed to be *in Christ*. All this is un contingent on any alleged moral free will of man toward's God. It is God's acting for His glory in Christ in the heavenlies. And in keeping with this we Christians are bound up in the same bundle of the foreknowledge of God concerning this place before Himself.

#### *Bound together in the Bundle of Divine Sovereignty*

	ELECTION	CHOSEN	FOREKNOWN
CHRIST	1 Pet. 2:6	1 Pet. 2:4	1 Pet. 1:19, 20
CHRISTIANS	1 Pet. 1:2	1 Pet. 2:9	1 Pet. 1:2

**. . . I have written to you briefly; exhorting and testifying that this is [the] true grace of God in which ye stand (1 Pet. 5:12).**

Christ is also referred to as elect in Isa. 42:1. Cf. Matt. 12:18.

No doubt election and choice have something to do with Israel's future as the new Israel under the new covenant, but that is not the subject here. What

is in the table above has to do with saints who compose the assembly of God now.

Perhaps you have noticed that the entries in the table for Christ are all from 1 Peter, a book of Scripture which views the saints in what answers to the typical aspect of the wilderness journey of Israel. Note, also, the entries from 1 Peter regarding the saints. It is good for us as strangers and sojourners here (1 Pet. 2:11) to have the eye of faith fixed upon Christ presented in these ways. It brings before the pilgrim the sovereignty of God displayed in His Christ. The pilgrim is bound up with Christ in the bundle of that divine sovereignty.

Moreover, the character of 1 Peter is the government of God in favor and support of His people, looked at as in the wilderness, as strangers and pilgrims. It is an appropriate thought for us in the wilderness journey to savor that we are bound up in the same bundle of divine sovereignty with Himself, though in present circumstances.

In 2 Peter we see the government of God also, but against the world and evil. In the midst of all this let us have the eye of faith on the Shekinah as we are led through this wilderness where we have no home; for we really are strangers and pilgrims here, our commonwealth being in heaven from where we are looking for the Savior (Phil. 3:20, 21).

### *Not Willing that Any Should Perish; and Reprobation*

Before considering 2 Pet. 3:9, we shall first look at 1 Tim. 2:4 and some other Scriptures. Many Calvinists restrict "all" in such a texts, as they do in some other texts, to mean classes of men, not all individuals. What is at the bottom of this is the restriction of God's love to only the elect, not seeing the general love of God and that this general love does not set aside unconditional election. So just following our examination of 1 Tim. 2:4 we will review some passages that speak of all men.

#### 1 Tim. 2:4

. . . our Savior God, who desires<sup>243</sup> that all men should be saved and come

243. W. Kelly remarked:

. . . why should the Revisers {1881 Revised Version} give "desiring" (θέλω) in 1:7, and "willeth" (θ.) here, but "desire" βούλομαι in 8? In 2 Pet. 3:9 they render β. "wishing." Why this looseness and caprice? Buttmann's distinction (Lexil. i. 26), that  
(continued...)

to [the] knowledge of the truth.

The right understanding of this text is that all men means every individual but the verse does not mean that God's decretive will is that every individual be saved. Coupled with this is v. 6 which also refers to all individuals but does not mean that Christ bore every person's sins substitutionally. 1 Tim. 2:6 is explained in detail in *The Work of Christ on the Cross and Some of Its Results*, available from the publisher. The distinction between 1 Tim. 2:6 and Matt. 20:28 is shown in that book, as well as the fact that "ransom" and "redemption" are not identical. Moreover, the distinction between purchase (bought) and redemption is often not apprehended, as W. Kelly pointed out, and this has led to much mishandling of many texts.

This text in no way denies unconditional election. Calvinists who see the *will of decree* in this verse must necessarily have "all" mean, not every individual, but every kind of men, or *all classes* of men -- because, if it meant the will of decree *and* every person, then every person would ultimately be saved. Since not every person is saved, then either the verse expresses God's *desire*, or else it refers to classes of people, not to every individual. Since many Calvinists insist that God's will of decree is meant, they assert that "all men" means all classes of men. Their procedure is to direct attention to passages that they think clearly use the word "all" in this restricted sense and then view this passage in the same way.<sup>244</sup> After having done this, W. Hendriksen wrote:

Even today, how often do we not use the expression "all men" or "everybody" without referring to every member of the human race? When we say, "If everybody is ready, the meeting can begin," we do not refer to everybody on earth! {But we do refer to every individual in the room where the meeting is! The analogy is false.}

Thus also in the present passage (1 Tim. 2:1), it is *the context* that must decide. In this case the context is clear. Paul definitely mentions *groups* or *classes* of men: kings (verse 2), those in high position (verse 2), the Gentiles (verse 7). He is thinking of rulers and (by implication) subjects, of Gentiles

243. (...continued)

Θ. [ἐθέλω] is not only the more general expression for willing, which is true, but that kind especially where a purpose is included, as compared with β., which implies a mere acquiescence in the will of others, seems to be quite untenable even in Homer. It is β. which is used especially to express mind or purpose if required. Mr. Green is also faulty in giving just the same force to the two different words in 1 Tim. 2:3 {sic, 4} and 2 Pet. 3:9; so indeed are the old well-known English versions (*The Bible Treasury* 14:30).

244. For example, George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p. 113ff, 1992.

and (again by implication) Jews, and he is urging Timothy to see to it that in public worship not a single group be omitted. In other words, the expression "all men" as here used means "all men without distinction of race, nationality, or social position," not "all men individually, one by one."

Besides, how would it even be possible, except in a very vague and global manner (the very opposite of *Paul's* constant emphasis!), to remember in prayer *every person on earth*?

2. In explanation of the expression "in behalf of all men" the apostle continues: in behalf of kings and all who are in high position.<sup>245</sup>

Let us begin with: "Paul definitely mentions *groups* or *classes* of men: kings (verse 2), those in high position (verse 2) . . ." 1 Tim. 2:2 states:

for kings and all that are in dignity . . .

While I would not take this to mean that we are to pray for each king by name, and each person in the world who is in dignity by name, is our prayer for such to be inclusive of every individual king and every individual person in dignity? – or ought we to exclude some? That is, is our prayer for them to comprehend within the prayer every single one of them? -- "that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life . . ." (v. 2). Notice that W. Hendriksen definitely excludes "everybody on earth" from "all men" although he includes all classes of men. Would it not follow from what he claims that the words "all that are in dignity" excludes the meaning 'everybody in dignity' but includes all classes of men that are in dignity? We are to pray for the class "kings," and the class "rulers," and the class "governors," and the class "mayors," and the class "magistrates," and so on. So if I do not like some particular person in dignity, I do not have to pray for him in particular, because some individuals are excludable while I pray for all *classes* in a general way. This might remind us that Christ was sent to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24). Why limit this to classes of lost sheep of Israel, instead of to all the individual lost sheep?

There follows this direction concerning prayer, that has in view tranquility and godliness of His people, the statement that God desires that all men should be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). After that comes the statement:

For God is one, and [the] mediator of God and men one, [the] man Christ Jesus . . . (1 Tim. 2:5).

Are we to suppose "men" here means "all sorts, or all classes, of men"? The question is, is Christ the mediator of every individual and God or is He the mediator of classes of men and God? Is He the mediator of "kings and all that are in dignity," and of Jews and Gentiles, but not of every individual? We

245. *The Epistles to Timothy & Titus*, London: Banner of TruthTrust, p. 94, 1959.

have "men" on the one side, God on the other side, and the Mediator between; a man. There is God on one hand, a man the Mediator, and men on the other hand.<sup>246</sup> Let us return to 1 Tim. 2:4:

. . . our Savior God, who desires that all men be saved and come to [the] knowledge of [the] truth.

The verse shows that God hinders no one from being saved and coming to the knowledge of the truth. There is no decree of God preventing them, no decree of reprobation. It is man's willful refusal to come to the great supper that is the reason they are not there. The will of man refuses, yet the gospel is for *all men*. However, those that do come to God's great supper do so because they are compelled to come in, meaning that God implants in them a new nature and faith.

R. K. McGregor Wright gives the following meaning for "all" in 1 Tim. 2:1-6:

"all men" v. 1	"all kinds of people"
"all men" v. 4	"'all of God's people' or 'all kinds of people'"
"men" v. 5	{no comment}
"all" v. 6	"'all of God's people' or 'all kinds of people'"

And why is this necessary? He is rebutting the idea of Christ dying *substitutionally* for everyone by doing this and then says, "The passage is now, as I have put it, removed from the Arminian arsenal."<sup>247</sup> I must note one more point from him, namely an argument why "all existing human beings" is not meant by "all" -- instead of saying 'all presently living human beings on earth.' So, having set up a straw-man (i.e., cannot mean "all existing human beings"), he knocks him down by saying that the phrase would include those in hell and that could not be. So he concludes it means "all classes of people" -- as if there will not be "classes of people" in hell ("kings," to take an example from our chapter). The Calvinistic reasoning that goes into numbers of texts is just as wearisome as Arminian reasoning that

246. And then comes v. 6, which is discussed in the book, *The Work of Christ on the Cross and Some of Its Results*. It means exactly all men but does not mean that Christ is the substitute for all men as if He bore their sins in His body on the tree (1 Pet. 2:24). Were they really only all classes of men?

247. *No Place for Sovereignty, What's Wrong with Freewill Theism*, Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, pp. 171, 172, 1996.



goes into numbers of texts. Arminians work around texts which stand in the way of moral free will towards God. Calvinists work around a number of the uses of "all" in Scripture when they think that the word "all" should be restricted to the elect only. The view presented here rejects both the Arminian and Calvinistic explanation.

However, the Calvinist, John Piper, in an article, "Are There Two Wills in God?", rightly takes the position that "all men" in v. 4 means just that. And, the reason that not all are saved is, he says, because:

there is something that He wills more, which would be lost if He exerted his sovereign power to save all . . . The answer given by Calvinists is that the greater value is the manifestation of the full range of God's glory in wrath and mercy (Rom. 9:22-23) and the humbling of man so that he enjoys giving all credit to God for His salvation (1 Cor. 1:29).<sup>248</sup>

This is true. I would have given an answer in terms of the nature of God, in terms of what God is; namely, *God is light*, and *God is love*: that there shall be the eternal display of this in the eternal, conscious punishment of the wicked, and in the eternal, conscious blessedness of the saved. God permitted the entrance of evil that the glory of His nature as light might shine in the punishment of sin as an affront to that glory. In the case of the elect, God also uses sin in the display of His nature as love, for *He* provided His Son's sacrifice for sin on the cross, and by sovereign grace fits such for an eternity with Himself. He glorifies Himself in them as the trophies of His love. Thus, we have God glorified in all that He is: as light and as love. And we should keep in mind that God has dealt with our sins on the cross, according to what He is as light, and is thus just in justifying the believer. It gives us peace to know that God has righteously dealt with our sins (as well as what we are as characterized by the old nature). Those viewed by God as in Christ are the chargeless elect (Rom. 8:33; and see Eph. 1:4). No wonder that A. C. Brown so often said that "grace is God for us in all that He is, in spite of what we are in ourselves." God the omnipotent One has shown what evil is, an offense against His majesty, nature, and glory, and has undertaken to glorify Himself with respect to evil.

John Piper has also noted that such an explanation concerning God's "two wills" does justice to Ezek. 18:23, 32 and 33:11. None of this precludes God's will of unconditional election.

## ALL MEN

248. From, Thomas Schreiner and Bruce Ware, editors, *Still Sovereign*, Grand Rapids: Baker, pp. 123, 124, 2000.

Regarding the use of "all men" in 2 Tim. 2, George W. Knight III wrote:

What does "all people" (πάντες ἄνθρωποι), Acts 22:15; Rom. 5:12a, 18a, b; 12:17, 18; 1 Cor. 7:7; 15:19; 2 Cor. 3:2; Phil. 4:5; 1 Thes. 2:15; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Tit. 2:11; 3:2) mean? The repetition of ὑπέρ and further specification, as a subgroup, of civil rulers (v. 2) points in the direction of meaning all *kinds* of people.<sup>249</sup>

Let us look at each of these texts alleged to mean all *kinds* of people, not all individuals

### Acts 22:15.

. . . for thou shalt be a witness for him to all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

Since Paul did not personally witness to every individual on the globe, the solution sought is that this must mean all *kinds* of men. May we ask how many *kinds* of men are on the earth? Did Paul witness to each of these *kinds* of men? I am not aware of how Calvinists define, or limit, the *kinds* of men so as to fit the case. The better explanation is that a testimony was not personally rendered to all men, but that it had all men in view.

### Rom. 5:12.

For this [cause], even as by one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death; and thus death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned . . .

How could anyone pretend to drag the notion of all *kinds* of men into this when it is so clear that every individual is meant?

### Rom. 5:18.

So then as [it was] by one offence towards all men to condemnation, so by one righteousness towards all men for justification of life.

This is a statement of the bearing, or thrust, of the respective actions, not the actual effect. In the case of Adam's offence, we learn from Rom. 5:12 that the effect was that it did indeed result in death passing upon all men. However, we do not read in Scripture that the thrust of the one righteousness of Christ effected justification of life for all men. All men means every individual.

### Rom. 12:17, 18.

Recompensing to no one evil for evil: providing things honest before all men; if possible, as far as depends on you, living in peace with all men.

I suppose the notion is that since no one does this before every individual on the earth, therefore all *kinds* of men are meant. Does any Christian do this before all *kinds* of men? Is that supposed to be possible? Will someone provide

249. *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p. 115, 1992.

us with an authoritative listing of all the *kinds* of men? -- so that we Christians may be sure to obey and do it before all those *kinds* of men. Recompensing no one evil for evil has to do with any individual with whom we have to do. "All men" has all men in view, and wherever we find ourselves among them, we have directions here for our conduct.

### 1 Cor. 7:7.

Now I wish all men to be even as myself; but every one has his own gift of God: one man thus, and another thus. But I say to the unmarried, and to the widows, It is good for them that they remain even as I (1 Cor. 7:7, 8).

"All men" here has in view Christians -- *all* Christians; but every one of the Christians has his own gift of God regarding marriage. However, regarding every one of the unmarried and every one of the widows, "it is good for them that they remain even as I," "to be even as myself."

### 1 Cor. 15:19.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are [the] most miserable of all men.

"We" refers to all Christians and "all men" refers to all Christians and non-Christians, i.e., all men.

### 2 Cor. 3:2.

*Ye* are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read of all men . . .

Were the Corinthians known and read of all *kinds* of men because every individual around the globe read them? Could there be some *kinds* of men that did not read them, located far from Corinth? I suggest that the appeal to the idea of all *kinds* of men is not actually helpful, though many Calvinists think it necessary in order to maintain unconditional election.

### Phil. 4:5.

Let your gentleness be known of all men.

The same objection regarding all *kinds* of men applies.

### 1 Tim. 2:4.

We have discussed this, as well as some other uses of "all," above.

### 1 Tim. 4:10.

God, who is a preserver of all men, specially of those that believe.

Perhaps the notion is that since a group of persons, "those that believe," is mentioned, that therefore God is the preserver of all *kinds* of men but not of every individual? God is the preserver of every individual, including every Christian, but especially so of Christians.

### Titus 2:11.

For the grace of God which carries with it salvation for all men, has appeared

. . .

That is the character of the grace of God. Its actual application to individuals is in accordance with God's unconditional election.

### Titus 3:2.

. . . to speak evil of no one . . .

Why see in this that we are speak evil of no *kind* of men and that it does not mean every individual? Is it forbidden to speak evil of classes of men, but it is not forbidden to speak evil of individuals? Take, for example, the class "murderers."

**Summary.** The passages supposed to indicate *kinds* of men actually show that all individuals are in view. Just as Arminians read into many texts their idea about free moral will towards God, so do Calvinists restrict the meaning of "all men" to fit a notion about election. And this has its importance in some texts to which our attention was not yet drawn:

God . . . now enjoins men that they shall everywhere repent (Acts 17:30).

For the love of Christ constrains us, having judged this: that one died for all, then all have died; and he died for all, that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who died for them (2 Cor. 5:14, 15).

There is nothing here about kinds, or classes, of men. In fallen Adam all have died. And there is an aspect to the *death* of Christ that has all men in view. In Scripture usage of words, the *blood* is only applied to believers. This has been reviewed and explained in *The Work of Christ on the Cross and Some of Its Results*. It is necessary to observe the Spirit's use of such words.

### 2 PETER 3:9

. . . not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).

F. G. Patterson remarked:

He has not counseled (μη βουλόμενος) that any should perish . . . <sup>250</sup>

Another observed that:

These words entirely set aside the horrid idea (technically called reprobation) that any man was made for the purpose of being cast into hell. God, on the contrary, desires to save. His heart yearns over men. He waits on them, entreats them, sends the Gospel to them that they may receive it. No doubt it is pure grace and only grace that awakens one soul to love God. But it is the sin, the unbelief of man (whatever be the judicial hardening in certain cases)

250. *Collected Writings of F. G. Patterson*, p. 220, available from the publisher.

that shuts them up in the rejection of His mercy.<sup>251</sup>

It is clear that God is not *purposing* anyone to perish. It is also clear that He is not *purposing* all to be saved, else all would be saved. Regarding election and reprobation, W. Kelly wrote:

Election is necessarily from God entirely apart from those that are the objects of it, as it means the exercise of His sovereign choice. If there is the smallest ground in the party chosen because of which God chooses, it is not His choice, but rather a moral discernment, which, far from being sovereign, is only an appraisal whether the person deserves or not. One may hold then as strongly as the stoutest Calvinist the free sovereign choice of God, but the reprobation of the wicked which the Calvinist draws from it, as an equally sovereign decree, is in my judgment a grave error. I do not therefore scruple to say a word upon it now, inasmuch as it is an important thing in both doctrine and practice. The idea that, if God chooses one, He must reprobate another whom He does not choose, is a fallacy and without, yea against, scripture. This is exactly where human influence comes in; that is, the petty self-confidence of man's mind. Now I do not see why we as believers should be petty; there is every reason why we should gather what is great for God. To be simple is all well; but this too is a very different thing from being petty, and no reason why we should limit ourselves to ourselves; for what does God reveal His mind for? Surely that we should know Him, and be imitators of Him.<sup>252</sup>

For more on the Calvinist doctrine of reprobation, see Appendix 1.

Not surprisingly, there are Calvinists who want to restrict the meaning of this text (2 Pet. 3:9), just as in the case of 1 Tim. 2:4. As an example, R. K. McGregor Wright does so by presenting three arguments. While we may sympathize with his desire to show that these texts are not “‘obviously Arminian’ verses,” we do not agree with his Calvinistic view of them either. His first point is:

The simplest response to this curious notion is that if God did not want anyone to perish, he should not have created us with a free will in the first place, because this made the Fall inevitable sooner or later. More to the point, however, we might suggest that God should have done what would be necessary to save everyone, thus ensuring that everyone would not perish.<sup>253</sup>

John Piper's comments re 1 Tim. 2:4, given above, apply here also. Dr. Wright simply will not have it that God has a desire that all men should be saved, and that none should perish, but that His desire does not set aside unconditional election. His first point, then, is that such a thing cannot be.

251. *The Bible Treasury* 3:59.

252. W. Kelly, *Introductory Lectures . . . on the Minor Prophets*, pp. 508, 509.

253. *Op. cit.*, p. 168.

The second point is to make the text refer to the elect only. Thus, he notes that 1 Pet. 1:1, 3, 5 show that Peter is addressing the elect, as he also does in 2 Pet. 3:1. Then, in v. 9 we are told that our measure of “slowness” is not the standard for what God does:

In fact, his love for the elect is shown by the fact that he waited until 1953 to save me . . . God is not willing that *any of us*, the beloved elect, should perish, but proposes that all of the elect from all times should come to repentance.<sup>254</sup>

This is mere assumption that that the word “any” is restricted to the elect. That Peter wrote to the elect does not prove this. The third point is an appeal to Greek:

Furthermore, in a Greek sentence such as this, an indefinite pronoun such as *any (tinas)* normally refers to the most immediate antecedent in the sentence. Thus *any* must mean “any of us” (the elect and beloved to whom the letter is addressed).<sup>255</sup>

Such able Greek scholars as J. N. Darby and W. Kelly do not agree with him, and, moreover, there are Calvinists that also do not agree with him. His three points have not shown anything but unwillingness to accept what the text says because to do so would interfere with some Calvinistic notions he has that restrict God's love. He thinks this text is incompatible with unconditional election but of course it is not. And the Arminian who somehow is able to find moral free will towards God in this text is also quite astray.<sup>256</sup> Returning now to Calvinists who see only the elect in this text,<sup>257</sup> apparently they are more Calvinistic than Calvin himself (a phenomenon which occurs concerning some other texts also). Here are some remarks of Simon J. Kistemaker in which he first quotes John Calvin, both of them contradicting the above quoted Calvinist:

“So wonderful is [God's] love towards mankind, that he would have them all to be saved, and is of his own self prepared to bestow salvation on the lost” (Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Peter*, p. 491) . . .

254. *Ibid.*, p. 169.

255. *Ibid.*

256. The Mennonite, D. Edmond Heibert merely says, “It leaves open the possibility of human freedom of choice” ( *Second Peter and Jude*, Greenville: Unusual Publications, p. 156, 1989).

257. The Calvinist, Gordon H. Clark, wrote:

Peter therefore is simply saying that Christ will not return until every one of the elect has come to repentance ( *1 & 2 Peter*, Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, p. 71, 1980).

Christ's coming is pre-millennial, and persons will be saved during the millennium. He is mistaken about what “Peter therefore is simply saying . . .”

When Paul writes that God “wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4; also see Ezek. 18:23, 32), he does not mean that all men are indeed saved. Although God desires the redemption of the entire race, he does not decree universal salvation. Therefore, in respect to the verb *want* or *wish* theologians distinguish between God's desire and God's decree.<sup>258</sup>

God's long-suffering was displayed previously during Noah's day (1 Pet. 3:20). Longsuffering is being shown again before the day of the Lord begins. Note the words “longsuffering towards you.” Those to whom Peter wrote were themselves the beneficiaries of God's longsuffering, for they had been gathered in during that longsuffering. And any added to the number of the saved may appropriate those words to themselves during the present time while God is forming a heavenly people.

#### 1 PETER 2:8

. . . [who] stumble at the word, being disobedient, to which they have also been appointed (1 Pet. 2:8).

I have added the comma after disobedient, which is missing in the Stow Hill ed.(1966) of JND's translation, but is found in the printing of the third ed., revised, 1884, of JND's New Testament translation. It is important to apprehend that the appointment of these persons was not an appointment to be disobedient. They were, being disobedient, appointed to stumble.

The present state of the Jews exactly answers to the dark background of the picture. And the words which follow are as solemn morally as they are sure in fact: “stumbling as they do at the word, being disobedient, unto which also they were appointed.” There is neither here nor anywhere else the dogmatic reprobation of the Calvinistic school; which has no more to justify it from scripture than the opposite error of the power for good of the Pelagians. All the evil is man's; as the good is exclusively of God's grace. He never made man to be a sinner, nor does He take pleasure in a sinner's death, still less in his everlasting destruction. But He is supreme; and, bold as man may be in wilful disobedience, God's will stands. He presents His grace and truth in Christ; and men stumble at the word which reveals Him. To this they were appointed, not to be disobedient, but, being so, to stumble in this way, which God had in His wisdom appointed as their trial. They refuse and condemn the word; which others, by grace self-judging and believing Him, receive to their salvation, peace, and joy. Compare Jude 4.<sup>259</sup>

#### JUDE 4

258. *James, Epistles of John, Peter and Jude*, Grand Rapids: Baker, p. 335 on 2 Peter, 1996 [1987].

259. W. Kelly, *Exposition of 1 Peter*, in *loco*.

For certain men have got in unnoticed, they who of old were marked out beforehand to this sentence, ungodly [persons], turning the grace of our God into dissoluteness, and denying our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 4).

“Marked out beforehand” does not refer to a decree of reprobation. These false professors of Christianity, like everyone else in the earth, have been bought, or *purchased*, by the death of Christ. Additionally for the believer, he is *redeemed* by the precious blood. Corrupting grace by using it as a cover for dissoluteness, these ungodly persons are subject to a sentence, or judgment. The sentence is not stated in v. 4. It is given in Jude 14, 15. They were marked out of old by Enoch, the “seventh from Adam,” note; not the apocryphal book of 1 Enoch. The believer knows what Enoch that was who was the seventh from Adam, namely, the one that was taken up before the flood of judgment broke on the world that then was. The sentence pronounced by such a one before the judgment of the flood fell is morally fitting for these corrupters of Christianity, upon whom, in due season after we are caught up, the judgment pronounced by Enoch will take place.

The word for “sentence” is κρίμα,<sup>260</sup> found also 1 Cor. 11:29 -- “judgment.” See JND's footnote to that word, as well as the footnote to “fault” in 1 Tim. 3:6.

Perhaps of greater bearing on our general subject is “marked out beforehand” -- προγεγραμμένοι.<sup>261</sup> They were “marked out beforehand” in Enoch's prophecy. This has nothing to do with any alleged decree of reprobation, any more than does 1 Pet. 2:8.

260. See also *The Bible Treasury* 14:127 and 15:144.

261. W. Kelly remarked on the words “were of old ordained”:

. . . the Americans {correctors of the Revised Version of 1881} would have “written beforehand,” and put “set forth” into the margin: a doubtful interpretation, as it assigns but a secondary place to the well-known technical force of προγ. (*The Bible Treasury* 15:127).

He did not discuss this any further.

## Chapter 8

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### Reconciliation

The word “reconciliation” has appeared many times thus far. It is well to look at this matter more closely. 2 Cor. 5:18-20 and Col. 1:19-22 present the matter of reconciliation in its far-reaching character.

#### The Ministry of That Reconciliation

. . . and all things [are] of the God who has reconciled us to himself by [Jesus] Christ, and given to us the ministry of that reconciliation: how that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not reckoning to them their offences; and putting in us the word of that reconciliation. We are ambassadors therefore for Christ, God as [it were] beseeching by us, we entreat for Christ, Be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:18-20).

We have received the ministry of that reconciliation. Perhaps, it would be of help to us if we knew a little more about it. What is stated here about the content of that ministry? There are three things.

#### 1. GOD WAS IN CHRIST, RECONCILING THE WORLD TO HIMSELF

This refers to Christ in His pathway down here, up to the cross. In Him “all the fulness [of the Godhead] was pleased to dwell” (Col. 1:20). This was true from the instant of the incarnation and was stamped upon all His words, works, and ways. In His ministry to sinners He entreated them, “Come to me” (Matt. 11:28). He did not reckon to them their offences (see point 2 below).

In Ch. 1 we surveyed the end of the testing of the first man. God’s reconciling the world to Himself is also part of the testing of the first man, having to do with the final test in the presentation of Christ to the world. This text does not tell us that God *is* in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, as

if it might be going on now.<sup>262</sup> It was when Christ was here in the world. This was the character and thrust of His words, works, and ways. The testing of the fallen, first man was to see if he was recoverable -- not to inform God about the outcome, but that we might understand that the first man is not recoverable. What would it have shown if the first man had received Christ? Why, after all, he *was* recoverable and the world would then have been reconciled to God. Instead, the world hated Him and cast Him out (John 1:10; 3:19; 7:7; 8:23; 16:8). He affirmed that:

I spoke openly to the world; I taught always in [the] synagogue and in the temple, where all the Jews come together, and in secret I have spoken nothing (John 18:20).

God’s testing of the *fallen* first man had taken the form of His dealing with the Jews. Thus the Jews were representative of the first man. Therefore the Lord could say, “I spoke openly to the world.” That is how the world was tested and that was how God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. This testing is seen also in these words of the Lord Jesus:

For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not may see, and they which see may become blind (John 9:39).

Do you not see divine sovereignty in that text? However, it was not then the time for judgment *to be executed*, but the guilt of man was sealed by the rejection of Christ -- except, of course, that God opened the eyes of some of the spiritually blind ones to see Who He was. God in Christ provided the way of reconciliation to the world. The world rejected Him.

The notion that God does not command the sinner what he is not capable of obeying is absurd. You did not find that in the Word of God; ‘Thy wish was father, Harry, to that thought.’ It is invented by an unwillingness to own that man is totally lost. Man wants to save something for his own will and effort. But God gave the law, and man was not capable of keeping it:

Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God; for neither indeed can be: and they that are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:7).

God addresses man in responsibility and it is erroneously *inferred* from that fact that man is capable of paying. That is like saying that since God gave the law man could have kept the law. That is like saying that when God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, the world was capable of

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262. The notion that this is going on now might suit a five point Calvinist. They like to make “world” mean the elect. Thus, Christ would now be reconciling the elect. But seeing that it refers to Christ’s ministry when on earth makes a difficulty for that view of the word “world” in this text.

responding and being reconciled.<sup>263</sup> If a man owed you a million dollars and had not one cent to pay you, when he comes to you and says that he is incapable of paying you, will you say to him, Why, you have *no responsibility* to pay because you cannot?

But this really is not our subject to expand on. The Son came into the world for judgment on this world, judgment yet to be executed in due time, and to act sovereignly in opening eyes and confirming others in their blindness. The judgment, I repeat was not to be executed when He was here. Therefore we read,

## 2. NOT RECKONING TO THEM THEIR OFFENCES

In keeping with this, John 12:45-48 says:

(45) and he that beholds me, beholds him that sent me. (46) I am come into the world [as] light, that every one that believes on me may not abide in darkness; (47 and if any one hear my words and do not keep [them], I judge him not, for I am not come that I might judge the world, but that I might save the world. (48) He that rejects me and does not receive my words, has him who judges him: the word which I have spoken, that shall judge him in the last day.

Several facts bearing immediately on the matter that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, are evident in this passage:

- (1) God was in Christ (v. 45); and
- (2) Christ was manifesting God (v. 45).
- (3) Christ was not here to execute judgment at that time (v. 47).
- (4) Receiving Christ's and His words and work is the essence of reconciliation (v. 48).
- (4) Christ was rejected by the world and the world was not reconciled to God.
- (5) Judgment is sure, but it will take place in the future, not at the time then present (v. 48).

It is clear that had their offences been reckoned to them when our Lord was here, judgment would have taken place then. This does not mean they were not held guilty of offences; this refers to the time of the execution of judgment.

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263. It is a special feature of John's gospel that the rejection of Christ is given right at the beginning: John 1:10, 11. The world could no more receive Him than it can receive the Spirit sent down. "The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see him nor know him; but ye know him, for he abides with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:17). Note well the word "cannot." It means inability. Man is totally lost.

## 3. PUTTING IN US THE WORD OF THAT RECONCILIATION

God in Christ was rejected and the world was not reconciled. But that very rejection of Himself in Christ was used to provide the occasion for the work of Christ of the cross whereby God righteously forgives the sinner and reconciles the sinner to Himself. We have the ministry of this meanwhile before the reconciliation of all things takes place. Christians, as those who have been reconciled to God, have this ministry as ambassadors for Christ. So now God is still working regarding reconciliation (though not for the world, but) for sinners. God is still in Christ, but now we are Christ's ambassadors and "entreat for Christ." And thus this entreaty by Christ's ambassadors made to sinners to be reconciled is done by them on behalf of God. The sinner needs to be reconciled to God (not He to them, of course). Christians *are* reconciled to God *now* (Col. 1:21, 22).

### *The Reconciliation of All Things*

. . . for in him all the fulness [of the Godhead] was pleased to dwell, and by him to reconcile all things to itself, having made peace by the blood of his cross -- by him, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works, yet now has it reconciled in the body of his flesh through death; to present you holy and unblamable and irreproachable before it . . . (Col. 1:19-22).

Clearly, the reconciliation of all things is yet future. The power of God will be put forth to establish God's relationship to all things in accordance with the value of the shed blood of Christ. That value is commensurate with the glory and value of Christ's person, which glory and value has been imparted to the work accomplished on the cross. The "peace by the blood of his cross" is the grand basis. *We* have peace with God *now*, as we are reconciled now, but there remains the application of this to the things on earth and in the heavens.

J. N. Darby wrote:

Thus, in Israel, the blood was put upon the mercy-seat, and expiation -- peace, was made; but besides this everything was sprinkled, and the sins of the people were confessed. This, with regard to Israel and to creation, has not yet been done. As to that which is outward, it remains still at a distance from God, although peace is made. We know that it is the good pleasure of God to reconcile all things in heaven, and on the earth, by virtue of this blood. All things shall be restored to order under a new rule. The guilty, remaining in their sins, will be outside this scene of blessing; but heaven and earth will be completely freed from the power of evil (and even from its presence during the millennium, as regards manifestation -- still later, absolutely from its presence itself), according to the virtue of that blood which has separated between good and evil, according to the character of God Himself, and so

glorified God that peace is made. God can act freely for blessing; but here the work is twofold, like the glory of the Person of Christ, and refers to the same objects as His glory. It is in the counsels of God to reconcile unto Himself all things in heaven and on the earth through Christ. But Christians He has already reconciled. Once not only defiled, like the creature, but enemies in their minds, He has already reconciled them in the body of His flesh by means of death. The perfect work which Christ accomplished in His body, blotting out our sins and perfectly glorifying God His Father, has brought us into relationship with God in His holiness according to the efficacy of that work; that is to say, it is efficacious to present us, perfectly reconciled, holy, without blemish and without blame before His face; and with the consciousness of it, and of the love that has wrought it, and the favor into which we are brought, so that in the sense of this the heart is brought back to God: we are reconciled to God. This supposes that we continue steadfast in the faith unto the end.<sup>264</sup>

The wicked will not be reconciled to God, spite of what universalists claim.<sup>265</sup> Infernal beings will certainly bow at the name of Jesus (Phil. 2:11), but for all that they will have their portion in the outer darkness, which is not part of the new heavens and the new earth. Hell does not form part of the new heavens and new earth.

The Lord Jesus died to take away the sin (not sins) of the world (John 1:29). Sin is not yet removed. Heb. 9:26 tells us Christ has been manifested for the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The point is that the basis for the removal of sin, involving the reconciliation of all things, has been laid in the work on the cross. Its actual removal awaits the new heavens and new earth.

The Son of God has been manifested that He might undo the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). But the works of the devil are not yet undone, and will not be, until the new heavens and the new earth come. In Heb. 2:14 we read that it was through death that Christ “might annul him who has the might of death, that is the devil.” The Devil still “has” that might. The cross laid the basis to accomplish this (Heb. 2:14), but it still awaits the future. And so in 1 Cor. 15:24-26 we read that the last enemy that will be annulled is death. That occurs with the close of the millennial kingdom, following the “little season.” It is all preparatory for the new heavens and the new earth.

What about John 12:31?

<sup>264</sup>. *Synopsis, in loco.*

<sup>265</sup>. See J. N. Darby’s examination of Andrew Juke’s “The Second Death and the Restitution of All Things,” in *Collected Writings* 31:75-123; and F. W. Grant’s *Facts and Theories as to the Future State*, found in *The Conscious, Eternal Punishment of the Wicked*, available from *Present Truth Publishers*..

Now is [the] judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

Is Satan cast out yet? Of course not. Scripture tells us that now he is the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4). Has judgment been executed on the world? Not yet, but it lies under judgment to be executed in the due time upon it. John 12:31 speaks anticipatively of these things. And so we read that “the ruler of this world is judged” (John 16:11), but that judgment has not yet been executed. The time will come when the devil and his angels will be cast into the lake of fire, which is prepared for them, and will be joined by the wicked in eternal, conscious punishment. All opposed to God will be removed and when the new heavens and the new earth are brought into existence, all opposed to God will be outside. They are outside of what “the reconciliation of all things” points to: the new heavens and the new earth.

Acts 3:21, “the restoration of all things,” is considered in detail elsewhere; it has to do with the millennial reign of Christ.<sup>266</sup>

In these things God’s Word speaks of results of the cross. But not all results of the cross are actually realized yet. And faith believes Him Who so speaks, as Abraham believed God, “who quickens the dead, and calls the things which be not as being” (Rom. 4:17).

<sup>266</sup>. *Elements of Dispensational Truth*, vol. 1, sec. Ed., chapter 4.4 (available from the publisher).

## *Appendix 1:*

### *Is There an Eternal Decree of Reprobation?*

#### *John Calvin's Decree of Reprobation*

#### DID GOD DECREE ETERNAL SALVATION FOR SOME, AND DECREE DEVOTION TO DESTRUCTION FOR OTHERS?

John Calvin thought Scripture required the doctrine of the decree of reprobation because the Scripture speaks of God hardening persons. Here is Calvin's erroneous conclusion:

... God by his immutable counsel determined once for all those whom it was his pleasure one day to admit to salvation, and those on the other hand, it was his pleasure to doom to destruction. We maintain that this counsel, as regards the elect, is founded on his free mercy, without any respect to human worth, while those whom he dooms to destruction are excluded from access to life by a just and blameless, but at the same time incomprehensible judgment . . . But as the Lord seals his elect by calling and justification, so by excluding the reprobate either from the knowledge of his name or the sanctification of the Spirit, he by these marks in a manner discloses the judgment which awaits them.<sup>267</sup>

#### IS PREPARATION TO DESTRUCTION IN GOD'S HIDDEN COUNSEL?

Calvin would not have the truth that God before prepares the vessels of mercy but that the vessels of wrath were not fitted by God for destruction. If God had said the vessels of wrath were *before prepared* for destruction, Calvin's case would be proved. Since that is not stated, Calvin had to work around the difference in language concerning the two cases:

They {objectors} add also, that it is not without cause the vessels of wrath are said to be fitted for destruction, and that God is said to have prepared the vessels of mercy, because in this way the praise of salvation is claimed for God, whereas the blame of perdition is thrown upon those who of their own accord bring it upon themselves. But were I to concede that by the different

267. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2:210, 212 (book 3, ch. 21, par. 7; see also 3-21-5), 1975.

forms of expression Paul softens<sup>268</sup> the harshness of the former clause, it by no means follows, that he transfers the preparation for destruction to any other cause than the secret counsel of God. This, indeed, is asserted in the preceding context, where God is said to have raised up Pharaoh, and to harden whom he will. Hence it follows, that the hidden counsel of God is the cause.<sup>269</sup>

"Hence it follows" is not the statement of Scripture but a notion founded on the idea that hardening indicates that there was a decree of reprobation that is the cause. Having made that assumption, he transfers it into the part about the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. The very blockage to such a view is in the text itself, in the very difference of language regarding the two cases, which of course he recognized but works around it by claiming that Paul softens the harshness but does not transfer the cause of perdition to anything other than the hidden counsel of God. He should have learned from the differences in the two expressions and have seen that the hardening of Pharaoh is of a vessel fitted for destruction by Pharaoh's own obduracy. He has interpreted the meaning of hardening as if the very words were: vessels of wrath *before prepared* for destruction. He assumes that about Pharaoh, acts as if his point is proven, and he assumes that about the vessels of wrath. It is a tissue of assumptions.

#### CALVIN'S CAUSE OF THE ETERNAL DECREE OF REPROBATION IS THE SOVEREIGN WILL OF GOD, NOT FOREKNOWLEDGE

**God's foreknowledge of works is not the cause of the decree of reprobation.** Commenting on the cases of Jacob and Esau, Calvin said:

... the foundation of predestination is not in works.<sup>270</sup>

268. {This is an assumption in order to reach the conclusion wanted. Paul did no such thing.}

269. *Institutes* 3-23-1.

270. *Institutes* 3-22-11 (p. 224). Fred. H. Klooster wrote:

Calvin affirmed that the will of God, His eternal decree, is the ultimate cause of reprobation as well as of election (*Calvin's Doctrine of Election*, Grand Rapids: Baker, p. 71, sec. ed. 1977).

Of course, not all Calvinists will agree with Calvin. B. B. Warfield, quoted approvingly by L. Boettner, said:

... it is still the sinner's sinfulness that constitutes the ground of his reprobation. Election and reprobation proceed on different grounds; one on the grace of God, the other the sin of man (*The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, p. 114, 1963).

Let us hear one more dissent from Calvin's grounding the decree of reprobation in the will of God and not in His foreknowledge, quoted approvingly by L. Boettner :

When the Arminian says that faith and works constitute the ground of election we  
(continued...)



270. (...continued)

dissent, says Clark. But if he says that foreseen unbelief and disobedience constitute the ground of reprobation we assent readily enough. . . . it is still the sinner's sinfulness that constitutes the ground of his reprobation (*ibid.*, p. 114).

Of course, this contradicts Calvin. Moreover, notice the parallel reasoning regarding the decree of reprobation with Arminian reasoning on the decree of election. There is a desired symmetry in the double decree of predestination, but there is not a real symmetry in the minds of some Calvinists.

Regarding the quotation from L. Boettner just given, R. C. Sproul, commenting on the case of Jacob and Esau, disagrees that foreknowledge is the ground of reprobation:

If Paul meant that election is based on some foreknown human decision, why did he not say so? Instead he declares that the decree was made before the children were born and before they had done any good or evil. Now we grant that a foreknowledge view of predestination realizes that the divine decree was made prior to birth. But that view insists that God's decision was based on his knowledge of future choices. Why doesn't Paul make that point here? All he says is that the decree was made before birth and before Jacob and Esau had done any good or evil.

We grant that in this passage Paul does not come right out and say that God's decision was not based on their future good or evil. But he did not need to say that. The implication is clear in light of what he does say. He places the accent where it belongs, on the purpose of God and not on the work of man. The burden here is on those who want to add the crucial qualifying notion of foreseen choices. The Bible doesn't add it here or anywhere (*Chosen by God*, Wheaton: Tyndale House, p. 150, 1987).

What is the real meaning of that? Herman Hoeksema wrote:

Jacob He loved, and Esau He hated sovereignly, without regard to their works, in His eternal Counsel (*God's Eternal Good Pleasure*, Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, p. 75, 1979).

In regard to Calvin's grounding the double predestination in the sovereign will of God, and neither one of the decrees in foreknowledge, Fred. H. Klooster said this about "equal ultimacy":

If election and reprobation are *equally* ultimate in the sense that the sovereign will of God is the ultimate cause of each, this does *not* mean that, for Calvin, election and reprobation are *in all aspects parallel* . . . . When ultimacy and parallelism are not clearly defined and distinguished, a simple denial of equal ultimacy usually involves a distortion of Calvin's insistence upon the sovereignty of the divine will in reprobation . . . .

One of the most striking indications of the lack of parallelism is evident in Calvin's insistence on distinguishing the ultimate and proximate causes of reprobation. Human sinful action is the proximate cause of the condemnation aspect of reprobation . . . .

It would also be improper to say that the ground of reprobation is man's sin and guilt [*Eternal Predestination*, pp. 120-21}. Sin and guilt may be said to be the ground of only one element of reprobation, namely, condemnation; sin is the proximate cause of reprobation only in this sense (op. cit., pp. 75-77).

R. C. Sproul defines "equal ultimacy" in the double predestination differently -- as meaning that God "intervenes in the lives of the reprobate to create or work unbelief in their hearts," a view (continued...)

### The Claim that the Cause of the Decree of Reprobation is God's will.

Calvin speaks of the complaint of some who object that:

. . . to devote to destruction whomsoever he pleases, more resembles the caprice of a tyrant than the legal sentence of a judge; and therefore there is reason to expostulate with God, if at his mere pleasure men are, without any desert of their own, predestinated to eternal death. <sup>271</sup>

Calvin's teaching is that God's foreknowledge is only because He decreed what comes to pass:

If God merely foresaw human events, and did not also arrange and dispose of them at his pleasure, there might be room for agitating the question, how far his foreknowledge amounts to necessity; but since he foresees the things which are to happen, simply because he has decreed that they are so to happen, it is vain to debate about prescience, while it is clear that all events take place by his sovereign appointment. <sup>272</sup>

**It follows from this that God must have willed Adam's fall.** Calvin's view is not that God merely *permitted* Adam to fall, but that God had *decreed* the fall, yet that God is not the author of sin, and man himself is responsible for his sin, not the decree of God. He spoke of the decree as dreadful -- *decretum horribile* -- the horrible decree. He wrote:

The decree, I admit, is dreadful; and yet it is impossible to deny that God foreknew what the end of man was to be before he made him, and foreknew, because he had so ordained by his decree. Should any one here inveigh against the prescience of God, he does it rashly and unadvisedly. For why, pray, should it be made a charge against the heavenly Judge, that he was not ignorant of what was to happen? Thus, if there is any just or plausible complaint, it must be directed against predestination. Nor ought it to seem absurd when I say, that God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and in him the ruin of his posterity; but also at his own pleasure arranged it. For as it belongs to his wisdom to foreknow all future events, so it belongs to his power to rule and govern them by his hand. <sup>273</sup>

Whatever exists must have been because of a decree, the decretive will of God, not the permissive will of God. Oh, except sin; God is not the author of it! -- but the fall? yes, God decreed it! Fred. H. Kooster remarked about this:

For example, Calvin suggested that if the view that God had decreed Adam's

270. (...continued)

he rejects (*Chosen by God*, Wheaton: Tyndale House, p. 142, 1987). And so it goes . . .

271. *Institutes* 3- 23-2 (p. 227).

272. *Institutes* 3-23-6 (p. 231).

273. *Institutes* 3-21-7.

fall makes God the author of sin, then one is also forced to say that God is the author of that wicked act by which the Jews crucified Jesus Christ. The Jews did “that which Thy hand and Thy counsel beforehand determined to be done” . . . <sup>274</sup>

In effect, the argument here is that if God decreed that any one thing be done, then it follows that He must have decreed that everything be done. It should be evident that in Calvinism, as in Arminianism, numbers of conclusions are reached, not on the basis of Scripture stating so, but for framing a system.

God is not the author of moral evil, certainly. Adam’s fall from innocence is not to be equated with what men *already wicked* did as God used them to accomplish His purpose in the death of Christ. Adam was not wicked before He fell. He became wicked in the fall. God, says Calvin, decreed that Adam fall. That seems like decreeing wickedness.

\* \* \* \* \*

Having read the body of this book, the reader should recognize that it is better to distinguish a *desire* on God’s part as well as His *decretive will* regarding unconditional election, and His perfect moving of men and events for the accomplishment of His glory in Christ. We deny moral free will towards God in the sinner and affirm the sinner’s responsibility, rejecting the complaints by Arminians, grounded in philosophically framing a system.

## Heinrich Bullinger Rejected Double Predestination

### BULLINGER DID NOT HOLD THE DECREE OF REPROBATION

The Second Helvetic Confession (written by Heinrich Bullinger) in chapter 10, “The Predestination of God and the Election of the Saints,” does not mention a decree of reprobation at all, speaking only of God’s free choice from eternity of the saints.

God has from eternity predestinated or freely chosen, of his mere grace, without any respect of men, the saints whom he will save in Christ (Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9, 10).

God elected us in Christ and for Christ’s sake, so that those who are already implanted in Christ by faith are chosen, but those out of Christ are rejected (2 Cor. 13:5). <sup>275</sup>

274. *Op. cit.*, p. 68.

275. Richard A. Muller translates the last phrase as “those truly are reprobate who are outside of Christ.” No doubt reprobate means rejected. But be this as it may, the *decree* of reprobation does not appear in this confession as he notes:

(continued...)

Although God knows who are his, and a ‘small number of the elect’ is spoken of, yet we ought to hope well of all, and not rashly count any one among the reprobate (2 Tim. 2:19; Matt. 20:16; Phil. 1:3, sqq). <sup>276</sup>

The notion of the decree of reprobation is not necessary for unconditional election to be true. That is taught in the Word but the decree of reprobation is not stated there. The notion of the decree of reprobation is the fruit of speculation in divine matters. The decree of reprobation is supposed to be shown to be true because of certain Scriptures, and especially those that speak of *hardening* by God.

### HEINRICH BULLINGER ON HARDENING

The Second Helvetic Confession, in chapter 8, “Of Man’s Fall, Sin, and the Cause of Sin,” we read:

When God is said to blind or harden men, or to give them over to a reprobate mind (Ex. 7:13; John 12:40), it is to be understood as a righteous judgment. Moreover, God overrules the wickedness of men for good, as he did in the case of the brethren of Joseph. <sup>277</sup>

This is the correct view of the matter but is unsatisfactory to many Calvinists. They are not Heinrich ‘Bullingerists’; they are Calvinists. Richard A. Muller said that:

Bullinger demonstrates the least willingness to develop a speculative doctrine of the decrees, and he did object to the double predestination emphasis of Calvin’s doctrine and the inclusion of the fall in the counsel of God. <sup>278</sup>

Yes, “a speculative doctrine of decrees” is an excellent description of what has occurred under the name “Calvinism.”

## Supposed Proofs for the Decree of Reprobation

I am not aware that there has been produced a Scripture statement of the doctrine of the decree of reprobation that parallels the Scripture statements

275. (...continued)

. . . the identification of the reprobate as *extra Christum* avoids even the traditional infralapsarian distinction between a positive willing to elect and a negative passing over in reprobation. What Bullinger presses on us is the fact that election relates directly to Christ, whereas reprobation, whatever the causal explanation, is outside of Christ (*Christ and the Decree*, Grand Rapids: Baker, p. 45, 1986).

276. In Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, Grand Rapids: Baker 1:400, reprint of sixth ed., 1931.

277. In Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, Grand Rapids: Baker 1:400, reprint of sixth ed., 1931.

278. *Op. cit.*, p. 69.

regarding (unconditional) election. There is no statement about being reprobated before the foundation of the world (cp. Eph. 1:4). Another example we have previously seen is that there are “vessels of mercy, which God had *before prepared* for glory” (Rom. 9:23) but we do not read of vessels of wrath *before prepared* for destruction, etc. Should not such facts warn us? Lacking such parallel evidence with the teaching of election, other proof is sought.

The decree of reprobation is (erroneously) *inferred* from the truth of election and that is regarded as “proof.” It is thought that God’s passing some by is proof of an election of reprobation. And then it is said that there is independent Scripture proof, although, it is added, Scripture speaks more of what God does in producing faith and repentance.

Loraine Boettner has noted that Arminians want to discuss reprobation first, seeking to prejudice persons against the doctrine, alleging there is no such thing, and then argue that unconditional election of the saints is also false.<sup>279</sup> Not being an Arminian, nor a semi-Arminian, I have presented unconditional election in this book, shown the fallacy of the idea of moral free will towards God, and have left the main discussion of the decree of reprobation to an Appendix. Concerning the approach of Arminians and Calvinists, Dr. Boettner wrote:

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.<sup>280</sup>

Dr. Boettner claims that:

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.<sup>281</sup>

Ignoring the not-so-subtle hint in the last sentence, we note that he brings forward a considerable number of texts, which we will now look at.

#### PROV. 16:4

The first Scripture brought forward is Prov. 16:4, which he quotes as:

Jehovah hath made everything for its own end; Yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

J. N. Darby’s translation reads:

Jehovah hath wrought everything on his own account {Or, ‘for his own purpose’}, yea even the wicked for the day of evil.

Does this “teach the doctrine {of the decree of reprobation} with unmistakable clearness”? Calvin said:

. . . the wicked were created for the day of evil simply because God willed to illustrate His own glory in them [Prov. 16:4]; just as elsewhere He declares that Pharaoh was raised up by Him that He might show forth His name among the Gentiles (Exod. 9:6).<sup>282</sup>

In an 1831 paper, intending to show what the doctrine of the Church of England was at the time of the Reformation, J. N. Darby quoted Martin Bucer (1491-1551) on Rom. 9:

Hence also is the predestination of the bad. For, as God also forms these out of nothing, so He forms them to some certain end: for He does all things wisely, without any exception, even to the predetermined and good use of the evil. Also the impious are organs and instruments of God, as below, ch. 9. God made all things for Himself, the wicked also for the day of evil. But this theologians do not bear to call predestination, but they call it reprobation: but God does everything well and wisely. Therefore also everything has a determined end (*nihil non destinatum*) . . .

But whereas God formed these and all other wicked men, who will deny, that He knew, before He formed them, to what He willed to use them; and that He then ordained and destined them to this? What therefore forbids us to say that

280. *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, pp. 123, 124, 1963.

281. *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, p. 108, 1963.

282. Quoted in *Calvin’s Doctrine of Predestination*, Grand Rapids: Baker, p. 80, sec. Ed., 1997.

279. *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, p. 123, 1963.

there is a predestination of these also? <sup>283</sup>

The Arminian says that, God knowing beforehand that some men would of their own free will choose to believe, God then elected them.

Baucer said that God, knowing before he formed the wicked, to what He willed to use them, “then ordained and destined them to this,” that is, a predestination of reprobation!

These seem to me to be fruits of a similar reasoning process. In both cases, God saw beforehand, or knew beforehand, and in one view then decreed Arminianistically, and in the other view then decreed Calvinistically.

Prov. 16:4 has nothing to do with a decree of reprobation. “Made everything” or “wrought everything” does *not* mean *creation* (or do you think that God created certain men to be wicked?). It has to do with the certain, unfailing, moral government and superintending power of God sovereignly working everything for His glory. We see this in Psa. 76:10:

For the fury of man shall praise thee: the remainder of fury thou wilt gird on thyself {Or, ‘restrain’}.

God controls in this way. “God hath wrought everything on his own account.” What would not ultimately do that is restrained. Yes, “even the wicked for the day of evil” will redound to His glory. God made man upright in the garden, but man fell and became wicked in the garden, as man was wicked afterwards outside the garden. God uses all such things for His glory. Pharaoh, being what he was, God brought him to the place where His power might be shown and His name magnified before the heathen. So in Judas’ case.

#### 1 PET. 2:8; JUDE 4

These have been considered in Chapter 8.

#### 2 Pet. 2:12, 13

But these, as natural animals without reason, made to be caught and destroyed, speaking injuriously in things they are ignorant of, shall also perish in their own corruption, receiving [the] reward of unrighteousness . . .

Dr. Boettner merely quotes the verse without comment. Is the Calvinist’s point that the wicked were created by God for the purpose of God’s catching them and destroying them? <sup>284</sup> Simon Kistemaker wrote:

“[They are] born to be caught and destroyed.” Peter uses this illustration to imply that man was not born to be captured and killed, but rather to live in

283. *Collected Writings* 3:8

284. Interestingly, the hyper-Calvinist, Gordon H. Clark, in his exposition, (*1 & 2 Peter*, Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., pp. 47, 48, 1980), says not a word about reprobation and these verses.

freedom and with spiritual knowledge, in full reliance on God. But these men who have deliberately departed from God are like beasts of the field. They live by instinct and because of their spiritual ignorance they will soon perish (Ps. 49:12). <sup>285</sup>

The reference to Psa. 49:12 is quite apropos. It reads:

Nevertheless, man being in honor and abiding not; he is like the beasts that perish.

Man is composed of spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess. 5:12; see Heb. 4:12 -- contra the dichotomist view of man’s constitution). Animals have souls, but not spirits, and operate instinctually. Man has fallen into such a condition that the spirit is not in control, but rather the soul, and he is led by the lower part of his immaterial being, the soul -- and is thus like the animal that has but a soul. Thus is he like the beasts that perish, which are made to be caught and destroyed. This is what man has made of himself in sin. There is nothing here about God having made, or created, man this way.

#### REV. 17:17

For God has given to their hearts to do his mind, and to act with one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

What is unmistakably clear here is that God sovereignly controls the affairs of this world. There is no doctrine of the decree of reprobation here. Rather, we have a terrible case of judicially given blindness upon these apostates of Christendom, for these are sent the “working of error” (2 Thess. 2:11). Why? because “they have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved.” There is a helpful footnote in JND’s translation to the word “sends” in 2 Thess. 2:11:

The present tense is used here as stating the moral fact; it is not present as to time. It refers to the time when the lawless one is revealed, and is in contrast to the present time, which is referred to in v. 7.

#### REV. 13:8

and all that dwell on the earth shall do it homage, [every one] whose name has not been written from [the] founding of the [the] world in the book of life of the slain Lamb.

First of all, once again, these are the apostates of Christendom. Those “that dwell on the earth” is really not a reference to every person on the globe. It is a moral expression for the apostates, they having the character noted in Phil. 3:18, 19, a Character which comes to full expression at this epoch. They

285. James, *Epistles of John, Peter and Jude*, Grand Rapids: Baker, pp. 298-300, on 2 Peter.

are under the judicial “working of error,” noted just above, and are given over to the worship of the beast. *Hardening is no proof of a decree of reprobation.* A decree of reprobation is an assumption. The absence of names from this book of life of the slain Lamb does not prove a decree of reprobation. Were their names written in ‘the book of death from the founding of the world’? Were their names written in the book of the decree of reprobation? Let us reprobate speculation and allow the text to state what it does, and pass on.

#### ROM. 1:28

Actually, Rom. 9:22, 23 is cited next, but that has been considered in the chapter on Romans. Then Rom. 1:28 is cited. But we should have much more of Rom. 1 before us than just v. 28. Start reading at Rom. 1:18 and think about what fills these verses from v. 19 through v. 27.

Not until we come to v. 28 do we find the word *reprobate*, and the question is -- did this reprobation take place by an eternal decree of reprobation, or is this the righteous judgment of God upon sinful man? Not only did man have the testimony in the creation concerning God’s eternal power and divinity (vv. 19, 20), the second reason for God’s judicial action in giving them up is given in vv. 21-23, they substituted the creature for God: “Wherefore God gave them up” (v. 24). “For this reason God gave them up to . . . (v. 26). Because they thought it not good to have God in their knowledge, “God gave them up to a reprobate mind” (v. 28).

And meanwhile God is doing a work today in connection with a heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1). Grace always preserves some. What of the mass? “And for this reason God sends to them a working of error” (2 Thess. 2:11). The gospel had come among those described in Rom. 1 and God in sovereign grace saved some. But as in Israel, so in Christendom there has been a mass of empty profession. Compare 2 Tim. 3:1-5. Timothy was told to turn away from such; i.e., the condition was present before all the apostles were gone. We are now seeing certain of the sins denounced in Rom. 1 being supported by professed Christians.

W. Kelly remarked:

The word ἀδόκιμος is here as elsewhere translated “reprobate,” as this well suits the phrase and contrasts their not approving to retain God in their knowledge with His giving them over to a “disapproved” mind. But it may rightly bear an active sense, and would then mean an “undiscerning” mind, as the sentence on their presumption in rejecting God after pretending to test and try the matter.<sup>286</sup>

This word is used in Rom. 1:28 (reprobate); 1 Cor. 9:27<sup>287</sup> (rejected); 2 Cor. 13:5, 6, 7 (reprobates); 2 Tim. 3:8 (found worthless); Titus 1:16 (found worthless) -- as translated by JND. Persons are regarded by God as reprobate, or rejected, in God’s judicial government of this world. It is not a reference to the eternal judgment of God, and certainly not to an alleged decree of reprobation. The same is true of *hardening*; that has to do with God’s judicial government in this world concerning the obdurate, as in Pharaoh’s case.

#### ROM. 2:5

but, according to thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up to thyself wrath, in [the] day of wrath and revelation of [the] righteous judgment of God

. . .

The Arminian sees the Scripture, “whosoever will may come,” and says there is proof that man has the ability within him to *will* to come. The Calvinist sees the Scripture, “thy hardness and impenitent heart,” and says there is proof of *the decree of reprobation*. With such methods anything can be ‘proved.’

#### 2 THESS. 2:11

This is noticed above under Rom. 1:28 as one of numbers of God’s acts of judicial, moral government in the world -- not referring to eternal judgment (though that lies ahead), and certainly not to any supposed decree of reprobation.

#### ACTS 13:41

Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish; for *I* work a work in your days, a work which ye will in no wise believe if one declare it to you.

Is the fact that sinners do not believe a proof of the decree of reprobation? They are of the first Adam as fallen, irrecoverably so, and that is the sufficient and true grounds of their not believing. They have the old nature that controls them.

#### JOHN 12:40, 41

(39) On this account they could not believe, because Esaias said again, (40) He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they may not see with their eyes, and understand with their heart and be converted, and I should heal them.

This is another of the judicial blindings and hardenings in God’s moral government in the earth -- judicial acts which are always *after* the fact and never attributed to a *prior* decree of reprobation. W. Kelly remarked:

287. No, it is not the service that is rejected. It says “I should be myself rejected.” A person can preach to others and be himself rejected -- like Judas. The life did not correspond to the profession.

But as the first citation {John 12:38} proves the guilt of rejecting God's testimony, so the second {John 12:40}, though really earlier, points to the solemn fact of judicial blindness, never pronounced, still less executed, of God, till patience has had its perfect work and man has filled up the measure of his guilt beyond measure. Under such a sentence of hardening, no doubt, they could not believe; but the sentence came because of wickedness consummated in wilful rejection of God and His will when they did not believe, in spite of the fullest appeals to their hearts and consciences. As the first citation shows utter unbelief when Christ came in humiliation and suffering to do the work of atonement, so the latter conveys the dread word which shut them up in blindness before the light they had so long despised, followed up by the inspired comment that these things said Isaiah when he saw Christ's glory and spoke of Him. It is Jehovah in the prophecy, Christ in the Gospel; but they are one -- as, indeed, Acts 28:25-27 enables us to include the Holy Spirit. How thoroughly confirmed and confirming the still older oracle in Deut. 6:4, "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah!" John 12 and Acts 28 weaken it in nothing, but add to its force and expressiveness, as they show out more and more the patience of God and the darkness of the Jew after ages of trifling with His mercy and His menaces alike. And the darkness increased as the light shone out.<sup>288</sup>

Cp. 2 Cor. 4.

#### MATT. 25:41

Then he shall say also to those on the left, Go from me, cursed, into eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

It is startling to have this presented as a proof that there is an eternal decree of reprobation. The distinctions that Scripture makes are thus swept away. Consider the careful distinctions observed by W. Kelly:

But there is a very solemn back-ground to the blessed entrance into the kingdom: "Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (v. 41). Observe, He does not say, Cursed of My Father, answering to "Blessed of My Father." God hates putting away. So when the awful moment comes for the curse to be pronounced on these wicked Gentiles, it is "Depart from Me, ye cursed." I believe it is the deepest sorrow to God, and throws all the onus of destruction on those whose own sin it was, who rejected His love and holiness and glory in rejecting His Son. "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." In the other case the kingdom was said to be "prepared for you": not so when speaking about the curse. Hell was not prepared for poor guilty man. He deserves it; but it was prepared for the

devil and his angels. Where the souls rejected the testimony, he does pronounce them cursed. He is the King, the judge. But whether it be the great white throne, or this earthly throne, it is "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." There was no hope of deliverance for these fallen angels -- no redemption for them. They wilfully and without a tempter departed from God. Man was tempted by an enemy; and God feels for guilty man, drawn away by a mightier, if not more guilty, rebel than himself. How solemn to think that it was prepared for others, and that men share it with these rebellious spirits? It was not in the heart of God to make a hell for miserable man: it was prepared for the devil and his angels.<sup>289</sup>

#### JOHN 9:39

(39) And Jesus said, For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not may see, and they which see may become blind. (40) And some of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things, and they said to him, Are we blind also? (41) Jesus said to them, If ye were blind ye would not have sin; but now ye say, We see, your sin remains.

"They which see" do not really see. This refers to the pretension of the Pharisees, as the end of v. 41 shows. Listen to the trenchant remarks of W. Kelly once again:

The Lord thereon shows how His coming acted, and was meant to act, on souls. It had a higher purpose and more permanent result than any energy, however mighty and benign, that dealt with the body. He was the life to those, however dark, who received Him: those who rejected Him sealed their own ruin everlastingly, whatever their estimate of themselves or in the mind of others . . . Pharisaic pride refuses to bow to Jesus imputing blindness, as they thought; but if it speaks, it is obliged to hear its most withering sentence from the Judge of all mankind. For blindness there is all grace and power in Christ; but what can be the portion of those who, stone-blind, say they see? Their sin remains, as well as blindness, which of itself is not sin, though its consequence.<sup>290</sup>

Of course, the only reason any fallen man *sees* is because God opens the eyes of the blind. He alone gives spiritual sight. He shows mercy on whom He wills, and hardens whom He wills. Thus, the Pharisees, who said they see, are hardened in their blindness as a judicial act of God's moral government in this world. There is no hint in the passage that the blindness was decreed in a decree of reprobation.

#### MATT. 11:25

289. *Exposition of Matthew, in loco.*

290. *Exposition of the Gospel of John, in loco.*

288. *Exposition of the Gospel of John, in loco.*

(25) At that time, Jesus answering said, I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes. (26) Yea, Father, for thus has it been well-pleasing in thy sight.

This follows on very well after considering John 9:39. “The wise and the prudent,” the haughty and self-sufficient, of whom those blind Pharisees were a sample, do not get the blessing. Concerning the babes, it is what the Father’s grace has made them as objects of His love. His ways are well-pleasing to Himself. The babes are taught of Him. In Matthew this is said in connection with the subject of the chapter, that Judaism was coming under judgment. His disciples (except Judas) were among the babes thus taught of the Father. Moreover, in the next chapter (Matt. 12) we reach the point of the rejection of Christ when the emissaries of Jerusalem commit the unpardonable sin: attributing to Beelzebub the power of the Holy Spirit that wrought in Christ. “The wise and the prudent” experienced a judicial blindness.

#### LUKE 2:34

(34) And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary his mother, Lo, this [child] is set for the fall and rising up of many in Israel, and for a sign spoken against; (35) (and even a sword shall go through thine own soul;) so that [the] thoughts may be revealed from many hearts.

Alas that any one sees support for an eternal decree of reprobation here! The Lord was to be the occasion of a sifting in Israel. The thoughts of many hearts were going to be revealed by what each one does with Him. Of course, where there are thoughts that meet with God’s approval, it is because of the new nature He has implanted into that soul. But we read of the mass in Rom. 9:31-33.

This appears in Luke alone, who brings out so fully what is moral. This sifting brings out the moral state of souls, the thoughts of the heart. It would not be surprising to find in Luke’s gospel itself the state of many hearts exposed. For example, regarding the parable of the great supper (Luke 14), we saw that all invited, without exception, made excuse not to come. Such is the state of fallen man’s heart. Notice also that Christ is for a sign spoken against. Indeed, He Himself is the greatest of all signs.

The sword going through Mary’s heart would be particularly at the cross.

#### MATT. 13:10-15

(10) And the disciples came up and said to him, Why speakest thou to them in parables? (11) And he answering said to them, Because to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, but to them it is not given; (12) for whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall be caused to be in abundance; but he who has not, even what he has shall be taken away

from him. (13) For this cause I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear nor understand; (14) and in them is filled up the prophecy of Esaias, which says, Hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and beholding ye shall behold and not see; (15) for the heart of this people has grown fat, and they have heard heavily with their ears, and they have closed their eyes as asleep, lest they should see with the eyes, and hear with the ears, and understand with the heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. (16) But blessed are *your* eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear . . .

Here again we have the hardening spoken of in Isa. 6. Once again, let us be clear that hardening is a judicial act of God’s moral government in this world, consequent on disbelief and disobedience, not because of an eternal decree of reprobation. Really, the Calvinist’s case rests upon assuming that the various cases of hardening and blinding demonstrate that there is a decree of reprobation. It is a mere supposition.

Happily, because of God’s election, a thing taught in Scripture, there are eyes that do see, and ears that do hear.

#### ISA. 6:9, 10

This is discussed under John 12:40, 41 above.

#### ROM. 11:8-10

(7) What [is it] then? What Israel seeks for, that he has not obtained; but the election has obtained, and the rest have been blinded, (8) according as it is written, God has given to them a spirit of slumber, eyes not to see, and ears not to hear, unto this day. (9) And David says, Let their table be for a snare, and for a gin, and for a fall-trap, and for a recompense to them: (10) let their eyes be darkened not to see, and bow down their back alway.

Israel sought on the basis of self-righteousness, by law-works, by dead works. Life-works flow from divine life in the soul. The election has obtained because God has sovereignly acted in blessing. It is another statement about hardening, which, as we have been seeing, does not prove that there is a decree of reprobation. Hardening is “for a recompense to them”!

#### DEUT. 2:30

But Sihon the king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him; for Jehovah thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obdurate, that he might give him into thy hand, as it is this day.

This is similar to Pharaoh’s case (Ex. 7:3). Hardening shows that God acts judicially in His moral government in the earth.

#### 1 SAM. 2:25

If one man sin against another, God will judge him; but if a man sin against Jehovah, who shall intreat for him? But they hearkened not to the voice of

their father, for Jehovah was minded to slay them.

These were particularly wicked, practicing their wickedness at Shiloh in connection with the sacrifices to Jehovah. Their hard hearts were much in evidence there and Eli did not restrain them (as High Priest). Eli merely *talked* to them. Well, God had a different kind of talk for them, even His hardening judicial act, to bring them to judgment. This is temporal; what lies before them yet is another matter.

ROM. 9:17 – EX. 9:16

This has been considered in the chapter on Romans.

## CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions are:

1. There are no direct statements about an election of reprobation that parallel the statements concerning the election of believers.
2. The decree of reprobation is an erroneous inference from the truth of election. That is not Scripture proof.
3. Cases of hardening, after the fact of man's sin, under God's judicial, moral government in this world, are transmuted by Calvinists into an allegedly clear proof of a decree of reprobation in eternity. They are no proof at all.
4. The Scriptures teach one election only, an election (unconditional) out of the mass of humanity.

### *Some Comments from W. Kelly on Romans and Calvin and Reprobation*

It is excellent and right that scripture should declare hardening to be an infliction of God after men have already proved their ungodliness. It is false and bad to say that Paul labors to prove here {Rom. 11} that the blinding was not because it was deserved but in consequence of eternal reprobation. In fact scripture teaches no such doctrine. Nowhere are any said to be rejected before the foundation of the world. Nor this only: they are punished at the world's end for their wickedness, not because of a divine decree. Indeed a judgment in this case would be nugatory. But they are judged each according to their works, and the lake of fire is their sentence; though scripture takes care after this to append the divine side, adding that, if any one was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire. So in a previous chapter of this epistle Paul had carefully shown how God, willing to show His wrath and make His power known, endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His

glory upon vessels of mercy which He had before prepared for glory. To me I confess it looks like the blinding influence of falsehood when men overlook the difference of vessels of wrath fitted on the one hand to destruction, and of vessels of mercy which He on the other hand before made ready for glory. It is guilty man who is the agent in sin and misery; God only who is the source of all the good, though His longsuffering be conspicuous most of all if possible in bearing with the evil who at last come into judgment.

In short then not only not Paul but no other inspired writer ever speaks of "eternal reprobation"; it is merely a dream of a certain school. So the curse of God follows, instead of causing, the impious ways of men. Arminianism is wholly astray no doubt in reducing God's election to a mere foresight of good in some creatures; but Calvinism is no less erroneous in imputing the evil lot of the first Adam race to God's decree. They both spring from analogous roots of unbelief: Calvinism reasoning, contrary to scripture, from the truth of election to the error of eternal reprobation; Arminianism rightly rejecting that reprobation but wrongly reasoning against election. Like other systems they are in part true and in part false -- true in what they believe of scripture, false in yielding to human thoughts outside scripture: happy those, who are content as Christians with the truth of God and refuse to be partisans on either side of men! Our wisdom is to have our minds open to all scripture, refusing to go a hair-breadth farther.<sup>291</sup> ♦

At the same time it is remarkable that, while the first book of the Bible points out the choice of God from the beginning, He does not pronounce morally on Esau in a full, complete, and absolute way until the last book of the Old Testament. It is only in Malachi that he says, "Esau have I hated." I could conceive nothing more dreadful than to say so in Genesis. Never does scripture represent God as saying before the child was born and had manifested his iniquity and proud malice, "Esau have I hated." There is where the mind of man is so false. It is not meant, however, that God's *choice* was determined by the character of the individuals. This were to make man the ruler rather than God. Not so: God's choice flows out of His own wisdom and nature. It suits and is worthy of Himself; but the reprobation of any man and of every unbeliever is never a question of the sovereignty of God. It is the choice of God to do good where and how He pleases; it is never the purpose of His will to hate any man. There is no such doctrine in the Bible. I hold therefore that, while election is a most clear and scriptural truth, the consequence that men draw from election, namely, the reprobation of the non-elect, is a mere reproduction of fatalism, common to some heathen and all Mahommedans, the unfounded deduction of man's reasoning in divine things. But man's reasoning in the things of God, not being based on the divine revelations of His mind in His word, is good for nothing, but essentially and invariably false. It is impossible for man to reason justly in the

291. *Notes on Romans, in loco.*



abstract as to the will of God. The only safe or becoming ground is to adhere to the simple exposition of His own declarations; and this for the very simple reason that a man must reason from his own mind, and his own mind is far indeed from being God's mind. Reasoning means deduction according to the necessary laws of the human mind. Here, however, the groundwork being the will of God, faith to reason aright must reason from what God is according to what He Himself says. The danger is of inferring from what man is and from what man feels. Such is the essential difference between what is trustworthy and what is worthless in questions of the kind. Man must submit to be judged by God and His word, not to judge for Him. No man is competent to think or speak in His stead. But we may and ought to learn what He has told us of Himself and His ways in His word.<sup>292</sup> ♦

### R. C. Sproul on Hyper-Calvinism

#### WHAT R. C. SPROUL WROTE IN 1986

Dr. Sproul tells us that Hyper-Calvinism has to do with how the matter of “double predestination” is understood. He himself holds that there is a predestination of reprobation as well as the predestination of salvation of the elect. The issue is about avoiding making God the author of sin while at the same time holding that there is an eternal decree of reprobation. To avoid making God the author of sin, the character of the decree of reprobation must be viewed as different from the character of the decree of election and thus the two decrees are not of “equal ultimacy.” Commenting on the idea of persons holding to “single predestination,” he refers only to those who have an Arminian notion of moral free will. Let us bypass the fact that such persons also do not really believe in the biblical doctrine of election, but note that he seems to allow no room for the view set out in this book, namely, that God has unconditionally elected believers to salvation, from the beginning, and that there is no such thing as the sinner having free will morally towards God, and also rejecting the idea any decree of reprobation. It seems a startling conclusion to claim:

Unless we conclude that every human being is predestined to salvation, we must face the flip side of election.<sup>293</sup>

So we must face it that there is a decree of reprobation because it is the ‘flip side’ of “predestined to salvation” and if we do not accept this we must think everyone is predestined to salvation. This is not arrived at from Scripture stating so, but from Calvinistic, philosophical reasoning that it must be so. But

let us pass on. He does not want the decree of election and the decree of reprobation to be of “equal ultimacy.” He sees a person who believes in their “equal ultimacy” as a hyper-Calvinist, and as one who thus makes God the author of sin:<sup>294</sup>

Equal ultimacy is *not* the Reformed or Calvinist view of predestination. Some have called it “hyper-Calvinism.” I prefer to call it “sub-Calvinism” or, better yet, “anti-Calvinism.” Though Calvinism certainly has a double view of predestination, the double predestination it embraces is not one of equal ultimacy.<sup>295</sup>

He has defined “equal ultimacy” in terms of the idea that God is the author of sin. “Equal ultimacy” really should be referred to Calvin’s finding a decree of God’s will in both the decree of election and the decree of reprobation. That is the ultimate equivalency regardless of the fact that in some considerations the two decrees are not parallel. But before coming to that, we should note that Dr. Sproul points out that while the Reformed view is that God does intervene in the lives of His elect to ensure salvation, regarding unbelievers, he says:

The rest of mankind God leaves to themselves. He does not create unbelief in their hearts. The unbelief is already there. He does not coerce them to sin. They sin by their own choices. In the Calvinist view the decree of election is positive; the decree of reprobation is negative.<sup>296</sup>

We most certainly agree, if the last sentence is omitted. There is no need of a decree of reprobation -- except in the minds of Calvinists. “The rest of mankind God leaves to themselves.” *That* is true, and moreover, *sufficient*. That did not satisfy Calvin who insisted upon the double decrees, having equal ultimacy in God’s decretive will. But to proceed, Dr. Sproul has provided a chart:

CALVINISM	HYPER CALVINISM
positive-negative	positive-positive
asymmetrical view	symmetrical view
unequal ultimacy	equal ultimacy
God passes over the	God works unbelief in the hearts

294. Of course, a person who believes in equal ultimacy may also deny that equal ultimacy makes God the author of sin.

295. *Chosen by God*, p. 142.

296. *Chosen of God*, p. 142.

292. *Lectures Introductory to the Study of the Minor Prophets*, pp. 168-170.

293. *Chosen by God*, Wheaton: Tyndale House, p. 141, 1986.

reprobate of the reprobate <sup>297</sup>

Perhaps the notion of a decree of reprobation satisfies a philosophical, a mental, view, but it is not in Scripture. In the first column, if the word “reprobate” was replaced with “the non-elect obdurate of heart,” that would state the fact and eliminate the need for the first three items in the column -- but thus setting aside a major part of Calvinism.

In Calvin’s writings, he says that God is not the author of sin. But it may also be found in Calvin’s writings that by God’s decree of reprobation there were vessels before (in eternity) prepared for destruction. And because he held these two views, then he would not be, according to Dr. Sproul, a hyper-Calvinist. And perhaps hyper-Calvinists use *the same kind of reasoning* <sup>298</sup> on

297. *Chosen of God*, p. 143. This may also be found, with a little more detail, in his 1997 book, *Grace Unknown*, Grand Rapids: Baker, p. 160.

298. The philosopher, Gordon H. Clark, is a hyper-Calvinist, believing that God creates sin, as we see here in his comments on Isa. 45:7:

Some people who do not wish to extend God’s power over evil things, and particularly over moral evils, try to say that the word evil here means such natural evils as earthquakes and storms. The Scofield Bible notes that the Hebrew word here, RA, is never translated sin. This is true. The editors of that Bible must have looked at every instance of RA in the Old Testament and must have seen that it is never translated sin. But what the note does not say is that it is often translated wickedness, as in Gen. 6:5, “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth.” In fact RA is translated wickedness at least fifty times in the Old Testament; and it refers to a variety of ugly sins. The Bible therefore explicitly teaches that God creates sin. This may be an unpalatable thought to a good many people. But there it is, and everyone may read it for himself. (*Predestination*, Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, p. 12, 1987).

So God, Who cannot lie (Titus 1:2), creates lies. The question is this: does this conclusion result from the thought that God preordains *all* things, and that nothing at all falls into the area of His permission? Be that as it may, let John Calvin answer this abuse of Isa. 45:7:

*Making peace, and creating evil.* By the words “light” and “darkness” he describes metaphorically not only peace and war, but adverse and prosperous events of any kind; and he extends the word *peace*, according to the custom of Hebrew writers, to all success and prosperity. This is made abundantly clear by the contrast; for he contrasts “peace” not only with war, but with the adverse events of every sort. Fanatics torture this word *evil*, as if God were the author of evil, that is, of sin; but it is obvious how ridiculously they abuse this passage of the prophet (*Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, Grand Rapids: Baker, pp. 402, 403, 1989 reprint).

According to John Gill, a hyper-Calvinist of the Particular Baptists, the doctrine of the decree of reprobation has been “left us to conclude,” i.e., to infer it, from the doctrine of election of believers found stated in Scripture! We do agree it is an inference, but a false one; just as much as the Arminian notion that God’s demands upon the sinner imply that the sinner can comply. John Gill has been represented this way:

(continued...)

Calvin’s view of the decree of reprobation concerning *the preparation beforehand* of persons for destruction in order to arrive at the idea that “God works unbelief in the hearts of the reprobate.” However, that being distasteful to Dr. Sproul, yet wanting to hold to a decree of reprobation (for the sake of a philosophical parallelism, not because such a decree is stated in Scripture), he settles for “God passes over the reprobate.” That God has not elected everyone to salvation is clear. That there is even a scriptural necessity for the word “reprobate” to describe this is not only *not clear*, it clouds the subject of election. Before closing this paragraph, note that below we will see that Dr. Spoul (now) holds this concerning God: “I am suggesting that he created sin.” Note well that that means the creation of moral evil.

Coming back to “equal ultimacy,” the Calvinist, Fred. H. Klooster, once professor of systematic theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, concluded this about John Calvin:

Having noted various nonparallel features of election and reprobation, we must finally observe those features that *are* parallel. The most striking one is that God’s sovereign will is the ultimate cause of each. In that respect we have spoken of equal ultimacy of election and reprobation . . .

Although other features could be mentioned as parallel or nonparallel, two issues stand out in Calvin’s discussion. God is sovereign in reprobation as well as election; they are equally ultimate. <sup>299</sup>

But then persons do not all mean, perhaps, the same thing by “equal ultimacy.” And so, philosophical discussions are held about things, which, after all, are not really in Scripture to begin with. If reprobation meant only that God did not elect some, why discussions about equal ultimacy?

#### WHAT R. C. SPROUL WROTE IN 1999

We cannot imagine God looking at his wrath like unwanted pounds he wants to lose, if only he had the power. No, God is delighted with his wrath as he is with all his attributes {wrath is a divine attribute?}. Suppose he says, “What I’ll do is create something worthy of my wrath, something on which I can exhibit the glory of my wrath. And on top of that I’ll manifest my mercy by showering grace on some of these creatures deserving my wrath.” Can you imagine God thinking such a thought? {No, because God does not think, which implies incomplete knowledge.} I can and I’m not alone in this. The

298. (...continued)

Although the doctrine of reprobation is not contrary to the nature and perfections of God, but is equally defensible with the doctrine of election, the Scriptures are “more sparing of the one than of the other, and have left us to conclude the one from the other,” but not without clear and full evidence (Thomas J. Nettles in *The Grace of God, The bondage of the Will*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2:305, 1995).

299. *Calvin’s Doctrine of Predestination*, Grand Rapids: Baker, p. 79, sec. ed., 1977.

Apostle Paul . . . (Rom. 9:22-24).<sup>300</sup>

We discussed this passage when considering God's sovereignty in Romans. Writing such things it is not surprising that a page later he tells us that God created sin, as he speculates some more about God:

It is because of this similarity {to man} (God always acting according to his strongest inclination) and this difference (God always getting what he wants) that we can know that whatever comes to pass must be what God wished to come to pass, his strongest inclination.

But wait a minute. Isn't there an obvious line of reasoning against this line of reasoning. Isn't it impossible for God to do evil? Of course it's impossible for God to do evil. He can't sin. This objection, however, is off the mark. I am not accusing God of sinning; I am suggesting that he created sin. There is a difference.

We must define our terms. The Westminster Confession of Faith defines sin as "any lack of conformity to or transgression of the law of God." Where I must ask, does the law of God forbid the creation of evil? I would suggest that it just isn't there. Someone might object that of course it isn't there, because man hasn't the power to create sin. And I would rest my case.<sup>301</sup>

According to reformed theology, Adam had **the** law; but the truth is that he had **a** law. But that is not our subject now. Moreover, sin was in the universe through the fall of Satan, who certainly did not have the ten commandments. I suppose Dr. Sproul would say that Satan had not the power to create sin.

But my object here is to show how the human mind operates in divine matters, even to using the law to show that God must have created sin! God must be compared to man's inclinations, the strongest inclination winning. God's inclination led him to create sin but God did not sin in creating sin! God created evil but He did no evil in creating evil! And he thinks that Rom. 9:22-24 undergirds this. Apparently Dr. Sproul has developed his 1986 views to this in 1999. This is all as repugnant as is Dr. Geisler's 1999 (and 2001 reprint with new Appendix) book.

### *The Alleged Symmetry of "Double Predestination" And Is There a Book of Reprobation?*

300. *Almighty Over All*, Grand Rapids: Baker, pp. 52, 53, 1999.

301. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

Here is how Loraine Boettner views the symmetry of double predestination:

Those who hold the doctrine of Election but deny that of Reprobation can lay 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.<sup>302</sup>

The decree of reprobation is arrived at through 'logic,' through inference, not by Scripture statement. It is needed in order to remove 'lop-sidedness,' thus producing philosophical symmetry. Creeds may state what their authors will; God's word does not state the decree of reprobation. Analogy with birds will not make Scripture state what it does not state. It is the false freight and weight of the alleged decree of reprobation that causes a Calvinist's doctrine of election to be lop-sided.

Moreover, we have numbers of references to the book of life (Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27). All those whose names are in the book of life are the saints, the elect. They had been dead but they were quickened -- made alive from spiritual death.

Concerning the great white throne judgment we read:

. . . and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is [that] of life. And the dead were judged out of the things written in the books according to their works (Rev. 20:12).

And if anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15).

"The books" refer to the records of works of the sinners. Besides that there is only one other book, the book wherein are inscribed the names of all the saints. If a person's name is not in the book of life he will be cast into the lake of fire.

There is no book of reprobation produced to show them that their name is written there. We shall now look at Dr. Boettner's argument about lop-sidedness with regard to this matter of the book of life and substitute the appropriate words into the quotation above to make a point:

Those who hold the doctrine of *the book of Life* but deny that of *the book of Reprobation* can lay little claim to consistency. To affirm the former while denying the latter makes the *book of Life* an illogical and lop-sided *book*. The creed which states the former but denies the latter will resemble a wounded eagle attempting to fly with but one wing.

302. *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, p. 105, 1963.

Double predestination ought to be reflected by double books: a book of life and a book of reprobation. We realize, of course, that the book of life is figurative -- not a literal book -- but that does not change this matter. There is no book of reprobation and there is no decree of reprobation.

*The Alleged Symmetry of “Double Predestination”  
And Are There Evil Works Before Prepared?*

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and have set you that ye should go and [that] ye should bear fruit, and [that] your fruit should abide (John 15:16).

For we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before prepared that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10).

It is clear that the good works of the Christian have been “before prepared” of God. These good works are to be done by those of whom Rom. 9:23 speaks:

. . . that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared for glory, us . . .

There is a lack of symmetry regarding the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. Not only does the Scripture *not* tell us that these vessels were before prepared for destruction, Scripture says nothing about bad works which have been before prepared for these vessels fitted to destruction to walk in.

The fact is that Scripture offers no support for the symmetry idea that calls for the decree of reprobation.

## Appendix 2: "Moderate Calvinism"

### A "Kenosis" Type of Notion Concerning God's Limitation of His Omnipotence

The Kenosis notion derives its name from the word *enkenose* used in Phil. 2:5 of our Lord's "emptying" himself. The notion proposes that in emptying Himself the Son of God voluntarily limited Himself concerning omniscience; and thus here in manhood He allegedly did not have omniscience. This suits persons who think that the Lord believed in the alleged errors in the OT.<sup>303</sup> Of course, it is absurd to think that the Son could divest Himself of a divine attribute. It would make Him less than God.

The idea that God has chosen to limit Himself with respect to man's will is akin to the Kenosis notion. It is claimed that God has chosen to limit himself by not compelling man's will. Thus man's will has been elevated to sovereign inviolability. God is not omnipotent over the human will. God has made Himself less than omnipotent.

God's sovereign rights were under attack in the garden of Eden by man's disobedience. The deception was:

. . . ye shall be as God {or, as gods}, knowing good and evil (Gen. 3:5).

Men are now so many gods, having moral sovereign wills, wills that even God cannot violate. No, He *cannot*. He has limited His sovereignty -- so claim believers in moral free will. Thus He is not really omnipotent as a result of this self-limitation. This is similar to the Kenosis notion. One idea especially attacks omniscience, the other attacks omnipotence. Let us reject both.

It will be objected that there is no analogy between these two things because in one case there is alleged to be no more omniscience at all (could there be partial omniscience?) while God can be partially omnipotent, partially sovereign. Really?!

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303. The true character of this emptying is given in *Could Christ Sin?*, available from the publisher.

### *Norman Geisler's Explanation*

Dr. Norman Geisler holds to both eternal security *and* the idea of man's moral free will towards God. Obviously, holding the idea of moral free will towards God also affects what one holds on the subject of election. (It also adversely affects the doctrine of the atonement.) Holding such views, Dr. Geisler molds his idea about God to conform with them. He has provided some statements that nicely summarize his view of this molded God. Here is what he wrote.

*Moderate Calvinism:*

*God's predetermination is in accord with His foreknowledge*

There is a third alternative {in contrast to Arminianism and Calvinism}. It postulates that God's election is neither *based on* His foreknowledge of man's free choices nor exercised *in spite of* it. As the Scriptures declare, we are "elect *according to* the foreknowledge of God" (1 Peter 1:2 NKJV). That is to say, there is no chronological or logical priority of election and foreknowledge. As John Walvoord insightfully commented on 1 Peter 1:2, it "teaches not the logical order of election in relation to foreknowledge but the fact that they are coextensive."<sup>304</sup> In other words, all aspects of the eternal purpose of God are equally timeless.

God is a simple Being,<sup>305</sup> all of whose attributes are one with His indivisible essence. Hence, both foreknowledge and predetermination are one in God.<sup>306</sup> Whatever God knows, He determines. And whatever He determines, He knows.

Thus, God is in a loop of determinations, a circle of causes and forces, with no starting point. Moreover, He is in a loop with the creature. But wait! In this loop, God is actually controlled by the creature's will. Is not the creature's alleged moral free will the starting point and controlling force in this system? Furthermore, God must have willed to make man's will autonomous in this loop. *That* exercise of God's will must have been outside the loop -- being prior, not in a time-priority, of course, but deterministically prior. *That exercise of God's will* must have been a predetermination in order to set up this loop. But the notion is that "foreknowledge and predetermination are one in God" so that the predetermination to make man's will autonomous<sup>307</sup> will also have to be worked into the loop so as to be part of the loop. His view requires that

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304. In Lewis Sperry Chafer/John F. Walvoord, *Major Bible Themes*, rev. ed (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 233.

305. {Perhaps God being a "simple Being" suits philosophical lips when speaking about God, but it seems to me presumptuous of the lips of clay to so speak of the Potter.}

306. For further arguments for simplicity see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1. 3.4.

307. We must keep in mind that in this system man must lose the autonomy of his will once he is saved, because he cannot will himself to be lost again.

there can be no exercise of God's will outside of this loop.

If election in relation to foreknowledge is coextensive, that does not prove the case. In considering Rom. 8:29 we saw that *foreknowledge of persons* is selective and discriminatory, not referring to God's general prescience, or omniscience. That foreknowledge has reference strictly to persons and not to conduct. This applies to 1 Pet. 1:2 also. And we also saw that in 1 Pet. 1:2 election is *not* in accordance with, or because of, conduct (or obedience), but rather "unto [the] obedience and sprinkling of [the] blood of Jesus Christ." Election has obedience as an object, not as a determining factor. Dr. Geisler continues:

More properly, we should speak of God as *knowingly determining* and *determinately knowing* from all eternity everything that happens, including all free acts. For if God is an eternal and simple Being,<sup>308</sup> then His thoughts must be eternally coordinate and unified.

According to the moderate Calvinist's view, whatever God forechooses cannot be based on what He foreknows. Nor can what He foreknows be based on what He *forechose*. Both must be simultaneous, eternal, and coordinate acts of God.<sup>309</sup> Thus, our actions are truly free, and God determined that they would be such. God is totally sovereign in the sense of actually determining what occurs, and yet man is completely free and responsible for what he chooses.<sup>310</sup>

God forechose that our actions would be truly free. His forechoosing that our actions would be truly free "cannot be based on what He foreknows." Yet, He foreknows that our actions would be truly free. His foreknowing that our actions would be truly free cannot be based on what He forechose. This is a loop, a circle. A circle has no starting point. Yet, Dr. Geisler claims:

God is totally sovereign in the sense of actually determining what occurs.

He has a different meaning for the word *sovereign* than do those who do not believe in moral free will towards God. And so, he can complain when he is accused of not believing in God's *sovereignty*, for he can say that he affirms it -- yes, after undermining it by placing it in a loop which does not exist.

Could this God frame another system? If so, it necessarily must be said that another, new system would exist as it would exist because of "God as *knowingly determining* and *determinately knowing* from all eternity everything that happens." And yet if He could frame another system, how could He do

308. {Again, perhaps God being a "simple Being" suits philosophical lips speaking about God, but it still seems to me presumptuous of the lips of clay to so speak of the Potter.}

309. {Peter wrote: "elect according to the foreknowledge of God [the] Father" (1 Pet. 1:2.)}

310. *Op. cit.*, pp. 52, 53 [54].

so with the exercise of His will, if His will is involved inside the present loop which now exists as Dr. Geisler views the matter? It seems to me that his view limits God to one system and nothing else could possibly be, but that is not really important to the discussion.

At any rate, this view is arrant presumption against the free choice of God, forcing Him into a loop, and doing so with reasoning that empties the word "*determine*" (as well as *sovereignty*) of its meaning. The real point to what is proposed is that God actually determines that He is not able to interfere with man's moral free will. And how was He able to determine that, since all is "eternally coordinate and unified"? There is nothing active in the loop as far as God's determination is concerned. He does not determine. He is actually *passive* (notwithstanding Dr. Geisler's rejection of this term) regarding the creature's determination. God does not determine the creature's will. He is actually passive with regard to it. It is the creature who is free according to this view, not God. God knows the actions of the free will and thus, this notion claims, He is simultaneously determining those free actions. Indeed, He is *bound* to do so in this loop.

And does this mean that when the creature exercises his will to reject Christ that God is determining that free action? Surely his reasoning results in such a conclusion. In effect, it is a system of man determining and controlling a contingent God. Not surprisingly, Dr. Geisler continues, denying that God forces free acts:

. . . There is no contradiction in God knowingly predetermining and predeterminately knowing from all eternity precisely what we would do with our free acts. For God *determined* that moral creatures would do things *freely*. He did not determine that they would be *forced* to perform *free* acts. What is forced is not free, and what is free is not forced. *IN BRIEF, WE ARE CHOSEN BUT FREE.*<sup>311</sup>

He says that God

knowingly predetermines . . . precisely what we would do with our free acts.

He had also said:

God is totally sovereign in the sense of actually determining what occurs.

The two statements seem to me to concur, and if God knowingly *predetermined* our free acts, He did in fact force them.

What follows is repetition of what he said above but it is included here for completeness of his presentation, though redundant. He wrote:

*Self-determined actions are contrary to God's foreknowledge*

311. *Op. cit.*, p. 54 [55].

Traditional theists, both Calvinists and Arminians, hold that God knows infallibly all that will come to pass. But how can this be, if there are free creatures? It is not difficult to understand how God can bring about a necessary end through necessary means (such as determining in advance that the last domino in a falling series will drop, too). But how can God bring about a necessary end through *contingent* means (such as free choice)?

*Response*

The answer lies in the fact that God knows -- for sure -- (infallibly) precisely how everyone will use his freedom. So, from the vantage point of His omniscience, the act is totally determined. Yet from the standpoint of our freedom it is not determined. God knows *for sure* what we will *freely* do. . . This is not to deny that God uses *persuasive* means to convince us to choose in the way that He desires. It is only to deny that God ever uses *coercive* means to do so.<sup>312</sup>

All this nonsense, along with the pejorative word "coercive" is for the purpose of denying that sinners are compelled to come in (Luke 14), the compelling being God's begetting us by His own will (John 1:13; James 1:18), working in us both the willing and the working of his good pleasure (Phil. 2:13), according to the truth of Acts 13:48:

And [those of] the nations, hearing it, rejoiced, and glorified the word of the Lord, and believed, as many as were ordained to eternal life.

Such are the 'coerced.' Moreover, since he does not "deny that God uses persuasive means to convince us to choose in the way He desires," it follows that God only uses these persuasive means sufficiently with some people and not with many others.

. . . who desires that all men should be saved . . . (1 Tim. 2:4).

. . . not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:8).

So God desires all to be saved but there are only certain ones concerning whom He successfully "uses persuasive means to convince us to choose in the way that He desires." Apparently Dr. Geisler's God is successful with some persons and fails with others. In his system, God is limited in the power of persuasion. And whereas God was "*knowingly determining and determinately knowing* from all eternity everything that happens," He was also "*knowingly determining and determinately knowing*" His failure rate. To such is the sovereign One reduced in this system.

The truth is -- *in brief, we were chosen, though in bondage, and set free.*

312. *Op. cit.*, p. 178 [184, 185].

### *Appendix 3:*

## *An Objection to the Offer of the Kingdom by an “Authentic Calvinist”*

John Gerstner, a Presbyterian, church history professor, has written an attack on dispensational truth. He has once again raised the morality issue regarding the offer of the kingdom to the nation of Israel at Christ's first coming. He alleges that the offer, as described by dispensational truth, would be an immoral one for God to make. The objection is that God could not make the nation an offer that He had no intention that they should accept. Before coming to that point, I desire to connect this issue with his Calvinistic view regarding the gospel, comparing that view with Acts 17:30, 31, the giving of the law, and the presentation of Messiah to His own. Then we will consider the matter of the kingdom offer. My purpose in doing this is twofold. We will observe that this morality of God issue involves not only the offer of the kingdom, but also these other actions of God. This will also illustrate the contrast between Calvinism as a *system of man's devising* and **the balance of truth** brought out in the unfolding of dispensational truth. First, then, consider what J. Gerstner says about the offer of the gospel:

The dispensationalist asks the authentic Calvinist whether, supposing a non-elect person had actually chosen to believe, God would have accepted that person's faith. God knows who and who will not accept it, yet He offers the gospel to everybody. If everybody actually did accept it, then God could not actually save everybody because He had already declared that everyone would not be saved. If He saved everybody, He would prove Himself to be ignorant of what was going to happen and frustrated in all of His counsels and purposes. So what difference, the dispensationalist asks, is there between the dispensational idea of a kingdom offer and the Calvinist saying that the gospel is *offered* to all while God designs the Atonement only for the elect and hence could save only the elect?

This might be a compelling argument except that the dispensational representation of Reformed theology is a caricature at this point. We do *not* teach that God invites reprobates to believe and be saved knowing full well that He will not give them a heart of faith. In fact, God does not call reprobates! He calls persons who recognize and admit themselves to be sinners. Those who confess themselves to be sinners, and they only, are called. Any one of them who comes will be saved. God *never* invited anyone who, if he responded, would be refused. God would never be embarrassed, even hypothetically, by someone coming and being rejected because he was

not predestinated and foreknown. Every convicted sinner who has come, would come, will come, has been, would be, or will be accepted.<sup>313</sup>

We are told here that God does not “invite reprobates to believe and be saved knowing full well that He will not give them a heart of faith.” Here is the crux of the argument -- which he will apply to the offer of the kingdom also. In regards to the invitation of “reprobates,” we might notice that “a certain man made a great supper and invited many” (Luke 14:16), but *all* made excuse, yet the servant (indicating the Spirit) is told, “Go out into the ways and fences and *compel* to come in . . .” (Luke 14:23). Obviously, an invitation is not enough. Not one that was invited came. But were they invited to the supper? Why, yes, they were. What if they had all come? But that was not possible, because man is totally ruined, and so those ridiculous excuses not to come to the supper were made. Something more is needed: “compel to come in.” Many are invited, but the house will be filled with those compelled by sovereign grace. *This* is the grace of God in effecting a sinner's salvation. Why deny that those who did *not* come were *actually* invited? -- unless you have a troublesome theological notion to maintain. Many Calvinists and Arminians do not properly understand the responsibility of man and the sovereignty of God. The invitation addresses the responsibility of man and puts into bold relief his total ruin.

It is obvious that the apostles preached the gospel to all. But the authentic Calvinist retorts that God does not ‘invite reprobates to believe and be saved.’ The Word of God says:

God therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, now enjoins men that they shall all everywhere repent, because he has set a day in which he is going to judge the habitable earth in righteousness by [the] man whom he has appointed, giving the proof [of it] to all [in] having raised him from among [the] dead (Acts 17:30, 31).

See also Acts 3:18,19; 8:22; 26:20, 21.

God does sovereignly quicken whom He will (James 1:18; John 1:13; Rom. 9:16; Luke 14:18-23; Rom. 8:7; John 6:44; 3:27); but that God therefore does not command *all everywhere* to repent is a caricature of the Word of God. If God had meant to say that all everywhere should repent, how would He have said *that*? If God had enjoined that all the elect everywhere should repent, how should He have said it? Are we going to be told that God does not enjoin “reprobates” to repent? -- as if they are not responsible to repent? Inability to pay does not relieve one of responsibility to pay.

Of course the flesh cannot repent. We know that, not by constructing a

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313. *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, p. 177.



system, the (supposed) logic of which we can rejoice in, but by the Word of God:

Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God; for neither indeed can it be (Rom. 8:7).

Man is totally ruined. He needs to be born again (John 3:3) and this is accomplished by a sovereign act of God (James 1:18; John 1:12,13, etc.) in communicating a new nature (1 John 3:9). This is not the flesh improved. That is totally and unalterably corrupt. God's seed abides in a Christian (1 John 3:9). When God views the Christian in a certain way, He says of him, "and cannot sin" (1 John 3:9). This is not "sinless perfection" on earth but God predicating of the believer, viewed as in Christ, what is true of the new nature. God looks at the believer as "in Christ" and says of believers, "even as *he* is, *we* are in this world" (1 John 4:17). "The mind of the flesh" cannot repent. The person who receives the new nature, sovereignly communicated by God, repents because, as having that new nature, he can repent.<sup>314</sup> This does not relieve the sinner of his responsibility.

In order to indicate the connection of this issue with other great facts of Scripture, we might ask the following questions:

How could God "invite" a "reprobate" to His supper (Luke 14:17) or wedding feast (Matt. 22:1-6) who He has no intention shall attend, while He has others *compelled* (Luke 14:23) to come?

How could God offer Israel a promise of life and blessing if they would keep the law (Lev. 18:1,5; Deut. 30:19, 20) when He knew no man could keep it (Rom. 8:7)?

How can God enjoin all everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30, 31), when He has no intention that all everywhere shall repent?

How could God "offer" the kingdom to the nation of Israel (Matt. 21:4, 5) if He had no intention for them to accept it?

J. Gerstner, and others of the same theological system, raise the issue of how can an insincere offer be compatible with the morality of God. *The issue raised* means that God is dishonest in doing the things that He actually has done.

Of course, I can easily imagine that a response would be that the words "all everywhere" do not mean "all everywhere"; but rather they mean only those who actually repent. That is, God would be enjoining only the elect to

314. I am not unaware of denials that the believer has two natures. J. Gerstner refers to the idea of two natures as "psychical schizophrenia," *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, p. 213.

repent. In other words God

. . . now enjoins all everywhere, except reprobates, to repent.

If the authentic Calvinist accepts such a view of Acts 17:30, 31, it should be obvious to the reader where this objection leads: *systematic* distortion of the words of God for the support of a false theological system. On the other hand, if the authentic Calvinist says that "all everywhere" means exactly that, then the insincerity/morality issue he has raised is turned against himself because then he is a person who condemns God for what he has, in actuality, done.

As indicated in a question above, this issue also involves the law:

And Jehovah spoke to Moses saying, Speak unto the children of Israel . . . And ye shall observe my statutes and my judgments, by which the man that doeth them shall live: I am Jehovah (Lev. 18:1, 5).

I call heaven and earth to witness this day against you: life and death have I set before you, blessing and cursing: choose then life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed, in loving Jehovah thy God, in hearkening to his voice, and in cleaving to him -- for this is thy life and the length of thy days -- that thou mayest dwell in the land which Jehovah swore unto thy fathers (Deut. 30:19, 20).

This was addressed to all Israel -- and surely there must have been some "reprobates"<sup>315</sup> among them. How could God do such a thing when he knew not one man could keep the law:

Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God; for neither indeed can it be (Rom. 8:7).

So here is God doing the very thing that the authentic Calvinist says that God cannot do, because that would be immoral. I suggest that the problem is with those who wrongly say such things about God. It is reasoning from man to God. It is limiting God by what man ought not to do.

*The law*, which addressed the first man in the persons of the favored nation of Israel, *addressed the first man as responsible*, and it brought out the total ruin of the first man. We saw in Appendix 2 that because a debtor cannot pay his debt he is not therefore absolved from responsibility. Is that so difficult to understand? Everyone insists on that fact when his own wallet is involved, but, interestingly, some may say that if a man cannot pay God then he is absolved from responsibility.<sup>316</sup> Moreover, J. Gerstner says, in effect or explicitly, that God may not expose man's inability and ruin by offering him something he cannot accept; or, by commanding him to do something he

315. I am using his word, but do not accept the Calvinistic theory of reprobation.

316. God holds man responsible, though he cannot pay, and we ought to learn from this that it is right to hold man responsible though he cannot pay. Grace and mercy is another matter.

cannot perform. But it is clear to those who are neither Calvinists nor Arminians that God has done exactly that in displaying His own sovereignty and man's ruin, in His purpose to glorify Himself in Christ.

The presentation of Messiah to Israel is also involved in this issue. The Lord Jesus came; to whom?

He came to his own, and his own received him not (John 1:11; cp. 19:15).

But all this came to pass, that that might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet, saying, Behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek . . . (Matt. 21:4, 5).

Are we to believe that He only came to the elect? The fact is that *all* of those designated by the phrase "his own received him not" <sup>317</sup> were placed into responsibility to receive Him -- though God knew that totally ruined man would not. What? His own were not responsible to receive Him? Excuse me, but the idea is absurd and exposes this system. Inability to pay does not relieve from responsibility to pay; and God addresses that responsibility to bring out man's total ruin.

Let us now turn to the subject of the offer of the kingdom to the nation of Israel. There is an argument against the offer of a temporal kingdom to Israel: that if Israel had accepted such an offer, then the prophecies of Christ's death, etc., would have been false. This argument has also been turned upon those who (like Dr. Gerstner) believe that the offer was about a spiritual kingdom: if the Jews had accepted the offer of a spiritual kingdom that would have set aside the prophecies of Christ's death, etc. How does an authentic Calvinist respond to such a turn of the argument? To this J. Gerstner replied:

. . . Christ never offered His true spiritual kingdom to *all* Jews but only to Jews who acknowledged that they were sinners. All those Jews did accept the kingdom offer. In other words, all those Jews to whom Christ offered His kingdom did accept it and those who did not were never offered it. The latter could and did account for the cross. <sup>318</sup>

We see here the same argument applied to the offer of the kingdom as we saw, above, applied to the offer of the gospel.

Concerning the kingdom, he wrote:

This "kingdom offer" is surely an appalling notion . . .

The primary objection is a moral one. A clear implication of the dispensational view is that God was offering Israel a very wicked option. According to Dispensationalism, the Lord Jesus Christ was offering

something to the Jews in good faith which, had they accepted, would have destroyed the only way of man's salvation. God is an honest God. He is a sincere God. He, therefore, truly offered to the Jews the setting up of a kingdom which would have made the Cross impossible. *Obviously, if God did offer a kingdom which He could not have permitted to be established, He could be neither honest nor sincere.*

We know the way the dispensationalists themselves account for such a concept. They feel that they are absolved from guilt by their view of divine sovereignty. Because they believe in divine foreknowledge, they say that God knew from all eternity that, when the Jews were presented with the kingdom by Christ, they would refuse it. Consequently there was no possibility of Christ setting up His kingdom at that time and making the Cross unnecessary. But this knowledge of God does not make Him honest and sincere. He is doing it safely, as it were, because He knows that this dishonest and insincere offer will never be accepted.

The fact of the matter is He could not possibly have redeemed His promise. If the Jews had embraced Christ's offer, God would have had to say, "I am sorry, Christ cannot be elevated to the throne at this time. He must die on a cross." If the Jews expostulated and said, "But you offered us this," He would have had to say that it was not a sincere offer. I thought that you would never accept it. Of course, the dispensationalist in the background is saying, "No, that would never happen because God knew it would never happen."

We are granting that it never could have happened. Still, such a divine offer would have been insincere. God was making an offer that He could never have redeemed though He dishonestly said that He would if it were accepted. It is as if I safely offered a million dollars (which I do not have) to a debt-ridden relative who detested me because I knew, his hatred of me being what it was, he would never accept it. <sup>319</sup>

But what of the fact that John and our Lord preached the kingdom to all the Jews as also did the disciples (Luke 9:1-6)? The "authentic Calvinist" retorts that "Christ never offered" the kingdom to those who did not accept it.

This is meant to 'save' the character of God from 'offering' something it was not His intention to give them. The Calvinist should not do such a thing and therefore reasons upon the prerogatives of God and limits His sovereign action. This is the answer to this theological system as it pertains to what they have called a moral issue regarding God's character. It parallels the notion that God does not "invite" those who do not respond to the gospel to believe and be saved. Truly, the 'authentic Calvinist' view is "an appalling notion," "a moral one," that falsifies God's dealings with sinners. The solution of these

317. I suppose these would be "reprobates" to an authentic Calvinist.

318. *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, p. 178.

319. *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, pp. 172, 173.

questions lies in rightly applying to the issues the sovereignty of God and the total ruin of man -- with an understanding of the testing of the first man.

Concerning this, John Calvin (the most authentic Calvinist, I suppose) wrote:

*Now he willeth all men.* In these words Paul teacheth that we must give ear to God so soon as he speaketh, as it is written, “To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts,” (Psa. 95:7, 8.) For the stubbornness of those men is without excuse, who foreslow [neglect] this opportunity when God doth gently call them unto him.<sup>320</sup>

Concerning *whosoever* in John 3:16, John Calvin wrote:

And he has employed the universal term *whosoever*, both to invite all indiscriminately to partake of life, and cut off every excuse from unbelievers.<sup>321</sup>

Since John Calvin did not believe that any of the indiscriminately invited sinners could partake of life except the elect, does that mean, according to J. Gerstner’s reasoning on the offer of the kingdom, that John Calvin believed in an immoral, or insincere, invitation on God’s part? We agree with John Calvin’s quoted statements and regard J. Gerstner’s objection as deficient in understanding God’s addressing man’s responsibility.

What is at the bottom of the Arminian/Calvinist dispute is *responsibility*. Both systems view man’s responsibility wrongly. And I suggest that this is what is at the bottom of the issue of the morality of the offer and the other points discussed above. Keep in mind that the morality issue really is involved also in the giving of the law as well as the coming of Christ to His own. Now, it so happens that in a reply to B. W. Newton, JND addressed one of his errors, and JND’s reply meets the issue under discussion here. It is as if he were replying to John Gerstner. JND wrote:

I believe that the author has not known how to distinguish responsibility and the purposes of God. I believe that Christ came seeking fruit on Israel and found none -- that He was presented to their responsibility. He piped to them and they would not dance.

But the reasoning of the author proceeds from his not seeing that, *had* He been received, it would have proved that there was good in man -- that man was not in an absolutely lost state, just as his keeping the law would. Whereas his rejecting Christ proved, not only that man’s flesh would not keep the law, but that even the goodness of God, and sending Messiah, and sending His Son, and light into the world, and love in the world, their king in the world, yea, God, Himself in power and goodness in the world, would not

lead the flesh to repentance. And until this trial was put to it [the flesh], and (specially as regard’s the Jews) coming according to promise and prophecy, man was not, in the dealings of God with Him, pronounced absolutely and finally bad. “If I had not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.” God never purposed to save by the old man, any more than he expected the law to be kept by the old man. But He did present His Son to man in his former state, and viewed as Israel after the flesh, to show the hopelessly sinful state of it [the flesh]. And, till He had done this, He did not pronounce upon it as the subject of nothing at all but judgment.

Now the testimony starts from this ground that all are entirely lost, the world is convicted of sin, because they have not believed in Christ.<sup>322</sup>

J. Gerstner complained that it is assumed “that a sincere offer is compatible with the foreknowledge of God rather than demonstrating how it is compatible.”<sup>323</sup> What does ‘demonstration’ mean to authentic Calvinists who, when God says “all everywhere,” pretend that it means “all everywhere except reprobates,” etc. etc. If you say to such, ‘I will show you a Scripture where God commands all everywhere to repent,’ he will tell you that you have not demonstrated it, nor are you able to do so -- because God does not command “reprobates” to repent. Do you see how *he* “demonstrates” *that*?

I suggest that the ‘moral issue’ is a bogus one, resulting from reasoning upward from what a finite Calvinist should and should not do to what God can and cannot do. It is the mind of the flesh intruding itself into the sovereign God’s using His exposure of the total ruin of man in the accomplishment of His eternal purpose in Christ. Moreover, the trial of the first man, and the end of that trial in the cross, is not understood.<sup>324</sup>

It is of the same character as the Arminian who says that God cannot violate man’s (alleged) moral free will; who says that God looked down the avenue of time, saw that I would choose Christ, and therefore chose me. A Calvinist who raises such a moral issue thinks God is at the center of his thinking about the issue, but it is man that is really at the center, limiting God by what man should and should not do. The difference with the Arminian is that in his case the man centered reasoning is more obvious.

322. *Collected Writings* 8:359, 360.

323. *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, p. 175.

324. There are also “dispensationalists” that do not understand this.

320. *Calvin’s Commentaries* 19:175, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989.

321. *Ibid.*, 17:125.

## Appendix 4: God's Sovereignty And the "Heathen"

A question was asked of J. N. Darby regarding the "heathen" and God's working with them apart from the gospel. The question is this:

It has been said that 'God is love: He does not leave the poor heathen without divine aid in their darkness. Though the Holy Ghost may not be in them as an indwelling Spirit, yet as external, He deals with the conscience of *every human being*; in the case of a heathen, aiding him towards right convictions and good practice, and helping him so to live that he may be saved, and this, though he may never have heard the name of Christ, and knows not the true God in Christ. Such texts as Acts 17:27; 10:36; Rom. 2:7; Gen. 6:3, corroborate this view.' How does scripture meet this serious question?

The doctrine you refer to is widely spread enough. Zwingli held it: all the Wesleyans hold it and most of the national professors of Christianity. But it is founded on a want of depth and truth in the foundations, denying that we are all lost. The best answer is the very plain statements in the Epistle to the Romans, though these are confirmed by many others. But there is always a want of conviction of sin in these cases: man is not lost, not dead in trespasses and sins, and that is, *I* am not; for if *I* have deserved condemnation, it is no difficulty to think we *all* have. Hence grace, sin, the Lord's death, all lose their import and value and the real way of meeting it morally is to deal with the conscience of the individual. 'So to live that he might be saved' at once shows ignorance of the ways of God in grace -- in fact of the gospel, as regards Christ's work. 'Right convictions and good practice' is not gospel. Is he born again? Acts 17:27 does not say a word of the Spirit's acting, and Acts 10:35 says simply that he who is such and such is accepted; it was merely that blessing was not confined to the Jews, as is evident if the passage be read. Rom. 2:7, etc., which is the strongest passage, supposes the truth of glory and resurrection known. *If I* found a Gentile so walking, he is as much saved as a Jew. But it is declared that every mouth is stopped, and all the world guilty before God, that "there is none righteous, no, not one." The condemnation of the heathen is (Rom. 1:18-3:19) put upon a ground which negatives the idea of such an universal operation of the Spirit. They are, says the apostle, without excuse, on the double ground of having given up glorifying God when they knew Him, and the testimony of creation, adding conscience: a reasoning perfectly futile, and without sense, if there was the other ground of condemnation, namely, that they have resisted the Holy Ghost. They that "have sinned without law shall also perish without law." "The carnal mind is enmity against God," in me, as well as in any other one of the nations. People confound the ground of responsibility with sovereign grace in saving. Gen. 6:3 refers merely to the patience of God in Noah's time.

Men are not saved by grace, if they are as thus stated; because, as the Spirit works alike on all (or the argument is nothing worth), the whole of salvation depends on man's acceptance of and acting on it. As I said at the beginning, our whole state, as scripture puts it, is denied. (See 2 Cor. 5:14, where the apostle draws the conclusion from grace. Compare Eph. 2:5.) I do not believe the Gentiles more lost than I was myself. But "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" but the name of Jesus Christ. Rom. 10:13, 15 is positive as to the

means. Judgment and condemnation is according to the means we have. What brings, by sovereign goodness, salvation to the lost is another thing. But, as I said, does he think himself lost? That is the real question. The source of thousands of opinions is the want of this, of conscience being before God; where it is not, the mind can have a thousand thoughts, all alike to no purpose. But I must close. [1879.] <sup>326</sup>

This may yet be added from JND:

Further, there would be in detail a righteous adjudgment to the servant -- he who knew, and did it not, many stripes, and he who knew it not, and did it not, few stripes. All was in ruin, all guilty; sin and neglect had produced ignorance. But the righteous distinction would be made. Note, they would be treated in the responsibility of the place they held, though they might not serve nor have spiritual right there. And so to whom much was given, of him much would be required, and if much has been afforded, more will be demanded. Thus the Lord unfolds the place and principles of service, as before of position, through His rejection and its consequences, and sole force. Further, we have to note here a manifest distinction between the called Church, called to wait for its Lord, and the ignorance of heathenism and the like, and the far more terrible portion of the Church. That servant, alluding specially to the one of whom He had just spoken, who knew his Lord's will and prepared not himself, i.e., for his Lord that was coming, and did not do according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes -- but he who -- it is not said: Did not prepare himself, for he was not at all in that position, but "Committed things worthy of stripes," acted evilly according to his natural heart, as a heathen might do, shall be beaten with few stripes. The distinction is clear, and the judgment of the Lord as righteous, so is it solemn thereon, exceeding solemn, for the professing Church. <sup>327</sup>

And then this may yet be added:

There is a tendency to think of them as merely unfortunate and scarcely responsible. It is even taught that many of them have the true knowledge of God, by the light of nature, or by some gracious work of God in their soul apart from revelation. The word of God says nothing of this, and leaves us to the awful conclusions stated in these remarks.

But what effect should this have upon those saved by the precious blood of Christ? Will it give them a self-satisfied assurance that they hold the truth, or will it stir their souls afresh with ardent desire to carry the good news to the perishing millions who have never heard the gospel? Surely every saved soul has a responsibility as to this. May we not pray to see awakened interest in sending the gospel to foreign lands, and may we not also ask that the Lord will raise up and send forth more laborers, more heralds of the gospel into the dark places of the earth? <sup>328</sup>

## Appendix 5: God's Sovereignty And the Salvation of Infants

326. *Letters* 2:503, 504.

327. *Notes and Comments* 6:232

328. From "The True Condition of the Heathen," *Help and Food* 18:294.

325. Asked by J. P. B., *The Bible Treasury* 12:288.

A beloved brother in the Lord has put some questions with regard to this, which it may be helpful to many to see clearly answered. As I doubt not Scripture furnishes the answer, I give those questions with a little more than usual detail.

He asks, “Does not such a statement as that in John 3:3 (Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God) take in the whole human race, not excepting children? Could, ‘of such is the Kingdom of God’ be an objection to such an application?” He adds, “I can see little foundation for children being saved, simply because Jesus died for the world, and they have not committed transgression. I suppose that idea is a remnant of the old doctrine of Jesus having ‘put away the Adamic transgression.’ I do not see Scripture state it that way.”

Now with regard to the latter point first: it is plain, if we take Scripture, that those who have not committed sin, cannot at any rate come up for judgment in the day of judgment. It is not for the possession of an evil nature that men will be judged, but “according to their *deeds*.” And people are very conscious of the difference between these two things, and of their responsibility with regard to them. Men acknowledge easily that they are sinners, and will plead even their nature as their excuse for sin; but all feel, notwithstanding, the shame and guilt of having committed this or that sin in particular. They have the sense of responsibility as to that, and that they need not have done it, however bad their nature.

The solemn account rendered before the judgment seat could never then be rendered by an infant. Nor will he be condemned for the evil nature only, or for Adam’s sin, which was not, nor is ever stated to be, his.

Yet it remains true that a being with an evil nature cannot enter into heaven, or (if that were possible) enjoy the presence of God there. The youngest babe must be born again undoubtedly, just as any other. The only question can be, is there assurance from Scripture that this is the case with every infant dying such?

Now our Lord’s words “Of such is the kingdom of God,” have been already quoted, and are familiar to us. Here again there is more than one question likely to be raised. First, perhaps, what *is* the kingdom of God? And secondly, how far do the words, “Of such is it,” carry us?

Now I apprehend, a common cause of mistake lies in confounding the different aspects of this Kingdom in the present and the future. The parables of Matthew and Mark teach us that the Kingdom of God, or of heaven, now in the time of the Lord’s absence, covers the whole ground of what we commonly call Christendom. Into it evil men do enter. But when the Lord comes He gathers out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and to that Kingdom which follows, (still the Kingdom of God) the Lord’s words to Nicodemus alone apply. The reference in “born of *water* and of the Spirit,” is to Ezekiel’s promise of God sprinkling clean “water” upon Israel, and putting His “Spirit” within them, preparatory to their entering the Kingdom in millennial

days (Ezek. 35). Our Lord says (John 3:12) that it is of “earthly things” He is speaking there. Of course the same is just as true of those who are to inherit the heavenly portion of that Kingdom.

But when in Mark 10:14, He says, “Of such is the Kingdom of God,” there is no need precisely to define, whether he is speaking of the present or future Kingdom. It is plain, if they could be, *according to the Lord’s mind*, in the present Kingdom, they could not but be in the Kingdom of the future. It is on this ground as showing His gracious mind toward them, that He takes them up in His arms and blesses them. Could He bless and put them in his Kingdom here, and exclude them from His Kingdom of glory?

Assuredly not; for in the case of the exclusion of any, it is *their* contrary will He blames. *He* would have all men to be saved. Now where there is no contrary will to be supposed, will *His* will fail? Does not the “all men” of 1 Tim. 2:4 extend as far as the Lord’s words in John 3:3?

If any raise question as to “of such,” and will set limits there, -- if they say it is of people who *resemble* children He is alone speaking, I can only ask, why then did He say, “Suffer *them* to come unto me, for of such,” etc. Why did He bless them? and where else is “of such” used in such a way, as to exclude the things or persona which furnish the resemblance? It would seem somewhat childish to ask, are not little children “such as” little children?

As to Jesus having “put away the Adamic transgression,” we can say something better, for with John we know Him as “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” Not the *sins* of the world, as some think; that is not true; but sin as a hindrance to God’s taking up and blessing any one any where. There is no hindrance to the blessing of any one, but, alas, in his own will. And this is after all just the point with me, where the truth and character of God seem concerned in our maintaining it; if the “Son of man is to seek and to save that which was lost,” and little ones are “lost,” yet with no barrier of their will to hinder their salvation, can the will be wanting upon His part? <sup>329</sup>

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329. *Helps by the Way* 1:160-163 (1873).

## Appendix 6

### "Sin in the Flesh"

"Sin in the flesh" is the root of sin within fallen man. We call it the old nature. Rom. 6 shows that fallen man is the slave of indwelling sin. Rom. 7 shows the need for deliverance from the power of sin. Rom. 8 shows what freedom from the power of indwelling sin is. Here are some thoughts of J. N. Darby directed against the notions of Wesleyans (Arminians) concerning lust and sin and their relationship, written in a conversational style.

\* \* \* \* \*

N. But I do not say that lust is not sin; it is desire which is not sin. And when you maintain that we cannot observe the law, you seem to forget that it is written, That the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; Rom. 8:4. In fact God never commands man to do what man cannot accomplish. And in this epistle of John, which you *imperfectorists* would get away from, it is declared, eight times over, that he who is born of God sinneth not.

A. You certainly did say that lust is not sin, and your definition expressly declares it; for the lust in my nature is not a voluntary transgression of the divine law, if I have a will, through grace, directly opposed to it.

N. If I said that lust is not sin, it is because James says, When lust hath conceived, it *bringeth forth* sin (James 1:15), and you confound temptations with lusts.

A. Alas! into what uncertainty and contradictions does error plunge the mind of man! As to the argument you derive from James, that apostle himself affirms that "every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed."

N. No. The proper translation of that passage is not, of his lusts; but, of his desires.

A. Your distinctions are deplorably subtle and dangerous. Thus men play with poison. It is in vain that I look for this difference; for the word which you translate *desire*, is the same Greek word which Paul employs in Rom. 7 to express the *lust* by which he had been convinced of sin. And pray observe, it is there said that sin produced lust (v. 8). It is true that when lust hath conceived, it *bringeth forth* sin *as an act*; but it is just as true that sin, which is in our nature, produces all sorts of lusts. With your definition of sin, which it totally anti-scriptural, you may indeed reason on the subject; but you will find yourself constantly in opposition to the declarations of God's word.

Temptation may, doubtless, be distinguished from sin. When I abhor the evil, and the new man rejects with indignation that which Satan presents, or, it may be, flattery, it is a temptation and not a sin. But lust in me is always sin. I do not say it will be imputed to me; but that is solely and absolutely because of the *blood of Christ*. But the "new man" judges it as sin. Woe is me, if I do not judge it!

N. But Christ had desires.

A. Oh! see to what you are reduced, to bring Jesus Christ down to your level in order to exalt yourself! It is a fearful principle. No, no; you dare not say that Jesus Christ had desires like those which are found in our fallen nature. You will reply, that there are desires which are not sinful. I admit it. There are for example hunger, thirst, and such like. These desires are the result of wants which our heavenly Father knows to exist in us. But would you venture to compare those desires which are in the human heart, and which, you say, occasion in the most pious, errors which require the *blood of Christ*, with the desires which were in the heart of the adorable Savior? Is it not true that all the *thoughts* of Christ proceeded from the Holy Spirit, while He still felt the wants and sufferings of a man? Did then those evil desires which are in us, which require to be kept under, and which, if not restrained, produce sin, exist in the heart of Jesus Christ? My dear friend! the more I look into your doctrine and its tendency to reduce to the same level God, Christ (who knew no sin), and us poor vile creatures fallen from our first estate, the more do I see that, instead of being a doctrine of sanctification, it is a doctrine which, while it pretends to exalt our condition, abases all that is worthy of being exalted, exalts all that should be abased, and destroys the distinction between good and evil. You tell me, moreover, that God commands nothing but what man can accomplish. Where do you get that in the Bible? The law, for example, was given to the Israelites, that is to say, to man in the flesh. Can man fulfil it?

N. No: but we can by the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus {Rom. 8:2}.

A. In one sense that is true; but that, by no means, establishes the principle upon which you lay so much stress, that God *commands nothing* but what may be accomplished. The law was given to man in the flesh, and the New Testament teaches me, very clearly, that God did not give the law in the thought that man *could keep it*. The carnal mind pretends to do so; but the word tells me that the law of God was given to convince man of sin, by the discovery that he did not keep it, so "that sin might become by the commandment exceeding sinful." The law entered, says the apostle, that *the offence might abound*. Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin is dead; Rom. 7:8.

Remark here, in passing, that sin produces concupiscence or lust. When the law had said, Thou shalt not covet, then Paul knew sin. "The strength of sin is the law," says the same apostle elsewhere; 1 Cor. 15:56. I gather, therefore, that in giving the law, God's purpose was to convince man of the sin which is in him; and not, as you say, with the thought that man could and would keep it.

N. But it is said God has condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; Rom. 8:3, 4.

A. That is true; yet the iniquity of the flesh is there again pointed out, as being ever the same in its nature. But we have been made free from the law of sin and death, by the new life which we have in Jesus Christ, strengthened by the Spirit of God, which is here called the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus. We are able then, in walking according to this new life, to keep from failing in obedience to His commands, while we still judge and because we judge the flesh. But as soon as we think and act after the flesh, the law is no longer fulfilled. On the other hand, God, in giving us this life, in which we walk in love, has, at the same time, given us the knowledge of a state which convinces us that we are very far behind Jesus Christ (that is to say, from the perfection of the example set before us). "I know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him [does not look merely at the law, but] purifieth himself, even *as he is pure*," 1 John 3:2, 3. If then God gives us strength to walk in His ways, that strength is given to us through a knowledge, which, at the same time, makes us understand that we cannot, here below, attain even to that which we know. Thus, instead of an end which we can attain to embolden us, God sets before us that which hereafter will assuredly be accomplished in us, but which preserves us ever in humility, ever in the feeling that we *are not* all that we would be. But this very thing keeps us ever *advancing* towards our great end. Your principle, which has a semblance of requiring nothing but what is just and suitable, is, accordingly, entirely opposed to the mind of God; it is akin to *self-righteousness*, which, instead of being "strong in the grace" which God has given to us, prefers saying, I have attained to the end. God has given us a full pardon at the very outset of our career; and at its termination He has set before us a glory, the power of which is in us by the communication of the life of Christ: but the nature and the very excellence of this glory make it evident to us that it is not a thing to which we can ever attain while here below. We "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God," Rom. 5:2. "We are saved by hope" (Rom. 8:24); and in the confidence of the certainty of God's grace, we press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus.

N. But it is said that we are "made free" from sin *itself*, and not only from the law of sin.

A. If you had read the passage, you would have seen that the apostle, in saying "made free," tells them that he speaks "after the manner of men," because of the infirmity of their flesh. He says made free, as contrasted with slavery; and therefore he adds, by way of marking the contrast, that they had become *servants to God*; Rom. 6:22. It is a simple comparison between a slave and a freed man, introduced to make the matter better understood. And pray observe, that it is not the condition of a *perfect* Christian only, but of *all* Christians without exception; so that this passage is not at all applicable in support of your doctrine.

The same observation applies to the eight passages of John, whose epistle is loved by all who love God, notwithstanding the misplaced reproaches of those who so despise their brethren. Do your eight passages prove that certain Christians have attained to *perfection*, so that they no longer sin, while other Christians have not attained that end? By no means; they are spoken of those who are "born of God." "He that committeth sin is of the devil; neither hath he known God" (1 John 3); so that, according to your quotation of the passages, every one who is not *perfect* is of the devil. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; and he cannot sin because he is born of God." This is true, therefore, of every Christian; and I cannot understand how anyone, ever so little conversant with this matter, can reconcile such quotations with a simple heart, except by singular prejudice of mind. You will reply, that many scholars in one and the same class may have made very different progress; but this is said of the *entire* class and does not apply to the greater or less progress of the scholars.

N. But is it not said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy might, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself?

A. I have already answered you in principle. God *necessarily* commands what *ought to be*, not what man can perform; for this commandment, which is the essence of the law, was given to man in the flesh, when he was "without strength." And we have already seen that, although it is the eternal law of perfect beings, it becomes, when it is imposed upon those who are already under sin, a ministry of death and condemnation; 2 Cor. 3.

N. I admit it: but we who are under grace can accomplish it.

A. I have answered you, likewise, on this point. Under grace a new life has been given to us. It is the life of Christ in us, which sees and considers Jesus Christ glorified, and which knows that, when He shall appear, we shall be like

Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Now *this life* judges all things in us according to the perfection of our hereafter state in the resurrection. It discerns that we have not yet obtained the redemption of our body. It judges the old man in us -- his root, his trunk, and his branches. But all the while the Christian purifies himself as Christ Himself is pure. Observe, it is not only said that he aims at growth in Christ, but that he purifies himself as He is pure. He does not say that he is purified, but that he *purifies* himself after the resemblance of Christ glorified; and, knowing that the time is not yet come for the redemption of his body, he dreams not of perfection here below.

N. I think I understand you. The Christian has already in his soul "the power of the resurrection." Nothing which is not after the power of the resurrection can satisfy him. He does not think that he has attained it, although he follows after such a purification of himself as he sees in Christ, whose life he possesses, and into whose image he is already changed from glory to glory; 2 Cor. 3:18. Yet it seems to me discouraging to say to a Christian, You never can attain the object you have in view.

A. But he is certain of obtaining his object! And it is evident that, instead of discouraging him, it is, in God's mind, the very way to urge him onward; "for every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure," 1 John 3:3. And Paul says, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; Phil. 3:13, 14. This view, according to your system -- which lowers all the privileges of Christianity -- this view, I say, according to your system, may discourage; but it is because your Christianity is, in a great degree, *man's* Christianity and not God's: a Christianity which works in order to obtain eternal life, and not because God has given it to us. What you really want is, not to be able to say, "I shall apprehend here below"; but it is to be able to say with the apostle, that I *may* apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus; Phil. 3:12. What you really want is to believe that, *through grace*, we have *in us* the very life of Jesus -- eternal life by our union with Him; that all things are ours; that we are joint-heirs with Christ; that we are assured of the love of God; that we are loved of Him as Jesus Christ is loved. Therefore with joy and gladness of heart we press onward, while on earth, toward the realization of this glory. By the power of the Holy Ghost we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory; by faith we are already made partakers of a perfection which will be given to us in its fulness, when Jesus Christ returns. "We have our citizenship in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue

all things unto himself," Phil. 3:20, 21.

No; we say not that we must stumble; for, theoretically, why cannot we walk every moment after the Spirit? But, practically and by experience, we know that in many things we do offend all; James 3:2. But, while confessing our fault, and that we are without excuse, we know that God is faithful, and that He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. God, who loves us, and brings good out of evil, although He never justifies it -- God, I say, humbles us either by His Spirit or by His chastenings, and gives us a deeper understanding of the boundless riches of His grace. And even I speak not now of outward falls; and I am very far from affirming that failures are necessary for our instruction; but in point of fact we do learn, in the tender and faithful care of our God, that His grace is sufficient for us, that His strength is made perfect in our weakness. But your doctrine fixes the heart upon low views, and in the belief that you have realized them, your Christianity becomes debased and proud. Your watchfulness is no fruit of confidence in God's love, and joy in His holiness and in communion with Him, but of fear; for one of your perfect men may, at the end, find himself in hell! In fact, one of your most distinguished teachers, who assuredly was a child of God, was four times perfect. He fell away from this state, he tells us (and the reason assigned is curious enough), because, in the state of perfection, there was unfaithfulness in his conduct: he consequently lost what had been given to him; and you caution us against those who profess that once in grace we are always in grace and infallibly in glory. I admit that the presence of the Spirit gives a happy inconsistency to those who are in this system; and I bless the Lord for it. Mr. Wesley, who thought at first that a *perfect* man could not fall from that state, afterwards affirmed that it was a great error to think so.<sup>330</sup>

330. Extracted from "The Doctrine of the Wesleyans," *Collected Writings* 3:182-188.



## Appendix 7:

### *The Notion of the "Corporate Election of the Church"*

The notion of "the corporate election" of the church is a device to get rid of individual election, the total lostness of man, and to maintain the idea of moral free will towards God. J. N. Darby rejected the idea of a corporate election of the church:

He will see that they are equally and expressly opposed to the Arminian (so-called, but properly Pelagian) notion of prospective works, or the new (and if you please Melancthonian) notion of church election, as contrasted with individual.<sup>331</sup> *Collected Writings* 3:18.

W. Kelly also rejected the notion of corporate election of the church:

We had God choosing the saints in Christ Jesus, but, not the Church. Election is an individual thing (*Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew*, London: A. S. Rouse, p. 361, 1896).<sup>332</sup>

... from the beginning of his first epistle, Peter draws out the contrast of the Christian place with their old Jewish one. It is not that the Jews were not elect as a nation, but therein precisely it is where they stand in contrast with the Christian. Whatever may be found in hymns, or sermons, or theology, scripture knows no such thing as an elect church. There is the appearance of it in the last chapter of this very epistle, but this is due solely to the meddling hand of man. In chapter 5 we read, "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you"; but all concede that the terms "*the church that is*" have been put in by the translators: they have no authority whatever. It was an individual and not a church that was referred to. It was probably a well known sister there; and therefore it was enough simply to allude to her. "She that was at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you." The very point of Christianity is this, that as to election it is personal -- strictly individual. This is precisely what those who contend against the truth of election always feel most: they will allow a sort of body in a general way to be elect, and then that the individuals who compose that body must be brought in, as it were, conditionally, according to their good conduct. No such idea is traceable in the word of God. God has chosen individuals. As it is said in Ephesians: He has chosen us, not the church, but ourselves individually. "The church," as such, does not come in till the end of the first chapter. We have first

331. *Collected Writings* 3:18.

332. I am sorry to say that the Loizeaux Brothers ed. of W. Kelly's *Matthew* has been tampered with, especially in the area of Matt. 18:20. Obtain an edition faithful to the original.

individuals chosen of God before the foundation of the world.<sup>333</sup>

Scriptures supposed to teach corporate election of the church are: Eph. 1:4; 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14; Heb. 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:9. These texts are not about the church, as such, in connection with the Head, or about the body of Christ, as such, in union with the Head.

"Corporate election" is an expression that seems to be utilized concerning Israel for the purpose of setting up a false analogy to an erroneous "corporate election" of the church. In Isa. 45:3 we read: "Israel mine elect." This refers to what is national and earthly. The election of Israel is for an earthly position of supremacy among the nations. There is really no analogy to this concerning the church.

Regarding the words "according as he has chosen us in him" (Eph. 1:4), Dr. D. A. Waite (a four point Arminian) writes:

I like to explain this by a "corporate election." I believe, for example, that the Lord chose the nation of Israel as an elect people, as a "corporate" body. I believe He has chosen the Church also as a "corporate" body or group. I believe that He has chosen the church as an entity. This is called "corporate election." The Lord founded and established the church as a corporate body before the foundation of the world.<sup>334</sup> As believers trust Christ as Savior and redeemer, they become members of that corporate body, the church, which was chosen before the foundation of the world. That is how I harmonize all these things.<sup>335</sup>

There has been no harmonization at all, but rather obvious omissions as well as dispensational confusion. Let us consider six points:

1. The idea of corporate election does not account for the "elect angels" (1 Tim. 5:21). Obviously, the ones that fell are not elect. The others are.
2. The idea of "corporate election" does not account for the saints before the formation of Israel. Enoch, Noah, and Job, for example, were saints (holy ones) and were born of God, having a new nature. Saints living before Israel was formed were not part of a "corporate election." Their election was, therefore, necessarily individual, which is the very thing the notion of "corporate election" is trying to set aside. Of course, one could claim that they were not elect persons, though saints, but that would be a most strange and desperate idea. If you use as an objection that Scripture does not use the word

333. *Lectures Introductory to the Study of the Acts, the Catholic Epistles, and the Revelation*, p. 224, 1870.

334. {The Lord founded and established the church on the day of Pentecost. His purpose is before the foundation of the world.}

335. *Ephesians*, Collingswood: The Bible for Today Press, p. 5 (2002).

"elect" concerning them, why would you deny the validity of pointing out that Scripture does not use such an expression as "the church, my elect," or, "my elect church," analogous to "Israel my elect"?

3. If OT Israel under the Mosaic system was corporately elect, then the unbelievers among them were part of the corporate election. Is that analogous with a corporately elect church? Does the corporately elect church include unbelievers? If you say the corporate election of Israel only applied to those among them who were born of God, you exclude the others from being part of the nation. In such a case, the born again ones must have been an invisible nation and God's rebukes *addressed to the nation* must be explained away in this regard. Even the breaking out of the natural branches (Jews) from the olive tree of Rom. 11 must be explained harmoniously with the "corporate election of Israel" if "corporate election" refers only to the born again ones among them.

4. In the future, Israel will experience a national status called the *adoption* in Rom. 9:4, and this will be realized under Messiah's reign when every Israelite will personally be elect. It is the new Israel under the new covenant (Heb. 8). That *nation* will be born at once (Isa. 66:8), the rebels having been purged (Ezek. 20:38) and the others brought into the bond of the covenant (Ezek. 20:37). The Deliverer will come to Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Rom. 11:26) and they shall all be righteous (Isa. 60:21). There shall not be an unbeliever among them. This is God's purpose for them **in the earth**. They will be seated, if I may so state it, in earthly places (or, in the earthlies) according to Israel's earthly calling. Thus, those composing the nation at that time are all individually elect *for salvation*; and besides that, they are part of a national election *for supremacy* over the nations.

During Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (after the rapture has occurred), there will be formed a Jewish remnant of godly ones. They also are elect, though the nation of Israel is not yet owned by God, not yet declared "Ammi" (Hos. 2 -- "my people"), but not yet in the good of "the adoption" and the national election for supremacy over the nations. They are not yet the nation of Israel -- not part of a national entity owned of God. What is their corporate election? They are not in the good of the national election, or "the adoption" (Rom. 9:4), at that point in time. That the godly Jews in the time of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week are, in fact, stated to be "elect" is seen in Matt. 24:22, 24, 31 and Mark 13:20, 22, 27 -- but at that time Israel does not exist as the publically acknowledged people -- still being "Lo-ammi" (Hos. 1 -- "not my people") at that time. "But on account of the elect whom he has chosen, he has cut short those days" (Mark 13:20). And preparatory to the setting up Israel in the future national status, He shall "send his angels, and shall gather his elect from the four

winds, from end of earth to end of heaven" (Mark 13:27). These elect are individuals. That there are elect Jews at that time shows that there is such a thing as individual election of Jews apart from the national election. But "corporate election" is used as a device to deny that there is individual election apart from a "corporate" election.

During Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week there are the sealed Jews, the sealed "bondmen of our God" of Rev. 7:3-8. To maintain that election is only corporate, will you deny that such persons are elect? Matt. 24 and Mark 13 calls them "elect." And what of the 144, 000 in Rev. 14:3-5? Besides those Jews, what about the crowd of Gentiles in Rev. 7:9-17 who come out of the great tribulation? And in Matt. 25:31-46 we have not only the brethren of the King (the godly of the remnant of Israel in Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week) but also the Gentiles who believed their message. Are not any of these elect? What "corporate election" is theirs? What about the saved Gentiles in the millennium -- what is their "corporate election"? If you say that Scripture does not use the word "elect" concerning them, let me repeat that Scripture does not use such an expression as "the church, my elect," or, "my elect church" -- so why do you think in such terms?

The clear fact is that Scripture does show the election of individuals *as individuals*. The use made of "corporate election" of the church is nothing but a device to get rid of the unwanted truth of individual election of Christians.

5. The Christian has a heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1) and election. This heavenly calling is stated in an epistle (Hebrews) that views Christians in the wilderness (typically speaking). In the epistle that views him in Canaan (typically speaking), he is seen seated *in* (not yet *with*) Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:7). Each of these individual believers is chosen in Christ before the world's foundation; and being sealed with the Spirit, he is viewed as seated above -- in Christ Jesus. This is a great dispensational distinction from Israel. The saints are heavenly and the church is not an age among the earthly ages. Most "dispensationalists" fail to see this. The reasoning from the national condition of Israel, whether under the old covenant or under the new covenant, to the election and place of the saints now, is a serious mistake. It mixes the heavenly and the earthly, the effect of which is to lower the heavenly, and bring in Judaizing.

6. There are two phrases that bring the difference before us concerning God's purpose and dealings with the earth and His dealings with us as heavenly.

**(A) From the foundation of the world.** This phrase has to do with the earth and with Israel.

. . . that the blood of all the prophets which has been poured out from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation (Luke 11:50).

"This generation" refers to a moral class, a class that extends from Moses' day until Christ appears in glory to deal with Israel.

. . . As I have sworn in my wrath, If they shall enter into my rest; although the works were completed from [the] foundation of the world (Heb. 4:3).

The Christian enters into a different rest than the one that the cast-aside Israel did not enter into. The new Israel, under the new covenant, will enter into that rest (the millennial rest on earth) that God has purposed for them. Since it is a rest on earth, it is stated to be completed *from* [the] foundation of the world -- *not* from *before* the foundation of the world.

We come now to two Scriptures that have to do with Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, after, of course, the time when we have been caught up at the rapture.

. . . and all that dwell on the earth shall do it homage, [every one] whose name has not been written from [the] founding of [the] world in the book of life of the slain Lamb (Rev. 13:8).

. . . and they who dwell on the earth, whose names are not written from the founding of the world in the book of life, shall wonder, seeing the beast . . . (Rev. 17:8).

In like manner, the national adoption of Israel is connected with the earth as its proper sphere, and is looked at as connected with the foundation of the world. What is heavenly now stands in contrast.<sup>336</sup>

We might notice that Heb. 9:26 is referring to the fact that if Christ needed to suffer often, He would have had to do so from the foundation of the world (likely referring to Adam's sin at the very beginning). The remaining use is in Matt. 13:35, referring to what the prophets spoke -- which had to do with the earth. Christ and the church is not a subject of the OT prophecies. It is a mystery as to which silence was kept in the OT (Rom. 16:25, 26). So, of course, the mystery was hidden from ages and generations -- from time-periods and from people (Col. 1:26). It was not hid in the OT; it was hid in God (Eph. 3:9).

**(B) Before the foundation of the world.** This phrase has to do with saints now because of the special and unique place we have. Indeed, as taken into favor in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6), *Christ's place is our place*, an utterly stunning truth!

In connection with the Lord's prayer in John 17, and His desire that we might be with Him above (note, He had told them He would come again for

them, to receive them unto Himself, "that where I am ye also may be" (John 14:1-3). He spoke of the Father's love for Him in this way:

Father, [as to] those whom thou hast given me, I desire that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before [the] foundation of [the] world (John 17:24).

Our election is connected with love before the foundation of the world:

. . . according as he has chosen us in him before [the] world's foundation (Eph. 1:4).

The application of the blood of Christ to us is also connected in this way:

. . . precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, [the blood] of Christ, foreknown indeed before [the] foundation of [the] world (1 Pet. 1:20).

336. It might be well to notice here that the national place for Israel has to do with the present earth, not the new earth. That national place will end in connection with the creation of the new heavens and the new earth, and so we read of God tabernacle being with with "men" (Rev. 21:3). The earthly distinction passes away. Not so the heavenly place of the church (Eph. 3:21).

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