



*I am the companion of all
that fear thee,
and of them that keep*

Thy Precepts

(Psa. 119:63)

*Keep by the Holy Spirit which
dwells in us the good deposit
entrusted (2 Timothy 1:14)*

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

*Appendix 1:
Is There an
Eternal Decree of Reprobation?*

Supposed Proofs for the Decree of Reprobation

(Continued)

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.¹

This Greek word is used in Rom. 1:28 (reprobate); 1 Cor. 9:27² (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 12:39, 40

1. *The Bible Treasury* 6:298.

2. 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.

(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:

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.³

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 background 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

3. Exposition of the Gospel of John, in loco.

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.⁴

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.⁵

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 will, and hardens whom He will. 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.

4. Exposition of Matthew, in loco.

5. Exposition of the Gospel of John, in loco.

MATT. 11:25

(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 12:39, 40 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 away.

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 consider 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. ⁶ ♦

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 abstract as to the will of God. The only safe or becoming

6. Notes on Romans, in loco.

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. ⁷ ♦

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 as R. C. Sproul 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. ⁸

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

7. *Lectures Introductory to the Study of the Minor Prophets*, pp. 168-170.

8. *Chosen by God*, Wheaton: Tyndale House, p. 141, 1986.

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: ⁹

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. ¹⁰

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 a 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. ¹¹

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 reprobate	God works unbelief in the hearts of the reprobate ¹²

Perhaps the notion of a decree of reprobation satisfies a philosophical, a mental,

9. Of course, a person who believes in equal ultimacy may also deny that equal ultimacy makes God the author of sin.

10. *Chosen by God*, p. 142.

11. *Chosen of God*, p. 142.

12. *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.

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*¹³ on 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

13. 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:

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).

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. Sproul (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.¹⁴

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 Apostle Paul . . . (Rom. 9:22-24).¹⁵

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

14. *Calvin’s Doctrine of Predestination*, Grand Rapids: Baker, p. 79, sec. ed., 1977.

15. *Almighty Over All*, Grand Rapids: Baker, pp. 52, 53, 1999.

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.¹⁶

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?

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.¹⁷

The decree of reprobation is arrived at through 'logic,' through inference, not

16. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

17. *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, p. 105, 1963.

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.

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," 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.

(Concluded)

Ed.

True Position Is Power -- Departure From It Is Weakness

In grace, where alone, as lost and ruined, we could stand, we learn that all our blessings are accomplished by Christ and vested in Him. To possess and to enjoy remain with us. Simple as this truth appears, none is practically so embarrassing to our legal and self-dependent spirits. To possess and to enjoy God’s gifts, we must first value them as gifts; and here is our difficulty. Our pride blunts our sense of need, but the earnest soul counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord. The surrender of nature proves the appreciation of grace, but it does not obtain it; though it opens the door to possession and to enjoyment. Grace is laid up for me; as I value it, I enjoy it. There is none *newly* provided or prepared for me; for it is already provided and laid up in Christ; and I enjoy it when I am in a position to enjoy it. We see this in the apostle’s prayers in Ephesians. In the first, that the saints might know the power which wrought in Christ, and what He has accomplished for them; and in the second, that they might know Christ Himself -- that they might be filled with all the fulness of God. As the soul enters on the position in which grace sets it, it knows the power which wrought in Christ. Truly, power must first work in me to raise me to that position, and for this is the prayer; but being in the position, I not only know the power but the fruition of it, and while I keep it I enjoy power efficiently. I do not gain the position. Through grace it is mine, and I take it. There is power in the taking of it, and still greater, evidently, in keeping it; because it is its effect. It is possible for a man to

assume a position in name, of which he, in reality, knows nothing; but this will soon test him. If a man assume the position of being “heavenly” without knowing the power which wrought in Christ -- the only question is, “*Is he heavenly?*” If through grace he be, he is so in spirit and act, and *by gift*, even as Christ is. If he be this only by assumption, there is an effort to prove it rather than enjoyment in the possession of it. In the one case you labour to convince others; in the other, to magnify your possession.

I am bound to take every position in which the grace of Christ has set me; and my weakness is because I do not. The position is the verification of Christ’s power; and in taking it and maintaining it, I am acknowledging Him, even though thereby my own infirmities are more openly disclosed. While to hold the position proves that I have possession and enjoyment in it, though I should fail to prove to others my title or fitness for such a position. Thus the position of itself affords me strength to value and to keep it. If I know that my position is “heavenly,” is it not power *to be* heavenly, to take the the position of being so? I am entitled to it through grace; and I own my title (it being a true one), and my soul adopting heavenliness as its right, and in a way I could not expect if I were only *looking* for such a position. When once we are impressed with the copiousness of Christ’s work, and what grace is, we take up the position, as we have light, and we are taught instinctively that it is a moral error to surrender it; as undoubtedly it is a return to nature. We are, however, constantly allowing the question of fitness to mar our enjoyment; but it is grace that puts us there, and while we own Christ and His work we enjoy the effect of it. Our eye is on the goodness of the giver, and not on the unworthiness of the receiver; and our labor is not to make ourselves fit for that expression of grace, but to walk worth of the vocation. Let a soul refuse to acknowledge vocation as his, and his action, however sincere, must, at least, be legal and coerced. Another hindrance is the tendency to measure ourselves with the difficulties of the path, and not to look at Him who puts us there: -- a sure evidence of want of true energy, “There is a lion in the streets!” For difficulties in the way always occur to those who have no heart to encounter them. Thus Israel lost Canaan; and the giants, and the cities walled up to heaven, shut out the goodness and majesty of God. But what was the language of one who would hold his position?

The land which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

Caleb held the position, and he had the power of it; and when years afterwards he laid low the giants and cities, he had the full fruition of it.

It is possible to have enjoyed our position (and this was power, for it is of grace), and yet to have lost it. We have not walked worthy of it; that is, we have

not in spirit kept the position; and the effect is a craving, if I may so speak, for enjoyment and deliverance which were once known. Alas! how many things, and in how many forms, are in this state offered to compensate us for our loss! Attention to forms, good works, acts of obedience, and the like, are freely proposed and adopted; but if we had kept our position we should not only have known the power which wrought in Christ, but the reaching forward, according to the second prayer in Ephesians, would be unto Christ Himself and all the fulness of God. The going on to perfection, is alone the progress of the soul; and this has to do with Christ in glory. Skilful in the word of righteousness, confirmed in the results of His work, the soul learns its proper and true place with God, and has power accordingly. How can we have power when we do not know our title to it nor own the grace which confers it? The Epistle to the Hebrews is entirely occupied with this. It teaches us in detail that

we are partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.

Surely holding anything does not entitle us to be made partakers of Christ; but holding the position in which grace sets us, we know our fellowship with Him who is the Source of it. It is only as the soul is sustained by faith that it can own the greatness of the place conferred on us. Faith practically results from an acquaintance with God, which He who declares the Father imparts to us. We thus know Him, and as we know Him, we freely take the place His love assigns to us; and as we maintain and assure ourselves of our right to that place, do we realize the power of the grace which has called us to it. We could have no genuine power to act in any position if we doubted our title to it. Wherever there is a shallow and imperfect sense of acceptance, there is always a shallow and partial admission of *all the other* gifts through grace. If the soul be not established on the broad basis of full justification without works before God, its power to progress will be always deficient and uncertain. But, on the contrary, if I have learned distinctly the real value of Christ for me, before God, though I may make many mistakes, and slowly shake off old religious prejudices, yet the light gradually breaks in on my understanding, and I advance in acquaintance with the power which wrought in Christ. Paul is an example of this.

Many were the deep-rooted and once true religious prejudices he had to break through; and slowly enough he escaped from them -- yet he advanced; and why? simply because he never let go the grand doctrine of justification by faith without works. The great landing-place where grace had set him he would not surrender; and hence his power, not only to carry him onward through his religious prejudices, but also where others slipped from their places in grace to hold it still for them and for the church. As he maintained the true position before Peter, can we not see that his soul was animated with the power of it?

Though Peter be confronted and Barnabas be turned aside, yet he enjoys the power of the position he maintains; and he loses sight of man while he shows forth the virtues of Him who hath called him out of darkness into His marvellous light. If Barnabas rejoined him again (as from 1 Cor. we may suppose), did he not rejoice that Paul had so faithfully maintained the truth of God? And must he not have felt his own departure as weakness? And of this weakness we have an evidence on another occasion; so true is it, *that we have imperfectly apprehended the doctrine of grace, when we are unable to walk worthy of our vocation*. Paul would not consent to take Mark, who had previously returned from Pamphylia and went not with them to the work; and though now repentant, Paul thought it not good to take him, for he had departed from the position he once assumed. But Barnabas, the son of consolation, the man who went to Tarsus seeking for Saul, does not see this. He takes Mark with him and sails to his native country, Cyprus, in nature and unto nature! Such is the man that can be turned aside from the full liberty of the Gospel. Paul maintains the right position, and he has power to go on in it; and well was it for the Church and well was it for Barnabas and Mark that he did so. Any position we are led to by God's grace, let us never surrender.

Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned.

It is to call in question the excellence of the position when we surrender it; for how then could we prove our appreciation of it as God's calling? Now this applies to every truth we learn, for we do not merit -- we only apprehend. We see, own, and enjoy, what grace has done for us. If I surrender it, it is not an acquisition of my own I surrender; but it is God's gift, which He calls on me to own, and which to surrender is plainly equal to a refusal to own that it was of grace; or at least it is an evidence that I did not know that it was of grace. If a believer acts unlike a child of God, is he restored the sooner and the better by surrendering the fact that he is a child of God -- or by maintaining that he is one -- and consequently that he ought to be humbled and self-emptied, and cast upon the grace which has given him so high and so undeserved a calling? In the one case he escapes censure, for he denies responsibility; but in the other, he learns from the censure (for he owns and rejoices in the responsibility), though he is thereby afflicted. This desire to escape censure by denying responsibility is a great evil, and arises from a low state of communion, because the soul has been imperceptibly filled with other things, and the sense of grace has become faint. Trial, or more deadness follows.

When Israel gave up its position as able to go up and possess the land, judicially they forfeited the power to do so. They doubted their power before they tried, and in their hearts they turned back into Egypt. Their proper position they surrendered. The weakness which thus declared itself might have been of

long growth, *yet as long as they held the position of being able they progressed*. They surrendered, and they were humbled and debarred from the place of blessing. So was Mark, to whom reference has been made. They immediately; but not so Mark. They were under law. Mark was under grace. Their attempt to recover their position was presumption, Mark, though disciplined for his secession, and perhaps separated from (see Col. 4:10), was profitable and forth-coming for service, when many others were declining. This shows that if in weakness we have surrendered a place which grace called us to, it or a higher one remains open to us: for it is not by merit, but by grace I am saved. True if I surrender, I shall, and ought to be, judged and disciplined, and for a time unfit for the position I surrendered, which was my weakness. Caleb and Joshua never surrendered the position of being able to possess the land, though many years passed over before they were allowed to prove their power to do so. It is always important to own and abide in what God calls me to, and as He calls me; for it is His grace to me, and by His grace I can alone keep it. I might essay to keep my position, but in a careless way; but this would not be power and would lead to judgment. This happens when there is more of imitating others than learning for myself. The position to be of power must be in spirit and energy according to God, or it is merely human, which is worthless. Eli is an example. Rightly a priest -- but with neither the discernment, nor the energy suited for such a place. Both the house of God and his own house gave evidence of his indolence and imbecility. The man that is not true to God is true nowhere. Eli might have had heart, but he had no soul for God: and being overcome by the judgments which his carelessness had expedited, he died as powerless as he lived. But this was not because he took a true position, but because he was negligent in it; and cursed be he who doeth the work of the Lord negligently. Of course every position is not open to me. It is not a true one unless I have a divine warrant for it. But having a divine warrant for it, though I cannot enjoy the fruition of it, yet it is strength to maintain it, even though the opportunity for declaring it be long deferred. It was so with Caleb and Joshua, and so with Daniel. It was so with Paul, though his eye only by degrees opened to the grandeur of the position to which he was called. Yet faithfulness to the position that he saw, gave him power to go on. "To him that hath more shall be given." It has been said "I ought not to take position without power." Now what ought to be the answer to this? Is it not the enquiry whether the position I am called to be of grace or not? If it be and I take it, I know the power in the act that made it mine; for it is faith that leads me to do so -- and that is Christ in me. Let us not excuse ourselves from a position to escape the responsibilities of it. There are inalienable ever-existing rights and privileges to the Church, of which by failure it may lose the enjoyment -- still repentance always puts us at the open door to possession. Sorrow does not this, though repentance be thus produced, for godly sorrow

produces it; but it is not the sorrow, but the fruit of it rather, which restores the church to the enjoyment of her unalterable position with Christ. Repentance is a change of sentiment from conviction. To the errant and faithless this always ensures recovery, because it proves the value of the ways of God instead of one's own. The church has never lost its right to the affections of Christ, or the privilege of His Lordship. It has failed to maintain these blessings; and thereby has forfeited power and commission to maintain subordinate glories. The moment it occupies a true position, be its state ever so low, *it is in the power suited to it*. The church at Corinth was low enough -- their condition one of disorder and defilement -- yet the word to them is, to come together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ. Taking their proper position, though weak and defiled as they had been, they are empowered to abide therein and get rid of whatever offended. I do not allude to this for the purpose of arguing that we may reckon on the same kind of power if we take the same position; but I do so to shew that the needed power follows or flows from taking our true position. I think the position cannot cease, for it is secured in Christ, but there might be, and there is, a different order of power required at different times. All that I desire to insist on is, that my taking my proper position irrespective of former failure is the place of power. We see, in every revelation of God to man, that there are relations established between them which no weakness or infidelity can disannul; though during the season of weakness or infidelity, they are not, or they could not be, enjoyed. But restoration when that was sincere, was always marked by a return to these unchangeable relations, and an acknowledgment of them. When Abram returns from Egypt, he builds an altar where he built one at the first {Gen. 12, 13}. If his restoration be a perfect one, it reinstates him with God, and more, because it is grace restores. God never restores without engaging us more intimately with Himself. Jacob added to his trials even in Canaan, because of his tardiness and forgetfulness to go back to Bethel and there to revive his soul in the grace which visited him on the first night of his exile. Shalem and the altar there, El-elohe-Israel, is the halting-place of the slothful soul, one who will not roast that which he took in hunting: eager to obtain, but with energy expiring when results were to be enjoyed. It was thus with Jacob; it is thus with many a one; but there is no power in such a condition, for it is not the place of grace, and so, after deep and sore trial and disappointment, Jacob is taught that, though he may have done much in the interval unworthy of the blessing revealed at Bethel, yet it is with God, as he had revealed Himself, he has to do, and not with his own fitness, and therefore Bethel is his ground; and being there it was not merely Bethel engrossed his soul, but El-Bethel the god of Bethel, which was the power of his position. If we turn to the book of Judges what do we find? Though Gilgal be Bochim, each deliverer's power is that Israel was God's people; and hence

Deborah could praise for the avenging of Israel, and sing praises to the Lord God of Israel. She saw God in all His terrible greatness and majesty as the God of Israel, as if Israel had never departed from the vigorous devotedness at Gilgal. The earth trembled -- the heavens dropped -- the mountains melted before the Lord -- even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel. *To see* what God is to His people, and to own it, is the secret of power. Barak could not receive the instructions of Deborah according to their nature and tenor; for doubtless he looked more at the people and their deserts and their condition, than at God as the God of Israel. And here is the clog to us all. Gideon's mind had to be cleared of misgivings on this point before he is in efficient service; but when confirmed in it how great was his power. Perhaps no thought so invigorates the soul in reading the book of Judges, as the ease with which each deliverer counts on God's favour towards His rebellious and fallen people. Though vanquished and enslaved, the deliverer's power always lay in his regarding God as their King. Appearances were against it on every side; but faith counted on it and took that place, and there was power accordingly. David gets rid of Michal when he brings back the ark -- the effect of true position. Could the soul do a worse thing than seek a lower place than the one assigned it by God? Certainly not. And it is not humility.

See Ezra and Nehemiah -- how eagerly and unhesitatingly they, not only in their hearts but in practice, return to the position to which God had called their nation! True, they had to endure a long and a painful captivity; for God is not unrighteous, though He be very gracious; and if we rightly know Him, we shall receive the punishment of our iniquity and submit to His righteous hand, but never forget His grace nor where His honour dwelleth. True also they returned to Jerusalem shorn judicially of the physical power with which they were once honoured. But though conscious of all this (yea, calmly submitting to it), yet they confidently resume their old position with God, and though there be many enemies, yet as long as they retain it they have power and blessing. Let them say (see Haggai), "The time is not come"; -- Let them refuse to take the position, and what is their power and blessing? It was,

you looked for much and it came to little; and when ye brought it home I did blow upon it {Hag. 1:9}.

But when they were admonished and resumed, it is, "from this day I will bless you." Now we learn here what has been a sore evil to the people even in this day, namely, that because they are not able to present as great and as powerful a front to the world as they once were permitted to do, or were endowed with, that consequently they have no light, that the time is not come for them, as they revive or are restored from Babylonish thralldom to resume the place with God to which He originally called them, and thence all their weakness, I am persuaded. We want to learn from the foundation all that God has called us to;

nothing short of His vocation will satisfy Him nor bless us. May our souls indeed learn that if we would have power to serve Him we must own the place, and take the place, His grace sets us in. To go back to a lower position or to tarry in one, is to have the Lord to "blow on what we bring home." The church can never cease to be the body of Christ; bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh; and now nourished and cherished by Him, and the Holy Ghost ever present to reveal Him. As it owns and takes this position, it proves its confidence in Him -- realizes the blessing of it -- and is thus confirmed in it. The church may have lost her ornaments, but not the affections nor nurture of her Lord, nor His Spirit that waits on her. She may be feeble and faltering, but she is loved in spite of it all; and she but crowns her sin when she owns it not. In like manner each believer should own and abide in the place where Christ's full work has set him. There cannot be power in the soul if it be not so. The less we own Christ's supremacy over all power, the less power practically can we expect, and the less deliverance from under Satan's power can we enjoy. If we have conflict with wicked spirits in heavenly places, it is because we are in heavenly places; and fellowship with Christ's victory over all the power of evil, can alone give us ease and dignity in passing through the world that lieth in the wicked one. The true soul always wants the sense of this victory; and as long as it owns the full service of Christ and where His grace sets it, it is satisfied and progresses with energy. But if it lose its place, as in this dreary journey we are apt to do, though it retains the sense of former relief, it will become occupied with expressing its own victory or giving proofs of it more than with Christ's. The end of this always is that such attempts are found unsatisfying, and so power-less that there is an insensible but decided return to worldliness once renounced. Nothing but true position is power, for nought else is grace; and may we praise our God for it, and evermore rejoice in His love in and by our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

From *The Present Testimony* 6:287-297

The Mystery of Christ and the Church and The Covenants

Chapter 3

The Relationship of the Old to the New Testament

Introduction

We now proceed from the fact that the mystery of Christ and the church was not spoken of by the prophets of Israel. That being true, the promises to Israel regarding the Kingdom must be understood literally (with due allowance for figures of speech and symbolic language). Moreover, Covenant Theology as a system is necessarily false, for it sees the church as the fulfilment of the OT. The secrecy of the mystery is a spiritual pointer, provided by God, in the Scripture of truth, to guide us to understand the relationship of the OT to the NT. Thus, this guidance is not the result of first elaborating a system of “literal interpretation,” but is given in the Word directly from God Himself. This means that we have divine direction regarding what the prophets of Israel said concerning the Kingdom for Israel.

The Covenantist View of the Relationship of the Old to the New Testament

Old and New Testaments Are Erroneous Titles

While the chapter title is meant to refer to the on-going debate (interminable) among Covenantists and Dispensationalists concerning the issue of the degree of “continuity and discontinuity” between the OT and the NT, the chapter title is ambiguous. It is likewise ambiguous to cast the matter according to such an expression as “the continuity or discontinuity of the OT and NT.”

The very expressions, OT and NT, are a misleading description of the Word of God. The description categorizes the entire Word of God under two covenants, for by OT is meant old covenant and by NT is meant new covenant. The fact is that, leaving aside the Noahic covenant, there was no covenant until Abraham; and, the church is under no covenant.

However, the descriptions OT and NT are entrenched in our way of speaking and will, of course, continue to be used. The expressions seem quite compatible with Covenant Theology which asserts that consequent upon the fall of Adam the Covenant of Grace was introduced and that covenant continues to the end of time -- and that means that other covenants were administrations of

the Covenant of grace, and that presently there is a different administration of the Covenant of Grace than in OT times. Moreover, in this view, the OT is *promise* and the NT is *fulfilment*; i.e., all is fulfilled in the church.

Covenant Theology Is Based on a Denial of the Secrecy of the Mystery

And so, Covenantists do not believe that, concerning the mystery of Christ and the church, “silence has been kept in [the] times of the ages” (Rom. 16:25). At most, there was partial silence, i.e., there was not the full revelation of the mystery (whatever that means to them) in the OT. But silence? Definitely not! They do not believe that the “mystery” has been “hidden from ages and from generations” (Gal. 1:26), i.e., from the time-periods and from the peoples. They tell us that the mystery *is* in the OT (we have seen this in Ch. 2). In chapter headings in Isaiah in the King James Version (KJV), for example, note the references to the church. Such are Covenantist notes that have been placed in chapter headings to describe what the chapter is about. That is certainly an exposition of the Covenantist view of the meaning of “silence” concerning the mystery of Christ and the Church.

Covenant Theology is a denial of the true, *heavenly work* that God is now doing.

Covenant Theology Is Based on a Hermeneutic of Spiritual Alchemy

Denying the secrecy of the mystery of Christ and the Church forces one to have a process of interpretation of the OT that has often been called “spiritualization,” generally used to describe the Covenantist way of handling the OT, while the “Dispensationalist” way has been called “literalism.” “Spiritualization” is hardly an adequate description of what Covenantists do with the OT. The unleashing of the imagination regarding “silence,” and “hid,” and “Paul’s kinsmen according to the flesh” shows the character of how a Covenantist looks at Scripture. He looks at the word “silence” and sees ‘partial silence’; he looks at the word ‘hid’ and sees ‘partially hidden’; he looks at the phrase “Paul’s kinsmen according to the flesh” and sees ‘Paul’s spiritual kinsmen.’ That is *spiritual alchemy*. It is the *transmutation* of things into something other than they actually are. It is like the alchemists of the past who wanted to transmute lead into gold. However, this *spiritual alchemy* is not working on lead, but rather on the gold of God’s Word. Under the transmutational force of this spiritual alchemy some gold changes into lead and

dress and other gold simply disappears from sight, though, thankfully, some gold does remain. Other examples of spiritual alchemy are given below.

Covenantists View the Scripture as Structured by Covenant and by Redemption¹

COVENANTISTS VIEW REDEMPTION/COVENANTS AS UNIFYING THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

In his book, *The Christ of the Covenants*, the Covenantist, Dr. O. Palmer Robertson has a chapter titled, “Which Structures Scripture - Covenants or Dispensations?”² Whatever nuances that he personally gives to covenant names in Covenant Theology, he is of the school that believes that a “covenant of works” was made with Adam. After Adam fell, another covenant was introduced, the “covenant of grace.”³ This covenant is said to be in force until the end of earth’s history. Thus, the covenants named in Scripture are the unfolding of, or administrations of, this “covenant of grace”; even the Mosaic covenant. Covenantists regard this as structuring and unify the Scriptures. And so they regard Scofieldian Dispensationalism as disjointing and fracturing Scripture.⁴

Covenant Theology and Reformed Theology are closely intertwined and in many respects stand or fall together. This is not surprising, for many very able minds have worked on the covenant idea since John Calvin’s day in order to produce what is viewed as a coherent whole that does justice to what Scripture

1. We have already seen this quite clearly in Chapter Two in a quotation from Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, p. 129, in his affirmation that salvation of any saint means union with Christ, and that under one head there cannot be two peoples of God.

2. Peter Golding holds that the key to understanding Scripture is the covenant idea and cites C. H. Spurgeon as saying that “the doctrine of the covenants is the key to theology” (*Covenant Theology The Key of Theology in Reformed Thought and Tradition*, Christian Focus Publications, p. 9, 2004). In this book there is an advertisement for a book, *The Bond of Love, God’s Covenantal Relationship with His Church*, and commenting on this book, Derek W. H. Thomas, of the Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi, wrote:

Covenant Theology is a way of understanding the entire biblical message from Genesis to Revelation as essentially one theme. It covers everything . . . (*ibid.* p. 239).

3. He departs from these classical Covenant Theology descriptions and prefers ‘covenant of creation’ and ‘covenant of redemption’ respectively. However, in classical Covenant Theology, many expositors spoke of a “covenant of redemption” made between the Father and the Son, in eternity, before the creation.

4. For example, Robert L. Reymond said:

The covenantal perspective stresses the unity and continuity of redemptive history; the dispensational perspective stresses the discontinuity of redemptive history (*A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, Nashville: Nelson, p. 509, sec. ed. 1998).

teaches. It is well to desire to understand the over-all structure of Scripture (see 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:15); i.e., to know the purpose of God and how He implements it -- in order that we may know how to be here for His glory while we wait for the Lord to come and take us to the Father’s house (John 14:1-3).

Typically of Covenant Theology, Dr. Robertson says:

Beginning with the first promise to Adam-in-sin and continuing throughout history to the consummation of the ages, God orders all things in view of his singular purpose of redeeming a people to himself. Indeed, significant sub-structures within this great expanse of time must be noted. The distinction between old covenant and new covenant marks a major structural division within the history of redemption. Yet even these two great epochs relate integrally to one another as promise and fulfilment.⁵

The reader may observe that implicit in this quotation is the idea that there is but one people of God, and therefore OT saints are part of the church. And any protests notwithstanding, *redemption* is the unifying thought for the structure of Scripture, for God has the “singular purpose of redeeming a people to Himself.” And, in Ch. 2 we saw how Covenantists centered the mystery of Christ and the church in *redemption*.

Of course Covenantists say that God glorifies Himself in redeeming sinners; however that is only a part of God glorifying Himself in Christ, in two spheres. Moreover, implicit in viewing Scripture as structured by covenants and redemption is the idea that the church is the spiritual Israel. Thus, for an example, by spiritual alchemy, “Israel” and “Judah” in Heb. 8 are *transmuted* into the church, as the prophecies of the coming kingdom for Israel, given by the OT prophets, are transmuted into church-blessings.

5. *The Christ of the Covenants*, Baker: Grand Rapids, p. 206, 1980.

COVENANTISTS CONSTRUCT COVENANTS WHERE THERE ARE NONE

The expressions, “covenant of redemption” (between the Father and the Son), “covenant of works” (with Adam), ⁶ and “covenant of grace” (the covenant covering the time from the ‘promise’ in Gen. 3:15 until the consummation) are not named in Scripture -- but it is claimed that just as the word “trinity” is a teaching of Scripture, so these just named covenants refer to what is taught in Scripture.

Let us briefly test the idea of the Covenant of Grace based on Gen. 3:15. The idea that this ‘promise’ inaugurates the Covenant of Grace is part of the Covenantist idea that the OT is promise and the NT is fulfilment. This notion of fulfilment finds the fulfilment in the church, concerning which, therefore, silence was not kept in the OT. Moreover, this alleged inauguration of the Covenant of Grace has God making a covenant with man, He being one party to the covenant and Adam the other party. Let us hear what *The New Geneva Study Bible* (1995) says about it:

Covenants in Scripture are solemn agreements, negotiated or unilaterally imposed, that bind the parties to each other in permanent defined relationships, with specific promises, claims and obligations on both sides (e.g., the marriage covenant, Mal. 2:4).

. . . When Adam and Eve failed to obey the terms of the covenant of works . . . God did not destroy them, but revealed His covenant of grace by promising a Savior (Gen. 3:15). God’s covenant rests on His promise, as is clear from His covenant with Abraham . . . (p. 30).

This is a concise and excellent manifestation of the reasoning that undergirds Covenant Theology. The fact is that there was no covenant of grace established with Adam -- **there was no promise made to Adam** in Gen. 3:15. What was said in Gen. 3:15 was said to the serpent. Adam heard it and could rest on what God said, but the notion that there was a covenant (a ‘solemn agreement, negotiated or unilaterally imposed, that bound Adam and God to each other in a permanent defined relationship’ is spiritual alchemy, transmuting what God said to the serpent into a covenant established with Adam. We shall look at this further in another chapter.

COVENANT THEOLOGY IS A SYSTEM OF INTERPRETATION IMPOSED UPON SCRIPTURE

Covenant Theology is an interpretive grid that has been imposed upon Scripture. All of Scripture is organized around the idea of “covenant.” The Covenantist, J. I. Packer wrote:

6. Concerning the Covenant of Works, *The New Geneva Study Bible* (1995) says, “. . . this precise phrase does not appear in Scripture” (p. 30).

What is covenant theology? The straightforward, if provocative answer to that question is that it is what is nowadays called a hermeneutic -- that is, a way of reading the whole Bible that is itself part of the overall interpretation of the Bible that it undergirds. A successful hermeneutic is a consistent interpretative procedure yielding a consistent understanding of Scripture that in turn confirms the propriety of the procedure itself. Covenant theology is a case in point. It is a hermeneutic that forces itself upon every thoughtful Bible-reader who gets to the place, *first*, of reading, hearing, and digesting Holy Scripture as didactic instruction given through human agents by God himself, in person; *second*, of recognizing that what the God who speaks the Scriptures tells us about in their pages is his own sustained sovereign action in creation, providence, and grace; *third*, of discerning that in our salvation by grace God stands revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, executing in tripersonal unity a single cooperative enterprise of raising sinners from the gutter of spiritual destitution to share Christ’s glory for ever; and, *fourth*, of seeing that God-centered thought and life, springing responsively from a God-wrought change of heart that expresses itself spontaneously in grateful praise, is the essence of true knowledge of God. Once Christians have got this far, the covenant theology of the Scriptures is something that they can hardly miss. ⁷

We may certainly agree that Covenant Theology is “a hermeneutic,” ⁸ but it is to be rejected. It is false, and it is unneeded for recognizing in Scripture that it is God Who speaks; unneeded for recognizing God’s sustained, sovereign action

7. “Introduction: On Covenant Theology,” in the reprint of Herman Witsius’ (1636-1708) *The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man* . . . , (2 vols.) distributed by Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Phillipsburg, 1990.

8. Willem Van Gemeren tells us that Covenantists approach the prophets of Israel from the standpoint of the unity of the Covenant of Grace. He wrote:

The Reformed exegete approaches the prophets from the perspective of the unity of the covenant (“Israel as the Hermeneutical Crux in the Interpretation of Prophecy (II),” *Westminster Theological Journal* 46, p. 269 (1984)).

Let me remind the reader of Vern S. Poythress’ remark regarding Ezek. 44-46:

Was the Old Testament hearer obliged to say that the passage must be interpreted in the most obvious way? (p. 105).

Note well that this **admits** that *the most obvious way* to understand Ezek. 44-46 is literally. Of course; and there was no basis for an Israelite to understand it, or the other prophecies, otherwise. The spiritual alchemization of Israel’s prophets does raise the question if God was deceiving the hearers of His Word -- because Covenantism means that though the hearers understood these prophecies as speaking of Israel’s future and glory under Messiah, the prophecies actually meant the church. And let me remind the reader what O. T. Allis said:

The Old Testament prophecies if literally interpreted cannot be regarded as having been fulfilled or as being capable of fulfillment in this present age (*Prophecy and the Church*, p. 238).

The Covenantist hermeneutic of spiritual alchemy is fathered by the mythical Covenant of Grace and its alleged giving unity to the OT and NT.

in creation, providence, and grace; unneeded for recognizing the revelation of the Father by the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the three Persons acting in tripersonal unity in the salvation of sinners and in the sharing of Christ's glory by the saints; unneeded for seeing that there flows from the God-wrought change of heart, a God-centered life, thought, and worship. And Christians who "have got this far" may well have done so without Covenant Theology, and 'got much further' without it.

Covenant Theology, then, is a hermeneutic, an interpretive grid, imposed upon the Scripture, claiming that it alone unifies the OT and the NT as it places both under the Covenant of Grace begun, allegedly, consequent upon Adam's fall. It boasts of its view of "continuity" in God's redemptive work, claiming that Scofieldian Dispensationalism fragments that work. What stands in the way of the system of Covenantism in Scripture is spiritually alchemized to transmute it into compliance with Covenant Theology.

There are Covenantists who believe in a Covenant of Redemption, an agreement made by the Father and the Son, in eternity. We have noted that "Covenant of Redemption," "Covenant of Works" (or "Covenant of Creation," if you prefer), and "Covenant of Grace" (or "Covenant of Redemption," if you prefer), are expressions not found in Scripture. Moreover, neither is it the case that what is meant to be described by these expressions is found in Scripture. However, it might be added here that what Scripture calls "the covenants of promise" (Eph. 2:12) are *gracious* in character, i.e., they are *unconditional promises* that God will undertake to implement: in particular, the Abrahamic, the Davidic, and the new covenant with Israel, and perhaps the covenant with Phinehas is to be included. The expression, "covenant of works," describes the character of the Mosaic Covenant; but in Covenant Theology the Mosaic Covenant is an administration of this system's Covenant of Grace. (The transmutational power of the Covenantist spiritual alchemy is amazing.) The Mosaic Covenant came into being 430 years after the promise to Abraham and cannot disannul the promise to Abraham because the promise was sovereignly given -- unconditionally. But the Mosaic covenant is not unconditional. The two covenants stand in stark contrast:

Now I say this, A covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which took place four hundred and thirty years after, does not annul, so as to make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance [be] on the principle of law, [it is] no longer on the principle of promise; but God gave it in grace to Abraham by promise. Why then the law? It was added for the sake of transgressions, until the seed came to whom the promise was made . . . (Gal. 3:17-19).

In Covenant Theology both the radically opposed Abrahamic Covenant ("on the principle of promise") and Mosaic Covenant ("no longer on the principle of promise") are part of, administrations of, the Covenant of Grace. We will

examine these covenants later, if the Lord will, but here just notice the mutually opposed principle of these two covenants. The inheritance is either on the principle of law, or on the principle of promise. Scripture clearly tells us that the inheritance is obtained on the principle of promise. And why would that be so? It is because "promise" indicates that God sovereignly undertakes to secure the inheritance. Why then the law? The law came in meanwhile to see if the (fallen) first man, in the persons of favored Israel, could obtain the promise by keeping the law. That would be by human effort instead of promise. That would be doing so from the position man took in eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil -- seeking to gain the promise on that basis: human responsibility acting on the basis of having the knowledge of good and evil. But in the fall, man had acquired what Rom. 8:3 calls "sin in the flesh." The function of the law was to expose the working of sin in the flesh by that working taking the form of transgression of positive commandments. Sin ("sin in the flesh") had been in the world ever since the fall of Adam (Rom. 5:12). It had been working in all men. The prohibitions pronounced in the law exposed the working of *sin in the flesh* in the form of transgression. The law brought sin into relief in the form of transgression. Here is what God brought out:

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).

Since the cross, God is working with the Second Man, the Man of purpose, and is forming a people who are not of the world (John 17:16) and are heavenly as He is (1 Cor. 15:48) while the whole world lies in the wicked one (1 John 5:19). When this work, involving the mystery of Christ and the church, is completed, then God will begin to work preparatory to the universal sway of the Second Man, the Son of man, over all (Eph. 1:9, 10), the church reigning with Him. So, the OT is the history of the first man. The cross involves the first man casting out the Second Man. The cross also involves God's setting aside the first man, displacing him with the Second Man. The NT is the unfolding of what God is doing for His glory, in the Second Man, in the heavenlies and in the earthlies, so to speak. When that is finished, the new heavens and the new earth will be brought into existence, all dispensational display of God's glory in Christ have been concluded. There will be eternal glory.

(Chapter 3 to be continued, if the Lord will)

Ed.

The Seat of Human Personality

The Muslims say that the thought of three Persons yet one God is illogical and absurd. The reality is that this truth is not determined by the logic of the finite mind of man. This truth is inscrutable by man's mind.¹

Those infected by Ravenism (such as T. H. Reynolds and others), say that there cannot be two personalities in one person, thus holding that in Christ there was no human personality, no human "I." They deem it illogical and absurd to say that there was.

As do the Muslims, so those infected by the evil teaching of F. E. Raven or T. H. Reynolds make *the mind of man* the measure of these respective truths. They alike trust their mental capacity concerning what is revealed in the NT.

Those that oppose this evil denial of human personality in the Person of Christ do not believe that there are two *separated* personalities in Him -- which would make Him two persons. In Him there is the union of the human and the divine so that He is the God-man with divine-human personality. This the result of the over-shadowing power of the Holy Spirit produced in the incarnation (Luke 1:35). The reality is that this truth is not determined by the logic of the finite mind of man, being inscrutable by man's mind. We can neither logically understand how Three can be One God, or how divine and human personality can be so united in One Person. It is fundamental evil to deny human personality in Christ.

The inscrutable union, then, was brought about by the overshadowing power of the Spirit (Luke 1:35). The denial of this truth is a denial of the truth of the incarnation, for that is what it amounts to. To deny human personality in Christ is the denial of "the man Christ Jesus." Christ is God and man united in one Person. To deny human personality in "the man Christ Jesus" is, in effect, to deny that He is human.

A "soul" without the consciousness of "I" is not a human soul. W. Kelly wrote:

Consciousness of "I" is in the soul, and on its real existence hangs personal identity.²

To deny consciousness of "I" in the soul of the Lord Jesus is, in result, to deny His personal identity as man.

1. There is an objection which says that $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$, and that would make three gods. Turn from arithmetic to Boolean algebra, and $1 + 1 + 1 = 1$. But neither arithmetic or Boolean algebra has anything to do with the existence of the Trinity.

2. *The Bible Treasury* 19:18.

In his paper, "Self-Consciousness and the Infinite," J. N. Darby wrote:

Personality is evidently in self-consciousness.³

Yes, indeed; and the denial of human personality (i.e., human "I") in Christ is to deny His human personality, i.e., His personal identity as man. The manhood is swept away; the manhood is gone; Jesus of Nazareth is gone; the Savior is gone!

In his "Christological Pantheism," J. N. Darby rejected the doctrine of those who said Christ had no human personality. I have added the emphasis on the denial of human personality in the Lord that JND is objecting to:

We have thus the Lord's incarnation, the point where (they say) He connects Himself with human nature; not merely personally, or rather not personally (so they expressly say), but in nature as the new head of the race (**He is not a man, not a human personality**, but) with humanity, and that fallen humanity the new head of the race.

In this article JND called the denial of Christ's human personality "heresy":

And this last statement, that Christ had no human personality, no ego, which is really **heresy** (though God and man were united in one person), and the mere folly of man attempting to fathom the mystery of His Person, when He has said, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father," is found in the Article of one by no means the worst of their doctors.⁴

The denial of human personality in Christ, i.e., the denial that Christ could say "I" *as man*, is "**heresy**," is "**the mere folly of man attempting to fathom the mystery of His Person.**" It is the scrutinizing of His inscrutable Person by the logic of the human mind intruding itself into the holy mysteries of our most holy faith. Their *reason* tells them why Christ cannot be fully man. It is like the men of Bethshemesh looking into the Ark of the covenant. It is fundamental evil concerning the person of Christ. It is an ancient, persisting evil, but today we also come across it as a taint from F. E. Raven's evil system through T. H. Reynolds and others.

Yet the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, [The] Lord knows those that are his;

and,

Let every one who names the name of [the] Lord withdraw from iniquity (2 Tim. 2:19).

Ed.

3. *Collected Writings* 32:44.

4. *Collected Writings* 29:213.

The Rights of God

Since the days of the deist Tom Paine and the French Revolution we have been hearing again and again in declarations and speeches about the “rights of man” -- men as such, that is, but not necessarily the rights of an individual if his convictions run counter to the general public, as today Christianity is under attack by modern thinking of liberalism. Be that as it may, we have yet to read of a declaration of the “rights of God” except in His own Word of infallible truth. This Book is being attacked as out of date and of questionable authority. God the Creator has declared what is right and best for man’s well-being but unbelief and Satan’s lies prevail today in society. Moral issues are watered down to a common denominator of what suits each one’s preference, i.e., what is right in his own eyes. Evolution in its various forms denies our being created in God’s image in order to escape responsible actions toward Him in our behavior in relationship as married, as subject to the powers that be over us in earthly government, worker and employer, etc. What is the Divine order for the life-taker cheat, covenant breaker, etc.? Interestingly, the Word of God informs us of just such a condition of lawlessness prevailing in the last days. It is as old as Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden when both took it upon themselves to do their own will and eat when expressly directed NOT to eat (Gen. 2:16, 17 with 3:6, 11). Self-will is just doing my own thing whether it’s pleasing to God or my neighbor. That is selfishness. Turning to Deut. 12:8 we read these pertinent words,

You shall NOT do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right IN HIS OWN EYES.

Note here the continued drift of fallen man to do as he thinks best in his own judgment, having no standard but his own, and rejecting God’s. It is fatal and produces anarchy in society’s behavior. This also takes in religious behavior as we see in Aaron’s sons acting as priests in offering what is called,

strange fire in the sight of the Lord, which He commanded them not (Lev. 10:1). So Christendom does its own will in the professed House of God and brings eventual judgment,

For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God . . . (1 Pet. 4:17; see also 1 Sam. 2:12-17; 27-36 and Ezek. 9:6).

It is an observed fact that government laws based on God’s infallible unchanging laws have always proved the preservation of society. Witness the result when there is an attempt to set aside these restraints and limitations on man’s natural bent to do evil, the horrible days of the “reign of Terror” of 1793-4 and the slaughter of millions under the Bolshevik Communist regime of our era. The trend today is to bring in laws that challenge God’s moral standards, e.g., same-

sex license, non capital punishment, drug permission use, bankruptcy leniency, easy divorce other than adultery, etc. The end result can only be eventual chaos.

In contrast to the self-will and rebellion stated in the verse quoted from Deut. 12:8, how good to read of the positive results stated in v. 28,

Observe and hear all these words which I command you, that it may go well with you, and with your children after you forever when you do that which is good and right in the sight of the Lord God.

Here we have God’s rights declared as “all these words which I command you . . .” The effort to set this aside proved disastrous for Israel as a nation to this day, until the Day when they shall say “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.” In the meantime men seem to get away with it because God is dealing in grace and forbearance, not in direct judgment, though He may at any time strike righteously. Because of the apparent indifference by God, men mock and say,

where is the promise of His coming? for all things continue as they were from the beginning (2 Pet. 3:4).

But Psa. 9 declares,

The wicked shall be turned into Hell and all the nations that forget God.

When? In the day of His wrath when He shall carry out His installation of His righteous Son that man put on the cross in rejection, saying, “we will not have this man to reign over us.” Psa. 110 states, “He will strike through kings in the day of His wrath” as no longer the meek and lowly Nazerene of 2000 years ago when He came to save, not destroy men’s lives. Psa. 2 speaks of the final showdown when the kings and rulers of this earth band together (ecumenical movement and global community formation) to cast away His cords of restraint from them. The conflict outcome is sure, in that Jehovah shall “set My King upon My holy hill of Zion.” And all shall bow the knee by decree of God (Rom. 14:11),

for it is written, As I live saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

Thus God’s rights are then vindicated and rebellious man’s so-called rights set aside and no longer to do as he pleases and thinks right in his own eyes. Maranatha, and

If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema.

Christ, and our acceptance of Him, is the final test.

Thomas J. Knapp

Job's Daughters

Nothing in Scripture is without significance and we can say then that the naming of Job's three daughters (by the Holy Spirit recorded) has a lesson to convey as the fruit resulting from Job's previous trial. In Psalm 144:12 we note that sons and daughters are mentioned as being "plants" (sons) and "cornerstones" (daughters). This Psalm looks forward to a Millennial condition of earthly fullness when the true King-Messiah will reign supreme, because several conditions are mentioned; i.e., salvation, deliverance, garners, sheep, oxen, and happy people as figures of full blessing. But I refer to the one figure of cornerstones as "polished after the similitude of a palace" that is, objects of adornment in beauty. So with Job's three daughters who are noted "in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job . . ." Here of course physical beauty is the subject which the natural man values most highly as appealing and made so much of today. But God has a different perspective before Him and this is moral inward decor, which is seen in a subject wife, spoken of in 1 Pet. 3:3, 4 as

the hidden man of the heart . . . even the ornament of a meek (dependent) and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price.

Of Abigail in 1 Sam. 25:3 we read that

she was a woman of good understanding and of a beautiful countenance

. . .

Note here inward powers are put first over natural external beauty possessed. Her behavior and actions subsequently prove the description of her. This David (type of our Lord as Anointed of God) valued, taking her for a wife following wicked Nabal's death. Read the whole chapter giving valuable lessons for today. In Prov. 9:1 and 14:1 we have a wise woman building her house with seven pillars (suggesting supporting virtues and truths -- 1 Tim. 3:15). How needful this is in our present day of levity and carnal views as to what counts in life.

Coming back now to Job's daughters, here are fruits seen of manifest glories in a resurrected life (three being the number of resurrection and full revelation in the Triunity of 3 in 1), in contrast to the first man Adam, with withered fruit as fallen. Job had come through the furnace of affliction losing all that the natural man values, i.e., possessions, offspring, health, and wife become estranged by a bad viewpoint in advice given (Job 2:9, 10). The intervening trial brings its desired purpose to Job in weaning him from all that his natural heart valued both in things, family and lastly self-esteem. In the presence of God he sees himself as God sees, and abhors his goodness (Job 42: 4, 6 and 40:4, 5). Having finally learned the divine lesson sought by the Lord, healing takes place, with sacrifices of burnt offering offered and prayer for instruments of trial -- his three unwise friends. Relatives too are restored to his favor (Job 42:11) and Job is accepted and blest doubly in what he lost (vv. 8-10).

Now coming to the daughters themselves, they alone are named of the restored ten children -- seven sons and three daughters. We might have thought sons as special honor would be named, but no, the "weaker" vessel (1 Pet. 3:7) is given this honor, and why so? God is glorified in our weakness and in infirmity not our natural strengths. So 2 Cor. 12:9 teaches us in Paul's thorn in the flesh. Read the whole chapter vv. 1-10.

Now the names of the daughters are:

1. Jemima meaning "purity";
2. Kezia meaning "fragrance";
3. Karen-Happuch meaning "horn of beauty."

Turning to 2 Cor. 4:7-12, we see that death worketh to resurrection life and the manifestation of Christ in the earthen vessel of v. 7; i.e., the moral life of Christ, displayed through death working in us, along with afflictions we pass through.

Bringing this now to the experience of Job's affliction and the naming his daughters, we can see the fruit of the trial manifest in their names as defined above.

Firstly we have Jemima meaning "purity." All of us are afflicted with the tendency of mixed motives and the Lord will use trial to sift these out and bring singleness of purpose in life, even His honor and glory. How needful the work of the Holy Spirit in this, called practical sanctification in Scripture, also described by the word "holiness" in Heb. 12:12, 14. Holiness is not an absence of sin, but abhorrence of and separation from it altogether. Our Lord is spoken of as,

holy, harmless (i.e., guileless, without an evil thought), separate from sinners. . . (Heb. 7:26).

This separation may apply to things considered by men as of no importance, but as we see them from Gods perspective as not pleasing to Him.

Secondly we have Kezia meaning "fragrance." This fragrance is made from the bark of a tree and closely related to our Cinnamon. It is cut in strips from the branches of the tree as we presently buy it in the whole -- rolled up in small bundles. Reference is made to it as part of the anointing oil compound in Ex. 31:22-34. Also Psa. 45:8 it is one of the scents on the garment of the King-Messiah of this Psalm. Also in the S of S 4:12-15 it is one of the pleasant fruit aromas of the "Garden enclosed." As God passes us through testings and trials down here like Job, the fragrance of Christ to God comes out in our lives. 2 Cor. 4:8-11 tells us of "troubles, perplexities, persecution, casting down," etc. (vv 8, 9), always bearing in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus; that brings forth the fragrance of His life made manifest in our mortal flesh (vv. 10, 11). The Cassia tree branches are cut off for the stripping of the fragrant bark so that our anointing for service (Ex.) and our garments that speak of our outward ways (Psa.

45) plus the garden enclosed (S of S) -- the inner life -- may be fruitful to God's pleasure as seeing the reflection of His beloved Son in us to His glory. The cross taken up is a daily act of faith (Luke 9:23, 24 & John 12:24). The seed is buried in the place of death so that life may spring out of it with fruit as the final product. To save our life for self is to lose it for eternal value as our Lord taught and lived. John 4:34; 8:29. The way of the cross leads Home we sing.

Thirdly we have Karen-Happach meaning "horn of beauty". As we are purified by trial, sweetened by pressures so also is the beauty of Jesus displayed in our lives. His beauty is upon us as Psa. 90:17 says. Natural beauty of the flesh fades away through time as we experience; but in the school of God we learn that,

the path of the just is as a shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day (Prov. 4:18).

So also, "though our outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16). Then too in 2 Cor. 3:18 we read,

But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

In the making of the laver of copper for the tabernacle, the material came from the women's looking mirrors which were made of highly polished copper. That which was for self-exalting reflection was given up, and melted in the heat of the furnace to produce a piece, the laver of water for self-judgment in the mirror reflection and cleansing of the Word of God. Compare Ex. 38:8 with James 1:23-25 and Eph. 5:25-27. It seems we may be backtracking to purification expressed by Jemima, but it is the image of His beauty we are tracing now. The final purpose of God for us is full conformity to His Son's image as Rom. 8:29 and Eph. 4:11-13, 15 set forth. Romans speaks of the end purpose and Ephesians shows the practical way it is carried out by gifts given for the growth of the whole Body of Christ. His Spouse is adorned with the pure linen garment made white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7, 8; cp. 7:14, a different company; i.e., the saved Gentile remnant of the Great Tribulation period after the Rapture).

So in conclusion, thank God our Father for everything He sends for our good whether good or evil as Joseph said to his erring brethren, "you meant it for evil but God meant it for good, to preserve life." Amen.

Thomas. J. Knapp

Hardening the Heart

There are Scriptures which contemplate a succession of eras or times all along the course of the earth's history, from the time of the flood, I may say, to the days of Antichrist, when there has been, or is to be, *a judicial visitation, under the hand of God, upon the hearts, understandings, and consciences of men.*

I might present the following instances: ¹

The old Gentile world	Rom. 1:28
Pharaoh or Egypt	Ex. 9:21
The kings of Canaan	Josh. 11:20
Israel	Isa. 6
Christendom	2 Thess. 2

These scriptures show us this judicial dementation of which I am speaking; and they further show us that the fruit or character of this dementation may be very startling, such as we could not easily have believed or feared.

Under it, men of refinement and intelligence may adopt all kinds of religious vanity; rulers and statesmen may be blinded to the plainest maxims of government. Did not Pharaoh persist in a course which, in the mouth of witness after witness, was sure to be the ruin of his kingdom? Did not the nations of Canaan tremble at the report of the conquests of Israel, and of what God had done for Israel; and yet, in spite of all that, did they not madly resist Israel? (See Joshua.) And will not whole communities of intelligent, refined, advanced people, by-and-by, bow to the claims of one who shows himself to be God, setting himself up above all that is worshiped?

This has been thus, and will be thus still, under this judicial dementation; worldly men violate the clearest and most sensible means of their own interests, and religious men depart from the simplest instructions of the truth. We are not to wonder at anything. The very idols which men have taken as spoils of war, they have afterwards bowed down to as their gods (2 Chron. 25:14). For what folly, what incredible blindness of understanding, will not the infatuated heart of man betray. But this dementation is never sent forth to visit man until he has righteously exposed himself to judgment. All the cases show this. Pharaoh, for instance, had, in deepest ingratitude, forgotten Joseph. The Amorites of Canaan had filled up the measure of their sins. The old Gentiles had brought this reprobate mind on themselves (Rom. 1:28). Israel "had not," Jerusalem "would

1. There are other instances of this judicial hardening; but they are of a private and not of a dispensational nature, and, therefore, I do not put them among these cases.

not” (Matt. 13:12; 23:37). And the strong delusion is to be sent, by-and-by, abroad upon Christendom, only because “they loved not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

This hardening precedes destruction; but it comes after man has ripened his iniquity. God endures with all long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, as He fashions by His Spirit His own elect vessels of mercy ere He glorifies them. “Whom He will He hardens,” is surely true; but He wills to show His wrath in this way, of hardening, or of prejudicial dementation, only in the case of those whom He has in much long-suffering endured (Rom. 9:11-22).

Thus, then, we see there is such a process in the judgment of God as the hardening of the heart -- that this is never executed till man has ripened himself in evil -- and that the fruit of this may appear in such human folly and blindness as we should never have apprehended, or perhaps conceived.

Let this prepare us for things which not only may shortly come to pass, but which have already appeared. Men of learning and of taste, men of morals and religion, men of skill in the science of government, and whole nations famed for dignity and greatness, each in their generation may be turned to fables and to follies enough to shake the commonest understandings in ordinary times.

I do not say the “strong delusion” has gone forth; but there are symptoms and admonitions of its not being far off. What a voice has this for us, to keep near to the Lord in the assurance of His love, to love His truth, to walk immediately with Himself, and to promise ourselves that His tarrying is not long.

The Present Testimony 7:44-46

Letter of J. N. Darby Re 1 Cor. 5:12, 13

You ask, Are the two last verses of 1 Corinthians v. practically applicable *now* to those gathered together separate from evil according to 2 Tim. 2:19-22? And, Is it correct to refuse obedience until power come in? To the first I reply that the word of the Lord abides for ever. Its authority never ceases, and obedience is always due to it. Power has nothing to do with this. Grace is needed to induce the heart to obey, but obedience is always due. The direction as to tongues has not lost its authority. Were there tongues it would apply. There are not, and there is nothing to apply it to. But its authority remains. This clears up at once the question as to 1 Cor. 5. “Put away from among yourselves that wicked person” has its own simple authority that nothing can take away. It applies to an assembly, including all saints professing to own the Lord everywhere (see

address of the Epistle); and wherever a wicked person is found in an assembly, the case it applies to is there, and it is a simple matter of obedience. There are acts of power, as “I have judged to deliver to Satan.” He does not say, Do you do it. He does it in all the solemnity of the assembled saints, but there is no command, but a personal act of power, as Paul says elsewhere, “Whom I have delivered unto Satan.”

The declaration or exercise of a personal act of power has nothing to do with the abiding authority of a command. The power may not subsist; the command does. That it requires the help and grace of the Lord to act upon it, is no more than is true of every command in scripture. To apply the ruin of the visible assembly to sanction disobedience is a principle wholly unallowable. I cannot appoint elders. It is not a question of obedience but authority, and I have not the authority. The assembly had it not when Paul was there {Titus 1:5}, nor can they assume it now. They had not power as an assembly to deliver to Satan then, they have not now; but they were bound to obey the command then, they are so now. Wherever two or three are really gathered together in Christ’s name Christ is, and there is the within and the without. It is a clearing of the conscience of the assembly: “Ye have proved yourselves clear in this matter.” Otherwise, the assembly would be the positive sanction, and by Christ’s presence, of the association of Christ and sin; and it would be far better there should be no assembly at all than that. 2 Tim. 2 gives us the general principle of every one who calls himself a Christian, separating from iniquity, purging himself from false teachers, and walking with those who call upon the name of the Lord out of a pure heart. It is individual duty when evil has come in.

As to the second question, it is practically answered already. In bestowing power God is sovereign. When the word has spoken I am bound to obey. To refuse obedience to it is to disobey, to assume on my own will authority not to act till God chooses to do that which rests on His will.

Affectionately yours, dear brother.

Georgetown, British Guiana, December 8th, 1868.

Letters of J. N. Darby 2:3, 4.

**‘Power in an evil day is manifested
in separation from evil unto the Lord.’**

**. . . thou hast a little power, and hast kept my
word, and hast not denied my name (Rev. 3:8).**

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