

The Recurrence of Synergism After the Reformation

Edited by John Hendryx

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Foreword

This eBook is a collection of essays which discuss the ongoing battle to preserve the integrity of the gospel after the Protestant Reformation. From that time until now there have been many movements in the visible church, and continue today, which have attempted to water down the grace of God in Jesus Christ - a diluted view of grace. Some of these teachings are subtle and some are not so subtle but from the beginning, and from the time of Jesus and Paul, fallen human beings have continued to be lured into bringing inconsistencies into the gospel of Christ alone. It is a battle we all need to be aware of and take precautions to avoid from the pulpit and from our pens. We do so by exposing what is false, but more importantly, by loudly and clearly proclaiming the genuine article and we would be God-honoring in making Him known as He has made Himself known in the Scripture.

It seems that the whole progress of biblical revelation and church history through the ages has been forged out of the fire of controversy and the often angry struggles over truth. It is these great debates that have preserved the church from error and when the church grows lazy and fat, unwilling to be corrected, the world loses its only hope of salvation. It is never easy to correct, nor is it pleasant, but we are to "preach the truth in love." However, neither are we to pretend that our laziness, ignorance and apathy in defending the truth are really attempts to preserve the bond of unity. With Luther, we must say, "Unity wherever possible, but truth at all costs." Our attempt is to resurrect polemical debate as a means to the end of waking up a decadent and grossly unfaithful church and helping it make its way forward toward a second Reformation. And at a time when most Americans who claim to be Bible-believing Christians cannot, according to major studies, even articulate the basic message of the Gospel, what could be more relevant? Nevertheless, sometimes there are casualties of "friendly fire." - Michael Horton

"If grace depends on our cooperation then it is no longer grace." -Martin Luther

At the heart of the Reformation was one of the most fundamental questions of the Christian faith: How can I be saved from eternal damnation? The answer of all the leading Reformers was one and the same: only by God's free and sovereign grace. As J. I. Packer and O. Raymond Johnston have pointed out, it is wrong to suppose that the doctrine of Justification by faith alone, that storm center of the Reformation, was the crucial question in the minds of such theologians as Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Bucer, and John Calvin. This doctrine was important to the Reformers because it helped to express and to safeguard their answer to another, more vital, question, namely, whether sinners are wholly helpless in their sin, and whether God is to be thought of as saving them by free, unconditional, invincible grace, not only justifying them for Christ's sake when they come to faith, but also raising them from the death of sin by His quickening Spirit in order to bring them to faith. - Michael A. G. Haykin

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

ARTICULI ARINIANI SIVE REMONSTANTIA The Five Arminian Articles A.D. 1610

Article I.

That God, by an eternal, unchangeable purpose in Jesus Christ his Son, before the foundation of the world, hath determined, out of the fallen, sinful race of men, to save in Christ, for Christ's sake, and through Christ, those who, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, shall believe on this his Son Jesus, and shall persevere in this faith an obedience of faith, through this grace, even to the end; and, on the other hand, to leave the incorrigible and unbelieving in sin and under wrath, and to condemn them as alienate from Christ, according to the word of the gospel in John iii. 36: 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of god abideth on him,' and according to other passages of Scripture also.

Article II.

That, agreeable thereto, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, died for all men and for every man, so that he has obtained for them all, by his death on the cross, redemption and the forgiveness of sins, yet that no one actually enjoys this forgiveness of sins except the believer, according to the word of the Gospel of John iii. 16: 'God so love the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' And in the First Epistle of John ii. 2: 'And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.'

Article III.

That man has not saving grace of himself, nor of the energy of his free will, inasmuch as he, in the state of apostasy and sin, can of and by himself neither think, will, nor do any thing that is truly good (such as saving Faith eminently is); but that it is needful that he be born again of God in Christ, through his Holy Spirit, and renewed in understanding, inclination, or will, and all his powers, in order that he may rightly understand, think, will, and effect what is truly good, according to the Word of Christ, John xv. 5: 'Without me ye can do nothing.'

Article IV.

That this grace of God is the beginning, continuance, and accomplishment of all good, even to this extent, that the regenerate man

himself, without prevenient or assisting, awakening, following and co-operative grace, can neither think, will, nor do good, nor withstand any temptations to evil; so that all good deeds or movements, that can be conceived, must be ascribed to the grace of God in Christ. But as respects the mode of the operation of this grace, it is not irresistible, inasmuch as it is written concerning many, that they have resisted the Holy Ghost. Acts vii., and elsewhere in many places.

Article V.

That those who are incorporated into Christ by a true faith, and have thereby become partakers of his life-giving Spirit, have thereby full power to strive against Satan, sin, the world, and their own flesh, and to win the victory; it being well understood that it is ever through the assisting grace of the Holy Ghost; and that Jesus Christ assists them through his Spirit in all temptations, extends to them his hand, and if only they are ready for the conflict, and desire his help, and are not inactive, keeps them from falling, so that they, by no craft or power of Satan, can be misled nor plucked out of Christ's hands, according to the Word of Christ, John x.28: 'Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.' But whether they are capable, through negligence, of forsaking again the first beginnings of their life in Christ, of again returning to this present evil world, of turning away from the holy doctrine which was delivered them, or losing a good conscience, of becoming devoid of grace, that must be more particularly determined out of the Holy Scriptures, before we ourselves can teach it with the full persuasion of our minds.

CANONS OF DORT

Synod of Dordrecht

November 13, 1618 - May 9, 1619

FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE. DIVINE ELECTION AND REPROBATION

FIRST HEAD: ARTICLE 1. As all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and are deserving of eternal death, God would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish and delivering them over to condemnation on account of sin, according to the words of the apostle: "that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God." (Rom 3:19). And: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," (Rom 3:23). And: "For the wages of sin is death." (Rom 6:23).

FIRST HEAD: ARTICLE 2. but in this the love of God was manifested, that He "sent his one and only Son into the world, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (1 John 4:9, John 3:16).

FIRST HEAD: ARTICLE 3. And that men may be brought to believe, God mercifully sends the messengers of these most joyful tidings to whom He will and at what time He pleases; by whose ministry men are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified. "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?" (Rom 10:14-15).

FIRST HEAD: ARTICLE 4. The wrath of God abides upon those who believe not this gospel. But such as receive it and embrace Jesus the Savior by a true and living faith are by Him delivered from the wrath of God and from destruction, and have the gift of eternal life conferred upon them.

FIRST HEAD: ARTICLE 5. The cause or guilt of this unbelief as well as of all other sins is no wise in God, but in man himself; whereas faith in Jesus Christ and salvation through Him is the free gift of God, as it is written: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph 2:8). Likewise: "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him" (Phil 1:29)

FIRST HEAD: ARTICLE 6. That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it, proceeds from God's eternal decree. "For now unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18 A.V.). "who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will" (Eph 1:11). According to which decree He graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe; while He leaves the non-elect in His just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy. And herein is especially displayed the profound, the merciful, and at the same time the righteous discrimination between men equally involved in ruin; or that decree of election and reprobation, revealed in the Word of God, which, though men of perverse, impure, and unstable minds wrest it to their own destruction, yet to holy and pious souls affords unspeakable consolation.

FIRST HEAD: ARTICLE 7. Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, He has out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of His own will, chosen from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault from the primitive state of rectitude into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom He from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect and the foundation of salvation. This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God has decreed to give to Christ to be saved by Him, and effectually to call and draw them to His communion by His Word and Spirit; to bestow upon them true faith, justification, and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of His son, finally to glorify them for the demonstration of His mercy, and for the praise of the riches of His glorious grace; as it is written "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves." (Eph 1:4-6). And elsewhere: "And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified." (Rom 8:30).

FIRST HEAD: ARTICLE 8. There are not various decrees of election, but one and the same decree respecting all those who shall be saved, both under the Old and New Testament; since the Scripture declares the good pleasure, purpose, and counsel of the divine will to be one, according to which He has chosen us from eternity, both to grace and to glory, to salvation and to the way of salvation, which He has ordained that we should walk therein (Eph 1:4, 5; 2:10).

FIRST HEAD: ARTICLE 9. This election was not founded upon foreseen faith and the obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality or disposition in man, as the prerequisite, cause, or condition of which it depended; but men are chosen to faith and to the obedience of faith, holiness, etc. Therefore election is the fountain of every saving good, from which proceed faith, holiness, and the other gifts of salvation, and finally eternal life itself, as its fruits and effects, according to the testimony of the apostle: "For he chose us (not because we were, but) in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight." (Eph 1:4).

FIRST HEAD: ARTICLE 10. The good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election; which does not consist herein that out of all possible qualities and actions of men God has chosen some as a condition of salvation, but that He was pleased out of the common mass of sinners to adopt some certain persons as a peculiar people to Himself, as it is written: "Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad--in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls--she (Rebekah) was told, 'The older will serve the younger.' Just as it is written: 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.'" (Rom 9:11-13). "When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed." (Acts 13:48).

FIRST HEAD: ARTICLE 11. And as God Himself is most wise, unchangeable, omniscient, and omnipotent, so the election made by Him can neither be interrupted nor changed, recalled, or annulled; neither can the elect be cast away, nor their number diminished.

FIRST HEAD: ARTICLE 12. The elect in due time, though in various degrees and in different measures, attain the assurance of this their eternal and unchangeable election, not by inquisitively prying into the secret and deep things of God, but by observing in themselves with a spiritual joy and holy pleasure the infallible fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God - such as, a true faith in Christ, filial fear, a godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc.

FIRST HEAD: ARTICLE 13. The sense and certainty of this election afford to the children of God additional matter for daily humiliation before Him, for adoring the depth of His mercies, for cleansing themselves, and rendering grateful returns of ardent love to Him who first manifested so great love towards them. The consideration of this doctrine of election is so far from encouraging remissness in the observance of the divine commands or from sinking men in carnal security, that these, in the just judgment of God, are the usual effects of rash presumption or of idle and wanton trifling with the grace of election, in those who refuse to walk in the ways of the elect.

FIRST HEAD: ARTICLE 14. As the doctrine of election by the most wise counsel of God was declared by the prophets, by Christ Himself, and by the apostles, and is clearly revealed in the Scriptures both of the Old and the New Testament, so it is still to be published in due time and place in the Church of God, for which it was peculiarly designed, provided it be done with reverence, in the spirit of discretion and piety, for the glory of God's most holy Name, and for enlivening and comforting His people, without vainly attempting to investigate the secret ways of the Most High (Acts 20:27; Rom 11:33f; 12:3; Heb 6:17f).

FIRST HEAD: ARTICLE 15. What peculiarly tends to illustrate and recommend to us the eternal and unmerited grace of election is the express testimony of sacred Scripture that not all, but some only, are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal decree; whom God, out of His sovereign, most just, irreprehensible, and unchangeable good pleasure, has decreed to leave in the common misery into which they have willfully plunged themselves, and not to bestow upon them saving faith and the grace of conversion; but, permitting them in His just judgment to follow their own ways, at last, for the declaration of His justice, to condemn and punish them forever, not only on account of their unbelief, but also for all their other sins. And this is the decree of reprobation, which by no means makes God the Author of sin (the very thought of which is blasphemy), but declares Him to be an awful, irreprehensible, and righteous Judge and Avenger thereof.

FIRST HEAD: ARTICLE 16. Those in whom a living faith in Christ, and assured confidence of soul, peace of conscience, an earnest endeavor after filial obedience, a glorying in God through Christ, is not as yet strongly felt, and who nevertheless make use of the means which God has appointed for working these graces in us, ought not to be alarmed at the mention of reprobation, nor to rank themselves among the reprobate, but diligently to persevere in the use of means, and with ardent desires devoutly and humbly to wait for a season of richer grace. Much less cause to be terrified by the doctrine of reprobation have they who, though they seriously desire to be turned to God, to please Him only, and to be delivered from the body of death, cannot yet reach that measure of holiness and faith to which they aspire; since a merciful God has promised that He will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed. But this doctrine is justly terrible to those who, regardless of God and of the Savior Jesus Christ, have wholly given themselves up to the cares of the world and the pleasures of the flesh, so long as they are not seriously converted to God.

FIRST HEAD: ARTICLE 17. Since we are to judge of the will of God from His Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they together with the parents are comprehended, godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom it pleases God to call out of this life in their infancy (Gen 17:7; Acts 2:39; 1 Cor 7:14).

FIRST HEAD: ARTICLE 18. To those who murmur at the free grace of election and the just severity of reprobation we answer with the apostle "But who are you, O man, to talk back to God?" (Rom 9:20), and quote the language of our Savior: "Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own?" (Matt 20:15). And therefore, with holy adoration of these mysteries, we exclaim in the words of the apostle: "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 'Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?' 'Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?' For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen." (Rom 11:33-36).

REJECTION OF ERRORS

The true doctrine concerning election and reprobation having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those:

FIRST HEAD: PARAGRAPH 1. Who teach: That the will of God to save those who would believe and would persevere in faith and in the obedience of faith is the whole and entire decree of election, and that nothing else concerning this decree has been revealed in God's Word.

For these deceive the simple and plainly contradict the Scriptures, which declare that God will not only save those who will believe, but that He has also from eternity chosen certain particular persons to whom, above others, He will grant in time, both faith in Christ and perseverance; as it is written "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. (John 17:6). "and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. (Acts 13:48)". And "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. (Eph 1:4)."

FIRST HEAD: PARAGRAPH 2. Who teach: That there are various kinds of election of God unto eternal life: the one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite; and that the latter in turn is either incomplete, revocable, non-decisive, and conditional, or complete, irrevocable, decisive, and absolute. Likewise: That there is one election unto faith and another unto salvation, so that election can be unto justifying faith, without being a decisive election unto salvation.

For this is a fancy of men's minds, invented regardless of the Scriptures, whereby the doctrine of election is corrupted, and this golden chain of our salvation is broken: "And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. (Rom 8:30)."

FIRST HEAD: PARAGRAPH 3. Who teach: That the good pleasure and purpose of God, of which Scripture makes mention in the doctrine of election, does not consist in this, that God chose certain persons rather than others, but in this, that He chose out of all possible conditions (among which are also the works of the law), or out of the whole order of things, that act of faith which from its very nature is undeserving, as well as it incomplete obedience, as a condition of salvation, and that He would graciously consider this in itself as a complete obedience and count it worthy of the reward of eternal life.

For by this injurious error the pleasure of God and the merits of Christ are made of none effect, and men are drawn away by useless questions from the truth of gracious justification and from the simplicity of Scripture, and this declaration of the apostle is charged as untrue: "who has saved us and called us to a holy life, not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time (2 Tim 1:9)."

FIRST HEAD: PARAGRAPH 4. Who teach: That in the election unto faith this condition is beforehand demanded that man should use the light of nature aright, be pious, humble, meek, and fit for eternal life, as if on these things election were in any way dependent.

For this savors of the teaching of Pelagius, and is opposed to the doctrine of the apostle when he writes: "All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast (Eph 2:3-9)."

FIRST HEAD: PARAGRAPH 5. Who teach: That the incomplete and non-decisive election of particular persons to salvation occurred because of a foreseen faith, conversion, holiness, godliness, which either began or continued for some time; but that the complete and decisive election occurred because of foreseen perseverance unto the end in faith, conversion, holiness, and godliness; and that this is the gracious and evangelical worthiness, for the sake of which he who is chosen is more worthy than he who is not chosen; and that therefore faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness, and perseverance are not fruits of the unchangeable election unto glory, but are conditions which, being required beforehand, were foreseen as being met by those who will be fully elected, and are causes without which the unchangeable election to glory does not occur.

This is repugnant to the entire Scripture, which constantly inculcates this and similar declarations: Election is "not by works but by him who calls (Rom 9:12)." "And all who were appointed for eternal life believed (Acts 13:48)." "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight (Eph 1:4)." "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name (John 15:16)." "And if by grace, then it is no longer by works (Rom 11:6)." "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son (1 John 4:10)."

FIRST HEAD: PARAGRAPH 6. Who teach: That not every election unto salvation is unchangeable, but that some of the elect, any decree of God notwithstanding, can yet perish and do indeed perish.

By this gross error they make God be changeable, and destroy the comfort which the godly obtain out of the firmness of their election, and contradict the Holy Scripture, which teaches that the elect can not be led astray (Matt 24:24), that Christ does not lose those whom the Father gave him (John 6:39), and that God also glorified those whom he foreordained, called, and justified (Rom 8:30).

FIRST HEAD: PARAGRAPH 7. Who teach: That there is in this life no fruit and no consciousness of the unchangeable elect to glory, nor any certainty, except that which depends on a changeable and uncertain condition.

For not only is it absurd to speak of an uncertain certainty, but also contrary to the experience of the saints, who by virtue of the consciousness of their election rejoice with the apostle and praise this favor of God (Eph 1); who according to Christ's admonition rejoice with his disciples that their names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20); who also place the consciousness of their election over against the fiery darts of the devil, asking: "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? (Rom 8:33)."

FIRST HEAD: PARAGRAPH 8. Who teach: That God, simply by virtue of His righteous will, did not decide either to leave anyone in the fall of Adam and in the common state sin and condemnation, or to pass anyone by in the communication of grace which is necessary for faith and conversion.

For this is firmly decreed: "God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden (Rom 9:18)." And also this: "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them (Mat 13:11)." Likewise: "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure (Mat 11:25-26)."

FIRST HEAD: PARAGRAPH 9. Who teach: That the reason why God sends the gospel to one people rather than to another is not merely and solely the good pleasure of God, but rather the fact that one people is better and worthier than another to which the gospel is not communicated.

For this Moses denies, addressing the people of Israel as follows: "To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. Yet the LORD set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today (Deu 10:14-15)." And Christ said: "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes (Mat 11:21)."

SECOND HEAD OF DOCTRINE. THE DEATH OF CHRIST, AND THE REDEMPTION OF MEN THEREBY

SECOND HEAD: ARTICLE 1. God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. And His justice requires (as He has revealed Himself in His Word) that our sins committed against His infinite majesty should be punished, not only with temporal but with eternal punishments, both in body and soul; which we cannot escape, unless satisfaction be made to the justice of God.

SECOND HEAD: ARTICLE 2. Since, therefore, we are unable to make that satisfaction in our own persons, or to deliver ourselves from the wrath of God, He has been pleased of His infinite mercy to give His only begotten Son for our Surety, who was made sin, and became a curse for us and in our stead, that He might make satisfaction to divine justice on our behalf.

SECOND HEAD: ARTICLE 3. The death of the Son of God is the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sin, and is of infinite worth and value, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world.

SECOND HEAD: ARTICLE 4. This death is of such infinite value and dignity because the person who submitted to it was not only begotten Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit, which qualifications were necessary to constitute Him a Savior for us; and, moreover, because it was attended with a sense of the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin.

SECOND HEAD: ARTICLE 5. Moreover, the promise of the gospel is that whosoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish, but have eternal life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel.

SECOND HEAD: ARTICLE 6. And, whereas many who are called by the gospel do not repent nor believe in Christ, but perish in unbelief, this is not owing to any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice offered by Christ upon the cross, but is wholly to be imputed to themselves.

SECOND HEAD: ARTICLE 7. But as many as truly believe, and are delivered and saved from sin and destruction through the death of Christ, are indebted for this benefit solely to the grace of God given them in Christ from everlasting, and not to any merit of their own.

SECOND HEAD: ARTICLE 8. For this was the sovereign counsel and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of His Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation; that is, it was the will of God that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby He confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation and given to Him by the Father; that He should confer upon them faith, which, together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, He purchased for them by His death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them, free from every spot and blemish, to the enjoyment of glory in His own presence forever.

SECOND HEAD: ARTICLE 9. This purpose, proceeding from everlasting love towards the elect, has from the beginning of the world to this day been powerfully accomplished, and will henceforward still continue to be accomplished, notwithstanding all the ineffectual opposition of the gates of hell; so that the elect in due time may be gathered together into one, and that there never may be wanting a Church composed of believers, the foundation of which is laid in the blood of Christ; which may steadfastly love and faithfully serve Him as its Savior (who, as a bridegroom for his bride, laid down His life for them upon the cross); and which may celebrate His praises here and through all eternity.

REJECTION OF ERRORS

The true doctrine having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those:

SECOND HEAD: PARAGRAPH 1. Who teach: That God the Father has ordained His Son to the death of the cross without a certain and definite decree to save any, so that the necessity, profitableness, and worth of what Christ merited by His death might have existed, and might remain in all its parts complete, perfect, and intact, even if the merited redemption had never in fact been applied to any person.

For this doctrine tends to the despising of the wisdom of the Father and of the merits of Jesus Christ, and is contrary to Scripture. For thus says our Savior: "I lay down my life for the sheep ... and I know them. (John 10:15, 27)." And the prophet Isaiah says concerning the Savior: "Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand (Isa 53:10)." Finally, this contradicts the article of faith according to which we believe the catholic Christian Church.

SECOND HEAD: PARAGRAPH 2. Who teach: That it was not the purpose of the death of Christ that He should confirm the new covenant of grace through His blood, but only that He should acquire for the Father the mere right to establish with man such a covenant as He might please, whether of grace or of works.

For this is repugnant to Scripture which teaches that "Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant that is a new covenant ..." and that "it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. (Heb 7:22; 9:15, 17)."

SECOND HEAD: PARAGRAPH 3. Who teach: That Christ by His satisfaction merited neither salvation itself for any one, nor faith, whereby this satisfaction of Christ unto salvation is effectually appropriated; but that He merited for the Father only the authority or the perfect will to deal again with man, and to prescribe new conditions as He might desire, obedience to which, however, depended on the free will of man, so that it therefore might have come to pass that either none or all should fulfill these conditions.

For these adjudge too contemptuously of the death of Christ, in no wise acknowledge that most important fruit or benefit thereby gained and bring again out of the hell the Pelagian error.

SECOND HEAD: PARAGRAPH 4. Who teach: That the new covenant of grace, which God the Father, through the mediation of the death of Christ, made with man, does not herein consist that we by faith, in as much as it accepts the merits of Christ, are justified before God and saved, but in the fact that God, having revoked the demand of perfect obedience of faith, regards faith itself and the obedience of faith, although imperfect, as the perfect obedience of the law, and does esteem it worthy of the reward of eternal life through grace.

For these contradict the Scriptures, being: "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood (Rom 3:24-25)." And these proclaim, as did the wicked Socinus, a new and strange justification of man before God, against the consensus of the whole Church.

SECOND HEAD: PARAGRAPH 5. Who teach: That all men have been accepted unto the state of reconciliation and unto the grace of the covenant, so that no one is worthy of condemnation on account of original sin, and that no one shall be condemned because of it, but that all are free from the guilt of original sin.

For this opinion is repugnant to Scripture which teaches that we are by nature children of wrath (Eph 2:3).

SECOND HEAD: PARAGRAPH 6. Who use the difference between meriting and appropriating, to the end that they may instil into the minds of the imprudent and inexperienced this teaching that God, as far as He is concerned, has been minded to apply to all equally the benefits gained by the death of Christ; but that, while some obtain the pardon of sin and eternal life, and others do not, this difference depends on their own free will, which joins itself to the grace that is offered without exception, and that it is not dependent on the special gift of mercy, which powerfully works in them, that they rather than others should appropriate unto themselves this grace.

For these, while they feign that they present this distinction in a sound sense, seek to instil into the people the destructive poison of the Pelagian errors.

SECOND HEAD: PARAGRAPH 7. Who teach: That Christ neither could die, nor needed to die, and also did not die, for those whom God loved in the highest degree and elected to eternal life, since these do not need the death of Christ.

For the contradict the apostle, who declares, Christ: "loved me and gave himself for me (Gal 2:20)." Likewise: "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died (Rom 8:33-34)", namely, for them; and the Savior who says: "I lay down my life for the sheep (John 10:15)." And: "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends (John 15:12-13)."

THIRD AND FOURTH HEADS OF DOCTRINE. THE CORRUPTION OF MAN, HIS CONVERSION TO GOD, AND THE MANNER THEREOF

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

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

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

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

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

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

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 7. This mystery of His will God reveals to but a small number under the Old Testament;

under the New Testament (the distinction between various peoples having been removed) He reveals it to many. The cause of this dispensation is not to be ascribed to the superior worth of one nation above another, nor to their better use of the light of nature, but results wholly from the sovereign good pleasure and unmerited love of God. Hence they to whom so great and so gracious a blessing is communicated, above their desert, or rather notwithstanding their demerits, are bound to acknowledge it with humble and grateful hearts, and with the apostle to adore, but in no wise curiously to pry into, the severity and justice of God's judgments displayed in others to whom this grace is not given.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 15. God is under no obligation to confer this grace upon any; for how can He be indebted to one who had no previous gifts to bestow as a foundation for such recompense? Nay, how can He be indebted to one who has nothing of his own but sin and falsehood? He, therefore, who becomes the subject of this grace owes eternal gratitude to God, and gives Him thanks forever. Whoever is not made partaker thereof is either altogether regardless of these spiritual gifts and satisfied with his own condition, or is in no apprehension of danger, and vainly boasts the possession of that which he has not. Further, with respect to those who outwardly profess their faith and amend their lives, we are bound, after the example of the apostle, to judge and speak of them in the most favorable manner; for the secret recesses of the heart are unknown to us. And as to others who have not yet been called, it is our duty to pray for them to God, who calls the things that are not as if they were. But we are in no wise to conduct ourselves towards them with haughtiness, as if we had made ourselves to differ.

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

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 17. As the almighty operation of God whereby He brings forth and supports this our natural life does not exclude but require the use of means by which God, of His infinite mercy and goodness, has chosen to exert His influence,

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

REJECTION OF ERRORS

The true doctrine having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those:

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: PARAGRAPH 1. Who teach: That it cannot properly be said that original sin in itself suffices to condemn the whole human race or to deserve temporal and eternal punishment.

For these contradict the apostle, who declares: "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned (Rom 5:12)." And: "The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation (Rom 5:16)." And "the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23)."

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: PARAGRAPH 2. Who teach: That the spiritual gifts or the good qualities and virtues, such as goodness, holiness, righteousness, could not belong to the will of man when he was first created, and that these, therefore, cannot have been separated therefrom in the fall.

For such is contrary to the description of the image of God which the apostle gives in Eph. 4:24, where he declares that it consists in righteousness and holiness, which undoubtedly belong to the will.

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: PARAGRAPH 3. Who teach: That in spiritual death the spiritual gifts are not separate from the will of man, since the will in itself has never been corrupted, but only hindered through the darkness of the understanding and the irregularity of the affection; and that, these hindrances having been removed, the will can then bring into operation its nature powers, that is, that the will of itself is able to will and to choose, or not to will and not to choose, all manner of good which may be presented to it.

This is an innovation and an error, and tends to elevate the powers of the free will, contrary to the declaration of the prophet: "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure (Jer 17:9)"; and of the apostle: "All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts (Eph 2:3)."

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: PARAGRAPH 4. Who teach: That the unregenerate man is not really nor utterly dead in sin, nor destitute of all powers unto spiritual good, but that he can yet hunger and thirst after righteousness and life, and offer the sacrifice of a contrite and broken spirit, which is pleasing to God.

For these things are contrary to the express testimony of Scripture: "you were dead in your transgressions and sins (Eph 2:1, 5)." And: "every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. (Gen 6:5, 8:21)." Moreover, to hunger and thirst after deliverance from misery and after life, and to offer unto God the sacrifice of a broken spirit, is peculiar to the regenerate and those that are called blessed (Ps 51:17; Matt 5:6).

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: PARAGRAPH 5. Who teach: That the corrupt and natural man can so well use the common grace (by which they understand the light of nature), or the gifts still left him after the fall, that he can gradually gain by their good use a greater, that is, the evangelical or saving grace, and salvation itself; and that in this way God on His part shows Himself ready to reveal Christ unto all men, since He applies to all sufficiently and efficiently the means necessary to conversion.

For both the experience of all ages and the Scriptures testify that this is untrue. "He has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel. He has done this for no other nation; they do not know his laws (Psa 147:19-20)." "In the past, he let all nations go their own way (Acts 14:16)." And: "Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to (Acts 16:6-7)."

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: PARAGRAPH 6. Who teach: That in the true conversion of man no new qualities, powers, or gifts can be infused by God into the will, and that therefore faith, through which we are first converted and because of which we are called believers, is not a quality or gift infused by God but only an act of man, and that it cannot be said to be a gift, except in respect of the power to attain to this faith.

For thereby they contradict the Holy Scriptures, which declare that God infuses new qualities of faith, of obedience, and of the consciousness of His love into our hearts: ""This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts (Jer 31:33)." And: "For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants (Isa 44:3)." And: "God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us (Rom 5:5)." This is also repugnant to the constant practice of the Church, which prays by the mouth of the prophet thus: "Restore me, and I will return (Jer 31:18)."

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: PARAGRAPH 7. Who teach: That the grace whereby we are converted to God is only a gentle advising, or (as others explain it) that this is the noblest manner of working in the conversion of man, and that this manner of working, which consists in advising, is most in harmony with man's nature; and that there is no reason why this advising grace alone should not be sufficient to make the natural man spiritual; indeed, that God does not produce the consent of the will except through this manner of advising; and that the power of the divine working, whereby it surpasses the working of Satan, consists in this that

God promises eternal, while Satan promise only temporal good.

But this is altogether Pelagian and contrary to the whole Scripture, which, besides this, teaches yet another and far more powerful and divine manner of the Holy Spirit's working in the conversion of man, as in Ezekiel: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh (Ezek 36:26)."

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: PARAGRAPH 8. Who teach: That god in the regeneration of man does not use such powers of His omnipotence as potently and infallibly bend man's will to faith and conversion; but that all the works of grace having been accomplished, which God employs to convert man, man may yet so resist god and the Holy Spirit, when God intends man's regeneration and wills to regenerate him, and indeed that man often does so resist that he prevents entirely his regeneration, and that it therefore remains in man's power to be regenerated or not.

For this is nothing less than the denial of all that efficiency of God's grace in our conversion, and the subjecting of the working of Almighty God to the will of man, which is contrary to the apostles, who teach that we believe accord to the working of the strength of his might (Eph 1:19); and that God fulfills every desire of goodness and every work of faith with power (2 Th 1:11); and that "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3)."

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: PARAGRAPH 9. Who teach: That grace and free will are partial causes which together work the beginning of conversion, and that grace, in order of working, does not precede the working of the will; that is, that God does not efficiently help the will of man unto conversion until the will of man moves and determines to do this.

For the ancient Church has long ago condemned this doctrine of the Pelagians according to the words of the apostle: "It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy (Rom 9:16)." Likewise: "For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it (1 Cor 4:7)?" And: "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose (Phil 2:13)."

FIFTH HEAD OF DOCTRINE. THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 1. Those whom God, according to His purpose, calls to the communion of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, He also delivers from the dominion and slavery of sin, though in this life He does not deliver them altogether from the body of sin and from the infirmities of the flesh.

FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 2. Hence spring forth the daily sins of infirmity, and blemishes cleave even to the best works of the saints. These are to them a perpetual reason to humiliate themselves before God and to flee for refuge to Christ crucified; to mortify the flesh more and more by the spirit of prayer and by holy exercises of piety; and to press forward to the goal of perfection, until at length, delivered from this body of death, they shall reign with the Lamb of God in heaven.

FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 3. By reason of these remains of indwelling sin, and also because the temptations of the world and of Satan, those who are converted could not persevere in that grace if left to their own strength. But God is faithful, who, having conferred grace, mercifully confirms and powerfully preserves them therein, even to the end.

FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 4. Although the weakness of the flesh cannot prevail against the power of God, who confirms and preserves true believers in a state of grace, yet converts are not always so influenced and actuated by the Spirit of God as not in some particular instances sinfully to deviate from the guidance of divine grace, so as to be seduced by and to comply with the lusts of the flesh; they must, therefore, be constant in watching and prayer, that they may not be led into temptation. When these are great and heinous sins by the flesh, the world, and Satan, but sometimes by the righteous permission of God actually are drawn into these evils. This, the lamentable fall of David, Peter, and other saints described in Holy Scripture, demonstrates.

FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 5. By such enormous sins, however, they very highly offend God, incur a deadly guilt, grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their consciences, and sometimes for a while lose the sense of God's favor, until, when they change their course by serious repentance, the light of God's fatherly countenance again shines upon them.

FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 6. But God, who is rich in mercy, according to His unchangeable purpose of election, does not wholly withdraw the Holy Spirit from His own people even in their grievous falls; nor suffers them to proceed so far as they lose the grace of adoption and forfeit the state of justification, or to commit the sin unto death or against the Holy Spirit; nor does He permit them to be totally deserted, and to plunge themselves into everlasting destruction.

FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 7. For in the first place, in these falls He preserves in them the incorruptible seed of regeneration from perishing or being totally lost; and again, by His Word and Spirit He certainly and effectually renews them to repentance, to a sincere and godly sorrow for their sins, that they may seek and obtain remission in the blood of the Mediator, may again experience the favor of a reconciled God, through faith adore His mercies, and henceforward more diligently work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 8. Thus it is not in consequence of their own merits or strength, but of God's free mercy, that they neither totally fall from faith and grace nor continue and perish finally in their backslidings; which, with respect to themselves is not only possible, but would undoubtedly happen; but with respect to God, it is utterly impossible, since His counsel cannot be changed nor His promise fail; neither can the call according to His purpose be revoked, nor the merit, intercession, and preservation of Christ be rendered ineffectual, nor the sealing of the Holy Spirit be frustrated or obliterated.

FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 9. Of this preservation of the elect to salvation and of their perseverance in the faith, true believers themselves may and do obtain assurance according to the measure of their faith, whereby they surely believe that they are and ever will continue true and living members of the Church, and that they have the forgiveness of sins and life eternal.

FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 10. This assurance, however, is not produced by any peculiar revelation contrary to or independent of the Word of God, but springs from faith in God's promises, which He has most abundantly revealed in His Word for our comfort; from the testimony of the Holy Spirit, witnessing with our spirit that we are children and heirs of God (Rom 8:16); and lastly, from a

serious and holy desire to preserve a good conscience and to perform good works. And if the elect of God were deprived of this solid comfort that they shall finally obtain the victory, and of this infallible pledge of eternal glory, they would be of all men the most miserable.

FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 11. The Scripture moreover testifies that believers in this life have to struggle with various carnal doubts, and that under grievous temptations they do not always feel this full assurance of faith and certainty of persevering. But God, who is the Father of all consolation, does not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that they may be able to endure it (1 Cor 10:13), and by the Holy Spirit again inspires them with the comfortable assurance of persevering.

FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 12. This certainty of perseverance, however, is so far from exciting in believers a spirit of pride, or of rendering them carnally secure, that on the contrary it is the real source of humility, filial reverence, true piety, patience in every tribulation, fervent prayers, constancy in suffering and in confessing the truth, and of solid rejoicing in God; so that the consideration of this benefit should serve as an incentive to the serious and constant practice of gratitude and good works, as appears from the testimonies of Scripture and the examples of the saints.

FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 13. Neither does renewed confidence of persevering produce licentiousness or a disregard of piety in those who are recovered from backsliding; but it renders them much more careful and solicitous to continue in the ways of the Lord, which He has ordained, that they who walk therein may keep the assurance of persevering; lest, on account of their abuse of His fatherly kindness, God should turn away His gracious countenance from them (to behold which is to the godly dearer than life, and the withdrawal of which is more bitter than death) and they in consequence thereof should fall into more grievous torments of conscience.

FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 14. And as it has pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, to begin this work of grace in us, so He preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of His Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof, and by the use of the sacraments.

FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 15. The carnal mind is unable to comprehend this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and the certainty thereof, which God has most abundantly revealed in His Word, for the glory of His Name and the consolation of pious souls, and which He impresses upon the hearts of the believers. Satan abhors it, the world ridicules it, the ignorant and hypocritical abuse it, and the heretics oppose it. But the bride of Christ has always most tenderly loved and constantly defended it as an inestimable treasure; and God, against whom neither counsel nor strength can prevail, will dispose her so to continue to the end. Now to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen.

REJECTION OF ERRORS

The true doctrine having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those:

FIFTH HEAD: PARAGRAPH 1. Who teach: That the perseverance of the true believers is not a fruit of election, or a gift of God gained by the death of Christ, but a condition of the new covenant which (as they declare) man before his decisive election and justification must fulfil through his free will.

For the Holy Scripture testifies that this follows out of election, and is given the elect in virtue of the death, the resurrection, and the intercession of Christ: "What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened (Rom 11:7)." Likewise: "He who did not spare His own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ (Rom 8:32-35)?"

FIFTH HEAD: PARAGRAPH 2. Who teach: That God does indeed provide the believer with sufficient powers to persevere, and is ever ready to preserve these in him if he will do his duty; but that, though all though which are necessary to persevere in faith and which God will use to preserve faith are made us of, even then it ever depends on the pleasure of the will whether it will persevere or not.

For this idea contains outspoken Pelagianism, and while it would make men free, it make them robbers of God's honor, contrary to the prevailing agreement of the evangelical doctrine, which takes from man all cause of boasting, and ascribes all the praise for this favor to the grace of God alone; and contrary to the apostle, who declares that it is God, "He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:8)."

FIFTH HEAD: PARAGRAPH 3. Who teach: That the true believers and regenerate not only can fall from justifying faith and likewise from grace and salvation wholly and to the end, but indeed often do fall from this and are lost forever.

For this conception makes powerless the grace, justification, regeneration, and continued preservation by Christ, contrary to the expressed words of the apostle Paul: "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him (Rom 5:8-9)." And contrary to the apostle John: "No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God (1 John 3:9)." And also contrary to the words of Jesus Christ: "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all ; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand (John 10:28-29)."

FIFTH HEAD: PARAGRAPH 4. Who teach: That true believers and regenerate can sin the sin unto death or against the Holy Spirit.

Since the same apostle John, after having spoken in the fifth chapter of his first epistle, vs. 16 and 17, of those who sin unto death and having forbidden to pray for them, immediately adds to this in vs. 18: "We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin (meaning a sin of that character); the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him (1 John 5:18)."

FIFTH HEAD: PARAGRAPH 5. Who teach: That without a special revelation we can have no certainty of future perseverance in this

life.

For by this doctrine the sure comfort of the true believers is taken away in this life, and the doubts of the papist are again introduced into the Church, while the Holy Scriptures constantly deduce this assurance, not from a special and extraordinary revelation, but from the marks proper to the children of God and from the very constant promises of God. So especially the apostle Paul: "neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:39)." And John declares: "Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us (1 John 3:24)."

FIFTH HEAD: PARAGRAPH 6. Who teach: That the doctrine of the certainty of perseverance and of salvation from its own character and nature is a cause of indolence and is injurious to godliness, good morals, prayers, and other holy exercises, but that on the contrary it is praiseworthy to doubt.

For these show that they do not know the power of divine grace and the working of the indwelling Holy Spirit. And they contradict the apostle John, who teaches that opposite with express words in his first epistle: "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure (1 John 3:2-3)." Furthermore, these are contradicted by the example of the saints, both of the Old and the New Testament, who though they were assured of their perseverance and salvation, were nevertheless constant in prayers and other exercises of godliness.

FIFTH HEAD: PARAGRAPH 7. Who teach: That the faith of those who believe for a time does not differ from justifying and saving faith except only in duration.

For Christ Himself, in Matt 13:20, Luke 8:13, and in other places, evidently notes, beside this duration, a threefold difference between those who believe only for a time and true believers, when He declares that the former receive the seed on stony ground, but the latter in the good ground or heart; that the former are without root, but the latter have a firm root; that the former are without fruit, but that the latter bring forth their fruit in various measure, with constancy and steadfastness.

FIFTH HEAD: PARAGRAPH 8. Who teach: That it is not absurd that one having lost his first regeneration is again and even often born anew.

For these deny by this doctrine the incorruptibleness of the seed of God, whereby we are born again; contrary to the testimony of the apostle Peter: "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable (1 Pet 1:23)."

FIFTH HEAD: PARAGRAPH 9. Who teach: That Christ has in no place prayed that believers should infallibly continue in faith.

For the contradict Christ Himself, who says: "I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail (Luke 22:32)", and the evangelist John, who declares that Christ has not prayed for the apostles only, but also for those who through their word would believe: "Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name," and "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one (John 17:11, 15, 20)."

CONCLUSION

And this is the perspicuous, simple, an ingenuous declaration of the orthodox doctrine respecting the five articles which have been controverted in the Belgic Churches; and the rejection of the errors, with which they have for some time been troubled. This doctrine the Synod judges to be drawn from the Word of God, and to be agreeable to the confession of the Reformed Churches. Whence it clearly appears that some, whom such conduct by no means became, have violated all truth, equity, and charity, in wishing to persuade the public:

"That the doctrine of the Reformed Churches concerning predestination, and the points annexed to it, by its own genius and necessary tendency, leads off the minds of men from all piety and religion; that it is a opiate administered by the flesh and the devil; and the stronghold of Satan, where he lies in wait for all, and from which he wounds multitudes, and mortally strikes through many with the darts both of despair and security; that it makes God the author of sin, unjust, tyrannical, hypocritical; that it is noting more than interpolated Stoicism, Manicheism, Libertinism, Turcism; that it renders men carnally secure, since they are persuaded by it that noting can hinder the salvation of the elect, let them live as they please; and, therefore, that they may safely perpetrate every species of the most atrocious crimes; and that, if the reprobate should even perform truly all the works of the saints, their obedience would not in the least contribute tot their salvation; that the same doctrine teaches that God, by a mere arbitrary act of his will, without the least respect or view to any sin, has predestinated the greatest part of the world to eternal damnation, and has created them for this very purpose; that in the same manner in which the election is the fountain and cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and impiety; that many children of the faithful are torn, guiltless, from their mothers' breasts, and tyrannically plunged into hell: so that neither baptism nor the prayers of the Church at their baptism can at all profit them;" and many other things of the same kind which the Reformed Churches not only do not acknowledge, but even detest with their whole soul.

Wherefore, this Synod of Dort, in the name of the Lord, conjures as many as piously call upon the name of our Savior Jesus Christ to judge of the faith of the Reformed Churches, not from the calumnies which on every side are heaped upon it, nor from the private expressions of a few among ancient and modern teachers, often dishonestly quoted, or corrupted and wrested to a meaning quite foreign to their intention; but from the public confessions of the Churches themselves, and from this declaration of the orthodox doctrine, confirmed by the unanimous consent of all and each of the members of the whole Synod. Moreover, the Synod warns calumniators themselves to consider the terrible judgment of God which awaits them, for bearing false witness against the confessions of so many Churches; for distressing the consciences of the weak; and for laboring to render suspected the society of the truly faithful.

Finally, this Synod exhorts all their brethren in the gospel of Christ to conduct themselves piously and religiously in handling this doctrine, both in the universities and churches; to direct it, as well in discourse as in writing, to the glory of the Divine name, to holiness of life, and to the consolation of afflicted souls; to regulate, by the Scripture, according to the analogy of faith, not only their sentiments, but also their language, and to abstain from all those phrases which exceed the limits necessary to be observed in

ascertaining the genuine sense of the Holy Scriptures, and may furnish insolent sophists with a just pretext for violently assailing, or even vilifying, the doctrine of the Reformed Churches.

May Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who, seated at the Father's right hand, gives gifts to men, sanctify us in the truth; bring to the truth those who err; shut the mouths of the calumniators of sound doctrine, and endue the faithful ministers of his Word with the spirit of wisdom and discretion, that all their discourses may tend to the glory of God, and the edification of those who hear them. Amen.

Prevenient Grace and Semi-Pelagianism

Scott Christensen

A consistent charge against Arminianism is that it is a form of semi-Pelagianism. Arminians consistently deny this charge and so it warrants an examination. This paper seeks to examine the Arminian doctrine of prevenient grace and to demonstrate that it supports the charge of semi-Pelagianism. In the course of the examination, I hope to show that the doctrine of prevenient grace does not bear the weight of the biblical evidence against it.

Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism

The Pelagianism controversy in the early 5th century pitted the teachings of Augustine's view of divine grace against that of Pelagius. Basically Pelagianism is understood as teaching that the natural man has "the capacity of self-determination by asserting the possibility of achieving sinless perfection in this life without grace."¹ In popular terms, Pelagianism would be the purest form of salvation by works. Pelagianism denies the doctrine of Original Sin and therefore of the depravity of man. It affirms free will in the libertarian sense in which man has a natural capacity to choose contrary to all possible factors that might otherwise determine one's choices. Thus, it denies that God determines or decrees the actions of men. This would violate human liberty. Subsequently, the internal work of divine grace is not necessary in order to procure acceptance before God who demands moral perfection as a prerequisite of salvation.² In affirming libertarian free will, Pelagianism asserts that man has the ability to act with sinless perfection if he so chooses. This is an absolute sort of anthropocentric construct and as such is rejected as heretical by all orthodox Christians including Arminians.

In the wake of the Augustinian-Pelagian controversy Semi-Pelagianism took hold in several quarters by a number of theologians. It was regarded as a middle ground between Augustine and Pelagius and his followers. However, the term semi-Pelagianism was not used until the 16th century Reformation.³ In contrast to Pelagianism, semi-Pelagianism states that man is affected by the fall of Adam, but that his free will is retained so that while he is inclined toward sinful behavior, he is not in full bondage to sin. John Cassian, the principal proponent of semi-Pelagianism, states, "There are by nature some seeds of goodness in every soul implanted by the kindness of the Creator."⁴ Although, divine grace is necessary for salvation, that grace is resistible due to our natural freedom to choose contrary to its influence. Cassian and other semi-Pelagians rejected Pelagianism as heretical but felt Augustine's doctrine of unconditional election and predestination went too far in combating Pelagius' error. Augustine regarded the semi-Pelagians as brothers in Christ. Likewise, the charge from Calvinists that Arminianism is semi-Pelagian, while a serious charge, is not intended to consign Arminianism to heresy. Calvinists who do so have been unfair to the genuine teachings of Arminians.⁵

¹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition: 100-600* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 313. ² Pelagius affirmed the grace of God but that it was an external grace in the form of God's moral law. It has no necessary influence on whether one chooses to obey it or not. ³ For more on the Pelagian and semi-Pelagian controversy see R. C. Sproul, *Willing to Believe: The Controversy Over Free Will* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), especially chapters 1, 2 and 3. ⁴ Quoted in Pelikan, *Catholic Tradition*, p. 323-24. ⁵ Some of the reason for this stems from the departure of Classical and Wesleyan Arminianism by influential figures like Charles Finney whose theology was much more in line with Pelagianism. His subsequent influence on Evangelical Christianity has been debilitating in a pervasive way. See Sproul, *Willing to Believe*, p. 169-85.

In order to be saved, semi-Pelagianism gives priority to the initiation of faith via one's free will, the latter being regarded as a gift of God's grace to all men. This in turn provokes God to supply further helping grace that the person must cooperate with in order for his faith to have a saving character to it. The capacity one has in exercising faith is the degree to which God will supply grace toward salvation.⁶ There is a balance between the human initiative and the subsequent divine initiative.⁷ Rebecca Weaver says concerning John Cassian:

Human dependence on grace meant for Cassian that at every stage of the process of salvation grace must be operative; however, the freedom of the human will meant that grace must function in such a way as not to deprive the will of its freedom to choose. The operation of grace as conceived by Cassian, therefore, is highly variegated. God interacts with the multitude of individual persons in the multitude of ways necessary to assist them toward salvation while at the same time preserving their freedom. The notion of grace as variegated was important to Cassian's position, for it served to protect the self-initiating character of the human will.⁸

There seems to be some debate in defining the parameters of what semi-Pelagianism espouses. Our concern here focuses upon the priority of grace versus free will. For example, Roger Olson quoting Nazarene theologian Orton Wiley states in essence that semi-Pelagianism teaches that in the partial depraved nature of man, he makes the first move toward God in procuring salvation but then needs divine grace to move further. The initiating act of man provokes God's response with the necessary grace to complete

salvation.⁹ Thus, semi-Pelagianism would teach that man initiates the process of salvation and God responds by supplying the necessary grace to help the process along. In contrast, Classical and Wesleyan Arminians argue that God must first initiate the process via prevenient grace and then man responds. In either case, there seems to be no debate that whoever initiates the process, man or God, that a cooperative effort is necessary. Thus, both positions affirm a synergistic view of salvation.

In an article written by the staff of *Modern Reformation*, a Calvinistic journal, the authors make a distinction between semi-Pelagianism and Arminianism.¹⁰ In a helpful chart they categorize both as forms of synergism. However, they make the same distinction that Olson and other Arminians make, that in Semi-pelagianism man takes the initiative in salvation and in Arminianism, God takes the initiative. In either case, grace and man's free will cooperate in the procurement of salvation. In their chart they make a distinction between 2 types of monergism. On the one hand, there is the monergism which teaches that God alone initiates and completes salvation. This is consistent with the teaching of the Augustinian/ Calvinist understanding of soteriology. On the other hand, there is the monergism of Pelagianism in which man alone initiates and completes salvation. In between these two poles exists various forms of synergism. The authors place Arminianism closer to that of the Augustinian/ Calvinist side and semi-Pelagianism closer to the Pelagian side. The closer one comes to the theocentric monergism of Augustine and Calvin the greater the affirmation of Original Sin and human inability. The closer one comes to the anthropocentric monergism of Pelagius the greater the denial of Original Sin

6 *Ibid.*, p. 324. 7 Rebecca Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency: A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1996), p. 72. 8 *Ibid.* 9 Roger Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2006), p. 30. 10 "Grace, Sin and the Will: The Structure of the Debate" *Modern Reformation* 21:1 (Jan-Feb. 2012), p. 12-17.

and human inability. Although there is some merit to the distinctions the chart makes under the rubric of synergism between Arminianism and semi-Pelagianism, it would seem the distinctions are more sharply made than the evidence may warrant.

It must be agreed that Arminianism affirms in principle a similar view of Original Sin and human inability that the Augustinian/ Calvinist tradition teaches. Furthermore, there is no doubt that Arminianism teaches the priority of divine grace working inwardly to initiate the process leading to salvation. However, it is not equally clear that semi-Pelagianism consistently affirms that man always is the first to initiate the first move towards God. Historical scholarship has taken note of this. Jaroslav Pelikan indicates that semi-Pelagians believed that sometimes faith preceded the supply of grace and at other times grace preceded the exercise of faith.¹¹ This is confirmed by Weaver's study. She states that for Cassian, "In the case of some persons, grace will assist the will that already desires the good, whereas in the case of others, grace will arouse the will to good when it is not so inclined."¹² In either case, faith is always exercised via the free will of man by either cooperating with or resisting the grace of God and that seems to be the main point of semi-Pelagianism. However, as will be argued, the Arminian doctrine of prevenient grace in terms of its practical outworking is not a one-time static event, but an ongoing and successive process whereby the unbeliever is drawn by stages to the culminating point of exercising saving faith. Yet, all along that process, the unbeliever must continually cooperate with grace in order to procure more grace. In this sense, Arminianism concurs with the semi-Pelagian notion that free will triggers the grace of God whether strictly in the initiation of the process or according to their view of prevenient grace in the continuing invocation of further supplies of grace.

The Doctrine of Prevenient Grace

When Arminians deny that their theology is semi-Pelagian the assertion is made in part due to their doctrine of sin. The common Classical and Wesleyan Arminian position is that man is indeed born in sin and concurs with Calvinism in the doctrine of the Total Depravity of man. Accordingly, man in his natural state is in bondage to sin such that he is not free to act with faith apart from the grace of God.¹³ However, the Arminian doctrine of prevenient grace mitigates the practical implications of this doctrine nearly to the point of nullifying its effects. This is an important point because prevenient grace is a central plank in Arminian theology. Roger Olson calls prevenient grace the "linchpin" of Arminian soteriology.¹⁴ Olson surveys with approval the theological statements of various historical proponents of the Arminian doctrine of prevenient grace. For example, he states at length that:

For... later Arminians of the nineteenth century, Christ's death not only resolved the guilt

issue of original sin, so Adam's sin is not imputed to every child born, but it also

mitigated the corruption of inherited depravity. From the cross flowed into humanity a

power of spiritual death as to excite in them various degrees or religious feelings, and

enabling them to seek the face of God, to turn at his rebuke, and, by improving that grace,

¹¹ Catholic Tradition, p. 324. ¹² *Divine Grace*, p. 72. ¹³ See Roger Olson, *Arminian Theology*, pgs. 137-57 where he argues convincingly that this has been the majority position of Arminians throughout history. Calvinist Thomas Schreiner draws the same conclusion from his review of Wesleyan theologians in his article, "Does Scripture teach Prevenient Grace in the Wesleyan Sense?" in *Still Sovereign* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), p. 232-33. ¹⁴ *Arminian Theology*, p. 178.

to repent and believe the gospel. [William Burton] Pope agreed. Christ's life and death, he averred, provided a free gift to all humanity. 'The gift was the restoration of the Holy Spirit; not indeed as the indwelling Spirit of regeneration, but as the Spirit of enlightenment, striving and conviction.' This common (not universal) Arminian doctrine of universal prevenient grace means that because of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit no human being is actually in a state of absolute darkness and depravity. Because of original sin, helplessness to do good is the natural state of humanity, but because of the work of Christ and the operation of the Holy Spirit universally no human being actually exists in that natural state.¹⁵

John Wesley developed the Wesleyan tradition of the Arminian doctrine of prevenient grace that is widely accepted today. Wesley lays out this doctrine in his sermon "On Working Out Our Own Salvation" (sermon #85).¹⁶ There he says prevenient grace brings forth "...the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first slight transient conviction of having sinned against him. All these imply some tendency toward life; some degree of salvation; the beginning of a deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart, quite insensible of God and the things of God." Wesley further states:

For allowing that all the souls of men are dead in sin by nature, this excuses none, seeing there is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called natural conscience. But this is not natural: It is more properly termed preventing grace. Every man has a greater or less measure of this, which waiteth not for the call of man. Every one has, sooner or later, good desires; although the generality of men stifle them before they can strike deep root, or produce any considerable fruit. Everyone has some measure of that light, some faint glimmering ray, which, sooner or later, more or less, enlightens every man that cometh into the world.

Wesley states, "No man sins because he has not grace, but because he does not use the grace which he hath." Elsewhere in his writings Wesley states, "That there is a measure of free-will supernaturally restored to every man, together with that supernatural light which 'enlightens every man that cometh into the world.'"¹⁷ Further in Sermon #85 Wesley makes a remarkable statement that is of a piece with the basic outline of semi-Pelagianism. He believes the restored free will of man can be used to invoke more grace he calls "convincing grace" that is associated with emerging signs of conviction and repentance.¹⁸ He exhorts men to "stir up the spark of grace which is now in you, and he will give you more grace." First of all, this suggests a cooperative effort that brings about salvation, although Wesley is careful to say that God's gracious work is the primary impetus for the reception of salvation so that there is no boasting in the sinner. Nonetheless, this formulation suggests a semi-Pelagian framework for understanding how salvation is procured by placing in the restored free will of man the power to initiate further grace. Pelikan states that in semi-Pelagianism, "It was by grace that each stage of conversion was effected."¹⁹ Yet, in each stage man must cooperate with grace before more is given. This sounds no different than Wesley's view.

15 Ibid., p. 153-54. 16 <http://new.gbpm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/85>. 17 The Works of John Wesley, ed. T. Jackson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 10:230. 18 Colin W. Williams ties this notion of convincing grace in Wesley's theology to the preaching of the gospel. See John Wesley's Theology Today, p. 42. 19 Catholic Tradition, p. 324.

Summarizing, most Arminians hold to these distinctive features of prevenient grace. 1) It is bestowed upon all men at birth. 2) It mitigates the effects of the fall mainly by restoring to man libertarian free will that is able to respond positively to the gospel by exercising faith. 3) It allows men to be enlightened concerning the truth of the gospel. 4) It is not saving grace but it leads to faith which does save. 5) It is resistible by virtue of the fact that it enables the ability of the will to act contrary to it if one so chooses. Thus, in order to activate its power one must cooperate with it by not resisting it. 6) It precedes regeneration and thus the spiritual transformation of the believer. It should be noted that a few Arminians disagree with the first point. For example, Robert Picirilli believes that prevenient grace (which he calls pre-regenerating grace) is only supplied in the hearing of the gospel.²⁰ However, a central point is that the doctrine entails stages of grace in which cooperation at each stage leads to more effusions of grace. This contributes to the charge that Arminianism is consummate with semi-Pelagian thought.

Defending the Charge of Semi-Pelagianism

Olson states emphatically in his work, "Arminius's theology was not Pelagian or semi-Pelagian in any sense because Arminius rested every good in human life, including ability to respond to the gospel with faith, on prevenient grace that restores free will. The free will of human beings in Arminius's theology and in Classical Arminianism is more properly denoted freed will. Grace frees the will from bondage to sin and evil, and gives it ability to cooperate with saving graces by not resisting it."²¹ It is difficult to see how these statements differ from semi-Pelagianism as understood earlier. At the very least, the practical implications are nearly identical with it. Thus, Arminians can affirm with Calvinists in the doctrine of Original Sin and Total Depravity but this has no practical value for their theology because it is nullified by their doctrine of prevenient grace. Although Olson denies the implications here, the Arminian doctrine of Original Sin and Total Depravity can only rightly be viewed as hypothetical. Olson affirms that natural humanity still suffers from the effects of inherited sin, but that his freed will is able to "influence him toward the good."²² He says, "No person is left by God entirely in that state of nature without some measure of grace to rise above it if he or she cooperates with grace by not resisting it."²³ Olson indicates that the effects of the inherited sin nature remain upon all human beings who are born in sin, but that simultaneously they receive prevenient grace. This in effect enables true libertarian freedom. Olson states, that an "actual inability and an actual ability" exist alongside each other in a dual state, "one is natural and the other is supernatural."²⁴ Thus, the natural man is enabled with the ability to continue in accordance with his sinful nature or to act contrary to it by inclining himself toward the spiritual good. However, there are several problems with this perspective. I will address four principal issues.²⁵

²⁰ Robert E. Picirilli, *Grace, Faith, Free Will* (Nashville: Randall House, 2002), p. 158. ²¹ *Arminian Theology*, p. 142. Schreiner after reviewing extensive sources for Wesleyan theology says, "What is common in all Wesleyan theories of prevenient grace is that the freedom, which was lost in Adam's sin, is sufficiently restored to enable people to choose salvation" ("Prevenient Grace", p. 236). ²² Ibid., p. 155. ²³ Ibid. ²⁴ Ibid., p. 156. ²⁵ I am not addressing some of the key Biblical texts Arminians use in support of prevenient grace such as John 1:9; 12:32; Rom. 2:4 and Titus 2:11. Thomas Schreiner addresses these texts in his article, "Prevenient Grace." which can also be accessed at <http://www.graceonlinelibrary.org/category/reformed-theology/arminianism/prevenientgrace/>.

A Deficient View of the Sin Nature

First of all, prevenient grace has a deficient view of the sin nature and its impact on the unbeliever. It does not comport with a faithful understanding of Total Depravity as taught in Scripture and consistently held by Calvinists. Do all men in their natural state of inherited sin (Rom. 5:12, 18, 19) have some ability to move toward the good and to exercise saving faith? Before answering this question, it should be made clear that the question regards all people not some people (i.e. the elect only). In other words, Calvinism and Arminianism are in full agreement that grace is necessary for a person to exercise saving faith. In fact, there is no substantial difference in their respective interpretations of Eph. 2:8-9. Even Arminians admit that faith is a gift of God's grace.²⁶ Faith cannot be exercised apart from prevenient grace. This is not where the problem lies. Rather the issue lies in the fact that Arminianism asserts that all men are afforded this grace to believe and each has the equal capacity to exercise their wills to that end. But is that the teaching of Scripture?

The Arminian doctrine of prevenient grace nullifies the effects of the Fall such that men are enlightened concerning the truth that leads to the gospel and that all men have the capacity for "seeking" God. But Paul makes it clear in Romans 3 that: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one

does good, not even one." (vss. 10-12). The present active verbs in this passage indicate the present status of all unregenerate human beings. There is no mitigation of the Fall here. According to Romans 8:8, those in the flesh (i.e. in the natural sinful state) are both unwilling and incapable of pleasing God. This is the thrust of Paul's argument in the previous verse: "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law [it is unwilling]; indeed, it cannot [it is incapable]" (vs. 7).

Paul is at pains to describe the life of the unbeliever as being spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1, 5; cf. Col. 2:13). He says to the believer: "We all once [i.e. when spiritually dead] lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (Eph. 2:3). If the state of the unbeliever (the rest of mankind) is by nature dead and considered as children of wrath, then in what sense are they also recipients of enabling grace that frees them to act in accordance with that grace toward procuring salvation? How can one be a child of divine wrath and the recipient of his grace at the same time? The only way to be relieved of death and wrath is not by prevenient grace, but by being made alive together with Christ which Paul equates in the same verse as being saved by grace. "Even when we were dead in our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ-by grace you have been saved" (vs. 5; cf. Col. 2:13). In other words, grace is in fact the act of being made alive in Christ. Notice also the work of salvation here, which is a resurrection from spiritual death, is accomplished solely by God. Nothing is said about the instrument of faith at this point. One does not make himself alive from the dead. It is a supernatural work of divine grace. Prevenient grace cannot be described as making unbelievers alive together with Christ. This is exclusive language for believers only. The grace spoken of here is a grace that can only be said to affect the believer. It is a grace that necessitates the actual salvation of its recipients not providing potential salvation to those who do not resist it.

26 See for example Arminian theologian. Picirilli, *Grace, Faith*, p. 165-67. Picirilli quotes Arminius to this effect as well (p. 161). Also see F. Leroy Forlines, *Classical Arminianism* (Nashville: Randall House, 2011), p. 257-60.

An Incorrect View of the Human Will

Inherent in Arminianism's deficient view of the impact of the sin nature upon the unbeliever is a corresponding view of the human will that does not comport with Scripture. Olson states that prevenient grace liberates the will from its bondage to sin and allows it libertarian freedom. He states, "All classical Arminians believe in libertarian free will, which is self-determining choice; it is incompatible with determination of any kind. That seems to amount to belief in an uncaused effect – the free choice of the self to be or do something without antecedent."²⁷ In the libertarian conception of free will, choices that are caused are choices that are coerced and coercion is a hindrance to freedom. In other words, free will means the absence of any hindrances (impediments) to the choices one makes (i.e. it is freedom from hindrances). Hindrances and impediments are primarily the various internal and external influences or causes that may direct the will towards a particular choice including one's desires, his nature, or arguments in defense of a particular choice. Olson states that free will "includes being able to do other than one wants to do and other than one does."²⁸ He states that free will is "the personal power of choice over motives and between alternatives."²⁹ Thus, the will must have the power to override any motives that might direct our choices.

Libertarian free will also affirms that the power of God's Word and even the powerful gracious influence of the Holy Spirit cannot determine choices that are made. They can have an influence and must have an influence in persuading the will if one is to be saved, but the will is the final arbitrator in whether to resist or embrace the influence God and His Word may have upon it. Olson says, "God's influence lies directly on every subject so that nothing can happen without being pulled or pushed by God toward the good. However, free and rational creatures have the power to resist the influence of God. This power was given to them by God himself."³⁰ Nothing can determine choices except the self-determining power of the will. Anything else that would determine the choices the will makes is regarded as coercive. Without such freedom Arminians believe human beings cannot be responsible for their actions.

But Scripture nowhere teaches a libertarian concept of free will. First, it teaches that God ultimately determines all that takes place. As the Psalmist says, "The LORD has established His throne in the heavens; and His sovereignty rules over all" (Psa. 103:19). And again, "But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases" (Psa. 115:3). The Psalmist also notes God's ownership rights upon the world: "The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it" (Psa 24:1; cf. Deut. 10:14; Exod. 19:5; Job 41:11). Paul says, "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen" (Rom. 11:36). One cannot argue with the Supreme Lord of all. The Potter has the right to do as He pleases with the clay (Isa. 45:9-11; cf. Matt. 20:1-16). God's sovereignty extends from the broad flow of history (Dan. 2:21; Acts 1:7) to the most minute detail of everyday existence. "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father" (Matt. 10:29; cf. Luke 12:6-7).

All God's actions and future plans are unconditionally made. "Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My

27 *Arminian Theology*, p. 71. 28 *Ibid.*, p. 129. 29 *Ibid.*, p. 174. 30 *Ibid.*, p. 131.

purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it" (Isa. 46:9-11). "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" (Num. 23:19; cf. 1 Sam. 15:29). God's sovereign plans are irrevocable by anyone or anything. Nebuchadnezzar after being humbled by God acknowledged His sovereignty in this regard saying, "For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What hast Thou done?'" (Dan. 4:34-35). This indicates that God's sovereign determination extends to the choices and actions of human beings (Prov. 16:1, 9; 19:21; 21:1; Isa. 46:9-11).

Scripture also rules out libertarian freedom by teaching that we cannot act apart from what our natures dictate. God never acts in such a way as to mitigate the immediate causes of one's actions. Those secondary and immediate causes are connected directly to our human natures. The Biblical concept of human nature refers specifically to the spiritual disposition of the heart and mind. It is mission control central (Prov. 4:23). We are bound to our natures that determine the sorts of choices we are capable of making. In

this regard, both Jesus and Paul make it clear that unregenerate mankind is in bondage to sin (John 8:34; Rom. 6:17). Paul says to believers in Titus 3:3: "For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another." This enslavement to the sinful nature is the normal disposition of all unbelievers. There is no possibility of being inclined to repentance, faith or any truly undefiled act of righteousness in such a state of existence. In other words, the will remains in bondage to the sinful nature and all one's choices are directed by such a sinful nature. A bad tree cannot produce good fruit (Matt. 7:17-18; 12:33-35; 15:18). Jeremiah communicates this truth in a memorable manner: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil" (Jer. 13:23). Mankind has no freedom to act contrary to his nature. And the sinful nature never inclines a person to seek God or exercise faith and repentance. Furthermore, these passages do not support the notion that some superintending grace mitigates the impact of the sinful nature. Salvation in no way depends upon the will of man (John 1:13; Rom. 9:16). The consistent affirmation of Scripture is that men are in unmitigated bondage to sin. They have no universally divinely endowed freedom to escape it.

A Deficient View of Regeneration

This leads to a further problem. The Arminian view of prevenient grace undermines a proper view of regeneration. Arminianism says that prevenient grace enables all men with the power of libertarian free will such that they can exercise faith by non-resistance to divine grace or resist it by the same power of free choice. If they choose not to resist grace, then they are afforded the opportunity to provoke more grace that then leads to saving faith. Once saving faith is exercised then God regenerates the believing person.³¹ Thus, in Arminianism faith precedes regeneration. Even though the Arminian argues that it is God who regenerates and not faith, faith is a necessary prerequisite to the reception of the new nature. Thus, it is difficult to escape the charge that faith invokes the divine response bringing us back to the charge of semi-Pelagianism. But once again, Arminians will respond that faith cannot be exercised without

³¹ See for example the order of salvation (*ordo salutis*) given by Forlines, *Classical Arminianism*, p. 84.

prior prevenient grace.³² This is immaterial since it has already been pointed out that semi-Pelagianism does not deny such a construct. The main distinctive of semi-Pelagianism is its insistence upon synergism – God's grace and man's free will must cooperate together in order to procure salvation.³³ Which comes first is not at issue because the human response in the end has the last word finally prompting God to act with saving/ regenerating/ converting grace. The charge against Arminianism is simply that it is not monergistic. Subsequently, any form of synergism seems inevitably to lead us back to semi-Pelagianism. The Scripture's teaching on regeneration contradicts the synergistic understanding of prevenient grace. Furthermore, the nature of regeneration has a direct bearing upon how one understands the sin nature and its grip upon the unbeliever.

Paul makes a distinction between the natural man and the spiritual man in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2. His teaching here is critical for understanding the Spirit's role in transforming the nature of those whom God has chosen for salvation. In support of what has already been said, the absolute resistance of the natural man to anything spiritual is reinforced by Paul's teaching in these chapters. He says, "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). Note the contrast between those who are perishing and those who are being saved. The perishing are those who are unregenerate. Their minds are blinded to the truth (2 Cor. 4:4). The gospel has no compelling force to any such person. The gospel has nothing but the appearance of obscurity and absurdity. But those who are being saved experience the unmitigated power of the cross. There is no middle ground. Paul says for the believer that, "[God] is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Therefore, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord'" (vss. 30-31). There is no sense in which the one who believes can claim that he arbitrated the grace of God via his own self-determining freedom of choice. John says, "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13). Again Paul says, "So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy" (Rom. 9:16). Salvation is monergistic. God does all the work necessary for salvation to obtain. Of course, that does not mean humans are passive recipients of His work. Rather divine grace is the necessary cause of human faith.

1 Corinthians 2:14 continues Paul's argument. "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned." In other words, unless one has the Spirit indwelling him he cannot ascertain spiritual realities. In this way, one's faith is completely dependent upon the power of the Holy Spirit (vss. 4-5). The "wisdom" Paul preached to the Corinthians (vss. 1-5) was the gospel – "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (vs. 2). This is not a wisdom that comes naturally to men. It is wisdom born of the Spirit. Paul says the Corinthian believers have received this wisdom of the gospel that led to their faith because they have received the Spirit Himself (vs. 12). Elsewhere, Paul says if a person does not have the Spirit of Christ he does not belong to Christ (Rom. 8:9). Paul is simply describing the power of the Spirit to transform the

³² *Ibid.*, p. 22. ³³ Most Arminians readily admit that their soteriology is synergistic. E.g. Forlines, *Classical Arminianism*, p. 24; Olson, *Arminian Theology*, p. 39. Picirilli rejects the synergism label as he believes this implies that faith is a work and salvation is not by works (Grace, Faith, p. 36, 96, 146). Nonetheless, his understanding of prevenient grace is in no way substantially different from other articulate Arminians.

natural man into a spiritual man (vs. 15; cf. 1 Cor. 3:1). In this regard, Paul uses the word "spiritual" to mean one who is of the Spirit. That is not the description of the unregenerate person because Paul has used the word "natural" to refer to such a person. Thus, anyone who is enlightened with the wisdom of the gospel is in fact one who has already received the Holy Spirit and become the recipient of the Spirit's power to transform one's nature from a natural unregenerate state to the spiritual regenerate state. But according to the Arminian doctrine of prevenient grace one can be enlightened concerning the wisdom of the gospel but still reject it. Paul allows for no such possibility here. True enlightenment concerning the wisdom of the gospel comes necessarily and inevitably from the power of the Spirit which leads necessarily and inevitably to the transformation of regeneration and subsequent saving faith. Such gracious power is irresistible as an unbroken chain of cause and effect.

Likewise, Jesus is also clear that apart from regeneration one is neither able to "see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3) nor "enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). In other words, the natural disposition of the unregenerate person is such that he is incapable of understanding the gospel in a spiritually enlightened manner nor is he capable of exercising faith so as to enter the realm of God's kingdom. The prerequisite of spiritual enlightenment and saving faith is to have one's nature transformed by the power of the Holy

Spirit such that the person is willing and able to repent and believe. But again what is necessary to understand here is that the grace that attends regeneration is an absolutely efficacious and irresistible grace. The primary contention of Arminianism is that any grace leading to salvation is resistible. All prevenient grace does is liberate the will from bondage to sin such that it is free to choose contrary to either influence – grace or sin. In other words, the will is free to resist the forces of the sin nature or concur with them. Likewise, it is free to resist divine grace or concur with it. Saving grace can only be efficacious for the person who wills it to be so. Thus, salvation is ultimately centered and dependent on a particular person's choice of God not God's choice of a particular person.

James makes it clear that regeneration is due to the sovereign will of God in the life of its recipients. "In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures" (James 1:18). First of all, God's will here speaks of his irrevocable sovereign will. Secondly, the phrase "brought us forth" literally means "gave us birth." The means by which He unconditionally willed believers to be born again was through the instrument of His word of truth, the message of the gospel. This gospel message is the same "wisdom of God" Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 2:7 that is distinguished from the wisdom of men. Paul's message is the wisdom of God and that same message, called the word of truth by James, is applied in regeneration to those God willed to be saved and is accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit. He says, "My message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:4-5; cf. Rom. 1:16). Again, salvation is monergistic, but not passively received. Regeneration always efficaciously results in the conversion of its recipients. Regeneration is God's work in the recipient and conversion (i.e. faith and repentance) is the inevitable active response of the person who has been regenerated. The synergistic view of Arminianism says God does His part in prevenient grace, but if the recipient doesn't do his part in exercising his free will, he cannot be saved. The Scripture nowhere teaches this concept.

A Deficient View of the Power of Grace

This reinforces another important conclusion. Divine saving grace is irresistible. Arminianism mitigates the power of grace by its view of prevenient grace. Arminians hold that grace has no power in the life of its recipients unless a person activates that power by his free will. This indicates that the determining factor of salvation rests not in the hands of God but in the hand on the one who exercises free will in a favorable response to grace. In other words, divine grace is completely resistible. Nonetheless, Arminians like Olson deny that Arminianism is man-centered and that the free choice of the sinner is the deciding force determining salvation. He insists that it is the grace of God that inclines one to choose and this choice is defined as "nonresistance"³⁴ to divine grace. However, he seems to forget that the corollary of libertarianism means equal resistance to grace otherwise man is not regarded as free. This poses serious problems for the doctrine of prevenient grace.

Resistible Grace. Many Arminians take pains to explain why a person chooses Christ when under the influence of prevenient grace. But little is said about those who reject Christ under the same influence. For example, Thomas Oden, a Wesleyan, states:

Grace works ahead of us to draw us toward faith, to begin its work in us. Even the first fragile intuition of conviction of sin, the first intimation of our need of God, is the work of preparing, prevenient grace, which draws us gradually toward wishing to please God. Grace is working quietly at the point of our desiring, bringing us in time to despair over our own unrighteousness, challenging our perverse dispositions, so that our distorted wills cease gradually to resist the gift of God.³⁵

This statement could easily fit the theology of any Calvinist if the grace described here were irresistible. However, the Arminian concludes that such grace is resistible. What is peculiar about this description of prevenient grace is that this could never be the experience of the one who resists it. In what sense does this grace draw one to faith, convict of sin, prepare one to please God, causing such a person to despair over unrighteousness, challenging their perverse dispositions and yet in the end they still resist the gift of God? How does the Arminian describe the work of prevenient grace in the life of the person who resists it? Wesley's answer was to exhort men to "stir up the spark of grace which is now in you, and he will give you more grace." Thus, the sort of grace Oden describes does not seem possible unless a person of his free will chooses to allow God to supply more of this grace at each nascent stage of being awakened to the truth of the gospel and one's spiritual need for it. The Arminian is at pains to say that salvation solely rests upon God's grace and non-resistance to this grace, but God appears not to supply it unless one wants it. The picture is one in which grace is withheld until further movements toward acceptance release it in evermore incremental stages. In the end, it is dependent upon man's free choice to cooperate at every step of the way toward saving faith. That however, appears indistinguishable from semi-Pelagianism.

Roger Olson, demurs. He says,

Wesley anticipated the Calvinist accusation that by affirming even grace-enabled free will he was opening the door to Pelagianism or semi-Pelagianism. He rejected that

³⁴ Ibid., p. 157. ³⁵ Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity*, p. 249. Picirilli gives a similar explanation for how grace impacts the one who believes, but says little about the one who does not believe. See *Grace, Faith*, p. 155-58. He says, "When we come to try to explain why some, when hearing the gospel, give more evidence of... conviction than others, we are not always able" (p. 158).

criticism as invalid, attributing all goodness in human beings to God's supernatural grace: "Whatsoever good is in man, or is done by man, God is the author and doer of it."³⁶

The problem with this statement is it is not possible for God to supply the grace and the goodness unless the recipient continues to long for more of it. And this points out a major problem for the Arminian. The Arminian wants to avoid any charge that salvation rests ultimately upon human free will. They want to say salvation rests upon divine grace. Olson says, "The decisive factor [for the

reception of salvation] is the grace of God – from beginning to end."³⁷ He says, "The only 'contribution' humans make is non-resistance."³⁸ But Olson fails to mention if at any point between beginning and end that the recipient of grace resists it, then grace fails to be effective. The Arminian conception of grace cannot save as long as it is resisted. Let's consider this problem further.

Unbelief a Gift. Remember that according to Arminianism, prevenient grace supplies the gift of libertarian freedom (i.e. contrary choice). Prior to prevenient grace, man's will was in strict bondage to sin which concurs with the Calvinistic doctrine of Total Depravity. Thus, if the Arminian says that the will to believe is a gift of initial prevenient grace, then they must also affirm that the concurrent will to disbelieve is also a gift of grace since both responses are necessary if libertarian freedom is true. It is not exactly an appealing point to say that the will to disbelieve is a gift of grace, but that has to be a necessary corollary to the fact that grace is what first supplies libertarian freedom.

Denial of Further Grace. But Arminianism cannot resolve the main conundrum here. Further effusions of divine grace are withheld if the recipient does not use his libertarian freedom to respond positively to the grace given. This seems a cruel by-product of the gift of libertarian freedom. Only if you use that freedom correctly will God supply more grace, otherwise you are barred access to further grace. One might take Thomas Oden's description of prevenient grace as something that happens wholesale at one time resulting in the freedom to exercise faith and thus procure salvation once and for all. But no Arminian would say that God's grace is dispensed in every case all at once and then faith is exercised to procure salvation. Everyone's conversion experience is different. Some respond to the call of the gospel immediately and without any intervening deliberation. But many more experience various promptings, convictions, awakenings to spiritual need, God-ward directed desires, increased understanding of the gospel, and so forth before exercising faith. These come in successive stages or waves and in varying intensity and so forth. Each occurrence culminates eventually in saving faith, but only if each occurrence of grace is responded to positively. If at any point the sinner resists these occurrences of grace then he cuts off further supplies of grace. Each successive act is wholly dependent on the positive response of the recipient, otherwise further acts are denied. Thus, it is not just one act of free will that procures salvation, but several and perhaps enumerable acts of free will. Thus, no matter how important and necessary divine grace is, in the end salvation is primarily conditioned and dependent on free will and only secondarily upon grace. Arminians are at pains to emphasize the priority of grace, but the final accent rests upon free will.

The Beggar Analogy. Olson offers a couple of analogies to describe the Arminian position on grace and free will. One is borrowed from Arminius himself.³⁹ A rich man representing God offers a beggar alms. The only condition of the beggar receiving the alms is that he simply reach

³⁶ Arminian Theology, p. 169. ³⁷ Ibid., p. 166. ³⁸ Ibid., p. 165. ³⁹ Ibid.

out his hand to take it. The principal source for the receiving of alms is not the liberty of the receiver, according to Arminius, but the liberality of the giver. Olson takes this analogy and expands it.⁴⁰ The rich man bestows the gift upon the poor man by offering him a check that simply needs to be endorsed and then deposited in the bank. Olson says surely no one would suggest that the decisive factor for the reception of the check was the endorsing and depositing of it in the bank. But there are several problems with this analogy. First, there is the assumption that the beggar/ poor man recognizes that he is poor and desperate and needs the money offered him. Again, the Arminian would say this recognition comes as part of prevenient grace. But as we have seen, it only comes if the person responds positively to each "spark of grace" offered along the way. Every aspect of grace as Thomas Oden earlier described it would have to be positively responded to (or as Olson says, not resisted). But what do we make of the one who resists? If it is always possible to resist prevenient grace then grace is only made effective by one's freely cooperating with it. Otherwise grace has no power to save. If grace was truly effective in the analogy Olson presents then the poor man would need to do nothing. The money would be automatically deposited into his bank account. But Olson would likely object. In this case, such a deed would be done apart from his freedom to accept or reject it. But that does not follow from the nature of the analogy. What beggar would refuse an automatic deposit to his bank account? Why is he begging in the first place? The point is, grace by its very nature does the work Thomas Oden described earlier and it does so irresistibly moving the recipient to saving faith. But that is the Calvinist position not the libertarian position of Arminians.

The Failure of Grace. So we are still left with the question of what to make of the one who resists grace. If two persons are the equal recipients of prevenient grace and one resists while the other does not, what explains the difference? Did grace succeed in one case and fail in the other case? The Arminian would be awfully hard pressed to say grace failed for the man who resisted. It was wholly dependent on his free choice to resist. But once you say this, then it is no longer dependent on grace. Furthermore, you must say the same for the man who did not resist. Was grace more powerful for him? Again, the Arminian would have to be compelled to say no if grace is to be regarded as non-partisan in its effects. It depended on his freely accepting the grace offered. The Arminian would not want to say that the one who does not resist actually gets a little extra grace to push him over the fence whereas the other doesn't get quite enough. That would make God unfair and it would be hard to distinguish from a deliberate determination of God to be inclined to save one person over the other. For Arminianism grace must be an equal opportunity employer. Each person should receive an equal share of grace. Thus, it is extremely difficult to avoid the fact that in the end the deciding factor is not primarily God's grace but man's free will that procures salvation. And again, this state of affairs essentially amounts to semi-Pelagianism. The only way one can truly affirm that grace is what saves is if grace in the end is irresistible and wholly efficacious in its salvific results for the one who believes in Christ.

Another question begs for an answer. Is not God's grace the most compelling and powerful force on earth? Why wouldn't it be if God desired the salvation of men as much as Arminians claim He does? Olson is unequivocal about the foundation for Arminian theology. It is protecting the character of God as primarily good and loving.⁴¹ This would seem to provide the impetus for a magnanimous display of love toward all of humanity. In an Arminian account of matters, what reason would a God who desires the salvation of all men yet respecting their free will would not use every powerful resource He could muster to persuade men short of forcing

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 166. ⁴¹ Arminian Theology, p. 97-114.

them to believe? And if that is the case, then how could such grace possibly be resisted? The only answer the Arminian can give is that man simply has the free will to refuse grace and for no other reason.

Free will is not an adequate answer to this dilemma. Oden quotes Wesley on how prevenient grace works. Wesley says, "God recreates our freedom to love from its fallen condition of unresponsive spiritual deadness."⁴² This explains the responsiveness of some who receive prevenient grace, but it does not explain the unresponsiveness of other recipients of prevenient grace. The freedom God creates in prevenient grace to love must also be the same freedom it creates to hate. But hate is more indicative of the fallen condition of man which is rightly described here as "unresponsive spiritual deadness." This undermines the whole nature of prevenient grace. Arminians consistently emphasize that prevenient grace is meant to induce responsiveness not continued unresponsiveness even though they explicitly acknowledge the latter must be true because libertarian freedom is necessary for salvation to be meaningful. In other words, a relationship with God cannot be meaningful unless one is free to reject it. Libertarianism teaches that any choice made that could not as easily not been made must necessarily be a choice that is determined by outside forces and therefore coerced. A coercive choice is no choice at all. So unresponsiveness to grace is a necessary corollary of libertarian freedom as unattractive as that seems to the Arminian.

But, the problem is unresponsiveness is characteristic of spiritual deadness and Arminians seem unwilling to recognize this as part of the logical result of their doctrine of prevenient grace. To say prevenient grace provides the renewal of free will makes no sense. The freedom to choose to love God and exercise saving faith is not a problem. Calvinists agree with this in substance as long as freedom of choice is defined as acting willingly or voluntarily in accordance with one's regenerated nature. But to say free will also creates the equal freedom to reject God is simply to say that the person still retains the conditions of spiritual deadness that prevented them from loving God or exercising faith in the first place. Arminians believe that Original Sin and Total Depravity placed the will in bondage and that prevenient grace restores the will with libertarian capacities. But to say that the recipient of prevenient grace can resist all such grace and continue to reject God is to say that grace fails for some. In fact, it is non-existent for those who resist it. Grace is only present and effective (i.e. successful for leading one to salvation) for those who do not resist, but this is what Calvinists have said all along. Grace is irresistible.

Furthermore, since libertarian free will by its nature has no antecedent causes and choices are contingent and therefore unpredictable, the libertarian must concede that there is no explanation for why one responds with non-resistance to grace while another resists it. But this is an absurdity. Few rational people believe choices never have their reasons. Choices always have determining causes even if we cannot always determine what those causes are. Again we come back to the same pressing questions. What reason does the recipient of prevenient grace have for resisting it? If God's grace is powerful and compelling then what keeps one from being persuaded by it? Would we not say that this person is somehow blind to what other recipients of grace see? If so, would they still not be in bondage to their spiritually dead nature that blinded them in the first place? If the other recipient of prevenient grace is able to see, what reason explains why he does so? The Arminian has eliminated the failure of God's grace so the only alternative lies in the person himself. To say belief or unbelief depends strictly on the contingent, unpredictable, causeless choice of the recipient of grace is to be mired in the arbitrary

⁴² Thomas Oden, *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), p. 249.

confusion that libertarian freedom amounts to. Therefore, the choice of believing and not resisting grace must be regarded as virtuous and the choice of the one who resists grace and refuses to believe is decidedly un-virtuous otherwise how do you explain the difference? So then, the problem reduces itself to the conclusion that one person believed because he was the better person than the one who did not believe. And if that is the case, the Arminian is forced to wrestling with the more serious criticism that their view of salvation amounts to works- righteousness. It depends on the particular virtue of the person who believes.

Now of course it is true that the choice of a person who believes in Christ is virtuous and the choice to remain in unbelief is un-virtuous. Unbelief is sin. Belief is righteous. This being the case, salvation cannot depend upon the free will of man to resist or not resist the grace of God (John 1:12-13; Rom. 9:16). The grace of God must be wholly responsible in every aspect of the reception of salvation. This means that grace must first transform the recipient as matter of course such that his nature is regenerated and made capable of seeing and believing. Such a transformation must of necessity lead to saving faith as a divinely enabled gift not a humanly initiated work otherwise grace is nullified. The power of grace rests in its efficacious nature as dispensed by a gracious God. If the power of grace can only be activated by the virtuous choice of the believer, then salvation would be by received only by people with prior virtue. Indeed belief is a virtuous response, but not one that is rooted in one's free will. The virtue of faith and repentance rests wholly in the efficacious and irresistible nature of transforming grace. Salvation depends on God who has mercy (Rom. 9:16). No one can come to Christ unless he is drawn by the Father (John 6:44). This drawing power cannot be resisted because all who come to Christ are the same people God gave to Christ (John 6:37). This is why Jesus says no one comes unless it has been "granted" by the Father (John 6:65). Thus, saving faith is wholly a gift of divine grace that obtains necessarily in the life of the recipient. It is not a gift that can be rejected, but then again, neither is it a gift one would ever desire to reject. When God changes the heart of a sinner (Ezek. 36:26-27) the sinner willingly comes only to Christ (John 10:3-5, 14) and with full joy (Psa. 13:5; 51:12; 110:3). Thus, contrary to all protests, the Arminian doctrine of prevenient grace is rooted in semi-Pelagian notions that undermine the nature of true grace.

Conclusion

The Arminian doctrine of prevenient grace is fraught with serious problems. It has a deficient view of human depravity allowing its view of divine grace to mitigate the effects of depravity. It does so by enabling all human beings with an ability to "seek" after God contrary to the Bible's descriptions of corruption and spiritual inability in the natural man. Subsequently, the doctrine under-girds a deficient view of the natural human will by saying it is freed from the bondage of sin and capable of acting contrary to the unbeliever's sin nature. It has a deficient view of regeneration by failing to recognize that apart from receiving a new nature the natural man cannot and will not believe upon Christ for salvation. Finally, the doctrine has a deficient view of God's grace and the unmitigated power it has to transform sinners. Rather, Arminians believe divine grace can and must be resisted placing the final determining power for salvation in the hands of the man who wills not the God who has mercy upon spiritually impotent and recalcitrant creatures. The natural man is depraved, his will enslaved by an unregenerate nature and incapable of exercising faith in Christ apart from the monergistic transforming irresistible grace of God. These conclusions place the Arminian doctrine of prevenient grace under the essential rubric of semi-Pelagianism under which it is difficult for it to escape.

A Comparison of Systems: Pelagianism, Semipelagianism, and Augustinianism

by A. A. Hodge

A COMPARISON OF SYSTEMS

In this chapter will be presented a brief sketch of the main contrasting positions of the three rival systems of Pelagianism, Semipelagianism, and Augustinianism, or as they are denominated in their more completely developed forms, Socinianism, Arminianism, and Calvinism--together with an outline of the history of their rise and dissemination.

1. What, in general, was the state of theological thought during the first three centuries?

During the first three hundred years which elapsed after the death of the apostle John the speculative minds of the church were principally engaged in defending the truth of Christianity against unbelievers--in combating the Gnostic heresies generated by the leaven of Oriental philosophy--and in settling definitely the questions which were evolved in the controversies concerning the Persons of the Trinity. It does not appear that any definite and consistent statements were made in that age, as to the origin, nature, and consequences of human sin; nor as to the nature and effects of divine grace; nor of the nature of the redemptive work of Christ, or of the method of its application by the Holy Spirit, or of its appropriation by faith. As a general fact it may be stated, that, as a result of the great influence of Origen, the Fathers of the Greek Church pretty unanimously settled down upon a loose Semipelagianism, denying the guilt of original sin, and maintaining the ability of the sinner to predispose himself for, and to cooperate with divine grace. And this has continued the character of the Greek Anthropology to the present day. The same attributes characterized the speculations of the earliest writers of the Western Church also, but during the third and fourth centuries there appeared a marked tendency among the Latin Fathers to those more correct views afterwards triumphantly vindicated by the great Augustine. This tendency may be traced most clearly in the writings of Tertullian of Carthage, who died circum. 220, and Hilary of Poitiers (368) and Ambrose of Milan (397).

2. By what means has the Church made advances in the clear discrimination of divine truth? And in what ages, and among what branches of the Church, have the great doctrines of the trinity and Person of Christ, of sin and grace, and of redemption and the application thereof been severally defined?

The Church has always advanced toward clearer conceptions and more accurate definitions of divine truth through a process of active controversy. And it has pleased Providence that the several great departments of the system revealed in the inspired Scriptures should have been most thoroughly discussed, and clearly defined in different ages, and in the bosom of different nations.

Thus the profound questions involved in the departments of Theology proper and of Christology were investigated by men chiefly of Greek origin, and they were authoritatively defined in Synods held in the Eastern half of the General Church during the fourth and immediately following centuries. As concerns THEOLOGY the consubstantial divinity of Christ was defined in the Council of Nice, 325, and the Personality and divinity of the Holy Ghost in the first Council of Constantinople, 381; the Filioque clause being added by the Latins at the Council of Toledo, 589. As concerns Christology. The Council of Ephesus, 431, asserted the personal unity of the Theanthropos. The Council of Chalcedon, 451, asserted that the two natures remain distinct. The sixth Council of Constantinople, 680, asserted that the Lord possessed a human as well as a divine will. These decisions have been accepted by the whole Church, Greek and Roman, Lutheran and Reformed.

The questions concerning sin and grace embraced under the general head of anthropology were in the first instance most thoroughly investigated by men of Latin origin, and definite conclusions were first reached in the controversy of Augustine with Pelagius in the first half of the Fifth century.

Questions concerning redemption, and the method of its application, embraced under the grand division of soteriology, were never thoroughly investigated until the time of the Reformation and subsequently by the great theologians of Germany and Switzerland.

Many questions falling under the grand division of Ecclesiology even yet await their complete solution in the future.

3. What are the three great systems of theology which have always continued to prevail in the church?

Since the revelation given in the Scriptures embraces a complete system of truth, every single department must sustain many obvious relations, logical and otherwise, to every other as the several parts of one whole. The imperfect development, and the defective or exaggerated conception of any one doctrine, must inevitably lead to confusion and error throughout the entire system. For example, Pelagian views as to man's estate by nature always tend to coalesce with Socinian views as to the Person and work of Christ. And Semipelagian views as to sin and grace are also irresistibly attracted by, and in turn attract Arminian views as to the divine attributes, the nature of the Atonement, and the work of the Spirit.

There are, in fact, as we might have anticipated, but two complete self-consistent systems of Christian theology possible.

1st. On the right hand, **Augustinianism completed in Calvinism**. 2nd. On the left hand, **Pelagianism completed in Socinianism**. And 3rd. **Arminianism** comes between these as the system of compromises and is developed **Semipelagianism**.

In the common usage of terms Socinianism is principally applied as the designation of those elements of the false system which relate to the Trinity of the Person of Christ; the terms Pelagianism and Semipelagianism are applied to the more extreme or the more moderate departures from the truth under the head of anthropology; and the term Arminianism is used to designate the less extreme errors concerned with the Department of soteriology.

4. When, where, and by whom were the fundamental principles of the two great antagonistic schools of theology first clearly discriminated?

The contrasted positions of the Augustinian and Pelagian systems were first taught out and defined through the controversies maintained by the eminent men whose name they bear, during the first third of the fifth century.

Augustine was bishop of Hippo in Northern Africa from A. D. 395 to A. D. 430. Pelagius, whose family name was Morgan, was a British monk. He was assisted in his controversies by his disciples Coelestius and Julian of Eclanum in Italy.

The positions maintained by Pelagius were generally condemned by the representatives of the whole Church, and have ever since been held by all denominations, except professed Socinians, to be fatal heresy. They were condemned by the two councils held at Carthage A. D. 407 and A. D. 416, by the Council held at Milevum in Numidia A. D. 416; by the popes Innocent and Zosimus, and by the Ecumenical Council held at Ephesus A. D. 431. This speedy and universal repudiation of Pelagianism proves that while the views of the early Fathers upon this class of questions were very imperfect, nevertheless the system taught by Augustine must have been in all essentials the same with the faith of the Church as a whole from the beginning.

5. State in contrast the main distinguishing positions of the Augustinian and Pelagian systems.

1st. As to ORIGINAL SIN. 1 [1 Historical Presentation of Augustinianism and Pelagianism, by G. F. Wiggers, D.D., Translated by Rev. Ralph Emerson, pp. 268-270.]

Augustinianism. By the sin of Adam, in whom all men together sinned, sin and all the other positive punishments of Adam's sin came into the world. By it human nature has been both physically and morally corrupted. Every man brings into the world with him a nature already so corrupt, that it can do nothing but sin. The propagation of this quality of his nature is by concupiscence.

Pelagianism. By his transgression, Adam injured only himself, not his posterity. In respect to his moral nature, every man is born in precisely the same condition in which Adam was created. There is therefore no original sin.

2nd. As to FREE WILL.

Augustinianism. By Adam's transgression the Freedom of the human Will has been entirely lost. In his present corrupt state man can will and do only evil.

Pelagianism. Man's will is free. Every man has the power to will and to do good as well as the opposite. Hence it depends upon himself whether he be good or evil.

3rd. As to GRACE.

Augustinianism. If nevertheless man in his present state, wills and does good, it is merely the work of grace. It is an inward, secret, and wonderful operation of God upon man. It is a preceding as well as an accompanying work. By preceding grace, man attains faith, by which he comes to an insight of good, and by which power is given him to will the good. He needs cooperating grace for the performance of every individual good act. As man can do nothing without grace, so he can do nothing against it. It is irresistible. And as man by nature has no merit at all, no respect at all can be had to man's moral disposition, in imparting grace, but God acts according to his own free will.

Pelagianism. Although by free will, which is a gift of God, man has the capacity of willing and doing good without God's special aid, yet for the easier performance of it, God revealed the law; for the easier performance, the instruction and example of Christ aid him; and for the easier performance, even the supernatural operations of grace are imparted to him. Grace, in the most limited sense (gracious influence) is given to those "only who deserve it by the faithful employment of their own powers. But man can resist it.

4th. As to PREDESTINATION AND REDEMPTION.

Augustinianism. From eternity, God made a free and unconditional decree to save a few 2 [2 The doctrine of Augustine does not by any means involve the conclusion that the elect are "few" or "a small number."] from the mass that was corrupted and subjected to damnation. To those whom he predestinated to this salvation, he gives the requisite means for the purpose. But on the rest, who do not belong to this small number of the elect, the merited ruin falls. Christ came into the world and died for the elect only.

Pelagianism. God's decree of election and reprobation is founded on prescience. Those of whom God foresaw that they would keep his commands, he predestinated to salvation; the others to damnation. Christ's redemption is general. But those only need his atoning death who have actually sinned. All, however, by his instruction and example, may be led to higher perfection and virtue.

6. What was the origin of the Middle or Semipelagian system?

In the meantime, while the Pelagian controversy was at its height, John Cassian, of Syrian extraction and educated in the Eastern Church, having removed to Marseilles, in France, for the purpose of advancing the interests of monkery in that region, began to give publicity to a scheme of doctrine occupying a middle position between the systems of Augustine and Pelagius. This system, whose advocates were called Massilians from the residence of their chief, and afterward Semipelagians by the Schoolmen, is in its essential principles one with that system which is now denominated Arminianism, a statement of which will be given in a subsequent part of this chapter. Faustus, bishop of Priez, in France, from A. D. 427 to A. D. 480, was one of the most distinguished and successful advocates of this doctrine, which was permanently accepted by the Eastern Church, and for a time was widely disseminated throughout the Western also, until it was condemned by the synods of Orange and Valence, A. D. 529.

7. What is the relation of Augustinianism to Calvinism and of Semipelagianism to Arminianism?

After this time Augustinianism became the recognized orthodoxy of the Western Church, and the name of no other uninspired man exerts such universal influence among Papists and Protestants alike. If any human name ought to be used to designate a system of divinely revealed truth, the phrase

Augustinianism as opposed to Pelagianism properly designates all those elements of faith which the whole world of Evangelical Christians hold in common. On the other hand Augustinianism as opposed to Semipelagianism properly designates that system commonly called Calvinism--while Cassianism would be the proper historical designation of that Middle or Semipelagian Scheme now commonly styled Arminianism.

8. How were parties divided with respect to these great systems among the Schoolmen, and how are they in the modern papal Church?

After the lapse of the dark ages, during which all active speculation slumbered, the great Thomas Aquinas, an Italian by birth, A. D. 1224, and a monk of the order of St. Dominic, Doctor Angelicus, advocated with consummate ability the Augustinian system of theology in that cumbrous and artificial manner which characterized the Schoolmen. John Duns Scotus, a native of Britain, A. D. 1265, a monk of the order of St. Francis, Doctor Subtilis, was in that age the ablest advocate of the system then styled Semipelagian. The controversies then revived were perpetuated for many ages, the Dominicans and the Thomists in general advocating unconditional election and efficacious grace, and the Franciscans and the Scotists in general advocating conditional election and the inalienable power of the human will to cooperate with or to resist divine grace. The same disputes under various party names continue to agitate the Romish Church since the Reformation, although the genius of her ritualistic system, and the predominance of the Jesuits in her councils, have secured within her bounds the almost universal prevalence of Semipelagianism.

The general Council, commenced at Trent, A. D. 1546, attempted to form a non-committal Creed that would satisfy the adherents of both systems. Accordingly the Dominicans and Franciscans have both claimed that their respective views were sanctioned by that Synod. The truth is that while the general and indefinite statements of doctrine to be found among its canons are often Augustinian in form, the more detailed and accurate explanations which follow these are uniformly Semipelagian.--Principal Cunningham's "Historical Theology" vol. 1, pp. 483-495.

The order of the Jesuits, founded by Ignatius Loyola, A. D. 1541, has always been identified with Semipelagian Theology. Lewis Molina, a Spanish Jesuit, A. D. 1588, the inventor of the distinction denoted by the term "Scientia Media," attained to such distinction as its advocate, that its adherents in the Papal Church have been for ages styled Molinists. In 1638 Jansenius, Bishop of Ypres in the Netherlands died leaving behind him his great work, Augustinus, wherein he clearly unfolded and established by copious extracts the true theological system of Augustine. This book occasioned very widespread contentions, was ferociously opposed by the Jesuits, and condemned by the Bulls of popes Innocent X. and Alexander VII., A. D. 1653 and 1656--which last were followed in 1713 by the more celebrated Bull "imigenitus" of Clement XI., condemning the New Testament Commentary of Quesnel. The Augustinians in that Church were subsequently called Jansenists, and had their principal seat in Holland and Belgium and at Port Royal near Paris. They have numbered among them some very illustrious names, as Tillemont, Arnauld, Nicole Pascal, and Quesnel. These controversies between the Dominicans and Molinists, the Jansenists and Jesuits, have continued even to our own time, although at present Semipelagianism shares with Jesuitism in its almost unlimited sway in the Papal Church, which has definitely triumphed in the Vatican council, 1870.

9. What is the position of the Lutheran church with relation to these great systems?

Luther, a monk of the order of Augustine, and an earnest disciple of that father, taught a system of faith agreeing in spirit and in all essential points with that afterwards more systematically developed by Calvin. The only important point in which he differed from the common consensus of the Calvinistic Churches related to the literal physical presence of the entire person of Christ in, with, and under the elements in the Eucharist. With these opinions of Luther Melancthon appears to have agreed at the time he published the first edition of his "Loci Communes." His opinions, however, as to the freedom of man and the sovereignty of divine grace were subsequently gradually modified. After the death of Luther, at the Leipsic Conference in 1548, he explicitly declared his agreement with the synergists, who maintain that in the regenerating act the human will cooperates with divine grace. Melancthon, on the other hand, held a view of the relation of the sign to the grace signified thereby in the Sacraments, much more nearly conforming to opinions of the disciples of ingli and Calvin than generally prevailed in his own Church. His position on both these points gave great offense to the Old Lutherans, and occasioned protracted and bitter controversies. finally, the Old or Strict Lutheran party prevailed over their antagonists, and their views received a complete scientific statement in the "Formula Concordiae" published 1580. Although this remarkable document never attained a position by the side of the Augsburg Confession and Apology as the universally recognized Confession of the Lutheran Churches, it may justly be taken as the best available witness as to what strictly Lutheran theology when developed into a complete system really is.

The Characteristics of Lutheran theology as contrasted with that of the Reformed Churches may be briefly stated under the following heads:

1st. As to **THEOLOGY PROPER AND CHRISTOLOGY** the only points in which it differs from Calvinism are the following:

As to the **DIVINE ATTRIBUTES OF SOVEREIGN FOREORDINATION**, they hold that as far as it is concerned with the actions of moral agents it is limited to those actions which see morally good, while it sustains no determining relation to those which are bad. God foreknows all events of whatever kind; he foreordains all the actions of necessary agents, and the good actions of free agents--but nothing else.

As to **CHRISTOLOGY**, they hold that in virtue of the hypostatical union the human element of Christ's person partakes with the divine in at least some of its peculiar attributes. Thus his human soul shares in the omniscience and omnipotence of his divinity, and his body in its omnipresence, and together they have the power of giving life to the truly believing recipient of the sacrament.

2nd. As to **ANTHROPOLOGY**, they hold views identical with those held by the staunchest advocates of the Reformed theology--for instance the antecedent and immediate imputation of Adam's public sin; the total moral depravity of all his descendants from birth and by nature, and their absolute inability to do aright in their own strength anything which pertains to their relation to God.

3rd. As to the Great central elements of SOTERIOLOGY, they agree with the Reformed with great exactness as to the nature and necessity of the expiatory work of Christ; as to forensic justification through the imputation to the believer of both the active and passive obedience of Christ; as to the nature and office of justifying faith; as to the sole agency of divine grace in the regeneration of the sinner, with which, in the first instance, the dead soul is unable to cooperate; as to God's eternal and sovereign election of believers in Christ, not because of anything foreseen in them, but because of his own gracious will--and consequently as to the fact that the salvation of every soul really saved is to be attributed purely and solely to the grace of God, and not in any degree to the cooperating will or merit of the man himself.

At the same time they teach, with obvious logical inconsistency, that the grace of the gospel is in divine intention absolutely universal. Christ died equally and in the same sense for all men. He gives grace alike to all men. Those who are lost are lost because they resist the grace. Those who are saved owe their salvation simply to the grace they have in common with the lost--to the very same grace--not to a greater degree of grace nor to a less degree of sin--not to their own improvement of grace, but simply to the grace itself. According to them God sovereignly elects all those who are saved, but he does not sovereignly pass over those who are lost. He gives the same grace to all men, and the difference is determined persistent resistance of those who are lost.

The grand distinction of Lutheranism however relates to their doctrine of the EUCHARIST. They hold to the real physical presence of the Lord in the Eucharist, in, with, and under the elements, and that the grace signified and conveyed by the sacraments is necessary to salvation, and conveyed ordinarily by no other means. Hence the theology and church life of the strict Lutherans center in the sacraments. They differ from the high sacramental party in the Episcopal church chiefly in the fact that they ignore the dogma of apostolic succession, and the traditions of the early church.

10. Into what two great parties has the Protestant world always been divided?

The whole Protestant world from the time of the Reformation has been divided into two great families of churches classified severally as LUTHERAN, or those whose character was derived from Luther and Melancthon; and as reformed or those who have received the characteristic impress of Calvin. The LUTHERAN family of churches comprises all of those Protestants of Germany, of Hungary, and the Baltic provinces of Russia, who adhere to the Augsburg confession, together with the national churches of Denmark and of Norway and Sweden, and the large denomination of the name in America. These are estimated as amounting to a population of about twenty-five million pure Lutherans, while the Evangelical Church of Prussia, which was formed of a political union of the adherents of the two confessions, embraces probably eleven-and-a-half million. Their Symbolical Books are the Augsburg Confession and Apology, the Articles of Smalcald, Luther's Larger and Smaller Catechism, and, as received by the Stricter party, the Formula Concordiae. The CALVINISTIC or REFORMED churches embrace, in the strict usage of the term, all those Protestant Churches which derive their Theology from Geneva; and among these, because of obvious qualifying conditions, the Episcopal Churches of England, Ireland, and America form a subdivision by themselves; and the Wesleyan Methodists, who are usually classed among the Reformed because they were historically developed from that stock, are even yet more distinctly than the parent church of England removed from the normal type of the general class. In a general sense, however, this class comprises all those churches of Germany which subscribe to the Heidelberg Catechism, the churches of Switzerland, France, Holland, England, and Scotland, the Independents and Baptists of England and America, and the various branches of the Presbyterian Church in England, Ireland, and America. These embrace about eight million German Reformed in the Reformed church of Hungary; twelve million and a half Episcopalians; Presbyterians six million; Methodists, three million and a half; Baptists, four million and a half; and independents' one million and a half;--in all about thirty-eight millions.

The principal confessions of the Reformed Church are the Gallic, Belgic, 2d Helvetic, and Scotch Confessions; the Heidelberg Catechism; the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England; the Canons of the Synod of Dort, and the Confession and Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly.

11. State the Origin of the Unitarian Heresy.

In the early church the Ebionites, a Jewish-Gnostic Christian sect, were the only representatives of those in modern times called Socinians. A party among them were called Elkesaites. Their ideas, with special modifications, are found expressed in the Clementine "Homilies," written about A. D. 150 in Oriental Syria. The most distinguished humanitarians in the early church were the two Theodotuses of Rome, both laymen, Artemon (t180) and Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch (260-270), deposed by a Council held 269. Most of these admitted the supernatural birth of Christ, but maintained that he was a mere man, honored by a special divine influence. They admitted an apotheosis or relative deification of Christ consequent upon his earthly achievements. (Dr. E. De Pressense, "Early Years of Christianity" Part 3, bk. 1, chs. 3 and 5).

Cerinthus, who lived during the last of the first and the first of the second century, held that Jesus was a mere man born of Mary and Joseph, that the Christ or Logos came down upon him in the shape of a dove at his baptism when he was raised to the dignity of the son of God, and wrought miracles, etc. The Logos left the man Jesus to suffer alone at his crucifixion. The resurrection also was denied.

They were succeeded by the Arians in the fourth century. During the Middle Ages there remained no party within the church that openly denied the supreme divinity of our Lord. In modern times Unitarianism revived at the period the Reformation through the agency of Laelius Socinus of Italy. It was carried by him into Switzerland and existed there as a doctrine professed by a few conspicuous heretics from 1525 to 1560. The most prominent of its professors were the Socini, Servetus, and Ochino. It existed as an organized church at Racow in Poland, where the exiled heretics found a refuge from 1539 to 1658, when the Socinians were driven out of Poland by the Jesuits, and passing into Holland became absorbed in the Remonstrant or Armenian Churches. In 1609 Schmetz drew up from materials afforded by the teaching of Faustus Socinus, the nephew of Laelius, and of J. Crellius, the Racovian Catechism, which is the standard of Socinianism (see Ree's translation, 1818.) After their dispersion Andrew Y. Wissowatius and others collected the most important writings of their leading theologians under the title "Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum." Socinianism was developed by these writers with consummate ability, and crystallized into its most perfect form, as a logical system. It is purely Unitarian in its theology-- Humanitarian in its Christology, Pelagian in its Anthropology-- and its Soteriology was developed in perfect logical and ethical consistency with those elements. A statement of its characteristic positions will be found below.

It reappeared again as a doctrine held by a few isolated men in England in the seventeenth century. During the eighteenth century a number of degenerate Presbyterian (churches in England lapsed into Socinianism, and towards the end of the same century a larger number of Congregational Churches in Eastern Massachusetts followed their example and these together constitute the foundation of the modern Unitarian Denomination.

"Its last form is a modification of the old Socinianism formed under the pressure of evangelical religion on the one hand, and of rationalistic criticism on the other. Priestley, Channing, and J. Martineau are the examples of the successive phases of Modern Unitarianism. Priestley, of the old Socinian- building itself upon a sensational philosophy; Channing, of an attempt to gain a large development of the spiritual element; Martineau, of the elevation of view induced by the philosophy of Cousin, and the introduction of the idea of historical progress in religious ideas."-"Farrar's Crit. Hist. of Free Thought," Bampton Lecture, 1862.

12. At what date and under what circumstances did modern Arminianism arise?

James Arminius, professor of theology in the university of Leyden from 1602 until his death in 1609, although a minister of the Calvinistic Church of Holland, at first secretly, and afterwards more openly, advocated that scheme of theological opinion which has ever subsequently been designated by his name. These views were rapidly diffused, and at the same time strongly opposed by the principal men in the church. His disciples, consequently, about a year after his death formed themselves into an organized party. and in that capacity presented a Remonstrance to the States of Holland and West Friesland, praying to be allowed to hold their places in the church without being subjected by the ecclesiastical courts to vexatious examinations as to their orthodoxy. From the fact that the utterance of this Remonstrance was their first combined act as a party, they were afterwards known in history as Remonstrants.

Soon after this the Remonstrants, for the sake of defining their position, presented to the authorities five Articles expressing their belief on the subject of Predestination and Grace. This is the origin of the famous "five Points" in the controversy between Calvinism and Arminianism. Very soon however the controversy took a much wider range, and the Armenians were forced by logical consistency to teach radically erroneous views with respect to the nature of; sin, original sin, imputation, the nature of the Atonement, and Justification by faith. some of their later writers carried the rationalistic spirit inherent in their system to its legitimate results in a hardly qualified Plagiarism, and some were even suspected of Socinianism.

As all other means had failed to silence the innovators, the States General called together a General Synod at Dort in Holland, which held its sessions in the year 1618-1619. It consisted of pastors, elders, and theological professors from the churches of Holland, and deputies from the churches of England Scotland, Hesse, Bremen, the Palatinate and Switzerland:the promised attendance of delegates from the French churches being prevented by an interdict of their king. The foreign delegates present were nineteen Presbyterians from Reformed churches on the Continent, and one from Scotland, and four Episcopalians from the church of England headed by the bishop of Llandaff. This Synod unanimously condemned the doctrines of the Armenians, and in their Articles confirmed the common Calvinistic faith of the Reformed churches. The most distinguished Remonstrant Theologians who succeeded Arminius were Episcopius, Curcellaeus, Limborch, Le Clerc, Wetstein, and the illustrious jurisconsult Grotius.

The denomination of Methodists in Great Britain and America is the only large Protestant body in the world it an avowedly Armenian Creed. Their Arminianism, however as presented by their standard writer, Richard Watson, an incomparably more competent theologian than Wesley, is far less removed from the Calvinism of the Westminster Assembly than the system of the later Remonstrants, and should always be designated by the qualified phrase " Evangelical Arminianism." In the hands of Watson the Anthropology and Soteriology of Arminianism are in a general sense nearly assimilated to the corresponding provinces of Lutheranism, and of the Calvinism of Baxter, and of the French School of the seventeenth century.

13. Give an outline of the main positions of the Socinian System.

THEOLOGY AND CHRISTOLOGY.

1st. Divine Unity.

This unity inconsistent with any personal distinctions in the Godhead.

Christ is a mere man.

The Holy Ghost is an impersonal divine influence.

2d. Divine Attributes.

There is no principle of vindictory justice in God. Nothing to prevent his acceptance of sinners on the simple ground of repentance.

Future contingent events are essentially unknowable. The foreknowledge of God does not extend to such events.

ANTHROPOLOGY.

Man was created without positive moral character. The " image of God, " in which man was said to be created did not include holiness.

Adam in eating the forbidden fruit committed actual sin, and thereby incurred the divine displeasure, but he retained nevertheless the same moral nature and tendencies with which he was created, and he transmitted these intact to his posterity.

The guilt of Adam's sin is not imputed.

Man is now as able by nature to discharge all his obligations as he ever was. The circumstances under which man's character is now formed are more unfavorable than in Adam's case, and therefore man is weak. But God is infinitely merciful; and obligation is graded by ability. Man was created naturally mortal and would have died had he sinned or not.

SOTERIOLOGY.

The great object of Christ's mission was to teach and to give assurance with respect to those truths concerning which the conclusions of mere human reason are problematical. This he does both by doctrine and example.

Christ did not execute the office of priest upon earth; but only in heaven, and there in a very indefinite sense.

The main office of Christ was prophetic. He taught a new law. Gave an example of a holy life. Taught the personality of God. And illustrated the doctrine of a future life by his own resurrection.

His death was necessary only as a condition unavoidably prerequisite to his resurrection. It was also designed to make a moral impression upon sinners, disposing them to repentance on account of sin, and assuring them of the clemency of God. No propitiation of divine justice was necessary, nor would it be possible by means of vicarious suffering.

ESCHATOLOGY.

In the intermediate period between death and the resurrection the soul remains unconscious.

"For it is evident from the authorities cited, that they (the older Socinians), equally with others' constantly maintain that there will be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust, and that the latter shall be consigned to everlasting punishment, but the former admitted to everlasting life." - B. Wissowatius.

"The doctrine of the proper eternity of hell torments is rejected by most Unitarians of the present day (1818) as in their opinion wholly irreconcilable with the divine goodness, and unwarranted by the Scriptures. In reference to the future fate of the wicked, some hold that after the resurrection they will be annihilated or consigned to 'everlasting destruction' in the literal sense of the words:but most have received the doctrine of universal restoration, which maintains that all men, however depraved their characters may have been in this life, will, by a corrective discipline, suited in the measure of its severity to the nature of each particular case, be brought ultimately to goodness and consequently to happiness." (--Rees's "Racovian Catechism," pp. 367, 368.)

ECCLESIOLOGY.

The church is simply a voluntary society. Its object mutual improvement. Its common bond similarity of sentiments and pursuits. Its rule is human reason.

The Sacraments are simply commemorative and teaching ordinances.

14. Give an outline of the main features of the Arminian System.

DIVINE ATTRIBUTES.

They admit that vindicatory justice is a divine attribute, but hold that it is relaxable, rather optional than essential, rather belonging to administrative policy than to necessary principle.

They admit that God foreknows all events without exception. They invented the distinction expressed by the term *Scientia Media* to explain God's certain foreknowledge of future events, the futurity of which remain undetermined by his will or any other antecedent cause.

They deny that God's foreordination extends to the volitions of free agents and hold that the eternal election of men to salvation is not absolute, but conditioned upon foreseen faith and obedience.

ANTHROPOLOGY.

Moral character can not be created but is determined only by previous self-decision.

Both liberty and responsibility necessarily involve possession of power to the contrary.

They usually deny the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin.

The strict Arminians deny total depravity, and admit only the moral enfeeblement of nature. Arminius and Wesley were more orthodox but less self-consistent.

They deny that man has ability to originate holy action or to carry it on in his own unassisted strength--but affirm that every man has power to co-operate with, or to resist "common grace" That which alone distinguishes the saint from the sinner is his own use or abuse of grace.

They regard gracious influence as rather moral and suasive than as a direct and effectual exertion of the new creative energy of God.

They maintain the liability of the saint at every stage of his earthly career to fall from grace.

SOTERIOLOGY.

They admit that Christ made a vicarious offering of himself in place of sinful men, and yet deny that he suffered either the literal penalty of the law, or a full equivalent for it, and maintain that his sufferings were graciously accepted as a substitute for the penalty.

They hold that not only with respect to its sufficiency and adaptation, but also in the intention of the Father in giving the Son, and of the Son in dying, Christ died in the same sense for all men alike.

That the acceptance of Christ's satisfaction in the place of the infliction of the penalty on sinners in person involves a relaxation of the divine law.

That Christ's satisfaction enables God in consistency with his character, and the interests of his general government, to offer salvation on easier terms. The gospel hence is a new law, demanding faith and evangelical obedience instead of the original demand of perfect obedience.

Hence Christ's work does not actually save any, but makes the salvation of all men possible---removes legal obstacles out of the way, does not secure faith but makes salvation available on the condition of faith.

sufficient influences of the Holy Spirit, and sufficient opportunities and means of grace are granted to all men.

It is possible for and obligatory upon all men in this life to attain to evangelical perfection—which is explained as a being perfectly sincere—a being animated by perfect love --and doing all that is required of us under the gospel dispensation.

With respect to the heathen some have held that in some way or other the gospel is virtually, if not in form, preached to all men. Others have held that in the future world there are three conditions corresponding to the three great classes of men as they stand related to the gospel in this world - the Status Credentium ; the Status Incredulorum ; the Status ignorantium.

15. Give a brief outline of the main features of the Calvinistic System.

THEOLOGY.

God is an absolute sovereign, infinitely wise, righteous, benevolent, and powerful, determining from eternity the certain futurity of all events of every class according to the counsel of his own will.

Vindictory Justice is an essential and immutable perfection of the divine nature demanding the full punishment of all sin, the exercise of which cannot be relaxed or denied by the divine will.

CHRISTOLOGY.

The Mediator is one single, eternal, divine person, at once very God, and very man. In the unity of the Theanthropic person the two natures remain pure and unmixed, and retain each its separate and incommunicable attributes distinct. The personality is that of the eternal and unchangeable Logos. The human nature is impersonal. All mediatorial actions involve the concurrent exercise of the energies of both natures according to their several properties in the unity of the single person.

ANTHROPOLOGY.

God created man by an immediate fiat of omnipotence and in a condition of physical, intellectual, and moral faultlessness, with a positively formed moral character.

The guilt of Adam's public sin is by a judicial act of God immediately charged to the account of each of his descendants from the moment he begins to exist antecedently to any act of his own.

Hence men come into existence in a condition of condemnation deprived of those influences of the Holy Spirit upon which their moral and spiritual life depends.

Hence they come into moral agency deprived of that original righteousness which belonged to human nature as created in Adam, and with an antecedent prevailing tendency in their nature to sin which tendency in them is of the nature of sin, and worthy of punishment.

Man's nature since the fall retains its constitutional faculties of reason, conscience, and free-will, and hence man continues a responsible moral agent, but he is nevertheless spiritually dead, and totally averse to spiritual good, and absolutely unable to change his own heart, or adequately to discharge any of those duties which spring out of his relation to God.

SOTERIOLOGY.

The salvation of man is absolutely of grace. God was free in consistency with the infinite perfections of his nature to save none, few, many, or all, according to his sovereign good pleasure.

Christ acted as Mediator in pursuance of an eternal covenant formed between the Father and the Son, according to which he was put in the law-place of his own elect people as their personal substitute, and as such by his obedience and suffering he discharged all the obligations growing out of their federal relations to law—by his sufferings vicariously enduring their penal debt by his obedience vicariously discharging those covenant demands, upon which their eternal well-being was suspended--thus fulfilling the requirements of the law, satisfying the justice of God, and securing the eternal salvation of those for whom he died.

Hence, by his death he purchased the saving influences of the Holy Spirit for all for whom he died. And he infallibly applies the redemption purchased by Christ to all for whom he intended it, in the precise time and under the precise conditions predetermined in the eternal Covenant of Grace—and he does this by the immediate and intrinsically efficacious exercise of his power, operating directly within them, and in the exercises of their renewed nature bringing them to act faith and repentance and all gracious obedience.

Justification is a Judicial act of God, whereby imputing to us the perfect righteousness of Christ, including his active and passive obedience, he proceeds to regard and treat us accordingly, pronouncing all the penal claims of law. to be satisfied, and us to be graciously entitled to all the immunities and rewards conditioned in the original Adamic covenant upon perfect obedience.

Although absolute moral perfection is unattainable in this life, and assurance is not of the essence of faith, it is nevertheless possible and obligatory upon each believer to seek after and attain to a full assurance of his own personal salvation, and leaving the things that are behind to strive after perfection in all things.

Although if left to himself every believer would fall in an instant, and although most believers do experience temporary seasons of backsliding, yet God by the exercise of his grace in their hearts, in pursuance of the provisions of the eternal Covenant of Grace and of the purpose of Christ in dying, infallibly prevents even the weakest believer from final apostasy.

Captive Hearts, Captive Church

R.C. Sproul

During the Protestant Reformation Martin Luther wrote a little book that was highly controversial. It was a massive critique of the Roman Catholic sacramental system, entitled *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. Luther likened the oppressive regime of Rome in the sixteenth century with that of Israel's blight while held captive by the rivers of Babylon.

I have often wondered how Luther would assess our own age and the state of the church today. I suspect if he wrote for our time his book would be entitled *The Pelagian Captivity of the Church*. I suspect this would be the case because Luther considered the most important book he ever wrote to be his classic magnum opus, *The Bondage of the Will* (*De Servo Arbitrio*).

This work focused on the issue of the enslaved will of man as a result of original sin. It was a response to the *Diatribes* of Desiderius Erasmus, of Rotterdam. In the translator's introduction to this work it is said that Luther "saw Erasmus as an enemy of God and the Christian religion, an Epicurean and a serpent, and he was not afraid to say so."

I think Luther would see the great threat to the church today in terms of Pelagianism because of what transpired after the Reformation. Historians have said that though Luther won the battle with Erasmus in the sixteenth century he lost it in the seventeenth century and was demolished in the eighteenth century by the conquest achieved by the Pelagianism of the Enlightenment. He would see the church today as being in the grasp of Pelagianism with this adversary of the faith having a stranglehold on us.

Pelagianism in its pure form was first articulated by the man for whom it is named, a fourth century British monk. Pelagius engaged in a fierce debate with St. Augustine, a debate provoked by Pelagius' reaction to Augustine's prayer: "Command what thou wilt, and grant what thou dost command." Pelagius insisted that moral obligation necessarily implies moral ability. If God requires men to live perfect lives then men must have the ability to live perfect lives. This led Pelagius to his wholesale denial of original sin. He insisted that Adam's fall affected Adam alone; there is no such thing as an inherited fallen nature that afflicts humanity. He further claimed grace is not necessary for salvation; that man is able to be saved by his works apart from the assistance of grace. Grace may facilitate obedience, but it is not a necessary condition for it.

Augustine triumphed in his struggle with Pelagius whose views were consequently condemned by the church. In condemning Pelagianism as heresy the church strongly affirmed the doctrine of original sin. In Augustine's view this entailed the notion that though fallen man still has a free will in the sense that he retains the faculty of choosing, the will is fallen and enslaved by sin to such an extent that man does not have moral liberty. He cannot not sin.

After this struggle passed, modified views of Pelagianism returned to haunt the church. These views were called semi-Pelagianism. Semi-Pelagianism admitted to a real Fall and a real transfer of Original Sin to the progeny of Adam. Man is fallen and requires grace in order to be saved. However, this view says we are not so fallen that we are left totally enslaved to sin or totally deprived in our nature. An island of righteousness remains in fallen man by which the fallen person still has the moral power to incline himself, without operative grace, to the things of God.

Though the ancient church condemned semi-Pelagianism as vigorously as it had condemned Pelagianism, it never died out. In the sixteenth century the magisterial reformers were convinced that Rome had degenerated from pure Augustinianism and fallen into semi-Pelagianism. It was not an insignificant detail of history that Luther himself was a monk in the Augustinian Order. Luther saw his debate with Erasmus and Rome as a renewal of the titanic struggle Augustine had with Pelagius.

In the eighteenth century, Reformation thought was challenged by the rise of Arminianism, a new form of semi-Pelagianism. This captured the thinking of such prominent men as John Wesley. The split over doctrine between Wesley and George Whitefield focused on this point. Whitefield sided with Jonathan Edwards' defense of classic Augustinianism during the American "Great Awakening."

The nineteenth century witnessed a revival of pure Pelagianism in the teaching and preaching of Finney. Finney made no bones about his unvarnished Pelagianism. He rejected the doctrine of original sin (along with the orthodox view of the atonement and the doctrine of justification by faith alone). But Finney's evangelistic methodology was so successful that he became a revered model for later evangelists and is usually regarded as a titan of Evangelicalism, this despite his wholesale rejection of Evangelical doctrine.

Though American Evangelicalism did not embrace Finney's pristine Pelagianism (that was left for the Liberals to do), it was deeply infected by forms of semi-Pelagianism to the extent that today semi-Pelagianism is far and away the majority report within Evangelicalism. Though most Evangelicals will not hesitate to affirm that man is fallen, few embrace the Reformation doctrine of total depravity.

Thirty years ago I was teaching theology in an Evangelical college that was heavily influenced by semi-Pelagianism. I was working through the five points of Calvinism using the acrostic tulip with a class of about thirty students. After giving a lengthy exposition of the doctrine of total depravity, I asked the class how many of them were convinced of the doctrine. All thirty students raised their hands in the affirmative. I laughed and said, "We'll see." I wrote the number 30 in the upper left hand corner of the blackboard. As we proceeded to the doctrine of unconditional election several of the students balked. I counted their number then went to the board and subtracted that number from the original thirty. By the time we got to Limited Atonement the number was reduced from thirty to about three.

I then tried to get the students to see that if they really embraced the doctrine of total depravity that the other doctrines in the Five Points were but footnotes. The students soon discovered that they didn't really believe in total depravity after all. They believed in depravity, but not in the sense of total. They still wished to retain an island of righteousness unaffected by the Fall whereby fallen sinners still retained the moral ability to incline themselves to God. They believed that in order to be regenerated they must first exercise faith by the exertion of their wills. They did not believe that the divine and supernatural work of regeneration by the Holy Spirit was a necessary precondition for faith.

Erasmus had won. Again the authors of the introductory essay of *The Bondage of the Will* assert:

Whoever puts this book down without having realized that evangelical theology stands or falls with the doctrine of the bondage of the will has read it in vain. The doctrine of free justification by faith only, which became the storm- centre of so much controversy during the Reformation period, is often regarded as the heart of the Reformers' theology, but this is hardly accurate. The truth is that their thinking was really centered upon the contention ... that the sinner's entire salvation is by free and sovereign grace only. ... Is our salvation wholly of God, or does it ultimately depend on something that we do for ourselves? Those who say the latter (as the Arminians later did) thereby deny man's utter helplessness in sin, and affirm that a form of semi-Pelagianism is true after all. It is no wonder, then, that later Reformed theology condemned Arminianism as being in principle a return to Rome ... and a betrayal of the Reformation. ... Arminianism was, indeed, in Reformed eyes a renunciation of New Testament Christianity in favour of New Testament Judaism; for to rely on oneself for faith is no different in principle from relying on oneself for works, and the one is as un-Christian and anti-Christian as the other.

These are strong words. Indeed for some they are fighting words. But of one thing I am sure: They mirror and reflect accurately the sentiments of Augustine and the Reformers. The issue of the extent of Original Sin is tied inseparably to our understanding of the doctrine of sola fide. The Reformers understood clearly that there is a necessary link between sola fide and sola gratia. Justification by faith alone means justification by grace alone. Semi-Pelagianism in its Erasmian form breaks this link and erases the sola from sola gratia.

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Pelagianism: The Religion of Natural Man

by Michael S. Horton

Cicero observed of his own civilization that people thank the gods for their material prosperity, but never for their virtue, for this is their own doing. Princeton theologian B. B. Warfield considered Pelagianism "the rehabilitation of that heathen view of the world," and concluded with characteristic clarity, "There are fundamentally only two doctrines of salvation: that salvation is from God, and that salvation is from ourselves. The former is the doctrine of common Christianity; the latter is the doctrine of universal heathenism."¹

But Warfield's sharp criticisms are consistent with the witness of the church ever since Pelagius and his disciples championed the heresy. St. Jerome, the fourth century Latin father, called it "the heresy of Pythagoras and Zeno," as in general paganism rested on the fundamental conviction that human beings have it within their power to save themselves. What, then, was Pelagianism and how did it get started?

First, this heresy originated with the first human couple, as we shall see soon. It was actually defined and labeled in the fifth century, when a British monk came to Rome. Immediately, Pelagius was deeply impressed with the immorality of this center of Christendom, and he set out to reform the morals of clergy and laity alike. This moral campaign required a great deal of energy and Pelagius found many supporters and admirers for his cause. The only thing that seemed to stand in his way was the emphasis that emanated particularly from the influential African bishop, Augustine. Augustine taught that human beings, because they are born in original sin, are incapable of saving themselves. Apart from God's grace, it is impossible for a person to obey or even to seek God. Representing the entire race, Adam sinned against God. This resulted in the total corruption of every human being since, so that our very wills are in bondage to our sinful condition. Only God's grace, which he bestows freely as he pleases upon his elect, is credited with the salvation of human beings.

In sharp contrast, Pelagius was driven by moral concerns and his theology was calculated to provide the most fuel for moral and social improvement. Augustine's emphasis on human helplessness and divine grace would surely paralyze the pursuit of moral improvement, since people could sin with impunity, fatalistically concluding, "I couldn't help it; I'm a sinner." So Pelagius countered by rejecting original sin. According to Pelagius, Adam was merely a bad example, not the father of our sinful condition—we are sinners because we sin—rather than vice versa. Consequently, of course, the Second Adam, Jesus Christ, was a good example. Salvation is a matter chiefly of following Christ instead of Adam, rather than being transferred from the condemnation and corruption of Adam's race and placed "in Christ," clothed in his righteousness and made alive by his gracious gift. What men and women need is moral direction, not a new birth; therefore, Pelagius saw salvation in purely naturalistic terms—the progress of human nature from sinful behavior to holy behavior, by following the example of Christ.

In his *Commentary on Romans*, Pelagius thought of grace as God's revelation in the Old and New Testaments, which enlightens us and serves to promote our holiness by providing explicit instruction in godliness and many worthy examples to imitate. So human nature is not conceived in sin. After all, the will is not bound by the sinful condition and its affections; choices determine whether one will obey God, and thus be saved.

In 411, Paulinus of Milan came up with a list of six heretical points in the Pelagian message. (1) Adam was created mortal and would have died whether he had sinned or not; (2) the sin of Adam injured himself alone, not the whole human race; (3) newborn children are in the same state in which Adam was before his fall; (4) neither by the death and sin of Adam does the whole human race die, nor will it rise because of the resurrection of Christ; (5) the law as well as the gospel offers entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven; and (6) even before the coming of Christ, there were men wholly without sin. ² Further, Pelagius and his followers denied unconditional predestination.

It is worth noting that Pelagianism was condemned by more church councils than any other heresy in history. In 412, Pelagius's disciple Coelestius was excommunicated at the Synod of Carthage; the Councils of Carthage and Milevis condemned Pelagius' *De libero arbitrio*--On the Freedom of the Will; Pope Innocent I excommunicated both Pelagius and Coelestius, as did Pope Zosimus. Eastern emperor Theodosius II banished the Pelagians from the East as well in AD 430. The heresy was repeatedly condemned by the Council of Ephesus in 431 and the Second Council of Orange in 529. In fact, the Council of Orange condemned even Semi-Pelagianism, which maintains that grace is necessary, but that the will is free by nature to choose whether to cooperate with the grace offered. The Council of Orange even condemned those who thought that salvation could be conferred by the saying of a prayer, affirming instead (with abundant biblical references) that God must awaken the sinner and grant the gift of faith before a person can even seek God.

Anything that falls short of acknowledging original sin, the bondage of the will, and the need for grace to even accept the gift of eternal life, much less to pursue righteousness, is considered by the whole church to be heresy. The heresy described here is called "Pelagianism."

Pelagianism in the Bible

Cain murdered Abel because Cain sought to offer God his own sacrifice. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that Abel offered his sacrifice in anticipation of the final sacrifice, the Lamb of God, and did so by faith rather than by works (Heb. 11). However, Cain sought to be justified by his own works. When God accepted Abel instead, Cain became jealous. His hatred for Abel was probably due in part to his own hatred of God for refusing to accept his righteousness. This pattern had already emerged with the contrast between the fig leaves that Adam and Eve sewed to cover their nakedness. Running from God's judgment, covering up the shame that resulted from sin--these are the characteristics of human nature ever since the fall. "There is no one who is righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks after God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one" (Rom. 3:10-12). The nearer God comes to us, the greater sense we have of our own unworthiness, so we hide from him and try to cover up our shame with our own clever masks.

At the Tower of Babel, the attitude expressed is clearly Pelagian: "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves." In fact, they were certain that such a united human project could ensure that nothing would be impossible for them (Gen 11:46). But God came down, just as they were building upward toward the heavens. "So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city" (v.8). This is the pattern: God provides the sacrifice, and judges those who offer their own sacrifices to appease God. God comes down to dwell with us, we do not climb up to him; God finds us, we do not find him.

The people of Israel regularly found themselves reverting to the pagan way of thinking. God had to remind them, "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him." Jeremiah responds, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?... Heal me, O LORD, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise" (Jer 17:5, 7, 9, 15). Jonah learned the hard way that God saves whomever he wants to save. Just as soon as he declared, "Salvation comes from the LORD," we read: "And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land" (Jon 2:9-10). The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar faced a similar confrontation, when his self-confidence was turned to humiliation by God. He finally raised his eyes toward heaven and confessed, "All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: 'What have you done'" (Dn 4:35). The clear message: God saves freely, by his own choice and action, to his own praise and glory.

We find Pelagianism among the Pharisees in the New Testament. Remember, the foundation of Pelagianism is the belief that we do not inherit Adam's sinful condition. We are born morally neutral, capable of choosing which way we will turn. Sin is something that affects us from the outside, so that if a good person sins, it must be due to some external influence. This is why it is so important, according to this way of thinking, to avoid bad company and evil influences: It will corrupt an otherwise good person. This Pelagian mentality pervaded the thinking of the Pharisees, as when they asked Jesus why they he did not follow the Jewish rituals. "Jesus called the crowd to him and said, 'Listen and understand. What goes into a man's mouth does not make him 'unclean,' but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him 'unclean.'" This theological orientation was so unfamiliar to the disciples that Jesus had to restate the point: "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man 'unclean'" (Mt 15:10-20). Later, Jesus scolded the Pharisees with these harsh words: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous, but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness" (Mt 23:25-28).

Therefore, Jesus told them that they must be "born from above" (Jn 3:5). The Pharisees believed that God had given them his grace by giving them the law, and if they merely followed the law and the traditions of the elders, they would remain in God's favor. But Jesus said that they were unbelievers who needed to be regenerated, not good people who needed to be guided. "No man can even come to me unless my Father who sent me draws him" (Jn 6:44), for we must be born again, "not of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God" (Jn 1:13). "Apart from me you can do nothing. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last" (Jn 15:5, 16).

This message was at the center of the apostolic message, as Paul defended the grace of God against the Judaizing heresy that sought to turn Jesus into merely another Moses. Centering on the person and work of Christ, Paul and the other apostles denied any place for self-confidence before God. Instead, they knew that we possess neither the ability, free will, power, nor the righteousness to repair ourselves and escape the wrath of God. It must all be God's work, Christ's work, or there is no salvation at all. Surely the Judaizing heresy that troubled the apostles was larger than the issue of Pelagianism, but self-righteousness and self-salvation lay at the bottom

of it. As such, the Council of Jerusalem, recorded in Acts 15, was the first church council to actually condemn this heresy in the New Testament era.

Pelagianism in Church History

Every dark age in church history was due to the creeping influence of the human-centered gospel of "pulling oneself up by the bootstraps." Whenever God is seen as the sole author and finisher of salvation, there is health and vitality;. To the degree that human beings are seen as agents of their own salvation, the church loses its power, since the Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes" (Rom 1:16).

Throughout the period that is popularly known as the "dark ages," Pelagianism was never officially endorsed, but it was certainly common and perhaps even the most popular and widespread tendency among the masses. That should come as no surprise, since thinking good of our nature and of possibilities for its improvement is the tendency of our sinful condition. We are all Pelagians by nature. There were debates, for instance, in the eighth century, but these did not end well for those who defended a strict Augustinian point of view. Since Pelagianism had been condemned by councils, no one dared defend a view as "Pelagian," but Semi-Pelagianism was acceptable, since the canons of the Council of Orange, which condemned Semi-Pelagianism, had been lost and were not recovered until after the closing of the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century.

On the eve of the Reformation, there were fresh debates over free will and grace. Reformers benefited from something of a renaissance of Augustinianism. In the fourteenth century, two Oxford lecturers, Robert Holcot and Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Bradwardine, became leading antagonists in this battle. Two centuries before the Reformation, Bradwardine wrote *The Case of God Against the New Pelagians*, but, "Holcot and a host of later interpreters found Bradwardine's defense of the 'case of God' was at the expense of the dignity of man." 3 If that sounds familiar, it should, since the truth and its corresponding objections never change. The archbishop's own story gives us some insight to the place of this debate:

Idle and a fool in God's wisdom, I was misled by an unorthodox error at the time when I was pursuing philosophical studies. Sometimes I went to listen to the theologians discussing this matter [of grace and free will], and the school of Pelagius seemed to me nearest the truth. In the philosophical faculty I seldom heard a reference to grace, except for some ambiguous remarks. What I heard day in and day out was that we are masters of our own free acts, that ours is the choice to act well or badly, to have virtues or sins and much more along this line." Therefore, "Every time I listened to the Epistle reading in church and heard how Paul magnified grace and belittled free will-as is the case in Romans 9, 'It is obviously not a question of human will and effort, but of divine mercy,' and its many parallels-grace displeased me, ungrateful as I was." But later, things changed:

"However, even before I transferred to the faculty of theology, the text mentioned came to me as a beam of grace and, captured by a vision of the truth, it seemed I saw from afar how the grace of God precedes all good works with a temporal priority, God as Savior through predestination, and natural precedence. That is why I express my gratitude to Him who has given me this grace as a free gift."

Bradwardine begins his treatise, "The Pelagians now oppose our whole presentation of predestination and reprobation, attempting either to eliminate them completely or, at least, to show that they are dependent on personal merits." 4

These are important references, since many think of the emphasis of Luther in *The Bondage of the Will* and of Calvin in his many writings on the subject as extreme, when in actual fact, they were in the mainstream of Augustinian revival. In fact, Luther's mentor, Johann von Staupitz, was himself a defender of Augustinian orthodoxy against the new tide of Pelagianism, and contributed his own treatise, *On Man's Eternal Predestination*. "God has covenanted to save the elect. Not only is Christ sent as a substitute for the believer's sins, he also makes certain that this redemption is applied. This happens at the moment when the sinner's eyes are opened again by the grace of God, so that he is able to know the true God by faith. Then his heart is set afire so that God becomes pleasing to him. Both of these are nothing but grace, and flow from the merits of Christ Our works do not, nor can they, bring us to this state, since man's nature is not capable of knowing or wanting or doing good. For this barren man God is sheer fear."

But for the believer, "the Christian is just through the righteousness of Christ," and Staupitz even goes so far as to say, that this suffering of Christ "is sufficient for all, though it was not for all, but for many that his blood was poured out." 5 This was not an extreme statement, as it is often considered today, but was the most common way of talking about the atonement's effect: sufficient for everyone, efficient for the elect alone.

To be sure, these precursors of the Reformation were not yet articulating a clear doctrine of justification by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, but the official position of the Roman Catholic Church even before the Reformation was that grace is necessary for even the will to believe and live the Christian life. This is not far enough for evangelicals, but to fall short of this affirmation is to lose touch with even the "catholic" witness shared at least on paper by Protestants and Roman Catholics.

What About Today?

Ever since the Enlightenment, the Protestant churches have been influenced by successive waves of rationalism and moralism that have made the Pelagian heresy attractive. It is fascinating, if frustrating, to read the great architects of modern liberalism as they triumphantly announce their project. They sound as if it were a new theological enterprise to say that human nature is basically good, history is marked by progress, that social and moral improvement will create happiness, peace, and justice. Really, it is merely a revival of that age-old religion of human nature. The rationalistic phase of liberalism saw religion not as a plan of salvation, but as a method of morality. The older views concerning human sinfulness and dependence on divine mercy were thought by modern theologians to stand in the way of the Enlightenment project of building a new world, a tower reaching to heaven, just as Pelagius viewed Augustinian teaching as impeding his project of moral reform.

Instead of defining Christianity in terms of an announcement of God's saving work in Jesus Christ, Schleiermacher and the liberal theologians redefined it as a "feeling." Ironically, the Arminian revivals shared with the Enlightenment a confidence in human ability. This Pelagian spirit pervaded the frontier revivals as much as the New England academy. Although poets such as William Henley might put it in more sophisticated language ("I am the master of my fate, the captain of my soul"), evangelicals out on the frontier began adapting this triumph of Pelagianism to the wider culture.

Heavily influenced by the New Haven theology and the Second Great Awakening, Charles Finney was nearly the nineteenth-century reincarnation of Pelagius. Finney denied original sin. "Moral depravity is sin itself, and not the cause of sin," 6 and he explicitly rejects original sin in his criticism of the Westminster Confession, 7 referring to the notion of a sinful nature as "anti-scriptural and nonsensical dogma." 8 According to Finney, we are all born morally neutral, capable either of choosing good or evil. Finney argues throughout by employing the same arguments as the German rationalists, and yet because he was such a successful revivalist and "soul-winner," evangelicals call him their own. Finney held that our choices make us either good or sinful. Here Finney stands closer to the Pharisees than to Christ, who declared that the tree produced the fruit rather than vice versa. Finney's denial of the substitutionary atonement follows this denial of original sin. After all, according to Pelagius, if Adam can be said to be our agent of condemnation for no other reason than that we follow his poor example, then Christ is said to be our agent of redemption because we follow his good example. This is precisely what Finney argues: "Example is the highest moral influence that can be exerted. If the benevolence manifested in the atonement does not subdue the selfishness of sinners, their case is hopeless." 9 But how can there be a "benevolence manifested in the atonement" if the atonement does not atone? For those of us who need an atonement that not only subdues our selfishness, but covers the penalty for our selfishness, Finney's "gospel," like Pelagius's, is hardly good news.

According to Finney, Christ could not have fulfilled the obedience we owed to God, since it would not be rational that one man could atone for the sins of anyone besides himself. Furthermore, "If he obeyed the law as our substitute, then why should our own return to personal obedience be insisted upon as the sine qua non of our salvation?" 10 One wonders if Finney was actually borrowing directly from Pelagius' writings. Many assume "that the atonement was a literal payment of a debt, which we have seen does not consist with the nature of the atonement. It is objected that, if the atonement was not the payment of the debt of sinners, but general in its nature, as we have maintained, it secures the salvation of no one. It is true, that the atonement, of itself, does not secure the salvation of any one." 11

Furthermore, Finney denies that regeneration depends on the supernatural gift of God. It is not a change produced from the outside. "If it were, sinners could not be required to effect it. No such change is needed, as the sinner has all the faculties and natural attributes requisite to render perfect obedience to God." 12 Therefore, "...regeneration consists in the sinner changing his ultimate choice, intention, preference." Those who insist that sinners depend on the mercy of God proclaim "the most abominable and ruinous of all falsehoods. It is to mock [the sinner's] intelligence!" 13

Of the doctrine of justification, Finney declared it to be "another gospel," since "for sinners to be forensically pronounced just, is impossible and absurd. As has already been said, there can be no justification in a legal or forensic sense, but upon the ground of universal, perfect, and uninterrupted obedience to law...The doctrine of an imputed righteousness, or that Christ's obedience to the law was accounted as our obedience, is founded on a most false and nonsensical assumption" and "representing the atonement as the ground of the sinner's justification has been a sad occasion of stumbling to many." 14

From Finney and the Arminian revivalists, evangelicalism inherited as great a debt to Pelagianism as modern liberalism received from the Enlightenment version directly. When evangelists appeal to the unbeliever as though it was his choice that determines his destiny, they are not only operating on Arminian assumptions, but Pelagian assumptions that are rejected even by the official position of the Roman Catholic Church as a denial of grace. Whenever it is maintained that an unbeliever is capable by nature of choosing God, or that men and women are capable of not sinning or of reaching a state of moral perfection, that's Pelagianism. Finney even preached a sermon titled, "Sinners Bound To Change Their Own Hearts." When preachers attack those who insist that the human problem is sinfulness and the wickedness of the human heart—that's Pelagianism. When one hears the argument, whether from the Enlightenment (Kant's "ought implies can"), or from Wesley, Finney, or modern teachers, that "God would never have commanded the impossible," 15 they are echoing the very words of Pelagius. Those who deny that faith is the gift of God are not merely Arminians or Semi-Pelagians, but Pelagians. Even the Council of Trent (condemning the reformers) anathematized such a denial as Pelagianism.

When evangelicals and fundamentalists assume that infants are pure until they reach an "age of accountability," or that sin is something outside-in the world or in the sinful environment or in sinful company that corrupts the individual—they are practicing Pelagians. That which in contemporary evangelicalism is often considered "Calvinism" is really "Augustinianism," which embraces orthodox Roman Catholics and Lutherans as well. And that which in our circles today is often considered "Arminianism" is really Pelagianism.

The fact that recent polls indicate that 77% of the evangelicals today believe that human beings are basically good and 84% of these conservative Protestants believe that in salvation "God helps those who help themselves" demonstrates incontrovertibly that contemporary Christianity is in a serious crisis. No longer can conservative, "Bible-believing" evangelicals smugly hurl insults at mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics for doctrinal treason. It is evangelicals today, every bit as much as anyone else, who have embraced the assumptions of the Pelagian heresy. It is this heresy that lies at the bottom of much of popular psychology (human nature, basically good, is warped by its environment), political crusades (we are going to bring about salvation and revival through this campaign), and evangelism and church growth (seeing conversion as a natural process, just like changing from one brand of soap to another, and seeing the evangelist or entrepreneurial pastor as the one who actually adds to the church those to be saved).

At its root, the Reformation was an attack on Pelagianism and its rising influence, as it choked out the life of Christ in the world. It asserted that "salvation is of the LORD" (Jon 2:9), and that "it therefore does not depend on the decision or effort of man, but on the mercy of God" (Rom 9:16). If that message is recovered, and Pelagianism is once more confronted with the Word of God, the glory of God will again fill the earth.

Notes

1. B. B. Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprinted 1980), p. 33.
2. Taken from the entry on Pelagianism in the *Westminster Dictionary of Church History*.
3. Heiko Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), p.134.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 151-162.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 175-200.
6. Charles Finney, *Finney's Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1976), p. 172.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 179.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 209.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 206.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
12. *Ibid.*, p.221.
13. *Ibid.*, p.226.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 319-323.
15. B. R. Rees, ed., *The Letters of Pelagius and His Followers* (Woodbridge, England: The Boydell Press, 1991), p.169.

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How Did We Come to Faith in Christ?

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Introduction: Jesus' Hard Words

Why should we study what the Bible says about how we came to faith in Jesus? Isn't it enough to simply believe and let it go? After all, do not such discussions only cause hurt feelings and doctrinal arguments among believers? These are good questions. Here are two answers. First, Jesus himself calls us to pay attention to His hard words,

Does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life (John 6:61-63).

Second, we should think about these things because they concern God's glory. He is rightly jealous for His glory. He says, "I will not give my glory to another." [1] Neither should we give God's glory to another. The question of who saves whom is central to God's glory.

Its true that discussing God's eternal decisions can cause trouble. This is also true of any one of a number of biblical doctrines. The solution can hardly be to refuse to think about or discuss Bible doctrines. Scripture itself gives guidelines for Christian discussion. If we treat one another with love, humility and patience, not thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought, then we ought to be able to grow together gracefully. [2]

In any doctrinal discussion, the most important question is, "What does God's Word say?" [3] It is God's Word which should determine what we believe. God's Word alone is His Spirit-inspired, infallible, inerrant, authoritative, self-revelation for faith and life. God's Word written must determine our faith and confession, even if what it says is difficult to accept

Sin Means Death and Total Inability

Understanding what the Bible says about sin is essential to understanding what the Bible says about salvation. What is sin? 1 John 3.4 says, "Every one who does sin, does lawlessness because sin is lawlessness". [4] James says that if we break one law, we have broken them all. [5] Sin is the violation of God's holy requirements. God's Word is an expression of God's holiness. Sin is an offense against God. Paul says, "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law; rather through the law we become conscious of sin". [6]

God's Word is equally clear that every human being is born "in sin". [7]

There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away....They have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one...All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. [8]

Contrary to the generally accepted modern view of man, Paul says that by nature we are not seekers after righteousness or God. We are by nature at war with God. The results of sin are accurately described as "total inability". In Romans 8.7 Paul puts it this way,

The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

Outside of Christ, before we have been redeemed, our natural (fallen) state is such that we are unable to obey God, it is impossible. Reminding God's people of the radical nature of God's saving grace John emphasizes the divine initiative in salvation:

Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent His Son an atoning sacrifice for our sins.[9]

In Genesis 2.17 we read that God commanded our first parents, Adam and Eve, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The command to avoid one tree in the Garden was God's standard of holiness for Adam and Eve. God's Word says that Adam and Eve were created "in the image of God".[10] The text gives every indication that they had the power and ability to obey God. They freely chose not to obey God.[11] The narrative of Genesis chapter 3 certainly seems to confirm Augustine's conclusion that before the fall we were able not to sin. After the fall, we were not able not to sin.

It is important to note that the penalty attached to the law was death. "For when you eat of it you will surely die".[12] Paul says, "The wages of sin are death".[13] Death, in God's Word, stands as the absolute opposite of life. Let me illustrate. In High School I had a Physiology teacher who took the class to see cadavers at a university medical school. We were allowed to put our gloved hands into the corpses, to learn how the human body works. Had those bodies any life in them I assure you, I would not have had my hands in their chest cavities! But the cadavers were dead. Dead people do not revive themselves. Dead people do not call the ambulance. Without God's power, dead people simply stay the way they are, dead.

In Adam's Fall Sinned We All

In Romans 5.12-21 Paul explains how we died. He says that Adam stood before God, in the Garden, as the representative of the entire human race. When Adam sinned, we all sinned. His sin was imputed - put on; credited - to us. Adam's sin offended God and brought physical and spiritual death and corruption to the entire human race.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all have sinned...For if the many died by the trespass of the one man...The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation...For if, by the trespass of one man, death reigned through that one man...Consequently, just as the result of one man's trespass was condemnation for all men...For just as through the disobedience of the one man, the many were made sinners.

The original sin of Adam has radical effects for our daily lives also. We sin because we are sinners by nature. We do not become sinners after we sin for the first time in our individual existence. We are not each born as Adam, without sin. We are born sinful and we act accordingly. Paul explains the relationship between our sin and our sinfulness this way.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air....[14]

The old puritan rhyme is correct, "In Adam's fall, sinned we all". The result of our sin is that we are spiritually dead.[15] Because we are spiritually dead we have no natural desire to know God or to be saved.[16] We are prone by the way we are from birth to hate God and our neighbor. Outside of Christ, we would be lost and without any hope. God's Word says that we are lost and dead, not merely confused or sick. Because we are in such a sad state God alone can save, by grace, through faith. God's Word gives no indication that we are, by nature, in any position to cooperate with God. God is not "waiting" helplessly for us to come to Him. There is nothing in us that makes us worthy before God. All human beings stand before God as hell deserving sinners.

Grace and Faith

The good news is that there is hope in Jesus! Romans 5.8 says that "While we yet were sinners, Christ died for us". Jesus died to pay the penalty for the sin of all his people. Our sin was credited to Christ, and His righteousness was credited to those who believe.[17] Whoever believes in Him has everlasting life.[18]

Ephesians 2.8,9 says,

For you were saved by grace through faith--and this faith does not come from yourselves, but it is the gift of God--not from works, so that no one will be able to boast.

What is the nature of God's grace? First of all it is saving, "you were saved by grace". It is saving in that it delivers the believer from the state of being under God's condemnation to a state of being under God's favor. The Biblical words for grace, *Chen* (O.T.) and *Charis* (NT) and are not ever used in Scripture to indicate that grace merely enables a person to cooperate with God.[19] Grace is never merely enabling, it is always saving.

By its very nature, grace is a gift, it is the unearned favor of God. In Romans 6.23 Paul contrasts works righteousness with the righteousness which comes by grace. "The wages of sin are death, but the gift of God is eternal life." A gift is the exact opposite of wages. A gift is not required, it is given merely out of one's good pleasure.[20] Grace is not earned, as Paul says, because then "grace would no longer be grace"[21]

Even the faith of which Paul speaks in Ephesians 2.8 is a gracious gift. It is true that it is we who must do the believing. No one can do our believing for us. The Gospel says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved".[22] Faith is the means through which people received the grace of God. Faith appropriates God's grace, faith trusts that Christ has acted on my behalf. Faith says,

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me (Galatians 2.20).

Yet, in the translation of Ephesians 2.8,9 given above, it is clear that the clause, "it is the gift of God", refers to faith. God has ordained that it is through faith the saving grace of God is received. With this biblical teaching in view, the old hymn takes on new meaning:

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me, I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved; How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!

The question is: how do sons and daughters of Adam, dead in trespasses and sins, come to believe in Jesus? This is the question which I will seek to answer in the rest of this essay.

Freely Chosen By God

God's Word teaches that our election is not conditioned upon any merit in us. There is no teaching anywhere in God's Word that we are somehow able to recommend ourselves to God. Deuteronomy 4.32-40 illustrates this choosing of a people by God. In his speech to Israel, Moses compares the choosing of Israel in vv.32-34 to the primeval creation.

Ask now about the former days, long before your time, from the day God created man on the earth; ask from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it before ever been heard of?

Moses supposes that his audience is familiar with the creation narrative, which says,

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light", and there was light.[23]

The Letter to the Hebrews says,

By faith we understand that the earth was created at God's command, so that what was seen was not made out of what was visible.[24]

God spoke and all things came into being. Before God spoke, no earth existed. The same is true of God's people. In his speech, Moses says that God spoke Israel into existence as a people.[25] For this same reason, it is God who sovereignly calls, elects and saves a people to be His possession,[26] because he is, as Paul puts it, the Creator of a "new creation in Christ".[27] The creation did not help God. God made the creation by His Word, without any help from us. Moses goes on to say that, in fact, the fact that Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob elects a people for Himself, makes Him unique among all the god's.

Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by miraculous signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?[28]

Three chapters later, Moses denies that there was any quality inherent in Israel which made the sons of Jacob worthy of being called the people of God.

The Lord did not set His affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other people, for you were the fewest of all people. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh, King of Egypt.[29]

According to this passage, there are two reasons for God's choosing of Israel, His undeserved love and His Covenant promise to Abraham.[30]

God's Sovereign Decisions in Exodus

Several passages in Exodus make the whole matter of God's sovereignty, predestination and election very explicit. In Exodus 4.11, in answer to Moses' excuse about not speaking well, the Lord asks the rhetorical question, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord?" God's absolute justice and power are fundamental themes of the Exodus narrative.

Pharaoh's Hard Heart

Throughout the Book of Exodus the Lord declares unequivocally that,

...I will harden Pharaoh's heart so that he will not let the people go...But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt, he will not listen to you.[31]

Exodus 7.22 says "...and Pharaoh's heart became hard". That Pharaoh is said to "harden his heart" shows that we are not robots.[32] God uses means. People also retain a sin corrupted will. Exodus 8.15 indicates that Pharaoh looked at the situation and then he "hardened his heart". That was a willful act on Pharaoh's part. The ultimate cause of Pharaoh's hard heart, however, must be understood in light of earlier and later passages which say clearly that God himself hardened Pharaoh's heart.

This can be a difficult teaching to accept. Several years ago while enrolled in a Bible Literature course at a large state university the class came upon these passages in our studies. After reading them, one of the students blurted out, "this must be a mistranslation! This can't be so!" Actually the grammar of each of the verses is unambiguous and is rendered correctly above from the NIV. What caused problems for my fellow student was a common (but unbiblical) assumption that it is unfair for God to hold humans responsible for anything over which they do not have absolute control.[33]

Adam Again?

This premise insists that God treat each of us as though we were Adam and not the children of Adam. However we cannot have it both ways! If we each wish to be Adam, then we must do away with Jesus, since he purposefully came to earth to succeed where Adam failed. If we were in a position to be Adam then Jesus was wasting His time, or providing insurance at best. This does not accord with Jesus self-description as "the way and the truth and the life." [34]

Scripture explicitly rejects the notion that moral responsibility is contingent upon human autonomy. In Exodus 9.15,16 the Lord says

to Pharaoh.

I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the face of the earth. But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show (in) you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.

According to Scripture, Pharaoh existed primarily to bring glory to God. The grammar of v.16 is exceedingly clear and the language equally blunt. God raised Pharaoh up so as to use him to demonstrate His power to harden and to redeem. It is against the backdrop of the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, against the backdrop of the plagues on Egypt, that the greatness of God's grace in redeeming Jacob's sons is to be seen. The marvel is not God's cruelty in hardening Pharaoh, but in redeeming Israel's sons!

God's Sovereign Choice According to the Apostle Paul

What makes these verses even more important is the way Paul interprets them in Romans chapter 9. In God's treatment of Pharaoh, Paul sees the prime example of God's predestinating, sovereign, electing, grace.

So then salvation is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I have raised you up that I may show my power in you, and that my name may be declared in all the earth. Therefore he has mercy upon whom he wills and whom he wills, he hardens.[35]

The Fairness Doctrine

Through the example of Pharaoh, Paul also answers what I call the "fairness question" which asks, "Is it fair that God wills that some should be saved and that some should not?" Paul's reply, "What shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all!".[36] God is fair. It was not God who sinned in the garden. In Adam, we were not created with any defect. We were created in the image of God. God made Adam and Eve so that they could live obediently, but they chose not to. That is not God's fault. The marvel is not that some are not saved, but that anyone at all is saved.

If, however, salvation is all of God, then how can he condemn those who do not believe? Paul's answer,

But indeed O man who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, 'Why have you made me like this?' Does not the potter have the power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?[37]

Free Will

That Adam had a free will, the ability to sin or not, is widely accepted. The idea however, that human beings have a free will has a long history in Western theology and continues to strongly influence many Bible interpreters and theologians. Many evangelicals simply assume that the doctrine of free will is a biblical one. It will be helpful, therefore, to understand the background of this idea in the Western intellectual tradition.

Reacting to Augustine's strong doctrine of human depravity (inability) and divine sovereignty, the British monk Pelagius (c.400) and his followers challenged the doctrine that all humans are federally (legally) united to Adam and thus fell with him. By breaking the legal/moral link between Adam and us, the Pelagians almost eliminated the effect of sin upon us.

Though the Councils of Carthage (411) and Orange (529) sided with Augustine, afterwards the majority of the medieval church moved in a steadily semi-Pelagian direction, attempting to synthesize Pelagius with Augustine. The synthesis said that sinners are able to cooperate with grace toward justification. In the high middle ages the semi-Pelagian banner was carried by Gabriel Biel (c.1420-95) and the greatest humanist of all, Desiderius Erasmus (c.1469-1536), against whom Martin Luther reacted during the Reformation.[38] In the late 16th century, Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) renewed the semi-Pelagian struggle against the Pauline doctrine of the will. Later, the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) defined free will to mean something like "the power of contrary choice." Kant said that a choice is truly moral choice only if the one making the decision has the power to will the contrary.

Though the doctrine that (fallen) human beings retain a free will is widely held, it is not is certainly not Pauline. He argues from God's electing wisdom that God has the right to choose Jacob and reject Esau.[39] We are not in any position, being sinners and finite humans, to question His mysterious, eternal, decisions. God's Word nowhere provides any defense whatsoever for the position that man has the ability to will the contrary to God's will. Rather, God's Word, as we have already seen, provides extended passages defending God's righteousness in His sovereign eternal gracious decrees. I doubt that is possible to find a single passage in God's Word which clearly teaches that created, sinful, human beings have a free will relative to God's. If Pelagius, Erasmus and Kant are correct, then one must say that Pharaoh is not morally culpable for his hardness because he did not have the power to will the contrary to God's decree. One would be forced to conclude that God is a evil tyrant who uses people as puppets.

Qualifications of Free Will

A word of clarification about the meaning of the term "free will" is in order. One may use the term free will. If, with Jonathan Edwards, we define a free will as that will which acts according to its nature, then the will, in this restricted sense may be said to be free. Sin warps our will so that, by nature, we do not will to do what is pleasing to God. Because of our relationship to Adam, we freely will to sin.[40] The fallen will may said to be free in an existential, or experiential sense. No one visibly compels any human being to do anything they do not will to do. After all, we experience ourselves choosing daily or moment by moment. One always has a choice, even if one of the choices is unpleasant.[41]

Nevertheless, ultimately, the human will must be said to be limited by God's decisions. Any other position is suicidal to the Christian faith. If one assumes that believers or unbelievers have the power of absolute contrary choice relative to God's decrees, then all of the biblical language describing God's eternal decrees becomes meaningless and mythological.

Second, if we have the power of contrary choice relative to God, then we must find some foundation in the Word of God to show that God has voluntarily limited Himself in some way so as to give us this almost divine prerogative. In the light of passages studied (and the ones forthcoming) this will be extremely hard to do.

Third, if we have the power of contrary choice, what does the Bible mean when it says that we are dead? Is this language also mythological? Why does the Bible consistently use death as the analogy for our spiritual state outside of Christ if God really means to say that we are only sick or ill? Why doesn't God's Word ever once describe us as "sick" or "ill" or only in a weakened condition?

The Non-Existent Hypothetical

It is sometimes asked: what if someone wanted to be saved but couldn't be saved because they weren't predestined? This might be an interesting question except that there have never been any such people. According to Scripture, everyone who wants to be saved will be saved because anyone who desires salvation, does so because God has effectively called them to faith by the work of His Holy Spirit.[42] The premise of the question is flawed. It assumes that sinners, if given the chance, will believe in Jesus on their own. This isn't true. We saw above that we are all dead in sin. Apart from the preventive work of God's Spirit dead men don't love Jesus. The Scriptures make it clear that no one even wanted to be saved, until God gave them a desire to be saved. Everyone who believes in Jesus does so because God predestined us, called us by the Holy Spirit, gave us a new life, mind and heart (i.e., we were born again) and caused us to believe in Jesus.

The Golden Chain

Romans 8.28-30 says,

And we know that all things work together for the good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose, because, those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son in order that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover those whom he predestined, these he also called, those whom he called these he also justified, those whom he justified, these he also glorified.

Because of the way they link one part of salvation with another, these verses have been called "the golden chain." These verses speak of God's eternal, pre-creational, decisions. We're all familiar with vs.28. Notice, however, that those for whom all things work out, are those whom God has "called". He explains that the group of everyone called is the same group as those whom God foreknew. Everyone he "foreknew" belongs to the same group of those who have been "predestined". This is the same group as those who are "justified" (i.e., declared to be righteous before God). The same group about whom all these other things are said, is the same group whom God will glorify. In each verse it is God who is the subject of the verse, the person doing the action, and those whom he is saving are the objects of God's gracious acts.

Salvation is from God from beginning to end. By definition, grace excludes human effort. Grace rescues a drowning man unable to save himself. Grace is raises the dead to life by the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Bible calls Christians the "elect". The noun "elect" (that is, "the chosen ones") occurs 25 times in the New Testament.[43] Using the word "elect" or "chosen" only makes sense in the context of God's sovereign predestinating grace. Believers are elect because we have been chosen by God, not because they have helped God to be a Saviour. In Ephesians 1.1-15 Paul explains how, when and why God decided to save us. How is "in Christ". In vv.3,4,10 Paul says that we (believers) were chosen "in Christ",

before the foundation of the world, in order that we might be holy and blameless before Him, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will.[44]

According to God's Word, those who believe were chosen by God before the world was created so that he would glorified (Ephesians 1.6). How? "Having predestined us...". God in His grace chose us, even though were worthy of destruction. We believe because God predestined us to believe. Why? Because it is "according to the good pleasure of His will."

God's Sovereign Choice According to Peter

The Letters by the Apostle Peter make it equally clear, in his own style, that he believes God predestined God's people to faith. In 1 Peter 1.1-3 he calls his readers (us!), ...the elect aliens...according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by His blood...". These verses define, for Peter, what it means to be "elect". Some have tried to show that these verses prove that election only means that God could see in advance who was going to believe. This understanding ignores the context of the word "foreknowledge" as well as all of the other Biblical passages which clearly teach the contrary. Look at the grammar of these verses. Peter calls his readers, "elect strangers". In verse two we are elect "in the sanctification of the Spirit" i.e., by the work of God's Spirit we were set apart. We were elect "to the sprinkling of blood". Again, these phrases indicate that salvation is God's work in us and for us. We do not sprinkle ourselves. Sprinkling is something done to us by God!

Foreknowledge

This clarifies Peter's use of the word "foreknowledge".[45] That God foreknew whom he had chosen is clear Biblical teaching. Paul teaches the exact same thing in Romans 8.29 where the verb "to foreknow" is used as part of God's "foreordaining" described in vs.28.[46] Foreknowledge implies in Scripture, not just a bare knowing ahead of time, but rather an intimate relationship. Repeatedly Scripture uses in the Old Covenant the verb Yada "to know" as a euphemism for sexual intercourse.[47] The same verb lies behind Peter's choice of the Greek noun Prognosis in this passage. To clinch the argument we need only to look at Peter's use of the verb "to foreknow" in his Pentecost Sermon. In Acts 2.23 Peter explains the crucifixion by saying,

This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you with the help of wicked men put him to death by nailing him to the cross (NIV).

The noun "foreknowledge" elaborates or explains the phrase translated as "set purpose".[48] These terms are used interchangeably. We could well speak of God's decided purpose. Whatever foreknowledge means, it must include God's will which has settled the future as well as his advance knowledge about the future. Never are events described with the verb "to foreknow" as though God had only

advance knowledge but not control over them. Instead His foreknowledge is always described in conjunction with His working of His decrees.

At the same time, despite God's "foreknowledge" and his "predetermined will", Peter refuses to release his hearers from their moral obligation. He reminds them that it was they, not God, who nailed Jesus to the cross. It is they who are culpable before God.

Predestination and Election

Peter also liberally uses the language of predestination to describe God's people. In chapter 2.9,10 Peter describes his readers as,

a chosen people, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy (NIV).

His gentile readers are called "chosen" or "elect".[49] Prior to our calling we were "in darkness" a poetic way describing spiritual death. The image reminds us of creation and the Exodus out of Egypt. Notice too that in verse ten, the elect are those who "have received mercy". Mercy is received, not earned or deserved, but bestowed by God by grace through faith. As in Acts 2.23 it is evident here too that, for Peter, God's electing grace does not nullify the human obligation of a response of gratitude. According to verse nine, the elect were chosen by God for the purpose of telling other people about "the praises of Him who called you out of darkness...."

God's Sovereign Choice and the New Life in John's Writings

John's gospel opens with a very strong and clear statement of God's total control over the process of salvation. This flows out his discourse on the pre-existence of the Son of God: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." And the Son's role in creation: "All things came into being through Him, without Him nothing came into being which has come into being."[50]

Salvation and Creation

As in Deuteronomy the creation motif appears alongside a description of salvation. This is not accidental. If we say that the Son of God sovereignly created all that exists, then it is very difficult to evade the conclusion John draws in 1.12-3 regarding Jesus' total control over salvation. "But as many as received Him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name...."

Some have read this verse to imply that we must first move our will to accept Jesus as our Saviour, before God can make us children of God. This reading might be plausible, if one ignored all of the other passages which we have studied, and if this verse was taken out of its context. The next verse, however, explains who receives Jesus. "Those who were born, not by blood, nor by the will of man, but by God."[51]

As in Romans 10.10 where we are called to believe and confess, and in Acts 16.31 to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ", John 1.12 does not answer the question of how we come to faith in Jesus. Verse thirteen does: by God's will. John starkly contrasts the will of man with the decision of God. It will not do to try to wedge a little human effort in between the "receiving" of vs.12 and the being "born" of vs.13. First, as we will trace out shortly, John's gospel teaches that we come to faith according to the decree of God prior to creation. There is no way to get behind God's will.

The creation narrative of Genesis 1.2 is the background for Jesus' discourse on the Spirit's moving.[52] This is a relatively frequent image in the Old Covenant Scriptures. The Spirit is said to reside over the Tabernacle.[53] In this Spiritual sense, Israel as God's people is a re-creation.[54]

In John 5.21 Jesus ties together the creation theme with His resurrection teaching. He illustrates God's sovereignty in salvation by explaining His power over the resurrection. For as the Father raises the dead and gives life, so also the Son gives life to whom he wills. Jesus, like Paul, begins from the premise that men are dead in sins and trespasses and must be raised to life through the supernatural, gracious, powerful, work of God's Spirit. Dead men do not raise themselves. Ask Lazarus. Resurrection is a powerful and clear analogy to God's saving work in the life of the sinner.

Salvation and the Spirit

Scripture says that we come to faith as a result of the work of the Spirit.[55] We have seen that we are spiritually dead in Adam. It is when we are grafted onto Christ that we are made alive. This union with Christ is God's gracious act through the means of faith.[56] Do we obtain new life because we believe or do we believe because we have been given new life? The biblical answer is the latter. The faith which unites us to Christ is the fruit of the new life. Jeremiah 13.23 asks, "Can an Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil." Jesus agrees in Matthew 7.16-20, "A bad tree cannot bear good fruit." In Adam, we are bad, dead, trees. Likewise, Jesus told His disciples regarding salvation, "with man it is impossible, but with God, all things are possible".[57] Paul says that though we are wasting away outwardly, inwardly we are "being renewed".[58] This renewal is something done to us, not by us.[59] John's gospel also reflects this idea that man's basic disposition, because of the fall, is to sin. People do not come to Christ for fear of being exposed as hell-bent sinners.[60]

Second, John clearly teaches throughout his gospel that "faith" or "believing" is a result of the previous (prevenient) work of God's Spirit. For John, we are not born because we believe, but we believe because we have been born. The reasons for this are many. In John's gospel, the state before re-birth is like death and blindness.[61] It is Jesus who gives sight to the blind. The blind do not give themselves sight, anymore than the dead raise themselves or the water turns itself into wine.[62] Jesus' explanation of the process of being "born again" in John 3.1-11 makes it clear that we do not give birth to ourselves, but we are delivered into new life by the sovereign, immediate, work of God Himself, through the means of faith. Sealing this understanding of the new birth is that fact that Jesus uses Genesis creation narrative as the background for His explanation of new life in John 3.1-21.

I tell you the truth, no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again...I tell you the truth, no one can enter the

kingdom of God he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit (vv.3, 5, 6).

The pre-requisite for seeing and entering the kingdom is the new birth. The question is, how does one obtain that new birth? Are we born because God has seen that we believed? Not according to Jesus. Verse 6, "Spirit gives birth to spirit" seems pretty clear. Nicodemus will not be able to give birth to Himself, but rather, he must be born by the Spirit. Jesus continues,

The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going, so it is with everyone born of the Spirit (v.8).

Clearly, Jesus is presuming and teaching the sovereign work of the Spirit in bringing unborn (i.e., lost, blind, dead) to new life. This is the foregoing or prevenient work of the Spirit. One does not give birth to himself, rather he is begotten. The original language of John 3 emphasizes the sovereignty of the Spirit in giving new life. In the original Jesus says, "You must be born Another." [63] Everywhere else this word is used in the gospel of John it means "from above". Later in this chapter Jesus refers to the one who "comes Another" ("from above") and contrasts him with those of the earth. In 19.11, Jesus tells Pilate that he could not crucify Jesus unless it was "given to you from above". In neither context does "again" make sense. Thus it is likely that the actual primary meaning of Another in 3.3 and 3.7 is "born from above". If this is so, then it could not possibly mean "born again" in the sense that we are spiritually renewed when we chose to believe. If the new birth is "from above" then it is from without and something which is done to us.

Notice too, that Jesus says that no one can "see" or "enter" the Kingdom unless he is born. There are compelling reasons for understanding the words "see" and "enter" to be referring to belief. Hard after his explanation of the Work of the Spirit, Jesus equates this "entering" with "belief" in 3.12. In vss.15,16,18 everyone who "believes" has eternal life. According to Jesus, people do not come to faith, because (by nature) "they love darkness rather than light" (v.19). The entire gospel of John is an evangelistic call to faith in Jesus. John testifies that he wrote his gospel "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name." [64] Consistently, in John's gospel, entry into the kingdom is something which happens to one.

Jesus also draws imagery from Ezekiel's prophecy concerning the dry bones.[65] In Ezekiel, the Lord asks a rhetorical question, "Son of Man, can these bones live?" The answer, of course, is no. The entire point of the narrative is that God will sovereignly resurrect His people, through the moving of the Spirit over the dry bones. God says,

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new Spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.[66]

These texts describe a change in man which is beyond his capacity. These are radical, Divinely worked, changes. It is God who sprinkles, God who gives the new heart, who gives the Spirit and move us. These promises are made to those dead. These promises are not conditioned upon our merit--as if dead men could bring themselves to life.[67] For Jesus, these narratives illustrate not only of the regenerating (new life giving) work of the Spirit in the lives of individuals, but also his birth and resurrection. It is through the over-dwelling of the Holy Spirit that he was conceived and born of virgin Mary.[68] It was also through the agency of the Holy Spirit that the Son was raised again.[69]

If God's Spirit is said to have been one of the agencies of the Son's resurrection, it is not too much to expect that sinful creatures also are totally dependent upon the Spirit for new life! It is through the work of the Spirit that humans are enabled to hear the Word with believing ears. Paul teaches this explicitly in 1 Corinthians 2.14,

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things of the Spirit because they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Salvation as a Gift

In Philippians Paul speaks about the new life this way,

It has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for Him.[70]

The terms of this passage are those of a royal grant, a gift. Faith was granted and along with it, the privilege of suffering. In 2 Timothy 2.25, Paul instructs the young pastor to be patient with those who oppose him, waiting for God to "grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth".

The Book of Acts consistently speaks about the new life as though it were something God accomplishes in us. In Acts 16.14 Luke records the conversion of Lydia thus, "The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message." Note that Lydia did not open her own heart, but it was the Lord who performed the spiritual cardiac surgery. In Acts 5.31 Peter is reported to have described repentance and forgiveness of sins both as gifts from God. In Acts 11.18 Peter again speaks of God granting repentance leading to life.

In his own commentary on his gospel, the Apostle John repeatedly describes new life as coming "from God".[71] As we have seen above, John uses creation as an analogy (as does Paul) to explain the origins of the new life. For John, in the prologue to his gospel, "in Him (the Word) was life..."[72] Life is original and inherent in the Son of God. Life is something which is imparted to creatures by the creative Son of God. So too in the Epistle. The Son is the Word of Life.[73] Eternal life is with the Father.[74]

Because spiritual life is original with God and ours only derivatively (it is given to us by God because we are fallen and dead) John describes Christians as those born "from God." [75] In 1 John 3.9 it is those who are "born from God" or "born by God" who do not 'sin'. Further only those whose birth has God as its source cannot sin.[76]

There is a causal relationship between the spiritual birth and the abstinence from sin. The birth provided by God is demonstrated by not sinning.[77] Only those who have God as their Father, who have been given the new birth by Him, love the brothers in Christ.[78] Everyone who belongs to the class of called believers belongs to the class of those who are born of God.[79] Those born from God are overcomers.[80] Note the causal relationship in every "born" passage. Faith and love are fruits of birth!

The Protestant View of Grace

Another reason why we must reject any interpretation of John 1.12,13 which makes faith the cause of the new birth (as opposed to the sovereign work of God), is that such a view makes faith virtually a meritorious work and the ground or basis of our justification before God.

The crux of the reformation was the question of the Bible's teaching on salvation. Luther's theology was revolutionized by Romans 1.17, "The righteous will live by faith". Luther came to understand that it was not baptism, the decree of the Church, or a habitual disposition which recommended us to God, but God's grace alone. For Luther, this grace was a sovereign, predestined gift.[81]

As we have already seen above, faith, for Paul, is the gift of God.[82] It is the means of receiving the righteousness of Christ.[83] Faith is designed by God to apprehend some righteous object. Christ is the object of saving faith. We believe in Jesus. We trust in His obedience. It is Christ's obedience and righteousness which is the righteousness which can stand before God.

To be sure, as we saw in our survey of John's use of the word, faith plays an absolutely crucial role in our salvation. The key is to put faith in the correct place so that we do not ask of it more nor demand of it less than God does. God's Word puts our sin problem and its solution in legal and economic terms, e.g., justification, condemnation, judgment, credit, righteousness etc. Scripture nowhere teaches that faith is the legal ground of justification. God's Word unequivocally teaches that it is the righteousness of Christ imputed to the believer which is the legal basis of our justification before God.[84] Scripture nowhere teaches that we are justified because we generated faith on our own. Time and again God's Word teaches that faith is the God ordained instrument of receiving the grace of God.[85]

If we make faith a meritorious work then we have reverted the Galatian error of saying, "grace plus".[86] In the Galatian case it was grace plus circumcision. If we are renewed and saved because we chose to believe, then how are we different from those Galatians who said that we justified because we believe and are circumcised? Faith is absolutely necessary, but it is not a work. It is the product of divine grace.

Does Jesus Have a People?

In John 6.37-39 Jesus gives us some insight into His eternal relationship with His Father.

Everyone whom the Father gives to me will come to me, and the one coming to me, I will not cast out...this is the will of the One who sent me, that I shall lose none of everyone whom he has given me, but (instead), I will raise him up on the last day.

The Father has given a people to Jesus to save and resurrect. These people are a gift from the Father to the Son. A gift does not give itself! The Son has come (v.38) to do the Father's will. The Father's will is that none should be lost. Verse 65 clarifies the whole matter of the order of salvation and the relationship between God's eternal decisions, made before creation existed and our faith.[87] Jesus' teaching here is occasioned by the apostasy of some of His followers. God's Word says,

...For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray Him...This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.[88]

The Lord is repeating what he has already said in vs.44,

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him". The decision is God's. He does the drawing. People don't come to faith in Christ unless they are drawn. Jesus stated this proposition in terms of possibility and impossibility. It is impossible in the nature of the case, that dead and blind sinners should come to Jesus. Only those raised and given new life believe.

People are the objects of the Father's drawing work. The people drawn are those whom God has chosen before the foundations of the world. Those whom God has drawn to Christ come to faith. They believe in Jesus. According to vs.65, it is only when we are drawn by God, led by the hand as it were, that we come to faith. It is the work of the Spirit of God to lead blinded sinners to sight and faith, as Jesus made the blind man to see.[89]

This closely knit chain of God's grace is absolutely necessary to our salvation. Jesus came to accomplish the Father's will, to seek and save the lost, to save those whom the Father has drawn. Should Jesus fail to accomplish the Father's will, we are all lost! Every believer affirms that Jesus did not fail. Jesus said, "It is finished!".[90]

In John 10.14-16 Jesus describes the Good Shepherd's knowledge of the sheep (saved people) by using an analogy with His Father's knowledge of Him. Jesus says that he "knows" His sheep in the same way, with the same intimacy and eternity, that the co-eternal, co-existent, consubstantial Father knows the eternally begotten Son. This is not mere advance knowledge! Continuing with the Shepherd-Sheep metaphor, Jesus says,

I give them eternal life and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.[91]

According to Jesus, eternal life is neither earned nor deserved. It is a gift from the shepherd to the sheep, just as the sheep are a gift from the Father to the Son. Our salvation is as safe as the Father's hand is secure.

In His High Priestly prayer, in John 17.2, Jesus again says that he has been granted all authority so that he can give eternal life.[92] He does not say that he has been granted all authority with a view to waiting around to see who is smart enough to believe. Instead it is the Father who has given him believers, and to these same believers Jesus will give eternal life.[93]

The Apostle John in his epistles returns to the theme of election as he addresses either an individual woman or a congregation as the "elect lady" and refers to her "elect sister".[94] These references must be understood in the context of the theology expressed already in

the gospel. Also in the Revelation Christ gives this promise to believers,

They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings-- and with Him will be His called, chosen and faithful followers.[95]

Divine Sovereignty: Means & Instruments

It would be a mistake to conclude, because it is God who sovereignly decides to save and to bring us to faith and salvation, that God does not use means and instruments to achieve His purposes. Quite the opposite is true. The first example is the very incarnation of the Son of God Himself. Jesus, the Son of Man and Son of God is more than a means, but he is the "Way".[96] Taking on human flesh to achieve salvation for sinners shows an extreme willingness to use means! God also uses faith as a means, as we have already seen. The Spirit of God is the means or the agent of regeneration, life giving, so that dead people come to eternal life through faith.

In Romans 8:28 Paul speaks of those "called according to His purpose" and again in vs.30 of those whom God "predestined he also called; those he called, he also justified". These verses are usually interpreted to speak of the "internal" call by God, through the Holy Spirit, of the believer to faith. I believe this is correct. This call is sometimes called the "effectual" or "effective" call. It is the effectual Paul has in mind in 1 Corinthians 1:9, "God, who has called you into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful". Everywhere in the New Covenant, where God is said to do the calling, it is this effectual call which is spoken of. Two possible exceptions will be discussed below.

In the case of the Exodus, God chose to use the stuttering Moses. He might have skipped the painful process of the ten plagues. In His unrivaled wisdom, however, God chose to execute His decisions through the means of the Red Sea episode, and through the plagues.

In Revelation 17:14 is the "called" who are the elect.[97] This must be an internal, effectual call, or else everyone who has ever heard the external call is included in the term elect. Such an interpretation makes nonsense of the Revelation's teaching about hell. Hebrews 9:15, says "those who have been called...receive the promise of an eternal inheritance". In Romans 1:6, believers are the "called of Jesus Christ..." The called are those who understand the wisdom of God.[98] For Peter, our internal calling is synonymous with our election, and something we need to "make sure".[99]

The Preaching of the Good News

Nevertheless, Scripture speaks a great deal about another, verbal, external, call. It is the gospel call. In the Old Covenant the prophets frequently made such calls for repentance and faith to Israel. For example, God complained about Israel's rejection of his "call". Then there was the promise that "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved".[100]

It is this sort of call of which Jesus speaks when he says, "Many are called, but few are chosen".[101] The same idea is found in Acts 17:30 where Scripture says, "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now God commands men everywhere to repent." Jesus issues such a call to faith in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest" and in John 3:16, "...whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life".

This is also the way to understand Jesus' words in Matthew 9:13, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." This refers to his external, vocal, verbal, call to repentance and faith. At the same time, it should be noted that those disciples whom he calls in this passage actually do come! The verbal, external gospel call is the instrument used by God to bring men to saving faith.

Paul summarizes the Good News in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5.

By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the Word I preached to you. Otherwise you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter and then to the Twelve.

It is because God is sovereign that believers can joyously anticipate success in preaching this Gospel. Paul does not--and neither should we--preach out of mere duty! The Lord Jesus told Paul,

Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent, for I am with you and no one is going to attack you and harm you because I have many people in this city.[102]

The Good News is the exacting instrument of the Spirit to bring hearers to life. James 1:18 says, "he chose to give us birth through the Word of Truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created." He ties together the motifs of God's sovereignty in redemption and creation, as we have already seen done in 2 Corinthians 5:17 and in John's gospel. The language in the original refers to the act of giving birth, ceasing to be pregnant.[103] The instrument of this spiritual mid-wifery is the gospel, the "Word of Truth".

Paul routinely ascribes such power to his gospel message. In Ephesians 1:13 he explains to his readers how and when they came to faith. "And you were included in Christ when you heard the Word of Truth, the gospel of your salvation". So also in Colossians 1:5-6 the News is, "the Word of Truth, the gospel" which is "producing fruit and growing." In 2 Corinthians 6:7 Paul parallels the "Word of Truth" with "the power of God." [104] The exemplar passage is of course Romans 1:16 where the gospel "is the power of God for salvation of everyone who believes...". Paul says that he became a father to the Corinthian church "through the gospel." [105] For Paul there is no dichotomy between God's eternal decision to save and the use of the instrument of the gospel.

Because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel...[106]

In Romans 10:13-15 Paul explains in detail the relationship between the gospel and faith.

...Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent. As it is written, 'How beautiful are

the feet are the feet of those who bring good news!'

As in Joel 2.32 and Acts 2 sinners must call upon the name of the Lord. But they cannot call until they have heard. There is a chronological priority and dependency. Lost sinners are dependent upon the message of the resurrection. It is through the instrument of the gospel that God saves sinners. Peter agrees: "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God." [107]

The Well Meant Offer of the Gospel

Some have concluded that if God has predestined those whom he will save through grace, then preaching is useless. Ignoring, for the moment, our just completed conclusive survey of passages which proves that God uses means, let us explore God's revealed intentions. The assumption behind this complaint is that God does not deal with us in good faith, that if the Bible really does teach predestination, then God talks out of both sides of His mouth. This complaint and its assumption ignores what God's Word has to say on the subject. When God offers salvation to all who believe, the offer is sincere. When the gospel is verbally preached to unbelievers (whether within the visible Covenant Community or in a purely missionary setting) God sincerely offers eternal life to whomever will come. This is the paradox, that in some sense, God desires what he has not decreed to happen, i.e., the salvation of all men.

An instructive Old Covenant example comes in Deuteronomy 5.29. Here, Moses repeats the Sinai commandments for those who were not there. Toward the end of his sermon, Moses relates the words of the Lord.

"O that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever.

What is significant about this verse for our discussion is that the Hebrew text uses a verb form (optative) which expresses emotion and which implies a desire which will not be fulfilled. Here God desires what he has not decreed and what will not actually come to pass. In Ezekiel 18.21-23 God says,

But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die. None of the offenses he has committed will be remembered against him. Because of the righteous things he has done, he will live. Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign Lord. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn away from their ways and live?

And a moment later God says again,

For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live! [108]

And again,

Say to them, 'As surely as I live', declares the Sovereign Lord, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O' house of Israel? [109]

God is not revealed to us as though he is emotionless. We know from God's Word that he does not change. [110] Yet God reveals himself to us as a God who sincerely desires to see everyone come to faith.

The New Covenant picks up this thread of God's self-disclosure and takes it even further, applying it not only to national Israel, but to all men! In Matthew 5.44-48 Jesus teaches us about love for our enemies by appealing to the example of His Father.

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy'. But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous... Therefore be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

The implication of this passage is unmistakable. Jesus wants believers to love unbelievers as the Father Himself loves them. This is what he means here by the word "perfect." [111]

Jesus says in Matthew 22.37, "O' Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who killed the prophets, how often would I have gathered you as a hen...." The Lord, who knew before the foundations of the world those for whom he was to die yet speaks of an unfilled desire. [112]

The entirety of Jesus' public preaching and ministry is one sustained sincerely intended offer of salvation. The Gospel of Mark begins with a call to repentance and faith. [113] Matthew 11.28 summarizes Jesus' message, "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest".

2 Peter 3.9,15 says,

The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some people understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance... bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation....

The context of the passage is about the second (and final) advent of the Lord Jesus. Some people are beginning to mock the second coming as a cruel joke played on believers. Peter's response is to point out the Lord's intentions.

Of interest to us right now is the reason for God's patience. Jesus' return is delayed, so to speak, for the sake of lost sinners. It is conceivable that Peter refers to the elect not yet come to faith. Still there is a universal tone to the passage. This is Peter's application of Jesus' principle taught in Matthew 5.43-48. Even though the World scorns God's people, God is patient and gracious.

Perhaps nowhere else in God's Word is this sincere offer of salvation put as wonderfully and beautifully as in the Revelation.

The Spirit and the Bride say come, and let him who hears say come, and let him come, and whosoever will may come and drink... [114]

Many well meaning, but misguided, Bible interpreters have inferred from the set of passages just reviewed that God is theoretically sovereign but practically impotent to bring about the salvation of those whom Scripture calls "elect". This conclusion however, is not warranted by the texts we have surveyed. Rather it stems from a philosophical presupposition which says, "If God sincerely desires the salvation of everyone, it must be hypothetically possible for everyone to be saved, or else God would be guilty of cruelty and unfairness".

Conclusion

The immediate answer to this "problem" lies in our discussion of Romans chapter 9 above, to which I refer you. But the real answer is mystery. A mystery is something known to God but inexplicable by man. That God is One in three persons is true and must be affirmed by all Christians, at peril of the soul, even though no one can give an thorough explanation of how this is possible. Christ is both true man and true God. All Christians must affirm this too, at peril of the soul.

How we can be legally and morally responsible for Adam's sin is a mystery, but one which must be affirmed. That God is actually sovereign actively in history and yet we are morally responsible for our own actions, is another mystery. These are true paradoxes where two sides of a matter must be affirmed in order to be faithful to God's Word.

The paradox of the free offer of the Gospel is another. For our purposes here it is helpful to note that Scripture does not have a problem with this or the other paradoxes mentioned. As we have seen, Scripture very clearly teaches that God is just. God's Word also teaches that he has decreed and predestined and sovereignly elected whomever comes to faith in the Lord Jesus.

All of this being true has not kept God from speaking about the lost in very powerful, sincerely meant ways. God intends to stir the believer's heart to compassion for the lost, not to cause him to make cold (ungodly) calculations about whether a given (presently) unsaved person is elect or not. Our joy is to tell that person that Jesus was raised from the dead and because of the resurrection, there is new life in Christ!

Thus, evangelism is not a burdensome, dreary task dutifully carried out by grim harvesters of souls. The Good News really is good! Heaven rejoices over the repentance of a lost sinner, so should we.[115] The Father rejoices when the prodigal comes home. The parable of the lost son means nothing if not that the Father Himself rejoices when the lost come to faith.[116]

Let us be found faithful in giving God His right as the sovereign Lord in His eternal decisions and gracious salvation. Let our hearts be filled with praise and gratitude for His mighty work and outstretched arm in delivering us from the bondage of sin! Let us respond to His grace with heartfelt thanksgiving. Let our so overflow that we cannot help but make known the riches of His grace to a world lost and dead in sin!

Endnotes

1. Isaiah 42.8.
2. See 1 Corinthians 13.4-7; Philippians 2.1-4.
3. I assume the Protestant doctrine of perspicuity, that is, on essential matters the Scriptures are clear. I assume that biblical soteriology, or the biblical doctrine of salvation, is an essential scriptural teaching. This is not to say that all the passages under consideration are equally clear or that there is uniformity among Christian Bible scholars in their interpretation. Certainly this is not so. This paper is not, however, explicitly about hermeneutics or the science of interpretation, but actually engaged in the work of interpreting texts by relating them to one another.
4. My translation.
5. James 2.10
6. Romans 3.21.
7. Psalm 51.5.
8. Romans 3.10-2,23.
9. 1 John 4.10.
10. Genesis 1.26-7.
11. Genesis 3 [all].
12. Genesis 1.26-7.
13. Romans 6.23.
14. Ephesians 2.1-2.
15. Romans 6.23; Ephesians 2.5-6.
16. Genesis 8.21; Isaiah 53.6; Jeremiah 17.9.
17. 1 John 4.10; 2 Corinthians 5.21; Romans 5.12-21.
18. John 3.16; John 20.31.
19. *Chen* is used for grace 43 times in the O.T. *Charis* occurs approximately 141 times in N.T.
20. Romans 3.23; Ephesians 1.4.
21. Romans 11.6.
22. Acts 16.31.
23. Genesis 1.1-3
24. Hebrews 11.2.
25. Deuteronomy 4.33-6.
26. 1 Peter 2.9-10.
27. 2 Corinthians 5.17.
28. Deuteronomy 4.34.
29. Deuteronomy 7.6-7.
30. See Genesis 13.14-7; 15.1-21; 17.1-22.
31. Exodus 4.21, 7.3
32. Exodus 8.15,19.
33. This is a very powerful belief which many readers have brought to the reading of Scripture which is quite simply unsupported by

text itself. It so controls one's perceptions that it becomes almost impossible not to see it in Scripture. Yet, read on its own terms, Scripture never assumes that human moral responsibility is contingent upon freedom relative to God.

34. John 14.6

35. Romans 9.15-8

36. Romans 9.14.

37. Romans 9.20-1.

38. See Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (Cambridge, 1957).

39. Romans 9.13-4.

40. Jonathan Edwards, "A Careful and Strict Inquiry into the Prevailing Notions of the Freedom of the Will," *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* 2 vol. (Edinburgh, 1976), 1.12, 21-3, 51-3.

41. Edwards, notes that even an allegedly free will is limited by the fact that it cannot choose to stop choosing, lest it cease to be a will at all (*ibid.*, 1.12).

42. John 1.12,13; John 17.3; 20.31.

43. Compare Matthew 20.16; 24.22-31; Mark 13.20-7; Romans 8.33; Colossians 3.12; 1 Timothy 5.21; Titus 1.1; 1 Peter 1.1; 2.4-9.

44. Ephesians 1.4,5; compare 2 Thessalonians 2.13; 2 Timothy 1.9; Titus 1.2.

45. *Prognosis*.

46. *Proginosekein*.

47. See Genesis 4.1, 25.

48. *Horismene boule*.

49. *Eklekton*.

50. John 1.1-3.

51. John 1.13.

52. "And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters".

53. Exodus 40.34; Deuteronomy 32.10,11; Isaiah 31.5; 1 Peter 4.14.

54. Paul picks up this theme in 2 Corinthians 5.17 when he declares, "You are a new creation in Christ!"

55. See John ch. 3 [all].

56. Ephesians 2.8-9.

57. Matthew 19.16-30.

58. 2 Corinthians 4.16.

59. The verb used there is the passive voice of *Anakanein*. Compare Colossians 3.10; Romans 2.12; and Ephesians 4.23.

60. John 3.19,20.

61. John 12.37-41; John 9.

62. John 11.33-44; 2.1-11; Matthew 19.29-34.

63. *Anothen*.

64. John 20.31.

65. Ezekiel 37.1-14.

66. Ezekiel 36.25-27. See Jeremiah 31.31-34.

67. See 1 Corinthians 2.14,15; Galatians 5.22; Romans 6.17-22.

68. Luke 1.35.

69. Romans 8.11; 1 Corinthians 15.45.

70. Philippians 1.29.

71. 1 John.

72. John 1.4.

73. 1 John 1.1.

74. 1 John 1.2.

75. 1 John 2.29.

76. As John narrowly conceives of sin in this Epistle.

77. 1 John 5.18.

78. 1 John 4.7.

79. 1 John 5.1.

80. 1 John 5.4.

81. Luther regarded his 1525 response to Erasmus, *De Servo Arbitrio* (On the Bondage of the Will), as his most important. That the Protestant doctrine of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, required the doctrine of predestination, was a commonplace in the Reformation.

82. Romans 6.23.

83. Ephesians 2.8-9.

84. Romans 5.12-21; 2 Corinthians 5.21; Hebrews 11.

85. Romans 3.21-4.25.

86. Galatians 1.6-10; ch.3.

87. Ephesians 1.5,11; Romans 8.29; Revelation 13.8.

88. John 6.65.

89. John 9 [all].

90. John 19.30.

91. John 10.27-30.

92. Matthew 28.18-20.

93. John 17.6, 9.

94. 2 John vv.1, 13.

95. Revelation 17.14.

96. John 14.6.

97. *Kletoi* and *Eklektoi*.

98.1 Corinthians 1.24.

99. 2 Peter 1.10.
100. See Isaiah 65.12; 55.1ff; Joel 2.32.
101. Matthew 22.14.
102. Acts 18,9-10.
103. *Apokuein*.
104. 2 Timothy 2.15.
105. 1 Corinthians 4.15.
106. 2 Thessalonians 2.13-4.
107. 1 Peter 1.23.
108. Ezekiel 18.32.
109. Ezekiel 33.11.
110. Hebrews 31.8.
111. See Luke 6.35-6.
112. Ephesians 1.1-15; Galatians 2.20.
113. Mark 1.15.
114. Revelation 22.17.
115. Luke 15.7,10.
116. Luke 15.30-1.

Determinism and Responsibility

Gordon Clark

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Unless one has been recently disgusted by a surfeit of discussion on this sometimes barren topic, a religious thinker will almost invariably be carried away into a heated argument. This is better than to denominate the question barren, for such an attitude is agnostic, and to be disgusted is merely to be exhausted. Every Christian must face this problem squarely, and especially must the Calvinist do so, since he believes that much of the learned disrespect of Christianity is owing to the loose thinking of Catholics and Arminians.

Yet for fear someone may expect too much from a paper with such a comprehensive title, it is necessary strictly to state the scope of this article. First of all it is not a discussion of the freedom of the will such as is found in Jonathan Edwards' well-known work. The arguments of that great man concern many details which, however important and interesting, may be omitted from the present subject. Naturally there is some overlapping but the direction of search is different. The investigation of innumerable intricacies runs the risk of losing all sense of proportion, of becoming entangled in a puzzling maze and so requires an exceptionally great mind such as Edwards' was. The direction of search here, on the contrary, will be away from intricacies toward very general outlines and thus must run the risk of being superficial. Nevertheless it has seemed worth the risk. Now to state exactly the scope of the matter: Recently in books and magazines of varying intellectual value there have appeared, in defense of Historic Christianity as opposed to modern wandering attacks on "mechanistic psychology" "determinism in all its forms," and other phrases of similar import. This writer fears that however much one may hold to the cardinal points of orthodoxy, it is not always clear which philosophic theories are or are not consistent with such orthodoxy. One would think that only a shallow magazine would indiscriminately condemn all forms of determinism; there might be more excuse for an attack on mechanistic psychology. The aim of this article is, then, to show that determinism is consistent with responsibility, indeed responsibility requires determinism.

The arguments on both sides are fairly well known. They so lack originality as to discourage new attempts, including this one. The determinist position is stated as well as anywhere in the article by George Stuart Fullerton, entitled "Freedom and Free Will." His aim was to show that on the basis of indeterminism moral conduct in general, in so far as free or indeterminate, would lose all ethical value. The indeterminist holds that certain actions are not adequately explained, i.e. determined by preceding causes. Then, if benevolence for example is a free action, it is not determined by a benevolent personality but happens causelessly. If the will were free absolutely, then a knowledge of one's own respectable character in the past brings neither hope nor consolation. Ordinarily we consider a determining factor, and a moral man does not become immoral except for some other determining factor. But free will allows a man to become a criminal for no reason at all. Fullerton's illustration was little Timmy who stole his mother's jam. Punishment will not prevent a recurrence of the invasion of the pantry, neither will persuasion of a gentler sort. These can have no determining power on free actions. But on a deterministic theory, punishment, persuasion of and praise are all justified. "It seems, then that Tommy's mother, and his aunts and all his spiritual pastors and masters have for years approached Tommy upon a strictly deterministic basis. They have thought it worth while to talk, -- they have adjusted means to ends and have looked for results, taking no account of freedom at all."

On the other hand, if there is no responsibility for the freewillist, is there any for the determinist? This paper aims to harmonize determinism and responsibility on the basis of Calvinistic Christianity. And if it has not been done before the reason is that the Calvinists of today are but half-hearted followers of the prince of theologians, John Calvin.

If we must pass by many of the details in discussions of free will it is all the more needful to avoid embarking on the general subject of theism. Although it is the necessary foundation of the view to be explained, no one could reasonably expect it to be treated here, even in brief. We might be permitted to suggest however that one reason, even if only confirmatory, for assuming the being of God is precisely the more unified world which results from applying the conception of sovereignty to such problems as these.

To recall the discussion to the title of the paper and to make the present position more intelligible even if by contrast, one passage from an ancient author relative to sovereignty and omnipotence serves admirably well. Plato, in the second book of the Republic, says, "God

inasmuch as he is good, cannot be the cause of all things... On the contrary, he is the author of only a small part of human affairs; of the larger part he is not the author: for our evil things far outnumber our good things: and the good things we must ascribe to not other than God, while we must seek elsewhere, and not in him, the causes of the evil things." And as Plato here denies God's omnipotence, denies that He is the first cause of all, so Aristotle denies His omniscience.

It might now be well to turn from antiquity to some contemporary literature, not because the more recent is either better or more original than the old but because these are the living defenders of what we attack.

Dr. Arthur Holmes' *The Mind of St. Paul* provides a typical paragraph. This work is partly a description of Paul's emotional nature, partly a criticism of various psychological explanations of Paul's conversion. Theories of the subconscious or unconscious and theories of multiple personality occupy a good portion of the chapters. While the book as a whole does not bear on the present subject, Dr. Holmes feels called upon briefly to mention freedom and responsibility. The paragraph presents a very familiar view.

"St. Paul's system of morality avoids many pitfalls of manmade systems of ethics, but it does not eliminate one of the great problems involved in all morality and religion. This is the problem of freedom, the power of man to choose anything whatsoever. Such a liberty has been denied by predestinarian theologians and mechanistic scientists. Both contend that man's seeming freedom is illusory. Neither theory is based upon observed facts, but deduced from previous theories -- the first, from the absolute sovereignty of an omnipotent God, the second from the assumed power of inductive science to predict the occurrence of future events. On the other hand, the common sense of mankind, bent on preserving the moral responsibility of men, has always favoured at least a freedom to choose between good and bad on man's part. St. Paul went thus far and no farther. He never changed from his position in this matter from the doctrine of the Pharisees (Rom. ix 14-18, 23). He seems clearly enough to insist upon the sovereignty of God and His perfect freedom to mould men as He will. Yet, at the same time men appear free to choose both ends and means, and the Evangelist exhorts men and women to do so without a single hint that they are unable to make such choices. In all probability he would have indignantly denied the modern doctrine of determinism or physical necessity."

Before quoting a second contemporary, it is well to note and emphasize that the reason -- and has anyone found any other really basic reason? -- for introducing the concept of freedom, either in its most extreme form of power of contrary choice or in some more modified form, is to hold man responsible. Could it be shown that man's responsibility does not necessarily depend upon freedom, theology would be freed from an annoying problem. Well can we imagine the groanings which cannot be uttered if generations of young theologues were to be summoned before us to describe the tortures they endured in trying to reconcile God's omniscience with free will. The Presbyterian and Reformed churches do not believe in free will. They substitute the concept of free agency, meaning that a man is a free moral agent when he acts in conformity to his own nature. Even so, some have stated that the reconciliation of man's free agency and God's sovereignty is an inscrutable mystery. Rather the mystery is -- recognizing that God is the ultimate cause of the man's nature -- how the Calvinistic solution could have been so long overlooked.

But before making the solution explicit, permit a final word from the opponents. Miss Harkness, Professor of Philosophy in Elira College, in *Conflict in Religious Thought*, offers the following:

"Throughout the whole history of philosophy and theology people have wrangled over the question of free will. In general, the idealistic philosophies have asserted that the human spirit must be in some sense free, while materialistic philosophies have denied this freedom. Theology has clung tenaciously to the belief that man is a 'free moral agent' while at the same time often asserting a doctrine of predestination which, taken at its face value, would rigidly circumscribe man's acts. The problem, though complex, is too fundamental to be dodged.

"We have seen that the possibility of moral or immoral action depends upon the power of choice. If all one's acts are set and predetermined (either by the structure of the material world or by the will of God) in such fashion that it is impossible to act other than one does, quite obviously freedom disappears. With other than one does, quite obviously freedom disappears. With the power of voluntary choice goes moral responsibility. One cannot consciously choose to be good, nor choose to seek after God, unless he has the power to choose not to do so. No moral quality attaches to my failure to steal the million dollars that is outside my reach, but stealing becomes a moral question with me when I have to decide whether to tell the store clerk he has given me too much change. Likewise if I am 'foreordained' to be saved or damned there is not much use of my doing anything about my fate. If I have no freedom, I am not responsible for my acts.

"Theological determinism, or predestination, is a cardinal doctrine of Mohammedanism. Islam means 'submission' (to the will of Allah) and a Moslem is 'one who submits' -- to the fatalistic decrees of an arbitrary deity. Christian theology in its earlier forms regarded God as equally peremptory (though more ethical) in His decrees. Through the influence of illustrious Christian theologians, notably Paul, Augustine and Calvin, the doctrine of predestination has profoundly influenced Christian thinking. While God's omnipotence has thus been emphasized, God's freedom has been exalted at the expense of man's, and the most inhuman acts have been glossed over as arising from the will of God. but happily the doctrine of predestination is disappearing, at least in its application to evils that are obviously preventable.

"Some still hold that when the typhoid victim dies from lack of proper sanitation, it happened because it was 'to be'. There is a good deal of illogical comfort in such a view. But not many, even of the most rigorous of Calvinists, would now say that if a man gets drunk and shoots his family, it is the will of God that he should do so!"

While forced to smile a bit as authors permit their animosities to give rise to disparaging circumlocutions instead of appropriate argument, one must confess to being a little irritated at insinuation. Whether absolute predestination is happily being forgotten or not is quite irrelevant. The present question is, can predestination and determinism be reconciled with and made the basis of moral distinctions and human responsibility? Miss Harkness thinks not.

First of all, she claims moral action requires choice and choice requires the ability to have done otherwise. This is the first thing to be denied. Choice is that mental act, that deliberate volition -- I do not intend a comprehensive definition -- which initiates a human action. The ability to have chosen otherwise is an irrelevant consideration and has no place in the definition. It is still a deliberate volition even if it could not have been different True we are not always conscious of our limitation. Those who appeal to the

consciousness of freedom and consider that such appeal closes the issue rely on cherry or apple pie as illustrations. If illustrations be necessary we can refer to Luther's sentiments: "Here I stand, so help me God, I can do no other." The more important the decision, the less power of contrary choice we feel. And I venture to suppose that Luther's is a fairly common experience with serious, responsible persons.

But is there nothing in Kant's dictum, If I ought, I can? As stated by Kant and the Catholics it leads immediately to salvation by works. The motive which prompted this incorrect principle can, however, be better stated and so save what of truth it contains. If all ought, at least one can. If all ought to be honest, then some can and are. If all ought perfectly to satisfy divine justice, at least One has done so. At any rate we must remember that choice must be defined as a psychological function, distinct from desire or judgment for example, and nowhere in the definition can be found a place for the power to have chosen differently.

Likewise, Miss Harkness states, "if I am foreordained to be saved or damned there is not much use of my doing anything about my fate." It is strange that anyone but a novice should use this so-called "lazy argument" after the Stoics so long ago showed its fallaciousness. It is of use to do something precisely because it is the means to something else. The Mohammedan or fatalistic idea that the end is fixed independently of the means is but a caricature of Calvinism sometimes maliciously used. The end is foreordained to arrive by means of the means, and to obtain the end is the value of the means. But at any rate she well illustrates that the motive for asserting man's freedom is responsibility.

After relegating theological determinism to a benighted past, Miss Harkness dismisses mechanical or scientific determinism in a footnote on the quantum theory. This is mentioned here solely to point out that Calvinistic determinism may or may not be mechanical. The rationality of the mechanical ideal is aside from the present purpose. Theological determinism neither requires nor excludes it. All one needs to maintain is that every event is determined to occur as it does and cannot be otherwise. God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

The author last quoted seems in a previous page to have missed the main point. Discussing the question, Is God limited? she concludes that omnipotence is not inconsistent with freedom. God may freely limit Himself and omnipotently create persons endowed with free wills. This overlooks one essential factor, viz. God's omniscience. If God knows what will happen, what He knows will happen and nothing else. Calvinists believe God knows what will happen because He ordained it so. But aside from this, foreknowledge indicates that the future is certain, we must return to the dualism of Plato. But let it pass; if there be an omniscient God, the future is certain. The professor in Elmira College overlooked the decisive factor.

Now then, if every event is certain, can man be responsible for deeds he could not have escaped doing? Or does determinism make good men "pious little automata" as Miss Harkness says? All that is required to define choice or volition is that necessary and sufficient combination of factors which distinguishes it from other psychological functions. The statement of Charles Hodge, *op.cit.*, p.285, will then be seen to be an invalid inference, for a necessary volition is as much a volition as an unnecessary one. Again neglecting to notice what is substituted for rational argument, one may very justly reply, it all depends on what is meant by automata, or more precisely, what responsibility means.

It seems strange that works on theology usually make no very energetic attempt to define responsibility. But if it is of such importance, one ought not to omit making it as precise as possible. Yet this attempt is noticeably lacking among determinists and free willists alike. Not all true statements are definitional. The Pythagorean theorem states a truth respecting a right triangle but it is not a definition of one. Now Charles Hodge makes certain statements about responsibility, but it is not clear whether he intended them as definitions or merely true statements. For example, "We are responsible for our feelings because they are right or wrong in their own nature." In the next paragraph he makes human nature the ground of responsibility. The following looks more like a definition: "Whenever reason and the power of self-determination or spontaneity are combined in an agent, he is free and responsible for his outward acts and for his volitions."

Definition is no easy task, and an incorrect one may deceive us frightfully. The caution of him who would not admit two plus two equals four until he knew how the admission was to be used is nothing short of exemplary. Yet those who have criticized the position to be offered at most say that the conception of responsibility involved is incomplete or restricted. Perhaps they are right; all that is needed is that the characteristics mentioned are essential elements of the definition. Let us call a man responsible, then, when he may be justly rewarded or punished for his deeds. That is, the man must be answerable to someone, to God, for responsibility implies a superior authority who punishes or rewards. Now since in theology the crux of the matter is in the eternal punishment of some sinners, we may disregard other elements in the definition and emphasize that by calling a man responsible we mean he may be justly punished by God. For this definitional truth is the key to the explanation of why a man is responsible for the act God determined him to do.

More than one person, with caution born of experience, has replied at this point, that although they did not see the trap they could always escape the disagreeable Calvinistic conclusions by clinging to the saving adverb "justly." This of course is just what is desired. For whether the adverb is an escape from Calvinism or the very essence of Calvinism itself depends on meaning of justice. For by the echoes of Plato's Republic we cannot continue until we have seized justice herself.

This leads to an illustration in the writings of Leibniz, Descartes and Calvin. Leibniz held that this was the best of all possible worlds, thus provoking the remark he must have been a pessimist. He had said that God might have chosen any one of a number of possible worlds, each more or less good, but as a matter of fact God chose the best of them. He expressly denies that this world is best because God chose it. This latter proposition, the world is good because God chose it, was Descartes' opinion.

It is at this point we must refer to and take issue with Jonathan Edwards. While he tries to avoid placing God under commands, he still seems to imply the Platonic dualism by representing God as influenced by inducements. Later, when he comes to our present subject, he calls the question which divided Descartes and Leibniz, absurdity and nonsense.

John Calvin was not of the same opinion. He anticipated Descartes' position, and in the Institutes has given the key to the solution:

" In the first place they inquire, by what right the Lord is angry with His creatures who had not provoked Him by any previous offense; for that to devote to destruction whom He pleases is more like the caprice of a tyrant than the lawful sentence of a judge; that men have reason, therefore, to expostulate with God, if they are predestinated to eternal death without any demerit of their own, merely by His sovereign will. If such thoughts ever enter the minds of pious men, they will be sufficiently enabled to break their violence by this one consideration, how exceedingly presumptuous it is only to inquire into the causes of the Divine will; which is in fact, and is justly entitled to be, the cause of every thing that exists. For if it has any cause, then there must be something antecedent, on which it depends; which it is impious to suppose. For the will of God is the highest rule of justice; so that what He wills must be considered just, for this very reason, because He wills it. When it is inquired, therefore, why the Lord did so, the answer must be, because He would. But if you go further, and ask why He so determined, you are in search of something greater and higher than the will of God, which can never be found."

God is Sovereign; whatever He does is just, for this very reason, because He does it. If He punishes a man, the man is punished justly and hence the man is responsible. This answers the form of argument which runs: whatever God does is just, eternal punishment is not just, therefore God does not so punish. If the objector mean he has received a special revelation that there is no eternal punishment, we cannot deal with him here. If, however, he is not laying claim to a special revelation of future history, but to some philosophic principle which is intended to show that eternal punishment is unjust, the distinction between our positions becomes immediately obvious. Calvin has rejected that view of the universe which makes a law, whether of justice or of evolution, instead of the law-giver supreme. Such a view is the Platonic dualism which posits a World of Ideas superior to the Artificer. God in such a system is finite or limited, bound to follow or obey the pattern. But those who proclaim the Sovereignty of God determine what justice is by observing what God actually does. Whatever God does is just. What He commands men to do or not to do is similarly just or unjust.

This much is sufficient for our solution. Granted many other things remain to be said. The necessity of means or secondary, proximate causes might be further emphasized, sin as the judicial ground of divine punishment, because God so determined it should be, might be mentioned; further appendages and replies to objections could be tacked on. Only one need be examined. Does the view here proposed make God the Author of sin? Why the learned divines who formulated the various creeds so uniformly permitted such a metaphorical expression to becloud the issue is a puzzle. This view most certainly makes God the First and Ultimate Cause of everything. But very slight reflection on the definition of responsibility and its implication of a superior authority shows that God is not responsible for sin.

It follows from this that determinism is consistent with responsibility and that the concept of freedom which was introduced only to guarantee responsibility is useless. Of course man is still a "free agent" for that merely means, as Hodge says, that man has the power to make a decision. It is difficult to understand then, why so much effort should be wasted in the attempt to make the power of deciding consistent with the certainty of deciding. If there be any mystery about it, as the Brief Statement says, it is one of the theologian's own choosing. For God both gives the power and determines how it shall be used. God is Sovereign.

It seems to me that a great many objections to specific Christian doctrines, objections to the propitiatory atonement or the Incarnation, arise from a non-Christian view of God's nature. The modernists object to a vicarious sacrifice because they do not think God is that sort of a person. Theirs is not the God of the early Christians. And my sincere conviction is that if we are to retain the Satisfactio, if we are to promulgate a consistent Christianity, we must, among other things, reject and combat the semi-arminianism prevailing in so-called Calvinistic churches, and return to predestination, the perseverance of the saints, the ninth chapter of Romans, and Paul's best interpreter, John Calvin.

IAIN MURRAY ON WHITEFIELD AND WESLEY

This article first appeared in the 1960 edition of Whitefield's Journals, published by The Banner of Truth Trust.[1] Here Iain Murray discusses the historical background that led to George Whitefield's famous letter to John Wesley.

The occasion and background of Whitefield's letter to Wesley requires a few words of explanation. From the time of his conversion in 1735, Whitefield had been profoundly conscious of man's entire depravity, his need of the new birth, and the fact that God can save and God alone. Describing an experience which occurred a few weeks after his conversion, he wrote: "About this time God was pleased to enlighten my soul, and bring me into the knowledge of His free grace . . ." Strengthened by his reading of the Scriptures, the Reformers and the Puritans, Whitefield gradually grasped the great related chain of truths revealed in the New Testament—the Father's electing love, Christ's substitutionary death on behalf of those whom the Father had given Him, and the Spirit's infallible work in bringing to salvation those for whom it was appointed. These doctrines of "free grace" were the essential theology of his ministry from the very first and consequently the theology of the movement which began under his preaching in 1737.

When Whitefield returned to England at the end of 1738, after his first visit to America, he found that the awakening in London had been furthered by the conversion and subsequent ministry of the Wesleys. Immediately they began to work together. Under Whitefield's preaching the revival spread to Bristol and the West country in February and March 1739, and when he left that area at the beginning of April 1739, John Wesley was given the oversight of the work. But before three months had elapsed it began to be evident that there had not been the same doctrinal development in the Wesleys on all points mentioned above. The fact is that while John Wesley had at his conversion in May 1738 accepted evangelical views on sin, faith, and the re-birth, he had at the same time retained his pre-conversion opinions on the doctrines of predestination and the extent of the atonement. As the religious influences which had moulded Wesley prior to his conversion were High Anglican, it is not surprising that these opinions were Arminian and not orthodox.[2] His views on these points were not part of his new evangelical experience but arose, as Howell Harris declared to him, "from the prejudices of your education, your books, your companions, and the remains of your carnal reason." [3]

The first hint that this doctrinal difference might lead to serious results occurs in a letter of Whitefield's to Wesley on June 25, 1739: "I hear, honoured sir, you are about to print a sermon on predestination. It shocks me to think of it; what will be the consequences but controversy? If people ask me my opinion, what shall I do? I have a critical part to act, God enable me to behave aright! Silence on both sides will be best. It is noised abroad already, that there is a division between you and me. Oh, my heart within me is grieved I . . . "[4]

On July 2, 1739, Whitefield wrote further to Wesley on this subject, terminating his letter with another appeal:

"Dear, honoured sir, if you have any regard for the peace of the church, keep in your sermon on predestination. But you have cast a lot.[5] Oh! my heart, in the midst of my body, is like melted wax. The Lord direct us all! . . . "[6]

On Whitefield's departure from England in August 1739, Wesley immediately published this sermon. Entitled "Free Grace," it professed to be founded upon Romans 8:32, and was printed as a 12 mo. pamphlet in 24 pages. Annexed to it was a hymn by Charles Wesley on *Universal Redemption*. It was this sermon which occasioned Whitefield's reply here reprinted. But it is interesting to note that although Wesley's sermon was published in August 1739, Whitefield's reply is dated December 24, 1740, and was not published till early 1741. The reasons for this delay are probably as follows: (1) By the correspondence[7] which passed between Whitefield and Wesley in 1740 it is evident that Whitefield longed to avoid an open breach and still hoped that his friend might be brought to a clearer understanding of the truth. Such sentences as the following are typical of Whitefield's attitude: "How would the cause of our common Master suffer by our raising disputes about particular points of doctrines!" . . . "For Christ's sake, let us not be divided amongst ourselves" . . . "Avoid all disputation. Do not oblige me to preach against you; I had rather die . . ." (2) It is evident that while on his second visit to America, Whitefield developed stronger views on the issues which this controversy involved. Before he left England in August 1739, he had been satisfied to counsel "silence" on these doctrines and they were not at that time conspicuous in his preaching. As late as March 1740, he wrote to Wesley: "Provoke me to it as much as you please, I intend not to enter the lists of controversy with you on the points wherein we differ . . ." But before the year had ended Whitefield went back on this decision, the reason apparently being that he had come to see the seriousness of these questions in a new light. He could thus remain silent no longer. On September 25, 1740, he wrote to Wesley: "What a fond conceit is it to cry up *perfection*, and yet cry down the doctrine of *final perseverance*. But this, and many other absurdities, you will run into, because you will not own *election*. . . . O that you would study the covenant of grace! . . . O that you would not be too rash and precipitant! If you go on thus, honoured sir, how can I concur with you? It is impossible. I must speak what I know. . . ." On February 1, 1741, he says; further: "I must preach the gospel of Christ, and that I cannot now do, without speaking of election. . . ."

The reasons for Whitefield's more decided attitude are not hard to find. Firstly he had, during 1740, made close friendships with such American evangelicals as the Tennents and Jonathan Edwards;[8] through them he was doubtless led into a deeper understanding of Puritan theology and its relevance to evangelism and revivals. He also witnessed the outstanding blessing on their preaching. Secondly, as the year 1740 advanced, the reports that he received from his friends like [John] Cennick and Howell Harris made it increasingly obvious that harm and divisions were being wrought by the Wesleys' insistence on their Arminian views. Wesley's pamphlet "set the nation disputing." As Harris wrote to Wesley: "You grieve God's people by your opposition to electing love; and many poor souls believe your doctrine simply because you hold it." A situation had developed in which it was imperative that Whitefield should declare his mind and do something to arrest the drift from evangelical orthodoxy.

The outcome of Whitefield's return to England in March 1741 and the publication of his reply to Wesley, was an inevitable separation. Henceforth the evangelical forces engaged in the revival movement were divided, and a new party of Arminian evangelicals emerged for the first time in British church history. Due to the eminence of the Wesleys, this new form of evangelical faith has exerted a widespread influence even down to the present day. The contemporary strength of this influence can be judged from the manner in which George Whitefield, with his great predecessors the Reformers and Puritans, have been forgotten; indeed, it would not be too much to say that Whitefield's views, as expressed in [his letter to Wesley], would appear to many to be quite alien to the evangelicalism that is commonly believed in today.

Some evangelical writers have sought to minimize the division between Whitefield and Wesley by referring to their "minor differences." An impression is given that Whitefield abandoned the strong conviction he had about Arminianism in 1741; in proof of this we are referred to the fact that in 1742 their personal friendship was in measure resumed and that ultimately Wesley even preached Whitefield's funeral sermon. But all this is misleading. The truth is that Whitefield rightly made a distinction between a difference in judgement and a difference in affection; it was in the *former* sense that he differed from the Wesleys, and that difference was such that, as Tyerman writes, it "led them to build separate chapels, form separate societies, and pursue, to the end of life, separate lines of action . . . the gulf between Wesley and Whitefield was immense." [9] But while their public cooperation was thus seriously disturbed, his personal affection for the Wesleys as Christians was preserved to the last.[10] In this respect Whitefield teaches us a needful lesson. Doctrinal differences between believers should never lead to personal antagonism. Error must be opposed even when held by fellow members of Christ, but if that opposition cannot co-exist with a true love for all saints and a longing for their spiritual prosperity then it does not glorify God nor promote the edification of the Church.

IAIN MURRAY

NOTES:

1. [Whitefield's letter to Wesley was] added to [the Banner of Truth Trust] edition of *The Journals* for these reasons:

- It was written during the period covered in [*The Journals*] and best illustrates Whitefield's views on several important points of doctrine. The letter is therefore an important aid to a full understanding of his ministry.
- It explains references in *The Journals* which would otherwise be obscure and reveals a principal reason why Whitefield returned to England in 1741. He feared the results of the controversy which had broken out since his departure.
- *The Journals* show Whitefield and the Wesleys working in close cooperation. It is well known that this cooperation terminated in 1741. Without a knowledge of this letter the cause of that momentous separation cannot be rightly understood.
- Copies of this letter have become extremely scarce and, in view of the contemporary prevalence of the same errors which

Whitefield here opposes, it is highly relevant to the present situation.

2. The statement of Dr. H. B. Workman is significant: "Whitefield linked the Evangelical movement to Puritanism; Wesley linked it to Laud, for Laud was one of the founders of the Arminian movement." [*The Methodist Times*, in the issue commemorating the bicentenary of Whitefield's birth, December, 1914.]

3. *The Life and Times of John Wesley*. L. Tyerman, vol. 1, p. 315.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 277.

5. It was Wesley's practice at this period sometimes to decide on questions of guidance by casting lots.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 313.

7. Tyerman gives lengthy extracts from this correspondence, and the quotations which follow will be found in pp. 313- 322.

8. Tyerman's comments on this fact are interesting [*Ibid.*, p. 312 and *Life of Whitefield*, vol. 1, pp. 274- 275], but Tyerman needs to be read with care on matters relating to Whitefield's theology. He is glaringly inconsistent when he says: "Whitefield worked himself into a fume, and wrote his pamphlet in answer to Wesley," for elsewhere he says, "the spirit breathing in this letter is beautiful"! [Compare *Life of Whitefield*. vol 1, p. 471, with his *Life of Wesley*, vol. 1, p. 351.]

9. *Life of Wesley*, vol. 1, pp. 351-352.

10. This was no easy thing when it is remembered what provocation Whitefield suffered from John Wesley. On leaving England in 1739 Whitefield was the leader of the awakening; when he returned in 1741 it was to find himself supplanted and Wesley organizing the movement around himself. He had cause to write at a later date: "I have been supplanted, despised, censured, maligned, judged by and separated from my nearest, dearest friends." (*Works of George Whitefield*, edited by Gillies, vol. 2, p. 466.) But Whitefield was too great to contend for personal prominence. The legend of "England before and after *Wesley*" began to originate from this time.

FREE GRACE

John Wesley SERMON 128

Preached at Bristol, in the year 1740

(text from the 1872 edition)

TO THE READER

Nothing but the strongest conviction, not only that what is here advanced is "the truth as it is in Jesus," but also that I am indispensably obliged to declare this truth to all the world, could have induced me openly to oppose the sentiments of those whom I esteem for their work's sake: At whose feet may I be found in the day of the Lord Jesus!

Should any believe it his duty to reply hereto, I have only one request to make, -- Let whatsoever you do, be done inherently, in love, and in the spirit of meekness. Let your very disputing show that you have "put on, as the elect of God, bond of mercies, gentleness, longsuffering; "that even according to this time it may be said, "See how these Christians love one another!"

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Whereas a pamphlet entitled, "Free Grace Indeed," has been published against this Sermon; this is to inform the publisher, that I cannot answer his tract till he appears to be more in earnest. For I dare not speak of "the deep things of God" in the spirit of a prize-fighter or a stage-player. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. 8:32

1. How freely does God love the world! While we were yet sinners, "Christ died for the ungodly." While we were "dead in our sin," God "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." And how freely with him does he "give us all things!" Verily, FREE GRACE is all in all!

2. The grace or love of God, whence cometh our salvation, is FREE IN ALL, and FREE FOR ALL.

3. First. It is free in all to whom it is given. It does not depend on any power or merit in man; no, not in any degree, neither in whole, nor in part. It does not in anywise depend either on the good works or righteousness of the receiver; not on anything he has done, or anything he is. It does not depend on his endeavors. It does not depend on his good tempers, or good desires, or good purposes and intentions; for all these flow from the free grace of God; they are the streams only, not the fountain. They are the fruits of free grace, and not the root. They are not the cause, but the effects of it. Whatsoever good is in man, or is done by man, God is the author and doer of it. Thus is his grace free in all; that is, no way depending on any power or merit in man, but on God alone, who freely gave us his own Son, and "with him freely giveth us all things.

4. But it is free for ALL, as well as IN ALL. To this some have answered, "No: It is free only for those whom God hath ordained to life; and they are but a little flock. The greater part of God hath ordained to death; and it is not free for them. Them God hateth; and, therefore, before they were born, decreed they should die eternally. And this he absolutely decreed; because so was his good pleasure; because it was his sovereign will. Accordingly, they are born for this, -- to be destroyed body and soul in hell. And they grow up under

the irrevocable curse of God, without any possibility of redemption; for what grace God gives. he gives only for this, to increase, not prevent, their damnation."

5. This that decree of predestination. But methinks I hear one say, "This is not the predestination which I hold: I hold only the election of grace. What I believe is not more than this, -- that God,, before the foundation of the world, did elect a certain number of men to be justified, sanctified, and glorified. Now, all these will be saved, and none else; for the rest of mankind God leaves to themselves: So they follow the imaginations of their own hearts, which are only evil continually, and, waxing worse and worse, are at length justly punished with everlasting destruction."

6. Is this all the predestination which you hold? Consider; perhaps this is not all. Do not you believe God ordained them to this very thing" If so, you believe the whole degree; you hold predestination in the full sense which has been above described. But it may be you think you do not. Do not you then believe, God hardens the hearts of them that perish: Do not you believe, he (literally) hardened Pharaoh's heart; and that for this end he raised him up, or created him? Why, this amounts to just the same thing. If you believe Pharaoh, or any one man upon earth, was created for this end, -- to be damned, -- you hold all that has been said of predestination. And there is no need you should add, that God seconds his degree, which is supposed unchangeable and irresistible, by hardening the hearts of those vessels of wrath whom that decree had before fitted for destruction.

7. well, but it may be you do not believe even this; you do not hold any decree of reprobation; you do not think God decrees any man to be damned, not hardens, irresistibly fits him, for damnation; you only say, "God eternally decreed, that all being dead in sin, he would say to some of the dry bones, Live, and to others he would not; that, consequently, these should be made alive, and those abide in death, -- these should glorify God by their salvation, and those by their destruction."

8. Is not this what you mean by the election of grace? If it be, I would ask one or two question: Are any who are not thus elected saved? or were any, from the foundation of the world? Is it possible any man should be saved unless he be thus elected? If you say, "No," you are but where you was; you are not got one hair's breadth farther; you still believe, that, in consequence of an unchangeable, irresistible decree of God, the greater part of mankind abide in death, without any possibility of redemption; inasmuch as none can save them but God, and he will not save them. You believe he hath absolutely decreed not to save them; and what is this but decreeing to damn them? It is, in effect, neither more not less; it comes to the same thing; for if you are dead, and altogether unable to make yourself alive, then, if God has absolutely decreed he will make only others alive, and not you, he hath absolutely decreed your everlasting death; you are absolutely consigned to damnation. So then, though you use softer words than some, you mean the self-same thing; and God's decree concerning the election of grace, according to your account of it, amounts to neither more not less than what others call God's decree of reprobation.

9. Call it therefore by whatever name you please, election, preterition, predestination, or reprobation, it comes in the end to the same thing. The sense of all is plainly this, -- by virtue of an eternal, unchangeable, irresistible decree of God, on part of mankind are infallibly saved, and the rest infallibly damned; it being impossible that any of the former should be damned. or that any of the latter should be saved.

10. But if this be so, then is all preaching vain. It is needless to them that are elected; for they, whether with preaching or without, will infallibly be saved. Therefore, the end of preaching -- to save should -- is void with regard to them; and it is useless to them that are not elected, for they cannot possibly be saved: They, whether with preaching or without, will infallibly be damned. The end of preaching is therefore void with regard to them likewise; so that in either case our preaching is vain, as you hearing is also vain.

11. This then, is a plain proof that the doctrine of predestination is not a doctrine of God, because it makes void the ordinance of God; and God is not divided against himself. A Second is, that it directly tends to destroy that holiness which is the end of all the ordinances of God. I do not say, none who hold it are holy; (for God is of tender mercy to those who are unavoidably entangled in errors of any kind;) but that the doctrine itself, -- that every man is either elected or not elected from eternity, and that the one must inevitably be saved, and the other inevitably damned, -- has a manifest tendency to destroy holiness in general; for it wholly takes away those first motives to follow after it, so frequently proposed in Scripture, the hope of future reward and fear of punishment, the hope of heaven and fear of hell. That these shall go away into everlasting punishment, and those into life eternal, is not motive to him to struggle for life who believes his lot is cast already; it is not reasonable for him so to do, if he thinks he is unalterably adjudged either to life or death. You will say, "But he knows not whether it is life or death." What then? -- this helps not the matter; for if a sick man knows that he must unavoidably die, or unavoidably recover, though he knows not which, it is unreasonable for him to take any physic at all. He might justly say, (and so I have heard some speak, both in bodily sickness and in spiritual,) "If I am ordained to life, I shall live; if to death, I shall live; so I need not trouble myself about it." So directly does this doctrine tend to shut the very gate of holiness in general, -- to hinder unholly men from ever approaching thereto, or striving to enter in thereat.

12. as directly does this doctrine tend to destroy several particular branches of holiness. Such are meekness and love, -- love, I mean, of our enemies, -- of the evil and unthankful. I say not, that none who hold it have meekness and love; (for as is the power of God, so is his mercy;) but that it naturally tends to inspire, or increase, a sharpness or eagerness of temper, which is quite contrary to the meekness of Christ; as then especially appears, when they are opposed on this head. And it as naturally inspires contempt or coldness towards those whom we suppose outcast from God. "O but," you say. "I suppose no particular man a reprobate." You mean you would not if you could help it: But you cannot help sometimes applying your general doctrine to particular persons: The enemy of souls will apply it for you. You know how often he has done so. But you rejected the thought with abhorrence. True; as soon as you could; but how did it sour and sharpen your spirit in the mean time! you well know it was not the spirit of love which you then felt towards that poor sinner, whom you supposed or suspected, whether you would or no, to have been hated of God from eternity.

13. Thirdly. This doctrine tends to destroy the comfort of religion, the happiness of Christianity. This is evident as to all those who believe themselves to be reprobated, or who only suspect or fear it. All the great and precious promises are lost to them; they afford them no ray of comfort: For they are not the elect of God; therefore they have neither lot nor portion in them. This is an effectual bar to their finding any comfort or happiness, even in that religion whose ways are designed to be "ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace."

14. And as to you who believe yourselves the elect of God, what is your happiness? I hoe, not a notion, a speculative belief, a bare

opinion of any kind; but a feeling possession of God in your heart, wrought in you by the Holy Ghost, or, the witness of God's Spirit with your spirit that you are a child of God. This, otherwise termed "the full assurance of faith,": is the true ground of a Christian's happiness. And it does indeed imply a full assurance that all your past sins are forgiven, and that you are *now* a child of God. But it does not necessarily imply a full assurance of our future perseverance. I do not say this is never joined to it, but that it is not necessarily implied therein; for many have the one who have not the other.

15. Now, this witness of the Spirit experience shows to be much obstructed by this doctrine; and not only in those who, Believing themselves reprobated, by this belief thrust it far from them, but even in them that have tasted of that good gift, who yet have soon lost it again, and fallen back into doubts, and fears, and darkness, -- horrible darkness, that might be felt! And I appeal to any of you who hold this doctrine, to say, between God and your own hearts, whether you have not often a return of doubts and fears concerning your election or perseverance! If you ask, "Who has not?" I answer, Very few of those that hold this doctrine; but many, very many, of those that hold it not, in all parts of the earth; -- many of these have enjoyed the uninterrupted witness of his Spirit, the continual light of his countenance, from the moment wherein they first believed, for many months or years, to this day.

16. That assurance of faith which these enjoy excludes all doubt and fear, It excludes all kinds of doubt and fear concerning their future perseverance; though it is not properly, as was said before, an assurance of what is future, but only of what *now* is. And this needs not for its support a speculative belief, that whoever is once ordained to life must live; for it is wrought from hour to hour, by the mighty power of God, "by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them." And therefore that doctrine is not of God, because it tends to obstruct, if not destroy, this great work of the Holy Ghost, whence flows the chief comfort of religion, the happiness of Christianity.

17. Again: How uncomfortable a thought is this, that thousands and millions of men, without any preceding offense or fault of theirs, were unchangeably doomed to everlasting burnings! How peculiarly uncomfortable must it be to those who have put on Christ! to those who, being filled with bowels of mercy, tenderness, and compassion, could even "wish themselves accursed for their brethren's sake!"

18. Fourthly. This uncomfortable doctrine directly tends to destroy our zeal for good works. And this it does, First, as it naturally tends (according to what was observed before) to destroy our love to the greater part of mankind, namely, the evil and unthankful. For whatever lessens our love, must go far lessen our desire to do them good. This it does, Secondly, as it cuts off one of the strongest motives to all acts of bodily mercy, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and the like, -- viz., the hope of saving their souls from death. For what avails it to relieve their temporal wants, who are just dropping into eternal fire? "Well; but run and snatch them as brands out of the fire.: Nay, this you suppose impossible. They were appointed thereunto, you say, from eternity, before they had done either good or evil. you believe it is the will of God they should die. And "who hath resisted his will?" But you say you do not know whether these are elected or not. What then? If you know they are the one or the other, -- that they are either elected or not elected, -- all your labour is void and vain. In either case, your advice, reproof, or exhortation is as needless and useless as our preaching. It is needless to them that are elected; for they will infallibly be saved without it. It is useless to them that are not elected; for with or without it they will infallibly be damned; therefore you cannot consistently with your principles take any pains about their salvation. Consequently, those principles directly tend to destroy you zeal for good works; for all good works; but particularly for the greatest of all, the saving of souls from death.

19. But, Fifthly, this doctrine not only tends to destroy Christian holiness, happiness, and good works, but hath also a direct and manifest tendency to overthrow the whole Christian Revelation. The point which the wisest of the modern unbelievers most industriously labour to prove, is, that the Christian Revelation is not necessary. They well know, could they once show this, the conclusion would be too plain to be denied, "If it be not necessary, it is not true," Now, this fundamental point you give up. For supposing that eternal, unchangeable decree, one part of mankind must be saved, though the Christian Revelation were not in being, and the other part of mankind must be damned, notwithstanding that Revelation. And what would an infidel desire more? You allow him all he asks. In making the gospel thus unnecessary to all sorts of men, you give up the whole Christian cause. "O tell it not in Gath! lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice; lest the sons of unbelief triumph!"

20. And as this doctrine manifestly and directly tends to overthrow the whole Christian Revelation, so it does the same thing, by plain consequence, in making that Revelation contradict itself. For it is grounded on such an interpretation of some texts (more or fewer it matters not) as flatly contradicts all the other texts, and indeed the whole scope and tenor of Scripture. For instance: The assertors of this doctrine interpret that text of Scripture, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," as implying that God in a literal sense hated Esau, and all the reprobated, from eternity. Now, what can possibly be a more flat contradiction than this, not only to the whole scope and tenor of Scripture, but also to all those particular texts which expressly declare, "God is love?" Again: They infer from that text, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," (Romans 4:15) that God is love only to some men, viz., the elect, and that he hath mercy for those only; flatly contrary to which is the whole tenor of Scripture, as is that express declaration in particular, "The Lord is loving unto every man; and his mercy is over all his works." (Psalm 114:9.) Again: They infer from that and the like texts, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,": that he showeth mercy only to those to whom he had respect from all eternity. Nay, but who replieth against God now? You now contradict the whole oracles of God, which declare throughout, "God is no respecter of persons:" (Acts 10:34) "There is no respect of persons with him." (Rom. 2:11.) Again: from that text, "The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her," unto Rebecca, "The elder shall serve the younger;" you infer, that our being predestinated, or elect, no way depends on the foreknowledge of God. Flatly contrary to this are all the scriptures; and those in particular, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God;" (1 Peter 1:2;) "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate." (Rom. 8:29.)

21. And "the same Lord over all is rich" in mercy "to all that call upon him:" (Romans 10:12:) But you say, "No; he is such only to those for whom Christ died. And those are not all, but only a few, whom God hath chosen out of the world; for he died not for all, but only for those who were 'chosen in him before the foundation of the world.'" (Eph. 1:4.) Flatly contrary to your interpretation of these scriptures, also, is the whole tenor of the New Testament; as are in particular those texts: -- "Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died," (Rom. 14:15.) -- a clear proof that Christ died, not only for those that are saved, but also for them that perish: He is "the Saviour of the world;" (John 4:42;) He is "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world;" (John 1:29;) "He is the propitiation, not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world;" (1 John 2:2;) "He," the living God, "is the Savior of all

men;" (1 Timothy 4:10;) "He gave himself a ransom for all;" (1 Tim. 2:6;) "He tasted death for every man." (Heb. 2:9.)

22. If you ask, "Why then are not all men saved?" the whole law and the testimony answer, First, Not because of any decree of God; not because it is his pleasure they should die; for, As I live, saith the Lord God," I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." (Ezek. 18:3, 32.) Whatever be the cause of their perishing, it cannot be his will, if the oracles of God are true; for they declare, "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" (2 Pet. 3:9;) "He willeth that all men should be saved." And they, Secondly, declare what is the cause why all men are not saved, namely, that they will not be saved: So our Lord expressly, "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life." (John 5:40.) "The power of the Lord is present to heal" them, but they will not be healed. "They reject the counsel," the merciful counsel, "of God against themselves," as did their stiff-necked forefathers. And therefore are they without excuse; because God would save them, but they will not be saved: This is the condemnation, "How often would I have gathered you together, and ye would not!" (Matt. 23:37.)

23. Thus manifestly does this doctrine tend to overthrow the whole Christian Revelation, by making it contradict itself; by giving such an interpretation of some texts, as flatly contradicts all the other texts, and indeed the whole scope and tenor of Scripture; -- an abundant proof that it is not of God. But neither is this all: For, Seventhly, it is a doctrine full of blasphemy; of such blasphemy as I should dread to mention, but that the honour of our gracious God, and the cause of his truth, will not suffer me to be silent. In the cause of God, then, and from a sincere concern for the glory of his great name, I will mention a few of the horrible blasphemies contained in this horrible doctrine. But first, I must warn every one of you that hears, as ye will answer it at the great day, not to charge me (as some have done) with blaspheming, because I mention the blasphemy of others. And the more you are grieve with them that do thus blaspheme, see that ye "confirm your love towards them: the more, and that your heart's desire, and continual prayer to God, be, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!"

24. This premised, let it be observed, that this doctrine represents our blessed Lord, "Jesus Christ the righteous," "the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth," as an hypocrite, a deceiver of the people, a man void of common sincerity. For it cannot be denied, that he everywhere speaks as if he was willing that all men should be saved. Therefore, to say he was not willing that all men should be saved, is to represent him as a mere hypocrite and dissembler. It cannot be denied that the gracious words which came out of his mouth are full of invitations to all sinners. To say, then, he did not intend to save all sinners, is to represent him as a gross deceiver of the people. You cannot deny that he says, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden." If, then, you say he calls those that cannot come; those whom he knows to be unable to come; those whom he can make able to come, but will not; how is it possible to describe greater insincerity? You represent him as mocking his helpless creatures, by offering what he never intends to give. You describe him as saying on thing, and meaning another; as pretending the love which his had not. Him, in "whose mouth was no guile," you make full of deceit, void of common sincerity; -- then especially, when, drawing nigh the city, He wept over it, and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often *would* I have gathered thy children together, -- and *ye would not*;" _EthelEsa -- kai ouk EthelEsate_. Now, if you say, *they would*, but *he would not*, you represent him (which who could hear?) as weeping crocodiles' tears; weeping over the prey which himself had doomed to destruction!

25. *Such blasphemy this, as one would think might make the ears of a Christian to tingle! But there is yet more behind; for just as it honours the Son, so doth this doctrine honour the Father. It destroys all his attributes at once: It overturns both his justice, mercy, and truth; yea, it represents the most holy God as worse than the devil, as both more false, more cruel, and more unjust. More false; because the devil, liar as he is, hath never said, "He willeth all men to be saved:" More unjust; because the devil cannot, if he would, be guilty of such injustice as you ascribe to God, when you say that God condemned millions of souls to everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, for continuing in sin, which, for want of that grace he will not give them, they cannot avoid: And more cruel; because that unhappy spirit "seeketh rest and findeth none;" so that his own restless misery is a kind of temptation to him to tempt others. But God resteth in his high and holy place; so that to suppose him, of his own mere motion, of his pure will and pleasure, happy as he is, to doom his creatures, whether they will or no, to endless misery, is to impute such cruelty to him as we cannot impute even to the great enemy of God and man. It is to represent the high God (he that hath ears to hear let him hear!) as more cruel, false, and unjust than the devil!*

26. *This is the blasphemy clearly contained in the horrible decree+ of predestination! And here I fix my foot. On this I join issue with every assessor of it. You represent God as worse than the devil; more false, more cruel, more unjust. But you say you will prove it by scripture. Hold! What will you prove by Scripture? that God is worse than the devil? I cannot be. Whatever that Scripture proves, it never an prove this; whatever its true meaning be. This cannot be its true meaning. Do you ask, "What is its true meaning then?" If I say, " I know not," you have gained nothing; for there are many scriptures the true sense whereof neither you nor I shall know till death is swallowed up in victory. But this I know, better it were to say it had no sense, than to say it had such a sense as this. It cannot mean, whatever it mean besides, that the God of truth is a liar. Let it mean what it will it cannot mean that the Judge of all the world is unjust. No scripture can mean that God is not love, or that his mercy is not over all his works; that is, whatever it prove beside, no scripture can prove predestination.*

27. This is the blasphemy for which (however I love the persons who assert it) I abhor the doctrine of predestination, a doctrine, upon the supposition of which, if one could possibly suppose it for a moment, (call it election, reprobation, or what you please, for all comes to the same thing,) one might say to our adversary, the devil, "Thou fool, why dost thou roar about any longer? Thy lying in wait for souls is as needless and useless as our preaching. Hearst thou not, that God hath taken thy work out of thy hands; and that he doeth it much more effectually? Thou, with all thy principalities and powers, canst only so assault that we may resist thee; but He can irresistibly destroy both body and soul in hell! Thou canst only entice; but his unchangeable decrees, to leave thousands of souls in death, compels them to continue in sin, till they drop into everlasting burnings. Thou temptest; He forceth us to be damned; for we cannot resist his will. Thou fool, why goest thou about any longer, seeking whom thou mayest devour? Hearst thou not that God is the devouring lion, the destroyer of souls, the murderer of men" Moloch caused only children to pass though the fire: and that fire was soon quenched; or, the corruptible body being consumed, its torment was at an end; but God, thou are told, by his eternal decree, fixed before they had done good or evil, causes, not only children of a span long, but the parents also, to pass through the fire of hell, the 'fire which never shall be quenched; and the body which is cast thereinto, being now incorruptible and immortal, will be ever consuming and never consumed, but 'the smoke of their torment,' because it is God's good pleasure, 'ascendeth up for ever and ever.'"

28. O how would the enemy of God and man rejoice to hear these things were so! How would he cry aloud and spare not! How would he lift up his voice and say, "To your tents, O Israel! Flee from the face of this God, or ye shall utterly perish! But whither will ye flee? Into heaven? He is there, Down to hell? He is there also. Ye cannot flee from an omnipresent, almighty tyrant. And whether ye flee or stay, I call heaven, his throne, and earth, his footstool, to witness against you, ye shall perish, ye shall die eternally. Sing, O hell, and rejoice, ye that are under the earth! For God, even the mighty God, hath spoken, and devoted to death thousands of souls, from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof! Here, O death, is they sting! They shall not, cannot escape; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Here, O grave is thy victory Nations yet unborn, or ever they have done good or evil are doomed never to see the light of life, but thou shalt gnaw upon them for ever and ever! Let all those morning stars sing together, who fell with Lucifer, son of the morning! Let all the sons of hell shout for joy! For the decree is past, and who shall disannul it?"

29. Yea, the decree is past; and so it was before the foundation of the world. But what decree? Even this: "I will set before the sons of men 'life and death, blessing cursing.' And the soul that chooseth life shall live, as the soul that chooseth death shall die." This decree whereby "whom God did foreknow, he did predestinate," was indeed from everlasting; this, whereby all who suffer Christ to make them alive are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God," now standeth fast, even as the moon, and as the faithful witnesses in heaven; and when heaven and earth shall pass away, yet this shall not pass away; for it is as unchangeable and eternal as is the being of God that gave it. This decree yields the strongest encouragement to abound in all good works and in all holiness; and it is a well-spring of joy, of happiness also, to our great and endless comfort. This is worthy of God; it is every way consistent with all the perfections of his nature. It gives us the noblest view both of his justice, mercy, and truth. To this agrees the whole scope of the Christian Revelation, as well as all the parts thereof. To this Moses and all the Prophets bear witness, and our blessed Lord and all his Apostles Thus Moses, in the name of his Lord: "I call heaven and earth to record against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that thou and thy seed may live." Thus Ezekiel: choose life, that thou and thy seed may live;"Thus Ezekiel: (To cite one Prophet for all:) "The soul that sinneth, it shall die: The son shall not bear" eternally, "the iniquity of the father. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." (18:20.) Thus our blessed Lord: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." (John 7:37.) Thus his great Apostle, St. Paul: (Acts 17:30:) "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent; -- "all men everywhere;" every man in every place, without any exception either of place or person. Thus St. James: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." (James 1:5.) Thus St. Peter: (2 Pet. 3:9:) "The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." And thus St. John: " If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:1, 2.)

30. O hear ye this, ye that forget God! Ye cannot charge your death upon him! "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?' saith the Lord God." (Ezek. 18:23ff.) "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions where by ye have transgressed, -- for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God. Wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. -- Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11.)

A LETTER FROM GEORGE WHITEFIELD TO THE REV. MR JOHN WESLEY IN ANSWER TO MR. WESLEY'S SERMON ENTITLED "FREE GRACE"

"But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed" (Gal. 2:11).

PREFACE

I am very well aware what different effects publishing this letter against the dear Mr. Wesley's Sermon will produce. Many of my friends who are strenuous advocates for *universal redemption* will immediately be offended. Many who are zealous on the other side will be much rejoiced. They who are lukewarm on both sides and are carried away with carnal reasoning will wish this matter had never been brought under debate.

The reasons I have given at the beginning of the letter, I think are sufficient to satisfy all of my conduct herein. I desire therefore that they who hold election would not triumph, or make a party on one hand (for I detest any such thing)—and that they who are prejudiced against that doctrine be not too much concerned or offended on the other.

Known unto God are all his ways from the beginning of the world. The great day will discover why the Lord permits dear Mr. Wesley and me to be of a different way of thinking. At present, I shall make no enquiry into that matter, beyond the account which he has given of it himself in the following letter, which I lately received from his own dear hands:

London, August 9, 1740

My dear Brother,

*I thank you for yours, May the 24th. The case is quite plain. There are bigots both for predestination and against it. God is sending a message to those on either side. But neither will receive it, unless from one who is of their own opinion. Therefore, for a time you are suffered to be of one opinion, and I of another. But when his time is come, God will do what man cannot, namely, make us both of one mind. Then persecution will flame out, and it will be seen whether we count our lives dear unto ourselves, so that we may finish our course with joy. I am, my dearest brother,
Ever yours,*

J. WESLEY

Thus my honoured friend, I heartily pray God to hasten the time, for his being clearly enlightened into all the doctrines of divine revelation, that we may thus be closely united in principle and judgment as well as heart and affection. And then if the Lord should call us to it, I care not if I go with him to prison, or to death. For like Paul and Silas, I hope we shall sing praises to God, and count it our highest honour to suffer for Christ's sake, and to lay down our lives for the brethren.

WHITEFIELD'S LETTER TO WESLEY

Bethesda in Georgia, Dec. 24, 1740

Reverend and very dear Brother,

God only knows what unspeakable sorrow of heart I have felt on your account since I left England last. Whether it be my infirmity or not, I frankly confess, that Jonah could not go with more reluctance against Nineveh, than I now take pen in hand to write against you. Was nature to speak, I had rather die than do it; and yet if I am faithful to God, and to my own and others' souls, I must not stand neutral any longer. I am very apprehensive that our common adversaries will rejoice to see us differing among ourselves. But what can I say? The children of God are in danger of falling into error. Nay, numbers *have* been misled, whom God has been pleased to work upon by my ministry, and a greater number are still calling aloud upon me to show also my opinion. I must then show that I know no man after the flesh, and that I have no respect to persons, any further than is consistent with my duty to my Lord and Master, *Jesus Christ*.

This letter, no doubt, will lose me many friends: and for this cause perhaps God has laid this difficult task upon me, even to see whether I am willing to forsake all for him, or not. From such considerations as these, I think it my duty to bear an humble testimony, and earnestly to plead for the truths which, I am convinced, are clearly revealed in the Word of God. In the defence whereof I must use great plainness of speech, and treat my dearest friends upon earth with the greatest simplicity, faithfulness, and freedom, leaving the consequences of all to God.

For some time before, and especially since my last departure from England, both in public and private, by preaching and printing, you have been propagating the doctrine of *universal redemption*. And when I remember how Paul reprov'd Peter for his dissimulation, I fear I have been sinfully silent too long. O then be not angry with me, dear and honoured Sir, if now I deliver my soul, by telling you that I think in this you greatly err.

'Tis not my design to enter into a long debate on God's decrees. I refer you to Dr. Edwards his *Veritas Redux* [This refers to a work by Dr. John Edwards of Cambridge, not Jonathan Edwards, the famous American pastor-theologian.], which, I think is unanswerable—except in a certain point, concerning a *middle sort* between elect and reprobate, which he himself in effect afterwards condemns.

I shall only make a few remarks upon your sermon, entitled *Free Grace*. And before I enter upon the discourse itself, give me leave to take a little notice of what in your Preface you term an indispensable obligation to make it public to all the world. I must own, that I always thought you were quite mistaken upon that head.

The case (you know) stands thus: When you were at Bristol, I think you received a letter from a private hand, charging you with not preaching the gospel, because you did not preach up election. Upon this you drew a lot: the answer was "*preach and print*." I have often questioned, as I do now, whether in so doing, you did not tempt the Lord. A due exercise of religious prudence, without [the drawing of] a lot, would have directed you in that matter. Besides, I never heard that you enquired of God, whether or not election was a gospel doctrine.

But, I fear, taking it for granted [that election was not a biblical truth], you only enquired whether you should be silent or preach and print against it.

However this be, the lot came out "*preach and print*"; accordingly you preached and printed against election. At my desire, you suppressed the publishing of the sermon whilst I was in England; but you soon sent it into the world after my departure. O that you had kept it in! However, if that sermon was printed in answer to a lot, I am apt to think, one reason why God should so suffer you to be deceived, was, that hereby a special obligation might be laid upon me, faithfully to declare the Scripture doctrine of election, that thus the Lord might give me a fresh opportunity of seeing what was in my heart, and whether I would be true to his cause or not; as you could not but grant, he did once before, by giving you such another lot at Deal.

The morning I sailed from Deal for Gibraltar [2 February 1738], you arrived from Georgia. Instead of giving me an opportunity to converse with you, though the ship was not far off the shore, you drew a lot, and immediately set forward to London. You left a letter behind you, in which were words to this effect: "When I saw [that] God, by the wind which was carrying you out, brought me in, I asked counsel of God. His answer you have enclosed." This was a piece of paper, in which were written these words, "Let him return to London."

When I received this, I was somewhat surprised. Here was a good man telling me he had cast a lot, and that God would have me return to London. On the other hand, I knew my call was to Georgia, and that I had taken leave of London, and could not justly go from the soldiers, who were committed to my charge. I betook myself with a friend to prayer. That passage in 1 Kings 13 was powerfully impressed upon my soul, where we are told that the Prophet was slain by a lion when he was tempted to go back (contrary to God's express order) upon another Prophet's telling him God would have him do so. I wrote you word that I could not return to London. We sailed immediately.

Some months after, I received a letter from you at Georgia, wherein you wrote words to this effect: "Though God never before gave me a wrong lot, yet, perhaps, he suffered me to have such a lot at that time, to try what was in your heart." I should never have published this private transaction to the world, did not the glory of God call me to it. It is plain you had a wrong lot given you here, and justly, because you tempted God in drawing one. And thus I believe it is in the present case. And if so, let not the children of God who are mine and your intimate friends, and also advocates for *universal redemption*, think that doctrine true—because you preached it up in compliance with a lot given out from God.

This, I think, may serve as an answer to that part of the Preface to your printed sermon, wherein you say, "Nothing but the strongest conviction, not only that what is here advanced is the truth as it is in Jesus, but also that I am indispensably obliged to declare this truth to all the world." That you believe what you have written to be truth, and that you honestly aim at God's glory in writing, I do

not in the least doubt. But then, honoured Sir, I cannot but think you have been much mistaken in imagining that your tempting God, by casting a lot in the manner you did could lay you under an *indispensable obligation* to any action, much less to publish your sermon against the doctrine of *predestination to life*.

I must next observe, that as you have been unhappy in printing at all upon such an *imaginary warrant*, so you have been as unhappy in the choice of your text. Honoured Sir, how could it enter into your heart to choose a text to disprove the doctrine of election out of Romans 8, where this doctrine is so plainly asserted? Once I spoke with a Quaker upon this subject, and he had no other way of evading the force of the Apostle's assertion than by saying, "I believe Paul was in the wrong." And another friend lately, who was once highly prejudiced against election, ingenuously confessed that he used to think St. Paul himself was mistaken, or that he was not truly translated.

Indeed, honoured Sir, it is plain beyond all contradiction that St. Paul, through the whole of Romans 8, is speaking of the privileges of those only who are really in Christ. And let any unprejudiced person read what goes before and what follows your text, and he must confess the word "all" only signifies those that are in Christ. And the latter part of the text plainly proves, what, I find, dear Mr. Wesley will, by no means, grant. I mean the *final perseverance* of the children of God: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, [*i.e.*, all Saints] how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32). [He shall give us] grace, in particular, to enable us to persevere, and every thing else necessary to carry us home to our Father's heavenly kingdom.

Had any one a mind to prove the doctrine of *election*, as well as of *final perseverance*, he could hardly wish for a text more fit for his purpose than that which you have chosen to disprove it! One who did not know you would suspect that you were aware of this, for after the first paragraph, I scarce know whether you have mentioned [the text] so much as once through your whole sermon.

But your discourse, in my opinion, is as little to the purpose as your text, and instead of warping, does but more and more confirm me in the belief of the doctrine of God's *eternal election*.

I shall not mention how illogically you have proceeded. Had you written clearly, you should first, honoured Sir, have proved your proposition: "God's grace is free to all." And then by way of inference [you might have] exclaimed against what you call *the horrible decree*. But you knew that people (because *Arminianism*, of late, has so much abounded among us) were generally prejudiced against the doctrine of *reprobation*, and therefore thought if you kept up their dislike of that, you could overthrow the doctrine of election entirely. For, without doubt, the doctrine of election and reprobation must stand or fall together.

But passing by this, as also your equivocal definition of the word *grace*, and your false definition of the word *free*, and that I may be as short as possible, I frankly acknowledge: I believe the doctrine of reprobation, in this view, that God intends to give saving grace, through Jesus Christ, only to a certain number, and that the rest of mankind, after the fall of Adam, being justly left of God to continue in sin, will at last suffer that eternal death which is its proper wages.

This is the established doctrine of Scripture, and acknowledged as such in the 17th article of the Church of England, as Bishop Burnet himself confesses. Yet dear Mr. Wesley absolutely denies it.

But the most important objections you have urged against this doctrine as reasons why you reject it, being seriously considered, and faithfully tried by the Word of God, will appear to be of no force at all. Let the matter be humbly and calmly reviewed, as to the following heads:

First, you say that if this be so (*i.e.*, if there be an election) then is all preaching vain: it is needless to them that are elected; for they, whether with preaching or without, will infallibly be saved. Therefore, the end of preaching to save souls is void with regard to them. And it is useless to them that are not elected, for they cannot possibly be saved. They, whether with preaching or without, will infallibly be damned. The end of preaching is therefore void with regard to them likewise. So that in either case our preaching is vain, and your hearing also vain. Page 10, paragraph 9.

O dear Sir, what kind of reasoning—or rather sophistry—is this! Hath not God, who hath appointed salvation for a certain number, appointed also the preaching of the Word as a means to bring them to it? Does anyone hold election in any other sense? And if so, how is preaching needless to them that are elected, when the gospel is designated by God himself to be the power of God unto their eternal salvation? And since we know not who are elect and who reprobate, we are to preach promiscuously to all. For the Word may be useful, even to the non-elect, in restraining them from much wickedness and sin. However, it is enough to excite to the utmost diligence in preaching and hearing, when we consider that by these means, some, even as many as the Lord hath ordained to eternal life, shall certainly be quickened and enabled to believe. And who that attends, especially with reverence and care, can tell but he may be found of that happy number?

Second, you say that the doctrine of election and reprobation directly tends to destroy holiness, which is the end of all the ordinances of God. For (says the dear mistaken Mr. Wesley) "it wholly takes away those first motives to follow after it, so frequently proposed in Scripture. The hope of future reward, and fear of punishment, the hope of heaven, and the fear of hell, et cetera."

I thought that one who carries perfection to such an exalted pitch as dear Mr. Wesley does, would know that a true lover of the Lord Jesus Christ would strive to be holy for the sake of being holy, and work for Christ out of love and gratitude, without any regard to the rewards of heaven, or fear of hell. You remember, dear Sir, what Scougal says, "Love's a more powerful motive that does them move." But passing by this, and granting that rewards and punishments (as they certainly are) may be motives from which a Christian may be honestly stirred up to act for God, how does the doctrine of election destroy these motives? Do not the elect know that the more good works they do, the greater will be their reward? And is not that encouragement enough to set them upon, and cause them to persevere in working for Jesus Christ? And how does the doctrine of election destroy holiness? Who ever preached any other election than what the Apostle preached, when he said, "Chosen . . . through sanctification of the Spirit?" (2 Thess. 2:13). Nay, is not holiness made a mark of our election by all that preach it? And how then can the doctrine of election destroy holiness?

The instance which you bring to illustrate your assertion, indeed, dear Sir, is quite impertinent. For you say, "If a sick man knows that he must unavoidably die or unavoidably recover, though he knows not which, it is not reasonable to take any physic at all." Dear Sir, what absurd reasoning is here? Were you ever sick in your life? If so, did not the bare probability or possibility of your recovering,

though you knew it was unalterably fixed that you must live or die, encourage you to take physic? For how did you know but that very physic might be the means God intended to recover you by?

Just thus it is as to the doctrine of election. I know that it is unalterably fixed (one may say) that I must be damned or saved; but since I know not which for a certainty, why should I not strive, though at present in a state of nature, since I know not but this striving may be the means God has intended to bless, in order to bring me into a state of grace?

Dear Sir, consider these things. Make an impartial application, and then judge what little reason you had to conclude the 10th paragraph, page 12, with these words: "So directly does this doctrine tend to shut the very gate of holiness in general, to hinder unholy men from ever approaching thereto, or striving to enter in thereat."

"As directly," you say, "does the doctrine tend to destroy several particular branches of holiness, such as meekness, love, et cetera." I shall say little, dear Sir, in answer to this paragraph. Dear Mr. Wesley perhaps has been disputing with some warm narrow-spirited men that held election, and then he infers that their warmth and narrowness of spirit was owing to their principles? But does not dear Mr. Wesley know many dear children of God, who are predestinarians, and yet are meek, lowly, pitiful, courteous, tender-hearted, kind, of a catholic spirit, and hope to see the most vile and profligate of men converted? And why? because they know God saved themselves by an act of his electing love, and they know not but he may have elected those who now seem to be the most abandoned.

But, dear Sir, we must not judge of the truth of principles in general, nor of this of election in particular, entirely from the practice of some that profess to hold them. If so, I am sure much might be said against your own. For I appeal to your own heart, whether or not you have not felt in yourself, or observed in others, a narrow-spiritedness, and some disunion of soul respecting those that hold *universal redemption*. If so, then according to your own rule, *universal redemption* is *wrong*, because it destroys several branches of holiness, such as meekness, love, et cetera. But not to insist upon this, I beg you would observe that your inference is entirely set aside by the force of the Apostle's argument, and the language which he expressly uses in Colossians 3:12-13: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

Here we see that the Apostle exhorts them to put on bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, et cetera, upon this consideration: namely, because they were elect of God. And all who have experientially felt this doctrine in their hearts feel that these graces are the genuine effects of their being elected of God.

But perhaps dear Mr. Wesley may be mistaken in this point, and call that passion which is only zeal for God's truths. You know, dear Sir, the Apostle exhorts us to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Therefore you must not condemn all that appear zealous for the doctrine of election as narrow-spirited, or persecutors, just because they think it their duty to oppose you. I am sure, I love you in the bowels of Jesus Christ, and think I could lay down my life for your sake; but yet, dear Sir, I cannot help strenuously opposing your errors upon this important subject, because I think you warmly, though not designedly, oppose the truth, as it is in Jesus. May the Lord remove the scales of prejudice from off the eyes of your mind and give you a zeal according to true Christian knowledge!

Third, says your sermon, "This doctrine tends to destroy the comforts of religion, the happiness of Christianity, et cetera."

But how does Mr. Wesley know this, who never believed election? I believe they who have experienced it will agree with our 17th article, that "the godly consideration of predestination, and election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing their minds to high and heavenly things, as well because it does greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation, to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God," et cetera.

This plainly shows that our godly reformers did not think election destroyed holiness or the comforts of religion. As for my own part, this doctrine is my daily support. I should utterly sink under a dread of my impending trials, were I not firmly persuaded that God has chosen me in Christ from before the foundation of the world, and that now being effectually called, he will allow no one to pluck me out of his almighty hand.

You proceed thus: "This is evident as to all those who believe themselves to be reprobate, or only suspect or fear it; all the great and precious promises are lost to them; they afford them no ray of comfort."

In answer to this, let me observe that none living, especially none who are desirous of salvation, can know that they are not of the number of God's elect. None but the unconverted, can have any just reason so much as to fear it. And would dear Mr. Wesley give comfort, or dare you apply the precious promises of the gospel, being children's bread, to men in a natural state, while they continue so? God forbid! What if the doctrine of election and reprobation *does* put some upon doubting? So does that of regeneration. But, is not this doubting a good means to put them upon searching and striving; and that striving, a good means to make their calling and their election sure?

This is one reason among many others why I admire the doctrine of election and am convinced that it should have a place in gospel ministrations and should be insisted on with faithfulness and care. It has a natural tendency to rouse the soul out of its carnal security. And therefore many carnal men cry out against it. Whereas universal redemption is a notion sadly adapted to keep the soul in its lethargic sleepy condition, and therefore so many natural men admire and applaud it.

Your 13th, 14th and 15th paragraphs come next to be considered. "The witness of the Spirit," you say, "experience shows to be much obstructed by this doctrine."

But, dear Sir, whose experience? Not your own; for in your journal, from your embarking for Georgia, to your return to London, you seem to acknowledge that you have it not, and therefore you are no competent judge in this matter. You must mean then the experience of others. For you say in the same paragraph, "Even in those who have tasted of that good gift, who yet have soon lost it again," (I suppose you mean lost the sense of it again) "and fallen back into doubts and fears and darkness, even horrible darkness that might be felt, et cetera." Now, as to the darkness of desertion, was not this the case of Jesus Christ himself, after he had received

an unmeasurable unction of the Holy Ghost? Was not his soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, in the garden? And was he not surrounded with an horrible darkness, even a darkness that might be felt, when on the cross he cried out, "My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

And that all his followers are liable to the same, is it not evident from Scripture? For, says the Apostle, "He was tempted in all things like as we are" (Heb 4:15) so that he himself might be able to succour those that are tempted (Heb. 2:18). And is not their liableness thereunto consistent with that conformity to him in suffering, which his members are to bear (Phil. 3:10)? Why then should persons falling into darkness, after they have received the witness of the Spirit, be any argument against the doctrine of election?

"Yet," you say, "many, very many of those that hold it not, in all parts of the earth, have enjoyed the uninterrupted witness of the Spirit, the continual light of God's countenance, from the moment wherein they first believed, for many months or years, to this very day." But how does dear Mr. Wesley know this? Has he consulted the experience of many, very many in all parts of the earth? Or could he be sure of what he hath advanced without sufficient grounds, would it follow that their being kept in this light is owing to their not believing the doctrine of election? No, this [doctrine], according to the sentiments of our church, "greatly confirms and establishes a true Christian's faith of eternal salvation through Christ," and is an anchor of hope, both sure and steadfast, when he walks in darkness and sees no light; as certainly he may, even after he hath received the witness of the Spirit, whatever you or others may unadvisedly assert to the contrary.

Then, to have respect to God's everlasting covenant, and to throw himself upon the free distinguishing love of that God who changeth not, will make him lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.

But without the belief of the doctrine of election, and the immutability of the free love of God, I cannot see how it is possible that any should have a comfortable assurance of eternal salvation. What could it signify to a man whose conscience is thoroughly awakened, and who is warned in good earnest to seek deliverance from the wrath to come, though he should be assured that all his past sins be forgiven, and that he is now a child of God; if notwithstanding this, he may hereafter become a child of the devil, and be cast into hell at last? Could such an assurance yield any solid, lasting comfort to a person convinced of the corruption and treachery of his own heart, and of the malice, subtlety, and power of Satan? No! That which alone deserves the name of a full assurance of faith is such an assurance as emboldens the believer, under the sense of his interest in distinguishing love, to give the challenge to all his adversaries, whether men or devils, and that with regard to all their future, as well as present, attempts to destroy—saying with the Apostle,

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:33-39).

This, dear Sir, is the triumphant language of every soul that has attained a full assurance of faith. And this assurance can only arise from a belief of God's electing everlasting love. That many have an assurance they are in Christ today, but take no thought for, or are not assured they shall be in him tomorrow—nay to all eternity—is rather their imperfection and unhappiness than their privilege. I pray God to bring all such to a sense of his eternal love, that they may no longer build upon their own faithfulness, but on the unchangeableness of that God whose gifts and callings are without repentance. For those whom God has once justified, he also will glorify.

I observed before, dear Sir, it is not always a safe rule to judge of the truth of principles from people's practice. And therefore, supposing that all who hold *universal redemption* in your way of explaining it, after they received faith, enjoyed the continual uninterrupted sight of God's countenance, it does not follow that this is a fruit of their principle. For that I am sure has a natural tendency to keep the soul in darkness for ever, because the creature thereby is taught that his being kept in a state of salvation is owing to his own free will. And what a sandy foundation is that for a poor creature to build his hopes of perseverance upon? Every relapse into sin, every surprise by temptation, must throw him "into doubts and fears, into horrible darkness, even darkness that may be felt."

Hence it is that the letters which have been lately sent me by those who hold universal redemption are dead and lifeless, dry and inconsistent, in comparison of those I receive from persons on the contrary side. Those who settle in the universal scheme, though they might begin in the Spirit, (whatever they may say to the contrary) are ending in the flesh, and building up a righteousness founded on their own free will: whilst the others triumph in hope of the glory of God, and build upon God's never-failing promise and unchangeable love, even when his sensible presence is withdrawn from them.

But I would not judge of the truth of election by the experience of any particular persons: if I did (O bear with me in this foolishness of boasting) I think I myself might glory in election. For these five or six years I have received the witness of God's Spirit; since that, blessed be God, I have not doubted a quarter of an hour of a saving interest in Jesus Christ: but with grief and humble shame I do acknowledge, I have fallen into sin often since that. Though I do not—dare not—allow of any one transgression, yet hitherto I have not been (nor do I expect that while I am in this present world I ever shall be) able to live one day perfectly free from all defects and sin. And since the Scriptures declare that there is not a just man upon earth (no, not among those of the highest attainments in grace) that doeth good and sinneth not (Eccl. 7:20), we are sure that this will be the case of all the children of God.

The universal experience and acknowledgement of this among the godly in every age is abundantly sufficient to confute the error of those who hold in an absolute sense that after a man is born again he cannot commit sin. Especially since the Holy Spirit condemns the persons who say they have no sin as deceiving themselves, as being destitute of the truth, and as making God a liar (1 Jn. 1:8, 10). I have been also in heaviness through manifold temptations, and expect to be often so before I die. Thus were the Apostles and primitive Christians themselves. Thus was Luther, that man of God, who, as far as I can find, did not peremptorily, at least, hold election; and the great John Arndt was in the utmost perplexity, but a quarter of an hour before he died, and yet he was no predestinarian.

And if I must speak freely, I believe your fighting so strenuously against the doctrine of election and pleading so vehemently for a sinless perfection are among the reasons or culpable causes, why you are kept out of the liberties of the gospel, and from that full assurance of faith which they enjoy, who have experimentally tasted, and daily feed upon God's electing, everlasting love.

But perhaps you may say, that Luther and Arndt were no Christians, at least very weak ones. I know you think meanly of Abraham, though he was eminently called the friend of God: and, I believe, also of David, the man after God's own heart. No wonder, therefore, that in a letter you sent me not long since, you should tell me that no Baptist or Presbyterian writer whom you have read knew anything of the liberties of Christ. What? Neither Bunyan, Henry, Flavel, Halyburton, nor any of the New England and Scots divines? See, dear Sir, what narrow-spiritedness and want of charity arise from your principles, and then do not cry out against election any more on account of its being "destructive of meekness and love."

Fourth, I shall now proceed to another head. Says the dear Mr. Wesley, "How uncomfortable a thought is this, that thousands and millions of men, without any preceding offence or fault of theirs, were unchangeably doomed to everlasting burnings?"

But who ever asserted, that thousands and millions of men, *without any preceding offence or fault of theirs*, were unchangeably doomed to everlasting burnings? Do not they who believe God's dooming men to everlasting burnings, also believe, that God looked upon them as men fallen in Adam? And that the decree which ordained the punishment first regarded the crime by which it was deserved? How then are they doomed without any preceding fault? Surely Mr. Wesley will own God's justice in imputing Adam's sin to his posterity. And also, after Adam fell, and his posterity in him, God might justly have passed them *all* by, without sending his own Son to be a saviour for any one. Unless you heartily agree to both these points, you do not believe original sin aright. If you do own them, then you must acknowledge the doctrine of election and reprobation to be highly just and reasonable. For if God might justly impute Adam's sin to all, and afterwards have passed by all, then he might justly pass by *some*. Turn on the right hand, or on the left; you are reduced to an inextricable dilemma. And, if you would be consistent, you must either give up the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin, or receive the amiable doctrine of election, with a holy and righteous reprobation as its consequent. For whether you can believe it or not, the Word of God abides faithful: "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" (Rom. 11:7).

Your 17th paragraph, page 16, I pass over. What has been said on the 9th and 10th paragraphs, with a little alteration, will answer it. I shall only say, it is the doctrine of election that most presses me to abound in good works. I am willing to suffer all things for the elect's sake. This makes me to preach with comfort, because I know salvation does not depend on man's free will, but the Lord makes willing in the day of his power, and can make use of me to bring some of his elect home, when and where he pleases.

But, **Fifth**, you say, "This doctrine has a direct manifest tendency to overthrow the whole Christian religion. For," say you, "supposing that eternal, unchangeable decree, one part of mankind must be saved, though the Christian revelation were not in being."

But, dear Sir, how does that follow? Since it is only by the Christian revelation that we are acquainted with God's design of saving his church by the death of his Son. Yea, it is settled in the everlasting covenant that this salvation shall be applied to the elect through the knowledge and faith of him. As the prophet says in Isaiah 53:11, "*By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.*" How then has the doctrine of election a direct tendency to overthrow the whole Christian revelation? Who ever thought that God's declaration to Noah, that seed-time and harvest should never cease, could afford an argument for the neglect of plowing or sowing? Or that the unchangeable purpose of God, that harvest should not fail, rendered the heat of the sun, or the influence of the heavenly bodies unnecessary to produce it? No more does God's absolute purpose of saving his chosen preclude the necessity of the gospel revelation, or the use of any of the means through which he has determined the decree shall take effect. Nor will the right understanding, or the reverent belief of God's decree, ever allow or suffer a Christian in any case to separate the means from the end, or the end from the means.

And since we are taught by the revelation itself that this was intended and given by God as a means of bringing home his elect, we therefore receive it with joy, prize it highly, use it in faith, and endeavour to spread it through all the world, in the full assurance, that wherever God sends it, sooner or later, it shall be savingly useful to all the elect within its call.

How then, in holding this doctrine, do we join with modern unbelievers in making the Christian revelation unnecessary? No, dear Sir, you mistake. Infidels of all kinds are on *your* side of the question. Deists, Arians, and Socinians arraign God's sovereignty and stand up for universal redemption. I pray God that dear Mr. Wesley's sermon, as it has grieved the hearts of many of God's children, may not also strengthen the hands of many of his most avowed enemies!

Here I could almost lie down and weep. "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph" (2 Sam. 1:20).

Further, you say, "This doctrine makes revelation contradict itself." For instance, say you, "The assertors of this doctrine interpret that text of Scripture, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated, as implying that God, in a literal sense, hated Esau and all the reprobates from eternity!" And, when considered as fallen in Adam, were they not objects of his hatred? And might not God, of his own good pleasure, love or show mercy to Jacob and the elect—and yet at the same time do the reprobate no wrong? But you say, "God is love." And cannot God be love, unless he shows the same mercy to all?

Again, says dear Mr. Wesley, "They infer from that text, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,' that God is merciful only to some men, viz the elect; and that he has mercy for those only, flatly contrary to which is the whole tenor of the Scripture, as is that express declaration in particular, 'The Lord is loving to every man, and his mercy is over all his works.'"

And so it is, but not his *saving* mercy. God is loving to every man: he sends his rain upon the evil and upon the good. But you say, "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34). No! For every one, whether Jew or Gentile, that believeth on Jesus, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him. "But he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk. 16:16). For God is no respecter of persons, upon the account of any outward condition or circumstance in life whatever; nor does the doctrine of election in the least suppose him to be so. But as the sovereign Lord of all, who is debtor to none, he has a right to do what he will with his own, and to dispense his favours to what objects he sees fit, merely at his pleasure. And his supreme right herein is clearly and strongly asserted in those passages of Scripture, where he says, "Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have

compassion" (Rom. 9:15, Exod. 33:19).

Further, from the text, "the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her [Rebekah], The elder shall serve the younger" (Rom. 9:11-12)—you represent us as inferring that our predestination to life in no way depends on the foreknowledge of God.

But who infers this, dear Sir? For if foreknowledge signifies approbation, as it does in several parts of Scripture, then we confess that predestination and election *do* depend on God's foreknowledge. But if by God's foreknowledge you understand God's fore-seeing some good works done by his creatures as the foundation or reason of choosing them and therefore electing them, then we say that in this sense predestination does not any way depend on God's foreknowledge.

But I referred you, at the beginning of this letter, to Dr. Edwards's *Veritas Redux*, which I recommended to you also in a late letter, with Elisha Coles on *God's Sovereignty*. Be pleased to read these, and also the excellent sermons of Mr. Cooper of Boston in New England (which I also sent you) and I doubt not but you will see all your objections answered. Though I would observe, that after all our reading on both sides the question, we shall never in this life be able to search out God's decrees to perfection. No, we must humbly adore what we cannot comprehend, and with the great Apostle at the end of our enquiries cry out, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" (Rom. 11:33-34)—or with our Lord, when he was admiring God's sovereignty, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Matt. 11:26).

However, it may not be amiss to take notice, that if those texts, "The Lord is . . . not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9) and "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezek. 33:11)—and such like—be taken in their strictest sense, then no one will be damned.

But here's the distinction. God taketh no pleasure in the death of sinners, so as to delight simply in their death; but he delights to magnify his justice, by inflicting the punishment which their iniquities have deserved. As a righteous judge who takes no pleasure in condemning a criminal, may yet justly command him to be executed, that law and justice may be satisfied, even though it be in his power to procure him a reprieve.

I would hint further, that you unjustly charge the doctrine of *reprobation* with blasphemy, whereas the doctrine of *universal redemption*, as you set it forth, is really the highest reproach upon the dignity of the Son of God, and the merit of his blood. Consider whether it be not rather blasphemy to say as you do, "Christ not only died for those that are saved, but also for those that perish."

The text you have misapplied to gloss over this, see explained by Ridgely, Edwards, Henry; and I purposely omit answering your texts myself so that you may be brought to read such treatises, which, under God, would show you your error. You cannot make good the assertion that Christ died for them that perish without holding (as Peter Bohler, one of the Moravian brethren, in order to make out universal redemption, lately frankly confessed in a letter) that all the damned souls would hereafter be brought out of hell. I cannot think Mr. Wesley is thus minded. And yet unless this can be proved, universal redemption, taken in a literal sense, falls entirely to the ground. For how can all be universally redeemed, if all are not finally saved?

Dear Sir, for Jesus Christ's sake, consider how you dishonour God by denying election. You plainly make salvation depend not on *God's free grace*, but on *man's free-will*. And if thus, it is more than probable, Jesus Christ would not have had the satisfaction of seeing the fruit of his death in the eternal salvation of one soul. Our preaching would then be vain, and all invitations for people to believe in him would also be in vain.

But, blessed be God, our Lord knew for whom he died. There was an eternal compact between the Father and the Son. A certain number was then given him as the purchase and reward of his obedience and death. For these he prayed (Jn. 17:9), and *not for the world*. For these elect ones, and these only, he is now interceding, and with their salvation he will be fully satisfied.

I purposely omit making any further particular remarks on the several last pages of your sermon. Indeed had not your name, dear Sir, been prefixed to the sermon, I could not have been so uncharitable as to think you were the author of such sophistry. You beg the question, in saying that God has declared, (notwithstanding you own, I suppose, some will be damned) that he will save all—*i.e.*, every individual person. You take it for granted (for solid proof you have none) that God is unjust, if he passes by any, and then you exclaim against the "*horrible decree*": and yet, as I before hinted, in holding the doctrine of original sin, you profess to believe that he might justly have passed by all.

Dear, dear Sir, O be not offended! For Christ's sake be not rash! Give yourself to reading. Study the covenant of grace. Down with your carnal reasoning. Be a little child; and then, instead of pawning your salvation, as you have done in a late hymn book, if the doctrine of *universal redemption* be not true; instead of talking of *sinless perfection*, as you have done in the preface to that hymn book, and making man's salvation to depend on his *own free will*, as you have in this sermon; you will compose a hymn in praise of sovereign distinguishing love. You will caution believers against striving to work a perfection out of their own hearts, and print another sermon the reverse of this, and entitle it "*Free Grace Indeed*." Free, not because free to all; but free, because God may withhold or give it to whom and when he pleases.

Till you do this, I must doubt whether or not you know yourself. In the meanwhile, I cannot but blame you for censuring the clergy of our church for not keeping to their articles, when you yourself by your principles, positively deny the 9th, 10th and 17th.

Dear Sir, these things ought not so to be. God knows my heart, as I told you before, so I declare again, nothing but a single regard to the honour of Christ has forced this letter from me. I love and honour you for his sake; and when I come to judgment, will thank you before men and angels, for what you have, under God, done for my soul.

There, I am persuaded, I shall see dear Mr. Wesley convinced of election and everlasting love. And it often fills me with pleasure to think how I shall behold you casting your crown down at the feet of the Lamb, and as it were filled with a holy blushing for opposing the divine sovereignty in the manner you have done.

But I hope the Lord will show you this before you go hence. O how do I long for that day! If the Lord should be pleased to make use of this letter for that purpose, it would abundantly rejoice the heart of, dear and honoured Sir,

Yours affectionate, though unworthy brother and servant in Christ,

GEORGE WHITEFIELD.

Synergism: The Fatal Leaven

Chapter 21

The Leaven of Synergism

Throughout the centuries since God covenanted to save man through the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ, whereby He provided a full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction for our sins, one aberration of the Gospel has recurrently threatened the truth. It is the view that man must make some contribution himself in securing his salvation. It is not the size of this contribution that is the important factor, but the necessity of it.

It is as though healing is promised to a terminally ill patient if only he will prepare himself in some way, or yield himself, or present himself at his own expense before the physician. The Roman Catholic Church holds strongly to the view that some self-preparation is essential, usually in the form of a willingness to make amends for wrongs done, or to effect some self-correction in order to merit the grace of God. The Lutherans place the emphasis on the necessity of man's willingness to accept God's salvation. Modern evangelism calls upon men to "make an active decision" as though to pick up the phone and arrange an appointment. Or the patient is invited at least to unlock the door before the physician can make this call and heal him. This door is locked on the inside and can be unlocked only by the patient.

But there is no question of the patient's healing himself. On this there is a wide measure of unanimity. He does need the Savior; but he is not considered to be without any ability to assist in some way, or at least to cooperate in the healing process, though the measure of his cooperation may amount to no more than that he allow the physician to visit his soul.

Whatever form the human contribution takes, it always means that salvation is a cooperative activity. Salvation is not a God-only process, but a God-and process. This working together is termed Synergism. Such Synergism was a religious philosophy with humanistic overtones even in Old Testament times, and it has been in evidence in every generation. It is man's demand not to be considered impotent, Man admits his sickness, but he is unwilling to admit his death.

Theologically, Synergism is fatal to any sound Christian soteriology, for it is a denial of man's total bondage in sin and a claim to some remaining will to absolute good. By and large, the Greek Fathers were always content to place the grace of God and the free will of man side by side, and as a consequence, the Greek Catholic Church early assumed a synergistic position. The Roman Catholic Church followed suit--though somewhat more slowly. Since the Council of Trent it has held dogmatically that man prepares himself and disposes his own heart to receive the grace of justification. (1)

The Reformation was a total break with this almost universal teaching, a recovery of a truly monergistic doctrine of salvation, a *Solus Deus* position. But like all other revivals of the truth of the Gospel, it soon began to be plagued by those who demanded that allowance be made for man's autonomy if he was not to be a mere puppet, some tiny admission of spiritual competence, some small part which man might be called upon to play, as a sound basis for exhortation in preaching the Gospel and as an incentive to those striving after holiness.

Luther himself was wholly committed to a God-only position. Unregenerate man is spiritually dead, not perfectly well as Pelagius held, nor merely sick as Arminius held, but completely dead as Calvin held. We have already traced briefly the gradual leavening of Luther's position by the synergistic tendencies of those who followed him (Chapter 4). This fatal return to the heresy of all ages was, in Germany, largely the result of one man, Melancthon (1497-1560).

It was this godly and gentle man whose humanistic influence introduced once again the corrupting stream into Lutheran theology, where it took the seemingly harmless form of attributing to man nothing of a positive nature but only a non-resistance to the overtures of God without which the Holy Spirit is unable to make the grace of God effectual unto salvation. Luther was aware of this tendency from its first reappearance among his disciples and spoke out strongly against it. He said (in *Table Talk*, under the heading "Of Free Will"):

Some allege that the Holy Spirit works not in those that resist Him but only in such as are willing and give consent thereto, whence it follows that free will is a cause and helper of faith; and consequently the Holy Ghost does not work alone through the word, but that our will does something therein.

But I say it is not so; the will of man works not at all in his conversion and justification...It is a matter on which the Holy Spirit works (as a potter makes a pot out of clay), equally in those that are averse and remiss as in St. Paul. But after the Holy Spirit has wrought in the wills of such resistants, then He also manages that the will be consenting thereto. (2)

Luther agreed that Melancthon seemed to be asking very little when he proposed that we grant only man's non-resistance as his contribution. But Luther warned that this "very little" was more dangerous than the "very much" that the Pelagians demanded when they argued that man was wholly capable of meriting the grace of God, for it had the appearance of a relatively harmless concession whereas in fact it was a fatal one. For those who support it are teaching that "we are able to obtain righteousness and grace by that 'very little.'" The Pelagians struck Luther as being more forthright. He saw Melancthon's apparently mad concession as the more dangerous because it was less patent. The very violence of his diatribe against Erasmus in his famous work on *The Bondage of the Will* stemmed from the subtlety of this synergistic position. And in this connection Luther wrote:

These [Pelagians] assert that it is not a certain little something in us by which we obtain grace, but we obtain it by whole,

full, perfect, great and many efforts and works. Our adversaries [the followers of Melancthon], however, declare that it is a mere trifle and practically nothing at all by which we merit grace. (3)

And here, as Luther saw it, was the danger. It is no longer the Gospel of the sovereign grace of God that we are proclaiming, but the delusion of the sovereignty of man who in the final analysis holds the trump card. It is not a Gospel of revelation but a Gospel of common sense, for why would God command men to repent or yield to the overtures of the Holy Spirit if man did not of his own have freedom of will to do so?

In the Western Church the drift to Synergism was slower than in the East. At the Council of Orange (A.D. 529) it had been agreed that "God does not wait for man's decision." (4) But at the Council of Trent (1545-63) the synergistic view was officially written into the theology of the Roman Catholic Church, it there being agreed that man's will is a decisive factor. Berkhof says: "In the days of the Reformation the monergism of the Reformers was opposed by the Roman Catholic Church with greater vehemence than any other doctrine." (5) Indeed it may very well have been the major reason for the calling of the Council of Trent in the first place.

The Reformation was nothing less than the purging out of this synergistic tendency. And yet so strongly entrenched in human nature is its basic philosophy that within fifty years it was, as we have seen, once again embraced by the Lutheran community, and the terms of surrender were couched virtually in the words of Melancthon. Melancthon held that conversion is the result of the combined action of three causes: (1) the truth of God; (2) the Holy Spirit; and (3) the will of man. He made a *facultas* out of a mere *capacitas*, an active ability for grace out of a passive aptitude for the reception of it. (6) And so after over five hundred pages of debate and discussion of the issue, the *Formula of Concord* finally confesses: "Towards this work [of grace] the will of the person who is to be converted does nothing but only *lets God work* [in him] (my emphasis)! until he is converted." (7)

Meanwhile Arminius, assuming this active ability on the part of the unregenerate man, argued that the basis of Predestination to Election was God's foreknowledge of those who would exercise this capacity responsively. And by this heresy he left a similar community of misguided followers both in Holland and, even more seriously, in England and the New World, who, holding the synergistic view, formed a further major division of the Church of God. Methodism, and out of Methodism a number of other denominational bodies, cultivated the error which has largely inspired modern evangelistic methods. Such human techniques of persuasion are held to be in line with God's appointed method of reaching the unregenerate. Thus man usurps the convicting role of the Holy Spirit of God.

The consequences of these "persuasive techniques" in the free world are yet to become fully apparent. Already we see a great resurgence of religious enthusiasm, but if we look at the staying power of these thousands of decisions for the Lord it has to be admitted that the picture they often present a few months after "conversion" suggests there may be something seriously amiss with the method of evangelism, if not perhaps even more seriously with the theology which has inspired the method.

Karl Barth in a small volume entitled *God in Action*, sometimes referred to as his "Little Dogmatics," elaborates on this issue. To him Monergism is the keystone to any stand by the Church against the secular authority because it places the outcome of events squarely in the hands of God. As soon as we begin to say "God *and*," man becomes increasingly important as the decision maker and God decreasingly so. In due time God is reduced almost to the position of assistant or even bystander. The battle becomes not the Lord's but man's. When the world comes in like a flood to overwhelm the Church as Hitler's world did, man finds himself alone in his weakness and no longer able to meet the challenge. In 1934 Barth said to an English audience:

I'm sure that everyone of you is horrified [i.e.. by what was happening to the Christian Church in Germany, and says in his heart I thank God that I am not a German Christian]. I assure you that it will be the end of your road, too. It has its beginning with "Christian life" and ends in paganism.

For, if you once admit not only God but I also, and if your heart is with the latter--and friends, that's where you have it--there's no stopping it...

Let me warn you now. If you start with God and...you are opening the doors to every demon. And the charge which I raise against you, I lay before you in the words of Anselm: *Tu non eons; considerastzi quandi ponderis sit peccatum!* You have failed to consider the weight of sin. And that is the sin that man takes himself so very seriously. (8)

This seemingly small concession to which Luther refers always has had the effect of opening the way to a flood of error that effectively neutralizes Paul's Gospel of salvation by faith without works. As W. G. T. Shedd observed:

The position of partial ability or synergism comes to the same result with that of full ability [i.e., Pelagianism] so far as divine independence and sovereignty are concerned. For it is this decision of the sinner to contribute his quota, to do his part in the transaction, which conditions the result. It is indeed true, upon this theory, that if God does not assent, the act of faith is impossible. But it is equally true that if the sinner does not assist, the act of faith is impossible. Neither party alone and by himself can originate faith in Christ's atonement. God is as dependent in this respect as man. (9)

G. C. Berkouwer wrote in a similar vein: "This theme of synthesis [between God's grace and man's power of decision] runs like a red thread through the history of the doctrine of election. It is the theme of harmony, of cooperation." (10) And it is a poison, fatal to the Gospel. It is a heresy that slowly undermines all the implications of the truth of the sovereign grace of God. Warfield refers to it as,

...the evil leaven of synergism, by which God is robbed of his glory and man is encouraged to attribute to some power, some act, some initiative of his own, his participation in that salvation which has come to him from pure grace...Any intrusion of any human merit, or act, or disposition, or power, as ground or cause or occasion, into the process of divine salvation--whether in the way of power to resist or ability to improve grace, or the employment of grace already received--is a breach with Calvin. (11)

And a breach with Calvin in this respect is a breach with Augustine and, more importantly, a breach with Paul. In short, the difference between a monergistic and a synergistic faith, between a *God only* and a *God and* Gospel, is nothing less than the difference between the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on the one hand, and all other religious systems of belief, whether pagan or

so-called Christian, on the other. There are basically only two alternatives. If man contributes any essential part towards his salvation, he effectively becomes his own savior, even if that contribution takes no more concrete form than that of merely allowing God to act by non-resistance.

There is here a clear point of demarcation. It is all of God or it is no good news at all. If man is free to resist, God is not free to act, for He is bound by man's freedom. If God is to be free to act, man must be bound by the will of God. There can be nothing harmful in such a bondage, since perfect freedom by definition is perfect obedience to perfect law, and "the law of the Lord is perfect" (Ps. 19:7). In the perfect order which is yet to come there can never be any conflict of wills since God's will and man's will are to be one, and both are therefore to be entirely free. But in a fallen world, God's grace must be irresistible or man's will can remain forever opposed to God, and the will of the creature overrides the will of the Creator.

In truth-there is no "Gospel" that is not entirely rooted in the sovereignty of God's grace in salvation, which is the sum and substance of Calvinism. And I venture to say that it must be not merely a three-point or a four-point Calvinism, but a five-point Calvinism. To depart from this is to surrender the whole by giving it a logical incoherence which makes it indefensible whether from Scripture or by reason. The crucial issue is the sovereignty of God's grace in the most absolute sense, a pure unabashed Monergism.

The only defense against Synergism is an unqualified Calvinism ascribing all the glory to God by insisting upon the total spiritual impotence of man, an Election based solely upon the good pleasure of God, an Atonement intended only for the elect though sufficient for all men, a grace that can neither be resisted nor earned, and a security for the believer that is as permanent as God Himself.

If such a system creates some problems because of the limitations of our comprehension, the problems it creates are not nearly as serious as the problems of another kind created by the alternatives which in fact destroy the Gospel altogether by dishonoring the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ both as to its sufficiency and its efficacy.

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4. G. C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics: Divine Election*, p. 31.
5. Berkhof, *History of Christian Thought*, p. 146.
6. Augustus Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 816.
7. *Book of Concord*, p. 539.
8. *God in Action*, pp. 137f.
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10. *Divine Election*, p. 29.
11. Benjamin B. Warfield, *Calvin as a Theologian and Calvinism Today*, pp. 16.

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Arminian Theory of Redemption

by R. L. Dabney

THE subjects which are now brought under discussion introduce us to the very center of the points which are debated between us and Arminians. I propose, therefore, for their further illustration, and because no better occasion offers, to consider here their scheme.

SOURCES OF THE ARMINIAN THEOLOGY

The sources of Arminian Theology would be best found in the apology of Episcopius, Limborch's Christian Theology, and Knapp's Christian Theology. Among the English may be consulted, as a low Arminian, Daniel Whitby's Five Points; as high Arminians, Wesley's Doctrinal Tracts, and Watson's Theological Institutes. For refutation of Arminianism, see Stapfer, Vol. 4; Turretin; Hill, bk. 4, ch. 9.

I. A CONNECTED VIEW OF THE ARMINIAN TENETS:

FIVE POINTS OF REMONSTRANTS AMBIGUOUS

The five points handed in by the Arminians to the States General of Holland, in their celebrated Remonstrants, were so covertly worded as scarcely to disclose their true sentiments. The assertions concerning original Sin and Free will, were seemingly such as Calvinists could accept. The doctrine of common grace was but obscurely hinted; and the perseverance of Saints was only doubted. But their system soon developed itself into semi-Pelagianism, well polished and knit together. Discarding the order of the five points, I will exhibit the theory in its logical connection.

LOGICAL SOURCE IN DOCTRINE OF INDIFFERENCY OF THE WILL. VIEW OF ORIGINAL SIN

1. Its starting point is the doctrine of indifference of the will, and a denial of total depravity, as held by Calvinists. According to the universal consent of Pelagians and Socinians, this self-determination of the will is held necessary to proper free agency and responsibility. Take Whitby as a type of the grosser Arminians. He thinks Adam was created liable, but not subject, to bodily death, and his immunity in Paradise was secured by his access to the Tree of Life. His sin made death and its attendant pains inevitable; and this his posterity inherit, according to the natural law, that like begets like. This has produced a set of circumstances, making all men so liable to sin, that, practically, none escape. But this results from no moral necessity or certainty of the will. Man has natural desires for natural good, but this concupiscentia is not sin till formed into a positive volition. But the sense of guilt and fear drives man from God, the pressure of earthly ills tends to earthly mindedness; man's pains make him querulous, envious, inordinate in desire; and above all, a general evil example misleads. So that all are, in fact, precipitated into sin, in virtue of untoward circumstances inherited from Adam. This is the only sense in which Adam is our federal head. This relation is not only illustrated by, but similar to that which exists between a bad parent and an unfortunate offspring now--in instance of the same natural law.

WESLEYAN VIEW OF ORIGINAL SIN

But Wesley and Watson repudiate this, as too low; and teach a fall in Adam, prior to its reparation by common grace, going as far as moderate Calvinists. Watson, for instance (Vol. 2, p. 53 &c.,) says that imputation is considered by theologians as mediate and immediate. Mediate imputation he says, is "our mortality of body and corruption of moral nature in virtue of our derivation from Adam." Immediate means "that Adam's sin is accounted ours in the sight of God, by virtue of our federal relation." This, the student will perceive, is a very different distinction from that drawn by the Reformed divines. Watson then repudiates the first statement as defective; and the latter as extreme. Here he evidently misunderstands us; for he proceeds to say, with Dr. Watts, that Adam did act as a public person; our federal head, and that the penal consequences of our sin (not the sin itself), are accounted to us, consisting of bodily ills and death, privation of God's indwelling, (which results in positive depravity) and eternal death. In this sense, says he, "we may safely contend for the imputation of Adam's sin."

But in defending against Pelagians, &c., the justice of this arrangement of God, he says it must be viewed in connection with that purpose of redemption towards the human race which co-existed in the divine mind, by which God purposed to purchase and bestow common grace on every fallen man thus repairing his loss in Adam. (The fatal objection to such a justification is, that then God would have been under obligations to provide man a Savior; and Christ's mission would not have been of pure grace).

COMMON SUFFICIENT GRACE

2. This leads us to their next point: God having intended all along to repair the fall, and having immediately thereafter given a promise to our first parents, has ever since communicated to all mankind a common precedaneous sufficient grace, purchased for all by Christ's work. This is not sufficient to effect a complete redemption, but to enable, both naturally and morally, to fulfil the conditions for securing redeeming grace. This common grace consists in the indifference of man's will remaining notwithstanding his fall, the lights of natural conscience, good impulses enabling unregenerate men to do works of social virtue, the outward call of mercy made, as some Arminians suppose, even to heathens through reason, and some lower forms of universal spiritual influence. The essential idea and argument of the Arminian is, that God could not punish man justly for unbelief, unless He conferred on him both natural and moral ability to believe or not. They quote such Scripture as Ps. 81:13; Isa. 5:4; Luke 19:42; Rev. 3:20; Rom. 2:14; Jn. 1:9. So here we have, by a different track, the old conclusion of the semi-Pelagian. Man, then, decides the whole remaining difference, as to believing or not believing, by his use of this precedent grace, according to his own free will. God's purpose to produce different results indifferent men is wholly conditioned on the use which, He foresees, they will make of their common grace. To those who improve it, God stands pledged to give the crowning graces of regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. To the heathen even, who use their light aright, (unfavorable circumstance may make such instances rare), Christ will give gospel light and redeeming grace, in some inscrutable way.

GRACE IN REGENERATION VINCIBLE

3. Hence, the operations of grace are at every stage vincible by man's will; to be otherwise, they must violate the conditions of moral agency. Even after regeneration, grace may be so resisted by free will, as to be dethroned from the soul, which then again becomes unrenewed.

REDEMPTION GENERAL

4. The redeeming work of Christ was equally for all and every man of the human race, to make his sins pardonable on the condition of faith, to purchase a common sufficient grace actually enjoyed by all, and the efficient graces of a complete redemption suspended on the proper improvement of common grace by free will. Christ's intention and provision are, therefore, the same to all. But as justice requires that the pardoned rebel shall believe and repent, to those who, of their own choice, refuse this, the provision remains forever ineffective.

JUSTIFICATION

5. In the doctrine of justification, again, the lower and higher Arminians differ somewhat. Both define justification as consisting simply of pardon. According to the lower, this justification is only purchased by Christ in this, that He procured from God the admission of a lower Covenant, admitting faith and the Evangelical obedience flowing out of it, as a righteousness, in place of the perfect obedience of the Covenant of works. According to the higher, our faith (without the works its fruits) is imputed to us for righteousness, according, as they suppose, to Rom. 4:5. Both deny the proper imputation of Christ's active (as distinguished from His passive) obedience, and deny any imputation, except of the believer's own faith; although the higher Arminians, in making this denial, seem to misunderstand imputation as a transference of moral character.

PERSONAL ELECTION CONDITIONAL

6. Hence, it will be easily seen, that their conception of election must be the following: The only absolute and unconditional decree which God has made from eternity, concerning man's salvation, is His resolve that unbelievers shall perish. This is not a predestinating of individuals, but the fixing of a General Principle. God does, indeed, (as they explain Rom. 9-11 chapters), providentially and sovereignly elect races to the enjoyment of certain privileges; but this is not an election to salvation; for free-will may in any or each man of the race, abuse the privileges, and be lost. So far as God has an external purpose toward individuals, it is founded on His foresight, which He had from eternity, of the use they would make of their common grace. Some, He foresaw, would believe and repent, and therefore elected them to justification. Others, He foresaw, would not only believe and repent, but also persevere to the end; and these He elected to salvation.

A THOROUGHLY-KNIT SYSTEM, IF ITS PREMISES ARE GRANTED.

II. The refutation of the Arminian theory must be deferred, on some points, till we pass to other heads of divinity, as Justification and Final Perseverance. On the extent of the atonement enough has already been said. On the remaining points we shall now attempt to treat.

COMMON SUFFICIENT GRACE REFUTED

1. In opposition to the assertion of a common sufficient grace, we remark, 1st. That there is no sufficient evidence of it in Scripture. The passages quoted above do, indeed, prove that God has done for all men under the gospel all that is needed to effect their salvation, if their own wills are not depraved. But they only express the fact that God's general benevolence would save all to whom the gospel comes, if they would repent; and that the obstacles to that salvation are now only in the sinners. But whether it is God's secret purpose to overcome that internal obstacle, in their own perverse wills, these texts do not say. It will be found, on examination, that they all refer merely to the external call, which we have proved, comes short of the effectual call; or that they are addressed to persons who, though shortcoming, or even backsliding, are regarded as God's children already. Look and see.

DOCTRINE FALSE, IN FACT

2. The doctrine is false in fact; for how can grace be sufficient, where the essential outward call, even, is lacking? Rom. 10:14. God declares, in Scripture, He has given up many to evil. Acts 14:16; Rom. 1:21, 28; 9:18. Again: the doctrine is contradicted by the whole doctrine of God, concerning the final desertion of those who have grieved away the Holy Ghost. See Hos. 4:17; Gen. 6:3; Heb. 6:1-6. Here is a class so deserted of grace, that their damnation becomes a certainty. Are they, therefore, no longer free, responsible and blameable?

3. If we take the Arminian description of common sufficient grace, then many who have its elements most largely, an enlightened conscience, frequent compunctions, competent religious knowledge, amiability, and natural virtues, good impulses and resolutions, are lost; and some, who seem before to have very little of these, are saved. How is this? Again: the doctrine does not commend itself to experience; for this tells us that, among men, good intentions are more rare than good opportunities. We see that some men have vastly more opportunity vouchsafed them by God's providence than others. It would be strange if, contrary to the fact just stated, all those who have less opportunity should have better intentions than opportunities.

COMMON GRACE, IF SUFFICIENT, SAVES

4. We have sometimes illustrated the Wesleyan doctrine of grace thus: "All men in the 'slough of despond' in consequence of the fall. There is a platform, say Arminians, elevated an inch or two above the surface of this slough, but yet firm, to which men must struggle in the exercise of their common sufficient grace alone, the platform of repentance and faith. Now, it is true, that from this platform man could no more climb to heaven without divine grace, than his feet could scale the moon. But God's grace is pledged to lift up to heaven all those who will so employ their free-agency, as to climb to that platform, and stay there." Now, we say, with the Arminian, that a common sufficient grace, which does not work faith and repentance, is in no sense sufficient; for until these graces are exercised, nothing is done. Heb. 11:6; Jn. 3:36. But he who has these graces, we further assert, has made the whole passage from

death to life. That platform is the platform of eternal life. The whole difference between elect and non-elect is already constituted. See John 3:36; 1 John 5:1; Acts 13:48; 2 Cor. 5:17, with Eph. 3:17. If then there is sufficient grace, it is none other than the grace which effectuates redemption; and the Arminian should say, if consistent with his false premises, not that God by it puts it in every man's free will to fulfill the conditions on which further saving communications depend; but that He puts it in every man's free will to save himself.

OR ELSE, IT IS EITHER NOT COMMON, OR NOT SUFFICIENT

5. If the doctrine is true, it is every man's own uninfluenced, and not the purpose of God, which determines his eternal destiny. Either the common grace effects its saving work in those who truly believe, in virtue of some essential addition made to its influences by God, or it does not. If the former, then it was not "common," nor "sufficient," in those who failed to receive that addition. If the latter, then the whole difference in its success must have been made by the man's own free will resisting less--I.e., the essential opposition to grace in some souls, differs from that in others. But see Rom. 3:12, 27; Eccl. 8:11; Eph. 2:8, 9; 1 Cor. 4:7; Rom. 9:16; and the whole tenor of that multitude of texts, in which believers ascribe their redemption, not to their own superior docility or penitence, but to distinguishing grace.

To attain the proper point of view for the rational refutation of the doctrine of "common" sufficient grace, it is only necessary to ask this question: What is the nature of the obstacle grace is needed to remove? Scripture answers in substance, that it is inability of will, which has its rudiments in an ungodly habitus of soul. That is to say: the thing grace has to remove is the soul's own evil disposition. Now, the idea that any cause, natural or supernatural, half rectifies this, so as to bring this disposition to an equipoise, is absurd. It is the nature of disposition to be disposed: this is almost a truism. It is impossible to think a moral agent devoid of any and all disposition. If God did produce in a sinful soul, for one instant, the state which common sufficient grace is supposed to realize, it would be an absurd tertium quid, in a state of moral neutrality. As we argued against the Pelagian, that state, if possible, would be immoral, in that it implied an indifferent equipoise as to positive obligations. And the initial volitions arising out of that state would not be morally right, because they would not spring out of positive right motives; and such acts, being worthless, could not foster any holy principles or habits. The dream of common grace is suggested obviously, by the Pelagian confusion of inability of will with compulsion. The inventor has his mind full of some evil necessity which places an external obstruction between the sinner and salvation; hence this dream of an aid, sufficient but not efficacious, which lifts away the obstruction, and yet leaves the sinner undetermined, though free, to embrace Christ. Remember that the obstruction is in the will; and the dream perishes. The aid which removes it can be nothing short of that, which determines the will to Christ. The peculiar inconsistency of the Wesleyan is seen in this: that, when the Pelagian advances this idea of Adam's creation in a slate of moral neutrality, the Wesleyan (see Wesley's Orig. sin. or Watson, ch. 18th), refutes it by the same irrefragable logic with the Calvinists. He proves the very state of soul to be preposterous and impossible. Yet, when he comes to effectual calling, he imagines a common grace, which results, at least for a time, in the same impossible state of the soul! It is a reversion to Pelagius.

GRACE IN REGENERATION INVINCIBLE

The views of regeneration which Calvinists present, in calling the grace of God therein invincible, and in denying the synergism (sunergeia) of man's will therein, necessarily flow from their view of original sin. We do not deny that the common call is successfully resisted by all non-elect gospel sinners; it is because God never communicates renewing grace, as He never intended in His secret purpose. Nor do we deny that the elect, while under preliminary conviction, struggle against grace, with as much obstinacy as the dare; this is ensured by their depraved nature. But on all those whom God purposes to save, He exerts a power, renewing and persuading the will, so as infallibly to ensure their final and voluntary submission to Christ. Hence we prefer the word invincible to irresistible. This doctrine we prove, by all those texts which speak of God's power in regeneration as a new creation, birth, resurrection; for the idea of successful resistance to these processes, on the part of the dead matter, or corpse, or foetus, is preposterous. Conviction may be resisted; regeneration is invincible. We prove it again from all those passages which exalt the divine and mighty power exerted in the work. See Eph. 1:19,20; Ps.110:3. Another emphatic proof is found in this, that otherwise, God could not be sure of the conversion of all those He purposed to convert; yea, not of a single one of them; and Christ would have no assurance that He should ever "see of the travail of His soul" (Isa. 53) in a single case! For, in order for God to be sure of the result, He must put forth power adequate to overcome all opposing resistances. But see all those passages, in which the security and immutability of God's purposes of grace are asserted. Rom. 9:21, 23; Eph. 1:4; John xv; 16, &c., &c. Eph. 2:10.

MERE FOREKNOWLEDGE INADEQUATE

Here, the Arminian rejoins, that God's scientia media, or foreknowledge of the contingent acts of free agents (arising not from His purpose of control over those acts, but from His infinite insight into their character, and the way it will act under foreseen circumstances), enables Him to foreknow certainly who will prove their common grace, and that some will. His eternal purposes are not crossed, therefore, they say, because He only purposed from eternity to save those latter. The fatal answer is, that if the acts of free agents are certainly foreseen, even with this scientia media, they are no longer contingent, but certain; and worse than this: Man's will being in bondage, all the foreknowledge which God has, from His infinite insight into human character, will be only a foreknowledge of obdurate acts of resistance on man's part, as long as that will is unsubdued. God's foreknowledge, in that case, would have been a foreknowledge that every son of Adam would resist and be lost. The only foreknowledge God could have, of any cases of submission, was one founded on His own decisive purpose to make some submit, by invincible grace.

GRACE DOES NOT DESTROY FREE AGENCY

The Arminian objects again, that our doctrine represents man as dragged reluctantly into a state of grace, like an angry wild beast into a cage; whereas, freedom of will, and hearty concurrence are essential elements of all service acceptable to God. The answer is, that the sinner's will is the very subject of this invincible grace. God so renews it that it neither can resist, nor longer wishes to resist. But this objection virtually reappears in the next part of the question.

THE SOUL PASSIVE IN ITS QUICKENING. PROOF

Calvinists are accustomed also to say, in opposition to all Synergistic views, that the will of man is not active, but only passive in regeneration. In this proposition, it is only meant that man's will is the subject, and not the agent, nor one of the agents of the distinctive change. In that renovating touch, which revolutionizes the active powers of the soul, it is acted on and not agent. Yet, activity is the inalienable attribute of an intelligent being; and in the process of conversion, which begins instantaneously with regeneration, the soul is active in all its exercises towards sin, holiness, God, its Savior, the law, &c., &c.

This doctrine is proved by the natural condition of the active powers of the soul. Man's propensities are wholly and certainly directed to some form of ungodliness, and to impenitency. How, then, can the will, prompted by these propensities, persuade itself to anything spiritually good and penitent? It is expecting a cause to operate in a direction just the opposite to its nature--as well expect gravity to raise masses flung into the air, when its nature is to bring them down. And this is agreeable to the whole Bible representation. Does the foetus procure its own birth? the dead body its own resurrection? the matter of creation its own organization? See, especially, John 1:13. Yet this will, thus renewed, chooses God, and acts holiness, freely, just as Lazarus, when resuscitated, put forth the activities of a living man.

The objections of the Arminian may all be summed up in this: that sinners are commanded, not only to put forth all the actings of the renewed nature, such as believing, turning from sin, loving God, &c., but are commanded to perform the very act of giving their hearts to God, which seems to contain the very article of regeneration. See Prov. 23:26; Is. 1:16; Ezek. 18:31; Deut. 10:16.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

The answer is, 1st. That God's precepts are no test of the extent of our ability of will, but only of our duty. When our Creator has given to us capacities to know and love Him, and the thing which prevents is our depraved wills, this is no reason why He should or ought to cease demanding that which is His due. If the moral opposition of nature into which God's creatures may sink themselves by their own fault, were a reason why He should cease to urge His natural rights on them, He would soon have no right left. Again: the will of man, when renovated by grace, needs a rule by which to put forth its renewed activity, just as the eye, relieved of its darkness by the surgeon needs light to see. Hence, we provide light for the renovated eye; not that light alone could make the blind eye see. And hence, God applies His precepts to the renovated will, in order that it may have a law by which to act out its newly bestowed, spiritual free-agency. But 3d, and chiefly: These objections are all removed, by making a sound distinction between regeneration and conversion. In the latter the soul is active; and the acts required by all the above passages, are the soul's (now regenerate) turning to God.

BIBLE PROMISES NO SALVATION TO HEATHEN

The salvability of any heathen without the gospel is introduced here, because the question illustrate these views concerning the extent of the grace of redemption, and the discussions between us and the Arminians. We must hold that Revelation gives us no evidence that Pagans can find salvation, without Scriptural means. They are sinners. The means in their reach appear to contain no salvation. a.) One argument is this: All of them are self-convicted of some sin (against the light of nature). "Without the shedding of blood is no remission." But the gospel is the only proposal of atonement to man. b.) Paganism provides nothing to meet the other great want of human nature, an agency for moral renovation. Is any man more spiritually minded than decent children of the Church are, because he is a Pagan? Do they need the new birth less than our own beloved offspring? Then it must be at least as true of the heathen, that except they be born again, they shall not see the kingdom. But their religions present no agencies for regeneration. They do not even know the Word. So far are their theologies from any sanctifying influence, their morals are immoral, their deities criminals, and the heaven to which they aspire a pandemonium of sensual sin immortalized.

GOD NO MORE UNJUST TO THEM THAN TO NON- ELECT UNDER THE GOSPEL

Now, the Arminians reject this conclusion, thinking God cannot justly condemn any man, who is not furnished with such means of knowing and as put his destiny in every sense within his own choice. These means the heathen do not fully possess, where their ignorance is invincible. The principle asserted is, that God cannot justly hold any man responsible, who is not blessed with both "natural and moral ability." I answer, that our doctrine concerning the heathen puts them in the same condition with those unhappy men in Christian lands, who have the outward word, but experience no effectual calling of the Spirit. God requires the latter to obey that Law and Gospel, of which they enjoy the clearer lights; and the obstacle which ensures their failure to obey is, indeed, not any physical constraint, but an inability of will. Of the heathen, God would require no more than perfect obedience to the light of nature; and it is the same inability of will which ensures their failure to do this. Hence, as you see, the doctrine of a common sufficient grace, and of the salvability of the heathens, are parts of the same system. So, the consistent Calvinist is able to justify God in the condemnation of adult heathens, according to the principles of Paul. Rom. 2:12. On the awful question, whether all heathens, except those to whom the Church carries the gospel, are certainly lost, it does not become us to speak. One thing is certain: that "there is none other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12. Guilt must be expiated; and depravity must be cleansed, before the Pagan (or the nominal Christian) can see God. Whether God makes Christ savingly known to some, by means unknown to the Church, we need not determine. We are sure that the soul which "feels after Him if haply he may find Him," will not be cast off of God, because it happens to be outside of Christendom. But are there such? This question it is not ours to answer. We only know, that God in the Scriptures always enjoins on His Church that energy and effort in spreading the gospel, which would be appropriate, were there no other instrumentality but ours. Here is the measure of our duty concerning foreign missions.

CONDITIONAL DECREES ARE IMPLIED IN SYNERGISM

THE favorite Arminian dogma, that God's will concerning the salvation of individuals is conditioned on His simple foresight of their improvement of their common grace, in genuine faith, repentance, and holy obedience, is necessary to the coherency of their system. If grace is invincible, and all true faith, &c., are its fruits, then God's purpose as to working them must be absolute in this sense. If grace is only synergistic, and the sinner's free will alone decides the question of resisting it, or co-operating with it, then, of course, the sovereignty of decision, in this matter, is in the creature, and not in God; and He must be guided in His purpose by what it is foreseen the creature will choose to do. Thus we reach, by a corollary from the Arminian doctrine of "Calling," that which in time is first, the nature of the Divine purpose about it. The student is here referred to the Lecture on the Decree. But as the subject is so illustrative of the two theories of redemption, the Arminian and the orthodox, I shall not hesitate to discuss the same thing again, and to reproduce some of the same ideas.

THE RESULT MAY BE CONDITIONED, AND NOT THE DECREE

And let me begin by reminding you of that plain distinction, by the neglect of which, Arminians get all the plausibility of their view. It is one thing to say that, in the Divine will, the result purposed is conditioned on the presence of its means; another thing to say that, God's purpose about it is also conditioned or dependent on the presence of its means. The former is true, the latter false. And this, because the presence of the means is itself efficaciously included in this same Divine purpose. Thus, a believer's salvation is doubtless dependent on his repentance; in the sense that, if he does not repent, he will not be saved. But God's purpose to save him is not dependent on his choosing to repent; for one of the things which God's purpose efficaciously determines is, that this believer shall have grace to repent. Remember, also, that when we say God's election is not dependent on the believer's foreseen faith, &c., we do not represent the Divine purpose as a motiveless caprice. It is a resolve founded most rationally, doubtless, on the best of reasons--only, the superior faith and penitence of that man were not, a priori among them; because had not God already determined, from some better reasons unknown to us, that man would never have had any faith or repentance to foresee. And this is a perfect demonstration, as well as a Scriptural one. The Arminian opinion makes an effect the cause of its own cause. And that our faith, &c., are effects of our calling and election, see Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4, 5; 2 Thes. 2:13; 1 Cor. 4:7; Jno. 15:16.

PROVIDENCE MAKES SOVEREIGN DISTINCTIONS IN MEN'S OUTWARD OPPORTUNITIES. ESPECIALLY OF INFANTS

(b). But to this I may add the same idea in substance, which I used against Common Sufficient Grace: That, in fact, differences are made, in the temperaments and characters, opportunities and privileges of individuals and nations, which practically result in the death of some in sin. Thus: what practical opportunity, humanly speaking, had the man born in Tahiti, in the 18th century, for redemption through Christ? Now the Arminian himself admits an election of races or nations to such privilege, which is sovereign. Does not this imply a similar disposal of the fate of individuals? Can an infinite understanding fail to comprehend the individuals, in disposing of the destiny of the mass? But, under this head especially, I remark: the time of every man's death is decided by a sovereign Providence. But by determining this sovereignly, God very often practically decides the man's eternal destiny. Much more obvious is this, in the case of infants. According to Arminians, all that die in infancy are saved. So, then, God's purpose to end their mortal life in infancy is His purpose to save them. But this purpose cannot be formed from any foresight of their faith or repentance; because they have none to foresee, being saved without them.

IF FORESEEN, FAITH MUST BE CERTAIN

(c). God's foresight of believers' faith and repentance implies the certainty, or "moral necessity" of these acts, just as much as a sovereign decree. For that which is certainly foreseen must be certain. The only evasion from this is the absurdity of Adam Clarke, that God chooses not to foreknow certain things, or the impiety of the Socinians, that He cannot foreknow some things. On both, we may remark, that if this faith and repentance are not actually foreknown, they cannot be the bases of any resolve on God's part.

IMMUTABLE DECREE CANNOT BE CONDITIONED ON A MUTABLE CAUSE, SCRIPTURE

(d) That any purposes of God should depend on the acts of a creature having an indeterminate, contingent will, such as Arminian describes, is incompatible with their immutability and eternity. But all His decrees are such. See Ps.33:11; 2 Tim. 2:19; Eph. 1:4; Is. 46:10. In a word, this doctrine places the sovereignty in the creature, instead of God, and makes Him wait on His own servant. It is disparaging to God.

Last: This very purpose of individual election to salvation is often declared to be uncaused by any foreseen good in us. See Matt. 11:26; Rom. 9:11-16; 11:5-6, etc.

TEXTS SEEMING TO EXPRESS A CONDITIONED PURPOSE

But Arminians cite many passages, in which they assert, God's resolve as to what He shall do to men is conditioned on their good or bad conduct. They are such as 1 Sam. 13:13; Ps. 81.13-14; Luke 7:30; Ezek. 18:21, etc.; Luke 19:42. Our opponents here make an obvious confusion of things, which should be distinguished. When God preceptively reveals a connection between two alternative lines of conduct, and their respective results, as established by His law or promise, he does not at all reveal anything thereby, as to what He purposes with reference to permitting or procuring the exercise of that conduct by man. Of course, it does not imply that His purpose on this point is contingent to Him, or that the consequent results were uncertain to Him. We have seen that many of the results decreed by God were dependent on means which man employed; but that God's resolve was not dependent, because it secretly embraced their performance of those instrumental acts also. But the proof that the Arminians misconstrue those Scripture instances, is this: That the Bible itself contains many instances of these conditional threats and promises, and expressions of compassion, where yet the result of them is expressly foretold. If expressly predicted, they must have been predetermined. See, then, Is. 1:19, 20, compared with 7:17-20. And, more striking yet, Acts 27:23-25, with 31.

EVASION ATTEMPTED FROM ROMANS 9:11

Rom. 9:11-18, is absolutely conclusive against conditional election. The only evasion by which the Arminian can escape its force, is, that this passage teaches only a national election of Israel and Edom, represented in their patriarchs, Jacob and Esau, to the outward privileges of the Gospel. We reply, as before, that Jacob and Esau certainly represented themselves also, so that here are two cases of unconditional predestination. But Paul's scope shows that the idea is false: for that scope is to explain, how, on his doctrine of justification by grace, many members of Israel were lost, notwithstanding equal outward privileges. And in answering this question, the Apostle evidently dismisses the corporate or collective, in order to consider the individual relation to God's plan and purpose. See the verses 8, 15, 24. That the election was not merely to privileges is clearly proved by the allusion of verse 8, compared with verses 4, 21, 24.

CALVINISTIC VIEW AGREEABLE TO THE TRUE NATURE OF THE WILL

2. I am now to show that the Calvinistic scheme is consistent, and the Arminian inconsistent, with the philosophical theory of the will and free agency. Let me here refer you to Lecture 11, where the true doctrine of the will is stated and defended, and request you, if

your mastery of the views there given is not perfect, to return and make it so, before proceeding. While I shall not repeat the arguments, the definition of the true doctrine is so important (and has so often been imperfectly made by Calvinists), that I shall take the liberty to restate it.

TRUE THEORY OF THE WILL STATED

The Arminian says that free-agency consists in the self-determining power of the will, as a distinct faculty in the soul. The Calvinist says, it consists in the self-determining power of the soul. An Arminian says an agent is only free, when he has power to choose as the will may determine itself either way, irrespective of the stronger motive. The Calvinist says that an agent is free, when he has power to act as his own will chooses. The Arminian says that in order to be free, the agent must be exempt from the efficient influence of his own motives; the Calvinist, that he must be exempt from co-action, or external constraint; The Arminian says, that in order to be free, the agent must always be capable of having a volition uncaused. The Calvinist says that if an agent has a volition uncaused, he cannot possibly be free therein, because that volition would be wholly irrational; the agent would therein be simply a brute. Every free, rational, responsible volition is such, precisely because it is caused i.e. by the agent's own motives; the rational agent is morally judged for his volitions according to their motives, or causes.

MOTIVE WHAT?

But when we ask: What is the motive of a rational volition, we must make that distinction which all Arminians, and many Calvinists heedlessly overlook between motive and inducement. The object offered to the soul as an inducement to choose is not the cause, the motive of the choice; but only the occasion. The true efficient cause is something of the soul's own, something subjective; namely, the soul's own appetency according to his prevalent, subjective disposition. The volition is not efficaciously caused by the inducement or object which appeals, but by the disposition which is appealed to. Thus, the causative spring of a free agent's action is within, not without him; according to the testimony of our consciousness. (The theory which makes the objective inducement the true cause of volition, is from that old, mischievous, sensualistic psychology, which has always been such a curse to theology). But then, this inward or subjective spring of action is not lawless; it is not indeterminate; if it were, the agent would have neither rationality nor character; and its action would be absolutely blind and brutish. This subjective spring has a law of its own activity--that is to say, its self-action is of a determinate character (of one sort or another). And that character is what is meant by the radical habitus, or natural disposition of the agent. And this subjective disposition is what gives uniform quality to that series of acts, by which common sense estimates the character of an agent. (And this, as we saw, was a sufficient proof of our doctrine; that otherwise, the exhibition of determinate character by a free agent, would be impossible). God is an excellent Agent, because He has holy original disposition. Satan is a wicked agent, because he has an unholy disposition, etc.

DISPOSITION WHAT?

Now, this habitus or disposition of soul is not by any means always absolutely simple; it is a complex of certain active principles, with mental habitudes proceeding therefrom, and modified by outward circumstances. With reference to some sorts of outward inducements, these active principles may act with less uniformity and determinateness; with reference to others, with more. Here, modifying outward influences may change the direction of the principles. The avaricious man is sometimes prompted to generous volitions, for instance. But our common sense recognizes this truth: that the more, original and primary of those active principles constituting a being's disposition or habitus, are perfectly determinate and uniform in their action. For instance: no being, when happiness and suffering are the alternatives, is ever prompted by his own disposition, to choose the suffering for its own sake; no being is ever prompted, applause or reproach being equally in its reach, to prefer the reproach to the applause for its own sake. And last: this disposition, while never the effect of specific acts of volition (being always a priori thereto, and cause of them) is spontaneous; that is, in exercising the disposition, both in consideration and choice, the being is self-prompted. When arguing against the Pelagian sophism, that man could not be responsible for his disposition, because it is "involuntary," I showed you the ambiguity wrapped up in that word. Of course, anything which, like disposition, precedes volition, cannot be voluntary in the sense of proceeding out of a volition; what goes before of course does not follow after the same thing. But the question is, "whether disposition is self-prompted." There is a true sense in which we intuitively know that a man ought not to be made responsible for what is "involuntary," viz.; for what happens against his will. But does any man's own disposition subsist against his will? If it did it would not be his own. There is here a fact of common sense, which is very strangely overlooked; that a man may most freely prefer what is natural to him, and in that sense his prior to his volition choosing it. Let a simple instance serve. Here is a young gentleman to whom nature has given beautiful and silky black hair. He, himself, thinks it very pretty, and altogether prefers it. Does he not thereby give us as clear, and as free an expression of his taste in hair, as though he had selected a black wig? So, were he to purchase hair dye to change his comely locks to a 'carrot red,' we should regard him as evincing very bad taste. But I ask, if we saw another whom nature had endowed with 'carrot red hair,' glorying in it with pride and preference, we should doubtless esteem him guilty of precisely the same bad taste, and precisely as free therein as the other. But the color of his hair was determined by nature, not by his original selection. Now, my question is: must we not judge the moral preference just as free in the parallel case, as the aesthetic? I presume that every reflecting mind will give an affirmative answer. If, for instance, a wicked man made you the victim of his extortion, or his malice, you would not think it any palliation to be told by him that he was naturally covetous or malignant, nor would you be satisfied by the plea, that this evil disposition was not at first introduced into his soul by his personal act of soul; while yet he confessed that he was entirely content with it and cherished it with a thorough preference. In fine: whether the moral agent is free in entertaining his connate disposition, may be determined by a very plain test. Does any other agent compel him to feel it, or does he feel it of himself? The obvious answer discloses this fact; that disposition is the most intimate function of our self-hood, and this, whether connate or self-induced.

THIS THEORY OBVIOUS. CALVINISM IN HARMONY WITH IT

Is not this now the psychology of common sense and consciousness? Its mere statement is sufficiently evincive of its truth. But you have seen a number of arguments by which it is demonstrated, and the rival theory reduced to absurdity. Now, our assertion is, that the Calvinistic doctrine of effectual calling is agreeable to these facts of our free-agency, and the Arminian inconsistent with them.

GRACE CANNOT PRODUCE AN EQUILIBRIUM BETWEEN HOLINESS AND SIN

(a.) First, the equilibrium of will, to which Arminians suppose the gospel restores all sinners, through common sufficient grace, would

be an unnatural and absurd state of soul, if it existed. You will remember that the Wesleyans (the Arminian school which we meet) admit that man lost equilibrium of will in the fall; but say that it is restored through Christ; and that this state is necessary to make man truly free and responsible in choosing the Savior. But we have shown that such a state is impossible for an active agent, and irrational. So far as it existed, it would only show the creature's action irrational, like that of the beasts. Hence, the evangelical choice arising in such a state would be as motiveless, as reasonless, and therefore, as devoid of right moral character, as the act of a man walking in his sleep. And, to retort the Arminian's favorite conclusion, all the so-called gracious states of penitence, &c., growing out of that choice, must be devoid of right moral quality, how can those exercises of soul have that quality? Only as they are voluntary, and prompted by right moral motives. But as we have seen, motive is subjective; so that the action of soul cannot acquire right moral quality until it is prompted by right moral disposition. Hence, if that common sufficient grace were anything at all, it would be the grace of moral renovation; all who had it would be regenerate.

THE NATURAL WILL DECISIVELY BENT TO CARNALITY

(b.) Second: We have seen that the notion of a moral agent without determinate, subjective moral character, of some sort, is absurd. The radical, ruling habitus has some decisive bent of its own, some way or other. Is not this simply to say that disposition is disposed? The question of fact then arises, which is the bent or determinate direction, which man's natural disposition has, touching spiritual things? Is it for, or against it? Or, as a question of fact, is the disposition of mankind naturally, and uniformly. either way? Or, are some men one way disposed by nature, and some the other, as to this object? The answer is, that they are all naturally disposed, in the main, the same way, and that, against the spiritual claims of Christ and God. What are these claims? That the sinner shall choose the holy will of God over his own, and His favor over sensual, earthly, and sinful joys in all their forms. Nothing less than this is evangelical repentance and obedience. Now note, we do not say that no men ever choose any formal act of obedience by nature. Nor, that no man ever desires (what he conceives to be) future blessedness by nature. Nor, that every natural man is as much bent on all forms of rebellion, as every other. But we assert, as a matter of fact, that all naturally prefer self-will to God's holy will, and earthly, sensual, and sinful joys (in some forms) to God's favor and communion; that this is the original, fundamental, spontaneous disposition of all; and that in all essential alternatives between self and God, the disposition is, in the natural man, absolutely determinate and certain. If this is true, then the unconverted man without sovereign grace is equally certain to choose carnally, and equally a free agent in choosing so.

PROVED BY CONSCIOUSNESS AND EXPERIENCE

But that such is the determinate disposition of every natural man, is obvious both from experience and from Scripture. Every renewed man, in reviewing his own purposes, is conscious that, before regeneration, self-will was, as against God, absolutely dominant in all his feelings and purposes; of which no stronger test can be imagined than this conscious fact; that the very best religious impulses to which his soul could be spurred by remorse or alarm, were but modifications of self-will, (self-righteousness.) Every true Christian looks back to the time when he was absolutely incompetent to find, or even to imagine, any spontaneous good or joy in anything except carnality; and the only apprehension it was possible for him to have of God's service, in looking forward to the time when, he supposed, the fear of hell would compel him to undertake it, was of a constraint and a sacrifice. So, when we look without, while we see a good many in the state of nature, partially practicing many secular virtues, and even rendering to God some self-righteous regards, we see none preferring God's will and favor to self-will and earth. All regard such a choice as an evil per se; all shrink from it obstinately; all do so under inducements to embrace it which reasonably ought to be immense and overwhelming. The experimental evidence, that this carnality is the original and determinate law of their disposition, is as complete as that which shows the desire of happiness is a law of their disposition. And all this remains true of sinners under the gospel, of sinners enlightened, of sinners convicted and awakened by the Holy Ghost in His common operations; which is a complete, practical proof that there is not any such sufficient grace, common to all as brings their wills into equilibrium about evangelical good. For those are just the elements which the Arminians name, as making up that grace: and we see that where they are, still there is no equilibrium, but the old, spontaneous, native bent, obstinately dominant still.

PROVED BY SCRIPTURE

The decisiveness of that disposition is also asserted in Scripture in the strongest possible terms. All men are the "servants of sin," John. 8:34; Rom. 6:20; 2 Pet. 1:19. They are "sold under sin." Rom. 7:14. They are "in the bond of iniquity." Acts 8:23. They are "dead in sins." Eph. 2:1. They are "blind;" yea, "blindness" itself. Eph. 4:18. Their "hearts are stony." Ezek. 36:26, They are "impotent" for evangelical good 2 Cor. 3:5; John. 15:5; Rom. 5:6; Matt. 7:18; 12:34; John. 6:44. "The carnal mind is enmity, and cannot be subject to the law of God." Rom. 8:7. Surely these, with the multitude of similar testimonies, are enough to prove against all ingenious glosses, that, our view of man's disposition is true. But if man's free-agency is misdirected by such active principles as these, original, uniform, absolutely decisive, it is folly to suppose that the mighty revolution to holiness can originate in that free-agency; it must originate without, in almighty grace.

INABILITY DOES NOT SUPERSEDE RESPONSIBILITY

Nor is it hard for the mind which has comprehended this philosophy of common sense and experience, to solve the current Arminian objection; that the man in such a state of will cannot be responsible or blameworthy for his continued impenitency. This "inability of will" does not supersede either free-agency or responsibility.

INABILITY DEFINED

There is here an obvious distinction from that external coercion, which the reason and conscience of every man recognizes as a different state, which would supersede responsibility. The Calvinists of the school of Jonathan Edwards make frequent use of the terms, "moral inability," "natural inability," to express that plain, old distinction. Turretin teaches us that they are not new. In his Locus, 10, que. 4, section 39, 40, you will find some very sensible remarks, which show that this pair of terms is utterly ambiguous and inappropriate, however good the meaning of the Calvinists who used them. I never employ them. That state which they attempt to describe as "moral inability," our Confession more accurately calls, loss of all ability of will." (Ch. 9 section 3). It should be remarked here, that in this phrase, and in many similar ones of our Confession, the word "will" is used in a sense more comprehensive than the specific faculty of choosing. It means the "conative powers," (so called by Hamilton,) including with that specific function,

the whole active power of soul. The "inability," then, which we impute to the natural man, and which does not supersede responsibility, while it does make his voluntary continuance in impenitence absolutely certain, and his turning of himself to true holiness impossible, is a very distinct thing from that physical coercion, and that natural lack of essential faculties, either of which would be inconsistent with moral obligation. It is thus defined in Hodge's outlines: "Ability consists in the power of the agent to change his own subjective state, to make himself prefer what he does not prefer, and to act in a given case in opposition to the co-existent desires and preferences of the agent's own heart." I will close with a statement of the distinction, which I uttered under very responsible circumstances. "All intelligent Calvinists understand very well, that "inability" consists not in the extinction of any of the powers which constituted man the creature he was before Adam's fall, and which made his essence as a religious being; but in the thorough moral perversion of them all. The soul's essence is not destroyed by the fall; if it were, in any part, man's responsibility would be to that extent modified. But all his faculties and susceptibilities now have a decisive and uniform, a native and universal, a perpetual and total moral perversion, by reason of the utter revolt of his will from God and holiness, to self-will and sin; such that it is impossible for him, in his own free will, to choose spiritual good for its own sake."

REGENERATION DOES NOT VIOLATE, BUT PERFECTS FREE-AGENCY

(c) Regeneration, correspondingly, does not constrain a man to will against his dispositions; but it renews the dispositions themselves. It reverse the morbid and perverse bias of the will. It rectifies the action of all faculties and affections, previously perverted by that bias. God's people are "willing in the day of His power." Ps. 110:3. "He worketh in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Phil. 2.13. In that believers now form holy volitions at the prompting of their own subjective principles, unconstrained by force, they are precisely as free as when, before, they spontaneously formed sinful volitions at the prompting of their opposite evil principles. But in that the action of intellect and desire and conscience is now rectified, purified, ennobled, by the divine renovation, the believer is more free than he was before. "He cannot sin, because the living and incorruptible seed" of which he is born again "liveth and abideth in him." Thus, regeneration, though almighty, does not infringe free-agency, but perfects it.

OBJECTION SOLVED

The standing Arminian objection is, that man cannot be praise or blame-worthy, for what does not proceed from his own free-will. Hence, if he does not primarily choose a new heart, but it is wrought in him by another, he has no more moral credit, either for the change or its consequences, than for the native color of his hair. This objection is, as you have seen, of a Pelagian source. By the same argument Adam could have had no concreated righteousness; but we saw that the denial of it to him was absurd. By the same reasoning God Himself could have no moral credit for His holy volitions; for He never chose a righteousness, having been eternally and necessarily righteous. We might reply, also, that the new and holy state is chosen by the regenerate man, for his will is as free and self-moved, when renovated in preferring his own renovation, as it ever was in sinners.

THIS BECAUSE THE SPIRIT MOULDS DISPOSITION A PRIORI TO THE WILL

To sum up, then: The quickening touch of the Holy Ghost operates, not to contravene any of the free actings of the will; but to mould dispositions which lie back of it. Second: all the subsequent right volitions of the regenerate soul are in view of inducements rationally presented to it. The Spirit acts, not across man's nature, but according to its better law. Third: the propensities by which the renewed volitions are determined are now noble, not ignoble, harmonious, not confused and hostile; and rational, not unreasonable. Man is most truly free when he has his soul most freely subjected to God's holy will. See those illustrious passages in John 8:36; 2 Cor. 3:17; Rom. 8:21. Since this blessed work is like the free-agency which it reinstates, one wholly unique among the actions of God, and essentially different from all physical effects, it cannot receive any adequate illustration. Any parallel attempted, from either material or animal causes, would be incomplete. If, for instance, I were to say that the carnal man "in the bonds of iniquity," is like a wretch, who is hindered from walking in the paths of his duty and safety by some incubus that crushes his strength, I should use a false analogy: for the incubus is external: carnality is internal: an evil state qualifying the will itself. But this erroneous parallel may serve us so far; the fortunate subject of effectual calling has no more occasion to complain of violence done to his free-agency, than that wretch would, when a deliverer came and rolled the abhorred load off his body, restoring his limbs to the blessed freedom of motion, which might carry him away from the death that threatened him. You must learn to think of the almighty grace put forth in effectual calling, as reparative only; not violative. Augustine calls it a *Delectatio victrix*. It is a secret, omnipotent, silent, beneficent work of God, as gentle, yet powerful, as that which restored the vital spark to the corpse of Lazarus. Such are all God's beneficent actions, from the launching of the worlds in their orbits, to the germination of the seed in the soil.

Who Was Arminius?

W. Robert Godfrey

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James Arminius (Jacob Harmenszoon) is undoubtedly the most famous theologian ever produced by the Dutch Reformed Church. His fame is a great irony since the Dutch Reformed Church historically was a bastion of strict Calvinism and Arminius has given his name to a movement very much in opposition to historic Calvinism. Who was this Arminius? What did he teach? Are the differences between Calvinism and Arminianism important today?

WHO WAS ARMINIUS?

Arminius was born in 1559 in Oudewater - a small city in the province of Holland. Holland was one of seventeen prosperous provinces then known as the Netherlands or the Low Countries, which today are divided into the Netherlands, Belgium and part of northern France. In 1559 His Most Catholic Majesty Philip II was the king of Spain and Sovereign of the Netherlands.

Despite Philip's ardent Roman Catholicism and persecuting zeal, Reformation movements had been strong in the Low Countries for decades. In the late 1540s Calvinism emerged as an attractive, popular religion in the Netherlands, especially in the southern provinces. In 1559 Guido de Bres wrote the first edition of the Belgic Confession, which clearly summarized the Calvinistic faith and set it off from Roman Catholicism and Anabaptism. The Belgic Confession became one of the basic doctrinal standards of Dutch Calvinism.

The decade of the 1560s saw dramatic developments in the Netherlands. The Belgic Confession was published. A storm of iconoclasm broke out, destroying many images in Roman Catholic churches throughout the provinces. Guido de Bres was martyred for the faith. Philip II increasingly alienated the nobility and the people with his fiscal and religious policies. Revolts broke out against royal authority.

By the early 1570s civil war had begun in earnest against Spain. History knows this revolt as the Eighty Years War, which was not settled until 1648. Growing up in the midst of civil war in state and church, Arminius knew the bitterness of war. In 1575 his mother and other members of his family died at the hands of Spanish troops in a massacre at Oudewater.

In October of 1575 Arminius entered the newly founded University of Leiden. He was the 12th student to enroll in the school that honored the heroic resistance of Leiden to Spanish siege in 1574. He was a talented student and like many students of his day continued his education at other schools. From 1581 to 1586 he studied in Geneva and Basle.

While in Geneva Arminius seemed to have some trouble with Theodore Beza, Calvin's staunch successor. The evidence suggests not theological, but philosophical, differences. Indeed there is very little evidence as to exactly what Arminius' theology was in his student years. What is clear is that when Arminius was ordered to return to the Netherlands in 1586 to take up pastoral responsibilities in Amsterdam, he was given a very good letter of recommendation from Beza to the Dutch Reformed Church.

Before returning to Amsterdam, Arminius took a trip into Italy to see the sights. This trip was later used by some Calvinists to accuse Arminius of having Roman Catholic sympathies. But such charges were clearly untrue and unfair.

Once back in Amsterdam he became one of several pastors there and in 1590 he married Lijsbet Reael, a daughter of one of Holland's most influential men. Arminius became allied to a regent family and his convictions on the relation of church and state were the same as that of most regents. Indeed, he was appointed in 1591 to a commission to draw up a church order in which the church was given a position clearly subordinate to and dependent on the state. This position (usually called Erastianism) was not held by most clergy in the Dutch Reformed Church. Most followed Calvin's conviction that the church must have a measure of independence from the state, especially in matters of church discipline.

The issue of discipline was a controversial one in the Netherlands. The Belgic Confession had stated that discipline was one of the marks of the true church and Calvinists strongly believed that the church ought to have the right especially to regulate the teaching of its ministers. But in the Netherlands the government had at times protected ministers who were targets of church discipline. Arminius' Erastianism distinguished him from most of his ministerial colleagues.

Most of the years of Arminius' pastorate (1587-1603) in Amsterdam were peaceful. But there were some controversies. Arminius preached through the book of Romans and some of his sermons did evoke opposition. In 1591 he preached on Romans 7:14 and following. The standard Calvinist interpretation argued that Paul in these verses is speaking as a regenerate Christian. Romans 7 then presents the Christian's continuing struggle resisting sin in his life. By contrast, Arminius taught that Paul is remembering his previous, unregenerate state. For Arminius the struggle against sin in Romans 7 is a struggle before conversion. The Calvinists objected sharply to this interpretation, asking how the unregenerate can delight in the law in the inner man (Rom. 7:22). In 1593 Arminius preached on Romans 9 and his sermons on predestination seemed inadequate to many Dutch Calvinists.

Still these controversies passed. When two vacancies in the theological faculty at the University of Leiden had to be filled in 1603, people of influence in the government thought Arminius ought to be appointed, but strict Calvinists objected, unsettled by too many questions about Arminius' orthodoxy. The disagreement was resolved when both sides agreed to allow the one remaining member of the faculty, Franciscus Gomarus, to interview and evaluate Arminius for this position. Gomarus was a strict Calvinist of undoubted orthodoxy. After the interview Gomarus declared himself satisfied with Arminius and that latter was installed as a professor at Leiden.

The reason Gomarus was satisfied with Arminius is unclear. It is as unclear as the reason that Beza recommended him or that his orthodox colleagues in Amsterdam got along with him as well as they did. Perhaps Gomarus failed to ask the right questions or Arminius was not candid with his answers. Another possibility is that Arminius' theology changed significantly after the interview, but it is difficult to speculate.

Within a few years, however, suspicions began to arise about Arminius. People criticized the books he assigned students. Others worried about his private sessions with students. Gomarus became convinced that Arminius was not orthodox on the doctrine of predestination. These suspicions led Arminius' classes to try to examine Arminius' doctrine, but the trustees of the university would not permit that. Some said the issues surrounding Arminius' teaching could only be resolved at a national synod. But the government was unwilling to allow a national synod to meet.

Tensions within the church finally led to a government investigation in 1608. In the course of that investigation, Arminius wrote his "Declaration of Sentiments," probably the best summary of his beliefs. Arminius had been insisting that he was only trying to protect the church from the extremes of Calvinism, especially supralapsarianism. Gomarus had replied that the issue was not peripheral matters such as supralapsarianism, but rather the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith. With no satisfactory resolution to the matter, Arminius became ill and died in 1609, a minister in good standing in the Dutch Reformed Church.

WHAT DID ARMINIUS TEACH?

Arminius is best known theologically for his rejection of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. In this definition Arminius states his belief that faith is the cause of election: "It is an eternal and gracious decree of God in Christ, by which He determines to justify and adopt believers, and to endow them with eternal life, but to condemn unbelievers, and impenitent persons." But such a position

reverses the biblical pattern (e.g., Romans 8:30 and Acts 13:48) where election is clearly the cause of belief. For orthodox Calvinists faith is a gift of God. If election - God's purpose to give faith according to His sovereign will - does not precede faith, then faith is not truly a gift.

Arminius expanded his basic definition of predestination in four theses. First, God decreed absolutely that Christ is the Savior who will "destroy sin", "obtain salvation", and "communicate it by his own virtue." Second, God decreed absolutely to save "those who repent and believe, and, in Christ, and for His sake and through Him to effect salvation of such penitents and believers as persevered to the end." Third, God decreed "to administer in a sufficient and efficacious manner the means which were necessary for repentance and faith" according to divine wisdom and justice. Fourth, God decreed "to save and damn particular persons" based on the foreknowledge of God, by which He knew from all eternity those individuals who would, through his preventing [i.e., prevenient] grace, believe, and through his subsequent grace would persevere."

In his exposition of predestination Arminius sought to have a theology of grace and to avoid all Pelagianism. He stated that "that teacher obtains my highest approbation who ascribes as much as possible to divine grace, provided he so pleads the cause of grace, as not to inflict an injury on the justice of God, and not to take away the free will of that which is evil." Arminius wanted a theology of grace that made God seem fair in all his dealings with and also wanted to leave room for people to reject grace. Like many others Arminius thought this kind of theology would make it easier to preach the Gospel and emphasize human responsibility. But Arminius ultimately failed to have a true theology of grace. For Arminius grace is essential and grace is necessary, but God's grace is not absolutely efficacious. Man's response to grace remains the final, decisive factor in salvation. Jesus is no longer the actual Savior of His people. He becomes the one who makes salvation possible. Man's contribution, however sincerely Arminius tried to limit it, became central for salvation.

Arminius also gave faith a different place in his system from the role that faith had occupied in earlier Reformed theology. Arminius taught that faith itself was imputed to the sinner for righteousness, whereas the earlier teaching had stressed that it was the object of faith, namely Christ and His righteousness, that was imputed to the sinner. This shift is important because again it shifts the primary focus of salvation from God's work in Christ to man's faith. Arminius can even speak of faith being the one work required of man in the New Covenant. This kind of teaching led to Gomarus' charge that Arminius was undermining the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith. Arminius' teaching turns faith from an instrument that rests on the work of Christ to a work of man, and tends to change faith from that which receives the righteousness of Christ to that which is righteousness itself.

After the death of Arminius controversy continued in the Netherlands about the teachings of Arminianism. Forty-two ministers in 1610 signed a petition or Remonstrance to the government asking for protection for their Arminian views. The heart of this Remonstrance summarized their theology in five points: conditional election, universal atonement, total depravity, sufficient but resistible grace and uncertainty about the perseverance of the saints. The Calvinists answered with a Contra-Remonstrance in 1611. It is surely ironic that through the centuries there has been so much talk of the "five points of Calvinism" when in fact Calvinists did not originate a discussion of five points. Indeed Calvinism has never been summarized in five points. Calvinism has only offered five responses to the five errors of Arminianism.

Controversy raged in the Netherlands over Arminianism, even threatening civil war. Finally in 1618, after a change of leadership in the government, a national synod was held at Dordrecht - the Synod of Dort - to judge the Arminian theology. By the time the Synod of Dort met, the issues raised by the Arminians were being widely discussed in the Reformed community throughout Europe. Reformed Christians from Great Britain, France, Switzerland and Germany expressed great concern for the dangers posed by the Arminian theology.

William Ames, one of the great English Puritans, wrote that Arminianism "is not properly a heresy but a dangerous error in the faith tending to heresy...a Pelagian heresy, because it denies the effectual operation of internal grace to be necessary for the effecting of conversion and faith." In this evaluation Ames rightly saw the conflict between Calvinists and Arminians as related to the conflict between Augustine - the champion of grace - and Pelagius - who insisted that man's will was so free that it was possible for him to be saved solely through his own natural abilities.

The Synod of Dort had delegates not only from the Netherlands but also from throughout Europe, the only truly international Reformed synod. The Synod rejected the teaching of the Arminians and in clear and helpful terms presented the orthodox Calvinist position in the Canons of Dort. Unanimously approved by the Synod, they were hailed throughout the Reformed churches of Europe as an excellent defense of the faith

The Canons of Dort responded to the five errors of Arminianism and expressed the Calvinist alternative to those errors: 1) God freely and sovereignly determined to save some lost sinners through the righteousness of Christ and to give to His elect the gift of faith; 2) God sent His Son to die as the substitute for His elect and Christ's death will certainly result in the salvation of His own; 3) Man is so utterly lost in sin that without the regenerating grace of God, man cannot desire salvation, repent, believe or do anything truly pleasing to God; 4) God's grace saves the elect sinner irresistibly since only irresistible grace can overcome man's rebellion; 5) God in mercy preserves the gift of faith in His elect to ensure that the good work He began in them will certainly come to completion in their salvation.

DO THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ARMINIANS AND CALVINISTS MATTER TODAY?

Many argue that the differences between Calvinists and Arminians no longer matter. After all, some argue, Arminius lived 400 years ago. Are his views still important and influential? The answer to that question must be a resounding yes. Arminianism is very influential in evangelical and Pentecostal circles today. Indeed Arminianism today usually goes much further in emphasizing free will than Arminius did or would ever have approved of doing.

Some downplay the differences between Arminians and Calvinists out of an activism that is rather indifferent to theology. Such activists often argue that, with so much to do for Christ in the world and with so much opposition to Christianity in general, theological differences must be minimized.

It is certainly true that the theological differences between Calvinists and Arminians should not be overemphasized. Most Arminians

have been and are evangelical Christians. But the differences between Calvinists and Arminians are important precisely for the work that all want to do for Christ. What is the work that needs to be done and how will it be done? The answers to those questions depend very much on whether man has a free will or not. Does one seek to entertain and move the emotions and will of men whose salvation is ultimately in their own hands? Or does one present the claims of God as clearly as possible while recognizing that ultimately fruit comes only from the Holy Spirit? Those kinds of concerns will affect the ways in which Christians worship and witness and serve and live.

Some argue that the differences between Calvinism and Arminianism are unimportant because the theological terms of the controversy were wrong or are now outmoded. They argue that just as progress has been made in so many fields, so theological progress has transcended the old controversies. This claim may be an attractive one until it is examined closely. On close examination such a claim proves to be false. Either salvation is entirely the work of God or it is partially the work of man. There is no way to "transcend" this reality. On close examination those efforts to transcend Calvinism are at best other forms of Arminianism.

Some try to split the difference between Arminianism and Calvinism. They say something like, "I want to be 75% Calvinist and 25% Arminian." If they mean that literally, then they are 100% Arminian since giving any determinative place to human will is Arminian. Usually they mean that they want to stress the grace of God and human responsibility. If that is what they mean, then they can be 100% Calvinist for Calvinism does teach both that God's grace is entirely the cause of salvation and that man is responsible before God to hear and heed the call to repentance and faith.

Today some Calvinists are hesitant to stress their distinctives because they feel that they are such a small minority within Christendom. They must remember that in the providence of God, Calvinism has gone through varying periods. In some it has flourished and in some it has declined. God does not call His people to be successful; He calls them to be faithful.

Calvinists should still confidently teach the sovereign grace of God as it was summarized in the Canons of Dort. They should do so because, according to this author and the witness of Reformed Christians in church history, Calvinism is both biblical and helpful. It is helpful because in a world that is often foolishly optimistic and man-centered, Calvinism teaches the seriousness of sin and the glories of the redemptive work of Christ for sinners. In the face of so much religious shallowness, the profundity of Calvinism is needed. Shallow religion produces shallow Christian living. The depths of God's grace should lead Christians to live gratefully, humbly, joyfully and carefully before God. Today the church of Jesus Christ does not need less Calvinism. Rather it needs to recover a forceful and faithful commitment to the God-centered biblical message.

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ARMINIANISM EXPOSED

by Rev. Mark Herzer

I have been a Calvinist for fifteen years or so. I have relished our doctrines and, as a Presbyterian, cherished our ecclesiology. And like all my Calvinistic brothers, I have had my bouts with Arminians. From these encounters, we have formed certain opinions about Arminianism. Some of us have even read Arminian theological works. However, I have found that most of my dear brothers have formed their opinions about Arminianism second hand. This is not to say that the opinions are incorrect but very few books handle them directly. What I wish to do in this essay is to 'expose' Arminianism and expose it to my Calvinistic brethren.

Several years ago, I began to 'collect' Arminian theological works. I wanted to read them for myself. I found myself constructing arguments against Arminianism without really being able to cite them. But after several years of hunting them down (the books, that is), I think I ended up actually possessing more Arminian theological text books than the Westminster Theological Seminary library. From those years of dabbling in and out of their works, I found that half has not been told. I suspect you too will discover these findings to be quite surprising.

We are accustomed to fighting Arminianism on two major fronts. One is in the area of predestination and the other is over the issue of "free-will." Both have been ably addressed by Reformed writers and scholars. As is well known, those are the critical and principal positions undergirding Arminianism. So I will not traverse those grounds again.

In my research, I was set at ease and actually elated to find that their own writers felt that consistency was critical to their system. They relish their doctrines as much as we ours. One of their highly respected Methodist theologians, John Miley, rightly perceived that all our (i.e. Calvinistic) doctrines hung together.¹ They sought a different ground for atonement, a different doctrine of justification and a different formulation of the decrees of God. They yearn to be as consistent and systematic as we. Their system hangs together as well as our own (in many of their works). As one would expect, because the principal issues (God's sovereignty and the bondage of the will) have been precluded at the outset, the reverberations from these concessions crop up throughout their theology. One such doctrine that suffers from this is the doctrine of justification by faith. It has been grossly overlooked by Calvinists in their polemic against Arminianism.² In one sense, it is as important as the doctrine of sovereignty and I suspect even more important. Their view of the doctrine of justification, so easily overlooked and misunderstood by evangelicals at large (hence the ECT escapade), is frighteningly non-protestant. But I am getting ahead of myself. Suffice it to say, justification by faith is not the only doctrine that suffered, as we shall see.

What I wish to do in this brief survey is to expose some of the major tenets of Arminianism. In order to do this, I will interact with

their primary sources. All the authors I cite are decidedly Arminian; it is not my label slapped onto them. They wear it as a badge of honor. But in the end, it will be seen that their system is crassly Pelagian and their position should startle the sensibilities of all true evangelicals. However, the primary audience I have in mind are Calvinists who wish to read it for themselves. Some of these doctrines will receive a more thorough analysis in the near future.³ This is merely a survey of their positions. I must also convey a word of caution or rather perhaps, an apology of a sort. The tone of this survey is not sympathetic, not in the least. I have grown quite impatient with their perspective because it seems to be gaining some power among evangelicals. It is my hope that the following survey will give ample impetus to further study and information to all readers. I am fast coming to the conclusion that Arminianism may not be evangelical at all. However, I will reserve that judgment and be charitable at this moment. I would appreciate any and all corrections to this survey. If I have incorrectly cited someone or have misrepresented a position, then please inform me. I will stand corrected.

ARMINIANISM

"It is hard to find a Calvinist theologian willing to defend Reformed theology, including the views of both Calvin and Luther, in all its rigorous particulars now that Gordon Clark is no longer with us and John Gerstner is retired. Few have the stomach to tolerate Calvinian theology in its logical purity. The laity seem to gravitate happily to Arminians like C. S. Lewis for their intellectual understanding. So I do not think I stand alone. The drift away from theological determinism is definitely on."⁴ So spoke the Arminian. Perhaps he is absolutely correct. But is this good? Let us see at what cost.

DOCTRINE OF GOD'S KNOWLEDGE

Arminians detest the doctrine of predestination as presented by Calvinists. Since the word itself is Biblical, Arminians are forced to define the term in a manner consonant with their assumptions. In order to do that, they must recast the traditional doctrines related to God's knowledge. Most of us have no problem saying that God knows all things; but this has vexed most Arminians. Many evangelical thinkers are promoting what is called "free will theism" or "the openness of God" theism. Such is the direct result of Arminian theology pushed to its logical tendencies.⁵ Gregory Boyd, who himself is an Arminian, has argued that "Arminian theologians have not generally followed through the logic of their insight into the nature of creaturely freedom to its logical (and biblical) conclusions."⁶ Their view is astounding.

They, the Arminians who are Freewill Theists, are not willing to concede that God knows all things, at least not in the traditional sense. For example, Clark Pinnock argues that "omniscience need not mean exhaustive foreknowledge of all future events. If that were its meaning, the future would be fixed and determined, as is the past."⁷ For them, the idea of foreknowledge "requires only that we define the scope of foreknowledge with care. In some respects the future is knowable, in others it is not. God knows a great deal about what will happen. He knows everything that will ever happen as the direct result of factors that already exist. He knows infallibly the content of his own future actions, to the extent that they are not related to human choices. All that God does not know is the content of future free decisions, and this is because decisions are not there to know until they occur."⁸ The problem with Rice's seemingly harmless formulation is that the whole future, as envisioned by this explanation, is filled with nothing but numerous human decisions. In order for God to know even two seconds into the future, God must know the decisions of the first second which He is not permitted to know (or, as they argue, He chose not to know). If He does not know it, then how can He know His own future actions when they are dependent upon the free acts of man? Thus God in fact does not know the future at all because He does not know our decisions nor His responses to them. Rice is even more adamant in another book: "Not even God knows the future in all its details. Some parts remain indefinite until they actually occur, and so they can't be known in advance."⁹ This sort of formulation is gaining ground among some evangelicals.

This would quite naturally lead to the notion of "divine learning." Namely, God must learn as the future unfolds. May it never be said that He infallibly knows all things. In fact, without much shame, they virtually concede in some measure that God is surprised. "God is not startled and is never struck dumb as the future unfolds, but an element of surprise embraces the divine knowledge just as it does ours even when we think our predictive powers are at their height. Were you a god, would you not find it dull to fix the future irrevocably from eternity?"¹⁰ That last question typifies and exposes their theological tendency, namely, God created in the image of man. In response, I ask, "What does it matter if I should be bored? How does my own boredom determine the nature of God's knowledge? And in what real sense do we have any predictive powers? Isn't God's predictive power the sheer evidence of His majestic divinity?" Yet Rice's assumption admits this central thesis: God is merely a superhuman being.

John Sanders's thesis is more subtle but also just as destructive. He argues that the nature of the relationship necessitates risks and therefore God's providence is a risk of a sort. He states that God is "amazingly creative" and enters into a risk relationship with human beings. "In the God-human relationship God sometimes decides alone what will happen; at other times God modifies his plans in order to accommodate the choices, actions and desires of his creatures."¹¹ God, in effect, reacts to our decisions and actions. But that is Sanders's point, God takes risks. He further explains that when God created the world, He had a "great chance of success and little possibility of failure while concomitantly having a ... high amount of risk in the sense that it matters deeply to God how things go."¹² He says that sin was possible, but not plausible because God took a risk. Sanders is aware that our sensibilities would be "shocked" with this sort of formulation. But a God of risk taking (unaware of what the future infallibly holds) is for Sanders the most relational picture of God. In essence, his view could be summed up by these words: "But God sovereignly decides not to control each and every event, and some things go contrary to what God intends and may not turn out completely as God desires. Hence, God takes risks in creating this sort of world."¹³ Let us be frank, God is a big God and He can take all these mishaps; the risk is something He is big enough to take.¹⁴ But what about that maverick atom that might destroy my health, is He actively involved? I hope so; no, I know so, the Bible tells me so.¹⁵

For the Arminians, the fundamental belief in man's freedom must be retained at all cost. Omniscience is denied (and thus the doctrine of Middle Knowledge is readily held by many so as to take omniscience seriously).¹⁶ This denial of omniscience is not held by all Arminians. Samuel Wakefield almost sounds like a Calvinist in his defense of God's omniscience, and he is well acquainted with the philosophical "problems" associated with the notion of necessary future contingent acts of human beings.¹⁷ So within their own camp, they see that one cannot concede God's omniscience. Most Arminians cannot accept the balance maintained in Scripture, namely, God knows all things and is in control of everything while man is justly responsible for all his actions. They maintain that it must be 'reasonable' and rational. Sanders argues that it must be reasonable at all costs.¹⁸ Calvinists maintain that it must be biblical

at all times; our reason bows before revelation, credo ut intelligam.

DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT

Another formulation that might also surprise many is the Arminian view of atonement. Most Christians believe that Christ paid the penalty for our sins and that Christ is our substitute. In this substitution, penal dimensions of divine transaction had transpired. This formulation has forced Arminians to redefine, once again, the doctrine of atonement. They rightly believe that the substitutionary doctrine necessarily entails limited atonement. So the first alteration in their position is the common biblical view of Christ paying the penalty for the sins of sinners. The following is an important observation from an avowed Arminian.

A spillover from Calvinism into Arminianism has occurred in recent decades. Thus many Arminians whose theology is not very precise say that Christ paid the penalty for our sins. Yet such a view is foreign to Arminianism, which teaches instead that Christ suffered for us. Arminians teach what Christ did he did for every person; therefore what he did could not have been to pay the penalty, since no one would then ever go into eternal perdition...They also feel that God the Father would not be forgiving us at all if his justice was satisfied by the real thing that justice needs: punishment. They understand that there can be only punishment or forgiveness, not both?realizing, e.g., that a child is either punished or forgiven, not forgiven after the punishment has been meted out.²⁰

A century before, the Methodist theologian, John Miley, one of the most important nineteenth-century Arminian thinkers in America (along with Watson and Pope, who were British), also saw the inconsistency of the theories within Arminianism. He felt compelled to argue that the doctrine of strict substitutionary atonement hung together as a system only in Calvinism.

If other cardinal doctrines of Calvinism are true, its doctrine of atonement is true. It is an integral part of the system, and in full harmony with every other part of it. The doctrines of divine sovereignty and decrees, of unconditional election to salvation, of the effectual calling and final perseverance of the elect, and that their salvation is monergistically wrought as it is sovereignly decreed, require an atonement which in its very nature is and must be effectual in the salvation of all for whom it is made. Such an atonement the system has in the absolute substitution of Christ, both in precept and penalty, in behalf of the elect. He fulfills the righteousness which the law requires of them, and suffers the punishment which their sins deserve. By the nature of the substitution both must go to their account. Such a theory of atonement is in scientific accord with the whole system. And the truth of the system would carry with it the truth of the theory. It can admit no other theory. Nor can such an atonement be true if the system be false.²¹

As a result of this, there is debate among Arminians over the nature of atonement. Some believe that the governmental theory is the Arminian position. Wesley, on the other hand, seems to have adopted the penal substitutionary theory (albeit inconsistently).²² Most, however, did not. Richard Watson accepted the governmental theory of atonement as did the Methodist William Burt Pope. They knew that the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement was inimical to their theology. William Pope for example argues: "Arminianism holds that the Sacrifice was offered for the whole world: it must therefore for that reason also renounce the commutative theory of exact and mutual compensation; since some may perish for whom Christ died, and He would be defrauded of His reward in them."²³ What he is saying is that we cannot argue that Christ really paid for the penalty of sin for everyone for whom He died, in the strictest and substitutionary sense. If we were to say He did, then we are (and his inference is correct at this point) forced to conclude some of Christ's blood was shed in vain (or limited to the elect). Then how and for what reason did He die?

One writer, apparently feeling the tension, sought to answer this. Benjamin Field gives his own vague model: "Christ did not pay the sinner's debt in the sense in which the objector understands that phrase. It is only in a loose sense that the death of Christ may be thus spoken of. He did a something [sic] in consideration of which it is now quite consistent with God's character as a moral Governor?"²⁴ How can one argue that Christ died for sin in "a loose sense?" What "something" did He accomplish? But since they already denied penal substitutionary atonement, they are left outside without a working model.²⁵ Even the modern Arminian theologian J. Kenneth Grider denies it more forcefully. "Scripture never states that He was punished for us or that He paid the penalty for us. Scripture always states instead that he suffered for us."²⁶ But this is to deny the word 'propitiation' used in the NT, Rom. 3:24, 25; 1Jn. 2:2. Grider's position is even denied by some of the elder Arminians who argued for the punishment doctrine along with their governmental theory (again, inconsistently).²⁷ We believe this is not consistent on their part but commend them for their attempt to be faithful to the biblical language.

The more modern Arminians are unhappy with all the theories; they sense that the governmental theory does not fit well with Scripture (with the exception of Grider). R. Larry Shelton wants to adopt a different model; the model he proposes is even more vague and unbiblical.²⁸ He argues, "Christ's work was not just a moral example to inspire moral living, but a sacrifice of obedient worship in which we may participate vicariously through faith. Through this work, a grieved God whose faith in us has been compromised is enabled to believe in us again as He sees that we share in the grief for sin and righteous obedience that Christ expressed on our behalf."²⁹ Wow, now God can believe in us! This is nothing less than the old governmental theory filled with anthropocentric sappy sentimentalism.

As you can see, deny the substitutionary atonement and you are lost as to a working 'model' for atonement. Substitutionary atonement is biblical and is the only one that is in accordance with Scripture (for a thorough biblical defense of this, see the numerous works on atonement by Leon Morris). Being forced to recast the doctrine of atonement, Arminians have developed some of the strangest theories. Some, however, are aware of the difficulties of their position, and attempt to say something remotely similar to the biblical language.

Having seen their confusion, we now see what the aftermath of their universal atonement might mean. Again, the whole defense of universal atonement is an implicit admission of substitutionary atonement (we greatly differ as to its extent). Nonetheless, if indeed Christ died for everyone without exception and that He suffered for all their sins, then a different ground must exist for man's damnation. This is simple and logical. If all their sins have been effectively dealt with on the cross, then on what basis will unbelievers perish? Donald Lake, out of sheer consistency with his fundamental belief, falls into this conclusion.

More importantly since Christ has finished his work of redemption upon the cross, the ground of our salvation has completely shifted. What is it that condemns a man? Is it his sins, large or small, numerous or few, that condemns a man and sends him into a Christless eternity? The answer of the New Testament is an absolute No! What condemns a man is not sins. Why? Because Christ's redemptive

and atoning work is complete and satisfying. Even man's rejection cannot frustrate the purposes of God. The issue of every man's salvation turns not upon his sins, but rather upon his relationship to the Son! Sin may have made the cross necessary, but the cross has now made sin irrelevant as far as man's relationship to God is concerned. This is, perhaps, a little too strong, but the fact is, that man's problem now is not so much sin or sins, but his reaction to what God has done in Christ.³⁰

If the above quote is true, then it also follows that one cannot really call anyone a 'sinner' because no sin can technically be imputed to them. However, unbelief is sin but didn't Christ die for all sins? Alas, I quibble. Who am I to say that such inconsistency is laughable? Perhaps we should shudder instead.

DOCTRINE OF GRACE (PREVENIENT)

Evangelical Arminians, in some sense, took seriously the doctrine of Original Sin. They knew that the Fall thoroughly impaired man's will. Since the Calvinistic system was the reigning system at the time and it alone gave adequate attention to the doctrine of Original Sin, Arminianism was forced to address the doctrine in a different way. While seeking to recognize the serious effects of Original Sin, they believed that Christ's death nullified all the effects. They believed their doctrine of prevenient grace could both take Original Sin seriously while at the same time put everyone on an equal moral footing. In that sense, grace could be said to precede all acts of faith. John Wesley held to this position. The net effect of it was that God has given grace to everyone to be able to believe if they will. The best sort of definition comes from Kenneth Jones who says, "The prevenient grace of God's convicting Spirit simply lifts the sinner up to the point where the choice is possible."³¹

Mrs. Wynkoop, a Wesleyan scholar, goes so far as to say, "No man is found in the 'state of nature.'"³² If she is correct, then everyone is in some sense (incompletely) in a redeemed state. Whereas the Arminians took Original Sin seriously, they did, however, overcome the problem by simply cloaking it with their novel doctrine of prevenient grace.³³ In other words, they are one with the Calvinists when it comes to the debilitating effects of the Fall. But due to this novel doctrine, they are one with the Pelagians in making everyone capable of believing. So they part company with the Calvinists by somehow [by fiat?] making the grave judicial effects of Original Sin no longer operative by their universal prevenient grace. The beauty of the Roman Catholic doctrine of Original sin is that it controlled the flow of grace to counter the grave effects through their sacraments. Though both are wrong, at least the Roman Catholics limited it to their church and that it was not universal. The Wesleyans, on the other hand, made everyone recipients of grace without exception. For the Roman Catholics, all those inside the church are without Original Sin. For the Wesleyans, all those in and outside the church are without Original Sin (generally speaking).³⁴ Perhaps this last statement was too strong; nevertheless, some of the judicial aspects no longer apply and for sure, its effect has been greatly dampened. Both systems have a doctrine of grace that is far from affecting salvation.

Some have tried to give what appears to be a scriptural argument for their position. Grider submits various passages which argue for repentance and thus concludes that man has the gracious ability to repent. Since God calls man to repent and since God wouldn't demand what we couldn't do, therefore, there is prevenient grace. Impeccable logic! The minor premise, however, is at fault. Even if one granted that, the conclusion could not be drawn. There are other ways for accounting for the premise.

They do not wish to relegate the Holy Spirit; they believe He is active in and working with prevenient grace. Grider urges us to believe that the Holy Spirit must work in order that we would believe. The passages he cites hardly argue for universal prevenient grace; it certainly seems to argue for particular prevenient grace.

John Miley seems to avoid the phrase 'prevenient grace' but not its meaning. We will let him speak for himself:

Man is fallen and corrupt in his nature, and therein morally helpless; but man is also redeemed and the recipient of a helping grace in Christ whereby he is invested with capabilities for a moral probation. He has the power of meeting the terms of an actual salvation. All men have this power. It is none the less real or sufficient because of its gracious source. Salvation is thus the privilege of every man, whatever his religious dispensation.³⁵

He makes several startling statements. He states that man has been "redeemed." In what sense? By making man capable or by investing him "with capabilities for a moral probation." [Now, where is that in Scripture?] But the other surprising comment is his argument for a probationary situation (similar to Adam?); it must be a probationary state because if it is denied, then (as they rightly conclude) one would have to fall into Calvinism.³⁶

This probationary period invested all of humanity with great gifts from the atonement. Similar thoughts developed in the Twentieth Century. The Nazarene Orton Wiley states that the atonement gave the following general benefits:

1. "The first benefit of the free gift was to preserve mankind from sinking below the possibility of redemption." But is there such a condition? When can our sin conquer sovereign grace? Most of all, where is that in Scripture?
2. "The second effect of the free gift was the reversal of the condemnation and the bestowal of a title to eternal life." He argues that the "culpability ? was removed by the free gift in Christ. The free gift removed the original condemnation?" Again, a statement without proof. We have already seen that sin no longer is a real concern when it comes to our eternal estate.
3. "The free gift was the restoration of the Holy Spirit to the race." What he means by this is not that all are regenerated by the Spirit but rather all are now given the Spirit "as a provisional discipline for the fuller grace of redemption." He is to everyone, "the spirit of awakening and conviction."³⁷

So what do we notice? We are in a probationary state. In this state, the Spirit works in all and prepares everyone for grace but the final choice is up to man. Or as the veritable Arminian Grider says (who was quoting another Arminian): "God voted for me, the devil voted against me, and I cast the deciding ballot for myself."³⁸ Man may kill grace (see section on Synergism). "The heathen have a measure of grace. The power to resist grace is of grace."³⁹ The reason this is so forcefully maintained is because the Spirit's work has gushed out into everything and everyone. "The Divine Spirit is atmospheric, and it becomes personal whenever any person appropriates it. ? The Divine Spirit is like the mother's heart. It is universal and infinite. It is the mother-soul of the universe, with infinite power, and sweetness, and beauty, and glory [blah, blah]? and what time any man accepts the influence of the Divine Spirit,

and cooperates with it, that moment the work is done by the stimulus of God acting with the practical energy and will of the human soul."⁴⁰ The Spirit is in everyone working to restrain the inherited bias and prompt us towards the good. In fact, they have a good idea when this work begins. Jones is quite sure that this work occurs in every child "as soon as [he] can understand anything."⁴²

This almost pantheistic notion of the Spirit-Grace obviously could be abused. Modern liberal Methodists did not miss this opportunity to exploit it. Some contemporary Methodists argue that since Wesley promoted this doctrine of prevenient grace, we can further conclude that those who never heard the Gospel could still respond to prevenient grace and thus be justified (apparently hinted at by Wesley). And to push this idea much further, they reasoned that "our evangelistic task is set, not in a world that is lost and deprived of God, but in one in which God is very much active, and where, moved by God's grace, people already experience the love of God in good measure through Christ and the Holy Spirit [mind you, the author is speaking of the unregenerate who never heard the gospel]. The evangelistic task is not to deny this universal grace, but to help persons move from 'grace to grace.'"⁴³ In other words, we are not bringing Good News to a world under the Wrath of God but we are bringing a decent message to a graceful people (certainly not graceless because of prevenient grace) who were already saturated by and soaked in grace.⁴⁴ Similar conclusions had been drawn by another writer in our section on 'The Doctrine of Atonement' where "sins" are no longer an issue for lost human beings.

So God has dispersed grace to everyone and everyone has been endowed with some grace, they are in an elevated status, a super-nature status (just short of redeemed nature). One can only wonder why anyone should pray for someone else's salvation since it is ultimately up to the individual. God can't do anymore, He already cast His vote for them, what is there left for Him to do? Thank God for sovereign mercy that can make a sinner willing in the day of His salvation.

Another point to consider is that if the atonement has secured the probationary status of everyone, then why hasn't it saved everyone? In other words, did only a portion of Christ's work merely apply to everyone and the rest is in limbo until accepted? They argue that prevenient grace was secured for everyone so that we could believe or reject the Gospel. They also argue that Christ died for everyone. How does only a portion of that work on the Cross apply to Everyone? "I did everything for you, everything and I am applying only 90% of it to you, but you have to believe for the other 10%."

Their doctrine of prevenient grace is ultimately rooted in their insistence upon the absolute non-negotiable of their theology, namely, man must be free enough to accept or reject. They wish to be debtors to Free Will and we to Sovereign Grace. They argue that since prevenient grace came before our choice, therefore their theology is one of grace. But then again, this sort of argument was advanced by the Papists. It is true that this universal prevenient grace came before our choice; but it affected no one efficaciously. It led none to salvation. The efficacious act came from man who could accept or reject the prevenient grace. Man's choice is the *sine qua non* of their theology and not God's sovereign irresistible grace. We, on the other hand, declare, "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus!"

DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

It has been recognized by some Reformed writers that Arminians deny the imputation of the active righteousness of Christ. The usual personality that is appealed to from the Reformed camp is Piscator.⁴⁵ The Arminians who adhere to this position hold to it for different reasons (namely, their preoccupation with sanctification).

John Wesley did not consistently communicate where he stood on this issue. Early on he denied it, but after James Hervey attacked him, Wesley seems to have reaffirmed it though some suspect that he fell back into his earlier position.⁴⁶ Wesley's response to James Hervey's Theron and Aspasio argues that Hervey's doctrine of imputation of Christ's righteousness will produce antinomianism. The gift of righteousness for Wesley was "the righteousness or holiness which God gives to, and works in them."⁴⁷ This phrase and similar ones like it became the hallmark of Arminianism. Even one of Wesley's close friends, William Grimshaw, disagreed with Wesley on this (though amicably).⁴⁸ For Grimshaw, this doctrine was the doctrine used of God to deliver him from legalism. One wonders if charity blinded him at this point; he was aware of Wesley's view and yet worked with him nonetheless.

It is not imputation but impartation of righteousness that was important to them. This is very reminiscent of the debate between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism; the debate was over imputed and infused righteousness. We will see that a similar line of reasoning exists within Arminianism.

The popular Arminian Bible commentator states what the Arminian view of justification is: "To say that Christ's personal righteousness is imputed to every true believer, is not scriptural: To say that he has fulfilled all righteousness for us, in our stead, if by this is meant his fulfilment of all moral duties, is neither scriptural nor true? In no part of the Book of God is Christ's righteousness ever said to be imputed to us for our justification."⁴⁹ For Clarke, the passive work alone is applied to believers, namely, Christ's death has procured our forgiveness. The active imputed righteousness of Christ, he argued as his forefathers, produces antinomianism.⁵⁰ Similarly, John Fletcher's massive work is essentially a diatribe against the active righteousness of Christ.⁵¹ The learned and influential Richard Watson argued that imputation of Christ's righteousness "as to be accounted as our own, [has] no warrant in the Word of God."⁵² Their lady theologian (not official, I hope?) states, "Christ's death is a substitute for our punishment but not for our holiness."⁵³ This is a curious statement because most Arminians, we have seen, have argued that Christ was not a substitute for our punishment.

Even the most recent twentieth-century Wesleyan theologian argues the same. "We Arminians understand that God as Judge, when He forgives us, really does make us righteous by imparting righteousness to us, and we feel [my emphasis] that many passages of Scripture support this understanding." Justification, for him, means to "make you righteous" and not "declare you righteous." He says that he believes in imputation of righteousness but also in imparted righteousness, the emphasis being on the imparted.⁵⁴ His systematic theology gives only one and a half pages to the doctrine of Justification and the bulk of the argument is a proleptic against imputed righteousness. The texts he adduces (three to be exact, though only two have any bearing) only argue that we will live in righteousness (Rom. 8:4 and 5:1); that is not something any Protestant has denied. All Reformed thinkers argue that we will fulfill righteousness; however, that righteousness does not justify. Kenneth Jones follows Grider at this point. However, he does not give the doctrine any separate treatment (not even a section in a chapter). After the chapter on Christ, he launches into a chapter on salvation which gives half a page to the word justify as one of the many ways of viewing salvation. His definition: "This is both the declaration that one is no longer guilty, and also the making of one to be righteous? Does God merely impute righteousness to the sinner, or does he impart righteousness to him? ? If this were the only word for salvation it would be difficult to understand, but it is only one of the

models for what God does in and for us. No one word can express it all."⁵⁵ It is mind boggling to read this. Confusion over the biblical word and then thoughtlessly declare ambiguity. Was not the Reformation sprung into life over this word? Is not our whole salvation determined by our standing before God? Is there not a world of difference between what is done in us versus what is done for us?

They feared that the historic doctrine undercut moral responsibility, and so they charged the Calvinists of being antinomians. They argued that the atonement put one on an equal footing with Adam.⁵⁶ Once this atonement was accepted by faith, all sins were forgiven and we were then imparted righteousness which by grace will lead us to holiness. The question then becomes, by what righteousness is a person justified? Is it solely the imputed righteousness of Christ? No. Then, is it by this mixed righteousness in a person (the imparted righteousness mixed with our obedience)? That seems to be the conclusion one must draw.⁵⁷

Though there appear to be some statements regarding the imputation of Christ's righteousness in justification, those are effectively nullified by their emphasis on impartation. Samuel Wakefield shows where there is verbal similarity between Arminian writers and Calvin himself. Nonetheless, imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers is denied by the Arminians, as observed by Wakefield.⁵⁸ Whereas J. G. Machen died thanking God for the active obedience of Christ, Wesleyans and Methodists, on the other hand, repudiate this doctrine. Did Machen die outside of true saving faith?

FORGIVENESS EQUALS JUSTIFICATION

The upshot of this position is more troubling (and also quite confusing). For them, no one's righteousness really saves; sin is pardoned and no imputed righteousness is accredited. It appears, the essence of justification is forgiveness.⁵⁹ This seems to be Wesley's position. Methodists like Tillett do not like to leave it as mere forgiveness. Curtis believes that forgiveness and pardon are not terms "quite large enough to express all the apostle means by justification."⁶⁰ Yet many, like Wesley, would want to limit it to that. Miley, astute as he is, argues that a forensic view of justification would make forgiveness superfluous and therefore argues that justification is not forensic in the truest sense but simply forgiveness. Forgiveness is the "vital fact of justification." But there is a slight forensic dimension, namely, "the result of forgiveness is a justified state."⁶¹ Field, in his catechetical manner asks, "How is it proved that justification is substantially the same blessing as pardon?" Then he cites various passages to argue the case. This is a question that assumes too much and a question that should have never been asked by a Protestant. One must not miss the point here. They insist upon this definition to avoid both the penal and forensic demands of justification and atonement. It is not simply a matter of emphasis. If justification is strictly forensic, then the declaration must be in truth, namely, imputed righteousness (of Christ). But this is the very element that is denied. To declare someone righteous assumes imputation. To preclude such a demand, they argue that it must be merely forgiveness. Now, not everyone is insistent here but enough state it to bring it to our attention. Most of them, however, are inconsistent.

DENIAL OF IMPUTATION

The second aspect is the strict denial of any real imputation. Hills states that "there can be no such thing as a transfer, or imputation, either of guilt or of righteousness."⁶² This is related to their doctrine of Atonement which lacks the penal dimension (though they are not all in agreement on this). Pope's argument is similar to Hills's. There is no imputation of our sins to Christ nor his righteousness to us.⁶³ Clarke explains why there is no imputation of Christ's active righteousness. "The truth is, the moral law was broken, and did not now require obedience; it required this before it was broken; but, after it was broken, it required death."⁶⁴ Christ's obedience pertained only to Himself (as a private person). "His active obedience has nothing more to do in the work of redemption than his supreme Divinity. Both were essential to his character as the world's Redeemer; but neither of them can in truth be imputed to us."⁶⁵ His capacity as the Redeemer only came into play at his death. Christ's righteousness, therefore, is not our righteousness. Even Adam's sin is not imputed to us because imputation has been precluded.⁶⁶

THE ROLE OF FAITH

The third aspect and the most confusing is their view of the role of faith in this odd formulation of justification. As briefly mentioned above, there is still some talk of "imputation." For them, faith is imputed for righteousness. Though merit is explicitly denied (in word), it is maintained in their theological definitions. They maintain that our righteousness does not save but neither does Christ's. The person who believes is declared righteous and is no longer guilty, but his sins are forgiven. "The imputation of righteousness is, then, the non-punishment or pardon of sin? it will also be seen that by the imputing of faith for righteousness, the apostle means precisely the same thing."⁶⁷ Again, the emphasis is on forgiveness but they also suggest that faith itself is imputed as righteousness. In some of their statements, this suggestion is more pronounced. While at one time they make faith itself the righteousness, they at the same time assure us that righteousness comes by faith. I thought this confusion was simply my own but to my surprise, I noticed that Girardeau himself observed it [in his explanation of the Arminian view which he ably refutes]: "That is, the righteousness of God is the righteousness of faith, and the righteousness of faith is the righteousness which is by faith. This is not Paul's confusion; it is Dr. Ralston's. He seemed unconscious that a righteousness which inheres in faith and a righteousness which comes by faith are not, cannot be, the same thing."⁶⁸ John Miley is clearer (and bolder, without shame) in saying that "faith itself, and not its object, that is thus imputed. Hence any attempt at a metonymical interpretation of faith, so that it shall mean, not itself but its object, that is Christ, and hence mean the imputation of his personal righteousness, is utterly vain."⁶⁹ He later explains in what sense this faith is imputed as righteous and it is what is stated above, namely, one is forgiven (a full circle without defining anything). How is faith imputed as righteous? What is in faith? If the object is not Christ but "itself" then do we have a faith in faith that justifies?

From what I can gather, so far, they don't want to completely sever some sort of righteousness imputed to us. It is the nature of that righteousness that is vague and undefined. All we can know for certain is that justification means one is forgiven and yet is declared righteous, but it is not our righteousness (though some seem to hint that it is), nor is it Christ's (which they all deny) nor is it faith itself (some say otherwise) but in another sense it is all of those points except Christ's righteousness (which is the only thing that is explicitly clear).

The confusion here is serious. They know the significance of this doctrine and do not wish be Roman Catholics but they are also not satisfied with the historic doctrine and formulation. This serious confusion, no doubt, has produced grave pastoral problems and theological anxiety.

SOME SERIOUS CONSIDERATIONS

1. Imparted righteousness: such a teaching is unbiblical and not protestant or evangelical. It is nothing less than the Romish notion of infused righteousness. This is not mere name calling. Some of their writers concede. Thomas Oden does not deny that the similarities exist. Wesleyans (along with others), he believes, "moderated" the extremes between Wittenberg and Rome. He believes that this moderation is a "via media."⁷⁰ This is dangerous. He believes imparted righteousness needs to be underscored; there is too much "dialectic" between imputation and impartation.⁷¹ We must never let the two meet; imputed righteousness alone justifies; imparted righteousness does not play any role in our justification. There can be no moderation. The antithesis between imparted/infused and imputed righteousness must always exist. If they continue to maintain this position, then they seriously err. It is Roman Catholicism in Protestant garb.

2. Faith: they maintain that justification is by faith but do not clearly indicate how justification is anything different from forgiveness. Most of them (not all) seem to give some merit to faith itself.⁷²

3. Most of the modern works give little or no attention to the doctrine of justification by faith and are preoccupied with entire sanctification. Even in the two volume work *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology*, one cannot find a separate chapter given to justification; in fact, if my reading is accurate, I don't think they give it any special attention (Curtis gave almost three pages (actually two whole pages) to the doctrine in his *The Christian Faith*, 361-3).⁷³ A contemporary reflection without a thorough commentary on the doctrine of justification is a sad testimony of their real belief. A whole chapter is given to their 'entire sanctification.' It would not be overstating the respective positions when I say that Reformed Christians lean on Justification whereas the Arminians lean on Sanctification. We trust in an alien righteousness whereas they seem to trust in inherent righteousness.

4. An academic note: it appears that modern Arminian scholars are not unaware of the tension and problem here. One recent article argued that these two strands (evangelicalism which focuses on justification by faith, extra nos and moralism which focuses on imparted righteousness, intra nos) have existed in Arminianism. The evangelical John Hicks (not the liberal one) argues that the two strands ought not to be confused (Grotius/Limborch & Remonstrantism vs. Arminius & Wesley). His reasoning is penetrating and would to God many Arminians would come to this same conclusion.

The distinction between Arminianism and Remonstrantism is, more importantly, theologically significant. It is a watershed issue for evangelicalism. It is the watershed issue of the Reformation itself. If Arminianism is to remain evangelical, it must take seriously the importance of its doctrine of atonement and justification. From where does justifying righteousness come? extra nos or intra nos? Is righteousness a gift wholly external to ourselves, or is it somehow inherent within the act of faith?

The righteousness which is imputed, according to Arminianism, is the righteousness which Christ merited through his obedience. The righteousness which is imputed, according to Remonstrantism, is God's gracious estimation of the human act of faith. This is no mere semantical difference. It is a fundamental disagreement concerning the ground of grace itself. It is the difference between being clothed in Christ's perfect righteousness and being clothed in our own partial righteousness voluntaristically (i.e., 'graciously' in Limborch's terminology, but not true righteousness according to divine justice) imputed to us. It is the difference between righteousness being wholly derived from Christ's work or righteousness partially derived from our own faith.⁷⁴

Hicks fully understands the issue. However, his distinction within Wesley is not that obvious; more of Remonstrantism is present in Wesley than Hicks would be willing to concede. But his observation is encouraging. Perhaps our Arminian brothers are rethinking this and may truly become more evangelical?

Quite admirably, Pope recognized the unique shifts and developments within Arminianism.⁷⁵ He seems to have veered away from the Limborchian tendency. This is not always the case among all Arminians. Hicks believes that the two tendencies are "logically incompatible" and suggests that the two schools of thought are historically disconnected.⁷⁶

DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION AND PERFECTION

Wesleyans view their teaching on sanctification and perfection as their contribution to historic theology.⁷⁷ I submit that this aberration is the inevitable fruit of their denial of the biblical doctrine of justification (the imputation of Christ's righteousness). Wynkoop is correct when she states, "The true antithesis of Calvinism is the Wesleyan and (we believe) biblical concept of sanctification with its dynamic, life-involving meaning. Wesleyanism, unencumbered with the philosophy underlying Calvinism, finds the doctrine of sanctification not only biblical and practical but absolutely essential to salvation."⁷⁸

One can say, after having surveyed their literature, that more attention has been given to this one doctrine than any other doctrine in the Wesleyan corpus. They are known as the "holiness" denomination.⁷⁹ But, we shall see, it is no real holiness. A weed by any other name is, well, let me first prove my case.⁸⁰

PERFECTION DEFINED

They consider perfection to be a second work of grace. And this work "is the work of the Holy Spirit the act of God's grace in the heart of one already regenerated, by which the 'old man is crucified,' and the moral nature is 'cleansed from all unrighteousness,' unrightness, proneness to sin, sinful propensity."⁸¹ So it is a second work of grace which is nothing short of the eradication of all sin. Yet the Evangelical and Calvinist William Grimshaw, a friend and contemporary of the Wesleys adamantly opposed the use of the phrase "eradication of sin" though he worked closely with the Methodists of that time and was warmly loved and received by the Wesleys.⁸² Nevertheless, the Wesleys persisted. Adam Clarke believes that we can destroy sin "root and branch."⁸³

Wiley summarizes Fletcher's view of Christian Perfection with approval:

Christian perfection is a spiritual constellation, made up of these gracious stars: perfect repentance, perfect faith, perfect humility, perfect meekness, perfect self-denial, perfect resignation, perfect hope, perfect charity for our visible enemies, as well as our earthly relations; and, above all, perfect love for our invisible God, through the explicit knowledge of our Mediator, Jesus Christ.⁸⁴

I wish to God I had just one portion of that. But enough of me (since I'm not perfect), let us go on. Wiley, a Nazarene, argues that "Christian perfection" is nothing more and nothing less, than a heart emptied of all sin and filled with pure love to God and man. As

such, it is a state, not only attainable in this life, but is the normal experience of all those who live in the fullness of the new covenant."⁸⁵ Its nothing more and nothing less!

At times, they call it "the complete destruction of sin" or "perfect love" or "entire sanctification." We can have it in this world. One theologian, William Pope, amazed me when he stated, "There is only one redemption which is reserved for His second coming: the redemption of our body. "There is no hint given in the Scriptural history of redemption that the finished triumph of the Deliverer from sin is never to be known in this world."⁸⁶ Glorification is virtually receiving a glorified body and nothing more because we can be perfect in this world. In other words, we are only awaiting the glorification of our bodies. "An unbroken, perfect, uninterrupted consecration of all the faculties on God is possible in itself, and it is possible on earth."⁸⁷ The fundamental proof for them is, if God calls us to it, we can do it. The logic is simple: "If through grace, we forsake one sin, we may forsake all sin. If we may be cleansed from one sin, we may be cleansed from all sin. If we may keep one commandment, we may, through grace, 'keep the whole law'"⁸⁸ Of course, everything depends on the definition of "keep" or "obey." We do not agree with his premise which teaches that we actually do keep any of the commandments in its full comprehensive sense. To minimize His demand is to play games with definitions.

At the same time, it needs to be understood that this perfection is not legal but evangelical, namely, it is the fruit of cooperating grace.⁸⁹ It is so robust and pure that it can "endure the scrutiny of the Searcher of hearts."⁹⁰ Yet some argue that it is not absolute perfection.⁹¹ Clarke, however, says otherwise: "Be so purified and refined in your souls, by the indwelling Spirit, that even the light of God, shining into your hearts, shall not be able to discover a fault that the love of God has not purged away."⁹² This earthly perfection can endure God's omniscient holy scrutiny. Again, they argue that this is a work of God's grace and not a product of human achievement. Clarke further says, "so he that says the blood of Christ either cannot or will not cleanse us from all sin in this life, gives also the lie to his Maker."⁹³ So, Calvinists, Lutherans and even the Roman Catholics are calling God a liar. He confuses the verses which speak of legal (forensic) work. There is a "definitive sanctification" namely, a fundamental and categorical break from sin but not the total eradication of sin (which happens in glorification).

INNER CONFLICT AND INDWELLING SIN

For them, there is no inner conflict, no civil war. "In Christian perfection, there is no such fight with the disposition, 'no civil war at all,' for the wrong impulse never enters the consciousness as motive."⁹⁴ This distinction is critical. Love to God is so pervasive, the weaker impulse to sin is no longer a part of the conscious motive. He has a "potent attitude" against it. This is the conclusion drawn by Curtis reflecting on Wesley's thought. So, perfection is simply a conscious love toward God and holiness and a hatred of some of the inappropriate desires within (or "intolerance toward the disposition").⁹⁵ Calvinists have always said that this is our goal, but precisely because that sinful disposition inheres (whether we are conscious of it or not), we are still sinful. The Methodists may not be aware of these dispositions but we are; closing our eyes to them or being ignorant of them does not change the reality. For the Arminians, that which is predominant gets the label. Those who are driven more by perfect love are considered perfect or conceived of having achieved entire sanctification, whereas those who haven't are simply born again Christians. If the believer has achieved this state, then he should declare it to the glory of God.⁹⁶

PERFECTION QUALIFIED

Of course, this notion of perfection needs to be qualified (to death). It is not the absolute same holiness God requires but such holiness that can be achieved here (whatever that might mean).⁹⁷ "Christian perfection is relative and probationary, and therefore in a certain perhaps undefinable sense limited."⁹⁸ It may be lost or even "utterly lost"; it is a perfection in imperfection ("perfect in their imperfection").⁹⁹ However, unlike Pope and Clarke, Miley says that it is insignificant in comparison to God's holiness.¹⁰⁰ It is usually found in established Christians, and their aversion to holiness has been removed.¹⁰¹ It admits of degrees.¹⁰² It is a relative holiness.¹⁰³ We can also still be tempted.¹⁰⁴ But all known conscious sin can be eradicated. It is a perfection that is full of infirmities which are "involuntary transgressions of the divine law, known or unknown, which are the result of ignorance or weakness on the part of fallen man."¹⁰⁵ At this rate, this is simply a perfection that is nothing more than the lowering of Divine standards.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: FORGIVES US OUR TRESPASSES

Many have countered their claims by appealing to the Lord's Prayer as a statement against the possibility of perfection in this world. Benjamin Field addresses the petition in the Lord's Prayer where we are taught to pray, "forgive us our trespasses." To this he says, "it should not be forgotten that, though we do not sin according to the evangelical sense of that term, but fulfil the law by pure love to God and man (Rom. xiii. 10), there are many involuntary improprieties of speech and behaviour into which we may be drawn through ignorance, mistake, or infirmity. These may be regarded as 'trespasses,' though not charged upon the conscience and imputed as sin; and of them we should ask the forgiveness of our Father in heaven."¹⁰⁶ Hmmm, not real sins but improprieties. For that reason, we can pray that petition (small sins means a small savior). Wiley gets himself into a quandry following a similar line of thinking. He argues that these "infirmities bring humiliation and regret, but not guilt and condemnation. These latter attach to sin only. Both, however, need the blood of sprinkling."¹⁰⁷ Its kinda, sorta, like a sin but not really a sin but somehow still needs Christ.¹⁰⁸ How can one be humiliated over something that is not sin? If those particular peccadilloes do not merit condemnation, then how can they still need Christ's blood? Wakefield also sugar-coats the force of our Lord's Prayer. "But men, though wholly sanctified, are nevertheless naturally weak and imperfect, and so liable to mistake and infirmity, as well as to defect, in the degree of that absolute obedience which the law of God demands."¹⁰⁹ So, he concludes, Yes, even the Perfect can in some sense pray this prayer. How generous of them! But not everyone will agree with this. Sheldon's statement actually counters this line of thinking.¹¹⁰ He further says, "While the Lord's prayer is eminently appropriate to the state of men in general, no one can demonstrate that every clause in it was designed absolutely to fit every possible condition of every man in the world." It can be used by those who are perfect because it has petitions for others and supplication for personal needs.¹¹¹ What if the Lord's Prayer would not fit every child of God? The only petition that doesn't apply to them is, "forgive us our trespasses." If it does apply, well, it only touches the infirmities and not real transgressions.

JUSTIFICATION AND PERFECTION

There are related issues to this doctrine. As I have hinted at before, their denial of justification (in the Reformational sense) has caused this perversion. Wiley, the standard textbook for the holiness group in this century, argues that our resistance to entire sanctification

or perfection is rooted in our doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness. He criticizes the evangelical position by summarizing it in this fashion: "The subtlety of a doctrine which holds that man can be instantaneously sanctified by an imputed standing, but not actually sanctified by an impartation of righteousness and true holiness, makes the error more dangerous."¹¹² He believes that our misunderstanding of justification has held us back from this Christian perfection. Interestingly, the Roman Catholic church argued that we couldn't be perfect and therefore we couldn't be fully justified. The holiness Arminians say that Calvinists can't accept the doctrine of perfection because we believe we are fully justified by the active righteousness of Christ fully imputed to us. Which is it?

But the greater danger in this is that in their defence of this doctrine, they frequently remark that we will not see God unless we are entirely holy.¹¹³ One is forced to wonder if this inherent-merit-achieved holiness will be the basis of our standing before God? May it never be. Give me Christ's alien imputed righteousness and let them revel in their own perfection.

CONCLUSION ON PERFECTION

As one reads through their works, one can't help wondering if this is not simply "much ado about nothing." I say this respectfully. It almost sounds like what we consider to be assurance or basic Christian maturity (after they qualify it). Considerable attention is given to directions as to how one might actually get this "blessing." But their language is dangerous and will mislead. Their view that we can be free from all known voluntary sins speaks loudly and this has misled many.

We also read that our holiness (ahem, only those that are perfect) could endure the scrutiny of the Almighty (while still in this world) and yet they state at the same time that somehow we could pray the Lord's Prayer. What is there to ask forgiveness for? If our holiness could survive Divine Scrutiny, then we need not pray "Forgive us our trespasses." One can't have it both ways. It is also frightening to read that in their defense of perfection, they argue that one should not use the Lord's Prayer as evidence that we need something to repent of. They miss the point. Our Lord is teaching us the very elements of our prayers while here on this earth; he did not call us to pray "Forgive us our transgressions" by making superficial distinctions. Hmmm, the apostles needed to be taught to pray with the "Lord's Prayer" whereas many Methodists, Nazarenes, and Wesleyans didn't need it (at least not all of the petitions in the prayer). This is simply wrong.¹¹⁴

SYNERGISM

All Arminians wish to say emphatically that salvation is given by the free grace of God. However, their next step undermines this confession. They so qualify this grace and so vehemently defend man's participation in salvation, that they naturally fall into the old semi-Pelagian heresy of synergism. This synergism is rooted in their doctrine of prevenient grace. So, there will be some overlap between the two sections here.

Arminians are not reluctant in admitting that salvation is synergistically wrought (as well as justification, regeneration, and repentance). Though historic evangelicals and Reformed believers have eschewed any hint of synergism, yet Arminians are not afraid to admit that their view is synergistic. Cannon's statement may be as bold as they come. "Granting, therefore, man's ability to stifle and to kill the grace of God within him, have we the right to ascribe to him the positive role of a co-operator with God? We have. For in the very act of not killing grace and of listening to the voice of natural conscience, even though at times very inattentively, man is actually co-operating with God in God's efforts in behalf of his salvation. This must be the case; it cannot be otherwise."¹¹⁵ Before this, Cannon declared, "In this negative way [namely, man's ability to reject to grace] man is the absolute master of his fate and the captain of his own salvation."¹¹⁶ It must be noted that Cannon is not an odd representative of the Wesleyan position. This is nothing less than consistent Arminianism under the influence of Wesley. Man, Cannon says, is the captain of his own salvation. This is not the Gospel, this is unadulterated moralism, a religion of the flesh. But they have more to say.

Kenneth Collins is aware of the differences and does not in any way tone down the differences. He maintains that the Calvinistic (and Lutheran) position on justification is different from the Wesleyan position. I quote in full to give his sense of meaning:

It should not be forgotten, for example, nor taken lightly, that Wesley's doctrine of justification is preceded by divine/human cooperation (synergism) in the form of the prevenient grace of God which fosters human responsibility. This means that, for Wesley at least, people are in some sense responsible for whether or not they are justified (although they cannot justify themselves) since the universal and free prevenient grace of God which renders them accountable has already been given. This same concept of prevenient grace is also behind Wesley's different evaluation of the role and necessity of works prior to justifying faith, and his placing of repentance, for the most part, before justifying faith, not simultaneous with it, ideas that were clearly repudiated by the continental Reformers.¹¹⁷

This crass synergism is inundated with Romish notions of salvation. Though the Romish doctrine is mired in the nature/grace scheme (which the Wesleyans think they overcame by their innovative doctrine of prevenient grace), the Wesleyans virtually mimic the rationale and theological structure of the Romish dogma. In the Tridentine dogma, the Protestants were anathematized for saying that "men are justified by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ."¹¹⁸ This odium does not apply to Wesley and his followers. Wiley's exhaustive but ill-conceived work states, "Synergism, or the co-operation of divine grace and the human will, is another basic truth of the Arminian system."¹¹⁹

A. M. Hills propounds a position that is also incredibly amazing. He states that we do wrong if we affirm that the Holy Spirit is the only efficient agency. In fact, there are various agencies employed in our regeneration. A man must change "his ultimate choice or preference." He would never make this choice without the gracious moving and prompting of the Holy Spirit; but still, as an ultimate fact, he must make it before the work is done. No one can do it for him. When a theologian says that regeneration is the work of the Spirit alone, he simply misrepresents the facts.¹²⁰ Then he affirms, "This view of the co-operation of God and man in the regeneration of the soul is of supreme importance."¹²¹ Not all Arminians are as bold. The Wesleyan Thomas Ralston is much more careful in his formulation and hints at the primacy of grace (while subverting it with his view of co-operating agency of man).¹²² His guarded statements are more acceptable because synergism is not the focus whereas it is the preoccupation in other Arminian theologians. Miley, also is not as bold as others, but nonetheless argues for synergism.¹²³ He says that "Regeneration is not an absolute work of the Spirit." Though the Spirit's work is needed, yet "we may finally resist, or we may yield to the gracious influences, and be born of the Spirit. Here is the sphere of synergism." Pope says the same with no apology. "But the co-operation of the will is

real: because in this last stage it rests with the free agent himself whether the influence of the Spirit be repelled or yielded to. This is the uniform and unfailing testimony of Scripture."¹²⁴

Not only is regeneration a synergistic act but so is repentance. Though we believe that repentance is solely the act of man, yet it is the end result or the fruit of God's sovereign work on and in man. But they believe it is the fruit of man's prior cooperation with God. Grider says, "Repentance is what God gives to people, what He grants to their cooperating hearts." It is also considered a preparatory work for more grace. "Repentance, a change of mind about sin that includes a willingness to obey and serve God, prepares a person for the first work of grace."¹²⁵ Those who are aware of RC Medieval theology and scholasticism will begin to sense the similarity.¹²⁶ Luther fought against this. Whereas the Roman Catholic taught a form of nature rising up to grace, these men argue for a reinvigorated nature rising up to grace.¹²⁷

In the nineteenth century, the venerable Southern Presbyterian theologian John Girardeau was dumbfounded when he read this Arminian statement: "that man determines the question of his salvation." To this he said, "These ominous words peal on the ear like the notes of a fire-bell at the dead of night. They mean a sure descent to a lower level of doctrine than that of the early Evangelical Arminians."¹²⁸ That downgrade tendency has continued up to this day. Indeed, those words rattle the sensibilities of all true Evangelicals and yet we have seen that not a few have espoused them.

Salvation is of the Lord; there is no synergism when it comes to our salvation, justification, and regeneration. Certainly, these Arminians should have known better! How could Collins truly say that an element of synergism is involved in justification? Why does Cannon adamantly declare that salvation itself is synergistic? Shouldn't the learned Miley have known better than to teach that regeneration is a synergistic act? Pope's comment is instructive as to why the Arminians are so blunt. "The general truth of a co-operation between the Spirit and the will of man is a postulate of the entire Scripture. Like some other fundamental truths, it is not demonstrated but taken for granted; and that very fact is sufficient evidence of our position."¹²⁹ This is not true but it does explain why they maintain their positions.

CONCLUSION

My goal behind this brief survey was to "expose" Arminianism to my Calvinistic brethren. We must realize that the battle is not over. We must be sure of our doctrines and let the Scriptures search us out.

My intent was not to be too polemical or to alienate brothers in Christ. I believe that these positions held by Arminians are destructive to the true evangelical faith and we should be aware of its influence (especially with the increasing attention Pinnock and Sanders are receiving). The Arminian position is as comprehensive and consistent as Calvinism (given their assumptions) and we should be aware of the contours of Arminianism lest we be hoodwinked into fighting a strawman. I hope I did expose the Methodists, Wesleyans, and Nazarenes and all who hold to similar views and by the grace of God compel them to repent of their positions.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

This portion of the essay will only interest true die hard bibliophiles. If you are not a lover of books or a person who spends much time combing the footnotes and endnotes, then you might want to get a life. Actually, if you don't like reading footnotes, then you might just want to stop here.

In the mid 1800s, John L. Girardeau, a prominent Southern Presbyterian divine, wrote one of the most comprehensive attacks on Evangelical Arminianism; it is perceptive and quite massive, about 600 pages. His *Calvinism and Evangelical Arminianism: Compared as to Election, Reprobation, Justification, and Related Doctrines* interacts with all the contemporary Arminian divines of that century. In fact, he wrote his massive work to address the then meager attention given to modern Evangelical Arminianism. Most of the attacks against Arminianism had to do with Arminius, Grotius and some of Socinus' positions. Little attention had been given to Wesley's brand of Arminianism which influenced more people at the popular level. That volume has been reprinted by Sprinkle Publications (1984); it is worth possessing and serves as an able weapon against Arminianism. Warfield's article on Atonement gives a helpful bibliography and survey of their position. These are a few of the 'older' works on Arminianism. I am specifically avoiding the works of Owen, Ness, Gill, Toplady, Hervey, etc. because those names are popular and in the hands of most.

Modern literature on Arminianism from a non-Arminian perspective is not as vast as one would suspect. Most of the literature written on the topic have been written by Calvinists and those works are either outdated or not necessarily the most unbiased representation of the Arminian system. The popular and prolific writer J. I. Packer wrote an important essay on Arminianism published in 1985. It is found in *Through Christ's Word: A Festschrift for Dr. Philip E. Hughes*. He ably gives a good historical sweep of the position. However, the article deals with Arminius and his immediate successors. It reaches into the era of what is called 'Evangelical Arminianism,' namely the Eighteenth Century. The dominant figures of that century are of course John Wesley and John Fletcher. It barely touches the nineteenth and twentieth century. An account of Richard Baxter's Arminianism is very helpful (since that is Packer's area of expertise). Overall, it is an erudite and comprehensive article (insofar as a small article can be 'comprehensive').

The two volumes entitled *The Grace of God, The Bondage of the Will*, eds. Thomas Schreiner & Bruce Ware are the most recent books on classic and modern Arminianism. The essays by R. Muller on Arminius' rationalism, T. Nettles' article on Wesley and his followers, T. Schreiner's critique on the Wesleyan notion of Prevenient Grace, and D. A. Carson's article on Assurance are stimulating and very informative. Richard Muller's *God, Creation, and Providence in the Thought of Jacob Arminius* (1991; though similar to his essay cited above, an understanding of Latin will be helpful to the reader) is the most comprehensive study of Arminius to date. It surely competes with Carl Bangs' work. Apart from these works, I am not aware of other modern works that interact thoroughly with Arminian literature. No doubt there are more and I would appreciate any bibliographical information on them (herzer@erols.com or send info to Andy Webb). However, I am aware of literature by Sproul, Packer, Gerstner, Boettner, etc. which argue for Calvinism while interacting in some measure with Arminianism. I am merely highlighting the more 'comprehensive' and 'academic' works on Arminianism.

Now, as to writings from an Arminian position, as one would suspect, they are many. I will have to restrain myself. Names that one needs to interact with from the around Nineteenth Century are Richard Watson, John Miley, William Pope, Miner Raymond (perhaps the first systematic work by an Arminian in America, 1877), and T. O. Summers. Other names are A. M. Hills, Ralston, Tigert (a

rehash of Summers), Wakefield (a reworking of Watson), the older Adam Clarke (the popular commentator, don't use his commentaries), and the milder H. Sheldon. The first set of names are the most prominent theologians of the Arminian persuasion. In the Twentieth Century, all will concede that H. Orton Wiley's *Christian Theology* (3 Vols.) is the most influential and representative work available. However, we need to note Carl Bangs' scholarly book *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation*. He was a student of Wiley. Two volumes have come into publication recently that have perhaps shocked many (nah, nobody reads anymore nor cares). Clark Pinnock, the once evangelical turned 'neo-evangelical', the once Calvinist turned Arminian, the once inerrantist turned progressivist in his view of inspiration, etc. (enough changes to shame any chameleon) edited two books to combat Calvinism. The first one is entitled *Grace Unlimited* (1975) and then later on *The Grace of God, The Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism* (1989). In this latter volume Pinnock unveils his own personal theological pilgrimage entitled 'From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology.' These two volumes actually served as the stimulus to the two volumes cited above by Schreiner and Ware. There are other volumes that convey and defend Arminianism. You can't avoid *Foundations of Wesleyan-Arminian Theology* by M. B. Wynnkoop; it is a small book and very harsh on Calvinism. Her later and more substantive work *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* is actually a fine apologetic for Wesleyanism/Arminianism. It is almost refreshing to see such conviction (though I believe misguided). The two volume work *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology* by Charles Carter are helpful (for information's sake). One of the most recent 'systematic theologies' is by J. Kenneth Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (1994); he is an astute Arminian and is thoroughly aware of the need for consistency within Arminianism. Very similar to H. Sheldon, Grider seeks to assimilate some of the liberal views and interacts with the standard liberal scholarship much too uncritically. The newest defense of the Arminian view of 'sovereignty' is by David Basinger and John Sanders. Their view is called "Freewill Theism." Basinger's book is entitled *The Case for Freewill Theism: A Philosophical Assessment* (1996). Sanders's book is entitled *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence* (1998). The title, sadly, speaks for itself. This is an expansion of another controversial book *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, ed. Clark Pinnock et al. (1994); Sanders is one of the contributors. Lastly, consider some of Gregory Boyd's works.

I specifically avoided works like Millard Erickson, Thiessen, Lewis and Demarest, Bloesch, etc. These men (with the possible exception of Thiessen) and the like seek to distance themselves from Arminianism though are in no way Calvinists. They are 'evangelicals' with a mixture of Calvinism and Arminianism; fundamentally, of course, they are Arminians. One other piece of work must be noted. Thomas Oden shows his scholarly hand in *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity: A Plain Exposition of His Teaching on Christian Doctrine*. This work is marvelous because it is the summary of Wesley's systematic theology from Wesley's written documents. It is worth consulting if you are interested in Wesley, though Wesley is not necessarily the sole spokesman for the Arminian position these days. These should suffice.

FOOTNOTES

1. See John Miley, *The Atonement in Christ* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1884) 22. The quote I have in mind is cited in our section on 'Doctrine of Atonement.'
2. The most up-to-date work against Arminianism is T. Schreiner and B. Ware, ed., *The Grace of God, The Bondage of the Will* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1995) but it gives scant attention to this. The notable exception is Thomas Nettle, who in the book gives a fuller historical account of the matter in his essay, 'John Wesley's Contention with Calvinism: Interactions Then and Now.' The century old work (recently republished) gives a weighty critique; I have not seen anything like it since, see Girardeau's work entitled *Calvinism and Evangelical Arminianism: Compared as to Election, Reprobation, Justification, and Related Doctrines* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1984).
3. I am still collecting more volumes to further my research on this topic. Being a Calvinist, I am not around many who possess a ready stocked library of Arminian theology. In fact, some of my Calvinistic brothers are becoming suspicious of my growing Arminian library. Needless to say (but I'm saying it anyway), I still have many more Reformed books than they do. Would appreciate anyone who could tell me where I can purchase Summers, Tigert, and Miner Raymond.
4. Clark Pinnock, 'From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology' in C. Pinnock, ed., *A Case for Arminianism: The Grace of God, The Will of Man* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989) 26-27.
5. For a defence of Freewill Theism, see C. Pinnock et al., *The Openness of God* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1994); David Basinger, *The Case for Freewill Theism: A Philosophical Assessment* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1996). These are the more popular works on the issue. R. K. McGregor Wright has critiqued this view in his *No Place for Sovereignty: What's Wrong with Freewill Theism* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1996); also, see the helpful short article by Tony Gray, "God Does not Play Dice," *Themelios* 24, no. 2 (February 1999): 21-34. However, any work by Paul Helm touching on this issue is better philosophically and theologically; it is more sophisticated and I believe (thus so far) more penetrating. Careful and less academic (philosophically though not any less competent) are the following articles in the *Modern Reformation* (September/October, 1999): "Does God Know the Future?" by William C. Davis and "Why the Glory of God is at Stake in the 'Foreknowledge' Debate," by John Piper (a critique on Gregory Boyd). Boyd is also handled by D. A. Carson in "God, The Bible and Spiritual Warfare: A Review Article," *JETS* 42/2 (June 1999): 251-269. See *World*, July 17, 1999, p. 23 which addresses the "news" behind the foreknowledge debate among Baptists (BGC). Freewill Theism is defined by Basinger (a proponent) as: "Freewill theists acknowledge that God can unilaterally intervene in earthly affairs and does so at times. But they deny that God can both grant individuals freedom and control its use. Unlike theological determinists, they maintain that God has voluntarily given up complete control of earthly affairs to the extent that he has voluntarily granted humanity freedom" (David Basinger, *The Case for Freewill Theism*, 12).
6. Gregory Boyd, *God at War: The Bible & Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1997) 49.
7. Clark Pinnock et al., *The Openness of God*, 121.
8. Richard Rice, 'Divine Foreknowledge and Free-Will Theism' in *A Case for Arminianism*, 134.
9. For example, Richard Rice, *God's Foreknowledge and Man's Free Will* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1980) 10. He does not only preclude absolute divine knowledge but he even precludes absolute divine decrees. Richard Rice says in another book that "God's will does not guarantee the outcome that he desires" (*The Openness of God*, 54-55).
10. Frederick Sontag, 'Does Omnipotence Necessarily Entail Omniscience?' *JETS* 34 (Dec. 1991): 508. Sontag also seems to suggest that a fixed future might actually detract from God's creativity. Clark Pinnock parrots Sontag's notion of surprise and boredom: "We do not limit God by saying that he can be surprised by what his creatures do. It would be a serious limitation if God could not experience surprise and delight. The world would be a boring place without anything unexpected ever happening" (*The Openness of*

God, 123).

11. J. Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1998) 169.

12. *Ibid.*, 172.

13. *Ibid.*, 11.

14. Sontag virtually says this as an apologetic for his position, "Ironically, weak gods (and people) attempt rigid control. Those who are secure in their power can allow others freedom without feeling threatened in their being" ("Does Omnipotence Necessarily Entail Omniscience?," 507).

15. Sanders in *The Openness of God*, 189-90, n.160 lists many of the Freewill theists. Their views differ from each other. Some suggest that we can "prevent what God knows will happen" while others suggest that God chose not to know. Eeeek, I hope someone knows what is going on down here.

16. One very astute reader has pointed out that I have not made careful distinctions in this argument because I overlap various views (between those who hold to Middle Knowledge and those who hold to Open Theism or Freewill Theism). This is true technically and I thank the reader for the observation. However, from my perspective, all the views fall into the same camp. Richard Muller has quite competently addressed this issue and argued that Molina's view set forth by Arminius is inimical to Reformational theology. Though shades of difference might exist among Arminians, all are contrary to Biblical Traditional Reformational theology. See Richard Muller, "Grace, Election, and Contingent Choice: Arminius's Gambit and the Reformed Response," in *The Grace of God, The Bondage of the Will*, II:251-278.

17. Samuel Wakefield, *A Complete System of Christian Theology* (Cincinnati, OH: Hitchcock & Walden, 189), 151ff. Those who hold to Middle Knowledge seek to take seriously omniscience while maintaining human free will but in its efforts to explain the two, they end up developing strange notions of counterfactual truths.

18. See Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 34-37.

19. It must be noted that many theologians like John Piper are amazed at the heterodoxy of this ("openness") position. However, modern proponents of the "Openness of God" are simply the logical fruit of Arminianism. Though competent Arminian thinkers like Oden may resist, yet Boyd is correct, if one pushes the system to their logical end, we are led to the "openness" position. J. K. Grider, Kenneth Jone, along with Thomas Oden are some of the conservative thinkers of modern Arminianism who still retain a modified and inconsistent view of God's foreknowledge yet, they do not deny God's omniscience. Nonetheless, modern theologians like Boyd, Sanders, Pinnock, etc. are simply pushing the heart of Arminianism to their rightful conclusions. We Calvinists have always charged them of being inconsistent; these modern thinkers have simply heard our complaint.

20. Grider, J.K., "Arminianism" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984] 80). This view is called "Governmental Theory" which teaches that because God did not want sinners to die, he relaxed that rule and accepted the death of Christ instead. He could have simply forgiven mankind had he wanted to, but that would not have had any value for society. The death of Christ was a public example of the depth of sin and the lengths to which God would go to uphold the moral order of the universe. (Morris, "Atonement, Theories of The" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 102).

21. John Miley, *The Atonement in Christ*, 22.

22. This tension is real in their thought. There are two competing strands in Arminianism vying for attention. One is the more evangelical wing of Arminius and Wesley and the other is the more rationalistic group represented by Limborch and Remonstrantism. Some of this is addressed in the section on 'Doctrine of Justification.'

T. O. Summers (1812-1882) actually held this tension. He argued for substitutionary elements in a governmental framework. See Robert E. Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism: 1790-1935* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965) 55-56. Chiles also argues that American Methodism sought to move away from its Arminian/Wesleyan British roots to something more consonant with the rational liberalizing trends of American Methodism where sin and its effect became less of a focus, e.g., 58-61.

23. Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, n.d.) II:314.

24. B. Field, *The Student's Handbook of Christian Theology* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1889) 180.

25. Kenneth E. Jones surveyed the various models and chose not to choose which one was right by saying that they were all correct a little bit. After a very brief survey he summarizes his understanding of the atonement in this manner: "Jesus died for the salvation of all human beings. He did this in a sense that is beyond our logic and philosophy. However Christ did it, he fully met the need of us for salvation from sin. It is not necessary for us to understand fully all that Christ did, and how he did it. What we need to comprehend is the way to accept that salvation by faith in him. His saving grace is beyond our full comprehension" (Kenneth Jones, *Theology of Holiness and Love* [Lanham: University Press of America, 1995] 175). It is almost better than Field's he did a 'something' on the cross but not much more. Did Christ pay the penalty for my sin or not? Their answer is, "I don't know but just believe because He did something for your sins on the cross that somehow allows you to be saved." This can only breed insecurity and confusion.

26. J. K. Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994) 329.

27. See Wakefield, *Christian Theology*, IV:iv and Watson, *Theological Institutes* (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831) II:xx.4ff. Orton Wiley also believes that the governmental theory is consistent with the propitiatory nature of atonement and also with some modified sense of substitution, see *Christian Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1940) II:244ff.

28. R. Larry Shelton, 'Initial Salvation: The Redemptive Grace of God in Christ' in *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology*, Charles W. Carter, ed. (Grand Rapids: Francis & Taylor, 1983) I:469-516.

29. *Ibid.*, II:508.

30. Donald M. Lake, "He Died for All: The Universal Dimension of the Atonement" in *Grace Unlimited*, Clark H. Pinnock, ed. (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1975) 47-48.

31. K. Jones, *Theology of Holiness and Love*, 215.

32. M. Wynkoop, *Foundations of Wesleyan-Arminian Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1967) 99.

33. T. Shreiner marvelously shows that the texts adduced by the Arminians to support Prevenient Grace is not only superficial but has been given little attention, see his "Does Scripture teach Prevenient Grace in the Wesleyan Sense?" in *The Grace of God, The Bondage of the Will*, II:365ff. However, not all Arminians are persuaded of the Adamic effect. A. M. Hills (very similar to his favorite theologian, Charles Finney) says, "Men are born with a nature full of propensities to sin, which lead them universally to commit sin; but they are not born sinners. They make themselves sinners by their own wicked choices" (*Fundamental Christian Theology* [Salem, OH: Schmuel Publishing Co., 1980] I:406). Man is not truly guilty, but very capable of being culpable (see *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology*, I:263).

34. I say "generally speaking" because they do end up saying that some of the effects of Original Sin exists in all, even the elect, I mean, even in the believers. But it is not entirely consistent so the statement is true in a sweeping sort of way.

35. John Miley, *Systematic Theology*, reprint ed. (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1893) II:246.
36. These are simply his conclusions and statements. Consider the following: "Therefore, if we hold the doctrine of native depravity, we must either admit a universal helping grace of the atonement or deny that the present life is probationary with respect to our salvation. Such denial must imply two things: a limited atonement, with a sovereignty of grace in the salvation of an elect part, which for them precludes a probation; and a reprobation of the rest which denies them all probational opportunity for salvation. Arminianism readily accepts the issue at this point; but the present section is not the place for the treatment of the questions involved" (*Ibid.*, II:247).
37. All the quotes were taken from Wiley, *Christian Theology*, II:134-6.
38. Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 353.
39. Wynkoop, *Foundations*, 99 [emphasis is in the original text].
40. H. T. Hudson, *The Methodist Armor* (Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1892) 34-5.
41. Pope, *A Higher Catechism of Theology* (Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, n. d.) 208.
42. "We are sure the Spirit begins this work [of prevenient grace] as soon as the child can understand anything, so as to lead the child to a knowledge of God and his will" (Jones, *Theology of Holiness and Love*, 216). This quote is taken from his section entitled, "Meaning of Prevenient Grace."
43. S. Wesley Ariarajah, "Evangelism and Wesley's Catholicity of Grace," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, M. Douglas Meeks, ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1985) 144.
44. The writer further asked if this sort of reasoning killed our sense of urgency in evangelism. He says that one cannot draw that conclusion since Wesley was so urgent in his evangelism. In other words, Wesley's practice denies the charge.
45. Shedd gave it a passing comment and Berkhof engaged it more thoroughly. Cf. L. Berkhof, *Vicarious Atonement of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1936) 125-136.
46. See article by T. Nettles, "John Wesley's Contention with Calvinism: Interactions Then and Now," in *The Grace of God and The Bondage of the Will*, II:297ff. Similarly, see Robert Oliver, "The Arminian Controversy of Eighteenth Century Methodism" in *Divisions and Dissensions: Papers Read at the 1987 Westminster Conference* (England: The Westminster Conference, 1987) 78-93.
47. J. Hervey, *The Works of the Rev. James Hervey, A. M.* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1839) 477.
48. Faith Cook, *William Grimshaw of Haworth* (Edinburgh: BOT, 1997) 238-40.
49. Adam Clarke, *Christian Theology* (London: Thomas & Son, 1835) 156, 158.
50. Wynkoop, *Foundations*, 116: "The idea of a transfer of righteousness from Christ to man (or imputed righteousness) is the exact antithesis of the biblical concept of holiness. It relieves man of the necessity of any real heart change."
51. See J. Fletcher, *Checks to Antinomianism*, 3rd American ed. (New York: J. Soule and T. Mason, 1820).
52. R. Watson, *Theological Institutes*, 300. This reference is also found in Berkhof's *Vicarious Atonement*, 135.
53. Wynkoop, *Foundation of Wesleyan-Arminian Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1967) 110.
54. J. K. Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 362.
55. Kenneth Jones, *Theology of Holiness and Love*, 179 [emphasis mine].
56. John Miley argued that we are now put in a probationary state after the atonement. Orton Wiley proposed that we were no longer be condemned for original sin (see my section on 'Prevenient Grace').
57. They are careful not to explicitly state that as their ground of acceptance but their extreme statements almost lead to that conclusion.
58. S. Wakefield, *A Complete System of Christian Theology* (Cincinnati, OH: Hitchcock & Walden, 189) 411-413.
59. W. F. Tillett, *Personal Salvation: Studies in Christian Doctrine pertaining to the Spiritual Life* (Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, 1902) 217ff.
60. O. A. Curtis, *The Christian Faith* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1905) 362.
61. Miley, *Systematic Theology*, II:310-11.
62. A. M. Hills, *Fundamental Christian Theology: A Systematic Theology* (Salem, OH: Schmull Publishing Co., 1980) II:184.
63. In his *Catechism*, this question is squarely addressed in Pope, *A Higher Catechism of Theology*, 228: "Is the personal righteousness of Christ Himself reckoned to the believer as his own? Assuredly not; any more than the personal sin of the sinner was reckoned to be Christ's. Moreover, as the Divine Son of God could not have our individual sins imputed to Him, so His Divine-human obedience was altogether beyond the range of man's obedience to the law. There could not be any such personal transfer."
64. A. Clarke, *Christian Theology*, 155.
65. Wakefield, *Christian Theology*, 414. Pope's observation about his own school of thought is worth noting: "Methodism has always maintained a firm protest against the distinct imputation of the active obedience of the Substitute of man; but has been reluctant to give up altogether the thought of an imputation of Christ's righteousness generally" (*A Compendium of Christian Theology*, II:446). This vacillation is what I have been noticing in their thinking.
66. "The personal guilt of Adam's transgression was never imputed to his descendents, nor that of the elect to Christ; though Adam's descendents do suffer certain consequences of his sin, and Christ's sufferings were in consequence of sin not his own" (W. F. Tillett, *Personal Salvation: Studies in Christian Doctrine pertaining to the Spiritual Life* [Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, 1902] 219).
67. Wakefield, *Christian Theology*, 418.
68. J. L. Girardeau, *Calvinism and Evangelical Arminianism*, 439.
69. J. Miley, *Systematic Theology*, II:319.
70. T. Oden, *Systematic Theology: Life in the Spirit*, Vol. III [San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992] 126.
71. *Ibid.*, 124.
72. *Ibid.*, 127: "faith is imputed to us for righteousness."
73. In fairness to him, he seems to have gotten this right; he denounces Cardinal Newman and opts for declarative justification. He does not confuse the issue by using impartation. Actually, Newman sounds more like most of the Arminians I already cited.
74. John Mark Hicks, "The Righteousness of Saving Faith: Arminian Versus Remonstrant Grace," *Evangelical Journal* 9.1 (1991) 34. John Hicks did his doctoral work on this very issue. See *The Theology of Grace in the Thought of Jacobus Arminius and Philip van Limborch: A Study in the Development of Seventeenth Century Dutch Arminianism* (Ph.d. Dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1985).
75. William Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology*, II:442-448.

76. Hicks, *The Theology of Grace*, 314.
77. To quote only one will suffice: "The Methodist Church was raised up to spread holiness over the land" (Hudson, *The Methodist Armor*, 110). This comment is in the context of the author's teaching on perfection or entire sanctification.
78. Wynkoop, *Foundations*, 122.
79. "If Methodists give up the doctrine of entire sanctification, or suffer it to become a dead letter, we are a fallen people. Holiness is the main cord which binds us together. The original design of Methodism was to raise up and preserve a holy people" (Hills, *Christian Theology*, II:257).
80. Bad, bad, bad, Mark. Be nice.
81. *Ibid.*, II:223.
82. In William Grimshaw's Creed we read: "I BELIEVE it is by the SPIRIT we are enabled, not to eradicate, as some affirm (for that is absurd) but to subjugate, the old man: To suppress, not extirpate, the exorbitancies of our fleshly appetites: To resist and overcome the world and the devil; to grow in grace, gradually, not repentively, [i.e. suddenly, or all at once] unto the perfect and eternal day. This is all I know, or acknowledge to be Christian Perfection, or Sanctification." See Faith Cook, *William Grimshaw of Haworth* (Edinburgh: BOT, 1997) 320.
83. Clarke, *Christian Theology*, 227.
84. Wiley, *Christian Theology*, II:497.
85. *Ibid.*, II:511.
86. Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology*, III:48. This is not an improper conclusion since they invest the power to sin many times to the body itself. Wesley says this perfection is not inconsistent with imperfection in conduct because "for want of better bodily organs, they sometimes inevitably think, speak, or act wrong" (O. Curtis, *The Christian Faith*, 377). Sheldon, on the other hand is quick to observe that this is not the case, *System of Christian Doctrine* (Cincinnati: Jennings & Graham, 1903) 464.
87. Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology*, III:53. "Christian perfection, entire sanctification, or perfected holiness is attainable in this life, whenever we comply with the conditions prescribed in the gospel" (Ralston, *Elements of Divinity* [Nashville, TN: Cokesbury Press, 1924] 466-7).
88. Ralston, *Elements of Divinity*, 467. Oden also argues in the same manner. See *Life in the Spirit*, 242-3.
89. Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology*, III:57.
90. *Ibid.*, II:60.
91. *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology*, I:564.
92. Clarke, *Christian Theology*, 223.
93. *Ibid.*, 231.
94. Curtis, *The Christian Faith*, 383.
95. *Ibid.*, 384. Gamertsfelder's statement is helpful: "The essential element of entire sanctification is the removal of certain carnal remains that occasionally becloud the consciousness of being a child of God, or weaken the disposition of holy love implanted in regeneration" (S. J. Gamertsfelder, *Systematic Theology* [Harrisburg, PA: Evangelical Publishing House, 1921] 532).
96. S. J. Gamertsfelder, *Systematic Theology*, 544.
97. Before we go on, the reader should recognize the contradiction here. They say that this holiness is perfect enough to endure the divine scrutiny and yet they argue for gradation and probation.
98. Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology*, III:58.
99. *Ibid.*, III:59-60.
100. Miley, *Systematic Theology*, II:376.
101. *Ibid.*, II:375-6.
102. "Holiness admits of an infinite number of degrees; and there is set before us an eternal progression in holiness" (*Ibid.*, II:376). "The goal keeps ever ahead, not because it is unattainable or unattained, but because every height that is scaled reveals a higher height and a wider horizon" (Tillett, *Personal Salvation*, 326).
103. Wiley, *Christian Theology*, II:499-500.
104. Wakefield, *Christian Theology*, 447; Ralston, *Elements*, 459. Curiously, Ralston points to Adam (before the Fall) and Jesus as support for this doctrine.
105. H. O. Wiley and P. T. Culbertson, *Introduction to Christian Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1946) 330.
106. Field, *Handbook of Christian Theology*, 239.
107. Wiley, *Christian Theology*, II:507.
108. Sheldon almost says this in his *System of Christian Doctrine*, 466 though his particular example is a moot point (a point no one is challenging, though it should be challenged).
109. Wakefield, *Christian Theology*, 454.
110. Sheldon, *System of Christian Doctrine*, 466: "Some advocates of the possibility of entire sanctification have answered this objection by urging that, although a man may be completely healed of sin, so far as moral contamination is concerned, he still bears its effects in infirmities, or in lack of the spiritual and intellectual statures which continuous exercise in holiness would have given, and so has need to beseech forgiveness. But this is a very doubtful line of argument."
111. *Ibid.*, 466-7.
112. Wiley, *Christian Theology*, II:454. The word he uses is 'sanctification' but that was not his criticism in the previous page. Wiley believes our theory of justification led to our denial of perfection: "Thus with their peculiar form of a substitutionary atonement, they held to a belief in the imputation to Him of our sins, and to us of His righteousness for our justification, and for our sanctification also, in so far as it applied to the cleansing from guilt" (II:453).
113. Wakefield, *Christian Theology*, 448.
114. Thomas Oden's magisterial *Systematic Theology* (*Life in the Spirit*, 235-236) is curious on this issue. His theological project was to be ecumenical and catholic (which he does admirably in many portions of the volume). Yet, he is stuck in his Arminian Wesleyan tradition on the issue of perfectionism. He addresses the Lord's Prayer in the same way as all the other Wesleyans; there is nothing ecumenical about the approach. He seems to have forgotten that 'perfectionism' is a new doctrine.
115. W. R. Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley With Special Reference to the Doctrine of Justification* (Nashville: Abington, 1946) 115.
116. *Ibid.*, 114.

117. K. J. Collins, *Wesley on Salvation: A Study in the Standard Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press of Zondervan Pub. House, 1989) 54.
118. Pohle & Preus, *Grace Actual and Habitual: A Dogmatic Treatise* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1934) 311-12.
119. Wiley, *Christian Theology*, II:355.
120. A. M. Hills, *Fundamental Christian Theology*, II:204-206. Those who are familiar with Charles Finney will begin to see the similarity here. Hills has been greatly influenced by Finney and the above bold statement can similarly be found in Finney's own systematic theology.
121. *Ibid.*, II:220.
122. Ralston, *Elements*, 432-3.
123. Miley, *Systematic Theology*, II:336-7.
124. Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology*, II:365.
125. J. Kenneth Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 353, 355.
126. One may think I am unfair here. However, Roman Catholic theologians who have studied Arminianism have pointed out that Arminianism in some sense is very close to Roman Catholicism. The celebrated RC theologian of Tübingen Johann Adam Möhler concluded that the Arminian view of grace is just like the Tridentine formula. "But if the Remonstrants reject these Calvinistic views of grace, they yet willingly retain those doctrines respecting it, without which the character of Christianity cannot be preserved. The grace of God, according to them, determines the beginning, the progress, and the consummation of all good. Their articles of belief on these points are nearly identical with the Catholic; and therefore, like the Council of Trent, they speak of a resuscitating grace, which only awakens the dormant powers yet existing in fallen man, in opposition to the Lutheran theory." (*Symbolism: Exposition of the Doctrinal Differences between Catholics and Protestants as Evidenced by their Symbolical Writings*, trans. James B. Robertson [rpr. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997] 501).
127. This can be seen from Miley's statement: "We hold fully the helplessness of man for any religious duty simply on the footing of nature. Such is the doctrine of our article of religion on this question [Article viii, Of Free Will]. But, with this doctrine of native powerlessness for any spiritual duty, we hold the doctrine of a universal helping grace. This we have pointed out, and also verified by our best authorities. The necessary grace for the present probation is an immediate benefit of the atonement, and the possession or the privilege of every man. This is the Arminian position." (II:247)
128. J. L. Girardeau, *Calvinism and Evangelical Arminianism*, 159.
129. Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology*, II:365. Pope should have taken a course in logic. One cannot merely assume the very position he seeks to prove. If something is taken for granted, then it cannot itself be the sufficient evidence.

EVANGELICAL ARMINIANS: OPTION OR OXYMORON?

by Michael S. Horton

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"A theological shift is underway among evangelicals as well as other Christians...This trend began, I believe, because of a fresh and faithful reading of the Bible in dialogue with modern culture, which places emphasis on autonomy, temporality, and historical change." [1] This announcement from Dr. Clark Pinnock, a respected evangelical theologian, is neither a criticism, nor a warning, but a promising development in the view of its author.

A number of evangelical leaders met at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School near Chicago two years ago for the purpose of defining the term "evangelical," but many left as confused concerning what that label comprehends as they were when they arrived. It is becoming increasingly difficult to say what an evangelical is and is not. Basically, American evangelicalism divides, from the mid-eighteenth century on, into two traditions: revivalistic and Reformational (as in the 16th century Reformation). While the Great Awakening in America and the Evangelical Revival in Britain were examples of the harmony between reformation and revival, these eventually became rivals as the latter developed an Arminian theology. As the Arminian branch of revivalism gained the popular advantage, evangelicalism became increasingly shaped by human-centered theology on a popular level even while its principal works of systematic theology were reformed.

However, today we see a shift even within the evangelical theological leadership. Pinnock writes, "It is my strong impression, confirmed to me even by those not pleased by it, that Augustinian thinking is losing its hold on present-day Christians." Evangelists are not the only ones preaching an Arminian gospel: "It is hard to find a Calvinist theologian willing to defend Reformed theology, including the views of both Calvin and Luther, in all its rigorous particulars now that Gordon Clark is no longer with us and John Gerstner is retired...So I do not think I stand alone." The drift is on. Pinnock insists that Augustine was shaped by Greek thinking more than scripture and the reformers simply followed his mistakes, but that was acceptable for their time: "Just as Augustine came to terms with ancient Greek thinking, so we are making peace with the culture of modernity." [2]

The purpose of these quotes is not to focus attention on one evangelical theologian's departure from Reformation theology, but to raise the question in very practical terms, "Is it possible to be an 'evangelical Arminian'?" In this article I attempt to defend a negative answer to that important question.

What is an Evangelical?

One might think that the term "protestant" has been around a lot longer than "evangelical," the latter often associated with the crusade and television evangelism of recent years. However, the term "evangelical" is the older of the two. It appears in medieval manuscripts, describing a qualification of a good preacher: He must be evangelical. Until the Reformation, however, that adjective could mean anything from having a sincere love for Christ to possessing missionary zeal. When Luther arrived on the scene he was eager to employ the time-honored term in the service of gospel recovery. After all, what could be more appropriate as a designation for a man or woman of the Reformation? It was all about a recovery of the evangel itself.

Thus, the term took on a new significance, moving from an adjective to a noun. One was not only "evangelical" in the ambiguous medieval sense of being pious, zealous, and faithful, but an evangelical in the sense that one adhered to the Reformation's tenets. After 1520 an evangelical was a person who was committed to the sufficiency of scripture, the priesthood of all believers, the total lostness of humans, the sole mediation of Christ, the gracious efficacy and finality of God's redemptive work in Christ through election, propitiation, calling and keeping. The linchpin for all of this was the doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, because of Christ alone. Thus, the believer, declared righteous by virtue of God's satisfaction with Christ's holiness imputed (credited) to us through faith alone, is simul iustus et peccator--"simultaneously justified and sinful."

The evangelicals, therefore, whether Lutheran or Reformed, insisted that this was the gospel. It was not a peripheral area of abstract doctrinal debate on which Christians could "agree to disagree agreeably." It was not merely an implication of the gospel or a part of the gospel: It was the gospel! It was this message and no other, be it ever so similar, that everyone had to get right. On other matters Christians of goodwill might differ, but without the distinction between a gospel of works and a gospel of grace alone, Luther wrote, one cannot distinguish a Christian from a Muslim or Jew. Calvin's successor in Geneva, Theodore Beza, wrote, "Ignorance of this distinction between Law and Gospel is one of the principal sources of the abuses which corrupted and still corrupt Christianity." [3]

Theologians and historians to the present have referred to the formal and material principle of the Reformation, the former being the sufficiency of scripture, and the latter being the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone. As the formal principle of the Reformation is "scripture alone!," we today must define "evangelical" according to scriptural teaching. If the reformers misinterpreted the Bible on any one of these key teachings, they must be corrected by those same scriptures. However, historically, the term "evangelical" has referred to those who embraced either the Lutheran or the Reformed confessions of faith. Only in the gradual Americanization of the evangelical faith has this inheritance been jettisoned, as though "scripture alone" meant that to merely adhere to the formal principle of the Reformation was enough. As long as one believed the Bible, one could stand wherever he or she liked on the material principle of God's method in saving sinners. If this were true, one would have to concede to the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses membership in the National Association of Evangelicals.

There are two ways of dealing with this question of defining "evangelical": scriptural and historical, but in this brief space allow me to focus on the argument that this term ought to be defined and used in its historical, time-honored sense. While the Reformation may, theoretically, have erred on its chief doctrines (since only scripture is infallible), it is nevertheless unavoidably true that those who called themselves evangelicals have historically affirmed and defended those teachings as being biblical. Thus, historically speaking, those who do not affirm those doctrines are, by virtue of the law of non-contradiction, not evangelicals.

What is an 'Arminian'?

James Arminius, one of Beza's students, first raised the eyebrows of the Dutch Reformed Church by teaching that the person Paul describes in Romans chapter seven was unregenerate, whereas the Reformed had always interpreted it as a sad, but appropriate, picture of the Christian life (simultaneously justified and sinful). But there was more controversy beneath this: Arminius denied unconditional election, arguing that God made his eternal decision based on his foreknowledge of faith and obedience. With this the entire Reformed system was denied.

Upon his death, however, Arminius's followers began to press the theologian's claims even further. The "Remonstrants," as they were called, presented their claims in five points: election was conditional (i.e., determined by foreseen faith and obedience), the atonement was universal not only in sufficiency but in intention, depravity is only partial, grace can be resisted, and the regenerate can lose their salvation. Further, the Arminians denied the Reformation belief that faith was a gift and that justification was a purely forensic (legal) declaration. For them, it included a moral change in the believer's life and faith itself, a work of humans, was the basis for God's declaration. In 1618-19, the Synod of Dort, an international conference of Reformed churches, the Remonstrants ("Arminians") were judged heretical and the churches of the Reformation concurred, even those of non-Reformed persuasion (as, for instance, the Lutherans).

Arminianism came to the English-speaking world chiefly through the efforts of seventeenth-century Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud, Bishop Jeremy Taylor, and the great preacher, Lancelot Andrewes. The leading Puritans such as John Owen, Richard Sibbes and Thomas Goodwin opposed Arminianism as a Protestant form of "Romanism" in which the Christian faith degenerated into a moralism that confused the Law and the Gospel and with-held from God his rightful praise for the whole work of salvation. Eventually, the English "Arminian" element evolved into the High Church wing of the English Church, emphasizing the importance of ritual and the church hierarchy as well as the moralistic Deism which characterized the preaching of the eighteenth century.

Wherever Arminianism was adopted, Unitarianism followed, leading on to the bland liberalism of present mainline denominations. This can be discerned in the Netherlands, in Eastern Europe, in England, and in New England. In fact, in a very short period of time, the General (Arminian) Baptists of New England had become amalgamated into the Unitarian Church in the eighteenth century.

This is not simply an argument from the so-called "slippery slope": in other words, if we allow for x, soon we will be embracing y. History actually bears out the relationship between Arminianism and naturalism. One can readily see how a shift from a God-centered message of human sinfulness and divine grace to a human-centered message of human potential and relative divine impotence could create a more secularized outlook. If human beings are not so badly off, perhaps they do not need such a radical plan of salvation. Perhaps all they need is a pep talk, some inspiration at halftime, so they can get back into the game. Or perhaps they need an injection of grace, as a spiritual antibiotic, to counteract the sinful affections. But in Reformation theology, human beings do not need help. They need redemption. They do not merely need someone to show them the way out; they need someone to be their way out of spiritual death and darkness.

Thus, the evangelicals who faced this challenge of Arminianism universally regarded it as a heretical departure from the Christian faith. One simply could not deny total depravity, unconditional election, justification by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone, and continue to call himself or herself an evangelical. There were many Christians who were not evangelicals, but to be an evangelical meant that one adhered to these biblical convictions. While Calvinists and Lutherans would disagree over the scope of the atonement and the irresistibility of grace and perseverance, they were both strict monergists (from mono, meaning "one" and

ergo, meaning "working"). That is, they believed that one person saved us (namely, God), while the Arminians were synergists, meaning that they believed that God and the believer cooperated in this matter of attaining salvation. It was this monergism which distinguished an evangelical from a non-evangelical since the Reformation.

Are Arminians Evangelicals?

The heart of the Reformation debate was, Who saves whom? Does God save sinners? Or do we save ourselves with God's help? The Roman Catholic Church was confused on that question throughout the Middle Ages, sharply divided at the time of the Reformation, but finally determined by the Council of Trent in the mid-sixteenth century that the second answer was better. God's grace is the source, but human cooperation with that grace is what makes God's saving will effective. Thus, God justifies us by making us better and that involves our own participation.

The orthodox Protestants were not over-reacting, therefore, when they regarded the Arminian denials as no different from the positions of Trent, which had declared the evangelicals "anathema." It would have been bigoted for them, therefore, to regard Trent's position as unorthodox if they were unwilling to say the same of a similar "Protestant" deviation.

So what does all of this mean for us nearly four centuries after Arminianism was condemned by the Churches of England, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Switzerland, the French Protestants, and the evangelicals of Eastern Europe?

In the British revival of the eighteenth century, Whitefield (a Calvinist) and Wesley (an Arminian) were willing to work together as close friends and allies in the evangelistic effort. However, as Wesley began to teach that justification was not purely forensic (that is, a legal declaration), but that it depended on "moment by moment" obedience, the Calvinists who had enthusiastically supported the revival and led the evangelistic cause side by side grew increasingly worried. Late in life, Wesley recorded some very unfortunate statements in his Minutes of the Methodist Conference, including the conclusion that his own position was but "a hair's breadth" from "salvation by works." Fearing an implicit antinomianism (license) in the Reformation doctrines, Wesley urged his supporters to warn the Calvinists "against making void that solemn decree of God, 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord,' by a vain imagination of being holy in Christ. O warn them that if they remain unrighteous, the righteousness of Christ will profit them nothing!"[4] John Wesley's favorite writer, William Law, wrote, "We are to consider that God only knows what shortcomings in holiness He will accept; therefore we can have not security of our salvation but by doing our utmost to deserve it." "We have," said he, "nothing to rely on but the sincerity of our endeavors and God's mercy." [5] Was Law an evangelical? If so, someone owes Pope Leo an apology.

The doctrine of justification--"simultaneously justified and sinful"--is scandalous to human reason and Wesley is famous for his "Quadrilateral" of authority: scripture, tradition, experience, and reason. So much for "scripture alone"! Both the material and the formal principle of the Reformation are at least undermined, if not denied. So much of tradition, experience, and reason opposes this doctrine. One modern evangelical theologian writes, "We can love God perfectly and we can be righteous in this world even as Christ is righteous..." and adds that the Bible "leaves no place for voluntary and known sin in the life of the believer." [6] Another adds, "But can it really be true-saint and sinner simultaneously? I wish it were so...Simul iustus et peccator? I hope it's true! I simply fear it's not." [7] These views were presented in a volume that offered five views of sanctification from evangelical writers.

In the Evangelical Revival, therefore, Wesley was allowed to embrace Arminianism while retaining the use of the evangelical label, in spite of the fact that to that time evangelicalism had repudiated the position as the very error of the medieval church that precipitated the Reformation in the first place. In one of his best sermons Wesley nevertheless defined justification not as a purely forensic (legal) declaration distinct from sanctification, but as both deliverance from the guilt of sin and "the whole body of sin, through Christ gradually 'formed in his heart.'" To be justified means that one does not sin "by any habitual sin," "nor by any willful sin," "nor by any sinful desire," nor "by infirmities, whether in act, word or thought...And though he cannot say he 'has not sinned,' yet now 'he sins not.'" [8] Further, the Minutes for the First Annual Methodist Conference affirm that repentance and works must precede faith, if by works one means "obeying God as far as we can." "If a believer willfully sins, he thereby forfeits his pardon." "Are works necessary to continuance of faith? Without doubt, for a man may forfeit the gift of God either by sins of omission or commission."

Justification may be lost every time one willfully disobeys and Wesley adds, "We do not find it affirmed expressly in Scripture that God imputes the righteousness of Christ to any, although we do find that faith is imputed unto us for righteousness." This imputation or crediting of faith as our righteousness, rather than Christ's active and passive obedience, is precisely the doctrine articulated by Arminius, rendering faith a work which achieves righteousness before God. Knowing who will most likely balk against the teaching within the evangelical Church of England, Wesley asks, "Have we not then unawares leaned too much towards Calvinism" in the past? "It seems we have," he answers, equating Calvinism with antinomianism. [9] Contemporary Wesleyan theologian, John Lawson, writes, "This judicious and moderating 'Arminian Evangelicalism,' which is now so largely characteristic of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism, is perhaps the most enduring and important contribution of the Methodist movement to theological understanding in the Church." [10] While Wesleyans insist they affirm justification by faith alone, they define it in the same moral terms rejected by evangelicals ever since the Reformation debate. Lawson himself defines justification as "the first and all-important stage in a renewed manner of life, actually changed for the better in mind and heart, in will and action." [11] Thomas Aquinas could hardly have improved on this definition.

Today, theologians such as Dr. Clark Pinnock insist on wearing the "evangelical" label while they move beyond Arminianism to an all-out denial of classical theism. Such spokespersons may insist that they are merely contributing to the ongoing evolution and upward development of doctrine, but in fact they are merely reinventing old heresies. As Arminius revived Semi-Pelagianism, Dr. Pinnock is merely advancing a revival of outright Pelagianism and Socinianism, enhanced by the latest academic craze-process theism.

Once he became an Arminian, Dr. Pinnock notes, "I soon realized something would have to be done about the received doctrine of God." God is no longer timeless, changeless, or even all-knowing. After all, "decisions not yet made do not exist anywhere to be known even by God." Dr. Pinnock also denies original sin, admitting that on this point, as on others, he is moving beyond Arminianism. And the next domino? "Obviously it required me to reduce the precision in which I understood the substitution [of Christ on the cross] to take place." [12] It must be said that if such writers can continue to be regarded as evangelical leaders (Dr. Pinnock is still a respected member of the Evangelical Theological Society), it is up to us as heirs of the Protestant Reformers to issue an apology to the Roman Catholic Church for dividing over issues no more essential than these. Original sin, the substitutionary atonement, justification,

eternal judgment, and classical theism (the doctrine of God) all must go, according to Dr. Pinnock and his team of writers in *A Case for Arminianism* (Zondervan, 1989). "I do not think we should feel we have lost something of absolute value when we find ourselves at variance with some of the old so-called orthodox interpretations," Dr. Pinnock concludes.

From where I sit, the main problem is this: we have gone back to using "evangelical" as an adjective. As its medieval use was ambiguous, referring more to a general attitude of humility, zeal, and simple Christ-likeness, so too the contemporary use falls most often into that category. An evangelical is someone who "loves Jesus," who "wins souls," and who has a "sweet spirit." Ken Myers notes that evangelicals no longer believe in orthodoxy, but in orthopathy—a concern for right feelings rather than right thinking and worship.^[13] One Christian publisher released a book by a Franciscan "evangelical" titled, *Evangelical Catholics*. Karl Barth, the great neo-orthodox theologian, is now widely regarded in conservative Protestant circles as evangelical and reformed, even though he reinterpreted the evangelical message beyond recognition. Again, Barth may be, theoretically, correct from the biblical point of view. I do not believe that he is and that is my primary objection to neo-orthodoxy, but for those of us who hold scripture as the final test of truth, I cannot ultimately reject Barthianism because he is at variance with the creeds and confessions. Nevertheless, one can say that Barth is not an evangelical in the historic, classical sense. The same is true of "evangelical Roman Catholics" who still deny the sufficiency of scripture, justification by grace alone through faith alone, and so on. If "evangelical" means anything at all any more, it is essential that we make such distinctions.

Having said that, it is equally important to realize that this is not a matter of bigotry or denominational pride. We will see non-evangelicals in heaven. As I reflect on views that I used to hold, it is sobering to say the least and it reminds me that the chances are pretty good that I have a good distance to go yet. While we must believe certain essential truths in order to be saved, we are not saved by the amount of doctrine that we know. There will doubtless be Roman Catholics, Arminians, and others in Paradise who were saved by God's grace even if they, like me, did not understand or appreciate that grace as much as they should have. Nevertheless, if we are going to still use "evangelical" as a noun to define a body of Christians holding to a certain set of convictions, it is high time we got clear on these matters. An evangelical cannot be an Arminian any more than an evangelical can be a Roman Catholic. The distinctives of evangelicalism were denied by Rome at the Council of Trent, by the Remonstrants in 1610, were confused and challenged by John Wesley in the eighteenth century, and have become either ignored or denied in contemporary "evangelicalism."

In conclusion, the evangelical movement is faced with a difficult decision: either to reclaim the meaning of "evangelical," or to shed its confinement. Let those maverick "evangelicals" who deny the great truths of the evangelical (and indeed, even the catholic) faith stand up with the courage of their convictions and lead an exodus from evangelicalism, but it is to my mind the height of arrogance and dishonesty to seek to represent oneself as something which one clearly is not.

My purpose has not been to pontificate about what ought to be done with certain individuals, but to point out the serious crisis evangelicals face as a movement. It is as if the evangelical leadership declared the movement a "consistency-free zone," an island on which the law of non-contradiction does not apply. A recent (April 27, 1992) issue of *Christianity Today* featured an article offering a "third way," an alternative to both Calvinism and Arminianism as "seeds for a biblical via media," as though the Bible taught something in between the view that God alone saves and that we cooperate with God in our salvation. But the main benefit of such a position is not that it explains the biblical record, but that it "stakes off common ground—to the surprise, at times, of participants all around—marking a safe and neutral area large enough for both groups to stand while growing together in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. After 450 years of constant controversy, perhaps this is no small step." After all, "The hallmark of a Christian is not logic, but love" (pp. 32-33). The gospel is the church's most precious possession, "for it is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom.1:20), and the debates over its content are not likely to disappear by a generous dosage of muddleheadedness of which we evangelicals seem to be in rather large supply these days.

Today one can be an evangelical—which has historically meant holding to total depravity, unconditional election, justification by grace through faith alone, the sufficiency of scripture—and at the same time be an Arminian, denying or distorting this very evangelical message. Contemporary Christians, generally speaking, have chosen to be agnostic on some of the most basic evangelical convictions. A few generations ago, a defense of justification would be considered a defense of evangelicalism itself, but today when I describe this doctrine I often hear, "That's awfully Calvinistic." (Obviously, those who say this have not run into many Lutherans!) What used to be considered broadly evangelical is now regarded by many as narrowly Reformed. Such shifts have been amply documented in *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation*, by University of Virginia sociologist James Davison Hunter. This, I submit, is just the sort of irresponsible thinking that is sweeping evangelicalism out to sea in confusion, division and irrelevance.

Let us lovingly confront our brothers and sisters in a spirit of boldness, but humility, as we undertake to bring ourselves and our fellow Christians into greater conformity to "the faith once and for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 24).

Notes

1. Dr. Clark Pinnock, *A Case for Arminianism: The Grace of God and the Will of Man* (Zondervan, 1989), p. 15.
2. *ibid.*, p. 27.
3. Theodore Beza, *The Christian Faith*, trans. by James Clark (E. Sussex: Focus Press, 1992), p. 41.
4. Outler, ed., *Wesley's Works*, vol. 2, p. 127.
5. William Law, *Christian Perfection*, (Creation House, 1975), pp. 137-138.
6. Donald Alexander, ed., *Christian Sanctification: Five Views* (IVP, 1981), p. 84.
7. *ibid.*
8. "Salvation by Faith," by John Wesley, Timothy Smith, ed., *Whitefield & Wesley on the New Birth* (Zondervan, 1986).
9. "Minutes of the First Annual Methodist Conference," in Timothy Smith, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 155-158.
10. John Lawson, *Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Zondervan, 1986), p. 217.
11. *ibid.*, p. 226.
12. Pinnock, *op. cit.*
13. Ken Myers, *All God's Children and Blue Suede Shoes* (Crossway, 1989), p. 186.

For Further Reading

Pinnock, cited above; Richard Rice, *God's Foreknowledge and Man's Will* (Bethany); Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Eerdmans); James Arminius's *Collected Works* (Baker); Carl Bangs, *Arminius* (Zondervan); Allan Sell, *The Great Debate* (Baker);

ARMINIANISM AND THE ATONEMENT

by John Murray

Atonement is to be defined in terms of sacrifice, reconciliation, redemption, satisfaction to divine justice, discharge of debt, and thus defined it is for those whom God hath predestinated to life, namely, the elect. They are saved because Christ by his redemptive work secured their salvation. The finally lost are not within the embrace of that salvation secured, and therefore they are not within the embrace of that which secures it, namely, the redemption wrought by Christ. It is just here that the difference between Arminianism and Calvinism may be most plainly stated. Did Christ die and offer Himself a sacrifice to God to make the salvation of all men possible, or did He offer Himself a sacrifice to God to secure infallibly the salvation of His people? Arminians profess the former and deny the latter; our Standards in accordance, as we believe, with Holy Scripture teach the latter.

The term 'limited' atonement has given much offense. It may not indeed be the most fortunate terminology. It is capable of misunderstanding and misrepresentation. Some for this reason may prefer the terms 'definite' or 'particular' atonement. But what we are particularly insistent upon defending is that which the term historically used connotes, and so if the disuse of the term 'limited' is calculated to create the impression that we have renounced the doctrine of which the term is the symbol, if in other words the disuse is calculated to placate the enemies of our Reformed Faith, then we must resolutely refuse to refrain from its use. The atonement is limited, because in its precise intention and meaning and effect it is for those and for those only who are destined in the determinate purpose of God to eternal salvation. We may well bless God that this is not a meagre company, but a multitude whom no man can number out of every nation and kindred and people and tongue.

Let it not be thought that the Arminian by his doctrine escapes limited atonement. The truth is that he professes a despicable doctrine of limited atonement. He professes an atonement that is tragically limited in its efficacy and power, an atonement that does not secure the salvation of any. He indeed eliminates from the atonement that which makes it supremely precious to the Christian heart. In B. B. Warfield's words, 'the substance of the atonement is evaporated, that it may be given a universal reference'. What we mean is, that unless we resort to the position of universal restoration for all mankind - a position against which the witness of Scripture is decisive - an interpretation of the atonement in universal terms must nullify its properly substitutive and redemptive character. We must take our choice between a limited extent and a limited efficacy, or rather between a limited atonement and an atonement without efficacy. It either infallibly saves the elect or it actually saves none.

It is sometimes objected that the doctrine of limited atonement makes the preaching of a full and free salvation impossible. This is wholly untrue. The salvation accomplished by the death of Christ is infinitely sufficient and universally suitable, and it may be said that its infinite sufficiency and perfect suitability grounds a bona fide offer of salvation to all without distinction. The doctrine of limited atonement any more than the doctrine of sovereign election does not raise a fence around the offer of the gospel. The overture of the gospel offering peace and salvation through Jesus Christ is to all without distinction, though it is truly from the heart of sovereign election and limited atonement that this stream of grace universally proffered flows. If we may change the figure, it is upon the crest of the wave of the divine sovereignty and of limited atonement that the full and free offer of the gospel breaks upon our shores. The offer of salvation to all is bona fide. All that is proclaimed is absolutely true. Every sinner believing will infallibly be saved, for the veracity and purpose of God cannot be violated.

The criticism that the doctrine of limited atonement prevents the free offer of the gospel rests upon a profound misapprehension as to what the warrant for preaching the gospel and even of the primary act of faith itself really is. This warrant is not that Christ died for all men but the universal invitation, demand and promise of the gospel united with the perfect sufficiency and suitability of Christ as Saviour and Redeemer. What the ambassador of the gospel demands in Christ's name is that the lost and helpless sinner commit himself to that all-sufficient Saviour with the plea that in thus receiving and resting upon Christ alone for salvation he will certainly be saved. And what the lost sinner does on the basis of the warrant of faith is to commit himself to that Saviour with the assurance that as he thus trusts he will be saved. What he believes, then, in the first instance is not that he has been saved, but that believing in Christ salvation becomes his. The conviction that Christ died for him, or in other words that he is an object of God's redeeming love in Christ, is not the primary act of faith. It is often in the consciousness of the believer so closely bound up with the primary act of faith that he may not be able to be conscious of the logical and psychological distinction. But nevertheless the primary act of faith is self-committal to the all-sufficient and suitable Saviour, and the only warrant for that trust is the indiscriminate, full and free offer of grace and salvation in Christ Jesus.

Part of an article which formed a series from Murray's pen entitled 'The Reformed Faith and Modern Substitutes' in *The Presbyterian Guardian*, 1935-36.

ARMINIANISM IN THE PILGRIMAGE OF THE SOUL

by John Murray

To some it might seem unnecessary and even wickedly controversial to thrust upon readers any discussion of Arminianism. This might appear to be the case for two reasons. First of all, why should we revive ancient controversies and thereby provoke animosities that have long since died the death of old age? Arminianism takes its name from James Arminius who died in 1609. Who in this age, with its multitudinous problems of a very practical kind, has time or use for the fine points of a theological debate that is now three

centuries old? Secondly, why should we even run the risk of making division among brethren over such issues? Arminians believe the Bible. They accept fundamental verities like the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, the Incarnation of the Eternal Son, the Virgin Birth, the Bodily Resurrection of Christ, Justification by Faith, the Resurrection of the Body, Heaven and Hell. Why should we, when confronted with common enemies like Modernism, Christian Science, and Mormonism, not to mention a host of other pagan philosophies and religions, engage in bickering controversy with those who are agreed on the great fundamentals? These two plausible reasons for the avoidance of such discussion are obviously self-contradictory. The second presupposes the falsity of the first. Nevertheless, they are arguments that sometimes lie side by side.

Although it is true that Arminianism derives its name from a man who died in 1609, we are not to think that that which it represents is a dead issue. A very cursory survey of present-day conditions in the church will disclose that fact, for there are multitudes in the Protestant church who hold and avow the tenets given vogue by James Arminius. This is true whether they are aware of it or not, or whether they have ever heard of Arminius or not. So, while our interest in Arminius himself maybe largely an historical one, we have to be interested in that which Arminianism represents. We have to be because we are either living it or we are living next door to it. We cannot but be interested in the view we ourselves hold or the view held by our next-seat neighbour in the church. We cannot get away from it if we are to think and live in a way worthy of even mediocre Christian intelligence.

The second argument appears much more weighty. For, after all, however much it may appear to seem that we like fighting, very few of us indeed like to dispute with those whom we are constrained to acknowledge as brethren for whom Christ died. Most of us, I think, recoil from it. And it is natural that that recoil should sometimes lead us to construct a rather plausible argument whereby we seek to justify our avoidance of it.

There is, however, just one thing that prevents our escape, and that is conviction. When we say conviction we mean something more precious than life. In this matter it is not bare conviction. That may be terribly right or terribly wrong. But it is conviction of truth and truth is always God's truth. It is not ours. Truly it is ours by conviction; but it is God's by source and authorship.

Well, what is this conviction of truth that concerns Arminianism? No doubt many readers have had some trouble with the doctrine of election. Perhaps you have endured the sorest travail of soul in connection with it. Perhaps, when you were aroused to some intelligent interest in this matter, there was one doctrine you found in Scripture that appeared to present an insuperable enigma, indeed an insuperable barrier to saving hope. Oh, you have said, if only I could tear out of the Bible that horrible doctrine of election, together with its companion doctrine of reprobation? Foreordination? That is what cuts athwart the path of my hope. For it cuts away every inducement to any effort on my part. If I am elected, you have said, I shall be saved in any case. If I am not elected, I am foredoomed to perdition, whatever I may try to do in the matter. I have no way of knowing in what class I am. And so bewildering perplexity, if not despair, was the result.

But some evangelist came along and appeared to be the ambassador of peace to you in this slough of despond. He told you that God did not in the exercise of His sovereign good pleasure from all eternity elect some to salvation and foreordain others to death. No, not at all. Truly, he said, election is in the Bible, but you have misunderstood it. The election you find in the Bible is just the election of those who will believe. God foresaw from eternity who would believe in Christ and who would not. And so He elected those whom He foresaw would believe and, of course, did not elect those whom He foresaw would reject. There is no such thing, said he, as unconditional election. After all, it is entirely left to you whether you will accept or reject the gospel.

A wave of new hope invaded your soul. You began to take courage. God has left me, you said, with my responsibility. The exercise of that responsibility is my part, it is my contribution. If I do my part, God will do His. God gives to all men a chance of salvation, and it is simply up to me to take advantage of that chance. "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."

It must not be said that the breeze of hope that crossed the brow of your despondent soul had no justification at all. There was some truth in this experience of yours. But it was truth distorted by the most dangerous error. And God was merciful to your soul. He did not allow that momentary peace to continue. The breeze of refreshment passed and the fever of despondency again settled upon your soul.

For you began to read your Bible and you read in Ephesians 1:4-6, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." You read this, you read through the chapter, you read the second chapter too, and you read other portions of Scripture to the same effect. You said to yourself, This sounds very like the doctrine I was taught in the Shorter Catechism, "God having, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer" (Q. 20).

So again you found yourself in the grip of the old enigma, and you could not accept the solution of your good-intentioned evangelist. It did not accord with your understanding of the truth of Scripture. God was merciful to your soul. He had led you to put truth above even the relief you so much sought and needed.

But another evangelist came along. He appeared severe, even harsh. He preached total depravity. He preached unconditional election. His emphasis upon the absolute sovereignty of God was irresistible. He appeared to have little sympathy with the deep wound that was cutting into the vitals of your spirit. He drove the sword even more penetratively. But his message rang true to Scripture. It bore the hallmark of truth. It commended itself to your conscience in the sight of God. It met with profound response in your soul.

That same evangelist, however, preached the gospel of sovereign grace, of full and free salvation. The overtures of the gospel, he said, were given in the full, free and unfettered call of the gospel to sinners. He represented Christ in all the glory of His Person and in all the perfection of His finished work. In Christ's name he invited you to Christ. He said that this free offer of salvation to you as a sinner dead in trespasses and sins came to you upon the very crest of the wave of the divine sovereignty, that it was the waves of the divine sovereignty that brought these sweet overtures of grace and love, and caused them to break upon the very threshold of your need and responsibility. He told you that it was not as one informed or convinced of your election by God that you were invited, exhorted, commanded and called to put your trust in Jesus' name, but as a sinner lost and condemned. He told you that your election was not

the warrant upon which you were to believe in Jesus, but rather that the warrant upon which you were to trust in Him was His all-sufficiency, all-suitability and perfection as Saviour, together with the invitations, demands and promises of the gospel. He quoted "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out," "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Your heart was drawn. The glory and love of Christ captivated your heart. The simplicity and beauty of the gospel placed an irresistible mysterious constraint upon your spirit. It was all so simple, it was all so harmonious. You entrusted yourself to the Saviour of sinners. You had peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The peace of God that passeth all understanding possessed your heart and mind. "Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel" (Shorter Catechism Q.31). God was merciful to your soul.

Well, do you know that yours was the pilgrimage of a soul through what is the very essence of the Arminian controversy? It was just the great issues that were at stake in centuries of theological debate that were being fought in the little world of your soul. For this is not, after all, a mere academic affair. It is not the playground of idle theological scholastics. It is a matter that concerns the integrity of truth and the purity of the gospel. It is a matter of life and death.

Now you have no dispute with sovereign and unconditional election. You see clearly that, if it were not for the sovereign electing grace of God, there would be salvation for none. You now rejoice with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory in the electing love of God the Father, the redeeming love of God the Son and the regenerating love of God the Holy Ghost. Thanksgiving and rejoicing break into adoration and you say in the words of an ancient liturgy, "One is holy, the Father; one is holy, the Son; one is holy, the Holy Ghost." You yield the total assent and consent of your spirit to the sovereignty expressed in the words of our Lord, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou has hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Matthew 11:25-26).

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THE REFORMED FAITH AND ARMINIANISM

by John Murray

[From a series which appeared in The Presbyterian Guardian in 1935-1936.]

Arminianism derives its name from James Arminius, a minister of the Reformed Church in Holland who lived from 1560 to 1609. He became Professor of Divinity in the University of Leyden, in 1603. It was particularly during the period of his professorial activity at Leyden that he gave expression to the departures from the Reformed Faith that have ever since been associated with his name. Arminius died in 1609, but he left behind him disciples who continued to teach and develop his tenets.

In 1610 a document known as the "Remonstrance" and frequently spoken of as "The Five Arminian Articles" was signed by forty-six ministers and presented to the civil authorities of the United Provinces. These articles set forth the doctrine of the "Remonstrants" or Arminians, as they came to be called, on the subjects of predestination, the extent of the atonement, the cause of saving grace, and perseverance. These articles were both negative and positive - they denied one doctrine and affirmed another.

In the early stages of the controversy the precise hearings and implications of some of the points had not become explicit, but, as the conflict precipitated by the Remonstrants developed, it became evident that the five points of the Reformed Faith which the Arminians were particularly insistent upon denying were unconditional predestination, limited atonement, total depravity, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints. These Calvinists affirmed, Arminians denied.

These five points do not define for us what the Reformed Faith or Calvinism is. The Reformed Faith is a system of truth and is much more comprehensive than any five points that might be enumerated, however important in it or essential to it these five points might be. In these five points attacked by the Arminians, however, the system of truth known as Calvinism may be said to be crystallized. They express what this system is in opposition to the Arminian system or any other system that, in similar fashion, is opposed to it. They ever continue to be the decisive points at which conflict is joined with any system of thought that is moved by an Arminian bias and directed by the same underlying principles.

Neither are we to think that the error of Arminianism is confined to these five points. Arminianism is a theology and the difference between this theology and the theology of the Reformed Church comes to expression at many other points. The error of the Arminian theology is, however, summed up in these five points and so the greater part of the controversy in the past is quite justifiably found to concern the doctrines enunciated in them. What is true in reality has been demonstrated by history.

UNCONDITIONAL PREDESTINATION

The first article of the Remonstrance of 1610 concerned predestination. All of the early Reformers were substantially at one on the doctrine of predestination. It is in the Reformed Church alone, however, that the doctrine of absolute predestination held by Luther as well as by Calvin continued to hold sway and came to its rights. What does it mean?

In answering we cannot do better than quote the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter III:

"i. God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

"iii. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others

foreordained to everlasting death.

"iv. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

"v. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or anything in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace."

This statement of the doctrine was framed by the Westminster divines in 1645, but it is just the well-articulated creedal expression of the doctrine held by the early Reformers, conserved in the Reformed Church, and attacked by the Arminians. The import of the first section quoted is just this: that the whole sweep of universal history from the beginning to the end, in all its extent and minutest detail, is embraced in the plan and decree of God, that all that comes to pass, great or small, good or bad, God from eternity immutably determined would come to pass.

It is not, however, in connection with the all-comprehensive decree of God that the conflict with the Arminian in the first instance is joined. It is as this decree comes to bear upon the destinies of rational beings and more particularly upon the destinies of men, in other words, as the decree becomes operative in the predestination to life of some of mankind and the foreordination to death of others. But the doctrine of the general decree bears directly upon the question of the destinies of men. If God freely and unchangeably ordains whatsoever comes to pass, and if it comes to pass that some men are saved and some perish, then surely He has freely and unchangeably ordained these facts as well as others. If the Arminian denies the latter he must also deny the former.

Predestination to life and foreordination to death mean substantially that from all eternity God sovereignly, according to the counsel of His will, chose or elected a definite number of the human race to everlasting life, that He elected them as individuals, and that in making this election He was not conditioned by His foresight of faith or good works or perseverance in both, but that the election was determined by that sovereign good pleasure which finds its whole ground and explanation in Himself and in nothing else. In other words, God by an absolute, unconditional, and unchangeable decree determined the salvation of certain persons out of free grace and love, and that in accordance with that decree He executes the purpose of His grace and love. The others not elected, by the exercise of the same sovereign good pleasure He decreed to pass by and ordain to everlasting destruction as the reward of their sins.

It is this doctrine Arminianism denies. In the words of James Arminius, "God has not absolutely predestinated any men to salvation; but that he has in his decree considered them as believers." It is peculiarly important that this fact should be appreciated. The fundamental principle of Arminianism on this article of faith is denial of the doctrine set forth in Reformed Standards. Too often the significance and seriousness of this is obscured by appeal on the part of Arminians to the positive side of their teaching. We must not allow this obscuration. Arminianism starts with negation, the denial of the doctrine of sovereign unconditional election. However much truth the more positive elaboration of the Arminian position may embody, it in no way ceases to be Arminian as long as the denial of unconditional election remains, for this is the crux of the question. Everyone who denies unconditional election denies an aspect of truth that is of the essence of Reformed doctrine.

The Arminian position involves, as we have already hinted, more than negation. The Remonstrance reads thus: "Article I. That God, by an eternal unchangeable purpose in Jesus Christ His Son, before the foundation of the world, hath determined out of the fallen, sinful race of men, to save in Christ, for Christ's sake, those who, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, shall believe on this his Son Jesus, and shall persevere in this faith and obedience of faith, through his grace, even to the end."

On superficial examination it might appear that there is no essential difference between this and the position set forth in the Reformed Standards. Does it not speak of an eternal and unchangeable purpose of God by which He determines to save all who believe on His Son and persevere to the end? It certainly does this, and no one in this controversy will deny that what is said is as such true. God does eternally and unchangeably determine to save all who believe and persevere in holiness to the end. But there is a chasm of difference between what the Arminian here affirms and what the Calvinist affirms.

The difference is just this. The Calvinist affirms that God eternally and unchangeably decrees the salvation of certain persons whom He sovereignly distinguishes by this decree from those who are not appointed to salvation. In pursuance of this decree of salvation He decrees the ends towards its accomplishment, and so decrees to give faith and perseverance to all those predestinated to salvation. The Arminian denies any such decree bearing upon the salvation of individuals, and what he affirms in its place is that God decrees or purposes to save all who believe and persevere in faith and obedience to the end. In the former case there is the eternal destination to salvation of persons who are the objects of God's sovereign election; in the latter case there is the divine purpose to save the class characterized by faith and perseverance. In the ultimate analysis the former is the election of persons, the latter is the election of qualities with the provision that all who exhibit these qualities will be saved.

Some Arminians under the stress of the argument, and also on exegetical grounds, perceive the inadequacy of the foregoing position, and so they say that God not only decrees to save all who believe, but that He also *elects* all who believe. There is therefore, they say, an eternal unchangeable election of individuals whose number is certain, an election indeed of all who are to be ultimately saved. Some may be disposed to say that this is exactly the teaching of the Reformed Standards. A little investigation will expose the fallacy of this.

The hallmark of Calvinism is unconditional election and that is exactly what this highest type of Arminianism vigorously denies. It professes indeed fixed and unchangeable election of individuals. But what is meant is, that, since God decrees to save all who believe and since He knows perfectly beforehand and from eternity who will believe, He on the basis of that foresight as ground and cause elects these individuals to eternal life. God elects all whom He foresees will believe and persevere to the end. His election then is determined by His foresight of some difference that comes to exist among men, a difference which He Himself does not cause but which in the final analysis is due to sovereign choice on the part of the human will. The determining factor in this type of election then is not the sovereign unconditioned good pleasure of God but the decision of the human will which God from eternity foresees. Election is not the source of faith, but faith foreseen is made the source or condition of election.

On close examination it should be evident that this is not divine election at all. The sovereign determination of God is ruled out at the

vital point, for the ultimate determinant of the discrimination that exists among men is made to be something in men and not the sovereign good pleasure of God. Indeed this type of Arminianism that at first appears to approach so closely to the Reformed position only serves to show more clearly the total difference between the two systems. The election taught in the Reformed Church is election to salvation and eternal life and therefore also to faith and all other graces as the means ordained of God to the accomplishment of His sovereign decree. Election is not then conditioned upon faith, but faith is the fruit of election. God sovereignly works faith in men because He has in His eternal counsel appointed them to salvation. Faith is not the logical prius of election, but election is the eternal prius and source of faith. Arminianism at its best denies all of these propositions.

The denial of unconditional election strikes at the heart of the doctrine of the grace of God. The grace of God is absolutely sovereign and every failure to recognize and appreciate the absolute sovereignty of God in His saving grace is an expression of the pride of the human heart. It rests upon the demand that God can deal differently with men in the matter of salvation only because they have made themselves to differ. In its ultimate elements it means that the determining factor in salvation is what man himself does, and that is just tantamount to saying that it is not God who determines the salvation of men, but men determine their own salvation; it is not God who saves but man saves himself. This is precisely the issue.

LIMITED ATONEMENT

The second article of the Arminian Remonstrance of 1610 concerned the question of the extent of the atonement. It reads as follows: "Article II. That, agreeably thereto, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, died for all men and for every man, so that he has obtained for them all, by his death on the cross, redemption and the forgiveness of sins; yet that no one actually enjoys this forgiveness of sins except the believer, according to the word of the Gospel of John 3:16. . . . And in the First Epistle of John 2:2 . . ." This is an emphatic statement of what is known as the doctrine of universal atonement, and is in its essence that Christ died for all men alike and procured for them equally and without distinction redemption and forgiveness of sins. The atonement as such, it says in effect, has as its intention the provision of salvation for all, the making of the salvation of all men possible, the placing of all men and every man in a salvable state or condition.

In opposition to this the Reformed Faith affirms the doctrine of what is known as limited atonement. What does it mean? Perhaps the best answer that can be given to this question is to set forth the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter VIII, section V.

REDEMPTION PURCHASED FOR THE ELECT

"The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he through the eternal Spirit once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father; and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto him." This definitely states that reconciliation and an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven is purchased for all *those given to the Son by the Father*. Who are they? In section 1 of this same chapter we are told that they are the people given to Christ from all eternity to be His seed and "to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified." The people given to Christ are surely the same as the *people chosen in Christ* - the form of expression used in chapter III, section v - and they are simply those of mankind predestinated unto life, namely, the elect. With respect to them the Confession continues: "As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore they who are elected being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ; are effectually called unto faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation." (III.vi.) It is for the elect, therefore, for the predestinated to life, for those given to Christ by the Father, for those chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, that reconciliation and an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of heaven is purchased. It is *they* who are redeemed by Christ. Thus teaches the Confession, and so the difference has already become apparent.

PURCHASE AND APPLICATION CO-EXTENSIVE

"To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same." (VIII.viii.) The import of this cannot be controverted. It is that the extent of the purchase of redemption is exactly the same as the extent of actual salvation. If Christ purchased redemption for all, then all will have that applied and communicated to them. If only a certain number of the human race are ultimately saved, then only for that number did Christ purchase redemption.

So explicit is the above statement that it needs no confirmation. But in order to show that this is not a random statement but a determining principle of the Confessional teaching it can be shown by an entirely distinct line of argument. "Christ by his obedience and death did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf." (XI.iii.) Those for whom Christ discharged the debt and made satisfaction to justice are then the *justified*. But all who are justified are also *effectually called*. "Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth." (XI.i.) And effectual calling expounded in chapter X refers us back to predestination. "All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ." (X.i.) And again: "God did from all eternity decree to justify all the elect; and Christ did, in the fullness of time, die for their sins, and rise again for their justification." (XI.iv.) The upshot is plain - predestination to life, redemption, effectually calling, and justification have identical extent; they have in their embrace exactly the same persons.

THE EXCLUSIVENESS OF REDEMPTION

That the non-elect, those who do not become the actual partakers of salvation and are therefore finally lost, are not included within the scope of the redemption purchased by Christ, we may and must even from that which we have already quoted infer to be the teaching of the Confession. But it is interesting to observe that not only does the Confession imply this; it also expressly states it. "Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only." (III.vi.) The Confession is using the phrases "redeemed by Christ" and "purchased redemption" synonymously. Here it is said that *redemption by Christ* or the purchase of redemption is for those who as a matter of fact are saved and for those only. It is exclusive of those who are not called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved. Redemption is defined not only extensively but exclusively.

If we may recapitulate then, the teaching of the Confession can be summed up in these three propositions. (1) Redemption is purchased for the elect. (2) Redemption is applied to all for whom it is purchased. (3) Redemption is not purchased for those who finally perish, for the non-elect.

Atonement is defined therefore in the Confession in terms of sacrifice, reconciliation, redemption, satisfaction to divine justice, discharge of debt, and states clearly that atonement thus defined is for those whom God hath predestinated to life, namely the elect. They are saved because Christ by his redemptive work secured their salvation. The finally lost are not within the embrace of that salvation secured, and therefore they are not within the embrace of that salvation secured, and therefore they are not within the embrace of that which secures it, namely the redemption wrought by Christ. It is just here that the difference between Arminianism and Calvinism may be most plainly stated. Did Christ die and offer Himself a sacrifice to God to make the salvation of all men possible, or did He offer Himself a sacrifice to God to secure infallibly the salvation of His people? Arminians profess the former and deny the latter; our Standards in accordance, as we believe, with Holy Scripture teach the latter.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

The term "limited" atonement has given much offense. It may not indeed be the most fortunate terminology. It is capable of misunderstanding and misrepresentation. Some for this reason may prefer the terms "definite" or "particular" atonement. But what we are particularly insistent upon defending is that which the term historically used connotes, and so if the disuse of the term "limited" is calculated to create the impression that we have renounced the doctrine of which the term is the symbol, if in other words the disuse is calculated to placate the enemies of our Reformed Faith, then we must resolutely refuse to refrain from its use. The atonement is limited, because in its precise intention and meaning and effect it is for those and for those only who are destined in the determinate purpose of God to eternal salvation. We may well bless God that this is not a meager company, but a multitude whom no man can number out of every nation and kindred and people and tongue.

Let it not be thought that the Arminian by his doctrine escapes limited atonement. The truth is that he professes a despicable doctrine of limited atonement. He professes an atonement that is tragically limited in its efficacy and power, an atonement that does not secure the salvation of any. He indeed eliminates from the atonement that which makes it supremely precious to the Christian heart. In B. B. Warfield's words, "the substance of the atonement is evaporated, that it may be given a universal reference." (*The Plan of Salvation*, p. 122.) What we mean is, that unless we resort to the position of universal restoration for all mankind - a position against which the witness of Scripture is decisive - an interpretation of the atonement in universal terms must nullify its properly substitutive and redemptive character. We must take our choice between a limited extent and a limited efficacy, or rather between a limited atonement and an atonement without efficacy. It either infallibly saves the elect or it actually saves none.

It is sometimes objected that the doctrine of limited atonement makes the preaching of a full and free salvation impossible. This is wholly untrue. The salvation accomplished by the death of Christ is infinitely sufficient and universally suitable, and it may be said that its infinite sufficiency and perfect suitability grounds a *bona fide* offer of salvation to all without distinction. The doctrine of limited atonement any more than the doctrine of sovereign election does not raise a fence around the offer of the gospel. The overture of the gospel offering peace and salvation through Jesus Christ is to all without distinction, though it is truly from the heart of sovereign election and limited atonement that this stream of grace universally proffered flows. If we may change the figure, it is upon the crest of the wave of divine sovereignty and of limited atonement that the full and free offer of the gospel breaks upon our shores. The offer of salvation to all is *bona fide*. All that is proclaimed is absolutely true. Every sinner believing will infallibly be saved, for the veracity and purpose of God cannot be violated.

The criticism that the doctrine of limited atonement prevents the free offer of the gospel rests upon a profound misapprehension as to what the warrant for preaching the gospel and even of the primary act of faith itself really is. This warrant is not that Christ died for all men but the universal invitation, demand and promise of the gospel united with the perfect sufficiency and suitability of Christ as Savior and Redeemer. What the ambassador of the gospel demands in Christ's name is that the lost and helpless sinner commit himself to that all-sufficient Savior with the plea that in thus receiving and resting upon Christ alone for salvation he will certainly be saved. And what the lost sinner does on the basis of the warrant of faith is to commit himself to that Savior with the assurance that as he thus trusts he will be saved. What he believes, then, in the first instance is not that he *has been* saved, but that believing in Christ salvation becomes his. The conviction that Christ died for him, or in other words, that he is an object of God's redeeming love in Christ, is not the primary act of faith. It is often in the consciousness of the believer so closely bound up with the primary act of faith that he may not be able to be conscious of the logical and psychological distinction. But nevertheless the primary act of faith is self-committal to the all-sufficient and suitable Savior, and the only warrant for that trust is the indiscriminate, full and free offer of grace and salvation in Christ Jesus.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

The third of the five points of Arminianism concerns the question of original sin or human depravity. In several of the formal statements of the Arminian position as it bears upon human depravity, the real import of that position is not readily detected. As William Cunningham points out, the controversy when it arose, especially as it was conducted on the Arminian side, did not give the prominence to this aspect of the debate. Yet, as he proceeds to show, "it really lies at the root of the whole difference, as was made more palpably manifest in the progress of the discussion, when the followers of Arminius developed their views upon this subject more fully, and deviated further and further from the doctrine of the Bible and the Reformation on the subject of the natural state and character of men." (*Historical Theology*, 2:392.)

Arminians do in general terms assert the depravity of fallen human nature. But a merely general statement of the fact does not touch the heart of the question. The real question is the seriousness with which the general statement of the fact is taken and the willingness there is to appreciate all the implications of it. In a word, it is the question of the totality or entirety of this corruption.

Our Confession of Faith says with respect to our first parents and their sin in eating the forbidden fruit: "By this sin they fell from their original righteousness, and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body."

"They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation.

"From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions." (VI.2-4.)

"Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto." (IX.3.)

These are highly compressed and succinct statements of total depravity, and their meaning and consequences ought to be carefully weighed. They are peculiarly offensive to every view that hangs on to any vestige of optimism with respect to the qualities or potencies inherent in human nature as fallen. Indeed they must arouse the opposition and emphatic protest of every view that suspends any hope on the autonomy of the human will. It is just because the Arminian does in the last analysis place the determining factor in the individual's salvation in the free choice of the human will, that he has taken such unrelenting issue with the doctrine of the Reformed Churches.

The Confession does not, of course, deny to men what we may call natural virtue or civil righteousness. It affirms that works done by unregenerate men may, as regards the matter of them, be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others. Neither does it say that all men are equally depraved, or to put it more accurately it does not say that this corruption "whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil" receives the same degree of development and expression in all. What the Confession does is to set forth the teaching of Scripture with respect to the moral and spiritual condition of men as they stand in the pure light of the divine standard and judgment. Judged by that norm they are dead in sin and wholly defiled.

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

As is apparent from the foregoing discussion it is in connection with the operations of God in His saving grace that the implications of the affirmation or denial of the doctrine of total depravity come to light. The question here is: What is the mode of the divine operation of the Spirit of God in bringing men to faith and repentance? All are agreed that men are saved through faith. But the difference arises when we come to explain the fact that, of those who indiscriminately receive the overtures of grace in the gospel, some believe and some do not. The question is not in general terms that of grace. Arminians concede that men cannot be saved apart from the gracious operations of the Spirit of God in the heart. The question is: What is the nature of that grace? What is the cause of faith? Why is it that some believe to the saving of their souls and some do not? Is that grace of God given to all indiscriminately, or is it a grace given only to those who believe? Is it a grace that may be resisted, or is it always efficacious to the end in view, and therefore incapable of being frustrated?

Arminians though exhibiting certain differences among themselves are agreed that sufficient grace, whether it be regarded as a natural possession or a gracious bestowal, resides in all, and therefore that all men have the ability to believe. The explanation of the fact that some believe and some do not rests wholly in a difference of response on the part of men. This difference of response may be stated in terms of co-operation with, or improvement of, the grace of God. But in any case the explanation of the difference lies exclusively in the free will of man. For the difference of response on the part of the believer as over against the unbeliever he is not only wholly responsible but he, in the exercise of the autonomy that belongs to his will, is the sole determining factor. God does not make men to differ. He operates no more savingly and efficaciously in the man who believes than He does in the man who does not believe. For this indiscriminateness in the saving operations of God, the Arminian is exceedingly jealous; he demands that what God does for and in one He does for and in all equally. In the ultimate, then, the issue of salvation rests with the sovereign determination of the human will. Men make themselves to differ.

Now it is easy to see that, if man is thus able to co-operate with or improve the grace that is common to all, there must remain in man some vestige of good. Indeed, so decisive an element of ability to good survives that it determines the exercise of the most important event or series of events in the history of the individual. And this is exactly where the Arminian position impinges not only upon the sovereignty and efficacy of God's saving grace but upon the total depravity of sinful man.

In magnificent contrast with this denial of the sovereignty and efficacy of the saving grace of God is the teaching of our Confession. It reads: "All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.

"This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man; who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it." (X.1-2.)

In these sections the faith that embraces Jesus Christ to the saving of the soul is referred to the sovereign predestination of God as its source, and to the regenerative operation of God in the heart as its cause. God is sovereignly pleased to impart His efficacious grace, and it is the enablement that comes from this sovereign bestowal of the grace of the Holy Spirit that leads to faith. The person effectually called is altogether passive therein until renewed by the Holy Spirit. A new heart has been given him and a right spirit created within him by the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit; and because he has a new heart and a right spirit his response to the call of the gospel cannot but be one of loving reception and trust. Just as the reaction of the carnal mind cannot but be one of enmity against God, so the reaction of the mind of the Spirit cannot but be one of faith and trust. It is the very nature of the new heart to trust God as He is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ.

We have here in our Confession a rather neat statement of the relation of faith to regeneration. In this realm of theological debate our position can very readily be tested by our answer to the questions: Does God regenerate us because we believe, or do we believe

because God has regenerated us? In other words what has the causal priority, regeneration or faith? There are many evangelicals who will say that faith is the means of regeneration, that God regenerates those who believe and because they believe. They thereby, whether wittingly or unwittingly, place themselves in the Arminian camp and in the most decided opposition to Reformed doctrine. Logically they place themselves - perhaps with good intentions - in a position that leads to the wreck and ruin of true evangelicalism.

We are, of course, using the term "regeneration" in the restricted sense of the new birth, and in this sense the very hallmark of Calvinism as of Augustinianism is that faith is the gift of God, because it proceeds from the regenerative operation of the Holy Spirit as its only cause and explanation. God has elected His people to salvation. He has ordained that this salvation become theirs through faith. But because of the total depravity of their hearts and minds they cannot exercise faith; they are dead in trespasses and sins. In order to bring them to faith God implants by the agency of the Holy Spirit a new heart and a right spirit within them, and thus effectually and irresistibly draws them to Christ. They are made willing in the day of God's power. By grace they have been saved through faith, and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God.

THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

In the closest relation to the foregoing doctrine of efficacious or irresistible grace is the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer. This doctrine the Arminian bluntly rejects. A true believer, he says, may be in grace and then fall from grace and finally perish. Such a position is in logical coherence with his doctrine of the nature of saving grace. If the determining factor in the matter of an individual's salvation is the autonomy of his own free will, then consistency would seem to be all in favor of regarding salvation as a very insecure and mutable possession. Salvation in this case cannot be any more stable than that which in the final analysis determines it.

But it is just here that the harmony of efficacious grace with the perseverance of the saints comes to light. The Reformed Faith recognizes that God it is who determines a sinner's salvation, and that what He begins He brings to perfection. Salvation rests upon the unchangeable grace of God. He will not forsake the work of His hands, nor make void His covenant. Thus reads the Confession: "They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.

"This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ; the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them; and the nature of the covenant of grace: from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof." (XVII.1-2.)

An Antidote Against Arminianism or A Treatise to Enervate and Confute All The Five Points Of it;

Viz.: Predestination Grounded upon Man's Foreseen Works--
Universal Redemption--Sufficient Grace in All--The Power of Man's Free-will in Conversion--and the
Possibility of true Saints Falling away Totally and Finally.

by Christopher Ness

With Extracts from Dr. John Gill, Dr. Isaac Watts, Augustus Toplady, John Newton, J. Hart, etc.

Recommended by Dr. John Owen, and Published for Public Good.

With corrections and formatting changes as would make the text more readable. (From Online Bible by Larry Pierce).

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF CHRISTOPHER NESS

Christopher Ness (1621-1705) was an English Nonconformist preacher and author.

He wrote "A History and Mystery of the Old and New Testaments," a work to which Matthew Henry is thought to owe much of his most valuable material for his commentary; "A Protestant Antidote Against the Poison of Popery;" "The Crown and Glory of a Christian;" "A Christian's Walk and Work on Earth;" "A Church History from Adam," and "A Scripture Prophecy to the End of the World;" "A Discovery of the Person and Period of AntiChrist;" and "An Antidote Against Arminianism," a small work embodying in a brief form the doctrines on election, predestination, etc., as taught by John Owen, Toplady, and others.

Ness was born on December 22, 1621 at North Cave, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, the son of Thomas Ness, a husbandman there. He was educated at a private school at North Cave, under Lazarus Seaman, and entered St. John's College, Cambridge, on May 17, 1638, where he graduated B.A. and M.A. When 23 years old he retired into Yorkshire, where he became a preacher of independent tenets successively at Cliffe, or South Cliffe Chapel in his native parish, in Holderness, and at Beverley, where he taught a school. On Dr. Winter's election as provost of Trinity College, Dublin, in 1651, Ness was chosen as his successor in the living of Cottingham, near Hull, though it does not appear that he ever received Episcopal orders.

In 1656, he became a preacher at Leeds, and in 1660 he was a lecturer under the vicar, Dr. Lake, afterwards Bishop of Chichester; but his Calvinism clashed with the Arminianism of Dr. Lake, and on St. Bartholomew's day in 1662 he was ejected from his lectureship. After this he became a schoolmaster and private preacher at Clayton, Morley, and Hunslet, all in Yorkshire. At Hunslet he took an indulgence as a Congregationalist in 1672, and a new meeting-house was opened by him on June 3, 1672.

He was excommunicated no less than four times, and when in 1674 or 1675 a writ de excommunicato capiendo was issued against him, he removed to London, where he preached to a private congregation in Salisbury Court, Fleet Street. In 1684 he had to conceal himself from the officers of the crown, who had a warrant for his arrest on the charge of publishing an elegy on the death of his friend John Partridge, another Nonconformist minister. He died on December 26, 1705, aged exactly 84 years, and was buried at Bunhill Fields Cemetery.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Candid Reader, observe these few considerations: Although this small manual be very little in itself and substance, yet ought it not therefore to be despised; for,

First. We read how the mighty angel of the Covenant had a very little book open in his hand, (Re 10:2), yet this little book contained the great concerns of the Redeemer's little, little flock; a double diminutive as Christ calls them in Lu 12:32. And that little book was not shut nor sealed, but it was open. It is the work of AntiChrist to keep it shut. Yea, it must also be eaten; "take it and eat it up." (Re 10:9); that is, it must go down and be hid in our hearts ("Thy Word have I hid in mine heart," Ps 119:11); then the simplest soul may have right conceptions of it. "The word is then very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it" (De 30:14).

Secondly. This little book hath cost me great study and labour to compose it, that it might contain the very cream and quintessence of the best Authors on this subject. Moreover, it hath cost me likewise many ardent prayers to God, and many earnest wrestlings with God, that I might not be one "of those that rebel against the light" (Job 24:13); but that in His light I might see light, (Ps 36:9); and to have mine eyes anointed with Christ's eye-salve, (Re 3:18), that I might see clearly into these profound points, which hath so very much puzzled the Christian world. As blessed Athanasius sighed out in his day, "The world is overrun with Arianism;" so it is the sad sigh of our present times, the Christian world is overrun, yea, overwhelmed with the flood of Arminianism; which cometh, as it were, out of the mouth of the serpent, that he might cause the woman the Church "to be carried away of the flood" of it (Re 12:15).

Thirdly. Lest this overflowing deluge of Arminianism should bring destruction upon us, there is great need that some servants of Christ should run to stop the further spreading of this plague and leprosy. Thus Moses stood in the gap, and prevented the destruction of Israel (Ps 105:23). Also (Nu 16:48), "He stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed." And the neglect of this duty the Lord complains of, that He found none of His servants to stand in the gap, etc. "O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. . . With lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, . . . by promising him life" (Eze 13:4, 5, 22). While I was considering these things, the Lord stirred up my spirit to do as is done in common conflagrations, when everyone runs with the best bucket he can get, wherewith to quench the devouring flames, and to stop them, that they may not lay waste all before them.

Fourthly. When I had completed this short compendium I showed it to Dr. John Owen, Mr. Nicholas Lockier, and Mr. George Griffith, who all unanimously approved of it and wrote an epistle commendatory to it, subscribing it with all their three hands, which is too large here to insert, but the truth of the premises I do hereby affirm.

Lastly. As a little map doth represent a large country at one view, which will take much time to travel over, so this book is multum in parvo, much in a little. Read it seriously without partiality, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.

So prayeth

Yours in the best of bonds,

CHRISTOPHER NESS September 30th, 1700.

AN ANTIDOTE AGAINST ARMINIANISM

Of Arminianism In General

It hath ever been the lot of truth (like the Lord of it) to be crucified between right-hand and left-hand thieves. Truth's enemies, on all hands, are various. While some men consider the Bible to be an imposition on the world, and treat salvation by Christ as mere priestcraft and deception, there are others who tell us they have Christ, and are one with Christ, and yet with audacious effrontery cry down the ordinances of the gospel, and consider the means of grace as too burdensome for a free-born conscience, and too low and carnal for a seraphic spirit. There is as much beyond the truth as on this side of it; as much in outrunning the flock of Christ and the Lamb that leads them, as in straggling and loitering behind. Truth hath evermore observed the golden mean.

The Socinians decry the divinity of Christ and His satisfaction, as if His sufferings were exemplary only, not expiatory. The Roman Catholics turn the true worship of God into will worship, and teach their own traditions for the commandments of God, spoiling God's institutions with man's inventions. And the Arminians do call the justice of God to the bar of reason; they dare confidently wade in the deep ocean of divine mysteries, and in stating the decrees of God, where blessed Paul could find no bottom, but cried out "O the depth" etc. (Ro 11:33); they dare undertake to fetch the Apostle from off his nonplus, saying, "God foresaw that Jacob would believe, and that Esau would not believe; therefore, the one was loved and the other hated." Thus Arminius' school teacheth deeper divinity than what Paul learned in the third heaven. And they do not only with the Socinians gratify the pride of man's reason, but also the pride of man's will, in extenuating and lessening both the guilt and filth of original sin; even as Popery, their elder sister, doth gratify the pride of outward sense.

Hence Dr. Leighton calls Arminianism "the Pope's Benjamin, the last and greatest monster of the man of sin; the elixir of Anti-Christianism; the mystery of the mystery of iniquity; the Pope's cabinet; the very quintessence of equivocation." Alike hereunto Mr. Rous (Master of Eton College) addeth, saying, "Arminianism is the spawn of Popery, which the warmth of favour may easily turn into frogs of the bottomless pit." And what are the new Arminians but the varnished offspring of the old Pelagians, that makes the grace of God to lackey it at the foot, or rather, the will of man? that makes the sheep to keep the shepherd? that puts God into the same extremity with Darius, who would gladly have saved Daniel but could not (Da 6:14)?

What else can their doctrine signify which they call a prescience or foreknowledge in God, the truth of which depends, not on the decree of God, but on the free-will of the creature? This is to make the creature have no dependence on the Creator, and to fetter Divine Providence. Thus that fatal necessity, which they would lay at our doors, unavoidably remains at theirs, and (according to their scheme) God must say thus to man, "O My poor creature? that fatal fortune which hath harmed you must be endured more than bewailed, for it was from all eternity, before My providence. I could not hinder, I could not but consent to those fatal contingencies; and unavoidable Fate hath, whether I will or not, pronounced the inevitable sentence." What else is this but to overthrow all those graces of Faith, Hope, etc., to expectorate (to cast off) all vital godliness; and to pull the great Jehovah Himself out of His throne of glory, setting up dame Fortune to be worshipped in His stead?

These and many other great abominations have been discovered in the "chambers of imagery" in our days, and are nothing but measuring supernatural mysteries with the crooked metewand of degenerate reason. "Wisdom is too high for a fool" (Pr 24:7). In these points it was once well said, "Give me a mortified reason," for, to prescribe to God's infinite understanding, and to allow Him no reasons to guide His determinations by, but what we are acquainted with, is extremely arrogant. Reason must neither be the rule to measure faith by, nor the judge of it. We may give a reason of our believing, to wit, "because it is written," but not of all things believed, as why Jacob was loved and Esau hated before they had done either good or evil -- this was the counsel of God's own will. Touching such sublime mysteries our faith stands upon two sure bottoms: the first is, that being, wisdom, and power of God doth infinitely transcend ours; so may reveal matters far above our reach; the second is; that whatsoever God reveals is undoubtedly true, and to be believed, although the bottom of it cannot be sounded by the line of our reason; because man's reason is not absolute, but variously limited, perplexed with his own frailty, and defective in its own acting.

CHAPTER I

OF PREDESTINATION

That the reader may have clear views of the doctrine of Predestination, I shall, first, state that doctrine as revealed in the Bible; second, consider the Arminian's view of it, viz., that it is conditional upon the foresight of faith, works, perseverance, etc., and, thirdly, answer the objections brought by the Arminians against the Scriptural doctrine of Election and Predestination.

The Doctrine of Predestination

Predestination is the decree of God, by which (according to the counsel of His own will) He fore-ordained some of mankind to eternal life, and refused or passed by others; for the praise of His glorious mercy and justice. Some are vessels of mercy, others are vessels of wrath. "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; And that he might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory" (Ro 9:21-23).

In a great house are various vessels both for use and ornament; vessels of honour, and vessels of dishonour, (2Ti 2:20); and the master of the house hath a right to, and can wisely use, all his vessels, even as he shall think proper. God hath His use even of Pharaoh and of the church's greatest enemies; if it be but scullion work, to brighten vessels of mercy by them. God hath appointed the Elect unto Glory; and He hath by the eternal and most free purpose of His will fore-ordained all the means thereunto; such as redemption by Christ, regeneration by the Holy Ghost, effectual calling and conversion, justification in the court of conscience by saving faith in Jesus' merits, sanctification in the heart by the Spirit, producing holy living and holy walking with God and man. And these blessed participators are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1Pe 1:5). "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them he also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. What shall we then say to these things?" (Ro 8:30,31). We will say with the apostle, "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation" (1Th 5:9).

It is called destination, as it comprehends a determined order of the means to the end; and pre-destination, because God appointed this order in and with Himself before the actual existence of those things so ordered. The Greek word signifies a fore-separated for God's special use; as Israel was separated from among all the nations of the world to be God's peculiar inheritance. "I am the Lord your God, which have separated you from other people" (Le 20:24). "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (De 7:6). I have separated you to become vessels of mercy, members of Christ, and temples of the Holy Ghost, before all time, even from all eternity. As Divine prescience is sometimes largely taken for predestination, "God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew" (Ro 11:2), that is, whom He did predestinate; so, in like manner, predestination is taken strictly and in part for election itself (Ro 8:30; Eph 1:5). I shall handle it accordingly in this following treatise, using the words Election and Predestination promiscuously.

Predestination is also called a Divine decree, for in it is the determinate counsel of God, and the counsel of His own will, in bringing to pass such ends by such and such means. "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done" (Ac 4:27,28). "Having predestinated us . . . according to the good pleasure of His will" (Eph 1:5). "Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph 1:11). The election and predestination of the Lord is, in Scripture phrase, termed the "hand," the "determinate counsel," the "purpose," the "good pleasure" of God (Ac 2:23; Eph 1:9).

The Divine decree of Predestination hath various properties; it is eternal, unchangeable, absolute, free, discriminating, and extensive.

The First Property of the Divine Decree; it is ETERNAL

This is proved from the following reasons:

1. God's internal and immanent acts are the same with His essence: such an act is the Divine decree: and, therefore, as God's essence is eternal, so His decree must be eternal also. Now the decree is God's decreeing, because whatever is in God is God; it is God Himself by one eternal act, decreeing and determining whatsoever should come to pass unto the praise of His own glory.

2. The second reason is deduced from the simplicity of God, which is, God considered as one mere and perfect act, without any composition or succession. There can be no more a new thought, a new intent, or a new purpose in God, than there can be a new God. Whatever God thinks He ever thought, and always doth and will think. Whatever God purposes He always purposed, and ever and doth and will purpose. He saith, "I know the thoughts I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jer 29:11). As He cannot know anything new, neither can He intend anything new, for His name is, I AM. He takes not new counsels, as man, neither draws up new determinations.

3. The third reason is taken from Christ. If Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (as He is called, Re 13:8), then predestination to life must needs be before time, because Christ is the Foundation of election. We are elected in Him. "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4); and predestinated by Him, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself" (Eph 1:5). Christ is the means. Now the end cannot be of a later date and determination than the means to that end; they have relations to each other. And if Christ be the eternal purpose of the Father, the act of electing in Christ must needs be His eternal purpose also.

4. Scripture expressly proves the eternity of the decree, saying, it was "before the world began" (2Ti 1:9; Tit 1:2); and "before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4); and it was an "eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph 3:11).

5. It is the royal prerogative of the great Jehovah to order as well as appoint things that are coming and that shall come: "I appointed the ancient people, and the things that are coming and shall come" (Isa 44:7). None can appoint God the time. He saith, "Who is like Me? and who will appoint Me the time?" (Jer 50:44). Hence time is said to travail with those eternal decrees of God, and brings forth the accomplishment of them in their proper season; and the decree will bring forth ("Before the decree bring forth," Zep 2:2). Every thing hath its accomplishment in time, which was decreed to fall out from all eternity.

6. If human concerns have this encomium that "these are ancient things" (1Ch 4:22), how much more the Divine decree, which is not the work of yesterday! If the negative part of predestination (the ungodly) were "of old ordained" (Jude 4), then much more the positive, God's purpose of loving Jacob, as well as hating Esau, was before they had done "either good or evil" (Ro 9:11).

Objection. Some may object, saying, We grant God's prescience or foreknowledge to be eternal, but not His predestination; that choice or election mentioned in 1Co 1:27-29 must be a temporal, not an eternal, election.

Answers 1. With God, the knowledge of things that shall come to pass must follow the decree of it; for things must first be decreed, and then foreseen in that being which they have in the decree; in this sense prescience presupposes predestination. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Ac 15:18). God hath not an imperfect but a thorough foreknowledge of all future things; the means and the end; not only as they may be, but also as they shall be, by His Divine determination.

2. Prescience, or fore-knowledge, is taken for God's love from eternity. "Whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate" (Ro 8:29); that is, "whom He fore-loved" so Zanchius reads it. Whom He foreknew, not only with the knowledge of observation, but with the knowledge of approbation also; He foreknew them to be His. So it is predestination itself; and to grant an eternal prescience without an eternal predestination, is to break the links of that golden chain in Ro 8:29,30. "God hath not," and God will not, "cast away His people which He foreknew" (Ro 11:2).

3. Some grant a predestination eternal to the elect only, but to the non-elect only a prescience or naked foresight (without any pre-ordination), lest they should make God the author of the creature's sin and ruin. But these men fear where no fear is; for the worst evil that ever was committed in the world, to wit, the crucifying of the Prince of glory, Jesus Christ, did not only fall under the foreknowledge of God, but also under His determinate counsel, "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Ac 2:23; 4:28); the taking and apprehension of Christ was not barely foreknown but unchangeably determined.

4. Even suppose it be granted that the apostle speaks of a temporal election, or choice, in 1Co 1:27, etc., yet that signifies no more than our vocation or calling; and temporal reprobation intimates no more than man's obduration. The accomplishment of both these is granted to be in time, so may not be confounded with this eternal decree of God; these are but fruits and effects of that eternal decree.

Inferences drawn from the foregoing.

1. Is God's love eternal? Then Satan cannot get beyond or between this love of God and us; for it was before the world was, and so before Satan was.

2. Augustine told a curious fool that asked what God did before the world was made, "that He made hell for such as him;" but this teaches us that God was choosing us to Himself before the world began. O wonderful!

3. If so, believer, then thy saintship and sufferings have eternal glory wrapped up in them. All this comfort is lost in the contrary doctrine.

The Second Property of the Divine Decree of Predestination: it is UNCHANGEABLE

Hence it is compared to "mountains of brass" (Zec 6:1), and it is called, "immutability of his counsel" (Heb 6:17). This is made evident by sundry reasons, as:

1. The Divine decree hath an unchangeable fountain, to wit, the unchangeableness of God. "He is in one mind, and who can turn Him?" (Job 23:13). He desires and He doth it; no created being can interpose between the desire and the doing, to hinder their meeting together. "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man that He should repent" (Nu 23:19). "I am the Lord, I change not" (Mal 3:6); with Him is no "variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas 1:17). "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations" (Ps 33:11). "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand" (Pr 19:21). Man is a poor changeable creature and changes his mind oftener than his garment, both from the darkness of his understanding and the perverseness of his will. He frequently sees something that he saw not before. But there is no

such imperfection in God, all things are naked before Him, dissected, or with their faces upward. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb 4:13). He knows all His works (their natures and circumstances) as perfectly in the beginning of the world as He will do at the end of it. And He abides still in one mind when His dispensations are changed, for He decreed the change of them from all eternity.

2. The decree of Election stands upon an unchangeable foundation, to wit, that Rock of ages, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb 13:8). As the first Adam was the foundation stone in the decree of creation, so the last Adam, even Jesus, is the foundation stone in the decree of election. God hath blessed us in Him, yea, and we shall be blessed. He hath chosen us in Him; pardoned us in Him; sealed us in Him; built us up and completed us in Him; "According to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2Ti 1:9). All those acts of grace are said to be in Christ, who hath blest us in Christ (Eph 1:3); chosen us in Him (Eph 1:4); pardoned us; "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph 1:7); "in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed" (Eph 1:13); "rooted and built up in Him" (Col 2:7): and ye are "complete in Him" (Col 2:10).

Indeed, Christ Himself was under Divine ordination; He "verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world" (1Pe 1:20), and is called the elect stone (1Pe 2:6). Christ is the first person elected. "Behold My servant whom I uphold, Mine elect" (Isa 42:1; Mt 12:18). Christ was chosen as the Head, and we as His members; therefore are we said to be given to Christ. "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me" (Joh 17:6). Now, so long as this foundation standeth sure, so long doth the superstructure remain unchangeable. The temple stood firmly upon those two pillars, Jachin and Boza, i.e., stability and strength; so the decree of election standeth sure upon Christ the Foundation; and none can pluck an elect soul from off this Foundation. None can pluck any of Christ's out of His hands. Christ will lose none that are given to him; He will fulfil His Father's will by taking care of them all. "And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (Joh 6:39). "They shall never perish" (Joh 10:28).

3. 'Tis unchangeable, because it is a decree written in Heaven, and so above the reach of either angry men or enraged devils to cancel. "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2Ti 2:19), they are "the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven" (Heb 12:23). Thence it is called "the Lamb's book of life," which contains a catalog of the elect, determined by the unalterable counsel of God; which number can neither be increased nor diminished. This is to be rejoiced in above dominion over devils; "rather rejoice, because your names are in Heaven" (Lu 10:20); which, if our names may be written in Heaven today and blotted out tomorrow would be no such ground of joy. If the decrees of the Medes and Persians, which were but earthly writings, were unalterable (Da 6:8), how much more the decrees of the great God, written in Heaven, must be unchangeable. Must Pilate say, "What I have written I have written" (Joh 19:22); that is to say, "my writing shall not be altered," and shall not God say so much more? "I know (saith Solomon) that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it" (Ec 3:14). "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure . . . I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it" (Isa 46:10,11). The sun may sooner be stopped in his course than God hindered of His work or in His will. Nature, angels, devils, men, may all be resisted, and so miss of their design; not so God: for "who hath resisted His will?" All those chariots of human occurrences and dispensations come forth from between those mountains of brass, the unalterable decrees of God (Zec 6:1); and should it be granted that one soul may be blotted out of this book of life (this writing in Heaven) then it is possible that all may be so; and, by consequence, it may be supposed that that book may become empty, and useless as waste paper; and that Christ may be a head without a body.

4. 'Tis unchangeable, for the decree concerning the end includes the means to that end, and binds them altogether with an irrefragable chain, which can never be broken. The predestinated, called, justified, glorified ones, are the same (Ro 8:30). Therefore the purpose of God according to election must stand (Ro 9:11). God doth not decree the end without the means, nor the means without the end, but both together. As a purpose for building includes the hewing of stone, and squaring of timber, and all other materials for building-work; and as a decree for war implies arms, horses, ammunition, and all warlike provisions; so here, all that are elected to salvation, are elected to sanctification also. God ordains to the means as well as to the end. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Ac 13:48). God hath ordained that we should walk in good works (Eph 2:10). We are elected unto obedience, through the "sanctification of the Spirit" (1Pe 1:2); therefore God hath promised to sanctify those whom He purposed to save. We teach with Augustine that, "Election is an ordaining to grace as well as to glory." In pre-destination, therefore, the means of salvation are no less absolutely decreed than salvation itself. We may not conceive that God's decree runs after this form, "I will predestinate Peter to salvation, if it should so happen that he doth believe and persevere;" but rather thus, "I do predestinate Peter to salvation, which, that he may infallibly obtain, I will give him both faith and perseverance." Were it otherwise, the foundation would not stand sure; yea, and God's gifts would not be without repentance, if God did not absolutely decree to give and bestow faith and perseverance to His elected ones. The covenant of grace runs in this tenure, "I will be a God to you, and ye shall be a people unto Me" that is, I will make ye so.

Inferences drawn from the foregoing.

1. A name written in Heaven, where no thief, no rust, no moth comes to destroy it, is better than to be enrolled in princely courts; 'tis a name better than of sons and daughters, to be a free citizen of Heaven.
2. Though we are changeable creatures, yet unchangeable love is towards us, that keeps faster hold of us than we of it.
3. It is infinite condescension that the great God should hold a poor lump of clay so fast in His Almighty hands, as to secure our interest to all eternity (Joh 10:28,29; 1Pe 1:4,5).

The Third Property of the Divine Decree: it is ABSOLUTE

It is absolute in respect of the efficient impulsive cause which cannot be anything out of God, as the following reasons evince.

1. If the Divine decree be eternal it must be absolute; for nothing can be assigned before an eternal act, as the efficient cause of it. There cannot be a cause of the will of God out of God. Predestination is an immanent act of the Divine will; and so, not only the cause, but also the first cause of all created beings; and therefore cannot (in any good sense) be said to depend on foreseen transient

acts in the creature; so, by consequence, must be an absolute act, unless we will make the volitions of God to come behind the created and temporary volitions of man, which is grossly absurd. This goes to a denial of God being the first cause of all things.

2. First, if God be God; if He be an almighty, all wise, all free, and an all-disposing God, then His decree of Election must be absolute; for a conditional decree makes a conditional God, and plainly ungodly Him, by ascribing such imperfections to Him as are unworthy His majesty, and below His Divine being; as, first, it opposes His omnipotence--if some conditions be antecedent to the will of God, then the same are antecedent also to the power of God. Second, it takes away the glory of the Divine wisdom in ordering all things; for if Peter must be willing to believe before God's decree concerning Peter, then Divine wisdom doth not determine concerning the order of things. Thirdly, it takes away the glory of God's absolute liberty and independence; for if Peter's believing and Judas's not believing be antecedent to the decree of God concerning them, then Peter and Judas make themselves the objects of election and non-election, and God hath not an absolute dominion over His own creatures. The potter hath not freedom to make this lump of clay a vessel of honour and that a vessel of dishonour, and the difference will arise more from the quality of the clay than the will of the potter, and God's will must be dependent on the will of man for its determinations. This plainly overthrows the independency of God. Fourth, it takes away the glory of His all-disposing providence. If the decree be not absolute, how can God be said wholly to dispose of lots that are cast into the lap, as in Pr 16:33? Shall we say that the lot of the apostleship fell to Matthias by chance (Ac 1:26); was it not rather absolutely ordained and ordered by the Lord, to whom the Apostles prayed, as in Ac 1:24, saying, "Thou, Lord, which knoweth the hearts of all men, show whether (or which) of these two Thou has chosen . . . And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias" (Ac 1:24,26)? Thus by the disposal of lots in the lap was Achan discovered to be Israel's curse, and Saul appointed to be Israel's king (Jos 7:14-18; 1Sa 10:19-21). Man purposeth, but God disposeth; because God by an absolute decree hath foreordained all things that do come to pass. They fall not out casually and beyond God's intention; thus it is said, "It behoved Christ to suffer" (Lu 24:46).

3. If the will of the potter be an absolute will over his pots, much more is the will of God an absolute will over mankind. It is God's own comparison (Ro 9:20,21). God compares not Himself to a goldsmith, because a goldsmith hath costly materials, such as silver and gold, which lays some obligation on him to make honourable vessels therewith. But He compareth Himself to a potter, because first, the materials of a potter are vile and sordid, to wit, clay, so more answerable to fallen mankind, out of which God maketh His choice. We are not only clay (Job 4:19), but sinful clay through the fall. Second, the potter doth not make this difference among his pots for any foreseen inherent goodness in his clay (for the whole lump before him is of an equal temper and quality), but from the pleasure of His own will. Thus the potter's power over his materials is clearer from exception than that of the goldsmith, and illustrates more the absoluteness of God's will in His choice both in vessels of honour and vessels of dishonour. Again, the distance between the clay and potter is but a finite distance, even the distance only between one creature and another, animate and inanimate; but the distance between God and mankind is infinite, not only the natural distance between God and us, as we are creatures, but also the moral distance between us, as we are sinners. The potter also must have his clay made to his hand; he cannot make his own clay, though he may temper it for his work when he hath found it; but the great God creates His own clay. He created the earth out of which man was formed. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Ge 1:1). "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground" (Ge 2:7). It follows then, if the potter by an absolute will disposes of his pots, much more hath God a right concerning His creatures.

Inferences drawn from the preceding.

1. If the absolute will of God be the universal cause of all things, then no event can fall beyond or beside God's will; and fortune (in the world's sense of it) is but the devil's blasphemous spit upon Divine providence.

2. God's absolute will cannot be resisted; as He hath willed, so shall it come to pass; and there is no hindering the execution of it. "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand" (Isa 14:24). "Our God is in the Heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased" (Ps 115:3), "I know that Thou canst do everything" (Job 42:2).

3. Then let us learn submission to the will of God. Proud, yet brittle clay, will be knocking their sides against the absolute will of God, till they break in pieces; so did Adonijah, when Solomon must rule; compare 1Ki 1:5 with 1Ch 22:9, and mark the end of it, 1Ki 2:23-25. O for the grace of humility to enable us to adopt the language of the prophet, "Now, O Lord, Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and Thou our Potter, and we all are the work of Thy hand" (Isa 64:8).

The Fourth Property of the Divine Decree: it is FREE

As the Divine decree is not conditional but absolute, so 'tis not of necessity but free, as flowing only from the pleasure of God's will. God is a free agent, and cannot fall under any obligation, so as to necessitate Him in any of His emanations to the creature; but He is graciously pleased of His own free love to oblige Himself.

1. The first argument to prove the freeness of the Divine decree is: such a decree as passeth without any obligation to necessitate the passing of it, must needs have the property of freeness; and thus it was with the divine decree. If there be any obligation it must be either in respect of objects or acts or motives; but God was not obliged in any of these respects.

First. He was not obliged in respect of objects, for God was under no necessity of having either any elect or any reprobate. He was happy in Himself from all eternity; would have been happy for ever without either of these; and to affirm that God stood in need of any such objects is to deny the perfections of God. If it is called humbling Himself to look down on things in Heaven, much more on things on earth.

Second. He was not obliged by acts, as acts are necessary by a moral obligation. God was under no moral obligation to man. He had done man no wrong if He had never willed man to be, much less to be holy and happy. God was not bound to any of His actions concerning man. He cannot be a debtor to many any other way than as He makes Himself a debtor of His own good pleasure. As in His promises His love moved Him to make them, and His truth binds Him to perform them, otherwise those actions would be actions of debt, and not acts of grace, contrary to the tenor of Scripture, which makes the whole work of man's salvation to flow wholly from the free grace of God.

Third. He was not obliged in respect to motives; neither in the creature, nor yet in Christ. Not in the creature, for the being of the creature (much more the faith and good works of the creature) was the effect of the decree of God, so could not be the motive of it. Nor could the Lord foresee repentance, faith, love etc., in the creature, antecedent to His own purpose in the gift of it. Neither is Christ Himself the moving cause of the Divine decree; for Christ is the effect of God's eternal love, not the cause of it. "God so loved the world that He gave His Son" (Joh 3:16). God's love gives Christ. Therefore we are said to be elected in Christ, but never for Christ; for Christ is an elect one Himself, as was shown before. Christ was first chosen, then the members. The love of God as immediately cometh from Himself to me, as to Christ; and He was foreordained to be our Head, and we to be His members. Thus we are Christ's; and Christ is God's as the effect of His love to His elect from all eternity (1Co 3:22).

2. The second argument to prove the freeness of Divine decree is taken from the testimony of the Word of God (the Bible) in which it is affirmed to be a free act, an act of grace and not of debt, an act of love and special favour, founded upon the mere good pleasure of God. "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Mt 11:26), "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Lu 12:32). It was a gracious purpose in God from all eternity (2Ti 1:9; Eph 1:5,9,11). Paul's repeated exclamation is, "the pleasure of His own will," "the counsel of His own will;" but more fully in Ro 9:13,16 doth he exemplify this truth in Jacob and Esau. "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated . . . It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Both Malachi the Prophet (Mal 1:3), and Paul the Apostle make this instance of Jacob and Esau the fullest exemplification of free election. For they lay together in the same womb, and were born at the same time (for Jacob took hold of Esau's heel), so the contrary disposal of these two doth more illustrate the free predestination of God than any other two whatsoever. Of Jacob there came a distinguished people from all the world, even a Church unto God; and of Esau there sprang forth a persecuting seed. God hath no regard to faith in the one, or of infidelity in the other. When God's oracle passed upon them, they were both in their mother's womb, conceived in sin; and, if there were any pre-eminence, Esau had it, as being the first-born. What then cast the balance? Nothing but the good pleasure of God. God will "have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth" (Ro 9:18). Now, in opposition to this carnal reason saith, "It was because God foresaw what they would be." Nay, but God loved them because He loved them (De 7:7,8). It was choosing love that He bare to them, and that is the best of the kind. That is the favour which God bears to His people: He loved them, and chose them for His own.

3. The third reason to prove the freeness of the Divine decree is: God hath in all ages given us examples of His free receiving some of mankind and rejecting others; this is plain from Scripture history. Of Adam's three sons, Cain, Abel, Seth, the eldest was rejected. Of Noah's three, Japheth, Shem and Ham, the youngest was rejected. Of Terah's three, Abraham, Nahor, Haran, the middlemost was rejected; for Nahor was an idolater, and Laban sware by Nahor's idol (compare Ge 31:53 with Jos 24:2). Now why this picking and choosing, this receiving and rejecting; eldest at one time, youngest at another time, and middlemost at a third time? What is all this but to show that neither birth nor age, nor anything foreseen or existing in the creature, can produce any claim, but that all lies in the free election of God! We can give no reason, save the good pleasure of God, why Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar (both engaged in the same warfare against Israel, the church of God) had different dispensations of Heaven upon them; the one was hardened and the other humbled; why Pharaoh's baker was hanged and his butler restored to his office again; why two men shall be in one bed, the one taken, the other left; why two women shall be grinding at one mill, the one taken, the other left; why Aaron's rod, of all twelve, only blossomed.

4. If the fruits of the Divine decree be free, then must the decree itself be free. This assumption is clear, for first, our calling is from free love. Christ freely, and of His own sovereign will, called James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, and left their father uncalled with the hired servants (Mr 1:20). "He called unto Him whom He would" (Mr 3:13). "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given" (Mt 13:11). "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true" (1Jo 5:20). "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Mt 11:26). Second, our sanctification is from free grace. Of His own will He begat us (Jas 1:18). The sanctifying grace breathes where it listeth; and the wind at sea, is as much at our command as the fresh gales of this renewing Spirit. Third, our glorification is free. Eternal life is the gift of God (Ro 6:23); He doth not sell it for foreseen faith or works, but He freely gives it. Now if all these fruits of election be free, then the election itself to these fruits must be free also. If faith be the free gift of God (Eph 2:8), then predestination to faith must of necessity be also free, for God worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will (Eph 1:11).

Christian believer, there is much comfort and establishment to be drawn from a view of the freeness of the grace of God; then:

1. Admire free grace in this decree of predestination, and cry, How is it, Lord, that Thou dost manifest Thyself and Thy love to me, and not unto the world (Joh 14:22)?

2. Thou makest not thyself to differ from others, but free grace does it for thee. Thou art a lump of clay in the hands of the potter, no better than others; yea, pressed down to hell by Adam's fall; that God should lift thee up to Heaven, be thankful.

3. Rejoice in the Lord, sing to the honour of His great name, and live to His praise and glory. Did David dance before the Lord with all his might? Did he say to Michal, "It was before the Lord, who chose me before your father, to appoint me ruler over . . . Israel; therefore will I play before the Lord" (2Sa 6:14,21)? David's appointment, at that time, was but to an earthly kingdom; thou art freely chosen to inherit an Heavenly: therefore I say rejoice.

The Fifth Property of the Divine Decree: it is DISCRIMINATING

That it is discriminating and particular, not universal or general, may be proved from the following arguments:

1. The very word used, Election, confutes the universality of it. There can be no choice made, where all are taken, and none left. That cannot be called election which is equally extended to every individual. He doth not elect that doth not prefer some before others. God did not choose all the thirty-two thousand Israelites that were with Gideon, to save Israel by, out of the hand of Midian, but only the three hundred that lapped; and these were chosen from out of the thirty and two thousand (Jud 7:3-7). God did not choose all the nations, but only Israel, to be a special people to Himself, "Thy God hath chosen thee . . . above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (De 7:6). Election must therefore be discriminating, and a making of some to differ from others.

2. Scripture expressly states that only few are chosen, though many be called (Mt 20:16). It is only a little flock (Lu 12:32), and but one of a city and two of a family that are brought to Zion (Jer 3:14). "I have chosen you out of the world," saith Christ (Joh 15:19); and the Lord calls Paul a chosen vessel unto Him (Ac 9:15; 22:14). How ill it sounds in the ears of a gospel-spirit to say that Pharaoh and Judas were elected as well as Paul and Barnabas; and that Simon Magus was elected as well as Simon Peter; all which a general election, which is the Arminian hypothesis, most necessarily asserts. How can these "reprobate silver" pieces be, in a gospel sense, termed chosen vessels (as Paul was) to know God's will, and to see the Just One (Ac 22:14)?

3. If election be general under a condition of believing, then Pilate, Caiaphas, and Judas were elected under that condition; and so God is brought in to speak after this manner: I have appointed to save Pilate, Caiaphas and Judas if they will believe in the death of Christ; but, if they believe, Christ shall not be crucified, for those are the very men appointed by My determinate counsel to put Christ to death (see Ac 2:23; 4:28). Had these men believed (and they have believed according to the Arminians' views), then God's decree concerning Christ's death would not have been absolute, but depending on a condition which those men might have fulfilled (to wit, believing in Christ's death), which had they done, they had believed in that which then never would have come to pass. Thus carnal reason bespatters Divine wisdom!

4. How can it be safely said that God ever intended the salvation of any others, but those who are, or shall be, effectually saved? This would frustrate the will of God, even His will of intention, and would be contrary to the following scriptures, "Our God . . . hath done whatsoever He hath pleased" (Ps 115:3). "I know that Thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee" (Job 42:2). And no man can resist the will of God, for He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth. And, if after all, O vain man! thou wilt still object, and say, "Why doth He yet find fault? for who hath resisted His will?" the only answer for thee is, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" (Ro 9:19). Thus it was, according to the sovereign will of Jehovah, that Jacob and Esau were discriminated the one from the other.

5. The apostle shows that there is this discriminating difference between man and man, that some are chosen to life, and therefore shall most certainly obtain it! others are refused and left in a perishing condition, which they shall certainly not escape. "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" (Ro 11:7). The difference is of God, according to the purpose of election; not as of Him that foresees faith or works, but as of Him that gives both.

We may learn from the preceding:

1. It is distinguishing love that our Potter hath made us what we are, men and women. All creatures, even toads and other obnoxious animals, were formed of the same dust with man. "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground" (Ge 2:7); "and out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast" (Ge 2:19).

2. It is the will of God that some be poor and others rich; so here, that some be vessels of honour, and others of dishonour.

3. Christ raised not all up that were dead, but Lazarus, etc., nor all that were born blind, but him mentioned in John 9. Bless God for raising thee up from thy death of sin, and healing thy blindness, and not others! Thou wert alike undeserving with them! Thou wert, thou art still, in thyself, a sinner! And if thou art taught by grace, the last accents on thy faltering tongue will be the publican's prayer. "God be merciful to me a sinner."

The Sixth and last Property of the Divine Decree: it is EXTENSIVE

The Divine decree of God's electing and predestinating love, although discriminating and particular, is, nevertheless, very extensive. "I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb . . . and cried with a loud voice, saying Salvation" (Re 7:9). There is a general decree that relates to all created beings, both animate and inanimate, celestial and terrestrial; and extends itself to every individual in the whole creation of God. For as it gave a being to all things, so it preserves them in that being while they continue in the world; and the work of Providence, which extends itself from angels to worms, succeeds the work of creation. Now although this special Divine decree of predestination extends not (as the general decree) to every individual, it is nevertheless very extensive, even to all ranks, sexes, ages, nations and generations.

1. To all ranks. To all sorts and ranks of men, to princes and peasants, to high and low, to rich and poor, to bond and free. It extends itself to kings, for among them hath God His chosen vessels - - His Davids, His Solomons, His Hezekiahs, His Mannassehs. Though the Scriptures say (1Co 1:26) "Not many mighty, not many noble, are called," yet it doth not say, not any; for God hath had some great ones to own His ways in all ages. It extends to servants also (Tit 2:9,11), for God bestows His love on those in rags as well as those in robes. The poor have the gospel preached unto them (Mt 11:5), and God is no respecter of persons.

2. To all sexes. To both sexes is the decree extended, to male and female. God hath His elect ladies. "The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth;" and "The children of thy elect sister, greet thee" (2Jo 1:13), and both male and female are one in Christ Jesus (Ga 3:28) "I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women, which laboured with me in the gospel . . . whose names are in the book of life" (Phm 4:3).

3. To all ages. To young and old, to children, and to those of riper years; yea, very infants lay in the womb of the eternal decree, before ever they came out of their mother's womb. "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations:" (Jer 1:5). John Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost, even from the womb (Lu 1:15); and it is probable David believed that his child belonged to the election of grace, and that its soul was bound up in the bundle of life; for he comforted himself thus; "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2Sa 12:23). David's going to the grave to it could yield him but little comfort.

4. To all nations. Grace is not immured within the walls of one nation only, but is extended to Jew and Gentile, to circumcision and uncircumcision, to Barbarian and Scythian, bond and free (Col 3:11), to some of every nation under Heaven (Ac 2:5). The partition wall, which was betwixt Jew and Gentile, is thrown down. Our Lord saith, "and other sheep I have which are not of this (the Jewish) fold: them also I must bring" (Joh 10:16). This predestinating love effectually calls its chosen ones from all quarters. "I have loved

thee; therefore, I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up: and to the south, Keep not back; bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth; Even everyone that is called by My name" (Isa 43:4-7).

5. To all generations. Predestinating love is like a river that runs under ground, and breaks out in certain places above the earth. To this river, this ocean of everlasting love, Moses had his eye, when of Joseph he said, "Blessed of the Lord be his land . . . for the deep that coucheth beneath" (De 33:13). So fresh veins of election breaketh forth, sometimes in one generation, and sometimes in another. It is not bound up as to time -- neither before the law, nor under the law, nor after the law; but, in every generation God hath His Church visible on the earth, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. As God is no respecter of persons, so neither is He of places, nations, or generations; but hath had, and He will have, His hidden ones to the world's end.

O believer! there is ground for much rejoicing, and strong consolation, in a view of the extensiveness of God's everlasting love.

1. If predestinating love extends itself to all degrees, then, they which are poor of wealth may be rich in faith, and a master's servant may be the Lord's freeman.

2. If to both sexes, then the weaker vessel may be a chosen vessel, and an heir of the grace of life.

3. If to all ages, then believing parents may have hope of their dying children; they may belong to the election of grace; they may be bound up in the swaddling bands of the covenant of grace; so they are not as without hope for them.

4. If to all nations, then the ends of the earth may look towards Christ (as He is lifted up on the pole of the everlasting Gospel) and be saved (Isa 45:22).

5. If to all generations, then predestinating love is an inexhaustible fountain! crying always, Is there yet any of the house of the Lord among mankind that I may shew the kindness of God unto (2Sa 9:3)?

Of Conditional Predestination

Having stated the doctrine of Divine predestination, as revealed in the Scriptures, and having, from the same source, proved that it is possessed of various distinguishing properties, such as eternal, unchangeable, absolute, free, discriminating, and extensive; I come now, secondly, to consider the Arminians' view of it, viz.: "That it is conditional, upon the foresight of faith, works, perseverance," etc.

To this I answer, that predestination cannot be conditional, upon a foresight of man's faith, works, or perseverance, etc., because of the twelve following reasons:

1. That which the Scriptures declare to be the cause and ground of our election, that, and that only, must be the cause and ground of it.

The good pleasure of God is the only cause and ground of our election, not any foresight of our faith, etc. That the Scriptures declare this, appears plain from Eph 1:5; "According to the good pleasure of His will," and from Eph 1:9 "Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure;" and, "predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." Also, from Mt 11:25,26: "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." But why so? It is "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight." Again the Scriptures fully declare the same truth in Ro 9:11-15, and Ro 11:5; and in 2Ti 1:9, our salvation and calling is stated to be, "not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." The time would fail me in enumerating more passages of Scripture, for the whole Bible as with one voice crieth aloud, election is of sovereign grace and not of works; flowing only from the absolute will and good pleasure of God.

2. That which makes election an action of debt ought not to be received; and the conditional decree doth this.

An action of grace, and an action of debt, are contradictory terms. If election be an act of grace (and the whole work of salvation hath been proved to be wholly and solely from free grace), then 'tis abominable and to be rejected to make it an act of debt. If the decree be conditional (upon foreseen faith and perseverance), then is it an act of debt and not of grace, an act of justice and not of mercy. For a decree of giving glory to believers persevering, as their reward, can be nothing else but remunerative justice.

3. That which makes God go out of Himself, in His immanent and eternal actings, ought not to be received; and the conditional decree doth so.

It makes God look upon this or that in the creature upon which the will of God is determined; thus man is the author of his own salvation, and God is not the author of it. The doctrine of the conditional decree sets God upon His watch-tower of foreknowledge to spy what men will do; whether they will believe or not, obey or not, persevere or not, and according to His observation of their actings, so He determines His will concerning them; thus the perfection both of the Divine knowledge and Divine will is with one breath denied.

4. No temporal thing can be the efficient cause of our eternal election; but faith, obedience, etc., are temporal things, the former being wrought in us, and the latter performed by us, in their appointed time.

What is this but to prefer time before eternity, and to set up a post-destination instead of a predestination?

5. That which is the fruit and effect of the Divine decree cannot be the cause of it; and faith, perseverance, etc., are but the fruits and effects of electing love.

Such as are given to Christ in the decree of election, do come to, or believe in Christ; others do not come, do not believe; and the cause assigned is, because they are not of His sheep, because they are not given to Him. "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me" (Joh 6:37). Coming to Christ is believing on Him. "Ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep" (Joh 10:26). "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Ac 13:48). We may not (according to the Arminian notion) read it, "as many as believed were

ordained unto life;" for this would be setting the cart before the horse, as if the means were ordained before the end. We are predestinated that we should be holy, not because we are holy (Eph 1:4). We are foreordained to walk in good works, not because we do so (Eph 2:10). We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ, not because we are so (Ro 8:29). It is the election that obtains faith, and not faith that obtains election (Ro 11:7). And the Apostle, in 2Ti 1:9, excludes all works (both foreseen and existing), showing that God's gracious purpose is the original of all. Yea, Paul himself was chosen that he might know the will of God, not that he was foreseen to do so (Ac 22:14); and he tells the Thessalonians, that "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2Th 2:13). We may not make that an antecedent to election which is but the consequent of it. "I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit" (Joh 15:16).

6. That which sets up an inferior cause because a superior ought not be admitted, and the conditional decree doth so.

God is the cause of causes, and the first cause of all things. There can be no being but from Him, there can be nothing before Him. "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things" (Ro 11:36). "In Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Ac 17:28). O Lord, "Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created" (Re 4:11). God is the chief efficient cause, and the ultimate end of all beings; but if any being be antecedent to the determinations of God's will, this would take away the dignity of the supreme cause, and make an act of man superior to that of God.

7. That which takes away the certainty and unchangeableness of the Divine decree ought not to be received, and the conditional decree doth so.

If anything in man move God to choose man, then the purpose of God cannot remain firm, but must depend on some contingent act in man, be it faith, works or perseverance. If it depends on our persevering in faith, it cannot be firm and certain, according to the Arminian doctrine of falling away. For the Arminian hypothesis states the decree of God after this changeable dress, viz., "I will save all if they will obey Me; but I see they will sin. I must permit them, but I will condemn them all; yet this decree of condemnation shall not be peremptory. I will send Christ to redeem all, to save all again, if they will believe; but I see they will not. I will decree to save such as I foresee will believe, and persevere in believing." Oh what a changeable picture of an unchangeable God!

8. That which makes us to choose God, before God chooses us, ought not to be received; and the conditional decree upon faith foreseen doth so.

If God does not choose us until faith is foreseen in us, then it necessarily follows that we choose God before He chooses us, and we love Him before He loves us, contrary to these scriptures, "Ye have not chose Me, but I have chosen you" (Joh 15:16). "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1Jo 4:19). But the Arminians go further still, for they say, "We must be foreseen, not only to believe, but also to persevere in believing;" that is, not only to choose God for our God, but also to continue in that choice to the last moment of our existence before we can be fit objects of God's choice or election!

9. That which taketh away the mysteriousness of the Divine decree ought to be rejected, and this doctrine of foreseen faith doth so.

It is a dangerous presumption for men to take upon themselves, with unwashed hands, to unriddle the deep mysteries of God with their carnal reason; where the great apostle stands at the gaze, crying, "O the depth, how unsearchable!" and "Who knoweth the mind of the Lord!" Had Paul been of the Arminian persuasion he would have answered, "Those are elected that are foreseen to believe and persevere!" This answer would not have been hard to understand even by the unlearned (that is, the carnal) men of the world, who "wrest the Scriptures unto their own destruction" (2Pe 3:16). But Paul was ignorant, and these men are wiser than the Holy Ghost; for he tells us that our election proceedeth from the will of the Elector, and not from anything in the elected. The sovereign will of God is the supreme rule of all righteousness; He will have "mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth" (Ro 9:18). Had foreseen faith and perseverance been the causes and conditions of election, there had been no mystery in it.

10. That election which is shadowed out to us in God's love to Jacob (both person and nation) is the election according to truth; but that election was not upon foreseen faith or works.

First, Jacob the person. He was under electing love; all foresight of faith and works being excluded. "Jacob have I loved" (Ro 9:12,13). To love Jacob is to will unto him the greatest good, even everlasting salvation, and all things which accompany the same. And this was before there was any difference between him and Esau, for they were both alike in the womb, both conceived in sin. "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger" (Ro 9:11,12).

Second, Jacob, the nation. Our Election is typified by God's election of Israel, which plainly appears not to be an election upon foresight of worthiness in Israel; "Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart . . . Understand therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people" (De 9:5,6). All works and worthiness are excluded, and the reason assigned is, "Because the Lord loved you" (De 7:8).

11. That which sets up the rotten Dagon of man's free-will, before or above the ark of God's special predestinating grace, ought to be rejected; and the conditional decree doth so.

The conditional decree is grounded upon a foresight of our wills receiving or rejecting of proposed grace; and so man's will is made the first mover and advanced above God's will. And the act of predestination is put in the will and power of the predestinated, and not in that of the Divine Predestinator. Hereby the power of ordering man's salvation is wrested (as it were) out of God's hands, and put into the hands of our free-will. Then salvation is the work of the saved, and not of the saver; and to will and to do is not of God's good pleasure (Php 2:13). Thus men wickedly think that God is such an one as themselves (Ps 50:21), wavering and fluctuating in His counsels and hanging in pendulous suspenses; yea, taking up new consultations, as dependent on the will of men, and the contingent acts flowing therefrom.

12. That which infers a succession of acts in God ought not to be admitted, and election upon foresight doth so.

God is one act, and in Him there can be no succession, for then He would not be "I AM." Foresight of faith necessarily presupposes a

foregoing decree concerning the being of that faith foreseen. For, first, God must decree faith to be; second, He foresees that faith; third, then decrees to save upon that foresight. So that this foresight necessarily comes between two decrees.

Much more might be added, such as--foreseen faith can have no place in dying infants, yet of such is the kingdom of Heaven, and their names are written in the book of life (see Re 20:12). But to sum up the whole in one sentence: A conditional decree makes a conditional God, since the decree is God Himself decreeing. Therefore it must be rejected.

"May not the Sovereign Lord on high
Dispense His favours as He will;
Choose some to life, while others die,
And yet be just and gracious still?"

Shall man reply against the Lord,
And call his Maker's ways unjust?
The thunder of whose dreadful word
Can crush a thousand worlds to dust.

But, O my soul, if truths so bright
Should dazzle and confound thy sight,
Yet still His written will obey,
And wait the great decisive day!"

Objections Against the Absolute Decree of Predestination Answered

I have stated and proved the doctrine of absolute Divine Predestination. I have also considered, and, I trust, scripturally refuted the Arminian's notion of it, that it is conditional. I shall now, thirdly, answer a few of the principal objections brought by them against this Divine absolute decree of unconditional predestination.

The Arminians deal with this doctrine as the heathen emperors did with primitive Christians in the ten first persecutions, who wrapped them up in the skins of beasts, and then exposed them to be torn to pieces by their fierce ban-dogs; so do the Arminians with this great truth. They first dress it up in an ugly shape, with their own false glosses upon it, and then they let fly at it one cynical sarcasm after another, saying, "This doctrine of absolute predestination goes to accuse and charge God with injustice, dissimulation, hypocrisy," etc. etc.

Objection 1. Of injustice, in giving to equal persons unequal things; contrary to that scripture which saith, "that God is no respecter of persons" (Ac 10:34).

Answer 1. This was objected against Paul's doctrine, "What shall we say then? is there unrighteousness (is there injustice) with God? God forbid" (Ro 9:14). And seeing the apostle brings it in as the cavil of carnal reason against God's decree, we have therefore sufficient ground to reject it. God must not lose the honour of His righteousness, because the reason of it appears not to our shallow understandings. We may not reprehend what we cannot comprehend. The justice of God must not be measured by the standard of our reason; what is this but speaking wickedly for God, and talking deceitfully for Him (Job 13:7), and plainly robbing Him of all righteousness that is not consonant with our model? The work of God, and the wisdom of God, must ever be viewed as inseparably united.

2. God is righteousness itself; and darkness may sooner come from the sun (which is the fountain and source of light) than any unrighteous act from God. God's ways are always equal, though men think otherwise of them. "Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not My way equal? are not your ways unequal?" (Eze 18:25); and though they be sometimes secret and past finding out (Ro 11:33), yet are they always just. God's will is the rule ruling; but not as regulated by man's depraved reason. God is the origin of all good; He is also the Foundation of justice and equity. God is too kind to do us harm, and too just to do us wrong.

3. Jacob and Esau were equal in the womb, yet had an unequal disposing decree concerning them; this was God's right and power to do. This the apostle demonstrates, first, from Moses' testimony, "I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee, and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy" (Ex 33:19). It is His right to do so. And, secondly, from the example of the potter, who hath power over his pots, yet less than God over His creatures. Now that which the pot cannot do with the potter, that man may not do with his Maker. But the pot (supposing it could speak) could not blame the potter of injustice in appointing equal lumps to unequal ends.

4. God's decree is not an act of injustice, but of lordship and sovereignty. Justice always presupposes debt; but God (who was perfect in Himself from all eternity) could not be a debtor to man, who had his all from God; the decree is not a matter of right and wrong, but of free favour, Grace is God's own, He may do what He will with it. "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with Mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" (Mt 20:15). If He gives grace to some and not to others, it is no wrong in Him that is not bound to give to any.

5. God is not a respecter of persons, because He doth not choose men for their works' sake. It was before Jacob and Esau had done either good or evil. He finds all alike, and nothing to cast the balance of His choice but His own mere good pleasure. God is a free agent, and under no law in giving grace.

Objection 2. Of cruelty; as if God were worse to His creatures than tigers to their young: than rat-catchers who stop up all holes, and then hunt them with their dogs, etc. etc.

Answer 1. This is charging God foolishly, seeing no act of God can be a means to damn men. Men's own acts are the cause of it; to

wit, the fulfilling their own lusts. As reprobation gives not such a grace as infallibly to make them better, so it works nothing in them by which they are made worse.

2. 'Tis a mere fallacy: as if the decree of non-election was the procuring cause of man's damnation. Sin is the cause of damnation, but reprobation is not the cause of sin. David's order to Solomon concerning Joab and Shimei was not the cause why either the one or the other came to an untimely end; but it was treason against Solomon in Joab, and running from Jerusalem in Shimei, which procured their deaths (see 1Ki 2:5,28,40,42).

3. It is a false hypothesis to suppose that God, in the decree of reprobation, doth by an effectual means intend to bring men to damnation as in the decree of election to bring others to salvation: for salvation is a favour not due any, so God may absolutely give or deny it; but damnation is a punishment, so hath relation to a fault. Means to salvation is the gift of free grace, but damnation comes of man's own voluntary sin, and is the fruit or wages of it. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Ro 6:23). It is God that fitteth Peter for salvation; but Judas fits himself for damnation.

4. Should God constrain the creature to sin, and then damn him for it, He delighteth in the destruction of His creature, contrary to Eze 13:23 and 23:11. God did not thrust Adam into his sin, as, after he had willingly sinned, He thrust him out of Paradise. Man's punishment is from God as a judge; but man's destruction is from himself as a sinner. Let it be repeated, and again repeated, that man's sin came freely from himself.

Objection 3. It is objected against the absolute decree, that it makes God guilty of dissimulation in calling upon such as are under the negative part of it to repent, etc., just as if God bid men, whose eyes He had closed, to judge of colours; or those whose feet He had bound, to rise up and walk.

Answer 1. The non-elect's not repenting is not only from want of power "No man can come to Me, except the Father . . . draw him" (Joh 6:44)]; but also from want of will, "Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life" (Joh 5:40). None are damned because they can do no better, but because they will do no better. If there were no will there would be no hell: and this will be the very hell of hells, that men have been, *felo de se*, self destroyers.

2. Man had a power in Adam. God gave him knowledge in his understanding, rectitude in his will, and purity in his affections: these are all lost by the Fall. God must not lose His authority to command because man by reason of sin hath lost his ability to obey.

3. May it not more truly be said, that it is the Arminians who charge God with folly and dissimulation, by their representing Him as disappointed in his purpose, and by their bringing Him in as speaking thus: "I do indeed earnestly desire to save you, but ye so hinder that I cannot do what I desire; I would, if ye would: therefore since I am, by you, frustrated of My intention, I will change My purpose of saving you, and My consequent will shall be determination to destroy you?" So said Vorstius the Arminian, "Things may happen that may bring God to grief, having tried all things in vain!"

4. But there is another view to be taken here. When God giveth command to spiritual acts He grants power to obey the same. So it was when Christ bade the man to stretch out the withered hand, and Lazarus to come forth out of the grave. The call and command of God is the conduit-pipe of strength and ability.

Objection 4. God's decree cannot be absolute and infallible, because it might have been frustrated by the possibility of Adam's standing.

Answer 1. Adam's standing was possible respecting himself, but not respecting God. To say that Adam might not have sinned is a categorical and simple proposition, and will hold good, Adam being considered in himself as clothed with the freedom of his will; and to say also, that it could not be but that Adam would sin is equally true, considering Adam was subordinate to the decree of God, determining what Adam would do out of the freedom of his own will.

2. As it respects man, Adam might have stood as well as fallen; for God gave not His creature a law only, but also furnished him with power sufficient to keep that law if he would; and if man had not been mutable, he had been God and not man. Man is mutable; God alone is immutable; in this He, the Lord, is distinguished from all created beings. Yet as it respects God, it was not possible man should stand; for in God's decree it was certain that man, being left to the mutability of his own will (upon Satan's tempting and God's permitting), would voluntarily incline to evil. Therefore Adam sinned freely in respect of himself, but necessarily in respect of God. He acted as freely therein as if there had been no decree, and yet as infallibly as if there had been no liberty. God's decree took not away man's liberty; man in the Fall, while fulfilling the decree of God, yet freely exercised the proper motions of his will.

3. Thus then God, by decreeing Adam's sin, did not subtract from Adam any grace that he had; for He decreed that he should sin voluntarily. He diminished not that power with which he was endued, only He superadded not that grace by which Adam would infallibly not have fallen; which grace was no way due to man, neither was God bound to bestow it on him. So that Adam might stand, in respect of himself; yet certainly fall, in respect of God. The Jews might have broken Christ's bones, in respect of their own free-will in such actions, yet was it not possible they should do so; for "A bone of Him shall not be broken" (Joh 19:36). It was possible, in a sense, that Christ should be delivered from His passion by legions of angels (Mt 26:53), "But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Mt 26:54). It was possible, in respect of the thing, that God might have pardoned sinners without a Christ; but impossible, inasmuch as God had decreed Christ to be the ransom. To argue on the Arminian hypothesis of free-will, 'tis possible none may be saved or none lost; and then either Heaven or hell would be superfluous.

Objection 5. The predestinarians cannot agree about stating their decree; some stating it before the Fall, as the supra-lapsarians; and others after the Fall, as the sub-lapsarians.

Answer 1. The Arminians, by the law of retaliation, may be called sub- mortuarians, for their holding no full election till men die; and post-destinarians, for placing the eternal decree behind the race of man's life. Surely when believers die they are the subjects of glorification, not of election. Christ should have said (upon this hypothesis) to the penitent thief, "This day thou shalt be fully elected," not, "Thou shalt be with me in Paradise." And may they not also be styled re-lapsarians, for saying that the elect may totally and finally fall away; and that he who is a child of God today may be a child of the devil tomorrow?

2. Those notions of sub and supra are but human conceptions of the order of the Divine decree, which so far transcends our understanding, that our weak capacities cannot comprehend it but after the manner of men. Those several states of man, before and after the Fall, are not in the Divine understanding as they are in ours, by a succession of acts, one after another; but God by one single act orders all things; and the Divine idea in the decree is a representative of all those states at once. They are not sub-ordinanda but co-ordinanda; not this after that, but altogether in one instant of eternity.

Objection 6. Absolute election makes men remiss in duty; saying, "What need or use is there of good works? Let me live as I list; if I am elected to salvation I shall certainly be saved."

Answer 1. God's decree establishes means; it doth not only ordain the end, but the means to that end; and the one is never separated from the other. God decrees that the earth shall be fruitful; this doth not exclude, but includes, that the sun must shine upon it, showers must water it, and the husbandman must till it, as his God instructs him (Isa 28:26). God decrees that fifteen years shall be added to Hezekiah's life; this made him neither careless of his health nor negligent of his food; he said not, "Though I run into fire, or into the water, or drink poison, I shall nevertheless live so long;" but natural providence, in the due use of means, co-wrought so as to bring him on to that period of time pre-ordained for him. Man's industry is subservient to God's decree; it is called, "the life of thine hand" (Isa 57:10). We may not tempt the Lord our God.

2. The golden chain has so linked the means to the end, and sanctification in order to salvation, that God doth infallibly stir up the elect to the use of the means, as well as bring them to the end by the means. "Brethren beloved of the Lord, God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth" (2Th 2:13). "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them ... Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations" (Eze 36:25-31). Those in whom the Lord hath put His spirit, let them live as they list, and I am very sure they will live godly lives.

3. The Arminian eternal prescience infers as absolute a certainty, and necessity of events, as our predestination doth; for things must be foreordained to be before they can be foreseen that they shall be. Men may argue thus from their ground, "If I be eternally foreseen to believe, I shall believe and be saved." And yet on the contrary they teach men to say, "I can repent when I will; I may be elected whenever I please, though I at present am living in lewdness, for I have a free-will to repent even on my deathbed, so I may be saved if I think proper." This is the doctrine that will make men remiss in duty! But, for an elect soul, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, to read the heart of his covenant God towards him as loving him everlastingly, absolutely, and peculiarly; and, in consequence of His everlasting unchangeable love, bestowing on him, and giving for him, His greatest, His best gift, even Jesus Christ; let him live as he listeth, this will be his language, aye and his practice also, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." I love Thee, because Thou hast first loved me; I am constrained thereto by the all-powerful influences of Thy grace; this fleeting world can now afford nothing satisfactory to me. I shall never be satisfied till I am absent from the body and present with the Lord, till I awake with Thy likeness (Php 1:21; 1Jo 4:19; 2Co 5:14,15; Ps 17:15.)

Objection 7. The doctrine of absolute reprobation makes men desperate; "Let me do what I can, if I am to be damned I shall be damned: I am under a fatal necessity."

Answer 1. This is to suck poison out of a sweet flower; to dash against the Rock of ages; to stumble at the Word, whereunto they were appointed (1Pe 2:8). Why hath God ordered all things by an absolute decree for ever? It is "that men should fear before Him" (Ec 3:14). God acts freely, as the first cause; and man freely, as the second; in concurrence and not by constraint.

2. This objection is well answered in the 17th Article of the Church of England: "For curious and carnal persons taking the spirit of Christ to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, by which the devil doth thrust them either into desperation or into wretchedness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation."

3. No man may judge himself a reprobate in this life, and so grow desperate; for final disobedience (the only infallible evidence of reprobation) cannot be discovered till death. We are not to question the secret will of God but to pay attention to His revealed will.

4. The Arminian doctrine God foresaw what good courses I would take of my free-will, so did elect me] is miserable comfort to one whose heart is privy to myriads of departures from God. It was well said by the Psalmist, "Who can understand his errors?" Who can tell how oft he offendeth?" "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults" (Ps 19:12).

To tell men (as Arminians do) that they may be justified and sanctified, and God's children, all but glorification; and yet, after this, may become reprobates, and be damned in the end, is desperate doctrine indeed. Truly it is theirs which is the desperate doctrine; whereas our doctrine is only liable to false inferences from carnal persons -- from such persons as drew false conclusions from our Lord's words, and said, "Who then can be saved?" (Lu 18:26). Such inferences are not fairly deduced, but corrupt consequences drawn from good premises.

"God's ways are just, His counsels wise,
No darkness can prevent His eyes;
No thought can fly, nor thing can move,
Unknown to Him that sits above.

He in the thickest darkness dwells,
Performs His work, the cause conceals,
But though His methods are unknown,
Judgment and Truth support His throne.

In Heaven, and earth, and air, and seas,
He executes His firm decrees;
And by His saints it stands confess'd,
That what He does is ever best.

Wait then, my soul, submissive wait,
Prostrate before His awful seat,
And, midst the terrors of His rod,
Trust in a wise and gracious God."

CHAPTER II

OF UNIVERSAL REDEMPTION

Universal redemption, or, that Christ died for all men, cannot be a Gospel truth, because of the following arguments and reasons.

1. God the Father's election, God the Son's redemption, and God the Holy Ghost's sanctification, must all be of equal extent and latitude; but universal redemption, in the Arminian sense of it, makes these unequal.

This is clear; for as the Father, Word, and Spirit are One in essence, so are they One in willing, working, and witnessing the redemption of sinners. As there are Three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; so there are Three which bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; "and these Three agree in one" (1Jo 5:6,8). Whom the Father elects, the Son redeems, and the Holy Ghost sanctifies. If then there be a universal redemption there must be a universal election, and a universal sanctification also, and so, by consequence, a universal salvation. That the Son redeems no more than the Father elects is evident from two scriptures. The first is Joh 5:23, which declares the Son must be honoured as equal with the Father; but, to say that the Son redeemed all, and the Father elected but few, is to give greater honour to the One than to the Other, and to make an inequality in Their operations. The second scripture is Joh 17:9,10: "All Thine are Mine and all Mine are Thine," etc. They were the Father's by electing love, and they became the Son's by gift and redemption: "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me" (Joh 17:6). Christ redeems only those whom the Father gave unto Him. Hence God's "book of life" wherein the number of the elect is recorded, is called also the "Lamb's book of life;" intimating that the number of those elected by the Father is commensurate with those redeemed by the Son. That Christ redeems no greater number than the Spirit sanctifies is evident from 1Jo 5:6,7; there must be water to sanctify where there is blood to redeem. Christ's oblation is not of larger extent than the Spirit's operation. Thus it is most apparent that all the three Persons in the Trinity have one object and one design of love. They are equal in essence, equal in honour, and equal in operation.

2. The benefits of Christ's death and resurrection are of equal extent in their objects; but the benefit of Christ's resurrection is not extended to all.

That the benefit of Christ's resurrection is not extended to all and everyone alike, but is peculiar to believers, is acknowledged even by the Arminians. That the death and resurrection of Christ are of equal extent in their objects is evident from Ro 8:33,34 (they are both put together), "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect," for whom Christ died? Who can condemn those for whom Christ was raised? Those for whom Christ died and rose again cannot be condemned. "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Ro 4:25). Those that have the fruit of Christ's battle have the fruit of His victory also; but this cannot be said of all men, for on some the wrath of God abideth (Joh 3:36).

3. The benefit of Christ's death and intercession are of equal extent in their objects; but Christ intercedes not for all.

This is expressly declared in Scripture: "I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine" (Joh 17:9). "They are not of the world" (Joh 17:14). Christ's intercession is "not for the world" at large, but only for those whom His Father hath given Him; and reason confirms this, for if Christ interceded for Judas, Pilate, etc., then He would have had a repulse, and was not always heard of the Father; contrary to Joh 11:42. Again, Christ is a High Priest, and the two parts of His priestly office, oblation and presentation, cannot be separated: and they which have a part in the former have part in the latter also. For the presentation doth necessarily imply the oblation, and gives a perpetual force thereto in the sight of God (Heb 9:12). Christ must intercede on the behalf of those whom He hath reconciled to God by His death; and His intercession is a personal presenting of Himself to His Father on behalf of those whom He personated on the Cross. We cannot say that there be some for whom Christ offered Himself upon earth but doth not intercede for in Heaven; this would make Christ but a half-priest to some, and therefore not a faithful High Priest, contrary to sundry scriptures, Isa 53:11,12; 1Jo 2:1,2; Heb 9:11,12, and Heb 10:19-21.

4. Those for whom Christ died have Christ for their surety; but all have not Christ for a surety.

All are sinners: and every sinner must die, either in himself or his Surety, for "the wages of sin is death." And the suretyship of Christ consists of this, that He died for us (Ro 6:23). He was "made a curse for us," that is, in our stead (Ga 3:13; 2Co 5:21). Judah was surety for Benjamin's safety (Ge 44:32), and Christ is the surety of the new covenant (Heb 7:22); He took upon Him our sins in His death (Isa 53:4-8; 1Pe 2:24). If Christ was a surety for all, then He offered up a satisfaction for all, in becoming sin, and bearing the curse and wrath of God in their stead. But this is not done for all; for Christ knows not workers of iniquity, and of them He says, "I never knew you" (Mt 7:23); yet He knows His sheep, and He laid down His life for them (Joh 10:11-15).

5. If the covenant of grace be not to all, then Christ died not for all.

Christ's blood is called "the blood of the covenant" (Heb 9:20), and "the blood of the New Testament" (Mt 26:28). That the covenant of grace is not extended to all is evident, for it is made with the house of Israel only. "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days; saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jer 31:33). The covenant is with those only in whose hearts the conditions are effectually wrought, to wit, putting God's fear therein, and writing His law in their minds, which the election only obtains. None dare say that God entered into covenant of grace with the "seed" of the serpent, but only with those whose "heel" the serpent hurts (Ge 3:15).

6. If Christ died for His sheep, His friends, and His church only, then He died not for all.

This is plain from several scriptures. "The good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep . . . (I) know My sheep, and am known of Mine . . . and I lay down My life for My sheep" (Joh 10:11-15). "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are My friends" (Joh 5:13, 14). "Feed the church, which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Ac 20:28). "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Eph 5:25). Christ died for such as were Paul and Titus, not such as were Pharaoh and Judas, who were "goats" and not "sheep" (Mt 25:33). He died to save "His people from their sins," and therefore His name was called Jesus (Mt 1:21); who are called the "redeemed of the Lord" (Ps 107:2). Now since those for whom Christ died are such as "hear His voice and follow Him," to whom He "gives eternal life" (Joh 10:27, 28), such as He sanctifies, and cleanses, and presents to Himself "without spot or wrinkle" (Eph 5:27), and such as He hath "redeemed from all iniquity, to purify them to Himself a peculiar people" (Tit 2:14), such as are His people, His chosen, His children, it cannot be intended for all unless we say that Pharaoh, Judas, etc., were of the sheep, friends, and church of Christ. It is true He died for enemies (Ro 5:10), but it was to reconcile them to God; such were the believing Romans, who being Gentiles, Christ called "other sheep," not of the Jewish fold.

7. Those for whom Christ's death was intended, to them it must be applied; but it is not applied to all, therefore it was not intended for all.

The end and design cannot be severed from the action to accomplish that end. Christ's aim being to bestow what he obtains, He obtains nothing but what He applies. He Himself speaks of some from whom the gospel was hid, and of others to whom it was revealed or made known. "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Mt 11:25). The sum total of the intercession of Christ is, that what He has obtained may be applied, (see John 17 throughout).

8. If Christ died for all, then must all be reconciled to God; but all are not reconciled.

Sin hinders reconciliation; and Christ's death is a propitiation for sin (Ro 3:25), so that all for whom Christ died must be reconciled to God; the death of Christ is the cause, and reconciliation the effect following the cause. If all be reconciled, all must be saved, and nothing can be laid to the charge of any. Take away the sin, and you acquit the sinner. But to grant such an acquittance and reconciliation to all brings in many absurdities; for upon this hypothesis it follows, 1st that Cain, Pharaoh etc., were reconciled to God by Christ's death when they were (at the time of Christ's dying) in the torments of hell, and never to be delivered therefrom. 2nd, that God damns reconciled persons. 3rd, that God takes double pay for one fault, in punishing both the Surety and the debtor. 4th, that Christ's reconciling of some is ineffectual, etc. But these things are not so; for to those for whom Christ died repentance is granted, and remission of sins (Ac 5:31); to them is given freedom from the slavery of sin, and regeneration to newness of life (Ro 6:6 Heb 2:14,15); on them is bestowed purifying grace, "purifying their hearts by faith" (Ac 15:9); they have the blood of Christ to purge their conscience from dead works, that they may serve the living God (Heb 9:14), and theirs is life eternal: "I give to them eternal life, and they shall never perish" (Joh 10:28). All these fruits are evidences of our reconciliation by Christ's death.

9. That cannot be a truth which the Scripture nowhere affirms; and it nowhere asserts that Christ died for all men, much less for every man individually; therefore it is not a truth.

It is true Christ is said to "give His life a ransom for all:" but not for all men, or for every man individually; the Scripture is the best expounder of itself, and the "all" is rendered "many in Mt 20:28, and Mr 10:45: "The Son of man came to give His life a ransom for many." "My blood is shed for many, for the remission of sins" (Mt 26:28). And it is so frequently restrained to His sheep, friends, church, believers, chosen, and such as are given to Christ, that it must mean some of all sorts; which, in equivalent terms, is clearly expressed in Re 5:9, 10: "Thou hast redeemed us out of every kindred and tongue, and people and nation." Therefore the word "all" must be taken for all the elect, all His church, all His children that the Father hath given Him, etc., not all men universally, and every man individually.

10. That which opposes the attributes of God ought not to be received; and universal redemption doth so.

First, It opposes His justice. If Christ redeemed Pharaoh and Judas, then redeemed souls are unjustly damned; this hypothesis sets the death of Christ in direct opposition to God's justice. And how could Christ die for Judas' sin when Christ's death was his very sin?

Second, It opposes His wisdom. As if God should love and hate the same person at the same time; Esau must be loved if Christ is given to die for him, yet hated, as being ordained to death from all eternity.

Third, It opposes His power. If Christ died intentionally (as to God) for all, then God's intentions are frustrated, since all are not saved. Then God is not omnipotent if crossed in His designs by the work of His own hands. And to say that freedom was obtained by Christ's death for those who are not set free is ridiculous, and making a laughing stock of religion.

The Extent of the Atonement

God imposed his wrath due unto, and Christ underwent the pains of hell for, either

1. All the sins of all men,
2. All the sins of some men, or
3. Some of the sins of all men.

In which case it may be said:

- a. That if the last be true, all men have some sins to answer for, and so none are saved.
- b. That if the second be true, then Christ, in their stead suffered for all the sins of all the elect in the whole world, and this is the truth.
- c. But if the first be the case, why are not all men free from the punishment due unto their sins?

You will say, Because of unbelief; they will not believe. But this unbelief, is it a sin or is it not? If not, why should they be unpunished for it? If it be, then Christ underwent the punishment due to it or not. If he did, why must that hinder, more than their other for which he died, from partaking of the fruit of his death? If he did not, then he did not die for all their sins.

John Owen.

(Lewis Sperry Chafer, "Systematic Theology", Vol. III. P. 198., 1957, Dallas Seminary Press, Dallas, Texas)

Objections Against Particular Redemption Answered

Objection 1. What everyone is bound to believe must be true, and it is the duty of all men to believe; therefore Christ must have died for all men.

Answer 1. Suppose we grant this position, would not the doctrine of discriminating love be thereby destroyed? Would it not be poor comfort for a distressed soul to believe that Christ died for it, no more than for Judas and all the damned in hell?

2. They to whom the Gospel never came, they who have never heard of the death of Christ, are not bound to believe that Christ died for them. What God reveals is true; but God nowhere reveals that it is His intention that Judas shall believe, or that all shall believe.

3. All have not the Gospel preached to them; and many to whom it is preached only hear the sound of it with the outward ear: they come and go in an attendance thereon as the door upon its hinges, in a way of mere formality. They are not impressed with a sight and sense of their state as sinners. They are not weary and heavy laden because of sin. The proclamation by the gospel trumpet of redemption for sin through Christ's blood is not a joyful sound to them; they know not their need of it. Evangelical repentance is the gift of free grace; faith is the gift of God. What is God's, as a gift to bestow, cannot be man's duty to perform as a condition of salvation. Those who are invited to look to Christ, to come to Him for salvation, are very minutely described: they are the weary and heavy laden with sin, the penitent, the hungry and thirsty soul, etc., etc.; these are the characters invited to come to and believe in Christ, and not all men (Mt 11:28; Isa 55:1; Mr 2:17).

Objection 2. The words "all" and "every," often used in Scripture, must be taken universally.

Answer 1. "All" and "every" must not be taken for a universal affirmative collectively, and for every man individually, in the common quoted scriptures; but distributively, as in Mt 9:35, where we are told that Christ went about healing every sickness and every disease among the people: that is, any and every kind of disease, for Christ healed not every disease individually. Also in Col 1:28, where "every" is taken distributively three times over, and must be restricted to those to whom Paul preached.

2. "All" in 1Ti 2:4, cannot be taken for every man individually, since it is not the will of God that all men in this large sense should be saved: for it is His will that some men should be damned, and that very justly, for their sins and transgressions. Unto some men it will be said, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." If God willeth all men to be saved, then all men will be saved, for "He (God) doeth according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth" (Da 4:35). God faileth not, He cannot be disappointed in His own will, for He worketh all things after the counsel of it. Again, in Heb 2:9, Jesus is said to "taste death for every man;" it is in the very next verse restricted to "sons brought to glory," and in Heb 2:11, to "sanctified" ones. 1Ti 2:6 ("who gave Himself a ransom for all") is rendered in the parallel text in Tit 2:14, "who gave Himself for us." Now, who are the persons called "us" in this text? Are they not particularized as "redeemed from all iniquity, purified and made a peculiar people?" For "all" of this description Christ gave Himself a ransom, and for none else.

The prophet David saith, "All men are liars;" take the word strictly, and he must be a liar that saith so.

Objection 3. In Joh 3:16, and in 1Jo 2:2, it is declared that God gave Christ for the "world," and for the sins of the "whole world;" which must be taken literally.

Answer 1. The word "world" is of various significations. A decree went out that "all the world should be taxed" (Lu 2:1), that is, the Roman empire and such countries in subjection thereto. The faith of the church of Rome was "spoken of throughout the whole world" (Ro 1:8), that is, throughout all the churches, and among all the saints in the world. When the Pharisees said to Christ, "Behold, the world is gone after Him" (Joh 12:19), by reference we find that they meant "much people" who went out of Jerusalem to meet Jesus, crying, "Hosanna" (Joh 12:12,13). The Pharisees themselves, who so said, they were not gone after Christ; therefore the whole world was not gone, they themselves not being gone. So Joh 3:16: "God so loved the world" cannot be understood of the world in a strict sense, for so birds, beasts, fishes, and all inanimate things are comprehended, which cannot have everlasting life; nor can it be the world of men, but as God is the Preserver of both man and beast (Ps 31:6). There is God's love to creatures, His love to men, and His love to good men. God's love was the cause of His sending Christ, and the word "whosoever" (in the verse) restrains this love of God to some and not to others. It must therefore be properly God's love to good men, the third love; not such as He found good, but such as He made so.

2. There is a world of believers (Re 5:9); and as manna was only for Israel, so Christ, the true manna, the Bread from Heaven, gives life to the world of believers only (Joh 6:33). Christ was believed on in the world of believers only (1Ti 3:16); the reconciled world (2Co 5:19): and "all men have not faith" (2Th 3:2). There is also the world of unbelievers. "All the world wondered after the beast. And "they worshipped the dragon" (Re 13:3,4). "The whole world lieth in wickedness" (1Jo 5:19). The believing world is a world in the world ("these are in the world," Joh 17:11); and they are taken and chosen out of the world. They are in the world, and sojourning among the inhabitants of it as strangers and pilgrims only, this not being their rest, their home; their desires being towards a better country (Heb 11:13-16). And that they are taken and chosen out of the world and given to Christ is clear from Joh 15:19: "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore, the world hateth you." Also from Joh 17:6,9: "I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world . . . I pray for them; I pray not for the world."

"Zion's garden wall'd around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground;
A little spot, enclosed by grace,
Out of the world's wide wilderness."

3. It is granted that God hath a respect for all mankind. "We trust," saith Paul, "in the living God, who is the Saviour," i.e., the Preserver, "of all men, especially of those that believe" (1Ti 4:10). "The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works" (Ps 145:9). "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mt 5:45). All this implies not eternal preservation, but only temporal providence and preservation; for the wages of sin would have been paid at the birth of it, and the world (through confusion by sin) would have fallen about Adam's ears, had not Christ been the glorious undertaker.

All that are redeemed are redeemed by Christ; but the elect only are given to Him; they alone have an interest in Him, are redeemed by Him, and they shall be glorified with Him.

4. The word "world" is sometimes in Scripture put for Gentiles in opposition to Jews, and so it is in 1Jo 2:2. John wrote to the Jews, and ministered unto the circumcision (see Ga 2:9), and he says unto them, "Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world," that is, not for the Jews only, but for the Gentiles also. The Jewish nation considered themselves as the peculiar people of God; and so they were, for to them "pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." And Christ was a Jew, "of whom concerning the flesh Christ came" (Ro 9:4,5). The Jews were always taught to appropriate the Messiah exclusively to themselves, to the utter rejection of the Gentiles, who were called "strangers," "uncircumcised," "common," "unclean," "dogs," etc. And it was unlawful for a Jew to keep company or have any dealings with a Gentile (see Mt 10:5; Mr 7:17; Ac 10:28, and Ac 11:3). The salvation of the Gentiles is in various parts of Scripture called a "mystery," "hidden mystery;" the "mystery of Christ which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men ... that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs" (Eph 3:4-6; Col 1:27). But when this mystery was revealed and made fully known by the divine mission to Paul, who was by Christ sent to preach to the Gentiles (Ac 26:17,18), when it was declared by the vision of the unclean beasts and the Lord's consequent commission to Peter (Ac 10:9-15,20), then the contentions of the circumcision ceased (Ac 11:2,3); they found "the middle wall of partition" between Jew and Gentile was "broken down;" the latter, who before were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise," being now "brought nigh by the blood of Christ." They glorified God saying, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." Jesus Christ is not only the propitiation for the sins of us Jews, but for the Gentiles also (Eph 2:11-18).

5. The foregoing is proved from Ro 11:12, where the two words, "world" and "Gentiles," are both used as signifying one and the same thing. "If the fall of them (Jews) be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?"

"It was a controversy agitated among the Jewish doctors whether, when the Messiah came, the Gentiles, the 'world' should have any benefit by Him. The majority was exceeding large on the negative of the question; only some few, as old Simeon and others, knew that He should be 'a light to lighten the Gentiles,' as well as 'the glory of His people of Israel.' The rest concluded that the most severe judgments and dreadful calamities would befall the Gentiles; yea, that they should be cast into hell, in the room of the Israelites" (Dr. John Gill).

Objection 4. Surely Christ hath as much efficacy to save as to damn (see Ro 5:17).

Answer 1. There is a difference between a necessary extension and a voluntary one. Adam's sin was extensive necessarily, but salvation by Christ is of free grace, wholly of God's pleasure, and is therefore called the "free gift" (Ro 5:15).

2. Christ is nowhere compared to Adam in the extent of His object, but only in the efficacy of His obedience. All, and everyone, are not in Christ radically, as they were in Adam; all are not given to Christ; but "as many (saith Christ) as Thou has given Me." As all the offspring of Adam fell by his sin, so all that are Christ's are saved by His death; as all that are in Adam die, so all that are in Christ are made alive (1Co 15:22).

3. That the apostle might not be misunderstood, and the word "all" in Ro 5:18 taken universally, the term of comprehension is varied in the following verse, and "all" is rendered "many." "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

Objection 5. In Ro 14:15, it is said, "destroy not him for whom Christ died." And in 2Pe 2:1, persons are described as "denying the Lord that bought them."

Answer 1. Everlasting destruction cannot be intended by the word destroy in Ro 14:15, and the context shows this; for the apostle, throughout the chapter, is exhorting the believing Romans not to contemn or condemn one another on account of things indifferent; neither to destroy the weak believer's peace of mind by doing anything (which although it be indifferent, and not evil in itself) may yet prove a stumbling-block to him. I "am persuaded," says Paul, "that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him that esteemeth anything unclean, to him it is unclean. If thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not" (by thy conduct in eating meat esteemed by thy brother unclean) the peace of mind of one of the weaklings of that flock "for which Christ died." Put not a stumbling-block, or an occasion of falling or offence in thy weak brother's way (Ro 14:13-15). "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offense" (1Co 10:31,32). To the same purport is 1 Corinthians 8 throughout.

2. The persons spoken of in 2Pe 2:1, as "denying the Lord that bought them," are described by the apostle thus, "false teachers"--hypocritical professors, tares among the wheat (Mt 13:25,38), in whom was never the root of the matter; not bought and redeemed by Christ from eternal death, but had merely escaped, or abstained, from the pollutions of the world through a theoretical knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2Pe 2:20). To answer certain purposes, they made an outward profession of the gospel, which obliged them for a space to be outwardly moral; associated with the people of God, insinuated themselves into churches, privily introduced therein damnable heresies. Many followed their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth was evil spoken of, and they made merchandise of true believers. They continued thus for a while, and then either their sheep's clothing was stripped off them, or they threw it off themselves, and returned back again into the world. They were all this while "goats" and not "sheep;" ravening wolves, not gentle lambs. And Peter closes the chapter concerning them by saying, "It is happened to them according to the true proverb. The dog is turned to its own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2Pe 2:1-3,17-22).

3. The apostle (2Pe 2:1) does not appear to be there speaking concerning the purchase of the Redeemer's blood, the name or title, Lord

(Greek, *deposes*), is nowhere else applied to Christ in the New Testament, but to the Father, as in Lu 2:29; Ac 4:24; 2Ti 2:22; and especially in Jude 4, where "the only Lord God" is distinguished from "our Lord Jesus Christ." And even though it could be proved to apply to Christ in the above text, it may be explained upon the principle that it is no unusual thing with the inspired writers to speak of things not as they actually are, but according to the profession of the party. Thus, for instance, (Mt 13:12): "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath" that is, "which he seemeth to have," as explained in Lu 8:18. Thus apostates are said to be "twice dead," which would seem to import that they had been spiritually alive, though in fact that was never the case, but merely what they professed to be.

4. So that, if we even grant the premises, it only follows that such as think themselves redeemed, or are thought so by others, may blaspheme and perish; yet this makes not all the world redeemed; this can by no means establish the doctrine of Universal Redemption.

CHAPTER III

OF FREE-WILL IN THE FALLEN STATE, AND OF EFFECTUAL VOCATION OR CONVERSION TO GOD

The Arminians not only deny election to be an eternal, peculiar, unconditional, and irreversible act of God; and assert that Christ died equally and indiscriminately for every individual of mankind; for them that perish no less than for them that are saved; but they also aver that saving grace is tendered to the acceptance of every man; which he may or may not receive, just as he pleases. That the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit in conversion is not invincible but is suspended, or depends for its efficacy on the will of man. That notwithstanding Christ's death, it was possible (in respect of free-will) that all should perish; that now, by His death for all, true grace is given to all; which they may improve, hold fast, and be saved; or despise, neglect, cast away, and be lost!

The will of man is naturally a self-determining power and principle, but hath since the Fall the strong bias of sin upon it. Freedom is radically and originally in the will, not in the understanding; and it is an essential property of it, that it cannot be compelled by any created external agent, in its own free choice. Now it is no wonder, if many mistakes arise about this great engine of the Almighty, since the soul knows not itself but by reflection; and though we know its qualities and operations, yet we know not its essence.

Man is considered in a fourfold state:

1. The state of creation, therein he had free-will either to good or evil, but was necessitated to neither.
2. The state of degeneration, wherein he is a servant to sin, and necessitated to evil.
3. The state of regeneration, wherein he is freed from the slavery and dominion of sin, and from the love of sin, though not at present, from the inbred corruptions and in being of it.
4. The state of glorification, wherein man is both freely and necessarily good, perfect, and happy. In the first estate, man is free; in the second, a slave; in the third, set free; and in the fourth, having a glorious liberty.

The controversy is concerning the second state, wherein we say, that man is under a necessity of sinning, yet free from coercion; he is free to evil, but not to good; which appears by the following arguments:

1. That there is no free-will to good in the fallen estate, is proved from the Fall itself; if man, in the Fall, lost his free-will to good, then it cannot be found in the fallen estate.

The Fall implies: The loss of that original righteousness and perfection wherein man was created. If the other faculties of the soul became depraved, and were stripped of their primitive lustre by the Fall, then must the will also be a sharer in that depravation. Now the depravity of the will is proved by considering the good it hath lost, and the evil it hath gained, through Adam's sin. The good it has lost is sixfold: power, order, stability, prudence, obedience, liberty. The evil it hath gained is a threefold rebellion: (a.) Against the counsel of the mind. (b.) Against the controls of conscience. (c.) Against the commands of God. This king of the Isle of Man (the will), when he come first out of God's mint, was a curious silver-piece, and shone most gloriously; but now, being fallen among thieves, is robbed of all, hath ashes for beauty, and is a tyrant upon a dunghill; yea, is free from righteousness, but a very slave to sin (Ro 6:17-20). Before the Fall, the will had liberty both to good or evil, to do or not to do; but since the Fall, the will is evil, only evil, and continually evil (Ge 6:5). The whole heart now is evil extensively, only evil intensively, and continually evil protensively.

2. If conversion be a new creation, then fallen man hath not a free-will to good.

A convert is called a "new creature," or a "new creation" in Ga 6:15, and 2Co 5:17. Creation is a production of something out of nothing; but if there be a free-will to do good in man before conversion, then is there something of its own nature spiritually good in unconverted man towards the work of conversion; so can it not be called a new creature. Sure I am every experienced soul finds the contrary in that work; the whole frame is out of frame in the unconverted state and man is a confused chaos, a vast emptiness, when this creating power comes upon him. Yea, a greater power is required to recreate this little world than at first to create the greater; for in this, though there be no pre-existing good matter, yet is there resisting evil matter. The creation of the great world was the work of God's Word (Ps 33:6); of His fingers (Ps 8:3); or of His hands (Ps 102:25). But to restore (the little world) man, requires God's arm (Lu 1:51); nay, Christ set His sides to it (Lu 22:44); it cost Him tears and agony and blood. New qualities and operations are created in us; the will to will well, and the power to do well, are ascribed to this creating almighty power in the effectual conversion of souls to God. "It is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Php 2:13).

3. If conversion be a new-begetting, or generation, then fallen man hath no free-will to good.

Generation is the motion to a being, and a proceeding into a being; this presupposes that there is no being before; for we are not, we are nothing before we be begotten; as it holds true in generation, so in regeneration: "Of His own will begat He us" (Jas 1:18). It is not said that God begat us of our wills (yet this should be said were there in us a free-will to good) but of God's will; and till then we are not (1Co 1:28).

Unconverted men are nothing creatures. (a.) A natural nothing; for what is the great womb whence all things come but nothing? (b.) A moral nothing; we are morally worse than nothing, that is miserable; "Man is vanity," or as in Hebrew, Adam is Abel, that is, vanity (Ps 39:5); "and a lie" (Ps 62:9). "The heart of the wicked is little worth" (Pr 10:20); neither for use nor service; as a shadow is not

useful for war, nor a statue for prayer, so fallen man is unfit for the service of God, for his best actions are sin. All this shows we are nothing, and have not a free-will to good, till begotten of God.

4. If conversion be a new birth, then fallen man hath not a free-will to good.

We cannot have a birth of ourselves; a babe cannot be born of itself; nothing can have its original from itself, for it would then be before and after itself; it would be and would not be, at the same time. Thus are we taught to look up above ourselves for our new birth. "Except a man be born again," or from above (Joh 3:3). We are born, not of the flesh, "but of the Spirit" (Joh 3:6). Our first birth is of the earth, earthy; our second birth is from the Lord, Heavenly; "Born of God" (1Jo 3:9).

5. If conversion be a quickening of one that is dead in sin, then fallen man hath no free-will to good.

This is proved from Eph 2:1: "You hath He quickened who were dead" etc. He doth not say half dead, as the man was that fell among thieves (Lu 10:30); but wholly dead, as to spiritual life. There is no manner of good in us (Ro 7:18). And "we are not sufficient of ourselves to think" a good thought till Christ quickens us (2Co 3:5). "Without Him we can do nothing" (Joh 15:5). From Him is our fruit found (Ho 14:8); both the bud of good desires, the blossom of good purposes, and the fruit of good actions. Aaron's rod (a dry stick without a root) is a fit emblem; it budded, blossomed, and brought forth almonds; this was not done by any inward principle or power of nature, but it was solely and wholly the work of God. So Ezekiel's dry bones were made to live; nothing of that life was from themselves, but all from God. Thus it is in this spiritual life; we can contribute nothing by which to dispose ourselves to will that which is truly good; we cannot so much as call Christ Lord, but by the Spirit (1Co 12:3). If there be no life, but through union with Christ, then till we be engrafted into that blessed and bleeding vine we cannot bring forth fruit unto God. And it is not any natural power or principle in us that can engraft us into Christ, for faith is the engrafting grace, and that is "the gift of God" (Eph 2:8), the grace by which the just live (Hab 2:4), and by which Christ dwells in our hearts (Eph 3:17). Till then we are dead, and have no free-will to good.

6. If regeneration, or recovery from the state of degeneration, be a resurrection, then fallen man hath no free-will to good.

That regeneration is a resurrection is manifest from the following scriptures: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (Joh 5:25). "When we were dead in sins, (He) hath quickened us together with Christ" and "hath raised us up" etc. (Eph 2:5,6). It requires as much power to raise, quicken, and make alive a sinner dead in trespasses and sins, as to raise Christ from the dead (Eph 1:19,20). To raise up Christ, and to work faith in us, requires "the exceeding greatness of His power" (Eph 1:19). Here are three gradations: power, greatness of power, and as if that were too little, the apostle adds, "according to the working of His mighty power." The original words imply not only a working, but an effectual force in working; such strength as in the arms of valiant men who can do great exploits. Nay more, it is beyond all this, it implies a power that can do all things, an omnipotent power. Surely, had there been an internal principle in us toward this great work, or any free-will in us to good, Paul would not have used those gradations, nor such emphatical, significant expressions. This work of regeneration would not then have required the effectual, forcible power of the valiant arm of God; even such a power as raised up Christ from the dead, by which He was declared to be the Son of God (Ro 1:4).

7. If moral persuasion be altogether insufficient of itself to recover man from his fallen state, then fallen man hath no free-will to do good.

If moral persuasion could recover man, then faith would be an easy work, and not require such mighty power as has just been proved. Christ did more to the raising of Lazarus than morally persuade him to come out of the grave; when Christ said, "Lazarus, come forth" (Joh 11:43) a mighty power went along with the command, which gave effect thereto. It is not enough to persuade a prisoner to come forth, but his chains must be struck off, and the prison doors must be opened (Ac 12:6,7,10); and man is more than a mere prisoner; he is dead in sin, so must have a quickening grace; which moral persuasion can never accomplish.

8. If Christ be All in all (Col 3:11), in matters of salvation, then man is nothing at all as to that work, and hath not in himself a free-will to good.

(a.) Christ's work is to bore the ear, which before is stopped like the deaf adder's to the voice of the charmer (Ps 58:4,5). Christ gives the understanding ear; "He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity" (Job 36:10). See Ps 40:6, and Isa 50:4, which passages, although spoken of Christ, hold good concerning His people.

(b.) Christ opens not only the ear, but the heart also (Ac 16:14). The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, not she her own heart; which she might have done had she a free-will to good. The key of the heart hangs at Christ's girdle. "He that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth" (Re 3:7). Moral persuasion will never prove effectual to open the heart of man.

(c.) Besides Christ there is no Saviour (Isa 43:11; Ho 13:4); but free-will Arminianism makes man a co-saviour with Christ; as if there was a halving of it between the grace of Christ and the will of man, and the latter dividing the spoil with the former; yea, deserving the greater share: for if Christ be only a monitor, and persuade to good, then man's own will is the principal author of its own goodness; and he makes himself to differ from others, and hath something, that he received not at conversion, of which to boast before God. "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1Co 4:7). Persuasion leaves the admonished will to its own indifferency, not changing it at all; so man becomes his own saviour, at least Christ is not the only Saviour; how then is Christ All in all?

9. If fallen man must be drawn to goodness, then hath he no free-will to good.

That moral persuasion will not bring a soul to Christ; that man cannot come himself, but must be drawn, is proved from Joh 6:44: "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." Drawing is a bringing of anything out of its course and channel by an influence from without, and not from an innate power or principle from within. In So 1:4, it is not said lead, but "draw;" in drawing there is less will and more power than in leading; and though God draws us strongly, yet He doth it sweetly. As we are drawn, we have not a free-will to good, else man fell in his understanding only, not in his will; yet are we volunteers (Ps 110:3), a willing people; not that Christ finds us so, but makes us so "in the day of His power," and when He speaks to us with a strong hand

(Isa 8:11). We are naturally haters of God, and at enmity with Him (Ro 1:30; 8:7), but the Spirit gives a new power to the soul, and then acts and influences that power to good; so draws a God-hater to love Him. This is more than a bare persuasion to a stone to be warm, for God takes away the "heart of stone," and gives a "heart of flesh" (Eze 36:26). God the Spirit gives the inclination to come, and the very power of coming to Christ; and Christ finds nothing that is good in us (Ro 7:18).

10. If the soul of man be passive in effectual calling, then is there in fallen man no free-will to good.

The spirit of grace is compared to a precious liquor that is infused; and the called and chosen of God are styled vessels of mercy. "I will pour upon the house of David . . . the spirit of grace" etc. (Zec 12:10); "the vessels of mercy prepared unto glory" (Ro 9:23). Now a vessel is a passive receiver of liquor poured into it. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" (Ro 5:5); that is, poured out and infused into God's vessels of mercy. The atmosphere is passive when it receives light, and Adam's body was passive when God inspired it with life; though it was formed and organized, yet was it lifeless and breathless (Ge 2:7). So the will of man (in respect of this first reception of grace) hath neither concurrence nor cooperation active; the Lord is alone in that work. Apart from the influences of Divine grace, it is a very hell to any to be brought from hell; though it be an hell to us to stay after God hath opened our eyes and changed our hearts. Corrupt nature neither can nor will contribute anything to destroy its own corruptions. In the first work, the will moveth not itself, but is moved by God. The will, as a creature, must obey its Creator; yet as a sinful depraved will, it obeys not willingly till "made willing" (Ps 110:3). Man, and the will of man, while in an unregenerate state, may be compared to the tied-up colt in Mr 11:2 (tied and bound with sin's chain), but when "the Lord hath need of him," and the "day of His power" is come, the sinner must then be loosed and let go.

11. To deny grace, irresistible, special grace in conversion, is abominable; and the doctrine of free-will is a denial of this.

The advocates for free-will say, "If a man improves his naturals, God is bound to give him spirituals." What is this but turning grace into debt? And to say that the reason why one believes and another does not arises from the co-operation of the free-will of him that believeth, is to deny special irresistible grace as peculiar to the elect. All which is contrary to these scriptures: Joh 6:37,45; Ro 8:14; 1Co 1:23,24; 1Jo 4:13, and very many others. God's dispensations towards His people are all of free grace. He quickens whom He will (Joh 5:21). The heart of one sinner is caused to melt as wax before the fire and receive God's seal, while the heart of another remains as immovable as marble, and as the rock that cannot be shaken; this is the work of God's gracious dispensation. "He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth" (Ro 9:18). The Spirit blows where it listeth (Joh 3:8). God may drop in grace, even with the first breathings of life, and regenerate a babe as soon as it be brought forth; as John Baptist, who was filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb (Lu 1:15). And others He may cast into the womb of the new birth when in the very act of dropping out of the world, at the eleventh, yea, at the twelfth hour, as the thief on the cross. Oh, who can order the ways of grace, and set bounds to the spirit of God in its breathings on man!

12. Free-will brings with it so many absurdities that it cannot be received.

(a.) It makes man the cause of his own salvation.

(b.) It puts grace into man's power, not man's will under the power of grace.

(c.) It robs God of the honour of making one to differ from another, and ascribes it to man.

(d.) It allows man a liberty of boasting to God, saying, "God, I thank Thee that Thou gavest me power to will (yet Thou gavest that to Judas as well as me), but I thank myself for the act of willingness, since I receive from Thee no more than Judas did."

(e.) It exempts the creature from the power of God, as if man, spider-like, could spin a thread out of his own bowels whereon to climb to Heaven.

(f.) It maketh man the cause why God willeth this or that; so God must attend on the will of man, and not be infallible in His decrees, nor working all things according to the counsel of His own will (Eph 1:11 Ps 115:3).

(g.) Then the apostle James lied in saying "every good gift" is from God (Jas 1:17); and Paul also was mistaken in Ro 9:11. He should have said, "It is of man that willeth and runneth," and not, "Of God that showeth mercy."

Objections in Favour of Free-Will Answered

Objection 1. There is a law written in the hearts of fallen mankind (Ro 2:15).

Answer 1. This is conscience bearing witness of right and wrong (see the same verse, Ro 2:15). Impotency is in the will.

2. Adam begat a son "in his own image" (Ge 5:3), not only as a man, but a sinner. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (Joh 3:6). "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one" (Job 14:4). While we are Christless we are without strength (Ro 5:6).

3. The devils have more light than men, yet are they altogether dead in sin, though they believe and tremble (Jas 2:19), and though they confess Christ (Lu 4:34; Mr 1:24). They sin freely, yet cannot avoid it, but must sin.

Objection 2. Why is man blamed for resisting the Spirit, if there is no free-will (Ac 7:51; Mt 23:37).

Answer 1. They resisted the preaching of the Gospel (which is the outward means of grace) by persecuting the ministers of it. The word "resist" in that passage of Scripture signifies a rushing against, and falling upon in a rude and hostile manner, and fitly expresses their ill-treatment of Christ and His ministers by falling upon them and putting them to death. That is the resistance here particularly designed; see also Ac 7:52. The inward work of the Spirit cannot be resisted; as the creature can neither hinder nor further his own creation, nor the dead their own resurrection, so neither can fallen man hinder or further his conversion.

2. Mt 23:37. This scripture, so common in the mouths and so frequently found in the writings of Arminians, so readily produced by them on almost every occasion against the doctrines of grace -- this scripture, taken in its context, will advantage them nothing. "How often would I have gathered," etc., "but ye would not." This gathering does not design a gathering of Jews to Christ internally, by the

Spirit and grace of God; but a gathering of them externally, to hear Him preach, so that they might be brought to an assent unto Him as the Messiah.

This reception of Christ would not have been saving faith, but it would have preserved them from that temporal ruin threatened in the following verse (Mt 23:38). This scripture therefore, as Ac 7:51, only respects a resistance to Christ's outward ministry. Jerusalem, i.e., her rulers, received Him not (Joh 7:48), therefore their house is to be desolated (Mt 23:38); the city is one thing and her children another. Here is temporal destruction threatened for neglecting temporal visitations (Lu 19:44). Nationally considered, Jerusalem would have been preserved in its peace had the people, upon the rational opportunity afforded them for receiving the Messiah, accepted Christ under that character.

Objection 3. Why doth God say, "What could I do more to My vineyard?" (Isa 5:4).

Answer 1. This is not spoken of grace, that God gives to particular men peculiarly; but of great things done for Israel as a nation (Ps 147:19-20). God dealt not so with other nations. "These words are part of a parable, representing the state and condition of the people of the Jews; and the design of it is to show the ingratitude of the Jews in the midst of many favours bestowed on them, and the patience and long-suffering of God towards them, and to vindicate His justice in their ruin as a nation" (Dr. John Gill).

2. God did enough in making man upright, and if he hath lost his uprightness, he must thank himself, and not blame God, who is not bound to restore it. Grace is the Lord's own; he giveth it to whom He will.

Objection 4. Man is a rational creature; his will cannot be determined by anything from without, it being a self-determining principle.

Answer 1. Irresistible grace takes not away that natural liberty which the will hath by creation, but the depravity of it only; knocking off its fetters, but not destroying its nature. We never enjoy our will so much as when God's will overrules ours. If man can determine his own will, and destroy the liberty of it, then much more God who is the maker of it.

2. To will is from nature, to will well is from grace; spiritual fruit must spring from a spiritual root.

"Not all the outward forms on earth,
Nor rites that God hath given,
Not will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
Can raise a soul to Heaven.

The sovereign will of God alone,
Creates us heirs of grace;
Both in the image of His Son,
A new peculiar race.

Thus quicken'd souls awake and rise
From the long sleep of death;
On Heavenly things they fix their eyes,
And praise employs their breath."

CHAPTER IV

OF FINAL PERSEVERANCE

The fifth and last point of Arminianism implies that saving grace is not an abiding principle, but that those who are loved of God, ransomed by Christ, and born again of the Spirit, may (let God wish and strive ever so much to the contrary) throw all away, and perish eternally at last.

The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints will therefore be considered in this last chapter; and the position to be defended is: That true and saving grace cannot be totally and finally lost.

For the better understanding of this I shall enquire: First, What is saving grace? Second, What is it to fall totally and finally? Third, What arguments can be assigned, or reasons given, to evidence that this special saving grace cannot be totally and finally lost?

First Inquiry. What is saving Grace?

Answer First, Negatively. It is not the grace of nature or natural grace, which is two-fold. (a.) In the pure estate. The gift of original knowledge and righteousness which was infused into the soul so soon as it had its being in pure nature. (b.) In the fallen estate. The Gentiles do by nature the things contained in the law; their conscience bearing them witness, and their thoughts accusing or excusing them, according as they do well or ill (see Ro 2:14,15).

2. Neither is it supernatural common grace, which is called supernatural, as not attainable by the power of nature or free-will; and common, because given both to the elect and non-elect. As dexterity in callings, given by the Spirit to Bezaleel and Aholiab: "I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship" etc. (Ex 31:2-6). Ministerial gifts, of which Judas was a partaker. Delight in hearing the Word, as the stony ground hearer (Mt 13:20); and Herod also, who did many things, and who heard John preach gladly (Mr 6:20). These tastes of Heavenly things are given to servants as well as to sons, and differ from saving grace in its subject, original, efficacy, property, duration, event, and final issue.

(a.) In its subject. Saving grace being peculiar to the elect only, and is no wider than election itself.

(b.) In its original. Common grace flows from Christ as a Redeemer, but not as their Redeemer; and from the Spirit of Christ assisting but not as indwelling.

(c.) In its efficacy. Common grace may qualify for a common profession only, where there is a "form of knowledge" (Ro 2:20), and a

"form of godliness" (2Ti 3:5), which doth neither renew the heart, nor raise it above a common frame, yet may do much for God (with the stony ground) and suffer much for God (with the thorny ground) and yet not be special grace "which the world cannot receive" (Joh 14:17), and which lives, revives and reigns, so that sin cannot have dominion (Ro 6:14). Gifts are but as dead graces, but graces are living gifts.

(d.) In its property or nature. Common grace is but the ornament, not the substance of a Christian; gifts, indeed, may beautify grace, but grace only sanctifies gifts, as the gold beautified the temple, but it was the temple that sanctified the gold (Mt 23:17). For the eminency of gifts, and the prevalency of sin, a form of godliness and the power of sin may dwell and consist together.

(e.) In its duration. We acknowledge common grace may wither away; it is not a gift that God repents not of, as that gift of effectual calling is (Ro 11:29). The greatest flood of spiritual gifts may decay to less than a drop, whereas the least drop of saving grace shall increase to a river. Thus the Spirit (in gifts of prowess and government) departed from Saul (1Sa 16:14), and ministerial gifts (as the right arm and right eye, Zec 11:17) may fail and be withered up.

(f.) In its event and final issue. Common grace aggravates condemnation. As a sinking ship, the more it is laden with gold the deeper it sinks; so men, the more they are laden with gifts without grace the deeper they sink into hell. As a harlot may have children but no credit or comfort from them, because they are bastards; so bastard graces, such as false hope, faith, love, etc. (if we are not one with Christ, and married to Him) never end in joy. We may bless ourselves with thoughts of embracing beautiful Rachael (as Jacob did) when in the morning of the resurrection it proves but bleary-eyed Leah.

3. And now positively, supernatural saving grace is the sanctification of the Spirit, renewing in us the image of God, and guiding and strengthening us to obedience, and in obedience even to the end. It is His almighty effectual working on the hearts of the elect, giving to them a certain continued connection of all spiritual blessings, which manages them onward even to a state of glory. "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Ro 8:30). He "hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col 1:12). The effects of it doth accompany salvation, being permanent effects; both on the soul in justification and adoption, and in the soul in calling, sanctification, and perseverance to glorification. This grace differs not from glory in kind, but only in degree; grace is glory militant, as glory is grace triumphant. Therefore it is called "the riches of His grace" (Eph 1:7), and "the riches of His glory" (Ro 9:23). This is that grace which cannot be totally and finally lost. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life" (Joh 4:14).

Second Inquiry. What is it to fall totally and finally?

Answer 1. To fall totally is to have grace altogether dead in us, both in the act and in the habit; no life either in branches, bole, or root; no seed remaining in us, neither any root of the matter.

2. Finally to fall is never to rise again, never to recover by repentance; but to die in sin unrepented of and unpardoned.

Third Inquiry. What scriptural arguments can be assigned, or reasons given, to evidence that this special saving grace cannot be totally and finally lost?

Answer The following are the arguments and reasons assigned why the chosen of God cannot totally and finally fall away from grace.

1. Argument is taken from God the Father in His electing love. If the love of the Father to His chosen ones is an unchangeable love (Jer 31:3); if with Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning, (Jas 1:17); if none can pluck out of the Father's hand (Joh 10:29), then His chosen ones cannot totally and finally fall away. Neither the force nor fraud of hell can prevail against the Father's electing love, which runs parallel with eternity. "God is love" (1Jo 4:8), the everlasting love must needs flow from an everlasting God. He looketh on His, and saith unto them, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love" and, therefore, as the effect of it, "I have drawn thee with the cords of loving kindness" (Jer 31:3). It is to be declared of and from the Lord unto the Church, that "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing" (Zep 3:17). Hence Paul, having spoken of some apostates falling away, comforts the minds of believers, saying, that their standing is firm, because of election, or rather because of electing love (2Ti 2:19). This he compares to a foundation and a seal, two things of the greatest validity and security. Believers stand as upon a stable rock, and they are placed as upon a mountain of brass, so cannot totally and finally fall; for the Father is not inconstant in his love; He doth not love to-day and hate to-morrow.

2. The second argument is taken from God the Son in His redeeming love, which is unalterable.

Thereby are all the members of Christ united unto their Head. Neither principalities nor powers shall be able to separate them from the love of God in Christ (Ro 8:38-39). And the gates of hell cannot prevail against His Church (Mt 16:18). If one member may be broken off from Christ, then all may; one having no more privilege than another in respect of their state and standing; so Christ may be supposed, upon this hypothesis, to be a head without a body or members and to have died in vain; both which are grossly absurd. Christ prayed for perseverance for His; that Peter's faith should not fail (Lu 22:32), and that His disciples should be kept from evil (Joh 17:15), yea, and all believers (Joh 17:20), and what Christ prays for, He is always heard therein (Joh 11:41,42). Christ also promises perseverance to His. "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me" (Joh 6:37). He will not utterly withdraw His mercy from them under their severest correction (Ps 89:31-33). "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loveth them unto the end" (Joh 13:1), and loses not one of them (Joh 6:39). He is a Saviour to all parts of the body (Eph 5:23). Saints are in Christ's hands (De 33:3), and it is as easy to pluck a star out of Heaven as a saint out of Christ's hands (Joh 10:28); they are all, and they shall all be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto eternal salvation. "Sanctified (set apart) by God the Father, preserved in Jesus Christ, and called" (Jude 1:1 1Pe 1:5).

3. The third argument is taken from God the Holy Ghost, in His sanctification love. If the operation of the Spirit on the hearts of believers be a sure and certain operation, then true believers cannot totally and finally fall away.

The truth of this will appear in that the Spirit's operation is compared in Scripture; (1.) To an earnest. (2.) To a seal. (3.) To a witness.

(a.) To an earnest. "God hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit" (2Co 5:5). It is the earnest penny of our salvation, not the pawn or pledge, which is to be returned again. The earnest is a part of the bargain, and the first fruits of Heaven. Now the earnest would be lost if the bargain of salvation stand not, and he that hath the earnest be not saved; and if such an one be damned, he carries the earnest of the Spirit along with him into hell, which must needs be absurd.

"But Christ's to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in Heaven."

(b.) To a seal. Faith is our seal; assurance of faith is God's seal. He that believeth hath set to his seal that God is true (Joh 3:33). "After that ye believed ye were sealed" (Eph 1:13). They first believed and then were sealed, i.e., fully assured. God honours our sealing to His truth by His sealing with His Spirit; as the earnest makes the bargain, so the seal ratifies and confirms it. And the broad seal of Heaven must needs be more unalterable than that of the Medes and Persians.

(c.) To a witness. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself" (1Jo 5:10). And there can be no exceptions taken to this witness who abides for ever in the elect, and is called the Spirit of truth (Joh 14:17), which "teacheth you all things, and is truth, and is no lie" (1Jo 2:27); even the eternal Spirit (Heb 9:14), a witness that can neither die nor lie. So that believers, whose bodies are called "the temple of the Holy Ghost" (1Co 6:19), may not become a habitation of devils. This would make Satan rejoice and insult over God (as if stronger than He) could he so dispossess Him, as he is dispossessed by Him (Lu 11:21,22).

4. The fourth argument in defense of final perseverance respects spiritual enemies. If no spiritual enemy can prevail against a true believer totally and finally, then a true believer cannot totally and finally fall away.

(a.) Satan cannot; for that wicked one cannot touch them with any of his deadly touches (1Jo 5:18), but God treads him under their feet (Ro 16:20). The seed of the serpent may nibble at the heels of the seed of the woman, but cannot mortally wound the heart; for his armour is taken away (Lu 11:21), and his works are destroyed (Heb 2:14). Christ in them, the hope of glory, is stronger than he that is in the world (1Jo 4:4).

(b.) The world cannot; for Christ gives them faith to conquer the world (1Jo 5:4), yea, He Himself has overcome the world for them (Joh 16:33). He makes them to be higher-region men, above all storms (Pr 15:24); they are made kings unto God; they have a royal spirit to live above the frown and flatteries of the world; and the world, even all sublunary things, are beneath them under their feet.

(c.) Their fleshly lusts cannot; which have not dominion over those that are under grace (Ro 6:14). Though all real Shulamites find the presence of the two armies (So 6:13), the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh (Ga 5:17), so that they cannot be as they would; yet the issue of the contest is not doubtful. A troop may for a time overcome Gad; coming upon him like bees (as David's phrase is, Ps 118:12), yet Gad shall overcome at the last (Ge 49:19). Believers are more than conquerors, even triumphers, over all their spiritual enemies, through Christ who loves them; and no created power can prevail against them (Ro 8:35-39). Then "thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ" (2Co 2:14).

5. Then nature of saintship proves final perseverance; if saintship be a service, subjection, sonship and marriage, then saints cannot fall away totally and finally.

(a.) It is a service. The service of God transcends all other services; men take a servant for a year, and an apprentice for seven years, but our Heavenly master for life. We are to serve God in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives (Lu 1:74,75). A servant of God is like the Jewish servant that was bored through the ear, in token of perpetual servitude (De 15:17). Religion is a perpetual obligation.

(b.) It is subjection. It sets up God to be our King, and our allegiance is for life; it cannot be disclaimed (Mt 19:27). Born of God by the grace of God; and, if we be born subjects into the kingdom of this gracious Lord and King, we must die His subjects; there is no alienation.

(c.) It is a sonship. And this goes beyond the two former similitudes; a servant may be at liberty when his time is expired; a subject may change his earthly sovereign by removing out of his native country; yet a son cannot change his father, and he abides in the house for ever (Joh 8:35). Now as God hath begotten us of His own will by the Spirit of regeneration; causing us to come to him with weeping, and leading us with supplications, because he is our Father (Jer 31:9), and because of the relationship subsisting between Him and us He makes known His Abba love to our souls (Ga 3:26). Therefore shall we persevere; God is our Father, and we are called the children of God.

(d.) It is a marriage state, and that is for life too (Ho 2:19; Isa 54:5; Re 19:7; Ro 7:1-4), and in this state God hates putting away (Mal 2:16).

6. In respect to the saints themselves, If the names of the saints are written in Heaven; if they are kept for Heaven, as Heaven is kept for them; and if they are compared to things that neither fade nor fall, then they cannot totally and finally fall.

(a.) Their names are written in Heaven (Php 4:3; Da 12:1). "Rejoice because your names are written in Heaven" (Lu 10:20). To be enrolled in the book of life must needs hold our perseverance, for there is no blotting or blurring of that book; Satan cannot, for it is above his reach; and God will not, for then his work would not be perfect and glorious if it admitted of blottings.

(b.) Saints are kept as in a double garrison, or as with a guard; Heaven for them, and they for Heaven; they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (1Pe 1:4,5). Christ is their Lord, keeper, and if God had intended the loss of one saint, He would not have invested Christ with all power in Heaven and earth to undertake for His children, and to save them to the very uttermost (Mt 11:27; Heb 7:25).

(c.) Saints are compared to a tree that fades not (Ps 1:3); to a cedar in Lebanon (Ps 92:12; Ho 14:5); to Mount Zion that cannot be moved but abideth for ever (Ps 125:1); and to a house built on a rock (Mt 7:24). Though they fall, God raises them up (Ps 37:24; Pr

24:16). The Lord is with them in their old age (Isa 46:4), and is their guide even unto death (Ps 48:14), so that they cannot totally and finally be lost.

7. The final perseverance of the saints may be argued, seventhly, from the unchangeableness of the covenant of grace.

That which stands upon two unchangeable persons, and ratified before an unchangeable witness, must be itself unchangeable, and the covenant of grace is so.

(a.) It stands upon two unchangeable bottoms, even the Word and oath of God. When God made promise to Abraham, He swore by Himself, He being "willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath" that "we might have a strong consolation" (Heb 6:17,18). God's Word is as gold purified, which loses nothing of its weight, though cast a thousand times into the fire. We commonly say that the bare word of an honest man is as good as a bond. How much more the Word of the God of truth that cannot lie? And this Word is confirmed with an oath, when God swears by His holiness that He will not alter the thing that is gone out of His lips.

(b.) It is made between two unchangeable persons (Mal 3:6; Heb 13:8). In this covenant there is a mutual stipulation. The Father, in covenant, gave to Christ a people (Joh 17:6; 9:12,24). The Son confederates to take man's nature upon Him in the fulness of time; and in that nature to obey, magnify, and make honourable the law, and to answer the demands of Justice in our room and stead, by shedding of His own most precious blood (Ps 40:6,7; Heb 10:5-7; Eph 5:26,27). Hence it is called the blood of the everlasting covenant (Heb 13:20).

(c.) It is ratified before an unchangeable witness, even the Holy Ghost. Indeed the Father and the Son, are their own Witnesses (Joh 5:32,36,37), yet the Holy Ghost is the Witness of that covenant, agreement and stipulation which was between them; as Christ hath a greater witness than that of man, so hath the covenant also, even the witness of the eternal Spirit. Thus the covenant is called "everlasting" (Heb 13:20; Isa 54:8,10; Jer 32:40), and "the sure mercies of David" (Isa 55:3). Sure on God's part, who cannot fail in His good will to the elect, and sure also on their part, who shall have no will to depart from God. The latter is equally covenanted for with the former; therefore though the covenant permits a fall, yet it always ensures repentance after the fall, as in David and Peter, etc. The covenant doth absolutely promise the grace of perseverance, and all things that accompany salvation to the elect, even to the end of their lives.

8. If saving grace be of a permanent nature, and not subject to corruption, then the elect cannot fall from it totally and finally.

Saving grace is called a "seed" remaining in those that are born of God (1Jo 3:9), and "incorruptible seed" (1Pe 1:23). Grace never differs from itself, though a gracious man doth from himself. Saving grace cannot be lost, though as respects its acts and operations it may not always be in exercise; but degrees and measures of grace (formerly attained to) may be lost. "Thou hast left thy first love" (Re 2:4), not the habit, neither wholly the exercise of love, but only that vigour and heat that once appeared.

9. The Israelites, who were a type of God's spiritual Israel, could not alienate their inheritance in the land of promise (Le 25:23,24; 1Ki 21:3); if this was so in the type, then must it hold true also in the anti-type.

A true Christian cannot alienate his inheritance in Heaven, for the deeds concerning this inheritance are written and sealed, and part possession is given the believer even in this life (Jer 32:40). "I will put My fear in their hearts present gracious possession that they shall not depart from Me" perseverance to glorification. Christ is able to keep the deposit committed unto Him against that day (2Ti 1:12). He is not only our goal, our near Kinsman, who has redeemed our mortgaged inheritance for us; but He is our officer in trust also, keeping Heaven for us and us for Heaven; and He abideth faithful (2Ti 2:13), both in drawing, that we should come to Him, and in holding, that we should not depart from Him. Even now He is sealed at the right hand of the Father, interceding on our behalf, and saying, "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me" (Joh 17:24).

"His powerful blood did once atone,
And now it pleads before the throne."

10. If those that fall totally and finally be not (nor ever were) true believers, then it follows that such as are true believers cannot do so.

The truth of this appears from Joh 8:31; those only are Christ's disciples which continue in His word; and such as wholly fall away have but the flashing of a temporary faith, which, like a land flood, fills the country with inundations, yet at last comes to nothing. "They went out from us because they were not of us" (1Jo 2:19). All true believers continue to the end (Heb 3:6,14); those are God's house and partakers of Christ indeed, and those only.

11. The eleventh argument is taken from the subject of prayer.

Whatsoever true believers ask of the father in the name of Christ, according to His will, shall assuredly be obtained (Joh 14:13,14; 1Jo 5:14,15); and they pray for grace of perseverance. The church is represented as coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved (So 8:5); convinced of her own weakness, she leaneth on the Strength of Israel (Ps 84:5) "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe" (Ps 119:117). "My soul cleaveth to the dust: quicken Thou me" (Ps 119:25). "I am Thine, save me" (Ps 119:94) -- cause me to persevere. These are the petitions of the believing soul, who is convinced that his strength is perfect in weakness, his wisdom is folly in the abstract, and that he is not safe from falling one moment but as supported by the arm of Omnipotence. Believers pray for perseverance, and it is said that they never seek the Lord in vain (Isa 45:19).

12. The last argument for the final perseverance of the saints is taken from the whole concurrent voice of Scripture testimony. "The word of the Lord shall stand for ever" (Isa 40:8).

Dr. Moulin and others have computed the texts of Scripture, which declare the doctrine of the saints' final perseverance, at six hundred; the twelve following may, however, suffice (merely as a sample) to establish it as a gospel truth: Ro 11:29; Joh 10:28,29; Lu 22:32; Ro 8:30,38,39; 1Jo 2:19,27; 2Co 1:21,22; Php 1:6; 2Ti 2:19; Mal 3:6; Joh 14:19; Jer 32:40; 1Pe 1:3-5.

"The Mount Zion of the Lord (Psalm 125) is immoveable. They cannot be removed from the love of God, in which they are rooted and grounded; nor from out of the covenant of grace; nor out of the hands of Christ, out of whose hands none can pluck them; nor can they be moved off Christ, the foundation on which they are laid, which is a sure and an everlasting foundation; nor out of a state of grace in which they stand; neither out of sanctification, which is connected with life everlasting; nor yet of justification, for those who have passed from death unto life shall never enter into condemnation. These, like Mount Zion, abide forever. They abide on the heart of God, and in the hands of Christ; they abide in the house of God, and among the family of His people. The Lord surrounds them with His love, encompasses them with His favours, guards them by His special providence, watches over them night and day, and keeps them by His power (as in a garrison) through faith unto salvation." (Dr. John Gill).

Now if all these things are true, as they most certainly are, then shall the whole Church finally persevere in grace, and be eternally saved.

"How oft have sin and Satan strove
To rend my soul from Thee, my God,
But everlasting is Thy love,
And Jesus seals it with His blood,
Hallelujah.

The gospel bears my spirit up;
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation of my hope,
In oaths, and promises, and blood.
Hallelujah."

Objections Against the Doctrine of Final Perseverance Answered

Objection 1. To teach that grace cannot be lost will beget looseness in professors.

Answer 1. Ah! this is but the state cry of old carnality against the doctrines of grace, viz., that they lead to licentiousness. Swine may trample pearls under their feet (Mt 7:6). Ungodly men may and do turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness (Jude 4). Head-knowledge of gospel truths and holy doctrines (the man being destitute of heart experience, and a stranger to the Spirit's work) will never bring forth fruit unto God. It is in the nature of fallen man to love sin. "He drinketh iniquity like water" (Job 15:16); and it is the work of the Spirit to convince of sin, even of its exceeding sinfulness; without this conviction, no hatred of sin, no love of holiness, whatever the outward profession may be. Satan is glad to see carnal persons professing religion; they are sure (sooner or later) to disgrace that profession, and then the doctrines of grace are charged with being the cause of it; whereas they have a direct contrary tendency, even "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Tit 2:12). The two seeds are minutely described by their fruits in 1Jo 3:8-10.

2. Grace may be considered in the being, or well-being of it. It is, first, radical and fundamental, tending to the being of a saint, as faith, hope, and love; and second, flowing from these for his well-being only, as joy of faith, confidence of hope, zeal and fervency of love; these are the lustre and radiancy of the radical principle; the beams of the sun, as those the sap and substance. The latter we may lose, and perhaps irrecoverably (Ps 51:12); not so the former. The root remains, though reins be consumed (Job 19:27,28); it is "a well of water springing up to everlasting life" (Joh 4:14 and Joh 7:38).

3. There is a Divine purpose to be holy even to the end. This is a law written in every renewed will. There is also a Divine performance or prosecution of this purpose. This is not always found alike active in a gracious heart. This ebbs and flows according to the Spirit's influence upon us. "How to perform that which is good I find not" (Ro 7:18). Our life is not hid in ourselves, but it is "hid with Christ in God" (Col 3:3), and this requires our daily dependence on His Spirit (Php 2:13, and Php 4:13). In the practical part, a partial decay may befall our judgements, as in the bewitched Galatians (Ga 3:1), and our affections may cool, as in the Ephesian Church (Re 2:4). Christ's "spouse" may be in a drowsy frame, yet her heart awakes (So 5:2). Grace may, at times, seem to be lost to a child of God when it is indeed not so. The sun may be eclipsed, yet regain his former lustre; the tree may lose all its fruit and leaves in winter, yet have fresh buddings at spring; Israel flies once, yea twice before her enemies, yet conquer they the land of promise. A troop overcomes Gad, yet Gad overcomes at last. And wherefore all this? "Because I live, ye shall live also" (Joh 14:19).

4. Although all the sins of God's people were imputed to Christ, "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa 53:6); and although the blood of Christ has cleansed, and an application of it by the Spirit continues to cleanse from all sin (Joh 1:29); yet sin still is, what it ever was, exceedingly sinful. And if one sinful thought remains unatoned for by Christ (on behalf of His people), there is evil enough in it to sink to the lowest hell. Though God doth not disinherit us for sin, neither blot us out of the book of life, yet doth He, when we sin against Him, withdraw His favour, and embitter all our comforts. He makes relations (that should be comforts) to become scourges to us (2Sa 12:11), and fill us with anguish (Ps 38:3). Surely many of the children of God have found that the evil they have smarted under for sin, after sin hath been committed, has been fully commensurate to all the pleasure found in that sin. Could David have foreseen the evil consequences of his sin (in the matter of Uriah's wife), he might have said, "A dear-bought sin thou art like to be to me." Yea, sometimes God may add apprehensions of eternal wrath for sin, without any hope of deliverance (Ps 88:6,7). As the covenant Father of His covenant children, their transgressions He visits with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes; nevertheless, His loving-kindness is not removed, neither is His faithfulness suffered to fail (Ps 89:32,33). Upon these considerations the doctrine of final perseverance begets no looseness in those who are possessors of the grace of the doctrine, whatever it may in those who are professors only.

Objection 2. It is said of some that they made shipwreck of faith (1Ti 1:19), and a falling from grace may be proved from Heb 6:5, etc.

Answer 1. It will be granted that to make shipwreck of faith, so as to blaspheme the doctrines of the Gospel which persons once professed, is to fall from the profession of the faith; but then, to fall from doctrine of the Gospel and a profession of it, and to fall from the grace and favour of God, or from the grace of faith, are very different things indeed. The reasons assigned for making shipwreck of

faith are shown in 1Jo 2:19. The stony ground hearers endure "but a while," having no root (Mt 13:21); by and by they are offended, fall away, and are said to give up, or make shipwreck of that which they never possessed but in appearance (Lu 8:18). While some are savingly enlightened by the Spirit of God to see their lost state and condition, their need of salvation by Christ and their interest therein, who shall never perish; there are others who are enlightened only into the scheme of the doctrines of the Gospel; and some of these persons to such a degree as to be able to preach them to others, and yet are themselves entirely destitute of the grace of God. When such fall away, they are no proofs nor instances of the final apostasy of real saints.

2. It is spoken also in Heb 6:5 of such as only taste, but digest not; that have their minds informed, not their hearts reformed; sanctified in profession, not in power. And the apostle was persuaded otherwise of these Hebrews to whom he wrote; he was convinced that their faith was not an historical one, but of the operation of God (Col 2:12), evidenced by their fruits, (Heb 6:9,10; 1Th 1:5).

3. Objections may be multiplied by the impugners of the doctrines of grace, and very conclusive and scriptural replies made thereto; yet, as concerns the final perseverance of true saints, of the Father's beloved sons, the Son's redeemed ones, and the Spirit's sanctified ones, as Christ once dead dies no more, so in His members the life of grace cannot die totally (Ro 6:8,9). Faith is given once to the saints; as we are born but once, so but once again. "This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing ... that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (Joh 6:39,40).

"Not as the world, the Saviour gives:
He is no fickle friend;
Whom once He loves, He never leaves,
But loves him to the end.

Though thousand snares enclose his feet,
Not one shall hold him fast;
Whatever dangers he may meet,
He shall get safe at last.

The spirit that would this truth withstand
Would pull God's temple down,
Wrest Jesus' sceptre from His hand,
And spoil Him of his crown.

Satan might then full victory boast,
The Church might wholly fall;
If one believer may be lost,
It follows, so may all.

But Christ, in every age, has prov'd,
His purchase firm and true;
If this foundation be removed,
What shall the righteous do?"

J. I. PACKER'S INTRODUCTION TO A 1958 REPRINT OF JOHN OWEN'S THE DEATH OF DEATH IN THE DEATH OF CHRIST

The Death of Death in the Death of Christ (Owen Works, X:139:148) is a polemical piece, designed to show among other things, that the doctrine of universal redemption is unscriptural and destructive of the gospel. There are many, therefore, to whom it is not likely to be of interest. Those who see no need for doctrinal exactness and have no time for theological debates which show up divisions between so-called evangelicals may well regret its reappearance. Some may find the very sound of Owen's thesis so shocking that they will refuse to read his book at all, so passionate a thing is prejudice, and so proud are we of our theological shibboleths. But it is hoped that this classic may find itself readers of a different spirit. There are signs today of a new upsurge of interest in the theology of the Bible: a new readiness to test traditions, to search the Scriptures and to think through the faith. It is to those who share this readiness that Owen's treatise is now offered, in the belief that it will help us in one of the most urgent tasks facing evangelical Christendom today - the recovery of the gospel.

This last remark may cause some raising of eyebrows, but it seems to be warranted by the facts.

There is no doubt that evangelicalism today is in a state of perplexity and unsettlement. In such matters as the practice of evangelism, the teaching of holiness, the building up of local church life, the pastor's dealing with souls and the exercise of discipline, there is evidence of widespread dissatisfaction with things as they are and or equally widespread uncertainty as to the road ahead. This is a complex phenomenon, to which many factors have contributed; but, if we go to the root of the matter, we shall find that these perplexities are all ultimately due to our having lost our grip on the biblical gospel. Without realizing it, we have during the past century bartered that gospel for a substitute product which, though it looks similar enough in points of detail, is as a whole a decidedly different thing. Hence our troubles; for the substitute product does not answer the ends for which the authentic gospel has in past days proved itself so mighty. Why?

We would suggest that the reason lies in its own character and content. It fails to make men God-centered in their thoughts and God-fearing in their hearts because this is not primarily what it is trying to do. One way of stating the difference between it and the old gospel is to say that it is too exclusively concerned to be 'helpful' to man - to bring peace, comfort, happiness, satisfaction - and too

little concerned to glorify God. The old gospel was 'helpful', too - more so, indeed, than is the new - but (so to speak) incidentally, for its first concern was always to give glory to God. It was always and essentially a proclamation of divine sovereignty in mercy and judgment, a summons to bow down and worship the mighty Lord on whom man depends for all good, both in nature and in grace. Its center of reference was unambiguously God. But in the new gospel the center of reference is man. This is just to say that the old gospel was *religious* in a way that the new gospel is not. Whereas the chief aim of the old was to teach people to worship God, the concern of the new seems limited to making them feel better. The subject of the old gospel was God and his ways with men; the subject of the new is man and the help God gives him. There is a world of difference. The whole perspective and emphasis of gospel preaching has changed.

From this change of interest has sprung a change of content, for the new gospel has in effect reformulated the biblical message in the supposed interests of 'helpfulness'. Accordingly, the themes of man's natural inability to believe, of God's free election being the ultimate cause of salvation, and of Christ dying specifically for his sheep are not preached. These doctrines, it would be said, are not 'helpful'; they would drive sinners to despair, by suggesting to them that it is not in their own power to be saved through Christ. (The possibility that such despair might be salutary is not considered: it is taken for granted that it cannot be, because it is so shattering to our self-esteem.) However this may be (and we shall say more about it later), the result of these omissions is that part of the biblical gospel is now preached as if it were the whole of that gospel; and a half-truth masquerading as the whole truth becomes a complete untruth. Thus, we appeal to men as if they all had the ability to receive Christ at any time; we speak of his redeeming work as if he had made it possible for us to save ourselves by believing; we speak of God's love as if it were no more than a general willingness to receive any who will turn and trust; and we depict the Father and the Son, not as sovereignly active in drawing sinners to themselves, but as waiting in quiet impotence 'at the door of our hearts' for us to let them in.

It is undeniable that this is how we preach; perhaps this is what we really believe. But it needs to be said with emphasis that this set of twisted half-truths is something other than the biblical gospel. The Bible is against us when we preach in this way; and the fact that such preaching has become almost standard practice among us only shows how urgent it is that we should review this matter. To recover the old, authentic, biblical gospel, and to bring our preaching and practice back into line with it, is perhaps our most pressing present need. And it is at this point that Owen's treatise on redemption can give us help.

'But wait a minute,' says someone, 'it's all very well to talk like this about the gospel; but surely what Owen is doing is defending limited atonement - one of the five points of Calvinism? When you speak of recovering the gospel, don't you mean that you just want us all to become Calvinists?'

These questions are worth considering, for they will no doubt occur to many. At the same time, however, they are questions that reflect a great deal of prejudice and ignorance. 'Defending limited atonement' - as if this was all that a Reformed theologian expounding the heart of the gospel could ever really want to do! 'You just want us all to become Calvinists' - as if Reformed theologians had no interest beyond recruiting for their party, and as if becoming a Calvinist was the last stage of theological depravity, and had nothing to do with the gospel at all! Before we answer these questions directly, we must try to remove the prejudices which underlie them by making clear what Calvinism really is; and therefore we would ask the reader to take note of the following facts, historical and theological, about Calvinism in general and the 'five points' in particular.

First, it should be observed that the 'five points of Calvinism,' so-called, are simply the Calvinistic answer to a five-point manifesto (the Remonstrance) put out by certain 'Belgic semi-Pelagians'¹ in the early seventeenth century. The theology which it contained (known to history as Arminianism) stemmed from two philosophical principles: first, that divine sovereignty is not compatible with human freedom, nor therefore with human responsibility; second, that ability limits obligation. (The charge of semi-Pelagianism was thus fully justified.) From these principles, the Arminians drew two deductions: first, that since the Bible regards faith as a free and responsible human act, it cannot be caused by God, but is exercised independently of him; second, that since the Bible regards faith as obligatory on the part of all who hear the gospel, ability to believe must be universal. Hence, they maintained, Scripture must be interpreted as teaching the following positions:

1. Man is never so completely corrupted by sin that he cannot savingly believe the gospel when it is put before him, nor is he ever so completely controlled by God that he cannot reject it.
2. God's election of those who shall be saved is prompted by his foreseeing that they will of their own accord believe.
3. Christ's death did not ensure the salvation of anyone, for it did not secure the gift of faith to anyone (there is no such gift): what it did was rather to create a possibility of salvation for everyone if they believe.
4. It rests with believers to keep themselves in a state of grace by keeping up their faith; those who fail here fall away and are lost. Thus, Arminianism made man's salvation depend ultimately on man himself, saving faith being viewed throughout as man's own work and, because his own, not God's in him.

The Synod of Dort was convened in 1618 to pronounce on this theology, and the 'five points of Calvinism' represent its counter-affirmations. They stem from a very different principle - the biblical principle that 'salvation is of the Lord';² and they may be summarized thus:

1. Fallen man in his natural state lacks all power to believe the gospel, just as he lacks all power to believe the law, despite all external inducements that may be extended to him.
2. God's election is a free, sovereign, unconditional choice of sinners, as sinners, to be redeemed by Christ, given faith, and brought to glory.
3. The redeeming work of Christ had as its end and goal the salvation of the elect.
4. The work of the Holy Spirit in bringing men to faith never fails to achieve its object.
5. Believers are kept in faith and grace by the unconquerable power of God till they come to glory. These five points are conveniently denoted by the mnemonic TULIP: Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace, Preservation of the saints.

Now, here are two coherent interpretations of the biblical gospel, which stand in evident opposition to each other. The difference between them is not primarily one of emphasis, but of content. One proclaims a God who saves; the other speaks of a God who enables man to save himself. One view presents the three great acts of the Holy Trinity for the recovering of lost mankind - election by

the Father, redemption by the Son, calling by the Spirit - as directed towards the same persons, and as securing their salvation infallibly. The other view gives each act a different reference (the objects of redemption being all mankind, of calling, all who hear the gospel, and of election, those hearers who respond), and denies that man's salvation is secured by any of them. The two theologies thus conceive the plan of salvation in quite different terms. One makes salvation depend on the work of God, the other on a work of man; one regards faith as part of God's gift of salvation, the other as man's own contribution to salvation; one gives all the glory of saving believers to God, the other divides the praise between God, who, so to speak, built the machinery of salvation, and man, who by believing operated it. Plainly, these differences are important, and the permanent value of the 'five points', as a summary of Calvinism, is that they make clear the areas in which, and the extent to which, these two conceptions are at variance.

However, it would not be correct simply to equate Calvinism with the 'five points'. Five points of our own will make this clear.

In the first place, Calvinism is something much broader than the 'five points' indicate. Calvinism is a whole world-view, stemming from a clear vision of God as the whole world's Maker and King. Calvinism is the consistent endeavor to acknowledge the Creator as the Lord, working all things after the counsel of his will. Calvinism is a theocentric way of thinking about all life under the direction and control of God's own word. Calvinism, in other words, is the theology of the Bible viewed from the perspective of the Bible - the God-centered outlook which sees the Creator as the source, and means, and end, of everything that is, both in nature and in grace. Calvinism is thus theism (belief in God as the ground of all things), religion (dependence on God as the giver of all things), and evangelicalism (trust in God through Christ for all things), all in their purest and most highly developed form. And Calvinism is a unified philosophy of history which sees the whole diversity of processes and events that take place in God's world as no more, and no less, than the outworking of his great preordained plan for his creatures and his church. The five points assert no more than God is sovereign in saving the individual, but Calvinism, as such, is concerned with the much broader assertion that he is sovereign everywhere.

Then, in the second place, the 'five points' present Calvinistic soteriology in a negative and polemical form, whereas Calvinism in itself is essentially expository, pastoral and constructive. It can define its position in terms of Scripture without any reference to Arminianism, and it does not need to be forever fighting real or imaginary Arminians in order to keep itself alive. Calvinism has no interest in negatives, as such; when Calvinists fight, they fight for positive evangelical values. The negative cast of the 'five points' is misleading chiefly with regard to the third (limited atonement, or particular redemption), which is often read with stress on the adjective and taken as indicating that Calvinists have a special interest in confining the limits of divine mercy. But in fact the purpose of this phraseology, as we shall see, is to safeguard the central affirmation of the gospel - that Christ is a redeemer who really does redeem. Similarly, the denials of an election that is conditional and of grace that is resistible are intended to safeguard the positive truth that it is God who saves. The real negations are those of Arminianism, which denies that election, redemption and calling are saving acts of God. Calvinism negates these negations order to assert the positive content of the gospel, for the positive purpose of strengthening faith and building up the church.

Thirdly, the very act of setting out Calvinistic soteriology in the form of five distinct points (a number due, as we saw, merely to the fact that there were five Arminian points for the Synod of Dort to answer) tends to obscure the organic character of Calvinistic thought on this subject. For the five points, though separately stated, are really inseparable. They hang together; you cannot reject one without rejecting them all, at least in the sense in which the Synod meant them. For of Calvinism there is really only *one* point to be made in the field soteriology: the point that *God saves sinners*. God - the Triune Jehovah, Father, Son and Spirit; three Persons working together in sovereign wisdom, power and love to achieve the salvation of a chosen people, the Father electing, the Son fulfilling the Father's will by redeeming, the Spirit executing the purpose of Father and Son by renewing. *Saves* - does everything, first to last, that is involved in bringing man from death in sin to life in glory: plans, achieves and communicates redemption, calls and keeps, justifies, sanctifies, glorifies. *Sinners* - men as God finds them, guilty, vile, helpless, powerless, blind, unable to lift a finger to do God's will or better their spiritual lot. *God saves sinners* - and the force of this confession may not be weakened by disrupting the unity of the work of the Trinity, or by dividing the achievement of salvation between God and man and making the decisive part man's own, or by soft-pedaling the sinner's inability as to allow him to share the praise of his salvation with his Savior. This is the one point of Calvinistic soteriology which the 'five points' are concerned to establish and Arminianism in all its forms to deny: namely, that sinners do not save themselves in any sense at all, but that salvation, first and last, whole and entire, past, present and future, is of the Lord, to whom be glory for ever; amen!

This leads to our fourth remark, which is this: the five-point formula obscures the depth of the difference between Calvinistic and Arminian soteriology. There seems no doubt that it seriously misleads many here. In the formula, the stress falls on the adjectives, and this naturally gives the impression that in regard to the three great saving acts of God the debate concerns the adjectives merely - that both sides agree as to what election, redemption, and the gift of internal grace are, and differ only as to the position of man in relation to them: whether the first is conditional upon faith being foreseen or not; whether the second intends the salvation of every man or not; whether the third always proves invincible or not. But this is a complete misconception. The change of adjective in each case involves changing the meaning of the noun. An election that is conditional, a redemption that is universal, an internal grace that is resistible is not the same kind of election, redemption, internal grace that Calvinism asserts. The real issue concerns, not the appropriateness of adjectives, but the definition of nouns. Both sides saw this clearly when the controversy first began, and it is important that we should see it too, for otherwise we cannot discuss the Calvinist-Arminian debate to any purpose at all. It is worth setting out the different definitions side by side.

1. God's act of election was defined by the Arminians as a resolve to receive to sonship and glory a duly qualified class of people - believers in Christ.³ This becomes a resolve to receive individual persons only in virtue of God's foreseeing the contingent fact that they will of their own accord believe. There is nothing in the decree of election to ensure that the class of believers will ever have any members; God does not determine to make any man believe. But Calvinists define election as a choice of particular undeserving persons to be saved from sin and brought to glory, and to that end to be redeemed by the death of Christ and given faith by the Spirit's effectual calling. Where the Arminian says, 'I owe my election to my faith', the Calvinist says, 'I owe my faith to my election.' Clearly, these two concepts of election are very far apart.

2. Christ's work of redemption was defined by the Arminians as the removing of an obstacle (the unsatisfied claims of justice) which stood in the way of God's offering pardon to sinners, as he desired to do, on condition that they believe. Redemption, according to

Arminianism, secured for God a right to make this offer, but did not of itself ensure that anyone would ever accept it; for faith, being a work of man's own, is not a gift that comes to him from Calvary. Christ's death created an opportunity for the exercise of saving faith, but that is all it did. Calvinists, however, define redemption as Christ's substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners, through which God was reconciled to them, their liability to punishment was for ever destroyed, and a title to eternal life was secured for them. In consequence of this, they now have in God's sight a right to the gift of faith, as the means of entry into the enjoyment of their inheritance. Calvary, in other words, not merely made possible the salvation of those for whom Christ died; it ensured that they would be brought to faith and their salvation made actual. The cross *saves*. Where the Arminian will only say; 'I could not have gained my salvation without Calvary', the Calvinist will say, 'Christ gained my salvation for me at Calvary.' The former makes the cross the *sine qua non* of salvation, the latter sees it as the actual procuring cause of salvation, and traces the source of every spiritual blessing, faith included, back to the great transaction between God and his Son carried through on Calvary's hill. Clearly, these two concepts of redemption are quite at variance.

3. The Spirit's gift of internal grace was defined by the Arminians as 'moral suasion', the bare bestowal of an understanding of God's truth. This, they granted - indeed, insisted - does not of itself ensure that anyone will ever make the response of faith. But Calvinists define this gift as not merely an enlightening, but also a regenerating work of God in men, 'taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.'⁴ Grace proves irresistible just because it destroys the disposition to resist. Where the Arminian, therefore, will be content to say, 'I decided for Christ', 'I made up my mind to be a Christian,' the Calvinist will wish to speak of his conversion in more theological fashion, to make plain whose work it really was:

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night:
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray;
I woke; the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off: my heart was free:
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.⁵

Clearly, these two notions of internal grace are sharply opposed to each other.

Now, the Calvinist contends that the Arminian idea of election, redemption and calling as acts of God which do not save cuts at the very heart of their biblical meaning; that to say in the Arminian sense that God elects believers, and Christ died for all men, and the Spirit quickens those who receive the word, is really to say that in the biblical sense God elects nobody, and Christ died for nobody, and the Spirit quickens nobody. The matter at issue in this controversy, therefore, is the meaning to be given to these biblical terms, and to some others which are also soteriologically significant, such as the love of God, the covenant of grace, and the verb 'save' itself, with its synonyms. Arminians gloss them all in terms of the principle that salvation does not directly depend on any decree or act of God, but on man's independent activity in believing. Calvinists maintain that this principle is itself unscriptural and irreligious, and that such glossing demonstrably perverts the sense of Scripture and undermines the gospel at every point where it is practiced. This, and nothing less than this, is what the Arminian controversy is about.

There is a fifth way in which the five-point formula is deficient. Its very form (a series of denials of Arminian assertions) lends color to the impression that Calvinism is a modification of Arminianism; that Arminianism has a certain primacy in order of nature, and developed Calvinism is an offshoot from it. Even when one shows this to be false as a matter of history, the suspicion remains in many minds that it is a true account of the relation of the two views themselves. For it is widely supposed that Arminianism (which, as we now see, corresponds pretty closely to the new gospel of our own day) is the result of reading the Scriptures in a 'natural', unbiased, unsophisticated way, and that Calvinism is an unnatural growth, the product less of the texts themselves than of unhallowed logic working on the texts, wresting their plain sense and upsetting their balance by forcing them into a systematic framework which they do not themselves provide.

Whatever may have been true of individual Calvinists, as a generalization about Calvinism nothing could be further from the truth than this. Certainly, Arminianism is 'natural' in one sense, in that it represents a characteristic perversion of biblical teaching by the fallen mind of man, who even in salvation cannot bear to renounce the delusion of being master of his fate and captain of his soul. This perversion appeared before in the Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism of the patristic period and the later scholasticism, and has recurred since the seventeenth century both in Roman theology and, among Protestants, in various types of rationalistic liberalism and modern evangelical teaching; and no doubt it will always be with us. As long as the fallen human mind is what it is, the Arminian way of thinking will continue to be a natural type of mistake. But is not natural in any other sense. In fact, it is Calvinism that understands the Scriptures in their natural, one would have thought inescapable, meaning; Calvinism that keeps to what they actually say; Calvinism that insists on taking seriously the biblical assertions that God saves, and that he saves those whom he has chosen to save, and that he saves them by grace without works, so that no man may boast, and that Christ is given to them as a perfect Savior, and that their whole salvation flows to them from the cross, and that the work of redeeming them was finished on the cross. It is Calvinism that gives due honor to the cross. When the Calvinist sings,

There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all;
He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good;
That we might go at last to Heaven,
Saved by His precious blood . . .

he means it. He will not gloss the italicized statements by saying that God's saving purpose in the death of his Son was a mere ineffectual wish, depending for its fulfillment on man's willingness to believe, so that for all God could do Christ might have died and none been saved at all. He insists that the Bible sees the cross as revealing God's power to save, not his impotence. Christ did not win a

hypothetical salvation for hypothetical believers, a mere possibility of salvation for any who might possibly believe, but a real salvation for his own chosen people. His precious blood really does 'save us all'; the intended effects of his self-offering do in fact follow, just because the cross was what it was. Its saving power does not depend on faith being added to it; its saving power is such that faith flows from it. The cross secured the full salvation of all for whom Christ died. 'God forbid,' therefore, 'that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.'⁶

Now the real nature of Calvinistic soteriology becomes plain. It is no artificial oddity, nor a product of overbold logic. Its central confession, that *God saves sinners*, that *Christ redeemed us by his blood* is the witness both of the Bible and of the believing heart. The Calvinist is the Christian who confesses before men in his theology just what he believes in his heart before God when he prays. He thinks and speaks at all times of the sovereign grace of God in the way that every Christian does when he pleads for the souls of others, or when he obeys the impulse of worship which rises unbidden within him, prompting him to deny himself all praise and to give all the glory of his salvation to his Savior. Calvinism is the natural theology written on the heart of the new man in Christ, whereas Arminianism is an intellectual sin of infirmity, natural only in the sense in which all such sins are natural, even to the regenerate. Calvinistic thinking is the Christian being himself on the intellectual level; Arminian thinking is the Christian failing to be himself through the weakness of the flesh. Calvinism is what the Christian church has always held and taught when its mind has not been distracted by controversy and false traditions from attending to what Scripture actually says; that is the significance of the patristic testimonies to the teaching of the 'five points', which can be quoted in abundance. (Owen appends a few on redemption; a much larger collection may be seen in John Gill's *The Cause of God and Truth*.) So that really it is most misleading to call this soteriology 'Calvinism' at all, for it is not a peculiarity of John Calvin and the divines of Dort, but a part of the revealed truth of God and the catholic Christian faith. 'Calvinism' is one of the 'odious names' by which down the centuries prejudice has been raised against it. But the thing itself is just the biblical gospel.⁷

In the light of these facts, we can now give a direct answer to the questions with which we began.

'Surely all that Owen is doing is defending limited atonement?' Not really. He is doing much more than that. Strictly speaking, the aim of Owen's book is not defensive at all, but constructive. It is a biblical and theological enquiry; its purpose is simply to make clear what Scripture actually teaches about the central subject of the gospel - the achievement of the Savior. As its title proclaims, it is 'a treatise of the redemption and reconciliation that is in the blood of Christ: with the merit thereof, and the satisfaction wrought thereby.' The question which Owen, like the Dort divines before him, is really concerned to answer is just this; what is the gospel? All agree that it is a proclamation of Christ as Redeemer, but there is a dispute as to the nature and extent of his redeeming work. Well, what saith the Scripture? What aim and accomplishment does the Bible assign to the work of Christ? This is what Owen is concerned to elucidate. It is true that he tackles the subject in a directly controversial way, and shapes his book as a polemic against the 'spreading persuasion . . . of a *general ransom*, to be paid by Christ for all; that he dies to redeem *all and every one*'.⁸ But his work is a systematic expository treatise, not a mere episodic wrangle. Owen treats the controversy as providing the occasion for a full display of the relevant biblical teaching in its own proper order and connection. As in Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, the polemics themselves are incidental and of secondary interest; their chief value lies in the way that the author uses them to further his own design and carry forward his own argument.

That argument is essentially very simple. Owen sees that the question which has occasioned his writing - the extent of the atonement - involves the further question of its nature, since if it was offered to save some who will finally perish, then it cannot have been a transaction securing the actual salvation for all for whom it was designed. But, says Owen, this is precisely the kind of transaction that the Bible says it was. The first two books of his treatise are a massive demonstration of the fact that according to Scripture the Redeemer's death actually saves his people, as it was meant to do. The third book consists of a series of sixteen arguments against the hypothesis of universal redemption, all aimed to show, on the one hand, that Scripture speaks of Christ's redeeming work as effective, which precludes its having been intended for any who perish, and, on the other, that if its intended extent had been universal, then *either* all will be saved (which Scripture denies, and the advocates of the 'general ransom' do not affirm), or *else* the Father and the Son have failed to do what they set out to do - 'which to assert,' says Owen, 'seems to us blasphemously injurious to the wisdom, power and perfection of God, as likewise derogatory to the worth and value of the death of Christ.' Owen's arguments ring a series of changes on this dilemma.⁹

Finally, in the fourth book, Owen shows with great cogency that the three classes of texts alleged to prove that Christ died for persons who will not be saved (those saying that he died for 'the world', for 'all', and those thought to envisage the perishing of those for whom he died), cannot on sound principles of exegesis be held to teach any such thing; and, further, that the theological inferences by which universal redemption is supposed to be established are really quite fallacious. The true evangelical evaluation of the claim that Christ died for every man, even those who perish, comes through at point after point in Owen's book. So far from magnifying the love and grace of God, this claim dishonors both it and him, for it reduces God's love to an impotent wish and turns the whole economy of 'saving' grace, so-called ('saving' is really a misnomer on this view), into a monumental divine failure. Also, so far from magnifying the merit and worth of Christ's death, it cheapens it, for it makes Christ die in vain. Lastly, so far from affording faith additional encouragement, it destroys the scriptural ground of assurance altogether, for it denies that the knowledge that Christ died for me (or did or does anything else for me) is a sufficient ground for inferring my eternal salvation; my salvation, on this view, depends not on what Christ did for me, but on what I subsequently do for myself.

Thus, this view takes from God's love and Christ's redemption the glory that Scripture gives them, and introduces the anti-scriptural principle of self-salvation at the point where the Bible explicitly says 'not of works, lest any man should boast'.¹⁰ You cannot have it both ways: an atonement of universal extent is a depreciated atonement. It has lost its saving power; it leaves us to save ourselves. The doctrine of the general ransom must accordingly be rejected, as Owen rejects it, as a grievous mistake. By contrast, however, the doctrine which Owen sets out, as he himself shows, is both biblical and God-honoring. It exalts Christ, for it teaches Christians to glory in his cross alone, and to draw their hope and assurance only from the death and intercession of their Savior. It is, in other words, genuinely evangelical. It is, indeed, the gospel of God and the catholic faith.

It is safe to say that no comparable exposition of the work of redemption as planned and executed by the Triune Jehovah has ever been done since Owen published his. None has been needed. Discussing this work, Andrew Thomson notes how Owen 'makes you feel when he has reached the end of his subject, that he has also exhausted it'.¹¹ That is demonstrably the case here. His interpretation of

the texts on the points of issue is sure; his power of theological construction is superb; nothing that needs discussing is omitted, and (so far as this writer can discover) no arguments for or against his position have been used since his day which he has not himself noted and dealt with. One searches his book in vain for the leaps and flights of logic by which Reformed theologians are supposed to establish their positions; all that one finds is solid, painstaking exegesis and a careful following through of biblical ways of thinking. Owen's work is a constructive, broad-based biblical analysis of the heart of the gospel, and must be taken seriously as such. It may not be written off as a piece of special pleading for a traditional shibboleth, for nobody has a right to dismiss the doctrine of the limitedness, or particularity, of atonement as a monstrosity of Calvinistic logic until he has refuted Owen's proof that it is part of the uniform biblical presentation of redemption, clearly taught in plain text after plain text. And nobody has done that yet.

'You talked about recovering the gospel,' said our questioner; 'don't you mean that you just want us all to become Calvinists?'

This question presumably concerns, not the word, but the thing. Whether we call ourselves Calvinists hardly matters; what matters is that we should understand the gospel biblically. But that, we think, does in fact mean understanding it as historic Calvinism does. The alternative is to misunderstand and distort it. We said earlier that modern evangelicalism, by and large, has ceased to preach the gospel in the old way, and we frankly admit that the new gospel, insofar as it deviates from the old, seems to us a distortion of the biblical message. And we can now see what has gone wrong. Our theological currency has been debased. Our minds have been conditioned to think of the cross as a redemption which does less than redeem, and of Christ as a Savior who does less than save, and of God's love as a weak affection which cannot keep anyone from hell without help, and of faith as the human help which God needs for this purpose. As a result, we are no longer free either to believe the biblical gospel or to preach it. We cannot believe it, because our thoughts are caught in the toils of synergism. We are haunted by the Arminian idea that if faith and unbelief are to be responsible acts, they must be independent acts; hence we are not free to believe that we are saved entirely by divine grace through a faith which is itself God's gift and flows to us from Calvary. Instead, we involve ourselves in a bewildering kind of double-think about salvation, telling ourselves one moment that it all depends on God and next moment that it all depends on us. The resultant mental muddle deprives God of much of the glory that we should give him as author and finisher of salvation, and ourselves of much of the comfort we might draw from knowing that God is for us.

And when we come to preach the gospel, our false preconceptions make us say just the opposite of what we intend. We want (rightly) to proclaim Christ as Savior; yet we end up saying that Christ, having made salvation possible, has left us to become our own saviors. It comes about in this way. We want to magnify the saving grace of God and the saving power of Christ. So we declare that God's redeeming love extends to everyone, and that Christ has died to save everyone, and we proclaim that the glory of divine mercy is to be measured by these facts. And then, in order to avoid universalism, we have to depreciate all that we were previously extolling, and to explain that, after all, nothing that God and Christ have done can save us unless we add something to it; the decisive factor which actually saves us is our own believing. What we say comes to this - that Christ saves us with our help; and what that means, when one thinks it out, is this - that we save ourselves with Christ's help. This is a hollow anticlimax. But if we start by affirming that God has a saving love for all, and Christ died a saving death for all, and yet balk at becoming universalists, there is nothing else that we can say. And let us be clear on what we have done when we have put the matter in this fashion. We have not exalted grace and the cross; we have limited the atonement far more drastically than Calvinism does, for whereas Calvinism asserts that Christ's death, as such, saves all whom it was meant to save, we have denied that Christ's death, as such, is sufficient to save any of them.¹² We have flattered impenitent sinners by assuring them that it is in their power to repent and believe, though God cannot make them do it. Perhaps we have also trivialized faith to make this assurance plausible ('it's very simple - just open your heart to the Lord . . .'). Certainly, we have effectively denied God's sovereignty, and undermined the basic conviction of true religion - that man is always in God's hands. In truth, we have lost a great deal. And it is, perhaps, no wonder that our preaching begets so little reverence and humility, and our professed converts are so self-confident and so deficient in self-knowledge and in the good works which Scripture regards as the fruit of true repentance.

It is from degenerate faith and preaching of this kind that Owen's book could set us free. If we listen to him, he will teach us both how to believe the Scripture gospel and how to preach it. For the first: he will lead us to bow down before a sovereign Savior who really saves, and to praise him for a redeeming death which made it certain that all for whom he died will come to glory. It can't be overemphasized that we have not seen the full meaning of the cross till we have seen it as the divines of Dort display it - as the center of the gospel, flanked on the one hand by total inability and unconditional election, and on the other by irresistible grace and final preservation. For the full meaning of the cross only appears when the atonement is defined in terms of these four truths. Christ died to save a certain company of helpless sinners upon whom God had set his free saving love. Christ's death ensured the calling and keeping - the present and final salvation - of all whose sins he bore. That is what Calvary meant, and means. The cross *saved*; the cross *saves*. This is the heart of true evangelical faith; as Cowper sang:

*Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more.*

This is the triumphant conviction which underlay the old gospel, as it does the whole New Testament. And this is what Owen will teach us unequivocally to believe.

Then, second, Owen could set us free, if we would hear him, to preach the biblical gospel. This assertion may sound paradoxical, for it is often imagined that those who will not preach that Christ died to save every man are left with no gospel at all. On the contrary, however, what they are left with is just the gospel of the New Testament. What does it mean to preach 'the gospel of the grace of God'? Owen only touches on this briefly and incidentally,¹³ but his comments are full of light. Preaching the gospel, he tells us, is not a matter of telling the congregation that God has set his love on each of them and Christ has died to save each of them, for these assertions, biblically understood, would imply that they will all infallibly be saved, and this cannot be known to be true. The knowledge of being the object of God's eternal love and Christ's redeeming death belongs to the individual's assurance,¹⁴ which in the nature of the case cannot precede faith's saving exercise; it is to be inferred from the fact that one has believed, not proposed as a reason why one should believe. According to Scripture, preaching the gospel is entirely a matter of proclaiming to men, as truth from God which all are bound to believe and act on, the following four facts:

1. that all men are sinners, and cannot do anything to save themselves;
2. that Jesus Christ, God's Son, is a perfect Savior for sinners, even the worst;
3. that the Father and the Son have promised that all who know themselves to be sinners and put faith in Christ as Savior shall be received into favor, and none cast out - which promise is 'a certain infallible truth, grounded upon the superabundant sufficiency of the oblation of Christ in itself, for whomsoever (fewer or more) it be intended';¹⁵
4. that God has made repentance and faith a duty, requiring of every man who hears the gospel 'a serious full recumbency and rolling of the soul upon Christ in the promise of the gospel, as an all-sufficient Savior, able to deliver and save to the utmost them that come to God by him; ready, able and willing, through the preciousness of his blood and sufficiency of his ransom, to save every soul that shall freely give up themselves unto him for that end.'¹⁶

The preacher's task, in other words, is to *display Christ*, to explain man's need of him, his sufficiency to save, and his offer of himself in the promises as Savior to all who truly turn to him; and to show as fully as he can how these truths apply to the congregation before for him. It is not for him to say, nor for his hearers to ask, for whom Christ died in particular. 'There is none called on by the gospel once to enquire after the purpose and intention of God concerning the particular object of the death of Christ, every one being fully assured that his death shall be profitable to them that believe in him and obey him.' After saving faith has been exercised, 'it lies on a believer to assure his soul, according as he find the fruit of the death of Christ in him and towards him, of the goodwill and eternal love of God to him in sending his Son to die for him in particular';¹⁷ but not before. The task to which the gospel calls him is simply to exercise faith, which he is both warranted and obliged to do by God's command and promise.

Some comments on this conception of what preaching the gospel means are in order.

First, we should observe that the old gospel of Owen contains no less full and free an offer of salvation than its modern counterpart. It presents ample grounds for faith (the sufficiency of Christ, and the promise of God), and cogent motives to faith (the sinner's need, and the Creator's command, which is also the Redeemer's invitation). The new gospel gains nothing here by asserting universal redemption. The old gospel, certainly, has no room for the cheap sentimentalizing which turns God's free mercy to sinners into a constitutional softheartedness on his part which we can take for granted; nor will it countenance the degrading presentation of Christ as the baffled Savior, balked in what he hoped to do by human unbelief; nor will it indulge in maudlin appeals to the unconverted to let Christ save them out of pity for his disappointment. The pitiable Savior and the pathetic God of modern pulpits are unknown to the old gospel. The old gospel tells men that they need God, but not that God needs them (a modern falsehood); it does not exhort them to pity Christ, but announces that Christ has pitied them, though pity was the last thing they deserved. It never loses sight of the divine majesty and sovereign power of the Christ whom it proclaims, but rejects flatly all representations of him which would obscure his free omnipotence.

Does this mean, however, that the preacher of the old gospel is inhibited or confined in offering Christ to men and inviting them to receive him? Not at all. In actual fact, just because he recognizes that divine mercy is sovereign and free, he is in a position to make far more of the offer of Christ in his preaching than is the expositor of the new gospel; for this offer is itself a far more wonderful thing on his principles than it can ever be in the eyes of those who regard love to all sinners as a necessity of God's nature, and therefore a matter of course. To think that the holy Creator, who never needed man for his happiness and might justly have banished our fallen race forever without mercy, should actually have chosen to redeem some of them! And that his own Son was willing to undergo death and descend into hell to save them! And that now from his throne he should speak to ungodly men as he does in the words of the gospel, urging upon them the command to repent and believe in the form of a compassionate invitation to pity themselves and choose life! These thoughts are the focal points round which the preaching of the old gospel revolves. It is all wonderful, just because none of it can be taken for granted.

But perhaps that most wonderful thing of all - the holiest spot in all the holy ground of gospel truth - is the free invitation which 'the Lord Christ' (as Owen loves to call him) issues repeatedly to guilty sinners to come to him and find rest for their souls. It is the glory of these invitations that it is an omnipotent King who gives them, just as it is a chief part of the glory of the enthroned Christ that he condescends still to utter them. And it is the glory of the gospel ministry that the preacher goes to men as Christ's ambassador, charged to deliver the King's invitation personally to every sinner present and to summon them all to turn and live. Owen himself enlarges on this in a passage addressed to the unconverted.

Consider the infinite condescension and love of Christ, in his invitations and calls of you to come unto him for life, deliverance, mercy, grace, peace and eternal salvation. Multitudes of these invitations and calls are recorded in the Scripture, and they are all of them filled up with those blessed encouragements which divine wisdom knows to be suited unto lost, convinced sinners. . . . In the declaration and preaching of them, Jesus Christ yet stands before sinners, calling, inviting, encouraging them to come unto him.

This is somewhat of the word which he now speaks unto you: Why will ye die? Why will ye perish? Why will ye not have compassion on your own souls? Can your hearts endure, or can your hands be strong, in the day of wrath that is approaching. . . . Look unto me, and be saved; come unto me, and I will ease you of all sins, sorrows, fears, burdens, and give rest unto your souls. Come, I entreat you; lay aside all procrastinations, all delays, put me off no more; eternity lies at the door . . . do not so hate me as that you will rather perish than accept of deliverance by me.

These and the like things doth the Lord Christ continually declare, proclaim, plead and urge upon the souls of sinners. . . . He doth it in the preaching of the word, as if he were present with you, stood amongst you, and spake personally to every one of you. . . . He hath appointed the ministers of the gospel to appear before you, and to deal with you in his stead, avowing as his own the invitations which are given you in his name (2 Cor 1:19, 20).¹⁸

These invitations are *universal*; Christ addresses them to sinners, as such, and every man, as he believes God to be true, is bound to treat them as God's words to him personally and to accept the universal assurance which accompanies them, that all who come to Christ will be received. Again, these invitations are *real*; Christ genuinely offers himself to all who hear the gospel, and is in truth a perfect Savior to all who trust him. The question of the extent of the atonement does not arise in evangelistic preaching; the message to be delivered is simply this - that Christ Jesus, the sovereign Lord, who died for sinners, now invites sinners freely to himself. God commands all to repent and believe; Christ promises life and peace to all who do so. Furthermore, these invitations are *marvelously gracious*; men despise and reject them, and are never in any case worthy of them, and yet Christ still issues them. He need not, but he

does. 'Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest' remains his word to the world, never canceled, always to be preached. He whose death has ensured the salvation of all his people is to be proclaimed everywhere as a perfect Savior, and all men invited and urged to believe on him, whoever they are, whatever they have been. Upon these three insights the evangelism of the old gospel is based.

It is a very ill-informed supposition that evangelistic preaching which proceeds on these principles must be anaemic and halfhearted by comparison with what Arminians can do. Those who study the printed sermons of worthy expositors of the old gospel, such as Bunyan (whose preaching Owen himself much admired), or Whitefield, or Spurgeon, will find that in fact they hold forth the Savior and summon sinners to him with a fullness, warmth, intensity and moving force unmatched in Protestant pulpit literature. And it will be found on analysis that the very thing which gave their preaching its unique power to overwhelm their audiences with brokenhearted joy at the riches of God's grace - and still gives it that power, let it be said, even with hard-boiled modern readers - was their insistence on the fact that grace is *free*. They knew that the dimensions of divine love are not half understood till one realizes that God need not have chosen to save nor given his Son to die; nor need Christ have taken upon him vicarious damnation to redeem men, nor need he invite sinners indiscriminately to himself as he does; but that all God's gracious dealings spring entirely from his own free purpose. Knowing this, they stressed it, and it is this stress that sets their evangelistic preaching in a class by itself.

Other evangelicals, possessed of a more superficial and less adequate theology of grace, have laid the main emphasis in their gospel preaching on the sinner's need of forgiveness, or peace or power, and on the way to get them by 'deciding for Christ'. It is not to be denied that their preaching has done good (for God will use his truth, even when imperfectly held and mixed with error), although this type of evangelism is always open to the criticism of being too man-centered and pietistic; but it has been left (necessarily) to Calvinists and those who, like the Wesleys, fall into Calvinistic ways of thought as soon as they begin a sermon to the unconverted, to preach the gospel in a way which highlights above everything else the free love, willing condescension, patient long-suffering and infinite kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, without doubt, this is the most Scriptural and edifying way to preach it; for gospel invitations to sinners never honor

God and exalt Christ more, nor are more powerful to awaken and confirm faith, than when full weight is laid on the free omnipotence of the mercy from which they flow. It looks, indeed, as if the preachers of the old gospel are the only people whose position allows them to do justice to the revelation of divine goodness in the free offer of Christ to sinners.

Then, in the second place, the old gospel safeguards values which the new gospel loses. We saw before that the new gospel, by asserting universal redemption and a universal divine saving purpose, compels itself to cheapen grace and the cross by denying that the Father and the Son are sovereign in salvation; for it assures us that, after God and Christ have done all that they can, or will, it depends finally on each man's own choice whether God's purpose to save him is realized or not.

This position has two unhappy results. The first is that it compels us to misunderstand the significance of the gracious invitations of Christ in the gospel of which we have been speaking; for we now have to read them, not as expressions of the tender patience of a mighty Sovereign, but as the pathetic pleadings of impotent desire; and so the enthroned Lord is suddenly metamorphosed into a weak, futile figure tapping forlornly at the door of the human heart, which he is powerless to open. This is a shameful dishonor to the Christ of the New Testament. The second implication is equally serious: for this view in effect denies our dependence on God when it comes to vital decisions, takes us out of his hand, tells us that we are, after all, what sin taught us to think we are - masters of our fate, captain of our souls - and so undermines the very foundation of man's religious relationship with his Maker. It can hardly be wondered at that the converts of the new gospel are so often both irreverent and irreligious, for such is the natural tendency of this teaching.

The old gospel, however, speaks very differently and has a very different tendency. On the one hand, in expounding man's need for Christ, it stresses something which the new gospel effectively ignores - that sinners cannot obey the gospel, any more than the law, without renewal of heart. On the other hand, on declaring Christ's power to save, it proclaims him as the Author and Chief Agent of conversion, coming by his Spirit as the gospel goes forth to renew men's hearts and draw them to himself. Accordingly, in applying the message, the old gospel, while stressing that faith is man's duty, stresses also that faith is not in man's power, but that God must give what he commands. It announces, not merely that men *must* come to Christ for salvation, but also that *cannot* come unless Christ himself draws them. Thus it labors to overthrow self-confidence, to convince sinners that their salvation is altogether out of their hands, and to shut them up to a self-despairing dependence on the glorious grace of a sovereign Savior, not only for their righteousness but for their faith too.

It is not likely, therefore, that a preacher of the old gospel will be happy to express the application of it in the form of a demand to 'decide for Christ', as the current phrase is. For, on the one hand, this phrase carries the wrong associations. It suggests voting a person into office - an act in which the candidate plays no part beyond offering himself for election, everything then being settled by the voter's independent choice. But we do not vote God's Son into office as our Savior, nor does he remain passive while preachers campaign on his behalf, whipping up support for his cause. We ought not to think of evangelism as a kind of electioneering. And then, on the other hand, this phrase obscures the very thing that is essential in repentance and faith - the denying of self in a personal approach to Christ. It is not at all obvious that deciding *for* Christ is the same as coming *to* him and resting *on* him and turning *from* sin and self-effort; it sounds like something much less, and is accordingly likely to instill defective notions of what the gospel really requires of sinners. It is not a very apt phrase from any point of view.

To the question; 'What must I do to be saved?', the old gospel replies: believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. To the further question; 'what does it mean to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?', its reply is: it means knowing oneself to be a sinner, and Christ to have died for sinners; abandoning all self-righteousness and self-confidence, and casting oneself wholly upon him for pardon and peace; and exchanging one's natural enmity and rebellion against God for a spirit of grateful submission to the will of Christ through the renewing of one's heart by the Holy Ghost. And to the further question still, 'How am I to go about believing on Christ and repenting, if I have no natural ability to do these things?', it answers: look to Christ, speak to Christ, cry to Christ, just as you are; confess your sin, your impotence, your unbelief, and cast yourself on his mercy; ask him to give you a new heart, working in you true repentance and firm faith; ask him to take away your evil heart of unbelief and to write his law within you, that you may never henceforth stray from him. Turn to him and trust him as best you can, and pray for grace to turn and trust more thoroughly; use the means of grace expectantly, looking to Christ to draw near to you as you seek to draw near to him; watch, pray, and read and hear God's word,

worship and commune with God's people, and so continue till you know in yourself beyond doubt that you are indeed a changed being, a penitent believer, and the new heart which you desired has been put within you. The emphasis in this advice is on the need to call upon Christ directly, as the very first step.

Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him -

So do not postpone action till you think you are better, but honestly confess your badness and give yourself up here and now to the Christ who alone can make you better; and wait on him till his light rises in your soul, as scripture promises that it shall do. Anything less than this direct dealing with Christ is disobeying the gospel. Such is the exercise of spirit to which the old evangel summons its hearers. 'I believe - help thou mine unbelief': this must become their cry.

And the old gospel is proclaimed in the sure confidence that the Christ of whom it testified, the Christ who is the real speaker when the Scriptural invitations to trust him are expounded and applied, is not passively waiting for man's decision as the word goes forth, but is omnipotently active, working with and through the word to bring his people to faith in himself. The preaching of the new gospel is often described as the task of 'bringing men to Christ' - as if only men move, while Christ stands still. But the task of preaching the old gospel could more properly be described as bringing Christ to men, for those who preach it know that as they do their work of setting Christ before men's eyes, the mighty Savior whom they proclaim is busy doing his work through their words, visiting sinners with salvation, awakening them to faith, drawing them in mercy to himself.

It is the older gospel which Owen will teach us to preach: the gospel of the sovereign grace of God in Christ as the Author and Finisher of faith and salvation. It is the only gospel which can be preached on Owen's principles, but those who have tasted its sweetness will not in any case be found looking for another. In the matter of believing and preaching the gospel, as in other things, Jeremiah's words still have their application: 'Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.'¹⁹ To find ourselves debarred, as Owen would debar us, from taking up with the fashionable modern substitute gospel may not, after all, be a bad thing, either for us or for the church.

More might be said, but to go further would be to exceed the limits of an introduction. The foregoing remarks are made simply to show how important it is at the present time that we should attend most carefully to Owen's analysis of what the Bible says about the saving work of Christ.

It only remains to add a few remarks about this treatise itself. It was Owen's second major work, and his first masterpiece. (Its predecessor, *A Display of Arminianism*, published in 1642, when Owen was twenty-six, was a competent piece of prentice-work, rather of the nature of a research thesis.)

The Death of Death is a solid book, made up of detailed exposition and close argument, and requires hard study, as Owen fully realized; a cursory glance will not yield much. ('Reader . . . If thou art, as many in this pretending age, a *sign or title gazer*, and comest into books as Cato into the theater, to go out again - thou has had thy entertainment; farewell!'²⁰) Owen felt, however, that he had a right to ask for hard study, for his book was a product of hard work ('a more than seven-years' serious inquiry . . . into the mind of God about these things, with a serious perusal of all which I could attain that the wit of man, in former or latter days, hath published in opposition to the truth'²¹), and he was sure in his own mind that a certain finality attached to what he had written. ('Altogether hopeless of success I am not; but fully resolved that I shall not live to see a solid answer given unto it.'²²) Time has justified his optimism.²³

Something should be said about his opponents. He is writing against three variations on the theme of universal redemption: that of classical Arminianism, noted earlier; that of the theological faculty at Saumur (the position known as Amyraldism, after its leader exponent); and that of Thomas More, a lay theologian of East Anglia. The second of these views originated with a Scots professor at Saumur, John Cameron; it was taken up and developed by two of his pupils, Amyraut (Amyraldus) and Testard, and became the occasion of a prolonged controversy in which Amyraut, Daillé and Blondel were opposed by Rivet, Spanheim and Des Marets (Maresius). The Saumur position won some support among Reformed divines in Britain, being held in modified form by (among others) Bishops Usher and Davenant, and Richard Baxter. None of these, however, had advocated it in print at the time when Owen wrote.²⁴

Goold's summary of the Saumur position may be quoted.

Admitting that, by the purpose of God, and through the death of Christ, the elect are infallibly secured in the enjoyment of salvation, they contended for an antecedent decree, by which God is free to give salvation to all men through Christ, on the *condition* that they believe on him. Hence their system was termed *hypothetic(al) universalism*. The vital difference between it and the strict Arminian theory lies in the absolute security asserted in the former for the spiritual recovery of the elect. They agree, however, in attributing some kind of universality to the atonement, and in maintaining that, on certain *condition*, within the reach of fulfillment by all men . . . all men have access to the benefits of Christ's death.

From this, Goold continues:

the readers of Owen will understand . . . why he dwells with peculiar keenness and reiteration of statement upon a refutation of the conditional system. . . . It was plausible; it had many learned men for its advocates; it had obtained currency in the foreign churches; and it seems to have been embraced by More.²⁵

More is described by Thomas Edwards as 'a great Sectary, that did much hurt in Lincolnshire, Norfolk, and Cambridgeshire; who was famous also in Boston, [King's] Lynn, and even in Holland, and was followed from place to place by many.'²⁶ Baxter's description is kinder: 'a Weaver of *Wisbitch* and *Lyn*, of excellent Parts.'²⁷ (More's doctrine of redemption, of course, was substantially Baxter's own.) Owen, however, has a poor view of his abilities, and makes no secret of the fact.

More's book, *The Universality of God's Free Grace in Christ to Mankind*, appeared in 1646 (not, as Goold says, 1643), and must have exercised a considerable influence, for within three years it had evoked four weighty works which were in whole or part polemics against it: *A Refutation . . . of Thomas More*, by Thomas Whitfield, 1646; *Vindiciae Redemptionis*, by John Stalham, 1647; *The Universalist Examined and Convicted*, by Obadiah Howe, 1648, and Owen's own book, published in the same year.

More's exposition seems to be of little intrinsic importance; Owen, however, selects it as the fullest statement of the case for universal redemption that had yet appeared in English and uses it unmercifully as a chopping-block. The modern reader, however, will probably find it convenient to skip the sections devoted to refuting More (I:viii, the closing pages of I:iii and IV:vi) on his first passage through Owen's treatise.

Finally, a word about the style of this work. There is no denying that Owen is heavy and hard to read. This is not so much due to obscure arrangement as to two other factors. The first is his lumbering literary gait. 'Owen travels through it [his subject] with the elephant's grace and solid step, if sometimes also with his ungainly motion,' says Thomson.²⁸ That puts it kindly. Much of Owen's prose reads like a roughly-dashed-off translation of a piece of thinking done in Ciceronian Latin. It has, no doubt, a certain clumsy dignity; so has Stonehenge; but it is trying to the reader to have to go over sentences two or three times to see their meaning, and this necessity makes it much harder to follow an argument. The present writer, however, has found that the hard places in Owen usually come out as soon as one reads them aloud. The second obscuring factor is Owen's austerity as an expositor. He has a lordly disdain for broad introductions which ease the mind gently into a subject, and for comprehensive summaries which gather up scattered points into a small space. He obviously carries the whole of his design in his head, and expects his readers to do the same. Nor are his chapter divisions reliable pointers to the structure of his discourse, for though a change of subject is usually marked by a chapter division, Owen often starts a new chapter where there is no break in the thought at all. Nor is he concerned about literary proportions; the space given to a topic is determined by its intrinsic complexity rather than its relative importance, and the reader is left to work out what is basic and what is secondary by noting how things link together. Anyone who seriously tackles *The Death of Death* will probably find it helpful to use a pencil and paper in his study of the book and jot down the progress of the exposition.

We would conclude by repeating that the reward to be reaped from studying Owen is worth all the labor involved, and by making the following observations for the student's guidance. (1) It is important to start with the epistle 'To the Reader', for there Owen indicates in short compass what he is trying to do, and why. (2) It is important to read the treatise as a whole, in the order in which it stands, and not to jump into Parts III and IV before mastering the contents of Parts I and II, where the biblical foundations of Owen's whole position are laid. (3) It is hardly possible to grasp the strength and cogency of this massive statement on a first reading. The work must be read and reread to be appreciated.

Notes

Chapter 8: 'Saved by His Precious Blood': An Introduction to John Owen's 'The Death of Death in the Death of Christ'

1. John Owen, *Works*, X:6.
2. Jon 2:9.
3. Plus any others who, though they had not heard the gospel, lived up to the light they had - though this point need not concern us here.
4. *Westminster Confession*, X:1.
5. Granted, it was Charles Wesley who wrote this, but it is one of the many passages in his hymns which make one ask, with 'Rabbi' Duncan, 'Where's your Arminianism now, friend'
6. Gal 6:14.
7. C.H. Spurgeon was thus abundantly right when he declared:
I have my own private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what is nowadays called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the gospel . . . unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace; nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the gospel unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the Cross; nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called.
C.H. Spurgeon, *The Early Years*, Autobiography, vol I (Banner of Truth: London, 1962), p 172.
8. Owen, *Works*, X:159.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Eph 2:9.
11. 'Life of John Owen' in Owen, *Works*, I:38.
12. Compare this, from C.H. Spurgeon:

We are often told that we limit the atonement of Christ, because we say that Christ has not made a satisfaction for all men, or all men would be saved. Now, our reply to this is, that, on the other hand, our opponents limit it: we do not. The Arminians say, Christ died for all men. Ask them what they mean by it. Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of all men? They say, 'No, certainly not.' We ask them the next question - Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of any man in particular? They answer 'No.' They are obliged to admit this, if they are consistent. They say 'No. Christ has died that any man may be saved if' - and then follow certain conditions of

salvation. Now, who is it that limits the death of Christ? Why, you. You say that Christ did not die so as infallibly to secure the salvation of anybody. We beg your pardon, when you say we limit Christ's death; we say, 'No, my dear sir it is you that do it.' We say Christ so died that he infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can number, who through Christ's death not only may be saved, but are saved, must be saved and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved. You are welcome to your atonement; you may keep it. We will never renounce ours for the sake of it.

13. See Owen, *Works*, X:311-316, 404-410.

14. 'What, I pray, is according to Scripture, for a man to be assured that Christ died for him in particular? Is it not the very highest improvement of faith? doth it not include a sense of the spiritual love of God shed abroad in our hearts? Is it not the top of the apostle's consolation, Rom. viii. 34, and the bottom of all his joyful assurance, Gal. ii. 20?' (*Ibid*, X:409.)

15. *Ibid*, X:315.

16. *Ibid*, X:407f.

17. *Loc cit*.

18. *Ibid*, I:422.

19. Jer 6:16.

20. Opening words, 'To the Reader', Owen, *Works*, X:149.

21. *Loc cit*.

22. *Ibid*, X:156.

23. Owen indicates more than once that for a complete statement of the case against universal redemption he would need to write a further book, dealing with 'the other part of the controversy, concerning the cause of sending Christ' (pp 245, 295). Its main thesis, apparently, would have been that 'the fountain and cause of God's sending Christ, is his eternal love to his elect, and to them alone' (p 131), and it would have contained a more large explication of God's purpose of election and reprobation, showing how the death of Christ was a means set apart and appointed for the saving of his elect, and not at all undergone or suffered for those which, in his eternal counsel, he did determine should perish for their sins' (p 245). It looks, therefore, as if it would have included the 'clearing of our doctrine of reprobation, and of the administration of God's providence towards the reprobates, and over all their actions', which Owen promised in the epistle prefixed to *A Display of Arminianism* (*Works*, X:9), but never wrote. However, we can understand his concluding that it was really needless to slaughter the same adversary twice.

24. Davenant's *Duae Dissertationes*, one of which defends universal redemption on Amyraldean lines, came out posthumously in 1650. Owen was not impressed and wrote of it: 'I undertake to demonstrate that the main foundation of the whole dissertation about the death of Christ, with many inferences from thence, are neither formed in nor founded on the word; but that the several parts therein are mutually conflicting and destructive of each other' (*Works*, X:433, 1650).

Baxter wrote a formal disputation defending universal redemption but never printed it; it was published after his death, however, in 1694.

25. 'Prefatory Note' in *Works*, X:140.

26. *Gangraena* (1646), II:86.

27. Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, i:50.

28. *Loc cit*.

FIRE & WATER:

A Princeton apologist still helps us see why Calvinism and Arminianism simply don't mix.

by Kim Riddlebarger

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Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield (1851-1921) was in many minds the greatest American theologian living during the period between the Civil War and World War I. As professor of Polemical and Didactic theology at Princeton Theological Seminary from 1887 until his death 34 years later, B.B. Warfield was the leading advocate and most articulate spokesman of the "Old Princeton" tradition, which had been established in 1812 by A.A. Alexander, with the opening of what was then a small and virtually unknown Presbyterian seminary in Princeton, NJ.

The Old Princeton Tradition

The Old Princeton tradition came to be characterized by both the noted personalities who composed its faculty and by the institution's commitment to the ideal that truth is to be found in the objective world and in the express declarations found in Holy Scripture, with a faculty roster that read like a veritable Who's Who of theological luminaries, including founder Archibald Alexander (1772-1851); Charles Hodge (1797-1878); Charles, son Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823-1886), who was known for his careful and clearly

presented theological argumentation; B.B. Warfield, and later J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937), the founder of Westminster Theological Seminary and noted warrior in the fight against Protestant liberalism.

Other Princeton professors to make their marks upon the American church include Robert Dick Wilson, who mastered more than 50 Semitic languages; John Davis of Davis Bible Dictionary fame; Geerhardus Vos, the father of Reformed biblical theology; William Henry Green, and C.W. Hodge, just to name a few. The influence of these men and this institution upon American Christianity cannot be underestimated. Charles Hodge alone trained more than 2,000 students, A.A. Hodge another 400, and B.B. Warfield some 2,700 more,¹ including such noted defenders of Reformed orthodoxy of the next generation as Louis Berkhof and Cornelius Van Til. Church historian Mark Noll gives us an interesting glimpse of the influence of Princeton Graduates upon the life of the American church:

An enthusiastic speaker at the seminary's centennial rejoiced in the fact that "besides theological and college teachers, Princeton has contributed 56 moderators of General Assemblies, and five bishops to the Protestant Episcopal Church." The same speaker went on to note that "she has not, as yet produced a Pope, but has trained three stated clerks of the General Assembly."²

No other theological institution has ever contributed so much to the American church. And no other American seminary ever opposed Arminianism as fiercely. Unfortunately there remains the tragic sense that when Old Princeton died (and some say that it really died with Warfield), the Reformed influence upon American Christianity has since been in constant retreat in the face of Arminian erosion of Calvinism's God-centered religion.

But Old Princeton was more than influential personalities. She is also remembered for her commitment to historic Reformed orthodoxy as expressed in the Reformed creeds, and especially in the Westminster Standards. Princeton was well known as the stalwart bastion of "old school" American Presbyterianism, the defender of Calvinistic orthodoxy. As an institution, she was known for a n unwavering commitment to the inerrancy of Holy Scripture in an age when the growing intoxication with higher-critical methodology newly imported from Europe was threatening to cut out the very foundations of Christian supernaturalism. No one even thinks to question Princeton's commitment to her unshakable belief that the Westminster Standards were the clearest and best expression of biblical truth in existence.

To the Princeton mind, truth was objective and inviolable. There was no pressing need to discover new truths, since by and large the Princetonians believed that this is what the Reformation and the 200 year tradition of Reformed scholasticism was all about - the rediscovery of the biblical gospel and its subsequent elaboration in the Reformed creeds and scholastic dogmatic systems. The Princetonians saw their task not as discovering "new truths" but the constant application of existing truth to the specific new situations.

Warfield literally reviewed hundreds upon hundreds of books during his productive career, and it is here, in the course of reviewing the latest volumes that comprise the academic theological enterprise and the on-going debate with Arminianism, that Warfield took opportunity to respond to many a theological opponent, and specifically in the case under review here, to those who advocated the Arminian theological system.

While Warfield reviewed hundreds of volumes, there are two notable reviews that stand out very effectively for our topic at hand. These are Warfield's review of *He That is Spiritual*, written by Louis Sperry Chafer (1871-1952), the founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, and also Warfield's review of Methodist theologian John Miley's two-volume work, *Systematic Theology*.

Before we can look at the specifics of Warfield's treatment of Chafer and Miley, it is important to point out the fact that Warfield firmly believed that Arminianism was "the first serious defection from the fundamental conceptions of the Reformed system... in the early years of the 17th century."³ Arminianism was therefore a self-conscious rejection of the very first principle of the Reformed system - the "glory of God," which Warfield believed was exchanged in Arminian theology for the fundamental principle of the "freedom of man." Given Warfield's view of truth, such a definition was an attack not only upon specific doctrines of the Reformed system, but upon the very essence of evangelical Christianity itself. This is no intramural debate for Warfield, for as he saw it the very character of the gospel itself was at stake.

John Miley (1813-1895) was professor of Systematic Theology at Drew University in New Jersey, and author of the two-volume *Systematic Theology*, which was perhaps the best of all of the Arminian theologies of the period, serving in effect as a rival to Charles Hodge's famous *Systematic Theology*. Thus the Calvinism of Old Princeton and Charles Hodge had finally met a serious rival. Miley's volume, wrote Warfield, "is altogether a good book, which the Arminian should find rarely satisfying, and with which the Calvinist should count it a privilege to join issue."⁴ When giants such as Warfield and Miley cross theological swords, the issues that divide these schools quickly come into view.

Warfield immediately isolates Miley's central premise. "Freedom" Miley says, 'is fundamental in Arminianism. The system holds accordingly the universality and provisional nature of the atonement, and the conditionality of the atonement."⁵ Since human freedom is the starting point in the Arminian system, all Arminian doctrines end up being explained in light of an act of the human will (psychology), rather than through the biblical doctrine of the grace and mercy of God (theology). Miley flatly admits that "the cardinal doctrines of Wesleyan Soteriology (i.e. the doctrine of salvation) are that the atonement is only provisory in its character, rendering men savable, but not necessarily saving them." In other words, the death of Christ does not actually save sinners but merely renders people savable if they exercise their freedom to choose and to follow Christ.

Miley even admits the very point with which Calvinists have been charging Arminians since the beginning, "that salvation is conditional in the sense of being a real synergism."⁶ Salvation is not something then that God does to or for men and women who are dead in sin and cannot save themselves, but salvation is based upon an act that the sinner must perform himself in exercising the freedom that God has given to all. To this Warfield adds, with perhaps a note of seeming disbelief, "with these facts Dr. Miley remarks the atonement of satisfaction must be excluded (*italics mine*)."⁷ If human freedom is our starting point, the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement must be rejected as well, and here Miley himself admits this conclusion. In the Arminian scheme, how can Christ be said to bear the sins of someone else when we must see responsibility for our own actions as paramount? There is no room in the Arminian system for the crediting of the guilt of Adam's sin to us, no room for Christ's righteousness to be credited to us, nor is there any way for our sins to be truly paid for by Christ. In John Miley's *Systematic Theology*, Warfield writes, we have a man who

"presents himself here as above all things an Arminian, and as above most Arminians ready to follow his Arminianism to its logical conclusions."⁸ The issue in view here then, is just what are these logical conclusions and where do they lead? Thus here we can see in the clearest contrast the very points that distinguish Reformed orthodoxy from what is indeed at best a very "serious defection."

If human freedom is the central premise in Arminianism, then Miley must reject the doctrine of original sin. God cannot hold any of Adam's descendants responsible for Adam's own actions, since men and women must be free to obey or disobey on their own. "Arminianism, [Miley] says, has no logical place in its system for a doctrine of race sin, either in the sense of the participation of the race in the guilt of Adam's first sin, or in the sense of the infection of the race with a guilty corruption."⁹ So if we start from the premise that man must be free if he is to be responsible for his own free actions, we must then reject the biblical (Romans 5:12-19) idea affirmed by Catholics as well as Protestants of original sin and guilt, whereby Adam's descendants are not only seen as guilty for his act of rebellion, but also inherit his moral corruption as well. And what is worse, if Miley is right about human freedom, original sin is not all that must be rejected. Warfield points out:

"If the Arminian principle [of human freedom] is to rule, [Miley] says, the doctrine of race sin must go, and the doctrine of vicarious punishment must go. And as he thinks the Arminian principle ought to rule, he teaches that man are not by nature under the condemning wrath of God, and that Christ did not vicariously bear the penalty of sin (*italics mine*)."¹⁰

Thus John Miley, as the consistent theologian that he is, quickly reaches the logical conclusion where the first principle of Arminian (human freedom) inevitably leads - the rejection of both the doctrines of original sin (since God cannot hold any of Adam's descendants responsible for Adam's actions) and the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement of Christ (since on this same first principle, God cannot charge anyone's sins to Christ, since we are responsible only for our own actions).

As Warfield sees it, the first principle of Arminianism effectively destroys the very foundation of evangelical Christianity since both its doctrine of sin and salvation are redefined in psychological rather than biblical and theological terms. Warfield laments that "it is far better to be inconsistently Evangelical than consistently Arminian...Evangelicalism stands or falls with Calvinism, and the very proof of Evangelicalism is a proof of Calvinism."¹¹ In other words, if you follow Miley and the logic of the Arminian system, then you can no longer affirm the two cardinal doctrines historically regarded as essential in maintaining the biblical and evangelical principle that it is God who saves sinners, and not sinners who save themselves with God's help. Thus to follow Miley and Arminianism at this point is to reject the biblical doctrine of original sin and the substitutionary atonement of Christ, and that is not slight denial.

With what does Miley leave us? The death of Christ does not save anyone, but merely makes people savable if they exercise their freedom to believe in Christ. Miley interprets the cross to mean that God forgives sin on the grounds of a "substitute for penalty," for Christ's death does not actually save anyone. Rather, what does save is God's supposed free decision to accept Christ's death as an example of love and not as a payment for sin the exact justice upon all infractions of God's law. That Miley's point here is not supported by scripture and is completely arbitrary is noticed by Warfield: "If 'justice,'" Warfield explains, 'must punish sin simply for the reason of its demerit, penal substitution is the only possible atonement.'" Notice for Miley, God need not exercise justice but instead as the moral governor of the universe he can merely decide to accept the sacrifice of Christ as a substitute for the exercise of his justice. Warfield cannot let this point go unchallenged:

That the [governmental] theory of the atonement may be held, and with it the Arminian system, therefore, we must deny to God that moral indignation in view of evil, which we cannot help recognizing as one of the highest endowments of moral beings, and must transmute his 'justice' into merely the public justice of a wise ruler; we must revise, in a word, all our natural notions of the relations of an infinite holy being to sin.¹²

Simply put, John Miley and the Arminian system as he defines it, absolutely rejects the idea that a holy God must punish all sin. If Miley is correct, then, Christ cannot die to bear the sins of the world. Instead Christ dies to merely demonstrate the love of God, as God accepts his sacrifice as the example of love and sacrifice for all of his creatures, and not in any way as a literal payment to propitiate his wrath and to execute his justice. Since God need not punish sin anyway, how can we say any longer that God is holy? God simply accepts the sacrifice of Christ arbitrarily, not punishing sin, but overlooking it. Warfield then asks the obvious question: "If it be 'safe' to forgive sin on the ground of a 'substitute for penalty,' it would seem just as 'safe' to make sincere personal repentance that substitute as to make the suffering of an alien [Christ] such a substitute." In other words, Christ did not have to die on the cross as the substitute for our sin, and God killed his own Son on the cross when he did not really need to carry out such a terrible act. Instead, he could simply have accepted our repentance as sufficient payment. If this is true, we have not only destroyed the idea of a substitutionary atonement, we have killed God himself. For God can no longer be seen as holy, and he cannot be loving, either, since Christ was cruelly punished on the cross for no good reason.

All of this is done, according to Miley and the Arminian system, in the name of human freedom, a "first principle" which has no support whatever in scripture. Viewed from this perspective, Arminianism is not simply an alternative for evangelicals who are uncomfortable with certain doctrinal tenets of Calvinism. Taken to its logical conclusion, Arminianism is not only a departure from historic orthodoxy, but a serious departure from the evangel itself.

A Calvinist and Arminian Synthesis?

Louis Sperry Chafer's book, *He That Is Spiritual* (1918), received the brunt of Warfield's criticism in a second review germane to our topic. Here we do not see the gospel so much at stake; instead we see the confusion and harm that results when someone who should know better tries to synthesize two logically conflicting positions into one, such as when well-intentioned but historically ill-informed evangelicals try to synthesize Calvinism and Arminianism into a *tertium quid* that ends up as neither, and known only by the dubious title of "Calminianism." Such are Chafer's efforts in *He That Is Spiritual*.

Warfield sets his sights on this biblical and logical inconsistency:

Mr. Chafer is in the unfortunate and, one would think, very uncomfortable condition of having two inconsistent systems of religion struggling together in his mind. He was bred an Evangelical, and as a minister of the Presbyterian Church, South, stands committed to Evangelicalism of the purest water. But he has long been associated in his work with a coterie of "Evangelists" and "Bible Teachers," among whom there flourishes that curious religious system (at once curiously pretentious and curiously shallow) which the Higher

Life leaders of the middle of the last century brought into vogue; and he has not been immune from its infection.

These two religious systems are quite incompatible. The one is the product of the Protestant Reformation and knows no determining power in the religious life but the grace of God; the other comes straight from the laboratory of John Wesley, and in all its forms--modifications and mitigations alike--remains incurably Arminian, subjecting all the gracious workings of God to human determining. The two can unite as little as fire and water.¹⁴

Warfield's point must not only be seen as a serious blow to the logic of Chafer's dispensational-evangelical "hodgepodge" view of sanctification, for it applies equally to all of those in today's very popular non-denominational movements who also reject the confessionalism of Protestant orthodoxy and attempt to mix conflicting doctrinal elements into a kind of theological stew that is supposed to have a broader-based appeal for the masses, but instead leads only to doctrinal confusion. And as in Warfield's day, under the quite pretentious guise of rejecting "theology" and "head-knowledge," there are many who end up in a shallow sea of error and confusion. Unfortunately, this error is still with us and in even greater measure than in Chafer's time. Take for an example the subject of Chafer's book: the Christian life. Here, as in all other aspects of our salvation, either God works in our sanctification through means and our part is purely response and gratitude, or we are the prime mover in sanctification by "yielding," "seeking," "making Christ Lord," and so forth. While the Calvinist insists on active, energetic involvement in this process, either God is the one working in us to will and to do of his good pleasure, or sanctification is the product of our striving and yielding.

What Chafer has done is to combine two contrary elements, losing both the activism of human responsibility as well as the gracious character of sanctification by trying to achieve something "in between" the two.

Chafer insists upon the very untenable distinction between "carnal men and spiritual men," which Warfield notes is based upon Chafer's serious misreading of 1 Corinthians 2:9. According to Warfield, Chafer tells us "that the passage from the one [the carnal] to the other [the spiritual] is at our option, whenever we care to 'claim' the higher degree by 'faith.'" Chafer commits the same error as other "victorious Christian life" advocates and it is easy to see that this immediately separates the body of Christ into those "who have it," and "those who don't." This has a divisive effect upon the church everywhere such teaching has gone. In addition, such unbiblical schemes make the human will, instead of the grace of God, the determining power in the Christian life. Thus, sanctification has little to do with the means of grace (Word and Sacrament), but is instead defined in terms of "'engaging' the Spirit (as we engage, say, a carpenter) to do work for us...and we do explicitly hear of 'making it possible for God' to do things, a quite terrible expression."¹⁵ [p.322]

The Arminian roots of Chafer's system are visible not only when he treats the subject of the Christian life, but when he discusses the doctrine of salvation. Chafer writes that "sinners are not saved until they trust the Saviour, and saints are not victorious until they trust the deliverer. God has made this possible through the cross of his Son. Salvation from the power of sin must be claimed by faith as well (*italics in original*)." Again notice the separation of Christians who are only "saved" from those who choose to be "victorious." Since it depends upon an act of the will to be "saved" it likewise follows for Chafer that it depends upon an act of the will to become "victorious," too. Here Warfield concludes:

No doubt what we are first led to say of this is that here is the quintessence of Arminianism. God saves no one--He only makes salvation possible for men. Whether it becomes actual or not depends absolutely on their own act. It is only by their act that it is made possible for God to save them. But it is equally true that here is the quintessence of the Higher Life teaching, which merely emphasizes that part of this Arminian scheme which refers to the specific matter of sanctification (*italics in original*).¹⁶

Thus, "A haunting ambiguity is thrust upon Mr. Chafer's whole teaching by his hospitable entertainment of contradictory systems of thought."¹⁷ For those who have struggled to become "victorious Christians," and never knew quite when that moment would arrive, this confusion and ambiguity is no mere academic quarrel, but a serious practical matter. For Reformation Christians, life in the Spirit, no less than justification itself, is a gift for all believers at the beginning of their Christian life, not a state of spiritual attainment reserved for the elite. Chafer's confusion of Calvinism and Arminianism continues to be reproduced in our day, with even higher levels of odd contradictions and ambiguities, demonstrating that the sort of clear-thinking, biblically sound, confessional evangelicalism of the Old Princeton school is in desperate need of being heard again.

Notes:

1. Mark A. Noll, *The Princeton Theologian: 1812-1921* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), p. 19.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
3. See Darryl G. Hart's fine essay, "The Princeton Mind in the Modern World and the Common Sense of J. Gresham Machen," *Westminster Theological Journal* 46 (1984), pp. 1-25.
4. Warfield, "Calvinism" in *Calvin and Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), p. 362.
5. Warfield, "A Review of Systematic Theology" reprinted in *Selected Shorter Writings of Warfield*, vol. 2, ed. John E. Meeter (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), p. 214. Miley's work has recently been reprinted by Hendrickson Publishers.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.* Synergism means "working together," here taken in the sense of man and God working together (cooperating) in salvation. This was the position taken by the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, p. 314.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 315.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, p. 316.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 318.
14. Warfield, "Review of L. S. Chafer's He That Is Spiritual," *Princeton Theological Review* (Vol.XVII, No.2 [April 1919], p.322 ff.
15. *Ibid.* p. 322.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*

Recommended Reading:

Mark A. Noll, *The Princeton Theology: 1812-1921* (Baker);
B.B. Warfield, *Collected Works*, 10 volumes (Baker);
Selected Shorter Writings, 2 volumes (Presbyterian and Reformed);
Studies in Perfectionism (Presbyterian and Reformed).

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GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE - ACT OR ATTRIBUTE?

by Pastor William Sasser

James Arminius (1560 - 1609) was a student of Theodore Beza, the successor of John Calvin, who taught at the University of Geneva, Switzerland. He was sent there from the University of Leyden. Under the teachings of Beza, Jacob Arminius became a confirmed Calvinist, even holding the extreme soteriological position of supralapsarianism.

In 1588, after having studied in Italy and elsewhere, he returned to Amsterdam where he was ordained into the ministry and became distinguished as a preacher and theologian. According to Philip Schaff:

While engaged in research against the writings of Dorch Coornhert (1522 - 1591), at the request of the magistrate of Amsterdam, he found the argument of his opponent, who was a Pelagian, stronger than his own conviction, and became a convert to the doctrine of universal grace and the freedom of the will. (Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, Vol. 1, p. 510).

He thereafter developed a modified view of original sin though he continued to hold to the total depravity of man. Accordingly, Arminius advocated a revision of the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism, the standard for Reformed Churches.

Holding to such a position brought Arminius into open conflict with Francis Gomar (1563 - 1645), a supralapsarian colleague, who had also conferred on Arminius his degree of Doctor of Divinity. The controversy between Gomar and Arminius soon spread throughout all Holland. Arminius applied to the Government to invoke a Synod, a church council, for the purpose of examining and establishing official positions of the church upon doctrine. For Arminius the issue was two-fold:

1. A conditional or unconditional election.
2. A resistible or irresistible grace.

One year after Arminius' death in 1610 his followers, now known as Arminians and led by Episcopius, presented a remonstrance (protest) to the civil authorities of Holland organized under five heads or articles. They objected to the doctrines contained in the Belgic Confession of faith and Heidelberg catechism. They objected specifically to those doctrines relating to divine sovereignty, human inability, unconditional election or predestination, particular redemption, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints. They insisted that the confession and the catechism be revised to reflect their doctrinal position. Too, they demanded a full toleration for the profession of their views. This action procured for them the designation of the Remonstrants, while their opponents are often called Contra-remonstrants.

Roger Nicole, in *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, p. 64, summarizes the five articles contained in the Remonstrance as follows:

1. God elects or reproves on the basis of foreseen faith or unbelief.
2. Christ died for all men and for every man, although only believers are saved.
3. Man is so depraved that divine grace is necessary unto faith of any good deed.
4. This grace may be resisted.
5. Whether all who are truly regenerate will certainly persevere in the faith is a point which needs further investigation.

This last article was later altered so as to definitely teach the possibility of the truly regenerate believer losing his faith, and thus losing his salvation.

Under the leadership of men such as Uytenbogaert (1557-1644), Episcopius (1583-1643), Curcellaeus (1586-1659), Grotius (1583-1645), Limborch (1633-1712), and others, Arminianism became characterized by increasing differences from the Orthodox and historical faith. Regarding the foreknowledge of God and the human will, the following tenets are commonly held by Arminians:

- God's knowledge of the future acts of free agents is mediate.
- God's decrees are based on his foreknowledge: election on foreseen faith, and reprobation on foreseen resistance to grace.
- The external call of the gospel is accompanied by a universal sufficient grace which can be resisted.
- Repentance and faith precede regeneration.

- The human will is to be viewed as one of the causes of regeneration.
- As long as one lives one may fall away from grace and lose salvation altogether.

J. I. Packer wrote of the system of thought embodied in the Remonstrance:

The theology which it contained (known to history as Arminianism) stemmed from two philosophical principles: First, that divine sovereignty is not compatible with human freedom, nor therefore with human responsibility; second, that ability limits obligation. From these principles the Arminians drew two deductions: First, that since the Bible regards faith as a free and responsible act, it cannot be caused by God, but is exercised independently of Him; second, that since the Bible regards faith as obligatory on the part of all who hear the gospel, ability to believe must be universal. Hence, they maintained, scripture must be interpreted as teaching the following position: (1) Man is never so completely corrupted by sin that he cannot savingly believe the Gospel when it is put before him, nor (2) is he ever so completely controlled by God that he cannot reject it. (3) God's election of those who shall be saved is prompted by His foreseeing that they will of their own accord believe. (4) Christ's death did not insure the salvation of anyone, for it did not secure the gift of faith to anyone (there is no such gift); what it did was rather to create a possibility of salvation for everyone if they did believe. (5) It rests with believers to keep themselves in a state of grace by keeping up their faith; those who fail here fall away and are lost. Thus, Arminianism made man's salvation depend ultimately on man himself, saving faith being viewed throughout as man's own work, and because of his own, not God's (work) in him. (Introductory Essay to John Owen's work, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, pp. 3-4).

ELECTION, FOREKNOWLEDGE, PREDESTINATION

One can easily see how crucial the teaching regarding foreknowledge is to the scheme of salvation. To a great extent, the doctrines of election and predestination hinge upon foreknowledge. Is *foreknowledge* merely a knowing before? Does God choose on the basis of what He sees? Does the choice of man determine the choice of God? Our understanding of the foreknowledge of God will determine both our view of salvation and the God of salvation. Is it true that AGod helps those who help themselves,@ or does God help those who cannot and will not help themselves? To a large extent the answer to such questions depends upon our understanding of the foreknowledge of God.

A. The Terms.

1. *Unconditional Election*

a. Election (*Eklektos*) signifies picked out, chosen, to select from out of.

- 1) "Ek," from: "lego," to gather or pick out.
- 2) "Elect" or "chosen" is expressed by one Greek word, except in Matt. 12:18 and II Thess. 2:13.
- 3) It occurs with its correlative 51 times in Scripture.

b. Unconditional - This term is used to describe the *kind* of election set forth in Scripture because of...

- 1) The *time* it took place, i.e., before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8; 17:8; Eph. 1:4; II Tim. 1:9; II Thess. 2:13).
- 2) The *nature* of it, i.e., pure, sovereign grace (Jn. 1:12-13; Rom. 9:9-13; 9:15-16, 18).
- 3) The *cause* of it, i.e., the cause is within God. We are justified freely (Rom. 3:24). *Dorean*, translated "freely," is from *gratuitous*, "a free tip," as we say. It is used of Christ to explain why men hated him in John 15:25. As Christ was hated "without a cause" (*Dorean*), so we are justified without a cause, i.e., freely.

2. *Foreordination/Foreknowledge*

a. Foreknow - *proginosko* (Rom. 8:29) "pro" - before "ginosko" - to know

b. Foreknowledge - *prognosis* - used only of divine foreknowledge; an aspect of divine omniscience (Eph 1:5, 11; Gal. 1:16).

c. Foreordination has to do with the broader sense of divine supremacy which embraces God's sovereign plan.

3. *Determine / Predestinate / Determine*

a. Determine / Determine - *Horizo* - to bound, to set a boundary, to mark out definitely.

"Truly the Son of man goeth as it was determined" (Luke 22:22) Christ's death was foreordained, or marked out from eternity. His death was settled and unchangeable (Acts 2:23).

b. Predestinate - *Proorizo* "pro" - before "destinate" - a boundary. (Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29-30)

A part or facet of overall foreordination which has reference to eternal destiny. The broader sense of divine sovereignty which embraces God's sovereign plan whereby He over all, in all things, decides and determines all that is to happen in His universe. From a sparrow's fall to the numbering of the hairs of the head to the maker of salvation. This means that, from God's perspective, there is no such thing as luck, good or bad, or chance. According to Ephesians 1:11, God "works *all* things after the counsel "decree) of His own will;" not *some* things, *most* things or *many* things - but *all* things.

Is this giving too much power to God? Is this exalting Him too highly? The only person who would object to God controlling all things would be one who has such a high opinion of himself he doesn't trust even God. Nevertheless, all is according to the will of God; His secret will being revealed in time, and His revealed will being declared in Scripture (Deut. 29:29).

B. A Critical Apology

What about election? All who believe the Bible believe in election, either conditional or unconditional. Pelagianism and Arminianism teach a conditional election, while Calvinism teaches an unconditional election. What does the Bible teach? Which of the following is Scriptural?

God elected me because I first elected to believe. He chose me because I first chose Him;

OR

I chose God because He first chose me. He elected me because I could not save myself.

Granted, the believer chooses God, and the believer is chosen of God. The question is, which was the first choice? Which choice resulted from the other? Which was the cause and which the effect? Is it true that "God is careful to elect only those whom He foresees will elect themselves?" Or has God sovereignly chosen his people according to His own will and pleasure?

According to scripture, election is unconditional. That is, God chose apart from setting forth any conditions to be met. But this was not done arbitrarily. There are at least three wise reasons why God elected unconditionally.

1. *Because of what God knew (Psalm 14)*

The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand and seek God (v. 2).

- And what did he observe?

They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one (v. 3).

The Lord knew from all eternity that men, if left alone, would never choose him, or even seek him. If any were to be spared He had to choose them. The Apostle Paul quoted this Psalm in Romans 3, when revealing the sinfulness of men.

- Again, in I Corinthians 2:14, Paul wrote:

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

According to this verse, man is in such unbelief that the things of God are to him utter foolishness, i.e., "they are foolishness unto him." Further, man is spiritually dead and thus cannot understand, i.e., "they must be spiritually discerned," or understood.

2. *Because of God's great love and mercy.*

I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee (Jer. 31:3).

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:44, 45).

Knowing the condition of man, and knowing what man would do in time, the Lord therefore knew that man could not and would not meet any conditions set forth. In sovereign mercy he chose to set his love upon man unconditionally. There was no other way for any person to be saved.

3. *What about Romans 8:29?*

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Many attempt to use this passage to prove conditional election. However, it actually establishes the opposite. Broadly speaking, there are two general views regarding the meaning and use of the word "foreknow" in this passage.

a. The Arminian and Pelagian viewpoint.

The Arminian and Pelagian commentators maintain that Paul is saying that God predestined to salvation those whom he *foreknew* would respond to His offer of grace. For example, Frederic Godet says,

In what respect did God thus foreknow them? They were foreknown as sure to fulfill the conditions of salvation, that is, faith; so, foreknown as his faith (Frederic Godet, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. p.325).

b. The Augustinian and/or Calvinistic viewpoint.

Augustinian commentators reject this view on two grounds: first, such an interpretation is not in keeping with the meaning of the language; secondly, such a view is out of harmony with the system of doctrine taught in the rest of the Scriptures.

C. The meaning of the language in the verse.

· It is about people, not the acting of people. The word is "whom," not "what." This verse says nothing about God knowing something about particular individuals, i.e., what they would do; but, rather it speaks of God *knowing* the individuals themselves.

· "Foreknow" could not have reference to what the individuals under consideration would do, for God knows what all men will do at all times. However, all men are not called, justified, and glorified, nor shall this be the lot for all men. This means that God does not "foreknow" all men in this sense of the verse.

· When the view is held that "foreknow" means "*what*" rather than "whom," the verse makes no sense.

- Example: "What He foreknew He also did predestinate, call, justify, and glorify?"
- The word is "foreknow," not "foresaw." To *foresee* has reference to pre-science; to *foreknow* has reference to love, favor, or an intimate relationship.
- Thus, to teach that God merely saw what someone would do is not in keeping with the meaning of this verse.

D. The Immediate Context

Romans 8:29 must be in harmony with preceding chapters. Consider the following:

- Rom. 1:29-32. Men are absolutely ruined, having no remote interest in God. How could God foresee that they were not interested and at the same time foresee that they would choose to serve Christ?
- Rom. 2:11. How could God choose on the basis of *what* he saw men would do without having respect for some?
- Rom. 3:9-18. How could God see that none would do good, i.e., repent and believe, that none understood or sought Him, and at the same time see that they would choose Him?
- Rom. 4. Abraham, the father of the faithful, never sought God; he was a worshipper of idols (Josh. 24:2). He is called "ungodly" (v. 5). How could God have foreseen Abraham choosing Him when he didn't know who God was?
- Rom. 9:11-13. God could not have chosen based upon what one would or would not do, for none had done good or evil.
- Rom. 10:13-17 No man can call on God to be saved without a preacher and God's Word.

1. "Foreknow"; "Foreknowledge"

"Foreknow" cannot refer to the foresight of faith or good works.

- Faith would be understood as man's gift to God, not God's gift to man.

Robert Haldane: A Faith cannot be the cause of foreknowledge because, foreknowledge is always before predestination and predestination is the effect of faith. @

As many as were ordained to eternal life believed (Acts 13:48).

- "Foreknow" cannot be the foreknowledge of good works for these are the *effects* of predestination.

We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10).

- It cannot be a foreknowledge of faith, for even Arminians agree that faith is a gift which God gives or creates. But for God to give faith means that He doesn't give faith to all and perhaps He gave faith to one against his will.

2. Conclusion

- "Foreknow" means to "fore-love," i.e., "Whom He did fore-love?"

Amos 3:2 He *knew* Israel only.

Jer. 1:5 He *knew* Jeremiah.

Matt. 7:22 I never *knew* you.

The fact that God chooses according to The foreknowledge of God is the *cause* of faith, "If one loves God, one is known by Him" (II Cor. 8:3).

- God's purpose of election preceded good or evil, and who would not say that faith is a good thing (Rom. 9:1011)?
- We are not saved by the righteous work of faith. The cause of salvation is the mercy of God, not faith (Tit. 3:5; Rom. 9:15).
- Paul's theology is such that it anticipates cries of "unrighteousness" and "injustice" from natural men, which it would never do if God's election was based upon man's will or if God chose everyone to be saved (Rom. 9:11-16, 18-21). That is, no one ever cries that *conditional* election is unjust. The cry is that unconditional election is unjust. If Paul is not teaching unconditional election why does he presuppose that men will protest?

His own will and not because of man's faith or goodness, proves that God chooses unconditionally.

ARMINIANISM: THE ROAD TO ROME!

by Augustus Toplady

WHOSE VOICE DO YOU HEAR?

"My sheep, saith Christ, hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never

perish. O, most worthy Scriptures! which ought to compel us to have a faithful remembrance, and to note the tenor thereof; which is, the sheep of Christ shall never perish.

"Doth Christ mean part of his elect, or all, think you? I do hold, and affirm, and also faithfully believe, that he meant all his elect, and not part, as some do full ungodly affirm. I confess and believe assuredly, that there shall never any of them perish: for I have good authority so to say; because Christ is my author, and saith, if it were possible, the very elect should be deceived. Ergo, it is not possible that they can be so deceived, that they shall ever finally perish, or be damned: wherefore, whosoever doth affirm that there may be any (i.e. any of the elect) lost, doth affirm that Christ hath a torn body."¹

The above valuable letter of recantation is thus inscribed: "A Letter to the Congregation of Free-willers, by One that had been of that Persuasion, but come off, and now a Prisoner for Religion:" which superscription will hereafter, in its due place, supply us with a remark of more than slight importance.

JOHN WESLEY, A FRIEND OF ROME?

To occupy the place of argument, it has been alleged that "Mr. Wesley is an old man;" and the Church of Rome is still older than he. Is that any reason why the enormities, either of the mother or the son, should pass unchastised?

It has also been suggested, that "Mr. Wesley is a very laborious man:" not more laborious, I presume, than a certain active being, who is said to go to and fro in the earth, and walk up and down in it:² nor yet more laborious, I should imagine, than certain ancient Sectarians, concerning whom it was long ago said, "Woe unto you Scribes, hypocrites; for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte:"³ nor, by any means, so usefully laborious, as a certain diligent member of the community, respecting whose variety of occupations the public have lately received the following intelligence: "The truth of the following instance of industry may be depended on: a poor man with a large family, now cries milk, every morning, in Lothbury, and the neighbourhood of the Royal Exchange; at eleven, he wheels about a barrow of potatoes; at one, he cleans shoes at the Change; after dinner, cries milk again; in the evening, sells sprats; and at night, finishes the measure of his labour as a watchman."⁴

THE QUARREL IS WITH THE WOLF

Mr. Sellon, moreover, reminds me (p. 128.) that, "while the shepherds are quarrelling, the wolf gets into the sheep fold;" not impossible: but it so happens, that the present quarrel is not among "the shepherds," but with the "wolf" himself; which "quarrel" is warranted by every maxim of pastoral meekness and fidelity.

I am further told, that, while I am "berating the Arminians, Rome and the devil laugh in their sleeves." Admitting that Mr. Sellon might derive this anecdote from the fountain head, the parties themselves, yet, as neither they nor he are very conspicuous for veracity, I construe the intelligence by the rule of reverse, though authenticated by the deposition of their right trusty and well-beloved cousin and counsellor.

Once more: I am charged with "excessive superciliousness, and majesty of pride:" and why not charged with having seven heads and ten horns, and a tail as long as a bell-rope? After all, what has my pride, or my humility, to do with the argument in hand? Whether I am haughty, or meek, is of no more consequence either to that, or to the public, than whether I am tall or short: however, I am, at this very time, giving one proof, that my "majesty of pride" can stoop; that even to ventilate the impertinences of Mr. Sellon.

ARMINIANS AT HOME IN ROME

But, however frivolous his cavils, the principles for which he contends are of the most pernicious nature and tendency. I must repeat, what already seems to have given him so much offence, that Arminianism "came from Rome, and leads thither again." Julian, bishop of Eclana a contemporary and disciple of Pelagius, was one of those who endeavoured, with much art, to gild the doctrines of that heresiarch, in order to render them more sightly and palatable. The Pelagian system, thus varnished and paliated, soon began to acquire the softer name of Semipelagianism. Let us take a view of it, as drawn to our hands by the celebrated Mr. Bower, who himself, in the main, a professed Pelagian, and therefore less likely to present us with an unfavourable portrait of the system he generally approved. Among the principles of that sect, this learned writer enumerates the following:

"The notion of election and reprobation, independent on our merits or demerits, is maintaining a fatal necessity, is the bane of all virtue, and serves only to render good men remiss in working out their salvation, and to drive sinners to despair.

"The decrees of election and reprobation are posterior to, and in consequence of, our good or evil works, as foreseen by God from all eternity."⁵

Is not this too the very language of modern Arminianism? Do not the partizans of that scheme argue on the same identical terms? Should it be said, "True, this proves that Arminianism is Pelagianism revived; but it does not prove, that the doctrines of Arminianism are originally Popish:" a moment's cool attention will make it plain that they are. Let us again hear Mr. Bower, who, after the passage just quoted, immediately adds, "on these two last propositions, the Jesuits found their whole system of grace and free-will; agreeing therein with the Semipelagians, against the Jansenists and St. Augustine."⁶ The Jesuits were moulded into a regular body, towards the middle of the sixteenth century: toward the close of the same century, Arminius began to infest the Protestant churches. It needs therefore no great penetration, to discern from what source he drew his poison. His journey to Rome (though Monsicur Bayle affects to make light of the inferences which were at that very time deduced from it) was not for nothing. If, however, any are disposed to believe, that Arminius imbibed his doctrines from the Socinians in Poland, with whom, it is certain, he was on terms of intimate friendship, I have no objection to splitting the difference: he might import some of his tenets from the Racovian brethren, and yet be indebted, for others, to the disciples of Loyola.

PAPISTS AND PREDESTINATION

Certain it is, that Arminius himself was sensible, how greatly the doctrine of predestination widens the distance between Protestantism and Popery. "There is no point of doctrines (says he) which the Papists, the Anabaptists, and the (new) Lutherans more fiercely oppose, nor by means of which they heap more discredit on the reformed churches, and bring the reformed system itself into more

odium; for they (i.e. the Papists, & etc.) assert, that no fouler blasphemy against God can be thought or expressed, than is contained in the doctrine of predestination."7 For which reason, he advises the reformed world to discard predestination from their creed, in order that they may live on more brotherly terms with the Papists, the Anabaptists, and such like.

The Arminian writers make no scruple to seize and retail each other's arguments, as common property. Hence, Samuel Hoord copies from Van Harmin the self same observation which I have now cited. "Predestination (says Samuel) is an opinion odious to the Papists, opening their foul mouths, against our Church and religion:"8 consequently, our adopting the opposite doctrines of universal grace and freewill, would, by bringing us so many degrees nearer to the Papists, conduce to shut their mouths, and make them regard us, so far at least, as their own orthodox and dearly beloved brethren: whence it follows, that, as Arminianism came from Rome, so "it leads thither again."

THE JESUITS AND PREDESTINATION

If the joint verdict of Arminius himself, and of his English proselyte Hoord, will not turn the scale, let us add the testimony of a professed Jesuit, by way of making up full weight. When archbishop Laud's papers were examined, a letter was found among them, thus endorsed with that prelate's own hand: "March, 1628. A Jesuit's Letter, sent to the Rector at Brussels, about the ensuing Parliament." The design of this letter was to give the Superior of the Jesuits, then resident at Brussels, an account of the posture of civil and ecclesiastical affairs in England; an extract from it I shall here subjoin: "Father Rector, let not the damp of astonishment seize upon your ardent and zealous soul, in apprehending the sodaine and unexpected calling of a Parliament. We have now many strings to our bow. We have planted that soveraigne drugge Arminianisme, which we hope will purge the Protestants from their heresie; and it flourisheth and beares fruit in due season. For the better prevention of the Puritanes, the Arminians have already locked up the Duke's (of Buckingham) eares; and we have those of our owne religion, which stand continually at the Duke's chamber, to see who goes in and out: we cannot be too circumspect and carefull in this regard. I am, at this time, transported with joy, to see how happily all instruments and means, as well great as lesser, co-operate unto our purposes. But, to return unto the maine fabricke:ŃOUR FOUNDATION IS ARMINIANISME. The Arminians and projectors, as it appeares in the premises, affect mutation. This we second and enforce by probable arguments."9

THE SOVEREIGN DRUG ARMINIANISM

The "Sovereign drug, Arminianism," which said the Jesuit, "we (i.e. we Papists) have planted" in England, did indeed bid fair "to purge our Protestant Church effectually. How merrily Popery and Arminianism, at that time, danced hand in hand, may be learned from Tindal: "The churches were adorned with paintings, images, altar-pieces, & etc. and, instead of communion tables, alters were set up, and bowings to them and the sacramental elements enjoined. The predestinarian doctrines were forbid, not only to be preached, but to be printed; and the Arminian sense of the Articles was encouraged and propagated."10 The Jesuit, therefore, did not exult without cause. The "sovereign drug," so lately "planted," did indeed take deep root downward, and bring forth fruit upward, under the cherishing auspices of Charles and Laud. Heylyn, too, acknowledges, that the state of things was truly described by another Jesuit of that age, who wrote: "Protestantism waxeth weary of itself. The doctrine (by the Arminians, who then sat at the helm) is altered in many things, for which their progenitors forsook the Church of Rome: as limbus patrum; prayer for the dead, and possibility of keeping God's commandments; and the accounting of Calvinism to be heresy at least, if not treason."11

ARMINIANISM FROM THE PIT

The maintaining of these positions, by the Court divines, was an "alteration" indeed; which the abandoned Heylyn ascribes to "the ingenuity and moderation found in some professors of our religion." If we sum up the evidence that has been given, we shall find its amount to be, that Arminianism came from the Church of Rome, and leads back again to the pit whence it was digged.

Endnotes: 1. Strype, u.s. 2. Job 1:7 with 1 Peter 5:8. 3. Matt. 23:15. 4. Bath Chronicle, for Feb. 6, 1772. 5. Bower's Hist. of the Popes, vol. 1, p. 350. 6. Bower ibid. 7. Arminius, in Oper. P.115. Ludg. 1629. (See book for Latin.) 8. Hoord, In Bishop Davenant's Animadversions, Camb. 1641. 9. Hidden works of darkness, p. 89, 90. Edit. 1645. 10. Tindal's Contin. of Rapin, vol. 3 octavo, 1758. 11. Life of Laud, p. 238.

Does Scripture Teach Preventive Grace in the Wesleyan Sense?

Thomas R. Schreiner

Chapter 9 in Still Sovereign. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware, eds. Grand Rapids, Baker, 2000.

The Nature of Fallen Humanity

This chapter explores whether the Wesleyan concept of preventive grace can be supported from the Scriptures. Before examining this question, I want to emphasize that there is a significant area of common ground between Wesleyans and Calvinists. The disagreements that we have in some areas can cause us to overlook the extent to which we agree on major doctrines. In one arena of theology, namely, anthropology, the harmony between Wesleyans and Calvinists is of the utmost importance and our harmony in this area should be celebrated. Both camps acknowledge that fallen human beings are born with a corrupt nature that is in bondage to sin, and that human beings can do no good apart from the grace of God.

To sketch in the biblical data on the human condition since the fall is helpful. Thereby we will see the extent to which Wesleyans and Calvinists agree, and the gulf that the Wesleyan understanding of preventive grace creates between Arminians and Calvinists will also be illuminated. Paul teaches that all human beings are born with a corrupt nature inherited from Adam (Rom. 5:12-19). Without specifying the precise connection between Adam's sin and our condemnation—which is itself the subject of a long theological controversy—it is clear from the text that we are sinners because of Adam's sin.1 Through Adam's sin we died (Rom. 5:15, 17), are

condemned (Rom. 5:16, 18), and are constituted as sinners (Rom. 5:19).²

Harmonizing with this portrait of humanity in Romans 5 is Ephesians 2:3, which says we are by nature "objects of wrath." Human beings by nature (*physei*) are deserving of wrath, indicating that they are all born with a nature that is sinful. The near context in Ephesians 2 confirms the depth of human depravity. Human beings are "dead in transgressions and sins" (Eph. 2:1; cf. 2:5 and Col. 2:13). The deadness of fallen humanity indicates that we are devoid of life upon our entrance into the world. We have no inclination toward genuine righteousness or goodness. Paul proceeds to say in Ephesians 2:2-3 that we lived under the sway of the world, the devil, and the flesh before conversion.

What is in the consciousness of those who are under the control of the "flesh"? There is not necessarily a conscious awareness of rebellion against God. Life in the flesh consists in "gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts" (Eph. 2:3). The desires of people who are "by nature objects of wrath" are naturally and instinctively sinful desires. In other words, unregenerate people sin by merely doing what they wish to do,

1 For two insightful treatments of this text see Douglas J Moo, *Romans 1-8*, WEC (Chicago Moody, 1991), 325

59, C E B Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols, ICC

(Edinburgh T. and T. Clark, 1975, 1979), 269-91. 2 Arthur Skevington Wood ("The Contribution of John Wesley to the Theology of Grace," in *Grace Unlimited*,

ed. Clark H Pinnock [Minneapolis Bethany Fellowship, 1975], 212) demonstrates that Wesley interpreted our participation in Adam's sin similarly.

by carrying out the motivations that are in their hearts. Sinful desires dominate those who are in the flesh.

Is there biblical warrant for saying that the desires of the unregenerate are dominated by sin? Ephesians 2:3 suggests such a conclusion in saying that people are dead in trespasses and sins and that they are "by nature objects of wrath." The trespasses and sins flow from a nature that is sinful and warrants God's wrath. Titus 3:3 confirms such a conclusion. "At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another." Note here that Paul says that we were "enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures" (*italics added*). It is fair to conclude that people who are enslaved by their own desires are under the domination and tyranny of sin. This kind of tyranny is not externally coerced. People do what they want to do, in that they pursue their own pleasures and desires. Nonetheless, to describe this pursuit of their own desires as slavery because they have no desire, inclination, or aspiration to do good is appropriate.

The bondage of the will, then, is a slavery to our own desires. Unregenerate human beings are captivated by what they want to do! Jesus himself diagnosed sinning as an indication of slavery. "Everyone who sins is a slave to sin" (John 8:34; cf. 2 Pet. 2:19). Paul confirms that unregenerate people are slaves of sin. He reminds the Romans that "you are slaves to sin" (Rom. 6:17) and speaks of the time "when you were slaves to sin" (Rom. 6:20). They had presented "the parts of [their] bod[ies] in slavery to impurity and ever-increasing wickedness" (Rom. 6:19). Believers have been crucified with Christ "so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin" (Rom. 6:6). If Christ died so that we should no longer be slaves to sin, the clear implication is that we were formerly slaves to sin. Sin is described in Romans 6 as a power that holds its captives in thralldom. Unbelievers are enslaved to sin in the sense that all they want to do is sin. They are free to do what is good in the sense that they have opportunities to do so. They fail to avail themselves of these opportunities, however, because they do not desire to do what is good. The captivity of sin is so powerful that they always desire to sin.

Do unregenerate human beings always sin? Is there not some good in their lives? We are not saying that they are as evil as they can possibly be. Jesus says, "... you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children" (Luke 11:13). If people were as evil as they possibly could be, they would not desire to give good things to their children. They would presumably find ways to inflict only evil upon their children. Unbelieving parents often love their children and their friends (cf. Matt. 5:46-47). They also may do much that is good for society. It should be noted that Jesus still says that they are evil. Evil people still give good gifts to their children and do kind things for other people.

If people are not as sinful as they can possibly be, then in what sense are they slaves to sin? It is crucial to establish a biblical definition of sin. Of course, sin consists in disobeying the law (1 John 3:4). But the root of sin is much deeper than this. Romans 1:21-25 clarifies that the heart of sin is failing to glorify God as God. The heart of sin is a belittling of God and a scorning of his glory, which involves a failure to glorify and thank him (Rom. 1:21). As Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Sinners do not give God the supreme place in their lives but exchange "the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles" (Rom. 1:23). In other words, people "served created things rather than the Creator" (Rom. 1:25). Sin is not first and

foremost the practice of evil deeds but an attitude that gives glory to something other than God. People may be loving to their children and kind to their neighbors and never give a thought to God. The essence of sin is self-worship rather than God-worship. The serpent persuaded Eve and Adam to eat the fruit of the tree by promising them that they would "be like God" (Gen. 3:5). They could dispense with God and worship themselves; they would worship the creature rather than the Creator.

Such a conception of sin helps us understand how people can perform actions that externally conform with righteousness yet remain slaves of sin. These actions are not motivated by a desire to honor and glorify God as God. They are not done out of an attitude of faith, which brings glory to God (Rom. 4:20). Faith brings glory to God because he is seen to be the all-powerful one who supplies our every good, and thus is deserving of praise and honor. Actions that externally conform with righteousness may still be sin, in that they are not done for God's glory and by faith. The necessity of faith is underscored by Romans 14:23, where Paul notes that "everything that does not come from faith is sin." Slavery to sin does not mean that people always engage in reprehensible behavior. It means that the unregenerate never desire to bring glory to God, but are passionately committed to upholding their own glory and honor. Of course, the power of sin is such that all have fallen short of conformity with God's law (Rom. 1:18-3:20). No one has perfectly done all

that the law requires. The extent of our slavery to sin is, however, even deeper than this. It is not merely that the "sinful mind is hostile to God" (Rom. 8:7). It is also true that it "does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so" (Rom. 8:7). Those in the flesh have an intense hatred of God burning within them, whether they are conscious of this or not. Moreover, they have no ability to keep God's law. Paul is not saying that there is no opportunity to keep the law. Nor is he saying that people want to keep the law, but God prevents them from keeping it. His point is that those in the flesh have no moral ability to keep the law perfectly or to glorify God. The power of sin is so great that they "cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8) and do his will. They are slaves to sin.

The Wesleyan View of Fallen Humanity

It is notable that John Wesley would agree with the preceding diagnosis. He writes,

I believe that Adam, before his fall, had such freedom of will, that he might choose either good or evil; but that, since the fall, no child of man has a natural power to choose anything that is truly good. Yet I know (and who does not?) that man has still freedom of will in things of indifferent nature.³

Human beings since the fall are so enmeshed in the power of sin that apart from divine grace they cannot choose what is spiritually good.⁴ This point is often acknowledged by Wesley scholars.⁵ Harald Lindström rightly remarks that "Wesley maintains that natural man

³ The Works of John Wesley, ed. T. Jackson, 14 vols. (1831; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 10:350.

Hereafter designated as Works. ⁴ Wesleyan theology differs from that of Charles Finney in that Finney believed that all people possess the

ability, apart from grace, to choose what is good. Contrary to Wesleyans he rejects the idea that people are

born morally depraved because of Adam's sin. Thus, it is not surprising to learn that Finney repudiated the

doctrine of prevenient grace. See J. E. Smith, "The Theology of Charles Finney: A System of Self-

Reformation," *Trin J* 13 (1992): 75-77, 82-84. ⁵ See Wood, "Theology of Grace," 212-13; Charles A. Rogers, *The Concept of Prevenient Grace in the Theology*

of John Wesley (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1967), 107-13, 156-58, 194-98, 200-2.

is totally corrupt."⁶ He is "sinful through and through, has no knowledge of God and no power to turn to him of his own free will."⁷ Robert V. Rakestraw says that in Wesley's theology "men and women are born in sin and unable in themselves to make the least move toward God."⁸ Colin W. Williams affirms the same point: "Because of original sin, the natural man is 'dead to God' and unable to move toward God or respond to him."⁹ Leo G. Cox says, "By nature man receives nothing that is good. ... He is free but free only to do evil and to follow on in the way of sin."¹⁰ Wesley did not believe that the will of fallen humanity was free. He says, "Such is the freedom of the will; free only to evil; free to 'drink iniquity like water;' to wander farther and farther from the living God, and do more 'despite to the Spirit of grace!'"¹¹ The Wesleyan analysis of the human condition does not differ fundamentally from the Calvinistic one.¹² Indeed, in 1745 John Wesley said that his theology was "within a hair's breadth" of Calvinism "(1) In ascribing all good to the free grace of God. (2) In denying all natural free-will, and all power antecedent to grace. And, (3) In excluding all merit from man; even for what he has or does by the grace of God."¹³ Wesley's analysis of the human condition and his bold proclamation of divine grace should warm the heart of any evangelical Calvinist.

Prevenient Grace in the Wesleyan System

If Wesleyans and Calvinists concur on the human condition, wherein do they differ? One major place that Wesleyans break with Calvinists is through their doctrine of prevenient grace. Elton Hendricks says that this doctrine "played a more important role in Wesley's theological thought than in that of any other Protestant theologian."¹⁴ Williams affirms that it "has very great significance in his theology."¹⁵ Even though Calvinists and Arminians hold much in common, H. Ray Dunning rightly says that "the truth that holds them but a hair's breadth apart at the point of the watershed is the doctrine of prevenient grace."¹⁶ The differences between Calvinists and Arminians on this point should not be minimized. William Ragsdale Cannon is correct in saying that "though Wesleyanism and Calvinism come in this instance so close together, they are in reality worlds apart."¹⁷ How crucial is prevenient grace to the Wesleyan system? Wesleyans themselves seem to concur that their theology hinges on the doctrine. Robert E. Chiles says that "without it, the Calvinist logic is irrefutable."¹⁸ Williams asserts that Wesley's theology of prevenient grace "broke the chain of logical

⁶ Harald Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification: A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation* (London: Epworth,

1950), 45. ⁷ Ibid. ⁸ Robert V. Rakestraw, "John Wesley as a Theologian of Grace," *JETS* 27 (1984): 196. ⁹ Colin W. Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1960), 41. ¹⁰ Leo G. Cox, "Prevenient Grace-A Wesleyan View," *JETS* 12 (1969): 147.

¹¹ Works, 5:104. ¹² So also Melvin E. Dieter, "The Wesleyan Perspective," in *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids:

Zondervan, 1987), 21-23; M. Elton Hendricks, "John Wesley and Natural Theology," *Wesley Th J* 18 (1983): 9; J. Weldon Smith III, "Some Notes on Wesley's Doctrine of Prevenient Grace," *Religion in Life* 34 (1964/65): 70-74. The extent of the agreement should be qualified, according to H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill, 1952), 2:353.

¹³ Works, 8:284-85. Italics added. ¹⁴ Hendricks, "Natural Theology," 8. ¹⁵ Williams, *Wesley's Theology*, 41. ¹⁶ H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon

Hill, 1988), 49. ¹⁷ William Ragsdale Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley: With Special Reference to the Doctrine of Justification* (New York: University Press of America, 1974), 102. ¹⁸ Robert E. Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism: 1790-1935* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965),

50. necessity by which the Calvinist doctrine of predestination seems to flow from the doctrine of original sin."19 It seems fair to conclude that if prevenient grace is not taught in Scripture, then the credibility of Wesleyan theology is seriously undermined.

Before probing to see whether Scripture teaches prevenient grace, it is necessary to explore what Wesleyans mean by the term. We need to recall that Wesley himself was not a systematic theologian but a pastoral theologian who developed his theology in the course of his ministry. Thus, no systematic treatment of the theme of prevenient grace is found in his writings.²⁰ In Wesleyan theology there are various conceptions of prevenient grace that we do not need to specify here since, as we shall see, there is common ground within the various positions on the issue that concerns us.²¹

In some respects Wesleyans use the term prevenient grace in a way that matches with the Calvinist term common grace.²² The conscience, according to Wesley, is to be ascribed to prevenient grace.²³ It is not to be understood as a natural gift but is supernaturally given by God.²⁴ In addition, some moral excellence and virtue in the world exists even among those who are unregenerate.²⁵ Prevenient grace is responsible for the goodness that is present to some extent in every society, even in cultures that are largely non-Christian.²⁶ We are not surprised to learn, then, that the relationship between prevenient grace and natural theology has been explored by some, with a close connection being suggested.²⁷

The Wesleyan understanding of prevenient grace differs from the Calvinistic conception of common grace in one important area. In the Calvinistic scheme common grace does not and cannot lead to salvation. It functions to restrain evil in the world but does not lead unbelievers to faith. For Wesleyans, prevenient grace may lead one to salvation. Cox rightly says, "The Wesleyan teaches that the prevenient grace leads on to saving grace, prepares for it, enables a person to enter into it."²⁸ Indeed, in Wesley's theology it seems that a proper response to prevenient grace could lead to the salvation of those who have not heard

19 Williams, *Wesley's Theology*, 44. See also his comments on 46. In agreement with Williams are Rakestraw ("John Wesley," 197) and Wood ("Theology of Grace," 215).

20 For a survey of the positions of Wesley and John Fletcher see Mark Royster, *John Wesley's Doctrine of Prevenient Grace in Missiological Perspective* (D.Miss. dissertation, Asbury Theological Seminary, 1989), 30-72.

21 Rogers in his dissertation (see n. 5) has provided the most comprehensive analysis of Wesley's doctrine. See particularly his distinction between the early (Prevenient Grace, 127-35) and later Wesley (159-263) on prevenient grace. For the purposes of this chapter only Wesley's later theology of prevenient grace is in view. Rogers also includes a survey (5-16) of Wesleyan scholarship on prevenient grace; see also Royster (*Missiological Perspective*, 73-93). For three different understandings of prevenient grace in the Wesleyan tradition see Thomas A. Langford, *Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), 33. Chiles (*American Methodism*, 150-51) specifies two strands of prevenient grace among Wesleyans.

22 So Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 296; cf. Cox, "Prevenient Grace," 143-44. In fact, Wiley (*Christian Theology*, 2:357) thinks that the Wesleyan conception of prevenient grace precludes any need for "common grace."

23 Works, 7:187-88. For Wesley's understanding of the role of prevenient grace in relationship to the conscience see Rogers, *Prevenient Grace*, 184-89. 24 So Rakestraw, "John Wesley," 197; Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification*, 48. Wesley (Works, 7:187; see also

6:512) specifically says it is "a supernatural gift." 25 Wesley, Works, 7:345; see also 7:374. 26 So John Miley, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1894), 2:244, 246. 27 See Hendricks, "Natural Theology," 7-17; Smith, "Prevenient Grace," 77-80; Lindström, *Wesley and*

Sanctification, 46-47. 28 Cox, "Prevenient Grace," 144.

the gospel.²⁹ What we are interested in exploring, however, is not how prevenient grace affects those who have never heard the gospel. The distinctive aspect of prevenient grace that is relevant for our discussion is that it provides the ability to choose salvation, an ability that was surrendered by Adam's sin. Wesley describes it as follows:

Salvation begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) preventing grace; including the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first slight transient conviction of having sinned against him. All these imply some tendency toward life; some degree of salvation; the beginning of a deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart, quite insensible of God and the things of God.³⁰

What separates Calvinists from Wesleyans is that the former see electing grace as given only to some (the elect) and insist that this grace cannot ultimately be resisted. The latter argue that prevenient grace is given to all people and that it can be resisted.

What is common in all Wesleyan theories of prevenient grace is that the freedom, which was lost in Adam's sin, is sufficiently restored to enable people to choose salvation. ³¹ Prevenient grace provides people with the ability to choose or reject God. As sinners born in

29 See Dunning (*Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 161-70) for a helpful discussion. See also Rogers, *Prevenient Grace*, 243-47.

30 Works, 6:509.

31 The description of prevenient grace in this paragraph is supported by Langford, *Practical Divinity*, 33; Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 339; Rakestraw, "John Wesley," 196; Williams, *Wesley's Theology*, 41, 46; Chiles, *American Methodism*, 149; Cox, "Prevenient Grace," 147-49; Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification*, 45-46; Hendricks, "Natural Theology," 9-11; Smith, "Prevenient Grace," 75; Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, rev. Vernon D. Doerksen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 106, 259;

William B. Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1880), 2:358-67. Rogers's own conclusions regarding Wesley's understanding of prevenient grace, on first glance, seem to be radically different from that suggested by the other scholars. Further analysis, however, reveals that the difference is one of degree, not one of kind. Rogers argues (*Prevenient Grace*, 217-19) that prevenient grace, according to Wesley, does not provide people with the ability to choose salvation. Prevenient grace in Wesley's thought is a gift given, not a gift that is offered and can be rejected. People are passive in the reception of faith, and there is no emphasis on the role of human decision in receiving faith. Thus faith is irresistible at the moment given. Rogers's explanation may lead one to think that Wesley was a Calvinist! But this is not the whole story. Rogers contends that prevenient grace (*Prevenient Grace*, 228-30, 237, 271, 282-83, 288) in Wesley's thought plays a decisive role before one comes to faith. Prevenient grace operates through the law and conscience to bring conviction of sin and despair of ever pleasing God. People have the freedom to resist the conviction of sin that comes from the law and conscience. If they do not respond appropriately to the conviction of sin mediated by the law and conscience, then they will not be saved. Prevenient grace leads one to the very brink of salvation if one responds positively to the "means of grace" that precede saving faith. Thus, prevenient grace is irresistible at the moment one exercises faith, but long before one receives faith the grace of God can be resisted. Only those who satisfactorily respond to prevenient grace come to the point where saving faith can be exercised. It seems that Rogers is in harmony with other Wesleyans in his conception of prevenient grace, for the grace God gives can still be resisted. Human beings may choose to respond to or resist the influence of the law and conscience. The final and ultimate determination lies with human choice. Rogers differs from other Wesleyans in locating the point of resistance in another place in Wesley's theology, namely, one's response to the means of grace before conversion. For views that are quite similar to Rogers's see Royster (*Missiologiical Perspective*, 90-91) and Robert E. Cushman, "Salvation for All: Wesley and Calvinism," in *Methodism*, ed. W. K. Anderson (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1947). It is clear from Royster's concluding definition that ability to choose what is good is included in his understanding of prevenient grace, for he says (92) that prevenient grace provides "the freedom/power to respond positively to subsequent directions from God."

Adam, they had no ability to do good or to choose what is right. But as recipients of prevenient grace they can once again choose the good. Wesley said, "Natural free-will, in the present state of mankind, I do not understand: I only assert, that there is a measure of free-will supernaturally restored to every man, together with that supernatural light which 'enlightens every man that cometh into the world.'"³² Prevenient grace does not guarantee that the good will be chosen. It simply provides the opportunity or liberty to choose salvation. People may stifle the grace given and turn away from God, or they may respond to God's grace and turn to him in order to be saved.

Obviously, prevenient grace fixes a large gulf between Calvinism and Wesleyanism. Calvinists contend that the unregenerate have no ability or desire to choose God. God's election of some is what brings them from darkness to light, from Satan's kingdom to God's. Wesleyans believe that God has given prevenient grace to all people. As descendants of Adam they were born with no ability or desire to choose God, but God has counteracted this inability by the gift of prevenient grace. Now all people have the ability to choose God. The ultimate determination of salvation is the human decision to say no or yes to God.³³

Wesleyan Arguments in Favor of Prevenient Grace

For all Bible-believing Christians, the most important question in matters of doctrinal dispute is this: what is the Bible's teaching as it pertains to the issue at hand? Calvinists and Arminians likewise must turn to the Bible. The critical question is whether or not the doctrine of prevenient grace is supported by Scripture. We cannot examine this issue until we see the arguments that are put forward to defend the doctrine. Wesleyans use at least four arguments to support the idea that prevenient grace is a doctrine rooted in Scripture.

First, the Scripture text that is appealed to quite often is John 1:9.³⁴ "The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world." The meaning of this text is not analyzed in detail by Wesleyan scholars, but their understanding seems clear enough. The coming of Jesus Christ into the world brought enough light to all people so that they are now able to reject or accept the message of the gospel. The illumination (*photizei*) refers to the granting of grace that overcomes the darkness that penetrated human hearts as a result of Adam's sin. This illumination does not guarantee salvation; it simply makes it possible for men and women to choose salvation.

Such an understanding of the verse may be confirmed in the subsequent context. Some rejected the light and "did not receive him" (John 1:11), while others responded to the light and "received him" (John 1:12). It should also be noted that this illumination is not restricted to a few. It is granted to "every person" (*panta anthropon*). This would support the Wesleyan view that prevenient grace is given to all people.

A second argument employed by Wesleyans is that prevenient grace is granted in the atonement of Christ (e.g., Tit. 2:11; John 12:32).³⁵ This argument is bound up with the

³² Works, 10:229-30.

³³ Rakestraw ("John Wesley," 199) rightly says that in Wesley's theology "that one is ultimately the determining factor in the decision of his or her justification. Faith is offered as God's free gift, but the sinner must then

actively respond to that offer and reach out with the arms of true repentance to receive the gift." ³⁴ E.g., Wesley, Works, 10:230, 7:188; Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification*, 45. ³⁵ So, e.g., Miley, *Systematic Theology*, 2:247; Wiley, *Christian Theology*, 2:353; Adam Clarke, *Christian*

Theology (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1835), 117; Wood, "Theology of Grace," 216; Langford, *Practical*

universality of Christ's atonement. His death for all necessarily implies that grace is given to some extent to all. The argument is that Christ would not die for all unless all were granted the opportunity to accept or reject him. John 12:32 can be understood as supporting this theory. Jesus says, "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." Henry Thiessen says about this verse, "There issues a power from the cross of Christ that goes out to all men, though many continue to resist that power."³⁶ In the death of Christ grace is operative so that all people are "drawn" (*helkuo*) to him. The drawing does not guarantee

salvation but makes it possible,³⁷ supporting the idea that grace is given in the atonement that reverses the total inability of people to choose God. In addition, it should be pointed out that John 12:32 refers to "all people" (pantas). The grace given in the atonement is not limited to some but is universally distributed, giving all people everywhere the opportunity to respond or reject it.

The third Wesleyan argument in favor of prevenient grace has a theological cast. God must have granted the power to choose him because otherwise the warnings, invitations, and commands in Scripture are meaningless.³⁸ Why would God give commands to people if they are unable to put them into practice? There are numerous texts in Scripture in which commands, invitations, and warnings are employed. Perhaps Romans 2:4 is a particularly appropriate verse to cite in support.³⁹ "Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?" God would not command people to repent and be waiting for them to repent if he knew that they could not do so. His kindness is such that he has provided the means for every person to repent if they would only avail themselves of that means.

Fourth, prevenient grace is supported by the very nature of God.⁴⁰ A God of mercy, wisdom, justice, and love would not leave human beings without an opportunity to repent and choose salvation. A God of love and mercy who desires all to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4) would see to it that all have the chance to partake of salvation. If God elects only a few, he is guilty of partiality.⁴¹

A Critique of the Wesleyan Arguments for Prevenient Grace

We now proceed to analyze the four arguments for prevenient grace advanced by Wesleyans. I will argue that their case is unpersuasive and that their doctrine of prevenient grace is not found in Scripture. Wesleyans, however, advance some exegetical and theological arguments in defense of prevenient grace that will be considered here.

We turn first of all to John 1:9. The crucial phrase for our purposes is *photizei panta anthropon* (enlightens every person), which enlightening is ascribed to "the true light." Wesleyans understand this enlightenment to refer to prevenient grace, which is given to all people, but there are serious reasons for doubting that this is the meaning of the verse. In fact, the verse can be understood in three other ways that do not yield the Wesleyan interpretation.

Divinity, 34; Smith, "Prevenient Grace," 75; Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification*, 49; Dunning, *Grace,*

Faith, and Holiness, 339. 36 Thiessen, *Systematic Theology*, 261. 37 Cf. Grant R. Osborne, "Soteriology in the Gospel of John," in *The Grace of God, the Will of Man: A Case for*

Arminianism, ed. Clark H. Pinnock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 249. 38 Cf. Clarke, *Christian Theology*, 130, 132; Miley, *Systematic Theology*, 2:245-46. 39 Cf. Thiessen, *Systematic Theology*, 106. 40 So Wesley, *Works*, 10:36ff; Wood, "Theology of Grace," 211-12; Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification*, 46. 41 Cf. Thiessen, *Systematic Theology*, 260.

First, the illumination could refer to general revelation, which is granted to all people through the created order.⁴² This shifts the debate to different ground, for some argue that general revelation is sufficient for salvation.⁴³ Such a view is unpersuasive given Paul's estimation of general revelation in Romans 1:18-32.⁴⁴ In any case, D. A. Carson is correct in dismissing a reference to general revelation since this would have been more appropriately dealt with earlier in the prologue (i.e., John 1:3-4).⁴⁵ The specific context is not general revelation but the response of people to the incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ.

Second, the illumination may refer to an inward illumination that leads to conversion.⁴⁶ In this case, John would not be saying that illumination is given to all people "without exception" but to all "without distinction."⁴⁷ The light is not confined to the Jews, but also has an effect among the Gentiles. Other sheep that are not of the fold of the Jews will be brought in (John 10:16). Jesus died not only for the Jews but also for the children of God scattered throughout the world (John 11:51-52).

The context of John 1:9-13, however, suggests that another interpretation is the most probable.⁴⁸ The word enlighten (*photizo*) refers not to inward illumination but to the exposure that comes when light is shed upon something. Some are shown to be evil because they did not know or receive Jesus (John 1:10-11), while others are revealed to be righteous because they have received Jesus and have been born of God (John 1:12-13). John 3:19-21 confirms this interpretation. Those who are evil shrink from coming to the light because they do not want their works to be exposed (v. 20). But those who practice the truth gladly come to the light so that it might be manifest that their works are wrought in God (v. 21). The light that enlightens every person does not entail the bestowment of grace, nor does it refer to the inward illumination of the heart by the Spirit of God. Rather, the light exposes and reveals the moral and spiritual state of one's heart. C. K. Barrett rightly says that "the light shines upon every man for judgement, to reveal what he is."⁴⁹ Or, as Carson remarks, "Inner illumination is then not in view" but "the objective revelation" that occurs at the coming of the "true light."⁵⁰ John 1:9 is not, therefore, suggesting that through Christ's coming each person is given the ability to choose salvation. The purpose of the verse is to say that the coming of the true light exposes and reveals where people are in their relationship to God.⁵¹

⁴² So Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 95. ⁴³ In fact, in Wesleyan theology there is not a clear line of demarcation between general revelation and special revelation with respect to prevenient grace. See above.

⁴⁴ See Moo's (Romans 1-8, 91-124) thorough exegesis in defense of this conclusion. Neither does Romans 2:14-15 suggest the possibility of salvation through obeying one's conscience. See Thomas R. Schreiner, "Does Paul Believe in Justification by Works? Another Look at Romans 2," *The Bulletin for Biblical Research* 3 (1993): 131-58. Wesley believed that this passage taught the doctrine of prevenient grace. See John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, 2 vols. (reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), comment on Romans 2:14 in volume 2.

⁴⁵ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 123. ⁴⁶ The word *photizo* has the meaning of inward illumination in, e.g., Psalm 18:9 (LXX); Ephesians 1:18; 3:9. ⁴⁷ So Carson, *John*, 123. ⁴⁸ For the interpretation suggested here see C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Philadelphia:

Westminster, 21978), 161; Carson, *John*, 124. ⁴⁹ Barrett, *John*, 161. ⁵⁰ Carson, *John*, 124. ⁵¹ John emphasizes that the light, Jesus, has come into the world so that people might believe in him (1:6-8;

12:35-36) or follow him (8:12). The call to believe in the light, though, is a far cry from saying that all have been given the ability to

do so. Indeed, John, speaking of those who did not believe, says they "could not believe" because God "has blinded their eyes" (12:39-40). This judicial hardening by God does not lessen human responsibility in John's eyes (cf. 12:43). Jesus has come into the world as light so that people would

Wesleyans appeal to grace given in the atonement and Christ's death for all as an indication of prevenient grace. I shall not examine the question of the extent of the atonement since that is treated elsewhere in this work.⁵² Indeed, Calvinists have typically seen grace as bestowed upon the elect in the atonement, but in this case the grace bestowed is effective and guarantees salvation. The question is whether in the atonement of Christ the Wesleyan conception of prevenient grace is taught; that is, does Scripture teach that people are given the ability to choose or to reject God by virtue of the atonement? Doubtless grace is manifested in the atonement. For instance, Titus 2:11 says that "the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." Calvinists usually argue that this text teaches that the atonement secures and accomplishes redemption for the elect. It is not my purpose to defend or refute that interpretation. Even if the text were suggesting that salvation is potentially available for all people (cf. 1 Tim. 4:10), that is a far cry from saying that through the atonement God has counteracted the effects of Adam's sin so that all people have the opportunity to accept or reject him. Titus 2:11 says that God's grace has been manifested through Christ's work on the cross, but it does not say that God has thereby supplied the ability to believe to all people. Wesleyans conclude from the atonement effected by Christ that enough grace has been imparted to all people so that they can now choose whether or not to believe. But it is precisely this point that is not taught explicitly in the verse. It does not necessarily follow that since grace was manifested in the death of Christ that all people as a result have the ability to believe in him. Specific exegetical support for this conclusion is lacking.

A text that might lead to the Wesleyan conclusion is John 12:32. But this involves a misreading of the text. In John 6:37 Jesus says, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away." Note that this text specifically teaches that only some will come to Jesus, namely, those who have been given by the Father to the Son. In other words, the Father has not given all to the Son; he has selected only some, and it is they who will come to the Son and believe in him (cf. John 6:35).⁵³ The teaching of John 6:37 is reaffirmed in 6:44. "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him at the last day." The word draw (*helkuo*), which is used in John 12:32, is also used in John 6:37. The point of John 6:44 is that the Father does not draw all people, only some. Carson rightly remarks, "The combination of v[er]se 37a and v[er]se 44 prove that this 'drawing' activity of the Father cannot be reduced to what theologians sometimes call 'prevenient grace' dispensed to every individual, for this 'drawing' is selective, or else the negative note of v[er]se 44 is meaningless."⁵⁴ The Johannine conception of drawing is not that it makes salvation possible, but that it makes salvation effectual. Those who are drawn will come to Jesus and believe in him.

Does this definition of drawing mean that John teaches universalism, since 12:32 says that Jesus will draw all to himself by virtue of the cross? The context of John 12:20-33 helps us answer that question. Greeks, that is, Gentiles, approached Philip because they wanted to see Jesus (vv. 20-23). Jesus ignores the request and instead speaks of the need for a gram of wheat to die in order to bear fruit (vv. 24-26), and of his commitment to carry out his

believe in him and they should do so! For some wise comments on how God's judicial hardening is

compatible with other biblical themes see Carson, John, 448-49. ⁵² See chapter 11 by J. I. Packer. ⁵³ For more detailed support of divine election in John see Robert W. Yarbrough, "Divine Election in the Gospel

of John," in chapter 2 of this work; see also D. A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility:*

Biblical Perspectives in Tension (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 125-98. ⁵⁴ Carson, John, 293.

commission (vv. 27-28). Jesus' death is the means by which God's judgment of the world and his triumph over Satan will be accomplished (v. 31). He concludes by saying that if he is lifted up he will draw all people to himself (v. 32).

The context is of paramount importance for understanding John 12:32. Jesus appears to ignore the request from his disciples to meet with the Greeks who wanted to see him. But the point Jesus makes is that the only way Gentiles will come to him is through his death. He must die in order to bear much fruit and bring Gentiles to himself. The power of Satan as the ruler of the world will be broken only by the cross. Thus, when Jesus speaks of drawing all people to himself by virtue of the cross, the issue in the context is how Gentiles can come to Jesus. The drawing of all does not refer to all people individually but the means by which Gentiles will be included in the people of God. Carson again rightly interprets the verse. "Here 'all men' reminds the reader of what triggered these statements, [namely,] the arrival of the Greeks, and means 'all people without distinction, Jews and Gentiles alike', not all individuals without exception."⁵⁵ The Wesleyan theory that prevenient grace is provided in the atonement so that people are given ability to choose salvation cannot be supported from the context of John 12.

The third Wesleyan argument for prevenient grace is probably the most powerful one. Why would God give commands unless people were given some ability to obey them? Romans

2:4 says that his kindness is intended to lead people to repentance. Does this not imply that people have the ability to repent if they would only choose to do so? It should be acknowledged that Wesleyan logic is coherent here, and one can see why Wesleyans would deduce human ability from the giving of commands. Nonetheless, even though their logic is impeccable, it does not necessarily follow that their conclusion is true. An argument may be logically co-herent and not fit with the state of affairs in the world because the answer given is not comprehensive. To put it another way, one of the premises in the Wesleyan argument is not in accord with the reality of life as it is portrayed in the Scriptures. They are incorrect in deducing that God would not give commands without giving the moral ability to obey them. The distinction between physical and moral ability is crucial.⁵⁶ For instance, human beings are physically able (in most cases) to walk up steps, but they are physically unable to jump over houses. In a similar way, God gives commands to unbelievers that they can physically obey; that is, they could observe his commandments if they desired to do so. Unbelievers are morally unable to keep God's commands in the sense that they have no desire to obey all of his commandments. God commands all people (Gal. 3:10; Rom. 1:18; 20) to obey his law perfectly, but no one is morally able to do this. Because all people are born with a sin nature inherited from Adam, they will inevitably sin. Even though people cannot morally obey God's commands, biblical authors assume that they should keep his commandments. They should keep his commandments because they are right and good (Rom.

7:12) and are not physically impossible to keep. People could observe the commandments if they wanted to do so. The biblical view, however, is that unbelievers as slaves of sin have no desire to keep God's law.⁵⁷

The state of affairs that obtains under the law remains when Christ comes. That is, all

55 Ibid., 444. 56 For a recent explanation of this distinction which is a model of clarity see David M Ciochi, "Understanding

Our Ability to Endure Temptation A Theological Watershed," JETS 35 (1992) 463-68. 57 It should be pointed out that Adam was created with both physical and moral ability to obey God's

commands. We cannot here pursue the difficult question as to why Adam sinned.

people should come to Jesus in order to have life (John 5:40). Jesus upbraids those who do not believe despite all his works (Matt. 11:20-24), and he invites all to come to him (Matt. 11:28-30). Yet he also teaches that no one can come to him unless drawn by the Father (John 6:44), and only those to whom the Father and Son reveal themselves will come to know him (Matt. 11:25-27). All people are summoned to believe in Jesus and are censured for not believing. Nonetheless, the Scriptures also teach that they have no moral ability to believe, and that the only way they will believe is if they are given by the Father to the Son. This revelation is not vouchsafed to all people but only to the elect. Jesus commands believers to be perfect (Matt. 5:48), but the need for forgiveness (Matt. 6:14-15) demonstrates that perfection is impossible to attain.

The problem with Wesleyanism at this point is that it is guided by human logic and rationality rather than the Scriptures. Their view that commands would not be given that people could not morally obey is certainly attractive. But our counterargument is that such a notion is not taught in the Scriptures. The doctrine of original sin and human inability is an offense to reason.⁵⁸ This is not to say that it is irrational. The distinction between physical and moral ability goes a long way toward resolving the difficulties. Nonetheless, not all the difficulties are resolved by the Calvinist view, for ultimately we do not fully understand how people can be responsible for sin when they are born with an inclination that will inevitably lead them to sin.

An example from another area of life might help. Robert Wright in an article on alcoholism was musing on the theory that it might be determined by one's genes.⁵⁹ If so, could we conclude that people are not responsible for alcoholism? Wright correctly says no. If we draw this conclusion, then the reality of human responsibility will be slowly whittled away as we discover the impact of genetics on human behavior. Even if alcoholism is determined genetically, people are still responsible for their behavior.⁶⁰ We may not fully understand how both determinism and human responsibility can be true, but both are necessary to account for the nature of humanity and genetic research. So too, sinners who have inherited a sin nature from Adam and who have no moral ability to obey God's law and no inclination to respond to him are still responsible for their failure to respond to God's grace.

The preceding comments prepare us for understanding Romans 2:4. The wording of this text should be taken seriously, but our own philosophical presuppositions should not be read into it. It is the case that the kindness of God should lead people to repentance.⁶¹ God's kindness is not a charade but is profoundly present in that he spares people and does not immediately destroy them for their sin. The kindness and patience of God should induce people to seek him and to confess their sin. But this text does not say that people have the moral ability to repent and turn to God. It simply says that they should repent and turn to him. Wesleyans read into this verse their theology of prevenient grace, thereby squeezing

58 This is the title of Bernard Ramm's book on original sin, *Offense to Reason* (New York: Harper and Row,

1985). 59 Robert Wright, "Alcohol and Free Will: The Supreme Court Reopens an Old Question," *The New Republic*

197, 24 (14 December 1987): 14-16. 60 Wright himself seems to fall prey to rationalism insofar as he subordinates human responsibility to

determinism. Nonetheless, he insists that life will not make sense unless we hold people to be responsible. 61 The present indicative agei is understood here as conative. So C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New*

Testament Greek, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 8. Agei should not be pressed as a

present indicative to say that God's kindness is actually leading the Jews to repent. The point of the verse is

that God's kindness should lead them to repent.

more out of the verse than it says.⁶²

What we have said about Romans 2:4 leads us naturally to the fourth argument used for prevenient grace, that is, the justice, wisdom, mercy, and love of God. What I have been arguing is that the fundamental problem with the Wesleyan understanding of prevenient grace is that it is not taught in the Scriptures. It is a philosophical imposition of a certain world view upon the Scriptures. This world view is attractive because it neatly solves, to some extent, issues such as the problem of evil and why human beings are held responsible for sin. But the Scriptures do not yield such neat solutions.⁶³ God is wholly just in condemning sinners who have no ability to obey his law (Rom. 8:7-8). They fail to keep the law because they do not want to obey it. In sinning they carry out the desires of their hearts. God is merciful and loving in not destroying them immediately and offering them salvation. It is a mistake, however, to say that God's love and mercy will provide every person an equal chance to believe. God would be just in sending all to hell since all have sinned. The love and mercy extended to the elect is undeserved. God is obligated to save no one, but out of a heart of mercy he saves some (Eph. 2:4-7). Those who believe that God must extend mercy equally to all are subtly falling into the trap of believing that God would not be good without showing mercy equally to all. This comes perilously close to the conclusion that God should show mercy to all to the same extent, and that such mercy is obligatory. But if God should show equal mercy to all, then mercy is no longer viewed as undeserved. In this view mercy extended to all is demanded by justice. This kind of reasoning should be rejected because the Scriptures make it clear that no one deserves to be saved, that all people could be justly sent to hell, and that God's mercy is so stunning because it is undeserved.

The scandal of the Calvinist system is that ultimately the logical problems posed cannot be fully resolved. The final resolution of the problem of human responsibility and divine justice is beyond our rational capacity. The doctrine of prevenient grace in the Wesleyan sense is read into the Scriptures because it solves so many logical problems and attempts to clarify how God is just and loving. Calvinists also affirm God's mercy, wisdom, justice, and love. We trust that he is good, and that no one will perish who does not deserve judgment. There is significant evidence to vindicate the justice, mercy, and love of God. Nonetheless, we cannot comprehensively explain how these attributes of God fit the reality portrayed in the Scriptures. There are finally some mysteries that we cannot unravel.

Conclusion

The doctrine of prevenient grace should be accepted only if it can be sustained from a careful exegesis of the Scriptures. What was most striking to me in my research was how little scriptural exegesis has been done by Wesleyans in defense of prevenient grace. It is vital to their system of theology, for even Wesleyans admit that without it "Calvinist logic is irrefutable."⁶⁴ Nonetheless, not much exegetical work has been done in support of the

⁶² Another text that could be used to support prevenient grace is Acts 7:51, where Stephen says to his

adversaries, "you always resist the Holy Spirit." It is true that there is a work of the Spirit that is resisted by

unbelievers. This should be distinguished, however, from saying that God has granted all people the ability to

respond to his grace. In fact, the text seems to suggest the opposite. People resist the Holy Spirit because of

their bondage to sin. Scripture teaches that for the elect God graciously overcomes their resistance and brings

them to repentance (2 Tim. 2:25-26). ⁶³ For a semi-popular treatment that is a more detailed explanation of the biblical view see D. A. Carson, *How*

Long O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990). ⁶⁴ See note 18.

doctrine. This is particularly astonishing when one compares the biblical data for prevenient grace to Calvinist texts that support unconditional election. The Calvinist case has been promulgated, rightly or wrongly, via a detailed exegesis of numerous texts. The plight of humanity due to Adam's sin (which we investigated) is reversed only by the electing grace of God, according to the Calvinist. Wesleyans contend that prevenient grace counteracts the inability of humanity due to Adam's sin, but firm biblical evidence seems to be lacking. One can be pardoned, then, for wondering whether this theory is based on scriptural exegesis. Millard Erickson rightly says about it, "The problem is that there is no clear and adequate basis in Scripture for this concept of universal enablement. The theory, appealing though it is in many ways, simply is not taught explicitly in the Bible."⁶⁵

Prevenient grace is attractive because it solves so many problems, but it should be rejected because it cannot be exegetically vindicated. But if prevenient grace is rejected, then all people are in bondage to sin. They will never turn to God because they are so enslaved by sin that they will never desire to turn to him. How then can any be saved? The Scriptures teach that the effectual calling of God is what persuades those who are chosen to turn to him. God's grace effectively works in the heart of the elect so that they see the beauty and glory of Christ and put their faith in him (2 Cor. 4:6). Because God's choice lies behind our salvation, we cannot boast before him that we were noble or wise enough to choose him. We can only boast in the Lord who chose us to be his own (1 Cor. 1:29, 31).

⁶⁵ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 925.

On Universal Prevenient Grace

by R. C. Sproul

As the name suggests, prevenient grace is grace that "comes before" something. It is normally defined as a work that God does for everybody. He gives all people enough grace to respond to Jesus. That is, it is enough grace to make it *possible* for people to choose Christ. Those who cooperate with assent to this grace are "elect." Those who refuse to cooperate with this grace are lost.

The strength of this view is that it recognizes that fallen man's spiritual condition is severe enough that it requires God's grace to save him. The weakness of the position may be seen in two ways. If this prevenient grace is merely external to man, then it fails in the same manner that the medicine and the life preserver analogies fail. What good is prevenient grace if offered outwardly to spiritually dead creatures?

On the other hand, if prevenient grace refers to something that God does within the heart of fallen man, then we must ask why it is not always effectual. Why is it that some fallen creatures choose to cooperate with prevenient grace and others choose not to? Doesn't everyone get the same amount?

Think of it this way, in personal terms. If you are a Christian you are surely aware of other people who are not Christians. Why is it that you have chosen Christ and they have not? Why did you say yes to prevenient grace while they said no? Was it because you were more righteous than they were? If so, then indeed you have something in which to boast. Was that greater righteousness something you achieved on your own or was it the gift of God? If it was something you achieved, then at the bottom line your salvation depends on your own righteousness. If the righteousness was a gift, then why didn't God give the same gift to everybody?

Perhaps it wasn't because you were more righteous. Perhaps it was because you are more intelligent. Why are you more intelligent? Because you study more (which really means you are more righteous)? Or are you more intelligent because God gave you a gift of intelligence he withheld from others?

To be sure, most Christians who hold to the prevenient grace view would shrink from such answers. They see the implied arrogance in them. Rather they are more likely to say, "No, I chose Christ because I recognized my desperate need for him."

That certainly sounds more humble. But I must press the question. Why did you recognize your desperate need for Christ while your neighbor didn't? Was it because you were more righteous than your neighbor, or more intelligent?

The \$64 question for advocates of prevenient grace is why some people cooperate with it and others' don't. How we answer that will reveal how gracious we believe our salvation really is.

The \$64,000 question is, "Does the Bible teach such a doctrine of prevenient grace? If so, where?"

We conclude that our salvation is of the Lord. He is the One who regenerates us. Those whom he regenerates come to Christ. Without regeneration no one will ever come to Christ. With regeneration no one will ever reject him. God's saving grace effects what he intends to effect by it.

I love the way Dr. Sproul brought to a close the ending of the book. He described the quest for the understanding of predestination as being much more than an emotionally dead theological mind exercise, which is commonly perceived by many "theologically shallow" Christians.\

p. 213 Let me close the book by mentioning that soon after I awoke to the truth of predestination I began to see the beauty of it and taste its sweetness. I have grown to love this doctrine. It is most comforting. It underlines the extent to which God has gone in our behalf. It is a theology that begins and ends with grace. It begins and ends with doxology. We praise a God who lifted us from spiritual deadness and makes us walk in high places. We find a God who may be against us. It makes our souls rejoice to know that all things are working together for our good. We delight in our Savior who truly saves us and preserves us and intercedes for us. We marvel at his craftsmanship and in what he has wrought. We skip and kick our heels when we discover his promise to finish in us what he has started in us. We ponder mysteries and bow before them, but not without doxology for the riches of grace he has revealed:

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! ... For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:33, 36)

From Chosen by God by R. C. Sproul

Arminianisms

J. I. Packer

Within the Churches of the Reformation, the terms Calvinism and Arminianism are traditionally used as a pair, expressing an antithesis, like black and white, or Whig and Tory, or Roman and Protestant. The words are defined in terms of the antithesis, and the point is pressed that no Christian can avoid being on one side or the other. Among evangelicals, this issue, though now 350 years old (if not, indeed, 1900 years old), remains live and sometimes explosive. Calvinism and Arminianism are still spat out by some as anathematizing swear words (like fundamentalism on the lips of a liberal), and there are still places where you forfeit both fellowship and respect by professing either. There remain Presbyterian churches which ordain only Calvinists, and Methodist and Nazarene bodies which ordain only Arminians, and the division between "general" (Arminian) and "particular" (Calvinistic) still splits the English Baptist community. In evangelism, cooperation between evangelicals is sometimes hindered by disagreement and mistrust over this matter, just as in the eighteenth century the Calvinistic evangelicals and John Wesley's party found it hard on occasion to work together. Nor is it any wonder that tension should exist, when each position sees the other as misrepresenting the saving love of God. The wonder is, rather, that so many Christians who profess a serious concern for theology should treat this debate as one in which they have no stakes, and need not get involved.

This paper seeks to understand and evaluate the Calvinist-Arminian antithesis. To that end, we shall address ourselves to three questions. First, what is Arminianism? Second, how deep is the cleavage between it and Calvinism and what has the Bible to say on the matters in dispute here? Third (assuming that by this stage we shall have seen reason to regard Arminianism as a pathological growth), what causes Arminianism and what is the cure for it? Before we tackle these questions, however, one caveat must be entered. Our concern is with things, not words. Our subject matter will oblige us to speak of Calvinism and Arminianism frequently, but it is no part of our aim to revive bad habits of slogan-shouting and name-calling. What matters is that we should grasp truly what the Bible says about God and His grace, not that we should parade brand labels derived from historical theology. The present writer believes, and wishes others to believe, the doctrines commonly labeled Calvinistic, but he is not concerned to argue for the word. One who has received the biblical witness to God's sovereignty in grace is blessed indeed, but he is no better off for labeling himself a Calvinist, and might indeed be the worse for it; for party passion and love of the truth are different things, and are not always helpful to each other.

What Is Arminianism?¹

Historically, Arminianism has appeared as a reaction against Calvinism, affirming, in the words of W. R. Bagnall, "conditional in opposition to absolute predestination, and general in opposition to particular redemption."² This verbal antithesis is not in fact as simple or clear as it looks, for changing the adjective involves redefining the noun. What Bagnall should have said is that Calvinism affirms a concept of predestination from which conditionality is excluded, and a concept of redemption to which particularity is essential, and Arminianism denies both. The difference is this. To

Calvinism, predestination means foreordination, whereas to Arminianism it means only foresight of events not foreordained. On the Calvinist view, election, which is a predestinating act on God's part, means the foreordaining of particular sinners to be saved by Jesus Christ, through faith, and redemption, the first step in working out God's electing purpose, is an achievement actually securing certain salvation—calling, pardon, adoption, preservation, final glory—for all the elect. On the Arminian view, however, what the death of Christ secured was a possibility of salvation for sinners generally, a possibility which, so far as God is concerned, might never have been actualized in any single case; and the electing of individuals to salvation is no more than God noting in advance who will believe and qualify for glory, as a matter of contingent (not foreordained) fact. Whereas to Calvinism election is God's resolve to save, and the cross Christ's act of saving, for Arminianism salvation rests neither on God's election nor on Christ's cross, but on a man's own cooperation with grace, which is something that God does not Himself guarantee.

Arminianism was born in Holland at the turn of the seventeenth century, and synodically condemned by the whole Reformed world at Dort in 1618. In England, an Arminian tradition of teaching lasted into, and right through, the eighteenth century. Arminianism was part of the Wesley family heritage, and John and Charles fought the Calvinists by prose and poetry throughout their evangelical ministry. The Arminian evangelical tradition has been maintained by Methodists and others up to the present day.

It is important to realize that both in its general tenor and in its practical effect the Arminianism of the "Belgic semi-Pelagians,"³ as John Owen called the Remonstrants and their supporters, was not by any means identical with the Arminianism of John Wesley, his *Arminian Magazine* (1778–), and his colleague John Fletcher. The following account of Wesley's doctrine, taken from Fletcher's *First Check to Antinomianism* (1771), will alert us to the difference:

He [Wesley] holds also General Redemption, and its necessary consequences, which some account dreadful heresies. He asserts with St. Paul, that Christ by the GRACE of God, tasted death for every man: and this grace he calls free, as extending itself freely to all. He frequently observes with the same apostle, that Christ is the Saviour of ALL men, but specially of them that believe; and that God will have ALL men to be saved, consistently with their moral agency, and the tenor of his gospel. With St. John he maintains, that God is love, and that Christ is the propitiation not only for our sins, but also for the sins of the WHOLE WORLD . . . and with St. Peter, that the Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that ALL should come to repentance; yea, that God, without hypocrisy, commandeth ALL men, EVERYWHERE, to repent.

Thus far, Wesley's position coincided completely with that of the Remonstrants, but Fletcher's next point is this:

Thus far, Mr. W. agrees with Arminius, because he thinks that illustrious Divine agreed thus far with the Scriptures, and all the early Fathers of the Church. But if Arminius (as the Author of *Pietas Oxoniensis* affirms in his letter to Dr. Adams) "denied that man's nature is totally corrupt, and asserted that he hath still a freedom of will to turn to God, but not without the assistance of grace," Mr. W. is no Arminian, for he strongly asserts the total fall of man, and constantly maintains that by nature man's will is only free to evil, and that divine grace must first prevent, and then continually further him, to make him willing and able to turn to God.⁴

These sentences point us to the basic difference between the Remonstrant and the Wesleyan Arminianisms. In seeing man's act as contingent so far as God is concerned, and in thinking that moral agency presupposes "freewill" in the special and particular sense of indeterminacy of action, the two were agreed. In claiming that all men actually have power to respond to such revelation from God as reaches them, and that revelation sufficient to save actually reaches every man, whether he hears the gospel or not, they were agreed also. (Historic Calvinism would query all these positions.) But the two Arminianisms divided over the question whether capacity for response to God had been wholly lost at the fall. Wesley said it had, but held that it was now restored to every man as a gift of grace. The Remonstrants said it had never been wholly lost, and "total inability" had never been a true diagnosis of man's plight in Adam. Sin, said the Remonstrants in effect, has made man weak in the moral and spiritual realm, but not bad: he still has it in him to reach out, however sluggishly, after what is right, and God in fact helps him, powerfully if not decisively, in each particular right choice. Wesley agreed that God helps to actualize an existing capacity in every right choice, but maintained that this capacity only existed now because it had been supernaturally restored to all the race in consequence of the cross. While accepting Remonstrant synergism, in the sense of seeing man's co-operation in right action as something distinct from, and independent of, God's energizing, Wesley insisted that the capacity to cooperate was itself a love gift from God to sinners, and that the Calvinistic doctrine of original sin, as involving loss of this capacity entirely, had not been a whit too strong.

The effect of this difference was to give the two Arminianisms contrasting thrusts. The Remonstrant thrust was to upgrade nature, minimize sin, and recast Christianity as a moralism of grace (that is, a system, like Roman Catholicism, in which grace makes possible saving moral endeavor: in New Testament terms, a Judaizing Christianity which is really "another gospel"). The end of this road, as the century following Dort showed, was Deism—salvation by merit of morality without grace at all. The Wesleyan thrust, however, was explicitly anti-deistic and in intention, if not entirely in effect, anti-moralistic too. Wesley maximized sin in order to magnify grace. He challenged the then standard Anglican moralism, of which he had himself once been a victim, by affirming present justification through faith in Christ alone, and by adding that true Christian morality was the fruit of justifying faith, and that self-abandoning trust was of this faith's very essence. Where Remonstrant Arminianism had been humanistic and rationalistic in motivation, delimiting God's sovereignty of set purpose in order to assert man's autonomy and self-determination, Wesleyan Arminianism was directly religious in motivation—more religious than theological, in fact—seeking only to exhibit the love of God in salvation and the power of faith in everyday life and practice. Remonstrant Arminianism, like later Baxterianism, took a voluntaristic view of faith as essentially commitment to new obedience, a view which assimilates faith to repentance and makes it both look and feel like a human work determining salvation. Wesleyan Arminianism, however, like earlier Reformation theology, both Lutheran and Calvinist, distinguished faith from repentance, defining it as assured trust in Christ, correlative to the witness of the Holy Spirit, and springing from the sense of hopelessness and helplessness which God's law induces. Having

thus excluded all self-reliance from the psychology of faith, Wesley seems never to have seen the oddity of continuing to profess a theology which obliged him to view faith as a man's own work of response to God. There was, in truth, beneath the surface clearness and practicality of his mind a great deal of muddle at the theoretical level. Certainly, however, his view of the nature of faith made his professed Arminianism as fully evangelical, and as little legalistic, as it is possible for a synergistic system to be. We shall mark the difference between it and the Remonstrant position by calling them evangelical and rationalistic Arminianisms respectively.

We shall now glance at their history, taking the latter first.

Rationalistic Arminianism

Rationalistic Arminianism was a revival of the semi-Pelagian reaction to Augustinianism which was developed in the fifth century by John Cassian and Faustus of Ries. It was a movement of recoil from the high doctrine of predestination taught by Luther and Calvin and systematized—perhaps too thoroughly—by Beza. Arminianism emerged in Holland, but not as an isolated phenomenon; similar reactionary theologies appeared at about the same time in England, as we shall see, and in German Lutheranism. It was part of a Europe-wide encroachment on the theology of the Reformation by the rationalism of the Renaissance.

The story is this. In 1589 a brilliant young Amsterdam clergyman, who had studied for a year with Beza in Geneva, Jakob Hermandzoon (Arminius) by name, was asked to answer an attack by a certain Koornhert, of Delft, on the supralapsarian view of predestination. (This was the view that God's election of some to salvation and non-election of others envisaged men, not as fallen, but simply as rational creatures, and so was logically prior in God's thinking to His decision to permit the Fall.) It was assumed that Beza's pupil would hammer Koornhert hard; but Arminius's restudy of the issues led him to agree with Koornhert. The expected reply never appeared. Instead, for the next twenty years till his death in 1609, at the age of 49, Arminius maintained, discreetly but decidedly, the "Arminian" view of election and a semi-Pelagian view of man.

In 1610, a group of his followers issued a public Remonstrance, a manifesto stating on five theological issues "Arminian" views for which they claimed toleration and protection. Eventually the Synod of Dort (1618–19) pronounced against them all, affirming in opposition five counter-theses of its own. These "five points of Calvinism," made memorable by the mnemonic TULIP, are the Total depravity of man in sin (total in extent, of course, not in degree); the Unconditional and decisive character of God's election of sinners to salvation; the Limited scope (but definite and effective nature) of Christ's redemptive achievement on the cross; the Irresistible and efficacious quality of the grace that leads sinners to repentance and faith; and the certain Perseverance, through divine preservation, of all regenerate persons to final glory.⁵ The overall thrust of the Dort deliverances is to make the double point that it is God who saves us by fulfilling His plan of election, and Christ who saves us by His effective purchase of us on Calvary, and that in no sense do we save ourselves: salvation is wholly of the Lord, first to last a gift of free sovereign mercy. A. W. Harrison rightly describes the canons of Dort as "rather one of the classic statements of Calvinism than an exposition of Arminian error";⁶ their main value and significance lies in their positive affirmations, which controlled the presentation of the Reformed faith in Europe for a period of more than a century.

Dort having spoken, the Arminians were temporarily exiled; but in 1626 they were able to return and open a theological seminary at Amsterdam, where Episcopius, Curcellaeus (Courcelles), and Limborch, three brilliant men, taught in succession. Philip Schaff's description of Arminianism as standing for "an elastic; progressive, changing liberalism"⁷ was, however, true of the Seminary. The continental Arminian school drifted rapidly into undogmatic moralism, of a deistic or Socinian type.

In England, Peter Baro (Baron), a French refugee who had become Lady Margaret Professor for Divinity at Cambridge, caused a stir in 1579 by arguing from the case of Nineveh in the book of Jonah the thesis which in substance Arminius was to maintain ten years later—that "God predestined all men to eternal life, on condition of their faith and obedience."⁸ William Barrett preached the same doctrine in 1595, and the resulting explosion caused the nine Lambeth Articles to be composed. These, the nearest English counterpart to the Dort canons, were a semi-official statement of what was then regarded as Anglican orthodoxy on predestination and grace.⁹ At the Hampton Court Conference of 1604, John Rainolds, the Puritan leader, asked for the Lambeth Articles to be added to the Thirty-nine, but King James said no.

Soon came a massive reaction away from Calvinism along the lines that Baro and Barrett had marked out. This was due partly to official encouragement of Arminians from the top by Laud and others, partly to the attractive combination of moralism and natural theology put out by the Cambridge Platonists, and partly, no doubt, to the Englishman's congenital instinct toward Pelagianism. After the Restoration, Calvinism had the status only of an oddity maintained by nonconformists: the divines of the establishment were, with very few exceptions, Arminians. One result was the corrupting of the doctrine of justification by faith in the Church of England. The later Reformation teaching that Christ's righteousness imputed was the "formal cause" of justification was replaced by the Arminian thought of Christ's personal righteousness as the meritorious cause of the present possibility of self-salvation. Faith became not the means but the condition of justification, and was understood moralistically as "all the obedience required by the gospel." This phrase comes from Bishop Bull, who, like Luther, interpreted James as teaching that sanctification was the ground of justification; only whereas Luther concluded from this that James was not fit to be in the Bible, Bull argued that James was the norm, and Paul should be interpreted in line with him.¹⁰ Bull's older contemporaries, Hammond, Thorndike, and Jeremy Taylor, had substantially taught the same, and this view became standard. By Wesley's day the true meaning of justification by faith had been forgotten almost universally in the Church of England.

This brings us to evangelical Arminianism, which had as part of its purpose the restoring of the truth of justification to its rightful place once more.

Evangelical Arminianism

John Wesley learned moralistic Arminianism from his parents as part of the family doctrine. Both Samuel and Susanna had moved out from Calvinistic nonconformity into Arminian Anglicanism, and were sharply hostile to the teaching they had left behind. (The psychology of such hostile attitudes is well known.) A letter from Susanna to John in 1725, when he was twenty-two, states exactly the view of predestination, and of the meaning of article 17 of the Thirty-nine, which he always upheld in later life:

The doctrine of predestination as maintained by rigid Calvinists, is very shocking . . . because it charges the most holy God with being the author of sin. . . . I do firmly believe that God from all eternity hath elected some to everlasting life, but then I humbly conceive that this election is founded in His foreknowledge, according to Romans 8:29, 30 . . . Whom in his eternal prescience God saw would make a right use of their purses, and accept of offered mercy, He did predestinate. . . . nor can it with more reason be supposed that the prescience of God is the cause that many finally perish than that our knowing the sun will rise tomorrow is the cause of its rising.¹¹

However, John's association with the Moravians, which led to his Aldersgate Street experience of 1738, knocked all the moralism and self-effort out of his Arminianism, and brought in its place a clear emphasis on instantaneous justification through faith as part of an instantaneous new birth, without which there was no true religion. As we hinted earlier, Wesley's stress when presenting conversion as the entrance to authentic Christian life (unlike that of some today who would see themselves as Wesley's successors) was on man's utter and helpless dependence on God to give faith and bring about new birth. This was because Wesley thought of faith, not as decision (to use the modern catchword), but as a compound of trust and assurance, the subjective consequence of the Spirit's inner witness. What the Spirit witnessed to in giving faith was the promise of pardon and adoption as applying to oneself. Calvin, speaking here for all the Reformers, had defined faith as "a firm and sure knowledge of the divine favour towards us, founded on the truth of a free promise in Christ, and revealed to our minds, and sealed on our hearts, by the Holy Spirit."¹² Wesley's teaching on faith represents a return to this, a return from the world of synergism and self-determination to that of monergism and sovereign grace.

It was Wesley's Aldersgate Street experience that determined his view of faith. There, as his heart was "strangely warmed" through the reading of Luther on Romans, he entered into what his Moravian friends had told him that real faith was: namely, assurance of pardon and acceptance through the cross. "I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my sins, even mine. . . ." Habitually (though not with perfect verbal consistency) Wesley taught that this assurance is an integral element in the faith that God gives—the faith, that is, that saves.¹³ Repentance was to him faith's precondition, sorrow for sin and reform of manners. Sometimes, indeed, as in his 1744 Conference Minutes, he would describe repentance as "a low state of faith," or as the faith of a servant in contrast with that of a son (compare Gal. 4:1–7; Rom. 8:15–16); his basic thought, however, was that, whereas repentance is a state of seeking God, faith is the state of finding him, or rather of being found by him. A person seeking God can do no more than wait on God, showing the sincerity of his quest by the earnestness of his prayers and the tenderness of his conscience, till the light of assurance dawns in his heart. Such teaching is similar to the Puritan doctrine of "preparatory works," and led to similar practice in counseling troubled souls: it is a far cry from Dutch Arminianism.

Yet Wesley would never let the world forget that he wanted his teaching taken in an Arminian sense, because Calvinism in all its forms was anathema to him; and this caused him much trouble, mostly unnecessary and of his own making. He always caricatured Calvinism in the same three ways—as antinomian, making holiness needless; as restricting the preaching of God's love to the world (for some reason he was always sure that according to Calvinism only "one in twenty" is elect); and as fatalistic, destroying moral responsibility and denying the connection between means and ends in the spiritual realm. At the end of his life he wrote:

Q. 74. What is the direct antidote to Methodism, the doctrine of heart-holiness?

A. Calvinism: All the devices of Satan, for these fifty years, have done far less toward stopping this work of God, than that single doctrine. It strikes at the root of salvation from sin, previous to glory, putting the matter on quite another issue. [That is, Wesley takes Calvinism to say that men may be saved without holiness by virtue of their election.]

Q. But wherein lie the charms of this doctrine? What makes men swallow it so greedily?

A. It seems to magnify Christ, although in reality it supposes Him to have died in vain. For the absolutely elect must have been saved without Him; and the non-elect cannot be saved by Him.¹⁴

Misrepresentations like this, from a godly man who over fifty years had had many Calvinistic friends and abundant opportunity to read Calvinistic books, argue a degree of prejudice and closed-mindedness which is almost pathological. Perhaps John's invincible ignorance (shared by Charles) as to what Calvinism really was should be seen as a lifelong haunting by the ghost of Susanna. At all events, it became a rod for his back, and for the backs of many others too.

Wesley's first anti-Calvinist eruptions were occasioned by troubles in the Fetter Lane and Kingswood Societies in 1740–41. There were some sharp exchanges, and John, with Charles's help, produced a volume entitled *Hymns on God's Everlasting Love*, in which, along with some vintage Wesley paeans, ditties of this sort were reeled off:

God, ever merciful and just,
With new-born babes did Tophet fill;
Down into endless torments thrust,
Merely to show his sovereign will.

This is that Horrible Decree!

This is that wisdom from beneath!

God (O detest the blasphemy!)

Hath pleasure in the sinner's death.¹⁵

Comment on the tone and content of such lines, and on the degree of pastoral wisdom which they show as a contribution to domestic debate within a young evangelical movement, is surely superfluous.

For all the inflammatory gesture made on both sides, the 1741 debate died down; but in 1770 came bigger trouble. Wesley's Conference Minutes, wishing to make the point, against real or supposed Calvinistic Antinomians, that salvation through faith is also, and necessarily, salvation in holiness, were so drafted as to appear to teach, Roman-style, that a man's own works are the ground of his acceptance with God. Having reaffirmed that "we have leaned too much toward Calvinism" in playing down the fact that a man must be faithful and labor for life and bring forth works of repentance if he is to be saved, the Minutes proceed thus:

Once more review the whole affair:

- (1) Who of us is now accepted with God? He that now believes in Christ with a loving, obedient heart.
- (2) But who among those that never heard of Christ? He that, according to the light he has, "feareth God and worketh righteousness."
- (3) Is this the same with "he that is sincere"? Nearly, if not quite. [The Arminian doctrine of "universal sufficient grace" here comes to the surface.]
- (4) Is not this salvation by works? Not by merit of works, but by works as a condition.
- (5) What have we been disputing about for these thirty years? I am afraid about words . . .
- (6) As to merit itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid. We are rewarded according to our works, yea because of our works. How does this differ from, "for the sake of our works"? And how does this differ from *secundum merita operum*? which is no more than, "as our works deserve." Can you split this hair? I doubt [i.e. I rather think] I cannot . . .
- (8) Does not talking . . . of a justified or sanctified state, tend to mislead men; almost naturally leading them to trust what was done in one moment? Whereas we are every moment pleasing or displeasing to God, according to our works . . .¹⁶

These Minutes sparked off the heated and tragic controversy of the next five years, in which Wesley's lieutenants John Fletcher and Thomas Olivers exchanged fierce literary punches with Toplady, the Hill brothers, and Berridge, while the Calvinist and Arminian segments of the revival movement drifted further and further apart. One comment only, however, is relevant for us: and that is, that it is no more right to dismiss these Minutes as theologically inept (even though the 1771 Conference admitted that they had been upgraded), than it is right, with A. W. Harrison, to call them "apparently innocuous."¹⁷ They are in truth an object lesson on the tensions and incoherencies that necessarily arise as soon as an Arminian, committed as he is to treating man's response to the gospel as a contribution of man's own, and his continuance in grace as contingent on his continued response, tries to state the Reformation doctrine of justification by grace through faith without works. The doctrine he states, whatever he calls it, will appear as justification by works in fact. No man, however confident in manner, can really square this circle. Wesley's various attempts to do so (and he made quite a number) put one in mind of the parody of the Scout song:

They said it couldn't be done:

He said, "There's nothing to it!"

He tackled the job with a smile—

And couldn't do it.

Which brings us to our next section.

The Cleavage between Calvinism and Arminianism

Views differ here. Some maximize the cleavage in terms of theological black and white. In the seventeenth century, for example, Prynne spoke of "Arminian thieves and robbers," and Francis Rous told Parliament that "an Arminian is the spawn of a Papist"; and in the eighteenth century the Wesleys, as we saw, told the world that Calvinism was blasphemous, devilish, and spiritually ruinous. Many since have echoed both estimates, and left the matter there. A more discerning approach, however, is that exemplified by William Ames, one of the periti of Dort, who wrote: "The view of the Remonstrants, as it is taken by the mass of their supporters, is not strictly a heresy [that is, a major lapse from the gospel], but a dangerous error tending toward heresy. As maintained by some of them, however, it is the Pelagian heresy: because they deny that the effective operation of inward grace is necessary for conversion."¹⁸ Ames's words alert us to the fact that Arminianism varies, so that blanket judgments are not in order: each version of post-Reformation semi-Pelagianism must be judged on its own merits. Ames is right. The facts surveyed in this paper show clearly the need for discrimination. Thus, it is surely proper to be less hard on Wesleyanism than on any form of Dutch Arminianism, just because (to the loss of clarity and consistency, yet to the furtherance of the gospel) Wesley's teaching included so much Reformation truth about

the nature of faith, the witness of the Spirit, and effectual calling. Wesley's Arminianism, we might say, contained a good deal of its own antidote! Its evangelical and religious motivation, also, puts it in a different class from the Remonstrant position.

But why should Arminianisms vary in this way? The final answer is: not because Arminians are personally erratic, but because all Arminian positions are intrinsically and in principle unstable. Arminianism is a slippery slope, and it is always arbitrary where one stops on the slide down. All Arminianisms start from a rationalistic hermeneutic which reads into the Bible at every point the philosophic axiom that to be responsible before God man's acts must be contingent in relation to him. All Arminianisms involve a rationalistic restriction of the sovereignty of God and the efficacy of the cross, a restriction which Scripture seems directly to contradict. All Arminianisms involve a measure of synergism, if not strong (God helps me to save myself) then weak (I help God to save me). All Arminianisms imply the non-necessity of hearing the gospel, inasmuch as they affirm that every man can be saved by responding to what he knows of God here and now. The right way to analyze the difference between Arminianisms is to ask how far they go in working out these principles, and how far they allow evangelical checks and balances to restrain them.

On all this, we have just two comments to make.

First, the Bible forbids us to take a single step along the Arminian road. It clearly affirms the positions which Dort highlighted: God's absolute sovereignty; human responsibility without any measure of contingency or indeterminacy (look at Acts 2:24!); and a direct connection between the work of Christ in obtaining and applying redemption. The very name of Jesus is itself an announcement that "he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). It does not tell us that He will make all men savable, but that He will actually save those who are His. And it is in these terms that the Bible speaks throughout.¹⁹

Second, if we travel the Arminian road, there are three precious things that we necessarily lose. These are: the clear knowledge of God's sovereignty in our salvation, the clear sight of Christ's glory as the Savior of His people, and the clear sense of the Christian's eternal security in the covenant of grace. These are sad, and saddening losses, which impoverish the children of God in the same way that Roman Catholicism impoverishes them. There is more comfort and joy for God's children set forth in the Scriptures than the Roman and Arminian theologies allow them to possess. At this point, at least, Rous's verdict stands: Romanism and Arminianism show themselves to be all too much akin.

We conclude, then, that Arminianism should be diagnosed, not as a creative alternative to Reformation teaching, but as an impoverishing reaction to it, involving a partial denial of the biblical faith in the God of all grace. The lapse is less serious in some cases, more so in others, but in every case it calls for responsible notice and compassionate correction. The logical conclusion of Arminian principles would be pure Pelagianism, but no Arminian takes his principles so far (otherwise one would call him a Pelagian, and be done with it). Calvinists should therefore approach professed Arminians as brother evangelicals trapped in weakening theological mistakes, and seek to help them to a better mind. So we move to our final brief section.

The Causes of Arminianisms and Their Cure

What are the causes of Arminianisms, and what is the cure for them? Satanic malice and the natural darkness of the human mind are no doubt contributory causes of Arminianism, in its various forms; but what has directly produced it in history is reaction against an image (often incorrect) of Calvinism. Arminians appear as men concerned to do justice to four biblical realities: the love of God, the glory of Christ, the moral responsibility of man, and the call to Christian holiness. The reason why they affirm universal redemption, universal sufficient grace, man's ability to respond to God, man's independence in responding, and the conditional character of election, is because they think these assertions necessary as means to their avowed end. Calvinists believe that the Arminian method of safeguarding these four realities actually imperils them, and can argue strongly to this effect, but they can only expect to be listened to if they are showing equal concern for these realities themselves. And if their Calvinism appears hard, cold, and academic, lacking love for God and man, lacking passion for evangelism, lacking both the tender conscience and the burning heart, they must not wonder if their arguments fail to carry conviction. It is to be feared that much of the Arminianism in this world has been due in part, at any rate, to recoil from an unspiritual Calvinism. We are deliberately, in this paper, avoiding any attempt to generalize about our situation today, but those who find themselves up against Arminianism (or perhaps it calls itself anti-Calvinism) at the present time would do well to ask whether Calvinists themselves have not had something to do with bringing it into being, by not advancing their doctrine with holy and loving attitudes and actions.

How can Arminianisms be cured? Only God can finally set men's heads right, just as only He can ever set our hearts right. But if we, who stand on the Calvinist side, can learn afresh to explain that true theology must be confessional, a faithful echo of the Bible, neither adding nor subtracting; and that the reality of human moral agency and responsibility in a world where God is Lord is one of the mysteries of creation, which we acknowledge, but do not pretend to understand; and that total inability to respond to God is indeed part of the human tragedy; and that the redeeming love of God is not an impotent goodwill that can be thwarted, but a sovereign resolve that not even Satan can stop; and that there is in every regenerate heart a testimony confirming the biblical insistence that it is the Triune God, and He alone, who saves us; and that God in the gospel offers pardon and life to every man who hears it, and that none who hears misses this blessing save by his own unbelief; and that expectant evangelism is every Christian's duty; and that it is the very knowledge that it is God who saves, and that He does not send His word forth for nothing, that upholds our expectancy; and that the reprobates are faceless men so far as we are concerned, so that we can never be sure we have met even one of them—then we may hope to see the children of God returning in increasing numbers from the dry places of Arminianism to the "old paths, wherein is the good way," where they will find rest for their souls and power for their lives.

The Pelagian Captivity of the Church

by R.C. Sproul

Shortly after the Reformation began, in the first few years after Martin Luther posted the Ninety-Five Theses on the church door at Wittenberg, he issued some short booklets on a variety of subjects. One of the most provocative was titled *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. In this book Luther was looking back to that period of Old Testament history when Jerusalem was destroyed by the invading armies of Babylon and the elite of the people were carried off into captivity. Luther in the sixteenth century took the image of the historic Babylonian captivity and reapplied it to his era and talked about the new Babylonian captivity of the Church. He was speaking of Rome as the modern Babylon that held the Gospel hostage with its rejection of the biblical understanding of justification. You can understand how fierce the controversy was, how polemical this title would be in that period by saying that the Church had not simply erred or strayed, but had fallen — that it's actually now Babylonian; it is now in pagan captivity.

I've often wondered if Luther were alive today and came to our culture and looked, not at the liberal church community, but at evangelical churches, what would he have to say? Of course I can't answer that question with any kind of definitive authority, but my guess is this: If Martin Luther lived today and picked up his pen to write, the book he would write in our time would be entitled *The Pelagian Captivity of the Evangelical Church*. Luther saw the doctrine of justification as fueled by a deeper theological problem. He writes about this extensively in *The Bondage of the Will*. When we look at the Reformation and we see the solas of the Reformation — sola Scriptura, sola fide, solus Christus, soli Deo gloria, sola gratia — Luther was convinced that the real issue of the Reformation was the issue of grace; and that underlying the doctrine of solo fide, justification by faith alone, was the prior commitment to sola gratia, the concept of justification by grace alone.

In the Fleming Revell edition of *The Bondage of the Will*, the translators, J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston, included a somewhat provocative historical and theological introduction to the book itself. This is from the end of that introduction:

These things need to be pondered by Protestants today. With what right may we call ourselves children of the Reformation? Much modern Protestantism would be neither owned nor even recognised by the pioneer Reformers. *The Bondage of the Will* fairly sets before us what they believed about the salvation of lost mankind. In the light of it, we are forced to ask whether Protestant Christendom has not tragically sold its birthright between Luther's day and our own. Has not Protestantism today become more Erasmian than Lutheran? Do we not too often try to minimise and gloss over doctrinal differences for the sake of inter-party peace? Are we innocent of the doctrinal indifferentism with which Luther charged Erasmus? Do we still believe that doctrine matters?¹

Historically, it's a simple matter of fact that Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and all the leading Protestant theologians of the first epoch of the Reformation stood on precisely the same ground here. On other points they had their differences. In asserting the helplessness of man in sin and the sovereignty of God in grace, they were entirely at one. To all of them these doctrines were the very lifeblood of the Christian faith. A modern editor of Luther's works says this:

Whoever puts this book down without having realized that Evangelical theology stands or falls with the doctrine of the bondage of the will has read it in vain. The doctrine of free justification by faith alone, which became the storm center of so much controversy during the Reformation period, is often regarded as the heart of the Reformers' theology, but this is not accurate. The truth is that their thinking was really centered upon the contention of Paul, echoed by Augustine and others, that the sinner's entire salvation is by free and sovereign grace only, and that the doctrine of justification by faith was important to them because it safeguarded the principle of sovereign grace. The sovereignty of grace found expression in their thinking at a more profound level still in the doctrine of monergistic regeneration.²

That is to say, that the faith that receives Christ for justification is itself the free gift of a sovereign God. The principle of sola fide is not rightly understood until it is seen as anchored in the broader principle of sola gratia. What is the source of faith? Is it the God-given means whereby the God-given justification is received, or is it a condition of justification which is left to man to fulfill? Do you hear the difference? Let me put it in simple terms. I heard an evangelist recently say, "If God takes a thousand steps to reach out to you for your redemption, still in the final analysis, you must take the decisive step to be saved." Consider the statement that has been made by America's most beloved and leading evangelical of the twentieth century, Billy Graham, who says with great passion, "God does ninety-nine percent of it but you still must do that last one percent."

What Is Pelagianism?

Now, let's return briefly to my title, "The Pelagian Captivity of the Church." What are we talking about? Pelagius was a monk who lived in Britain in the fifth century. He was a contemporary of the greatest theologian of the first millennium of Church history if not of all time, Aurelius Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in North Africa. We have heard of St. Augustine, of his great works in theology, of his *City of God*, of his *Confessions*, and so on, which remain Christian classics.

Augustine, in addition to being a titanic theologian and a prodigious intellect, was also a man of deep spirituality and prayer. In one of his famous prayers, Augustine made a seemingly harmless and innocuous statement in the prayer to God in which he says: "O God, command what you wouldst, and grant what thou dost command." Now, would that give you apoplexy — to hear a prayer like that? Well it certainly set Pelagius, this British monk, into orbit. When he heard that, he protested vociferously, even appealing to Rome to have this ghastly prayer censured from the pen of Augustine. Here's why. He said, "Are you saying, Augustine, that God has the inherent right to command anything that he so desires from his creatures? Nobody is going to dispute that. God inherently, as the creator of heaven and earth, has the right to impose obligations on his creatures and say, 'Thou shalt do this, and thou shalt not do that.' 'Command whatever thou would' —

it's a perfectly legitimate prayer.”

It's the second part of the prayer that Pelagius abhorred when Augustine said, “and grant what thou dost command.” He said, “What are you talking about? If God is just, if God is righteous and God is holy, and God commands of the creature to do something, certainly that creature must have the power within himself, the moral ability within himself, to perform it or God would never require it in the first place.” Now that makes sense, doesn't it? What Pelagius was saying is that moral responsibility always and everywhere implies moral capability or, simply, moral ability. So why would we have to pray, “God grant me, give me the gift of being able to do what you command me to do”? Pelagius saw in this statement a shadow being cast over the integrity of God himself, who would hold people responsible for doing something they cannot do.

So in the ensuing debate, Augustine made it clear that in creation, God commanded nothing from Adam or Eve that they were incapable of performing. But once transgression entered and mankind became fallen, God's law was not repealed nor did God adjust his holy requirements downward to accommodate the weakened, fallen condition of his creation. God did punish his creation by visiting upon them the judgment of original sin, so that everyone after Adam and Eve who was born into this world was born already dead in sin. Original sin is not the first sin. It's the result of the first sin; it refers to our inherent corruption, by which we are born in sin, and in sin did our mothers conceive us. We are not born in a neutral state of innocence, but we are born in a sinful, fallen condition. Virtually every church in the historic World Council of Churches at some point in their history and in their creedal development articulates some doctrine of original sin. So clear is that to the biblical revelation that it would take a repudiation of the biblical view of mankind to deny original sin altogether.

This is precisely what was at issue in the battle between Augustine and Pelagius in the fifth century. Pelagius said there is no such thing as original sin. Adam's sin affected Adam and only Adam. There is no transmission or transfer of guilt or fallenness or corruption to the progeny of Adam and Eve. Everyone is born in the same state of innocence in which Adam was created. And, he said, for a person to live a life of obedience to God, a life of moral perfection, is possible without any help from Jesus or without any help from the grace of God. Pelagius said that grace — and here's the key distinction — *facilitates* righteousness. What does “facilitate” mean?

It helps, it makes it more facile, it makes it easier, but you don't have to have it. You can be perfect without it. Pelagius further stated that it is not only theoretically possible for some folks to live a perfect life without any assistance from divine grace, but there are in fact people who do it. Augustine said, “No, no, no, no . . . we are infected by sin by nature, to the very depths and core of our being — so much so that no human being has the moral power to incline himself to cooperate with the grace of God. The human will, as a result of original sin, still has the power to choose, but it is in bondage to its evil desires and inclinations. The condition of fallen humanity is one that Augustine would describe as the inability to not sin. In simple English, what Augustine was saying is that in the Fall, man loses his moral ability to do the things of God and he is held captive by his own evil inclinations.

In the fifth century the Church condemned Pelagius as a heretic. Pelagianism was condemned at the Council of Orange, and it was condemned again at the Council of Florence, the Council of Carthage, and also, ironically, at the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century in the first three anathemas of the Canons of the Sixth Session. So, consistently throughout Church history, the Church has roundly and soundly condemned Pelagianism — because Pelagianism denies the fallenness of our nature; it denies the doctrine of original sin.

Now what is called semi-Pelagianism, as the prefix “semi” suggests, was a somewhat middle ground between full-orbed Augustinianism and full-orbed Pelagianism. Semi-Pelagianism said this: yes, there was a fall; yes, there is such a thing as original sin; yes, the constituent nature of humanity has been changed by this state of corruption and all parts of our humanity have been significantly weakened by the fall, so much so that without the assistance of divine grace nobody can possibly be redeemed, so that grace is not only helpful but it's absolutely necessary for salvation. While we are so fallen that we can't be saved without grace, we are not so fallen that we don't have the ability to accept or reject the grace when it's offered to us. The will is weakened but is not enslaved. There remains in the core of our being an island of righteousness that remains untouched by the fall. It's out of that little island of righteousness, that little parcel of goodness that is still intact in the soul or in the will that is the determinative difference between heaven and hell. It's that little island that must be exercised when God does his thousand steps of reaching out to us, but in the final analysis it's that one step that we take that determines whether we go to heaven or hell — whether we exercise that little righteousness that is in the core of our being or whether we don't. That little island Augustine wouldn't even recognize as an atoll in the South Pacific. He said it's a mythical island, that the will is enslaved, and that man is dead in his sin and trespasses.

Ironically, the Church condemned semi-Pelagianism as vehemently as it had condemned original Pelagianism. Yet by the time you get to the sixteenth century and you read the Catholic understanding of what happens in salvation the Church basically repudiated what Augustine taught and Aquinas taught as well. The Church concluded that there still remains this freedom that is intact in the human will and that man must cooperate with — and assent to — the prevenient grace that is offered to them by God. If we exercise that will, if we exercise a cooperation with whatever powers we have left, we will be saved. And so in the sixteenth century the Church reembraced semi-Pelagianism.

At the time of the Reformation, all the reformers agreed on one point: the moral inability of fallen human beings to incline themselves to the things of God; that all people, in order to be saved, are totally dependent, not ninety-nine percent, but one hundred percent dependent upon the monergistic work of regeneration in order to come to faith, and that faith itself is a gift of God. It's not that we are offered salvation and that we will be born again *if we choose to believe*. But we can't even believe until God in his grace and in his mercy first changes the disposition of our souls through his sovereign work of regeneration. In other words, what the reformers all agreed with was, unless a man is born again, he can't even see the kingdom of God, let alone enter it. Like Jesus says in the sixth chapter of John, “No man can come to me unless it is given to him of the Father” — that the necessary condition for anybody's faith and anybody's salvation is regeneration.

Evangelicals and Faith

Modern Evangelicalism almost uniformly and universally teaches that in order for a person to be born again, he must first exercise faith. You have to choose to be born again. Isn't that what you hear? In a George Barna poll, more than seventy percent of "professing evangelical Christians" in America expressed the belief that man is basically good. And more than eighty percent articulated the view that God helps those who help themselves. These positions — or let me say it negatively — neither of these positions is semi-Pelagian. They're both Pelagian. To say that we're basically good is the Pelagian view. I would be willing to assume that in at least thirty percent of the people who are reading this issue, and probably more, if we really examine their thinking in depth, we would find hearts that are beating Pelagianism. We're overwhelmed with it. We're surrounded by it. We're immersed in it. We hear it every day. We hear it every day in the secular culture. And not only do we hear it every day in the secular culture, we hear it every day on Christian television and on Christian radio.

In the nineteenth century, there was a preacher who became very popular in America, who wrote a book on theology, coming out of his own training in law, in which he made no bones about his Pelagianism. He rejected not only Augustinianism, but he also rejected semi-Pelagianism and stood clearly on the subject of unvarnished Pelagianism, saying in no uncertain terms, without any ambiguity, that there was no Fall and that there is no such thing as original sin. This man went on to attack viciously the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement of Christ, and in addition to that, to repudiate as clearly and as loudly as he could the doctrine of justification by faith alone by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. This man's basic thesis was, we don't need the imputation of the righteousness of Christ because we have the capacity in and of ourselves to become righteous. His name: Charles Finney, one of America's most revered evangelists. Now, if Luther was correct in saying that *sola fide* is the article upon which the Church stands or falls, if what the reformers were saying is that justification by faith alone is an essential truth of Christianity, who also argued that the substitutionary atonement is an essential truth of Christianity; if they're correct in their assessment that those doctrines are essential truths of Christianity, the only conclusion we can come to is that Charles Finney was not a Christian. I read his writings and I say, "I don't see how any Christian person could write this." And yet, he is in the Hall of Fame of Evangelical Christianity in America. He is the patron saint of twentieth-century Evangelicalism. And he is not semi-Pelagian; he is unvarnished in his Pelagianism.

The Island of Righteousness

One thing is clear: that you can be purely Pelagian and be completely welcome in the evangelical movement today. It's not simply that the camel sticks his nose into the tent; he doesn't just come in the tent — he kicks the owner of the tent out. Modern Evangelicalism today looks with suspicion at Reformed theology, which has become sort of the third-class citizen of Evangelicalism. Now you say, "Wait a minute, R. C. Let's not tar everybody with the extreme brush of Pelagianism, because, after all, Billy Graham and the rest of these people are saying there was a Fall; you've got to have grace; there is such a thing as original sin; and semi-Pelagians do not agree with Pelagius' facile and sanguine view of unfallen human nature." And that's true. No question about it. But it's that little island of righteousness where man still has the ability, in and of himself, to turn, to change, to incline, to dispose, to embrace the offer of grace that reveals why historically semi-Pelagianism is not called semi-Augustinianism, but semi-Pelagianism.

I heard an evangelist use two analogies to describe what happens in our redemption. He said sin has such a strong hold on us, a stranglehold, that it's like a person who can't swim, who falls overboard in a raging sea, and he's going under for the third time and only the tops of his fingers are still above the water; and unless someone intervenes to rescue him, he has no hope of survival, his death is certain. And unless God throws him a life preserver, he can't possibly be rescued. And not only must God throw him a life preserver in the general vicinity of where he is, but that life preserver has to hit him right where his fingers are still extended out of the water, and hit him so that he can grasp hold of it. It has to be perfectly pitched. But still that man will drown unless he takes his fingers and curls them around the life preserver and God will rescue him. But unless that tiny little human action is done, he will surely perish.

The other analogy is this: A man is desperately ill, sick unto death, lying in his hospital bed with a disease that is fatal. There is no way he can be cured unless somebody from outside comes up with a cure, a medicine that will take care of this fatal disease. And God has the cure and walks into the room with the medicine. But the man is so weak he can't even help himself to the medicine; God has to pour it on the spoon. The man is so sick he's almost comatose. He can't even open his mouth, and God has to lean over and open up his mouth for him. God has to bring the spoon to the man's lips, but the man still has to swallow it.

Now, if we're going to use analogies, let's be accurate. The man isn't going under for the third time; he is stone cold dead at the bottom of the ocean. That's where you once were when you were dead in sin and trespasses and walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air. And while you were *dead* hath God quickened you together with Christ. God dove to the bottom of the sea and took that drowned corpse and breathed into it the breath of his life and raised you from the dead. And it's not that you were dying in a hospital bed of a certain illness, but rather, when you were born you were born D.O.A. That's what the Bible says: that we are morally stillborn.

Do we have a will? Yes, of course we have a will. Calvin said, if you mean by a free will a faculty of choosing by which you have the power within yourself to choose what you desire, then we all have free will. If you mean by free will the ability for fallen human beings to incline themselves and exercise that will to choose the things of God without the prior monergistic work of regeneration then, said Calvin, *free will* is far too grandiose a term to apply to a human being.

The semi-Pelagian doctrine of *free will* prevalent in the evangelical world today is a pagan view that denies the captivity of the human heart to sin. It underestimates the stranglehold that sin has upon us.

None of us wants to see things as bad as they really are. The biblical doctrine of human corruption is grim. We don't hear

the Apostle Paul say, “You know, it’s sad that we have such a thing as sin in the world; nobody’s perfect. But be of good cheer. We’re basically good.” Do you see that even a cursory reading of Scripture denies this?

Now back to Luther. What is the source and status of faith? Is it the God-given means whereby the God-given justification is received? Or is it a condition of justification which is left to us to fulfill? Is your faith a work? Is it the one work that God leaves for you to do? I had a discussion with some folks in Grand Rapids, Michigan, recently. I was speaking on *sola gratia*, and one fellow was upset.

He said, “Are you trying to tell me that in the final analysis it’s God who either does or doesn’t sovereignly regenerate a heart?”

And I said, “Yes;” and he was very upset about that. I said, “Let me ask you this: are you a Christian?”

He said, “Yes.”

I said, “Do you have friends who aren’t Christians?”

He said, “Well, of course.”

I said, “Why are you a Christian and your friends aren’t? Is it because you’re more righteous than they are?” He wasn’t stupid. He wasn’t going to say, “Of course it’s because I’m more righteous. I did the right thing and my friend didn’t.” He knew where I was going with that question.

And he said, “Oh, no, no, no.”

I said, “Tell me why. Is it because you are smarter than your friend?”

And he said, “No.”

But he would not agree that the final, decisive issue was the grace of God. He wouldn’t come to that. And after we discussed this for fifteen minutes, he said, “OK! I’ll say it. I’m a Christian because I did the right thing, I made the right response, and my friend didn’t.”

What was this person trusting in for his salvation? Not in his works in general, but in the one work that he performed. And he was a Protestant, an evangelical. But his view of salvation was no different from the Roman view.

God’s Sovereignty in Salvation

This is the issue: Is it a part of God’s gift of salvation, or is it in our own contribution to salvation? Is our salvation wholly of God or does it ultimately depend on something that we do for ourselves? Those who say the latter, that it ultimately depends on something we do for ourselves, thereby deny humanity’s utter helplessness in sin and affirm that a form of semi-Pelagianism is true after all. It is no wonder then that later Reformed theology condemned Arminianism as being, in principle, both a return to Rome because, in effect, it turned faith into a meritorious work, and a betrayal of the Reformation because it denied the sovereignty of God in saving sinners, which was the deepest religious and theological principle of the reformers’ thought. Arminianism was indeed, in Reformed eyes, a renunciation of New Testament Christianity in favor of New Testament Judaism. For to rely on oneself for faith is no different in principle than to rely on oneself for works, and the one is as un-Christian and anti-Christian as the other. In the light of what Luther says to Erasmus there is no doubt that he would have endorsed this judgment.

And yet this view is the overwhelming majority report today in professing evangelical circles. And as long as semi-Pelagianism, which is simply a thinly veiled version of real Pelagianism at its core — as long as it prevails in the Church, I don’t know what’s going to happen. But I know, however, what will not happen: there will not be a new Reformation. Until we humble ourselves and understand that no man is an island and that no man has an island of righteousness, that we are utterly dependent upon the unmixed grace of God for our salvation, we will not begin to rest upon grace and rejoice in the greatness of God’s sovereignty, and we will not be rid of the pagan influence of humanism that exalts and puts man at the center of religion. Until that happens there will not be a new Reformation, because at the heart of Reformation teaching is the central place of the worship and gratitude given to God and God alone. *Soli Deo gloria*, to God alone be the glory.

Notes

1. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston, “Introduction” to the *The Bondage of the Will* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming Revell, 1957) pp. 59-60.

2. Ibid

Man's Utter Inability to Rescue Himself

Thomas Boston

The following article has been extracted from Boston's classic work Human Nature In Its Fourfold State (Chapter 3, pp.

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Romans 5:6

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. John 6.44

We have now had a view of the total corruption of man's nature, and that load of wrath which lies on him, that gulf of misery into which he is plunged in his natural state. But there is one part of his misery that deserves particular consideration; namely, his utter inability to recover himself, the knowledge of which is necessary for the due humiliation of a sinner. What I design here, is only to propose a few things, whereby to convince the unregenerate man of this his inability, that he may see an absolute need of Christ and of the power of His grace.

A man that is fallen into a pit cannot be supposed to help himself out of it, but by one of two ways; either by doing all himself alone, or taking hold of, and improving, the help offered him by others. Likewise an unconverted man cannot be supposed to help himself out of his natural state, but either in the way of the law, or covenant of works, by doing all himself without Christ; or else in the way of the Gospel, or covenant of grace, by exerting his own strength to lay hold upon, and to make use of the help offered him by a Saviour. But, alas! the unconverted man is dead in the pit, and cannot help himself either of these ways; not the first way, for the first text tells us, that when our Lord came to help us, 'we were without strength,' unable to recover ourselves. We were ungodly, therefore under a burden of guilt and wrath, yet 'without strength,' unable to stand under it; and unable to throw it off, or get from under it: so that all mankind would have undoubtedly perished, had not 'Christ died for the ungodly,' and brought help to those who could never have recovered themselves. But when Christ comes and offers help to sinners, cannot they take it? Cannot they improve help when it comes to their hands? No, the second text tells, they cannot; 'No man can come unto me,' that is, believe in me (John 6.44), 'except the Father draw him.' This is a drawing which enables them to come, who till then could not come; and therefore could not help themselves by improving the help offered. It is a drawing which is always effectual; for it can be no less than 'hearing and learning of the Father,' which, whoever partakes of, come to Christ (verse 45). Therefore it is not drawing in the way of mere moral suasion, which may be, yea, and always is ineffectual. But it is drawing by mighty power (Eph. 1:9), absolutely necessary for those who have no power in themselves to come and take hold of the offered help.

Hearken then, O unregenerate man, and be convinced that as you are in a most miserable state by nature, so you are utterly unable to recover yourself any way. You are ruined; and what way will you go to work to recover yourself? Which of the two ways will you choose? Will you try it alone, or will you make use of help? Will you fall on the way of works, or on the way of the Gospel? I know very well that you will not so much as try the way of the Gospel, till once you have found the recovery impracticable in the way of the law. Therefore, we shall begin where corrupt nature teaches men to begin, namely, at the way of the law of works.

Sinner, I would have you believe that your working will never effect it. Work, and do your best; you will never be able to work yourself out of this state of corruption and wrath. You must have Christ, else you will perish eternally. It is only 'Christ in you' that can be the hope of glory. But if you will needs try it, then I must lay before you, from the unalterable Word of the living God, two things which you must do for yourself. If you can do them, it must be yielded that you are able to recover yourself; but if not, then you can do nothing this way for your recovery.

1. 'If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments' (Matthew 19:17). That is, if you will by doing enter into life, then perfectly keep the ten commandments; for the object of these words is to beat down the pride of the man's heart, and to let him see an absolute need of a Saviour, from the impossibility of keeping the law. The answer is given suitably to the address. Our Lord checks him for his compliment, 'Good Master' (Matthew 19:16), telling him, 'There is none good but one, that is God' (Matthew 19:17). As if he had said, You think yourself a good man, and me another; but where goodness is spoken of, men and angels may veil their faces before the good God. As to his question, wherein he revealed his legal disposition, Christ does not answer him, saying, 'Believe and thou shalt be saved;' that would not have been so seasonable in the case of one who thought he could do well enough for himself, if he but knew 'what good he should do;' but, suitable to the humor the man was in, He bids him 'keep the commandments;' keep them nicely and accurately, as those that watch malefactors in prison, lest any of them escape, and their life be taken for those which escape. See then, O unregenerate man, what you can do in this matter; for if you will recover yourself in this way, you must perfectly keep the commandments of God.

(1) Your obedience must be perfect, in respect of the principle of it; that is, your soul, the principle of action, must be perfectly pure, and altogether without sin. For the law requires all moral perfection; not only actual, but habitual: and so condemns original sin; impurity of nature, as well as of actions. Now, if you can bring this to pass you will be able to answer that question of Solomon, so as never one of Adam's posterity could yet answer it, 'Who can say, I have made my heart clean?' (Prov. 20:9). But if you cannot, the very want of this perfection is sin, and so lays you open to the curse and cuts you off from life. Yea, it makes all your actions, even your best actions, sinful: 'For who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' (Job 14:4). And do you think by sin to help yourself out of sin and misery?

(2) Your obedience must also be perfect in parts. It must be as broad as the whole law of God: if you lack one thing, you are undone; for the law denounces the curse on him that continues not in every thing written therein (Gal 3:10). You must give Internal and external obedience to the whole law, keep all the commands in heart and life. If you break any one of them, that will ensure your ruin. A vain thought, or idle word, will still shut you up under the curse.

(3) It must be perfect in respect of degrees, as was the obedience of Adam, while he stood in his innocence. This the law requires, and will accept of no less (Matthew 22:37), 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.' If one degree of that love, required by the law, be wanting, if each part of your obedience be not brought up to the greatest height commanded, that want is a breach of the law, and so leaves you still under the

curse. A man may bring as many buckets of water to a house that is on fire, as he is able to carry, and yet it may be consumed, and will be so, if he bring not as many as will quench the fire. Even so, although you should do what you are able, in keeping the commandments, if you fail in the least degree of obedience which the law enjoins, you are certainly ruined for ever, unless you take hold of Christ, renouncing all your righteousness as filthy rags. (See Rom 10:5; Gal. 3:10).

(4) It must be perpetual, as the man Christ's obedience was, who always did the things which pleased the Father, for the tenor of the law is, 'Cursed is he that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them! Hence, though Adam's obedience was, for a while, absolutely perfect; yet because at length he failed in one point, namely, in eating the forbidden fruit, he fell under the curse of the law. If a man were to live a dutiful subject to his prince till the close of his days, and then conspire against him, he must die for his treason. Even so, though you should, all the time of your life, live in perfect obedience to the law of God, and yet at the hour of death only entertain a vain thought, or pronounce an idle word, that idle word, or vain thought, would blot out all your former righteousness, and ruin you; namely, in this way in which you are seeking to recover yourself.

Now, such is the obedience which you must perform, if you would recover yourself in the way of the law. But though you would thus obey, the law stakes you down in the state of wrath, till another demand of it be satisfied.

2. You must pay what you owe. It is undeniable that you are a sinner; and whatever you may be in time to come, justice must be satisfied for your sins already committed. The honor of the law must be maintained, by your suffering the denounced wrath. It may be you have changed your course of life, or are now resolved to do it, and to set about keeping the commands of God: but what have you done, or what will you do, with the old debt? Your obedience to God, though it were perfect, is a debt due to him for the time wherein it is performed, and can no more satisfy for former sins, than a tenant's paying the current year's rent can satisfy the landlord for all arrears. Can the paying of new debts acquit a man from old accounts? Nay, deceive not yourselves; you will find these laid up in store with God, and sealed up among his treasures (Deut. 32:34). It remains then, that either you must bear that wrath, to which for your sin you are liable, according to the law; or else you must acknowledge that you cannot bear it, and thereupon have recourse to the Surety, the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me now ask you, Are you able to satisfy the justice of God? Can you pay your own debt? Surely not: for, as He is the infinite God, whom you have offended, the punishment, being suited to the quality of the offence, must be infinite. But your punishment, or sufferings for sin, cannot be infinite in value, for you are a finite creature: therefore, they must be infinite in duration or continuance; that is, they must be eternal. And so all your sufferings in this world are but an earnest of what you must suffer in the world to come.

Now, sinner, if you can answer these demands, you may recover yourself in the way of the law. But are you not conscious of your inability to do any of these things, much more to do them all? yet if you do not all, you do nothing. Turn then to what course of life you will, you are still in a state of wrath. Screw up your obedience to the greatest height you can; suffer what God lays upon you; yea, add, if you will, to the burden, and walk under all without the least impatience: yet all this will not satisfy the demands of the law; therefore you are still a ruined creature. Alas, sinner I what are you doing, while you strive to help yourself, but do not receive, and unite with, Jesus Christ? You are laboring in the fire, wearying yourself for very vanity; laboring to enter into heaven by the door which Adam's sin so bolted, that neither he, nor any of his lost posterity, can ever enter by it. Do you not see the flaming sword of justice, keeping you off from the tree of life? Do you not hear the law denouncing a curse on you for all you are doing, even for your obedience, your prayers, your tears, your reformation of life, and so on; because, being under the law's dominion, your best works are not so good as—it requires them to be under the pain of the curse? Believe it, sirs, if you live and die out of Christ, without being actually united to Him as the second Adam, the life-giving Spirit, and without coming under the covert of His atoning blood, though you should do the utmost that any man can do, in keeping the commands of God, you will never see the face of God in peace. If you should, from this moment, bid an eternal farewell to this world's joys, and all the affairs thereof, and henceforth busy yourselves with nothing but the salvation of your souls; if you should go into some 'wilderness, live upon the grass of the field, and be companions to dragons and owls; if you should retire to some dark cavern of the earth, and weep there for your sins, until you had wept yourselves blind; if you should confess with your tongue, until it cleave to the roof of your mouth; pray, till your knees grow hard as horns; fast, till your body become like a skeleton, and, after all this, give it to be burnt; the word is gone out of the Lord's mouth in righteousness and cannot return, that you shall perish for ever, notwithstanding all this, as not being in Christ (John 14:6), 'No man cometh unto the Father, but by me (Acts 4:12), 'Neither is there salvation in any other.' (Mark 16:16), 'He that believeth not shall be damned!

Objection: But God is a merciful God, and He knows that we are not able to answer these demands; we hope therefore to be saved, if we do as well as we can, and keep the commands as well as we are able.

Answer 1: Though you are able to do many things, you are not able to do one thing right: you can do nothing acceptable to God, being out of Christ (John 1:5), 'Without me ye can do nothing.' An unrenewed man, as you are, can do nothing but sin, as we have already proved. Your best actions are sin, and so they increase your debt to justice: how then can it be expected they should lessen it?

Answer 2: Though God should offer to save men, upon condition that they did all they could do, in obedience to His commands, yet we have reason to think that those who should attempt it would never be saved: for where is the man that does as well as he can? Who sees not many false steps he has made, which he might have avoided? There are so many things to be done, so many temptations to carry us out of the road of duty, and our nature is so very apt to be set on fire of hell, that we surely must fail, even in some point that is within the compass of our natural abilities. But,

Answer 3: Though you should do all you are able to do, in vain do you hope to be saved in that way. What word of God is this hope of yours founded on? It is founded on neither law nor Gospel; therefore it is but a delusion. It is not founded on the Gospel; for the Gospel leads the soul out of itself to Jesus Christ for all; and it establishes the law (Rom 3:31). Whereas this hope of yours cannot be established but on the ruins of the law, which God will magnify and make honorable. Hence it appears, that it is not founded on the law neither. When God set Adam working for happiness to himself and his posterity, perfect obedience was the 'condition required of him; and the curse was denounced in case of disobedience. The

law being broken by him, he and his posterity were subjected to the penalty for sin committed; and withal were still bound to perfect obedience. For it is absurd to think, that man's sinning, and suffering for his sin, should free him from his duty of obedience to his Creator. When Christ came in the room of the elect, to purchase their salvation, the terms were the same. justice had the elect under arrest: if He is desirous to deliver them, the terms are known. He must satisfy for their sin, by suffering the punishment due to it; He must do what they cannot do, namely, obey the law perfectly, and so fulfill all righteousness. Accordingly, all this He did, and so became 'the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth' (Rom 10:4). And do you think that God will abate these terms as to you, when His own Son got no abatement of them? Expect it not, though you should beg it with tears of blood; for if they prevailed, they must prevail against the truth, justice, and honor of God (Gal 3:10). 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. (Gal. 3:12), 'And the law is not of faith: but the man that doeth them shall live in them.' It is true, that God is merciful: but cannot He be merciful unless He save you in a way that is neither consistent with His law nor His Gospel? Have not His goodness and mercy sufficiently appeared, in sending the Son of His love, to do 'what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh?' He has provided help for those who cannot help themselves: but you, insensible of your own weakness, must needs think to recover yourself by your own works, while you are no more able to do it than to remove mountains of brass out of their place.

Wherefore I conclude, that you are utterly unable to recover yourself, in the way of works, or by the law. O that you would conclude the same concerning yourself!

Let us try next what the sinner can do to recover himself, In the way of the Gospel. It may be you think that you cannot do all by yourself alone, yet Jesus Christ offering you help, you can of yourself embrace it, and use it for your recovery. But, O sinner, be convinced of your absolute need of the grace of Christ: for truly, there is help offered, but you cannot accept it: there is a rope cast out to draw shipwrecked sinners to land, but, alas they have no hands to lay hold of it. They are like infants exposed in the open field, who must starve, though their food be lying by them, unless some one put it in their mouths. To convince natural men of this, let it be considered,

1. That although Christ is offered in the Gospel, yet they cannot believe in Him. Saving faith is the faith of God's elect, the special gift of God to them, wrought in them by His Spirit. Salvation is offered to them that will believe in Christ, but how can you believe? (John 5:44). It is offered to those that will come to Christ; but 'no man can come unto Him, except the Father draw him.' It is offered to those that will look to Him, as lifted on the pole of the Gospel (Isa. 45:22); but the natural man is spiritually blind (Rev. 3:17); and as to the things of the Spirit of God, he cannot know them, for they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14). Nay, whosoever will, he is welcome; let him come (Rev. 22:17); but there must be a day of power on the sinner, before he can be willing (Ps. 110:3).

2. Man naturally has nothing wherewithal to improve, for his recovery, the help brought in by the Gospel. He is cast away in a state of wrath, and is bound hand and foot, so that he cannot lay hold of the cords of love thrown out to him in the Gospel. The most cunning artificer cannot work without tools; neither can the most skilful musician play well on an instrument that is out of tune. How can anyone believe, or repent, whose understanding is darkness (Eph. 5:8), whose heart is a stony heart, inflexible, insensible (Ezek. 36:26), whose affections are wholly disordered and distempered, who is averse to good, and bent to evil? The arms of natural abilities are too short to reach supernatural help; hence those who most excel in them are often most estranged from spiritual things (Matthew 11:25), 'Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent!

3. Man cannot work a saving change on himself; but so changed he must be, else he can neither believe nor repent, nor ever see heaven. No action can be without a suitable principle. Believing, repenting, and the like, are the product of the new nature and can never be produced by the old corrupt nature. Now, what can the natural man do in this matter? He must be regenerate, begotten again unto a lively hope; but as the child cannot be active in his own generation, so a man cannot be active but passive only, in his own regeneration. The heart is shut against Christ: man cannot open it, only God can do it by His grace (Acts 16:14). He is dead in sin; he must be quickened, raised out of his grave; who can do this but God Himself? (Eph. 2:1-5). Nay, he must be 'created in Christ Jesus, unto good works' (Eph. 2:10). These are works of omnipotence, and can be done by no less a power.

4. Man, in his depraved state, is under an utter inability to do any thing truly good, as was proved before at large: how then can he obey the Gospel? His nature is the very reverse of the Gospel: how can he, of himself, fall in with that plan of salvation, and accept the offered remedy? The corruption of man's nature infallibly includes his utter inability to recover himself in any way, and whoso is convinced of the one, must needs admit the other; for they stand and fall together. Were all the purchase of Christ offered to the unregenerate man for one good thought, he cannot command it (2 Cor. 3:5), 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves! Were it offered on condition of a good word, yet 'how can ye, being evil, speak good things?' (Matthew 12:35). Nay, were it left to yourselves to choose what is easiest, Christ Himself tells you (John 15:5), 'Without me, ye can do nothing!'

5. The natural man cannot but resist the Lord's offering to help him; yet that resistance is infallibly overcome in the elect, by converting grace. Can the stony heart choose but to resist the stroke? There is not only an inability, but an enmity and obstinacy in man's will by nature. God knows, O natural man, whether you know it or not, that 'thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass' (Isa. 48:4), and cannot be overcome, but by Him who hath 'broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.' Hence, humanly speaking, there is such hard work in converting a sinner. Sometimes he seems to be caught in the net of the Gospel; yet quickly he slips away again. The hook catches hold of him; but he struggles, tin, getting free of it, he goes away with a bleeding wound. When good hopes are conceived of him, by those that travail in birth for the forming of Christ in him., there is oft-times nothing brought forth but wind. The deceitful heart makes many contrivances to avoid a Saviour, and cheat the man of his eternal happiness. Thus the natural man lies sunk in a state of sin and wrath, utterly unable to recover himself.

Objection 1: If we be under an utter inability to do any good, how can God require us to do it? Answer: God making man

upright (Eccl. 7:29), gave him a power to do everything that He should require of him; this power man lost by his own fault. We were bound to serve God, and do whatever He commanded us, as being His creatures; and also, we were under the superadded tie of a covenant, for that purpose. Now, we having, by our own fault, disabled ourselves, shall God lose His right of requiring our task, because we have thrown away the strength He gave us whereby to perform it? Has the creditor no right to require payment of his money because the debtor had squandered it away, and is not able to pay him? Truly, if God can require no more of us than we are able to do, we need no more to save us from wrath, but to make ourselves unable for every duty, and to incapacitate ourselves for serving God any manner of way, as profane men frequently do. So the deeper a man is plunged in sin, he will be the more secure from wrath, for where God can require no duty of us, we do not sin in omitting it; and where there is no sin there can be no wrath. As to what may be urged by the unhumbled soul, against the putting our stock in Adam's hand, the righteousness of that dispensation was explained before. But moreover, the unrenewed man is daily throwing away the very remains of natural abilities, that rational light and strength which are to be found amongst the ruins of mankind. Nay, further, he will not believe his own utter inability to help himself; so that out of his own mouth, he must be condemned. Even those who make their natural impotency to good a covert to their sloth, do, with others, delay the work of turning to God from time to time, and, under convictions, make large promises of reformation, which afterwards they never regard, and delay their repentance to a death-bed, as if they could help themselves in a moment; which shows them to be far from a due sense of their natural inability, whatever they pretend.

Now, if God can require of men the duty they are not able to do, He can in justice punish them for their not doing it, notwithstanding their inability. If He has power to exact the debt of obedience, He has also power to cast the insolvent debtor into prison, for his not paying it. Further, though unregenerate men have no gracious abilities, yet they want not natural abilities which nevertheless they will not improve. There are many things they can do, which they do not; they will not do them, and therefore their damnation will be just. Nay, all their inability to do good is voluntary; they will not come to Christ (John 5:40). They will not repent, they will die (Ezek. 18:31). So they will be justly condemned, because they will neither tam to God, nor come to Christ, but love their chains better than their liberty, and darkness rather than light (John 3:19)

Objection 2: Why do you then preach Christ to us, call us to come to Him, to believe., repent, and use the means of salvation? Answer: Because it is your duty so to do. It is your duty to accept of Christ, as He is offered in the Gospel, to repent of your sins, and to be holy in all manner of conversation; these things are commanded you of God; and His command, not your ability, is the measure of your duty. Moreover, these calls and exhortations are the means that God is pleased to make use of, for converting His elect, and working grace in their hearts: to them, 'faith cometh by hearing' (Rom 10:17), while they are as unable to help themselves as the rest of mankind are. Upon very good grounds may we, at the command of God, who raises the dead, go to their graves, and cry in His name, 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light' (Eph. 5:14). And seeing the elect are not to be known and distinguished from others before conversion, as the sun shines on the blind man's face, and the rain falls on the rocks as well as on the fruitful plains, so we preach Christ to all, and shoot the arrow at a venture, which God Himself directs as He sees fit. Moreover, these calls and exhortations are not altogether in vain, even to those who are not converted by them. Such persons may be convinced, though they be not converted: although they be not sanctified by these means, yet they may be restrained by them from running into that excess of wickedness, which otherwise they would arrive at. The means of grace serve, as it were, to embalm many dead souls, which are never quickened by them; though they do not restore them to life, yet they keep them from putrefying, as otherwise they would do. Finally, though you cannot recover yourselves, nor take hold of the saving help offered to you in the Gospel, yet even by the power of nature you may use the outward and ordinary means, whereby Christ communicates the benefit of redemption to ruined sinners, who are utterly unable to recover themselves out of the state of sin and wrath. You may and can., if you please, do many things that would set you in a fair way for help from the Lord Jesus Christ. You may go so far on, as not to be far from the kingdom of God, as the discreet scribe had done (Mark 12:34), though, it should seem, he was destitute of supernatural abilities. Though you cannot cure yourselves, yet you may come to the pool, where many such diseased persons as you are have been cured; though you have none to put you into it, yet you may lie at the side of it:

'Who knows but the Lord may return, and leave a blessing behind Him?' as in the case of the impotent man (recorded in John 5:5-8). I hope Satan does not chain you to your houses, nor stake you down in your fields on the Lord's day; but you are at liberty and can wait at the posts of wisdom's doors if you will. When you come thither he does not beat drums at your ears, that you cannot hear what is said; there is no force upon you, obliging you to apply all you hear to others; you may apply to yourselves what belongs to your state and condition.. When you go home, you are not fettered in your houses) where perhaps no religious discourse is to be heard, but you may retire to some separate place, where you can meditate, and exercise your consciences with suitable questions upon what you have heard. You are not possessed with a dumb devil, that you cannot get your mouths opened in prayer to God. You are not so driven out of your beds to your worldly business, and from your worldly business to your beds again, but you might, if you would., make some prayers to God upon the case of your perishing souls. You may examine yourselves as to the state of your souls, in a solemn manner, as in the presence of God; you may discern that you have no grace, and that you are lost and undone without it, and you may cry to God for it. These things are within the compass of natural abilities, and may be practiced where there is no grace. It must aggravate your guilt, that you will not be at so much pains about the state and case of your precious souls. If you do not what you can, you will be condemned, not only for your want of grace, but for your despising it.

Objection 3: But all this is needless, seeing we are utterly unable to help ourselves out of the state of sin and wrath. Answer: Give not place to that delusion, which puts asunder what God has joined, namely, the use of means and a sense of our own impotency. If ever the Spirit of God graciously influence your souls, you will become thoroughly sensible of your absolute inability, and yet enter upon a vigorous use of means. You will do for yourselves, as if you were to do all, and yet overlook all you do, as if you had done nothing. Will you do nothing for yourselves because you cannot do all? Lay down no such impious conclusion against your own souls. Do what you can; and, it may be, while you are doing what you can for yourselves, God will do for you what you cannot. 'Understandest thou what thou readest?' said Philip to

the eunuch; 'How can I,' said he, 'except some man should guide me?' (Acts 8:30-31). He could not understand the Scripture he read, yet he could read it: he did what he could, he read; and while he was reading, God sent him an interpreter. The Israelites were in a great strait at the Red Sea; and how could they help themselves, when on the one hand were mountains, and on the other the enemy in pursuit; when Pharaoh and his host were behind them, and the Red Sea before them? What could they do? 'Speak unto the children of Israel,' said the Lord to Moses, 'that they go forward' (Ex. 14:15). For what end should they go forward? Can they make a passage to themselves through the sea? No; but let them go forward, saith the Lord: though they cannot turn the sea to dry land, yet they can go forward to the shore. So they did; and when they did what they could) God did for them what they could not do.

Question 1: Has God promised to convert and save those who, in the use of means, do what they can towards their own relief? Answer: We may not speak wickedly for God; natural men, being strangers to the covenants of promise (Eph. 2:12), have no such promise made to them. Nevertheless they do not act rationally unless they exert the powers they have, and do what they can. For, I. It is possible this course may succeed with them. If you do what you can, it may be, God will do for you what you cannot do for yourselves. This is sufficient to determine a man in a matter of the utmost importance, such as this is (Acts 8:22), 'Pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee.' (Joel 2:14), 'Who knoweth if he will return?' If success may be, the trial should be. If, in a wreck at sea, all the sailors and passengers betake themselves each to a broken board for safety, and one of them should see all the rest perish, notwithstanding their utmost endeavor to save themselves, yet the very possibility of escaping by that means would determine that one still to do his best with his board. Why then do not you reason with yourselves, as the four lepers did who sat at the gate of Samaria? (2 Kings 7:3-4). Why do you not say, 'If we sit still,' not doing what we can, 'we die;' let us put it to a trial; if we be saved, 'we shall live;' if not, 'we shall but die?'

Question 2: It is probable this course may succeed; God is good and merciful; He loves to surprise men with His grace, and is often 'found of them that sought him not' (Isa. 65:1). If you do this, you are so far in the road of your duty, and you are using the means, which the Lord is wont to bless for men's spiritual recovery: you lay yourselves in the way of the great Physician, and so it is probable you may be healed. Lydia went, with others, to the place 'where prayer was wont to be made;' and 'the Lord opened her heart' (Acts 16:13-14). You plough and sow, though nobody can tell you for certain that you win get so much as your seed again: you use means for the recovery of your health, though you are not sure they will succeed. In these cases probability determines you; and why not in this also? Importunity, we see, does very much with men. Therefore pray, meditate, desire help of God, be much at the throne of grace, supplicating for grace, and do not faint. Though God regard you not, who in your present state are but one mass of sin, universally depraved, and vitiated in all the powers of your soul, yet He may regard prayer, meditation, and the like means of His own appointment, and He may bless them to you. Wherefore, if you will not do what you can, you are not only dead, but you declare yourselves unworthy of eternal life.

In conclusion then, let the saints admire the freedom and power of grace, which came to them in their helpless condition, made their chains fall off, the iron gate to open to them, raised the fallen creatures, and brought them out of the state of sin and wrath., wherein they would have lain and perished, had not they been mercifully visited. Let the natural man be sensible of his utter inability to recover himself. Know, that you are without strength: and cannot come to Christ, till you be drawn. You are lost, and cannot help yourself. This may shake the foundation of your hopes, if you never saw your absolute need of Christ and his grace, but think to contrive for yourself by your civility, morality, drowsy wishes, and duties, and by a faith and repentance which have sprung out of your natural powers, without the power and efficacy of the grace of Christ. O be convinced of your absolute need of Christ, and His overcoming grace, believe your utter inability to recover yourself, that so you may be humbled, shaken out of your self-confidence, and lie down in dust and ashes, groaning out your miserable case before the Lord. A proper sense of your natural impotence, the impotence of depraved human nature, would be a step towards a delivery.

Thus far of man's natural state, the state of entire depravity.

This article was extracted from Boston's classic work Human Nature In Its Fourfold State (Chapter 3, pp. 183-197).

HUMAN INABILITY

by Charles Spurgeon, 1858

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him."--John 6:44.

Coming to Christ" is a very common phrase in Holy Scripture. It is used to express those acts of the soul wherein, leaving at once our self-righteousness, and our sins, we fly unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive his righteousness to be our covering, and his blood to be our atonement. Coming to Christ, then, embraces in it repentance, self-negation, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it sums within itself all those things which are the necessary attendants of these great states of heart, such as the belief of the truth, earnestness of prayer to God, the submission of the soul to the precepts of God's gospel, and all those things which accompany the dawn of salvation in the soul. Coming to Christ is just the one essential thing for a sinner's salvation. He that cometh not to Christ, do what he may, or think what he may, is yet in "the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." Coming to Christ is the very first effect of regeneration. No sooner is the soul quickened than it at once discovers its lost estate, is horrified thereat, looks out for a refuge, and believing Christ to be a suitable one, flies to him and reposes in him. Where there is not this coming to Christ, it is certain that there is as yet no quickening; where there is no quickening, the soul is dead in trespasses and sins, and being dead it cannot enter into the

kingdom of heaven. We have before us now an announcement very startling, some say very obnoxious. Coming to Christ, though described by some people as being the very easiest thing in all the world, is in our text declared to be a thing utterly and entirely impossible to any man, unless the Father shall draw him to Christ. It shall be our business, then, to enlarge upon this declaration. We doubt not that it will always be offensive to carnal nature, but, nevertheless, the offending of human nature is sometimes the first step towards bringing it to bow itself before God. And if this be the effect of a painful process, we can forget the pain and rejoice in the glorious consequences.

I shall endeavour this morning, first of all, to notice man's inability, wherein it consists. Secondly, the Father's drawings-- what these are, and how they are exerted upon the soul. And then I shall conclude by noticing a sweet consolation which may be derived from this seemingly barren and terrible text.

I. First, then,

MAN'S INABILITY.

The text says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Wherein does this inability lie?

First, it does not lie in any physical defect. If in coming to Christ, moving the body or walking with the feet should be of any assistance, certainly man has all physical power to come to Christ in that sense. I remember to have heard a very foolish Antinomian declare, that he did not believe any man had the power to walk to the house of God unless the Father drew him. Now the man was plainly foolish, because he must have seen that as long as a man was alive and had legs, it was as easy for him to walk to the house of God as to the house of Satan. If coming to Christ includes the utterance of a prayer, man has no physical defect in that respect, if he be not dumb, he can say a prayer as easily as he can utter blasphemy. It is as easy for a man to sing one of the songs of Zion as to sing a profane and libidinous song. There is no lack of physical power in coming to Christ. All that can be wanted with regard to the bodily strength man most assuredly has, and any part of salvation which consists in that is totally and entirely in the power of man without any assistance from the Spirit of God.

Nor, again, does this inability lie in any mental lack. I can believe this Bible to be true just as easily as I can believe any other book to be true. So far as believing on Christ is an act of the mind, I am just as able to believe on Christ as I am able to believe on anybody else. Let his statement be but true, it is idle to tell me I cannot believe it. I can believe the statement that Christ makes as well as I can believe the statement of any other person. There is no deficiency of faculty in the mind: it is as capable of appreciating as a mere mental act the guilt of sin, as it is of appreciating the guilt of assassination. It is just as possible for me to exercise the mental idea of seeking God, as it is to exercise the thought of ambition. I have all the mental strength and power that can possibly be needed, so far as mental power is needed in salvation at all. Nay, there is not any man so ignorant that he can plead a lack of intellect as an excuse for rejecting the gospel. The defect, then, does not lie either in the body, or, what we are bound to call, speaking theologically, the mind. It is not any lack or deficiency there, although it is the vitiation of the mind, the corruption or the ruin of it, which, after all, is the very essence of man's inability.

Permit me to show you wherein this inability of man really does lie. It lies deep in his nature. Through the fall, and through our own sin, the nature of man has become so debased, and depraved, and corrupt, that it is impossible for him to come to Christ without the assistance of God the Holy Spirit. Now, in trying to exhibit how the nature of man thus renders him unable to come to Christ, you must allow me just to take this figure. You see a sheep; how willingly it feeds upon the herbage! You never knew a sheep sigh after carrion; it could not live on lion's food. Now bring me a wolf; and you ask me whether a wolf cannot eat grass, whether it cannot be just as docile and as domesticated as the sheep. I answer, no; because its nature is contrary thereunto. You say, "Well, it has ears and legs; can it not hear the shepherd's voice, and follow him whithersoever he leadeth it?" I answer, certainly; there is no physical cause why it cannot do so, but its nature forbids, and therefore I say it cannot do so. Can it not be tamed? Cannot its ferocity be removed? Probably it may so far be subdued that it may become apparently tame; but there will always be a marked distinction between it and the sheep, because there is a distinction in nature. Now, the reason why man cannot come to Christ, is not because he cannot come, so far as his body or his mere power of mind is concerned, but because his nature is so corrupt that he has neither the will nor the power to come to Christ unless drawn by the Spirit.

But let me give you a better illustration. You see a mother with her babe in her arms. You put a knife into her hand, and tell her to stab that babe to the heart. She replies, and very truthfully, "I cannot." Now, so far as her bodily power is concerned, she can, if she pleases; there is the knife, and there is the child. The child cannot resist, and she has quite sufficient strength in her hand immediately to stab it to its heart. But she is quite correct when she says she cannot do it. As a mere act of the mind, it is quite possible she might think of such a thing as killing the child, and yet she says she cannot think of such a thing; and she does not say falsely, for her nature as a mother forbids her doing a thing from which her soul revolts. Simply because she is that child's parent she feels she cannot kill it. It is even so with a sinner. Coming to Christ is so obnoxious to human nature that, although, so far as physical and mental forces are concerned, (and these have but a very narrow sphere in salvation) men could come if they would: it is strictly correct to say that they cannot and will not unless the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them. Let us enter a little more deeply into the subject, and try to show you wherein this inability of man consists, in its more minute particulars.

1. First, it lies in the obstinacy of the human will. "Oh!" saith the Arminian, "men may be saved if they will." We reply, "My dear sir, we all believe that; but it is just the if they will that is the difficulty. We assert that no man will come to Christ unless he be drawn; nay, we do not assert it, but Christ himself declares it--"Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;" and as long as that "ye will not come" stands on record in Holy Scripture, we shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will." It is strange how people, when talking about free-will, talk of things which they do not at all understand. "Now," says one, "I believe men can be saved if they will." My dear sir, that is not the question at all. The question is, are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the gospel

of Christ? We declare, upon Scriptural authority, that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved, and so inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human will ever be constrained towards Christ. You reply, that men sometimes are willing, without the help of the Holy Spirit. I answer--Did you ever meet with any person who was? Scores and hundreds, nay, thousands of Christians have I conversed with, of different opinions, young and old, but it has never been my lot to meet with one who could affirm that he came to Christ of himself, without being drawn. The universal confession of all true believers is this--"I know that unless Jesus Christ had sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God, I would to this very hour have been wandering far from him, at a distance from him, and loving that distance well." With common consent, all believers affirm the truth, that men will not come to Christ till the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them.

2. Again, not only is the will obstinate, but the understanding is darkened. Of that we have abundant Scriptural proof. I am not now making mere assertions, but stating doctrines authoritatively taught in the Holy Scriptures, and known in the conscience of every Christian man--that the understanding of man is so dark, that he cannot by any means understand the things of God until his understanding has been opened. Man is by nature blind within. The cross of Christ, so laden with glories, and glittering with attractions, never attracts him, because he is blind and cannot see its beauties. Talk to him of the wonders of the creation, show to him the many-coloured arch that spans the sky, let him behold the glories of a landscape, he is well able to see all these things; but talk to him of the wonders of the covenant of grace, speak to him of the security of the believer in Christ, tell him of the beauties of the person of the Redeemer, he is quite deaf to all your description; you are as one that playeth a goodly tune, it is true; but he regards not, he is deaf, he has no comprehension. Or, to return to the verse which we so specially marked in our reading, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned;" and inasmuch as he is a natural man, it is not in his power to discern the things of God. "Well," says one, "I think I have arrived at a very tolerable judgment in matters of theology; I think I understand almost every point." True, that you may do in the letter of it; but in the spirit of it, in the true reception thereof into the soul, and in the actual understanding of it, it is impossible for you to have attained, unless you have been drawn by the Spirit. For as long as that Scripture stands true, that carnal men cannot receive spiritual things, it must be true that you have not received them, unless you have been renewed and made a spiritual man in Christ Jesus. The will, then, and the understanding, are two great doors, both blocked up against our coming to Christ, and until these are opened by the sweet influences of the Divine Spirit, they must be for ever closed to anything like coming to Christ.

3. Again, the affections, which constitute a very great part of man, are depraved. Man, as he is, before he receives the grace of God, loves anything and everything above spiritual things. If ye want proof of this, look around you. There needs no monument to the depravity of the human affections. Cast your eyes everywhere--there is not a street, nor a house, nay, nor a heart, which doth not bear upon it sad evidence of this dreadful truth. Why is it that men are not found on the Sabbath Day universally flocking to the house of God? Why are we not more constantly found reading our Bibles? How is it that prayer is a duty almost universally neglected? Why is it that Christ Jesus is so little beloved? Why are even his professed followers so cold in their affections to him? Whence arise these things? Assuredly, dear brethren, we can trace them to no other source than this, the corruption and vitiation of the affections. We love that which we ought to hate, and we hate that which we ought to love. It is but human nature, fallen human nature, that man should love this present life better than the life to come. It is but the effect of the fall, that man should love sin better than righteousness, and the ways of this world better than the ways of God. And again, we repeat it, until these affections be renewed, and turned into a fresh channel by the gracious drawings of the Father, it is not possible for any man to love the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Yet once more--conscience, too, has been overpowered by the fall. I believe there is no more egregious mistake made by divines, than when they tell people that conscience is the vicegerent of God within the soul, and that it is one of those powers which retains its ancient dignity, and stands erect amidst the fall of its compeers. My brethren, when man fell in the garden, manhood fell entirely; there was not one single pillar in the temple of manhood that stood erect. It is true, conscience was not destroyed. The pillar was not shattered; it fell, and it fell in one piece, and there it lies along, the mightiest remnant of God's once perfect work in man. But that conscience is fallen, I am sure. Look at men. Who among them is the possessor of a "good conscience toward God," but the regenerated man? Do you imagine that if men's consciences always spoke loudly and clearly to them, they would live in the daily commission of acts, which are as opposed to the right as darkness to light? No, beloved; conscience can tell me that I am a sinner, but conscience cannot make me feel that I am one. Conscience may tell me that such-and-such a thing is wrong, but how wrong it is conscience itself does not know. Did any man's conscience, unenlightened by the Spirit, ever tell him that his sins deserved damnation? Or if conscience did do that, did it ever lead any man to feel an abhorrence of sin as sin? In fact, did conscience ever bring a man to such a self-renunciation, that he did totally abhor himself and all his works and come to Christ? No, conscience, although it is not dead, is ruined, its power is impaired, it hath not that clearness of eye and that strength of hand, and that thunder of voice, which it had before the fall; but hath ceased to a great degree, to exert its supremacy in the town of Mansoul. Then, beloved, it becomes necessary for this very reason, because conscience is depraved, that the Holy Spirit should step in, to show us our need of a Saviour, and draw us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Still," says one, "as far as you have hitherto gone, it appears to me that you consider that the reason why men do not come to Christ is that they will not, rather than they cannot." True, most true. I believe the greatest reason of man's inability is the obstinacy of his will. That once overcome, I think the great stone is rolled away from the sepulchre, and the hardest part of the battle is already won. But allow me to go a little further. My text does not say, "No man will come," but it says, "No man can come." Now, many interpreters believe that the can here, is but a strong expression conveying no more meaning than the word will. I feel assured that this is not correct. There is in man, not only unwillingness to be saved, but there is a spiritual powerlessness to come to Christ; and this I will prove to every Christian at any rate. Beloved, I speak to you who have already been quickened by the divine grace, does not your experience teach you that there are times when you have a will to serve God, and yet have not the power? Have you not sometimes been obliged to say that you have wished to believe. but you have had to pray, Lord, help mine unbelief?" Because, although willing enough to

receive God's testimony, your own carnal nature was too strong for you, and you felt you needed supernatural help. Are you able to go into your room at any hour you choose, and to fall upon your knees and say, "Now, it is my will that I should be very earnest in prayer, and that I should draw near unto God?" I ask, do you find your power equal to your will? You could say, even at the bar of God himself, that you are sure you are not mistaken in your willingness; you are willing to be wrapt up in devotion, it is your will that your soul should not wander from a pure contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ, but you find that you cannot do that, even when you are willing, without the help of the Spirit. Now, if the quickened child of God finds a spiritual inability, how much more the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sin? If even the advanced Christian, after thirty or forty years, finds himself sometimes willing and yet powerless--if such be his experience,--does it not seem more than likely that the poor sinner who has not yet believed, should find a need of strength as well as a want of will?

But, again, there is another argument. If the sinner has strength to come to Christ, I should like to know how we are to understand those continual descriptions of the sinner's state which we meet with in God's holy Word? Now, a sinner is said to be dead in trespasses and sins. Will you affirm that death implies nothing more than the absence of a will? Surely a corpse is quite as unable as unwilling. Or again, do not all men see that there is a distinction between will and power: might not that corpse be sufficiently quickened to get a will, and yet be so powerless that it could not lift as much as its hand or foot? Have we never seen cases in which persons have been just sufficiently re-animated to give evidence of life, and have yet been so near death that they could not have performed the slightest action? Is there not a clear difference between the giving of the will and the giving of power? It is quite certain, however, that where the will is given, the power will follow. Make a man willing, and he shall be made powerful; for when God gives the will, he does not tantalize man by giving him to wish for that which he is unable to do; nevertheless he makes such a division between the will and the power, that it shall be seen that both things are quite distinct gifts of the Lord God.

Then I must ask one more question: if all that were needed to make a man willing, do you not at once degrade the Holy Spirit? Are we not in the habit of giving all the glory of salvation wrought in us to God the Spirit? But now, if all that God the Spirit does for me is to make me willing to do these things for myself, am I not in a great measure a sharer with the Holy Spirit in the glory? and may I not boldly stand up and say, "It is true the Spirit gave me the will to do it, but still I did it myself, and therein will I glory; for if I did these things myself without assistance from on high, I will not cast my crown at his feet; it is my own crown, I earned it, and I will keep it." Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is evermore in Scripture set forth as the person who worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure, we hold it to be a legitimate inference that he must do something more for us than the mere making of us willing, and that therefore there must be another thing besides want of will in a sinner--there must be absolute and actual want of power.

Now, before I leave this statement, let me address myself to you for a moment. I am often charged with preaching doctrines that may do a great deal of hurt. Well, I shall not deny the charge, for I am not careful to answer in this matter. I have my witnesses here present to prove that the things which I have preached have done a great deal of hurt, but they have not done hurt either to morality or to God's Church; the hurt has been on the side of Satan. There are not ones or twos but many hundreds who this morning rejoice that they have been brought near to God; from having been profane Sabbath-breakers, drunkards, or worldly persons, they have been brought to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ; and if this be any hurt may God of his infinite mercy send us a thousand times as much. But further, what truth is there in the world which will not hurt a man who chooses to make hurt of it? You who preach general redemption, are very fond of proclaiming the great truth of God's mercy to the last moment. But how dare you preach that? Many people make hurt of it by putting off the day of grace, and thinking that the last hour may do as well as the first. Why, if we never preached anything which man could misuse, and abuse, we must hold our tongues for ever.

Still says one, "Well then, if I cannot save myself, and cannot come to Christ, I must sit still and do nothing." If men do say so, on their own heads shall be their doom. We have very plainly told you that there are many things you can do. To be found continually in the house of God is in your power; to study the Word of God with diligence is in your power; to renounce your outward sin, to forsake the vices in which you indulge, to make your life honest, sober, and righteous, is in your power. For this you need no help from the Holy Spirit; all this you can do yourself; but to come to Christ truly is not in your power, until you are renewed by the Holy Ghost. But mark you, your want of power is no excuse, seeing that you have no desire to come, and are living in wilful rebellion against God. Your want of power lies mainly in the obstinacy of nature. Suppose a liar says that it is not in his power to speak the truth, that he has been a liar so long, that he cannot leave it off; is that an excuse for him? Suppose a man who has long indulged in lust should tell you that he finds his lusts have so girt about him like a great iron net that he cannot get rid of them, would you take that as an excuse? Truly it is none at all. If a drunkard has become so foully a drunkard, that he finds it impossible to pass a public-house without stepping in, do you therefore excuse him? No, because his inability to reform, lies in his nature, which he has no desire to restrain or conquer. The thing that is done, and the thing that causes the thing that is done, being both from the root of sin, are two evils which cannot excuse each other, What though the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots? It is because you have learned to do evil that you cannot now learn to do well; and instead, therefore, of letting you sit down to excuse yourselves, let me put a thunderbolt beneath the seat of your sloth, that you may be startled by it and aroused. Remember, that to sit still is to be damned to all eternity. Oh! that God the Holy Spirit might make use of this truth in a very different manner! Before I have done I trust I shall be enabled to show you how it is that this truth, which apparently condemns men and shuts them out, is, after all, the great truth, which has been blessed to the conversion of men.

II. Our second point is

THE FATHER'S DRAWINGS.

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." How then does the Father draw men? Arminian divines generally say that God draws men by the preaching of the gospel. Very true; the preaching of the gospel is the instrument of drawing men, but there must be some thing more than this. Let me ask to whom did Christ address

these words? Why, to the people of Capernaum, where he had often preached, where he had uttered mournfully and plaintively the woes of the law and the invitations of the gospel. In that city he had done many mighty works and worked many miracles. In fact, such teaching and such miraculous attestation had he given to them, that he declared that Tyre and Sidon would have repented long ago in sack-cloth and ashes, if they had been blessed with such privileges. Now, if the preaching of Christ himself did not avail to the enabling these men to come to Christ, it cannot be possible that all that was intended by the drawing of the Father was simply preaching. No, brethren, you must note again, he does not say no man can come except the minister draw him, but except the Father draw him.

Now there is such a thing as being drawn by the gospel, and drawn by the minister, without being drawn by God. Clearly, it is a divine drawing that is meant, a drawing by the Most High God--the First Person of the most glorious Trinity sending out the Third Person, the Holy Spirit, to induce men to come to Christ. Another person turns round and says with a sneer, "Then do you think that Christ drags men to himself, seeing that they are unwilling!" I remember meeting once with a man who said to me, Sir, you preach that Christ takes people by the hair of their heads and drags them to himself" I asked him whether he could refer to the date of the sermon wherein I preached that extraordinary doctrine, for if he could, I should be very much obliged. However, he could not. But said I, while Christ does not drag people to himself by the hair of their heads, I believe that, he draws them by the heart quite as powerfully as your caricature would suggest. Mark that in the Father's drawing there is no compulsion whatever; Christ never compelled any man to come to him against his will. If a man be unwilling to be saved, Christ does not save him against his will. How, then, does the Holy Spirit draw him? Why, by making him willing. It is true he does not use "moral suasion;" he knows a nearer method of reaching the heart. He goes to the secret fountain of the heart, and he knows how, by some mysterious operation, to turn the will in an opposite direction, so that, as Ralph Erskine paradoxically puts it, the man is saved "with full consent against his will;" that is, against his old will he is saved. But he is saved with full consent, for he is made willing in the day of God's power. Do not imagine that any man will go to heaven kicking and struggling all the way against the hand that draws him. Do not conceive that any man will be plunged in the bath of a Saviour's blood while he is striving to run away from the Saviour. Oh, no. It is quite true that first of all man is unwilling to be saved. When the Holy Spirit hath put his influence into the heart, the text is fulfilled--"draw me and I will run after thee." We follow on while he draws us, glad to obey the voice which once we had despised. But the gist of the matter lies in the turning of the will. How that is done no flesh knoweth; it is one of those mysteries that is clearly perceived as a fact, but the cause of which no tongue can tell, and no heart can guess.

The apparent way, however, in which the Holy Spirit operates, we can tell you. The first thing the Holy Spirit does when he comes into a man's heart is this: he finds him with a very good opinion of himself: and there is nothing which prevents a man coming to Christ like a good opinion of himself. Why, says man, "I don't want to come to Christ. I have as good a righteousness as anybody can desire. I feel I can walk into heaven on my own rights." The Holy Spirit lays bare his heart, lets him see the loathsome cancer that is there eating away his life, uncovers to him all the blackness and defilement of that sink of hell, the human heart, and then the man stands aghast. "I never thought I was like this. Oh! those sins I thought were little, have swelled out to an immense stature. What I thought was a mole-hill has grown into a mountain; it was but the hyssop on the wall before, but now it has become a cedar of Lebanon. Oh," saith the man within himself, "I will try and reform; I will do good deeds enough to wash these black deeds out." Then comes the Holy Spirit and shows him that he cannot do this, takes away all his fancied power and strength, so that the man falls down on his knees in agony, and cries, "Oh! once I thought I could save myself by my good works, but now I find that

*"Could my tears for ever flow,
Could my zeal no respite know
All for sin could not atone,
Thou must save and thou alone,*

"Then the heart sinks, and the man is ready to despair. And saith he, "I never can be saved. Nothing can save me." Then, comes the Holy Spirit and shows the sinner the cross of Christ, gives him eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve, and says, "Look to yonder cross. that Man died to save sinners; you feel that you are a sinner; he died to save you." And he enables the heart to believe, and to come to Christ. And when it comes to Christ, by this sweet drawing of the Spirit, it finds "a peace with God which passeth all understanding, which keeps his heart and mind through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now, you will plainly perceive that all this may be done without any compulsion. Man is as much drawn willingly, as if he were not drawn at all; and he comes to Christ with full consent, with as full a consent as if no secret influence had ever been exercised in his heart. But that influence must be exercised, or else there never has been and there never will be, any man who either can or will come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. And, now, we gather up our ends, and conclude by trying to make a practical application of the doctrine; and we trust a comfortable one. "Well," says one, "if what this man preaches be true, what is to become of my religion? for do you know I have been a long while trying, and I do not like to hear you say a man cannot save himself. I believe he can, and I mean to persevere; but if I am to believe what you say, I must give it all up and begin again." My dear friends, it will be a very happy thing if you do. Do not think that I shall be at all alarmed if you do so. Remember, what you are doing is building your house upon the sand, and it is but an act of charity if I can shake it a little for you. Let me assure you, in God's name, if your religion has no better foundation than your own strength, it will not stand you at the bar of God. Nothing will last to eternity, but that which came from eternity. Unless the everlasting God has done a good work in your heart, all you may have done must be unravelled at the last day of account. It is all in vain for you to be a church-goer or chapel-goer, a good keeper of the Sabbath, an observer of your prayers: it is all in vain for you to be honest to your neighbours and reputable in your conversation; if you hope to be saved by these things, it is all in vain for you to trust in them. Go on; be as honest as you like, keep the Sabbath perpetually, be as holy as you can. I would not dissuade you from these things. God forbid; grow in them, but oh, do not trust in them, for if you rely upon these things you will find they will fail you when most you need them. And if there be anything else that you have found yourself able to do unassisted by divine grace, the sooner you can get rid of the hope that has been engendered by it the better for you, for it is a foul delusion to rely upon anything that flesh can do. A spiritual heaven must be inhabited by spiritual men, and preparation

for it must be wrought by the Spirit of God.

"Well," cries another, "I have been sitting under a ministry where I have been told that I could, at my own option, repent and believe, and the consequence is that I have been putting it off from day to day. I thought I could come one day as well as another; that I had only to say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me,' and believe, and then I should be saved. Now you have taken all this hope away for me, sir; I feel amazement and horror taking hold upon me." Again, I say, "My dear friend, I am very glad of it. This was the effect which I hoped to produce. I pray that you may feel this a great deal more. When you have no hope of saving yourself, I shall have hope that God has begun to save you. As soon as you say 'Oh, I cannot come to Christ. Lord, draw me, help me,' I shall rejoice over you. He who has got a will, though he has not power, has grace begun in his heart, and God will not leave him until the work is finished."

But, careless sinner, learn that thy salvation now hangs in God's hand. Oh, remember thou art entirely in the hand of God. Thou hast sinned against him, and if he wills to damn thee, damned thou art. Thou canst not resist his will nor thwart his purpose. Thou hast deserved his wrath, and if he chooses to pour the full shower of that wrath upon thy head, thou canst do nothing to avert it. If, on the other hand, he chooses to save thee, he is able to save thee to the very uttermost. But thou liest as much in his hand as the summer's moth beneath thine own finger. He is the God whom thou art grieving every day. Doth it not make thee tremble to think that thy eternal destiny now hangs upon the will of him whom thou hast angered and incensed? Dost not this make thy knees knock together, and thy blood curdle? If it does so I rejoice, inasmuch as this may be the first effect of the Spirit's drawing in thy soul. Oh, tremble to think that the God whom thou hast angered, is the God upon whom thy salvation or thy condemnation entirely depends. Tremble and "kiss the Son lest he be angry and ye perish from the way while his wrath is kindled but a little."

Now, the comfortable reflection is this:--Some of you this morning are conscious that you are coming to Christ. Have you not begun to weep the penitential tear? Did not your closet witness your prayerful preparation for the hearing of the Word of God? And during the service of this morning, has not your heart said within you, "Lord, save me, or I perish, for save myself I cannot?" And could you not now stand up in your seat, and sing.

*"Oh, sovereign grace my heart subdue;
I would be led in triumph, too,
A willing captive of my Lord,
To sing the triumph of his Word."*

And have I not myself heard you say in your heart--"Jesus, Jesus, my whole trust is in thee: I know that no righteousness of my own can save me, but only thou, O Christ--sink or swim, I cast myself on thee?" Oh, my brother, thou art drawn by the Father, for thou couldst not have come unless he had drawn thee. Sweet thought! And if he has drawn thee, dost thou know what is the delightful inference? Let me repeat one text, and may that comfort thee: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Yes, my poor weeping brother, inasmuch as thou art now coming to Christ, God has drawn thee; and inasmuch as he has drawn thee, it is a proof that he has loved thee from before the foundation of the world. Let thy heart leap within thee, thou art one of his. Thy name was written on the Saviour's hands when they were nailed to the accursed tree. Thy name glitters on the breast-plate of the great High Priest to-day; ay, and it was there before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round. Rejoice in the Lord ye that have come to Christ, and shout for joy all ye that have been drawn of the Father. For this is your proof, your solemn testimony, that you from among men have been chosen in eternal election, and that you shall be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto the salvation which is ready to be revealed.

Charles Spurgeon, Human Inability

God's Part and Man's Part in Salvation

by John Reisinger

God and man must both do something before a man can be saved. Hyper-Calvinism denies the necessity of human action, and Arminianism denies the true nature of the Divine action. The Bible clearly sets forth both the divine and human as essential in God's plan of salvation. This is not to say, as Arminianism does, God's part is to freely provide salvation for all men, and man's part is to become willing to accept it. This is not what we said above, nor is it what the Bible teaches. In order to understand what God's Word really says and to try to answer some "straw dummy" objections, we shall establish the subject one point at a time.

ONE: A man must repent and believe in order to be saved. No one was ever forgiven and made a child of God who did not willingly turn from sin to Christ. Nowhere does the Bible even hint that men can be saved without repentance and faith, but to the contrary, the Word always states these things are essential before a person can be saved. The one and only Bible answer to the question "What must I do to be saved?" is "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

TWO: Every one who repents and believes the gospel will be saved. Every soul, without any exception, who answers the gospel command to come to Christ will be received and forgiven by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Philip Bliss put the truth to music when he said, "Whosoever will, forever must endure..."

If we can be absolutely certain about anything, we can be sure that Christ will never void His promise to receive "all who come to Him." As old John Bunyan said, "Come and welcome" is the Savior's eternal word to all sinners.

THREE: Repentance and faith are not vicarious but are the free (i.e. voluntary) acts of men. Men, with their own mind, heart, and will must renounce sin and receive Christ. God doesn't repent and believe for us—we repent and believe. Turning from sin and reaching out in faith to Christ are the acts of man, and every man who so responds to the gospel call does so because he honestly desires to do so. He wants to be forgiven and he can only be forgiven by repenting and believing. No one, including God, can turn from sin for us, we must do it. No one can trust Christ "in our place," we must personally, knowingly, and willingly trust Him in order to be saved.

Now someone may be thinking, "But isn't that what the Arminian teaches?" My friend, that is what the Bible teaches—and teaches it clearly and dogmatically. "But don't Calvinists deny all three of those points?" I am not talking about, or trying to defend, "Calvinists" since they come in a hundred varieties. If you know anyone that denies the above facts, then that person, regardless of what he labels himself, is denying the clear message of the Bible. I can only speak for myself, and I will not deny what God's Word so plainly teaches. "But haven't you established the doctrine of free-will and disposed of election if you assent man must repent and believe and it is his own act?" No, we have neither proven freewill nor disproved election. since it is impossible to do either. We have merely stated exactly what the Bible says a man must do in order to be saved. Let us now look at what the Scripture says a sinner is able to do and what he is not able to do.

FOUR: The same Bible that states man must repent and believe in order to be saved, also emphatically states that man, because of his sinful nature, is totally unable to repent and believe. All of man's three faculties of mind, heart, and will, which must be receptive to gospel truth, have neither the ability to receive such truth nor even the desire to have such ability. In fact the exact opposite is true. Man's total being is not only unable to either come, or want to come, to Christ, but every part of his nature is actively opposed to Christ and truth. Rejecting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is not a passive "non-action," but a deliberate volitional choice. It is deliberately choosing to say "no" to Christ and "yes" to self and sin. No one is "neutral" in respect to God and His authority. Unbelief is just as much a deliberate act of mind, heart, and will as is faith. This is what Jesus meant in John 5:40 when He said, "You will (you are deliberately making a choice) not to come to me." Yes, unbelief is an act of the will. In fact unbelief is active faith, but unfortunately it is faith in myself.

To believe and preach points One, Two, and Three, without also preaching number Four is to grossly misrepresent the gospel of God's grace. It is to give a totally false picture of the sinner and his true need. It shows only half of the man's sin. It misses the most crucial point of a lost man's need, namely, his lack of power or ability to overcome his sinful nature and its effects. The "gospel" which is concocted out of this view is only a half gospel. It is at this point that modern evangelism so miserably fails. It confuses man's responsibility with his ability, and falsely assumes that a sinner has the moral ability to perform all that God has commanded. The "cannot" texts of scripture are either totally ignored or badly twisted by this perversion of the true gospel of God's saving grace.

Please note a few texts of Scripture that dogmatically state some things that a lost man cannot do:

Man cannot see—until he first be born again. (John 3:3)

Man cannot understand—until he first be given a new nature. (I Cor. 2:14)

Man cannot come—until he first be effectually called by the Holy Spirit. (John 6:44-45)

We do not have space to go into all the "cannots," but these three are sufficient to show that a sinner absolutely cannot (notice it is not "will" not) come to Christ until God first does something in that sinner's nature. That "something" is what the Bible calls regeneration, or the new birth, and it is the exclusive work of God the Holy Spirit. Man has no part whatever in regeneration.

FIVE: The new birth, or regeneration, is God giving us the spiritual life that enables us to do what we must do (repent and believe), but CANNOT DO because of our bondage to sin. When the Bible says man is dead in sin, it means that man's mind, heart, and will are all spiritually dead in sin. When the Bible speaks of our being in "bondage to sin," it means that our entire being, including our will, is under the bondage and power of sin. We indeed need Christ to die and pay the penalty of our sin, but we just as desperately need the Holy Spirit to give us a new nature in regeneration. The Son of God frees us legally from the penalty of sin, but only the Holy Spirit can free us from the power and death of our depravity in sin. We need forgiveness in order to be saved, and Christ provides complete forgiveness and righteousness for us in His death. However, we also need spiritual life and ability, and the Holy Spirit provides it for us in regeneration. It is the Holy Spirit's work of regeneration that enables us to savingly receive the atoning work of Christ in true faith.

God is a triune God, and no person can understand His 'so great salvation' until he sees each blessed Person of the Godhead playing a distinct and necessary part in that salvation. No man can declare the "glorious gospel of grace" and leave out the Father's sovereign electing love and the Holy Spirit's regenerating power as essential parts of God's work in saving sinners. To speak of "God's part" in salvation as only being one of "providing" forgiveness and man's part as "being willing" to accept it is to ignore both the Father's work of election and the Spirit's work of regeneration. This not only makes man a full "partner" with God in the work of salvation, it credits man with playing the decisive roll in the deal. How dreadful, and ridiculous, to give Christ the glory for His work on the cross, and then give sinners the credit for the Father's work in eternity (election) and the Spirit's work in our hearts (regeneration). It does great dishonor to the Sovereign Spirit to say, "The Holy Spirit will perform His miraculous work of quickening you unto life as soon as you give Him your permission." That's like standing in a graveyard saying to the dead people, "I will give you life and raise you up from the grave if you will only take the first step of faith and ask me to do it." What a denial of the sinner's total spiritual inability. Amazing!

The root error of the Arminian's gospel of freewill is its failure to see that man's part, repentance and faith, are the fruits and effects of God's work and not the essential ingredient's supplied by the sinner as "man's part of the deal." Every man who turns to Christ does so willingly, but that willingness is a direct result of the Father's election and the Holy Spirit's

effectual calling. To say, "If you will believe, God will answer your faith with the New Birth," is to misunderstand man's true need and misrepresent God's essential work.

SIX: The Scriptures clearly show that faith and repentance are the evidences and not the cause of regeneration. Suppose a man who had been dead for twenty years greeted you on the street one day. Would you conclude that the man had gotten tired of being dead and "decided" to ask a great doctor to perform a miracle and give him life? I'm sure you would instead, exclaim in amazement, "Man what happened to you? Who brought you back to life?" You would see he was alive because he was walking and breathing, but you would know these were evidences of a miracle having been performed on him from without and not the results of his own power of will. Just so when a spiritually dead man begins to perform spiritual acts such as repentance and faith-these spiritual "fruits" show that the miracle of the new birth has taken place.

Let me illustrate this with a Biblical example. Acts 16:14 is a clear proof of the above. By the way, as far as I know, this is the only place in the New Testament that uses the phrase "opened heart," and the Bible gives the whole credit for this "opening" to God's power and not to man's will. Modern evangelism does the exact opposite and credits the opening of the heart to the power of man's "free will." Remember that we are not discussing whether man must be willing to open his heart. We settled that under points One, Two, and Three. We are looking now for the source of power that enabled man to perform that spiritual act. Arminianism insists that man's free will must furnish the willingness or power, and the Bible says that the Holy Spirit of God furnishes that power or ability in the new birth. Let us examine the one text in Scripture that uses the phrase "opened heart" and see if it agrees with our previous points:

"And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." (Acts 16:14) The NIV says: "The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message." First of all we note that Lydia did indeed "attend" or listen to the words of Paul. She gladly heard and willingly believed his message. As we have already shown, she had to do this in order to benefit from the gospel and be saved. Lydia's attending, or hearing and believing, illustrates points One, Two, and Three above, and refutes hyper-Calvinism, (which says the elect will be saved regardless of whether they hear and believe the gospel or not). Lydia did choose to believe, and she herself did it only because she wholeheartedly wanted to. She did not do it "unwillingly" nor did God hear and believe for her. It was her own response and it was a most willing response. Next, we notice exactly what God did. We see here demonstrated what God must do before Lydia can be saved. (1) He provided a salvation of "by grace through faith" that could be preached. Obviously "the things spoken" by Paul were the gospel facts concerning the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and surely this Lamb is God's gracious provision. (2) God also brought the message of His provision to Lydia. He sent a preacher to tell her about this great plan of salvation. God went to a lot of trouble to provide such a gospel-He gave His only begotten Son up to death. He went to great ends to provide such a preacher as Paul-read about it in Paul's testimony in Acts 22. It is at this point that Arminianism departs from the Bible and proceeds to apply human logic to the above truths. They tragically fail to look at the rest of the Biblical text and see that God must do something else. (3) God must open Lydia's heart (or give her spiritual life) so she will be able to believe. Her natural mind is blind, her natural heart is averse to God, and her will is in bondage to sin and spiritual death. Only the power of God can free her from this graveyard of spiritual depravity. The giving of this life and power is solely the work of God. Notice that the Bible explicitly gives God alonethe credit for Lydia's heart being opened. It is impossible not see that in this text unless you simply refuse to accept what God clearly says. Look at the words carefully: . . . whose heart the LORD OPENED... Notice also how clearly the Holy Spirit teaches us the relationship between the cause and the effect in the conversion of Lydia. God was the One Who opened Lydia's heart, that is the cause, and He did so in order that she might be able to attend to the truths that Paul preached, that is the effect. Now that is what the Word of God says! Do not bluster about "dead theology" or throw Calvin's name around in derision, just read the words themselves in the Bible. If you try to deny that the one single reason that Lydia understood and believed the gospel was because God deliberately opened her heart and enabled her to believe, you are fighting God's Word. If you try to get man's "free will" as the one determining factor into this text, you are consciously corrupting the Word of God. God's grace not only provides salvation, but His power also gives us the ability to both desire and receive it He works in us "both to will and to do." His working in us to "will" is the new birth, and, I say again, this work of regeneration (new birth) is totally the work of the Holy Spirit. The moment we lose sight of this distinction between being "saved by faith" (the act of man) and being "born again by the Holy Spirit" (the act of God), we are heading for confusion and trouble. We will be convinced that man is able to do what the Bible emphatically states he is unable to do.

The necessity of the Holy Spirit's work being thus theologically denied, it will not be long before it is ignored in actual practice. This is the plight of modern day evangelism. Since the evangelists are convinced that the new birth is within the power and ability of man's will, their man made "me theology" has become far more important than the theology of the Bible, and organization and advertising are absolute essentials to success while the necessary work of the Holy Ghost is all but forgotten. It is true that lip service is given to the need to "Pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance," and cards asking people to "promise to pray every day" are always sent out months in advance of the big campaign. However, some people are not sure if the promise to pray or the other pledge (to give money) which is always included ("only your gifts can make this great campaign possible") is the most important to the success of the campaign. But that's another subject for another day....

Evangelicalism, False and True

by Joseph P. Braswell

October 1998

A popular theological method of the Middle Ages was that which was associated with Peter Abelard: sic et non (yes and

no). If I may be indulged a bit, I would make use of this "both/and" approach to state my equivocating attitude toward modern evangelicalism. On one hand, I wish to assert that I have no problem whatsoever with evangelicalism. I certainly do not believe it to be deficient, degenerate, or dilute—a debased and substandard form of Christianity. Indeed, I would insist that I myself am an evangelical and am proud to be so identified. On the other hand, however, I do have serious problems with many who have arrogated this label to themselves and to their doctrines and practices: those who have come in popular parlance to be called "evangelical" by an all-too-common misapplication of this term to those who are not true evangelicals. Sadly, meaning is use, and, according to the common consensus of contemporary linguistic usage, "evangelical" is used to refer to various beliefs and practices that in my estimation are deficient, degenerate, and dilute. Thus, in one sense of the term, I can be referred to as an evangelical, while, according to quite another (and perhaps that which has now become the primary) sense of the term, I am opposed to that which would be called evangelicalism. Which is true—whether that I ought to be identified as an evangelical or whether I should be described as opposed to evangelicalism—depends on what we mean by the term or how we are employing it.

The problem here is that historically the word had an intension (or sense) based on its etymological origins. When some arrogated the term to themselves, "evangelical" came to be understood by extension (or reference) to denote those self-styled evangelicals. X calls himself an evangelical. If one wants to know what an evangelical is, simply look at X as an example of an evangelical. Evangelicals are those who are like X, and, by describing certain characteristics of X, one describes what an evangelical is. In other words, locate those who are called evangelicals, describe the characteristics of their beliefs and practices, and therefore denote those beliefs and practices as evangelical. Over time, therefore, the characteristics of those persons, beliefs, and practices become the intension or connotation—the accepted definition or meaning—of the term.

The Definition of "Evangelical"

From a strictly etymological perspective, "evangelical" denotes someone or something for whom or which the evangel serves in some manner as such a significant and distinguishing characteristic that it can be referred to as an identifying mark, making "evangelical" an adequately descriptive label for purposes of identification. Something or someone can be labeled as evangelical because the evangel is so prominent and notable a feature of the person or thing (including ideas) as to stand out sufficiently as a means of characterization that allows us a means of classification and differentiation (comparison and contrast). Accordingly, to be an evangelical is to be identified with the gospel (the evangel), and that identification should be to us a most-coveted and highly-prized badge of honor and distinction: glorying in the Cross and bearing the testimony of Jesus Christ. I would be most proud to be considered an evangelical in this sense, for that would indicate that I have let my light shine before men.

If we continue to restrict ourselves to etymology, in order for a person, group, movement, or theology to qualify as evangelical in designation, the gospel must in some sense be basic, central, and constitutive—especially characteristic of his or its emphases. The gospel must be to him or it that which is of paramount importance and of primary concern, and this emphasis must be clearly and unmistakably expressed. To be truly evangelical is to be gospel-defined (or gospel-identified), gospel-concerned, gospel-oriented, gospel-driven. Certainly, this emphasis on the gospel could conceivably lapse into a reductionism (nothing but the gospel), or the gospel could be understood very narrowly, but such an interpretation of evangelicalism is far from necessary from the etymological derivation. The emphasis on the gospel need only be a stress on its necessity (it is sine qua non for authentic Christianity), not on its presumed sufficiency (as though it were held to be all that matters). An evangelical need only assert that the evangel is to be at the heart and soul of genuine Christianity, and all else in some sense flows from it or is understood in terms of it, as vitally related to it. He need only maintain that the gospel sheds light on the entire "package" of Christian faith and life; it is our existential starting point and foundation, because it is constitutive of Christian self-understanding and self-definition, of any genuine sense of Christian identity. He therefore would insist that all other doctrines need to be brought into relation to the gospel as implicitly contained in it, that other affirmations of the Faith simply explicate gospel faith in its confession, explanation, expression, and application.¹

Such evangelicalism is clearly expressed in the material principles of the Protestant Reformation, and the Reformation of the sixteenth-century is truly an evangelical movement in the best sense of the term. *Sola Gratia, sola fide, and solus Christus* are affirmations of the gospel. Luther held that the gospel (justification by faith) was that article on which the church stands or falls, and in his reforming efforts he judged everything by "what preaches Christ." Hardly intended in a narrow or reductionist fashion, these Reformational principles simply followed in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul, who determined among the Corinthians not to know anything but Christ crucified and insisted that our faith is in vain if Christ has not been raised in accordance with the received gospel. Whatever doctrine we might glean from Paul's epistle to the Romans (which is so rich in doctrinal content that it has often been viewed as a compendium of theology) is but the explication of the gospel as the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, through which the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. According to the evangelical understanding of the confessional and dogmatic-theological task, we enter into the field of Christian theology in all its breath and comprehensiveness through a deeper and fuller understanding of the meaning of the gospel, and evangelical theological study is faith—gospel faith—seeking understanding.

The New Evangelicalism

Such is my etymologically derived understanding of what it means to be evangelical, and it is in this sense that I consider myself (and exhort all of us) to be evangelical. Yet, it is the sad fact that evangelical ascription has been co-opted, that it is now applied (misapplied) to denote the "born-againism" of those semi-Pelagian adherents to synergistic, decisional regeneration and the pietistic and emotionalistic tradition of revivalism and its invitation system. I have problems with evangelicalism so conceived and do not wish to be identified as an evangelical in this sense. My differences with such evangelicalism are evangelical differences—differences determined by the gospel itself.

Reformation Monergism

Luther recovered the gospel, and thereby instituted a truly evangelical revival, when he broke free from the Medieval-Scholastic Nature/Grace metaphysical scheme. In his significant breakthrough insight, faith was no longer understood by him as a natural preparation for grace, as the fulfillment of a condition for receiving supernatural grace by the performance of something that was within man's natural capacity to do. The soteriological scheme of Scholastic theology was synergistic, because Pelagian: God responded to man; man cooperated with God according to his native ability. Against this Pelagian synergism, Luther insisted on total inability: the utter incapacitation and absolute impotence of the natural man in abject bondage to sin. Faith therefore could not be a condition for grace, for it could not be exercised out of inherently human resources as a natural act performed of sinful man's own initiative for the purpose of man's fitting and preparing himself to be a suitable candidate for receiving grace. Faith itself could only be the result of a preventing supernatural act; it was a free gift of divine grace, resulting entirely from God's unconditioned, monergistic action. Justification thus was not obtained because of faith, merely through faith—a faith wrought in us. Rather than a cooperation of Nature and Grace (the synergism of mutual effort by both God and man), God acts unilaterally and exclusively, taking the sole initiative in a free act of sovereign grace—grace that is altogether prior to, and productive of, justifying faith. The *sola fide* arises out of, and is nothing other than, *sola gratia*.

The Re-emergence of Synergism

Sadly, among the heirs of the Reformation it did not take long for divine monergism to be lost again. Melancthon, Luther's humanist protégé, made rapprochement with the free-will position that had been earlier advanced by his fellow-humanist, Erasmus (a position decisively repudiated by Luther in his *On the Bondage of the Will*), and accordingly attempted to reintroduce synergism into Lutheran soteriology, creating the controversy between the Philippists and the Flacians (or Gnesio-Lutherans) in Lutheranism. However, the great controversy (one with more widespread and enduring consequences that extend into—and flourish in—our own time) was in the Reformed churches, involving Jacob Arminius and the Remonstrant movement. The Remonstrants—perhaps better known as Arminians—were decidedly semi-Pelagian in their view of faith. In their theology the *sola fide* was coordinated with God's grace as the human fulfillment of a condition for the actualization of a saving possibility (a mere possibility) that God universally offers. Such a faith-contribution is itself a principle standing ultimately independent of God's action of grace; it owes exclusively to man's natural endowment with a free will and thus arises out of an inherent capacity of the natural man. Because election is God's response to foreseen faith, faith becomes to some extent the cause or basis of salvation, and we again have justification because of—conditioned on—faith, with Grace merely perfecting Nature. Arminianism thus reintroduced the dialectics of Nature and Grace by setting faith over against grace as an independent, autonomous principle.

The New Subjectivism

Obviously, because faith was no longer dependent on grace (but grace was instead made dependent on faith), faith had to be understood once again as a virtue in man that pleased God and to which God responded favorably. Thus, because salvation depended on both Christ and faith, confidence was placed first in one's own faith, rather than in Christ. The focus accordingly shifted from a theocentric to an anthropocentric perspective, one concerned with the essential quality of the faith-act (a concern with its intensity, its strength, its passion). In a move toward subjectivism, faith turned in on itself self-consciously in self-absorption and self-concern—self-righteousness. The power of faith as such—the way in which it was experienced and expressed—became a major emphasis, as attention was directed to the question of the sufficiency of the faith-virtuousness one had relative to the condition necessary for genuine conversion. Faith came to be understood as a subjective experience that one had to prepare oneself for (i.e., get "psyched up" for) by the proper, psychological manipulation of the emotions, for it was passion that moved one to choose to believe, and faith was purely a volitional act of self-determination. Given this opinion, the move from Arminianism, through Methodism, to revivalism was quite inevitable.

In this subjectivistic climate the glorious experience of being "born again" eclipsed the concern with being objectively right with God. As the emphasis on experience displaced justification, a gateway was opened to introduce into the heretofore "right-wing" of Protestantism (among the stepchildren of the Reformed) an essentially Anabaptist or enthusiastic mood, giving birth to perfectionism and the holiness movement, as well as to Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement. Even in its more moderate forms, modern evangelicalism gives evidence of owing a significant debt to "higher" or "deeper life" and second-blessing teachings that have origins in this revival of "left-wing" emphases of spiritual narcissism in which even the worship of God (which ought to be done solely to his glory) is gauged by what we get out of it, and the presentation of doctrine and life is concerned more with appeal than with truth.

New Evangelical Apologetics

This anthropocentric concern with a mass-appealing marketing strategy carries over into evangelical apologetics. In order to evoke the faith of the natural man we must appeal to him in terms of his own tastes, sense of justice and fairness, and canons of rationality. The natural man must be massaged; he must be shown respect and deference. We must tell him that he is basically good, appealing to how sincere he is as a seeker of truth and how wise and open-minded he is in considering Christianity as an option. We must show him how becoming Christian will benefit him pragmatically (e.g., boosting his self-esteem, providing "fire insurance"). We must appeal to him in his presumed autonomy and provide him with reasons that he finds acceptable. Because Nature/Grace has been revived, it is to natural reason that we appeal, allowing the natural man, on the basis of his own principles, to be the judge. As such, there is no place allowed for the radical antithesis between the so-called wisdom of this world and the wisdom of God that Paul places at the very heart of the gospel.²

New Evangelical Worldliness

Because this emphasis on antithesis is lost, evangelicalism, for all its concern with pietistic otherworldliness that owes to

its obsession with glorious conversion-experiences, has tended to be quite worldly. There is no radical repentance, for there is no root-and-branch repudiation of autonomy (Nature). Nature simply needs supplementation: the addition of a second story of Grace that is confined to a narrowly-conceived sphere of personal (read: private) devotion and to churchly activities in which evangelicals can retreat from the world to "get high" in the Spirit. Cloistered in the realm of Grace, they long for their coming escape from the world into heaven, viewing the gospel as the salvation of their ethereal souls that is concerned with the "sweet bye and bye" of the otherworldly hereafter. Upon going back into the world of everyday life, though excited about their future prospects, they largely conform to an unreformed, unreconstructed world and live an essentially unreformed and unreconstructed, natural life that more-or-less accepts what is as the norm. Their form of world-denial (retreat from history) leads to a laissez faire acceptance of—a passive resignation toward—the world as it is, including the spirit of the age.³ They make common cause with unbelievers because, though they are forgiven their sins and have a dimension of experience denied to the unbelievers, they perceive there to be no substantial difference between themselves and the unbelievers in most areas of life and no word of God to the sphere of Nature shared in common by believer and unbeliever. In the affairs of the realm of Nature, Christianity is largely irrelevant, and the dialectic of escapist separation and conformity takes the place of the Biblical calling of distinction (applying the antithesis) and transformation (dominion faith).

Real Evangelicalism

The Biblical gospel—the articulus stantis of authentic evangelicalism—is the gospel of the Kingdom, proclaiming that our God reigns and that the appropriate response to his Kingly reign is repentance and submission to his righteousness. It calls us to confess Jesus as our Lord. He is to be acknowledged as Lord in every area of our lives without exception; his lordship is total and all-encompassing. While we believe in our hearts, the implications of this faith—its fruit and consequences—are to flow out of our hearts to impact and determine every endeavor and relationship, registering itself in all the contexts of our existence and in our every activity, for out of the heart flow the issues of life. Christ's redemptive blessings flow "as far as the curse is found" (and we believe in total depravity!); wherever sin abounded, God's grace superabounds to establish the reign of life and righteousness. That grace constitutes us holy instruments of God's righteousness (his righting action) in the world unto the triumph of grace over sin across the full spectrum of human affairs, making our bodies (our interface with the world, our means of externalizing our faith in works) living acts of worship in offering the world back to God and unto his glory by whatsoever we do. By the gospel we are renewed in the image of God and must take up the dominion charge given to the images of God, bringing to bear the lordship of Christ on every point at which our lives make contact with the world as we work out our salvation and serve as instruments of the extension of the Abrahamic Blessing in fulfillment of the Great Commission.

Reclaiming True Evangelicalism

This is evangelical faith; anything else is a counterfeit based on "another gospel." We are the true evangelicals, and we should reclaim this term from those who have usurped it. The true evangelical is not ashamed of the gospel; without compromise or accommodation, he embraces its offense, neither adding to nor subtracting from it but, setting it forth in purity and fullness, he boldly announces: "Here I stand." Let us therefore not follow after a multitude to do evil, tacitly consenting to the prevalent corruption of a venerable term. Let us instead challenge the so-called (the spurious) evangelicals, judging them in terms of the evangel and calling for an authentic evangelical recovery and evangelical revival.

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GRACE ALONE: An Evangelical Problem?

by Kim Riddlebarger

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Outline:

- (1) What do we mean by the phrase "grace alone?"
- (2) What is the human condition according to the Scriptures?
- (3) What do the Scriptures say about Sola Gratia?
- (4) Why do American Evangelicals have such a difficult time with this doctrine?
- (5) How do we respond when these issues are at stake?

1) What do we mean when we say "that we are saved by grace alone?"

When we use the term "grace alone," what we mean is that our salvation from the wrath of God - our deliverance from hell - is because of something good in God, and not because of anything good in us. The Biblical conception of human nature after Adam and Eve's fall into sin is not a pretty picture, and Americans, who seem to have an unlimited confidence

in human nature and human goodness, have a very difficult time accepting what the bible says about the human condition. In a democratic culture such as ours, we believe that our vote counts, and that by exercising our right to choose, we can actually and significantly change the world around us. We are all taught from our youth that we have it within ourselves to accomplish anything, if we simply put our minds to it and give it our best efforts. And when we become Christians we carry that optimism over into our theology. If God tells us to do something, it must be because we have the ability to do what he commands! Choice becomes everything. And thus we fall headlong into one of the greatest heresies in church history, the heresy of Pelagianism, a theme to which we will return at the end of this lecture. It is really quite simple; grace alone doesn't make much sense to an American who doesn't think that much is wrong with the human condition in the first place. For if people are basically good, why then, do we need grace in order to be saved.

But to those who understand what the bible teaches about the effects of sin, grace alone is our only hope of heaven. And thus when we speak of grace alone (*sola gratia*), we are speaking of the fact that God saves us, because of his mercy and graciousness toward us, and not because of something - indeed anything - in us that makes us desirable to God. We really cannot understand grace alone unless we understand what it is, exactly, that sin has wrought upon us.

2) What do the Scriptures teach about the Human Condition?

The Scriptures are very clear about the effects of Adam's sin upon the human race, and there are a host of passages that speak to the issue of human sinfulness. In Job 14:1-4 we read, "Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He springs up like a flower and withers away; like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure. Do you fix your eye on such a one? Will you bring him before you for judgment? Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!" In other words, we are born "impure" or sinful, and therefore, subject to the judgment of God. Job asks the poignant question in this regard, "who can bring what is pure from what is impure?" and the answer is emphatically, "no one." Jeremiah (13:23) asks a similar question, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil." Thus because of our sin, we are impure, accustomed to doing evil, and unable to do anything to change our true nature any more than a leopard can wish his spots away, or that we can change the color of our skin simply by wishing it were so.

The Scriptures are also clear that our sinful nature is something with which we are born. According to the Psalmist in Psalm 51:5, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." Thus we are born sinful, sinful from the very moment of conception. The Psalmist goes on to say in Psalm 58(3), "Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies." We go astray from birth and we are born liars. We do not need to learn how to sin, it comes quite naturally to us.

The sinful nature (i.e., "the flesh") with which we are born produces a host of sinful actions. The author of 1 Kings (8:46) contends "there is no one who does not sin" and the author of Proverbs (20:9) laments, "Who can say, 'I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin'? Indeed Moses writes in Genesis 6:5, "the LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time." Thus because we are born in sin, every thought, every inclination is purely evil. This is not something that we enjoy hearing, but it is what the Scripture clearly teaches about human nature.

And this doctrine of human sinfulness is not only clearly taught in the OT, it is found with equal force in the New Testament, even on the lips of our Lord. For our Lord says much the same thing in Matthew 15:19, when he declares "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander." Thus the specific sins which we commit come from the sinful condition of our hearts. For as it is used in Scripture, the heart is the seat of our very personality - the heart is the true self, what we really are. Jesus went on to point out in Matthew 7:16-20, that "By their fruit you will recognize [wolves who come in sheep's clothes]. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them." Can any one of us here pretend for even a single moment that unlike everyone else, we are born good trees, and that we somehow escape the effects of sin which befall the entire human race? For out of each of our hearts inevitably spring the evil deeds and sins that all of us commit on a regular basis.

And if that is not all, it is Jesus who also reminds us that even if we haven't committed a specific sin with our hands, you can bet we have done it in our hearts. It is Jesus who declares, "anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Jesus also said, "You have heard it said, 'Do not murder,' and anyone who murders will be subject to judgement." And so there may be someone who is even now saying to themselves, "I am not a murderer!" I have never taken a life. Jesus says otherwise. You may not have taken the life of another, but as Jesus says, "any one who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgement," and "anyone who calls his brother a fool will be in danger of the fire of hell." Thus any one of us who has ever driven a Southern California freeway is certainly guilty as charged.

While the Scriptures are clear that we are born in sin, and that we sin because we are sinners, the Scriptures are equally clear about the specific effects of our own sinfulness upon our relationship with God. According to the Apostle Paul, (Romans 8:7-8), "the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God." Thus because of the sin into which we are born, we cannot submit to God's law, nor do anything to please him. So much for non-Christians supposedly keeping the 10 Commandments. In his letter to the Galatians (5:19-21), Paul speaks of the human condition this way: "The acts of the sinful nature [the flesh] are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God." While we are apt to make distinctions between so-called big and little sins, Paul would not agree. All sins damn, even such things as jealousy and ambition, and these sins that damn spring forth spontaneously from our sinful nature. This certainly calls to mind our Lord's comments about bad fruit coming forth

from a bad tree. The sins of the flesh spring forth from our sinful hearts as surely as apples grow on an apple tree.

And when all is said and done, Paul indeed paints a very dark picture. In Romans 3:10-12 he writes; "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." Paul is clear, here, though many of us do not like what he says.

First, he points out that there are none righteous, that is, none without the guilt of sin. And for the sake of emphasis, he repeats the phrase, "no, not even one."

Next he states that because of sin, there is no one who understands, for as he says elsewhere, sin has darkened our understanding, made our thinking futile, and hardened our hearts to the things of God (Ephesians 4:18 ff).

Third, the result of these blinding effects of sin is that there is no one who seeks God. Even though these words make many of us choke, they are simply un-American, nevertheless, Paul is utterly clear, because of sin, "no one seeks God." Tough words, but we cannot evade them simply because we do not like them.

And if we do not believe the testimony of Paul, Jesus says exactly the same thing. Speaking to the crowds that followed him after he fed the five thousand and because they saw the miracles and wanted their stomachs filled (John 6:44), Jesus declared, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day." In other words, you cannot come to God unless you are drawn, the term translated here as "to draw" is also translated "to drag" elsewhere in the NT, as for example, when Paul is dragged out of the temple against his will in Acts 21:30. And then again in that same discourse in John 6, as if he was not clear enough the first time he said it, Jesus went on to say in verse 65, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him." Thus unless we are enabled to come to Father, we cannot and indeed will not turn to God and embrace Jesus Christ. For we are sinful, we do not seek God, we do not understand God, we do not obey God's law, and indeed says Paul, we cannot. Our hearts are sinful, there are none righteous, not even one, and we sin freely and willingly because we want to.

Thus when all is said and done, what this means is that if God does not do something to rescue us from our predicament, we will perish in our sins. And this is what we mean when we say we are saved by grace alone, because there is certainly nothing in us worth saving and there is nothing that creatures in such a predicament can do to save themselves. Our salvation depends upon God's graciousness and not upon our goodness.

So it is against this backdrop the biblical description of sin and its effects that we now turn our focus to grace alone.

3) What the Scriptures say about Sola Gratia:

Simply stated, if the Scriptures are clear that men and women are sinful by nature and cannot do anything to save themselves or even prepare themselves to be saved, the Scriptures are equally clear that it is God who saves by grace alone through faith alone on account of Christ alone. This means that it is God who acts first, upon the sinner, while the sinner is dead in sin. For as we have seen, the sinner is enslaved to the sinful nature and its passions, and will not come to God, as Paul declares. But the good news is that while sinners do not seek God, God seeks sinners. And this is what we mean by the phrase, grace alone.

The Bible approaches the idea of grace alone from a number of ways and there are three passages that we need to consider in some detail, John 3, John 11, and Ephesians 2.

Many Evangelicals identify themselves as "born again" Christians. And indeed, as our Lord expressly states in John 3:3-7, "unless one is born again," they cannot see, much less enter into the kingdom of God." What then, does it mean to be "born again?" Historic Protestants, both the Lutherans and Reformed, have not placed the notion of being "born again" at the center of the Christian faith in the way in which many of our Evangelical contemporaries do. The reason for this is not because Lutheran and Reformed Christians reject the idea of being "born again." Instead, they equate John's teaching on being born again with the larger Biblical category of "regeneration." That is, being "born again," is a synonym for being "regenerate," or "being made alive," and therefore, while an essential aspect of the Christian life, it is approached from the perspective that regeneration is something God does, not man.

Another reason historic Protestants have not stressed being "born again," is because regeneration is an act of God upon the sinner, whereas the New Testament, on the other hand, stresses that the Gospel is something that God has done for us in Christ outside of ourselves, and that the Gospel alone - the message that Christ died and rose again for sinners (1 Corinthians 15:1-8) - is the power of God unto salvation. It is through preaching the Gospel, the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ for sinners, that God gives the new birth, or causes one to be "born again," to use John's phrase. The new birth, it is important to note, does not come through preaching the new birth, it comes through the preaching of Christ crucified!

If being "born again" or "regenerated" is an essential aspect of the Christian faith, what exactly do we mean by the term? The noted Reformed theologian Louis Berkhof, defines regeneration as "a work in which man is purely passive, and in which there is no place for human co-operation....The creative work of God produces new life, in virtue of which man, made alive with Christ, shares the resurrection life, and can be called a new creature." Indeed, no one will ever see heaven if they are not regenerate or "born again."

It is also vital to notice that Jesus' words here are not to be taken as a command in which we are to do what it takes to "be born again." In John 3, Jesus is not telling us to do anything! Instead, he is telling us about our condition - telling us that something must happen to us first, if we are to see and then enter the kingdom of God. Thus, "Unless you are born again, you cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." Later in the same gospel, our Lord tells us that "we must cross over from death to life" (John 5:24), and that no one can even come to Him unless the Father not only draw them (6:44), but also enables them to come to Him (6:65). In fact, in John 3:3-8, notice that Jesus makes it very clear that "flesh gives birth to flesh, but Spirit gives birth to spirit." The Spirit is like the wind, it blows wherever it wills. When we look back at John

chapter one, we find the very similar statement that "we are born not of natural descent, nor of a human decision or a husband's will, but [we are] born of God (John 1:13)." We often quote the first part of the verse, "to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God," and we then interpret this to mean, that unless we first choose God we cannot be saved. But the very next clause tells us just the opposite, namely, "we are born not of natural descent, nor of a human decision or a husband's will, but [we are] born of God."

Therefore, it is vital to notice that throughout the Scriptural data, especially here in John 3, God the Holy Spirit is the agent of regeneration, the one who gives the new birth, and not a human "decision" to accept Jesus as savior, or to invite him into our hearts. As most commentators point out, the word translated here as "born again," (anōthen) is a word that can either mean "from above" or "second time." Nicodemus very likely understood it to have the latter meaning since he very pointedly asks Jesus, "how can I go back into the womb to be born all over again."

Second, it is also important to notice that Jesus connects being "born again" to being born of "water and the Spirit." What on earth does Jesus mean by this? The Christian family has generally answered this question in one of three ways. Some such as Luther and most of the church fathers, have understood this to refer to Christian baptism; the water spoken of here is the water of baptism. A second group of commentators have argued that water is a reference to the baptism of John the Baptist. This connection perhaps can be found in chapter 2, verse 6 and can be strengthened by looking further in chapter three, where water is connected with purification (v. 25). A third view equates water with natural birth or procreation. There is some evidence that Rabbinic writers did indeed connect water with natural birth and male semen. If water is seen in this manner, the idea is conveyed that just as Nicodemus was born the first time (of natural descent - water), he must also be born again a second time by the Holy Spirit. This is the way most modern Evangelical and Reformed commentators interpret the passage. This would also pick up on the notion that two births are in view. In the first birth "flesh gives birth to flesh," and in the second birth (the birth about which Jesus is informing Nicodemus), the Spirit gives birth to spirit, and we are "born again."

But no matter how we decide upon this matter, there is one thing that is certainly precluded by John 3, and that is the idea that being "born again," is something that results from an act on our part. If Jesus is clear about anything, it is that God is the active party while we remain passive, and are acted upon by God. In the new birth, God is the active party as men and women, who are dead in sins and transgressions, cannot be seen to resurrect themselves. Both the Lutheran and Reformed traditions carefully following the Scriptures, connect regeneration to the proclamation of the Word of God, specifically the Law and the Gospel, and not to the powers of the fallen human will. Therefore, if we wish to see God call the dead to life and give the gift of new birth, we preach Christ crucified, for it is through this message that God gives the gift of the new birth and calls people to faith in his Son.

Thus any view of being "born again," which defines regeneration either as a work of man, or resulting from a work of man, is therefore, seriously deficient, and denies that we are saved by grace alone.

Another one of the passages we need to briefly consider is found in John 11, when our Lord raises his friend Lazarus from the dead. In this account John details for us the utterly amazing story of how our Lord brought back to life a man who had been dead for some four days. The raising of Lazarus is important for several reasons, one of which being it clearly demonstrates the idea of sola gratia. The miracle of raising the dead demonstrates perhaps more clearly than anything else, Jesus' power over death and the grave. For only God in human flesh can call forth life where there is death. As Jesus himself declares to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die (v. 25)." This power to give life takes two forms. In John 5:24-25, Jesus says "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live." This means that in a sense, there are two resurrections for the one who trusts in Christ for salvation. The first resurrection - a "spiritual" resurrection - occurs so that one can believe in Christ, for our Lord himself states that whoever believes in him has already crossed over from death to life. That is, as we have seen in our treatment of John 3, through the sovereign power of God, we are "born again" or regenerated by the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God. When we are given the new birth, in effect, at that very moment, we cross over from death to life. The second resurrection, of course, occurs at the end of the age when Jesus Christ returns in judgement and to raise the dead at the end of the age. This is the bodily resurrection.

But the most important thing to note about the account of the raising of Lazarus, is that Lazarus was dead! He was not merely sick, or a tad under the weather, nor was he doing anything to co-operate with the grace of God, when Jesus called him forth from the grave. In fact, his only contribution to his salvation was the fact that he was dead! Lazarus was not inside the tomb taking the bandages off, unwrapping himself, so that Jesus would do his part if Lazarus did his! Our Lord did not go to the tomb and leave a medicine outside that would help Lazarus to raise himself, if only he Lazarus would reach out and take the medicine. Jesus did not stand outside and "woo" Lazarus to come forth! Lazarus could do nothing to raise himself, apart from the sovereign voice of God calling him forth from the tomb and giving life to him in the process. And this exactly what the Scripture says of us, we are dead in sins and transgressions, and just like Lazarus, we too must be called to life by God through the word of Jesus or else we remain dead in our sins. And this is the meaning of grace alone God calling us to life when we are reeking in death, and calling us not because of anything he sees in us.

Another very important text in this regard is found in the first 10 verses of the second chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Listen very carefully to what Paul says: "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient." Like Jesus, Paul is crystal clear that we are "dead in transgressions and sins." There is no way for optimistic Americans to circumvent the thrust of Paul's argument here. And so in verse 3, Paul can describe how it is, that being dead in sin, leads to a life characterized by sinful actions. "All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature [our flesh] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath." Thus because we are born sinful, dead in trespasses and in sins, we live our lives trying to

gratify the cravings of our flesh to which we are enslaved. As Paul says, we are by nature children of wrath, and therefore, rightfully subject to God's righteous judgement. This is very clear: we are dead in sins and transgressions, enslaved to our sinful passions and desires, and by nature children of wrath. If left to ourselves, we are headed for hell and eternal judgement, and we can do nothing to change things.

It is here, then, with this picture of human sinfulness in his mind that Paul abruptly changes subjects, and gives us one of the clearest presentations of sola gratia, found anywhere in Scripture. Thus we read in verse 4, "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions it is by grace you have been saved." It is vital to note that Paul says that it is when we are dead in sins and transgressions that God made us alive with Christ. As Jesus called Lazarus forth from the tomb, a man who had been dead for four days and who was totally incapable of doing anything to co-operate and save himself, so too, God makes us alive with Christ when we were dead in sin. And this is what we mean when we speak of "grace alone." It is because of God's mercy and His love for helpless sinners, that folk who are sinful by nature and by choice, are now believers in Jesus Christ! It is God's choice of us in Jesus Christ that saves, not our choice of Christ! For the Scriptures declare that it is God who acts upon us in his love and mercy when we are dead in sin. How on earth, do dead men and women make themselves alive? Can they co-operate with God's grace? How do dead men and women do their part so that God can supposedly do his? This is sheer nonsense. It is because God calls us forth from death through his word, and only because God calls us forth that we embrace Jesus Christ through faith in the first place. This is why we speak of grace alone.

Paul goes on to make this point with even greater clarity in the balance of the chapter. "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus." Because God has made us alive, we are now seen as raised and seated with Christ in heaven, because as Paul will say in Romans 11:29, "God's gifts and calling are irrevocable." God doesn't start something and lose interest and quit. He is faithful even when we are not.

Thus Paul can conclude in verses 8 and ff., "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Though this is one of the most oft-quoted passages in the New Testament, I'm not sure if we ever stop to fully consider what it is, exactly, that Paul is saying here. The context of Ephesians 2:8 is the condition of being dead in sins and transgressions, and our enslavement to the sinful nature in verses 1-5. And so it is clear, I think, that when pointing out that "God makes us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in sin," Paul's explanation is sola gratia that is, "it is by grace you have been saved." That God raised us in Christ when we were dead in sin, is to be saved by grace. We must be clear about this, or we will miss what Paul is saying. I have heard far too many people say to me over the years, "Oh yes, I believe we are saved by grace alone," and approvingly quote this verse, and then they turn right around and argue that unless we do something first, unless we decide, unless we choose, unless we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, grace is useless. It is crystal clear that this is not what Paul is saying, and to argue that grace is of no avail to us, unless we do something first, is to deny sola gratia altogether!

If you are not convinced, consider the rest of the passage. "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith -- and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works so that no one can boast." Whether or not the faith mentioned here by Paul is the gift spoken of or not, it doesn't matter. First, we are not saved by faith, we are saved by grace through faith. We are not saved because we believe, but it is through faith in Christ (sola fide) that God saves --- from our being made alive in Christ, to our exercising faith, to being saved from God's wrath, and our being raised in Christ and even now, our being seated in the heavens with him --- it is all God's doing, not ours. The fact is, Paul says that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, on account of Christ alone and the whole thing, from beginning to end, is a gift. We'll talk about how faith relates to this in our second hour, but if you think that grace depends upon faith, and not the other way around, you misread and misunderstand Paul at this point. This becomes clear in Romans 10, as Paul says there that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ." That is, faith arises in connection with the preaching of the gospel. As Jesus spoke forth the word of God and raised Lazarus from the dead, the same thing happens to us through the preaching and sharing of the gospel today. For it is through the word of the Gospel, and only through the Word of the Gospel, that God calls us forth from the dead -- or to use Paul's language here, "God made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in sin, for you have been saved by grace." And this beloved, is precisely what we mean when we speak of grace alone. God makes us alive, when we are dead in sin. This is what it means to be saved by grace alone.

4) Why is it, then, that American evangelicals have so many problems with this biblical teaching?

There is no teaching in Christian theology that offends our contemporaries (especially our Christian friends and family), any more than the teaching of sola gratia. Americans hate to be told "no," that they are helpless. Surprisingly, the greatest opposition to the biblical teaching on this point comes not from a secular culture, but from household-name leaders in the American Church. From contemporary figures such as Chuck Smith at Calvary Chapel to Bill Bright and Campus Crusade, to virtually all forms of revivalism and Pentecostalism which spring from the loins of one Charles Grandison Finney (to whom we will return in a minute), to Alexander Campbell and the Restorationist movement, to Joseph Smith and what later on became the cult known as Mormonism, to William Miller and the Adventist movement, and we can go on and on; all of these movements are based, at least in part, upon a denial of sola gratia, in direct opposition to Reformation theology, and the biblical teaching on this point. Americans hate to be told that God does not depend upon them and a decision that they make. And it is here, then, that we as Reformation Christians and historic Protestants run smack dab into our culture and to much of American Christianity. This is why our friends and families look at us like we have three heads when we speak of these doctrines. But this is the historic Protestant position, and the wholesale rejection of sola gratia demonstrates how far the "evangelical movement" has departed from the historic and biblical Evangelical faith.

This rejection of sola gratia is not new, in fact, it is an ancient heresy known as Pelagianism. Named for the monk

Pelagius (who lived in the fourth century) and who was the arch-foe of St. Augustine, Pelagianism is that teaching which emphasizes the human freedom, sees original sin not as corruption and guilt inherited from our first father but simply the bad example introduced by into the world by Adam. Pelagianism sees grace as simply an influence enticing us to act upon proper information. And it is only natural that rugged, self-made, independent, frontier Americans would naturally gravitate to a theology that emphasized human ability and natural freedom to act. It is from Pelagius and not Holy Scripture that we derive the idea that children are born innocent, not sinful, and it is from Pelagius that we learn that sin is simply that which we do, not what we are. In the words of one historian, "America is very much in favor of this Pelagian idea that every individual can always make a new beginning, that he is able by his individual freedom to make decisions for or against the divine."

As American Christians moved to the frontier away from the established communities along the eastern seaboard, they also moved away from their Puritan and Calvinistic assessment of human nature. If we could conquer the west, build cities where there had been only wilderness, and if this was the fruit of our manifest destiny and our democratic ideal, then the "terrible honesty" of Calvinistic convictions, to use Ann Douglas' phrase, made little sense. In this context, Americans are rugged, capable and basically good people. And so, Pelagius became our patron saint and Charles Finney his main spokesman.

It is no accident that most of the Pelagianizing movements just mentioned, sprang up on the American frontier in a region in upper state New York, known to historians as the "burned over district," a region which produced millennialism and Millerites, Joseph Smith and Mormonism, Alexander Campbell and the Restoration movement, the Shakers and a host of others, all which grew up in the Wake of Charles Finney and his new measures. From a Reformed perspective, the "burned over district" is a kind of a theological Bermuda Triangle.

By the time of the Second Great Awakening in the latter years of the 17th century, the Reformation preaching of Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield which characterized the first great awakening of the 1730's-40's, had given way to a man-centered, experience oriented theology. And it was Charles Finney, perhaps more than anyone else, who ensured that the Second Great Awakening undid the Reformation emphases of the first. Finney was born in 1792, and was a child of both the American democratic ideal as well as the frontier spirit. After studying law, Finney experienced a dramatic conversion in 1821, and then sought to enter the Presbyterian ministry. It was soon all too evident that Finney was not interested in the Westminster Standards, the basic statement of Presbyterian doctrine, and that his preaching was more or less combination of the New Haven theology - a radical modification of the theology of Jonathan Edwards, and common-sense case law typical of William Blackstone. It was Finney who invented the anxious bench (the fore-runner of the alter call), and established the protracted revival meeting. Interestingly enough, both Jesse Jackson and Jerry Falwell stand in Finney's shadow, as both the liberal-left and the Christian-right trace their own activistic roots directly to Finney's stress upon political activism and social reform. It is from Finney that we trace prohibitionism and the temperance movement as well as abolitionism. The danger in this stress upon Christian activism is, of course, that Christianity in Finney's scheme, becomes activism. Reformation Christians would, on the other hand, insist that while Christians should be abolitionists and pro-life, abolitionism and being pro-life per se is not Christianity. Prohibitionism is, of course, right out! It is a pernicious error bequeathed to us by the Methodists!

One thing I admire about Finney is that he is clear. In his Lectures on Revival (1835) Finney "out Pelagius' Pelagius" to use Dr. Robert Godfrey's phrase, when he states "A revival is not a miracle according to another definition of the term "miracle" something above the powers of nature. There is nothing in religion beyond the ordinary powers of nature....A revival is not a miracle, nor dependent on a miracle in any sense. [A revival] is a purely philosophical result of the right use of the constituted means." Thus if we jiggle the lever in the right way, and simply use the right means, we don't need the grace of God, at all. We have all the natural ability we need. Thus a revival does not at all depend upon God, it depends upon us, plain and simple. As the Princeton theologian B. B. Warfield remarked, this is not theology at all. This is ethics. According to Warfield, "we said that God might be eliminated entirely from Finney's ethical theory without injury to it: are we not prepared to now say that [God] might be eliminated from it with some advantage to it."

In a later work Finney expresses his rejection of sola gratia very clearly. In his Systematic Theology (1846) he wrote, "Regeneration consists in the sinner changing his ultimate choice, intention, preference; or in changing from selfishness to love and benevolence; or, in other words, in turning from the supreme choice of self-gratification, to the supreme love of God and the equal love of his neighbor. Of course the subject of regeneration must be an agent in the work (p. 224)." As I said, Finney is clear and it is hard to misunderstand him here. Man is the agent of his own regeneration. A more blatant rejection of what the Scriptures teach about the new-birth and regeneration is hardly imaginable. Finney's Lazarus is capable of resurrecting himself, without God's help, thank you.

Why Charles Finney is important to us this morning, is precisely because it is Finney who serves to sow the Pelagian seed which germinates all over the American landscape in subsequent years. Think of his influence on the contemporary church for just one moment:

Finney is the father of revivalism, characterized by the frontier revival tent meeting and the sawdust trail. Finney's revivalist legacy is most clearly seen today in a stadium filled with Promise Keepers.

Finney is the father of the alter call and the "evangelistic meeting" that takes place apart from the normal preaching and sacramental ministry of the local church. It was the stress upon the "new measures," as Finney called them that largely served to displace the sacramental and preaching ministry of the church for technique-oriented evangelism.

The entire church growth movement, which seeks to entice so-called "seekers" to church by removing those things from the church service which offend them (in other words, anything distinctly Christian), can be traced back to Finney's new measures; only the new measures now come to us couched in the language of marketing and sales, target groups and demographics.

Whether it be Chuck Smith, Bill Bright, or Billy Graham, there is no doubt that one branch of each of their respective intellectual family trees traces itself back to Charles Finney, and even if another branch in that same family tree can be traced back to Protestant forbears, these traits are now most certainly recessive. For Finney's family characteristics are now dominant in the American church. And sola gratia is no longer a doctrine to be defended, it is an offence and an embarrassment. Who needs God when man is quite capable on his own.

5) How are we to respond?

First, the Bible does not approach this subject from the perspective that everyone is entitled to a chance at heaven, as do most Americans. Now it makes for a wonderful system of government when we see things democratically everyone has a vote and everyone is equal before the Law, and that in order to be fair, everyone should have an equal chance to participate in the process. We can all exercise our vote, make a decision, and really change things. God, however, is not democratic and he does not operate according to American democratic ideals. The Scriptures do not begin with human freedom, as it is argued, they begin with the fall of Adam into sin and its consequences. This means that we lost our vote and our freedom in the Fall! And because the entire human race fell with Adam, we are everything that the Scriptures say about us. Thus, as Christians, we must begin where the Bible does, with the fact of human sinfulness and with the idea clearly in our minds that no one deserves to go to heaven, and that none of us can do anything to get there. To start with the presupposition that unless we have free will to choose God whenever we want to, or else Christianity (and by implication - God) would not be fair, we miss the point. God does not owe sinners anything. And if we are thinking this way, we have, perhaps, imbibed too deeply from our democratic culture, and we are not approaching things, as we should, from the perspective found in the Holy Scriptures.

Second, the degree to which we argue that we contribute something to our salvation is the degree to which we deny sola gratia. It was Charles Spurgeon who said, "he that thinks lightly of sin, thinks lightly of the savior." It is really very simple. Either God saves sinners who are dead in sin, by calling them forth from the grave when they could contribute nothing, or else sinners have something good within them is that not somehow tainted, corrupted, polluted or damaged by the fall. As we have seen the Scriptures teach the former rather than the latter. To add anything we do to grace alone, is to deny grace alone! You cannot have it either way. As Calvin puts in the Institutes, "Whatever mixture men study to add from the power of free-will to the grace of God, is only a corruption of it; just as if anyone should dilute good wine with dirty or bitter water." Since we are sinful from head to toe, from hair to toe-nail, whatever our contribution we might add to God's grace, only can serve to pollute, not to activate the grace of God! And so when we look to as answers for questions like, "Why does God save this one rather than that one?" we do well to answer as one Puritan divine put it, "There is no reason to be given for grace, but grace." God is God and we are sinful creatures. It is not ours to ask why.

Third, sola gratia is the basis for our comfort and assurance as sinners before a Holy God. Since any contribution that I am supposed to make to make my salvation possible is necessarily tainted by sin, I will always be plagued by doubts about what it is that I am supposed to contribute, and whether or not I contributed it in the right way. If I think that I am saved by my decision to accept Jesus as my Savior, how do I know if I really meant it when I asked him into my heart? If I am saved because of my faith, what do I do when my faith is weak, or when I am in sin or else plagued by nagging doubts? Do I need to be saved all over again? This is not religion of faith but a religion of fear and of pride. Since the Scriptures teach that we are saved not because of anything that is in us, and that the merit necessary for our salvation comes to us from the person and work of Jesus Christ, we look, not within at what we have done, but we to our savior to see what he has done. For in Jesus Christ we see what it means to be saved by grace.

We look to a savior who calls the dead from the tomb when they still reek of their sins; a savior who promises never to leave or forsake us, even when we go astray. We look to a good shepherd who will lose none of his sheep and who declares; "all that the Father gives to me will come to me, and I will lose none of them, but raise them all up on the last day." We look to a savior who died for all of our sins and who kept God's Law perfectly every minute of his life, so that his perfect righteousness could be given to cover our unrighteousness. We look to a savior who was crucified, but who conquered death and the grave and who rose again who ascended into heaven, and who even now is ruling and reigning, all the while praying for us, as our advocate and defender. Sola gratia is most clearly seen in the fact that Jesus Christ came to do for us the very thing that we could do for ourselves. For he came to seek and to save that which was lost. This beloved is sola gratia, the sinless Son of God, dying upon a Roman cross for the sins of the world, rising from the dead for our justification, and making us alive, through his word, when we were still dead in our sins. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

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