

*Divine Election
Or
Human Effort?*



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FOREWORD

The following paper is based on a faculty workshop given by the writer on October 25, 1971, in a faculty meeting at Faith Baptist Bible College. Frequent questions by students in the area of the sovereignty of God have prompted the writer to put his notes into a more permanent form. Although recognizing the differences that exist among evangelicals, the author believes that the position stated herein approximates most closely the Biblical and historically Baptist view. This paper must not be construed as the official position of the school. However, it is sent forth with the prayer that it might generate more light than heat and be found profitable by the ever inquiring students who, like "the infernal peers,

'Reason'd high
Of providence, foreknowledge, will and fate;
Fix'd fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute;
And found no end, in wandering mazes lost.'"

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Chapter I

THE DUTY OF THE THEOLOGIAN

INTERPRETATION

The primary task for the theologian is to interpret God's Word for man. But interpretation is both an art and a science. This means that any exposition of the Bible is guided by specific rules and checks which guard against the personal whims and prejudices of the interpreter. The application of these rules demands the greatest care in judgment that the godly and dedicated interpreter can bring to bear upon the text. In that sense interpretation is an art.

In the area of the doctrine of Salvation, one of the greatest sins committed by the expositor is the failure to apply the most basic principle of hermeneutics, that of the study of key words. Terms such as election, foreknowledge and foreordination are crucial to a proper understanding of Soteriology, and yet, in discussions of man's freedom and God's sovereignty scant attention is given to these terms. Many hours of fruitless debate would be saved if the theologian lived up to his basic responsibility, to interpret the text, which includes the detailed study of key terms. But unfortunately, theologians repeatedly skirt this obligation, either because of ignorance of the biblical languages or because of certain basic biases.

SYSTEMATIZING

Once biblical texts have been interpreted on a given doctrine, they need to be systematized for the purpose of presenting divine truth in an attractive logical manner.

BALANCE

The interpreter is under obligation to keep that balance in his system of doctrine which the Holy Spirit Himself evinces in His inspired Word. In the area of the doctrine of Salvation, the question of balance is of the utmost importance. Which aspect of salvation does God the Holy Spirit accent? Is it God's sovereignty in salvation or the effort of man? Or does the Spirit place equal emphasis on divine election and human freedom? In other words, does the Bible present a parallel view, as it is commonly called? This brief study hopes to clarify this issue.

The conscientious Bible student will keep the emphasis where the Holy Spirit placed it. He is not free to proffer his pet prejudices. He must not major in minors nor minor in majors. Doctrinal hobby horses have no place in theology, though we all are guilty of riding them from time to time. Someone has rightly observed that the only difference between a horse and a hobby horse is that a person can always get off a hobby horse.

COMMUNICATION

Once the proper meaning of a portion of the inspired Word has been determined the servant of God has the responsibility to communicate this truth to others. What is a matter of revelation must be made a matter of proclamation. Frequently one encounters a strangely resigned

attitude on the part of believers toward certain areas of God's truth, especially that of election, such as: "Oh, well, we will know it all by and by!" This is true of course. But the point is that God has revealed more about His majestic plan of redemption than Christians sometimes realize. Many things can indeed be known "here and now" instead of in the "by and by." Believers must study all that God has revealed and communicate it faithfully, not relegating truth to the future when it could be our possession now.

Chapter 2

THE DECREES OF GOD

THE SYSTEMS OF THEOLOGY

The Divisions among Theologians

There are two basic ways of approaching the doctrine of salvation. One way is to stress the importance of man and his free will to choose for or against Christ; this school of interpretation is called Arminianism, named after James Arminius. The other way of approaching salvation is to stress the importance of God and His sovereign will in bringing men to Himself through Christ; this school of interpretation is called Calvinism, named after John Calvin. It is unfortunate that one must call himself an Arminian or Calvinist but for theological purposes every Christian is either one or the other. However, the issues involved in this historic controversy are indeed grave, for they vitally affect the Christian's concept of God, of sin, and of salvation. J. I. Packer has rightly observed:

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 [Calvinism] 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 [Arminianism] gives each act a different reference (the objects of redemption being all mankind, of calling, those who hear the gospel, and of election, those hearers who respond), and denies that any 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 a part of God's gift of salvation, the other as man's 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 points at which, and the extent to which, these two conceptions are at variance.¹

Development of the Calvinistic and Arminian Systems

After the death of Arminius, one of his followers, Simon Episcopus, developed the Arminian system of theology as it is known today. Because Arminius was not the systematic theologian that John Calvin was, he did not clearly define his thinking on salvation. As a result, the followers of Arminius distorted his system with views Arminius did not hold. However, one must say that the followers of Arminius simply carried the viewpoint of limited sovereignty of God to its logical conclusion.

After the death of Arminius, his followers set forth the Remonstrance which expounds the straight Arminian position. The Calvinists then set forth their Contra-Remonstrance which set forth the five points of Calvinism. At the Synod of Dort, the synod concluded that Arminius and his followers were teaching heresy, and they were put out of the Presbytery. The Arminians were occasionally persecuted for five years and then given freedom by the government to establish their own churches and schools.

The Distinctions between Arminianism and Calvinism²

These points may be found listed in Steele as:

¹David N. Steele, The Five Points of Calvinism (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1963), p. 22.

²ibid., pp. 16-23.

The "Five Points" of Arminianism

(1) Free Will or Human Ability

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

(2) Conditional Election

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

(3) Universal Redemption or General Atonement

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

(4) The Holy Spirit Can be Effectively Resisted

The Spirit calls inwardly all those who are called outwardly by the gospel invitation; He does all that He can to bring every sinner to salvation. But inasmuch as man is free, he can successfully resist the Spirit's call. The Spirit cannot regenerate the sinner until he believes; faith (which is man's contribution) precedes and makes possible the new birth. Thus, man's free will limits the Spirit in the application of Christ's saving work. The Holy Spirit can only draw to Christ those who allow Him to have His way with them. Until the sinner responds, the Spirit cannot give life. God's grace, therefore, is not invincible; it can be, and often is, resisted and thwarted by man.

(5) Falling from Grace

Those who believe and are truly saved can lose their salvation by failing to keep up their faith, etc. All Arminians have not been agreed on this point; some have held that believers are eternally secure in Christ--that once a sinner is regenerated, he can never be lost.

According to Arminianism:

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

The "Five Points" of Calvinism³

(1) Total Inability or Total Depravity

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

(2) Unconditional Election

God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are the result, not the cause of God's choice. Election therefore was not determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ. Thus God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.

(3) Particular Redemption or Limited Atonement

Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and

³The basis of Calvinism is popularly expressed by the flower TULIP: (1) total depravity; (2) unconditional election; (3) limited atonement; (4) irrresistible grace; and (5) the perseverance of the saints. Similarly, a joker has suggested that the Arminian has a flower too. It is a DAISY: "he loves me...he loves me not...he loves me..."

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

(4) The Efficacious Call of the Spirit or Irresistible Grace

In addition to the outward general call to salvation which is made to everyone who hears the gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The external call (which is made to all without distinction) can be, and often is rejected; whereas the internal call (which is made only to the elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion. By means of this special call the Spirit irresistibly draws the sinner to Christ. He is not limited in His work of applying salvation by man's will, nor is He dependent upon man's cooperation for success. The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ. God's grace, therefore, is invincible; it never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended.

(5) Perseverance of the Saints

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

According to Calvinism:

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

The Origin of the Two Systems.

(1) The Controversy between Pelagius and Augustine

Neither John Calvin nor James Arminius originated the basic concepts which undergird the two systems that bear their names. The fundamental principles of each system can be traced back many centuries prior to the time these two men lived. For example, the basic doctrines of the Calvinistic position had been vigorously defended by Augustine against Pelagius during the fifth century. The doctrines of Arminius can be traced back as far as the time of Clemens Alexandrinus, and seem to have been held by many of the fathers of the third and fourth centuries, having been diffused in the church through the corrupting influence of pagan philosophy. Pelagius denied that human nature had been corrupted by sin. He maintained that the only ill effects which the race had suffered

as the result of Adam's transgression was the bad example which he had set for mankind. His leading principle was that man's will is absolutely free. Hence everyone has the power, within himself, to believe the gospel as well as to perfectly keep the law of God. Augustine, on the other hand, maintained that human nature had been so completely corrupted by Adam's fall that no one, in himself, has the ability to obey either the law or the gospel. Divine grace is essential if sinners are to believe and be saved, and this grace is extended only to those whom God predestined to eternal life before the foundation of the world. The act of faith, therefore, results, not from the sinner's free will (as Pelagius taught) but from God's free grace which is bestowed on the elect only.

(2) Semi-Pelagianism, the Forerunner of Arminianism

Augustine's unanswerable polemic had so fully discredited Pelagianism in the field of argument, that it could no longer be made plausible to the Christian mind. It collapsed. But a new system soon presented itself, teaching that man with his own natural powers is able to take the first step toward his conversion, and that this obtains or merits the Spirit's assistance. Cassian... was the founder of this middle way, which came to be called SEMI-PELAGIANISM, because it occupied intermediate ground between Pelagianism and Augustinianism, and took in elements from both. He acknowledged that Adam's sin extended to his posterity and that human nature was corrupted by original sin. But, on the other hand, he held a system of universal grace for all men alike, making the final decision in the case of every individual dependent on the exercise of free-will. Their maxim was: "It is mine to be willing to believe, and it is the part of God's grace to assist."

(3) Calvinism, the Theology of the Reformation

The leaders of the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century rejected Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism on the ground that both systems were unscriptural. Like Augustine, the Reformers held to the doctrines of the sovereignty of God, the total depravity of man, and of unconditional election. To the Reformers, the crucial question was not simply whether God justifies believers without works of law, but the crucial issue was whether God is the author, not merely of justification, but also of faith; whether, in the last analysis, Christianity is a religion of utter reliance on God for salvation and all things necessary to it, or of self-reliance and self-effort.

The Main Point of Calvinism.

To Calvinism there is really only one point to be made in the field of 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, 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-peddling the sinner's inability so as to allow him to share the praise of his salvation with his Saviour.

THE FOUR BASIC SYSTEMS CONCERNING SALVATION

Pure Arminianism (Remonstrance).

Sin. Man is never so completely corrupted by sin that he cannot savingly believe the Gospel when it is put before him (John 3:16; 5:24; Rom. 1:14).

Resistible Grace. Man is never so completely controlled by God that he cannot reject the Gospel (Acts 7:51; Matt. 23:37).

Limited Sovereignty. God's election of those who shall be saved is prompted by His foreseeing that they will of their own accord believe (1 Pet. 1:2). God limited His sovereignty so as to give man a free will.

Unlimited Atonement. Christ in His death died for the sins of the whole world and now all men are rendered savable if they will believe (John 3:16; 1:29; 1 John 2:1,2; 2 Cor. 5:14).

Conditional Salvation. It rests with believers to keep themselves saved by keeping up their faith; those who fail to do so, fall away and are lost (Heb. 6:1-4; Gal. 5:4; 1 Pet. 1:5; John 15:6).

Modified Arminianism.

This group accepts the first four points of Arminianism but denies

the fifth. This group believes in the doctrine of eternal security (John 6:37; 10:28,29; 2 Tim. 2:13). Once a man has believed then God is obligated to keep this person saved. This was probably the view of Arminius, but we cannot be sure.

In summary the theological basis for Arminianism may be stated as follows. (1) The Bible regards faith as a free and responsible human act. It cannot be caused of God, but is exercised independently of Him; (2) Divine sovereignty is incompatible with free will and therefore God's sovereignty must be limited; (3) the Bible regards faith as obligatory on the part of all who hear the Gospel; therefore ability to believe must be universal or God would not be fair to make an offer of salvation if man couldn't believe it.

Pure Calvinism (Contra-Remonstrance).

Total Depravity. Fallen man in his natural state lacks all power to believe the gospel without supernatural enablement (1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 3:10,11; Eph. 2:1-3).

Unconditional Election. God's election is a free, sovereign, unconditional choice of sinners as sinners, to be redeemed by Christ, given faith and brought to glory (John 6:37, 39, 40; 1:13; 10:27; Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 8:29, 30; Rom. 9:23).

Limited Atonement. The redeeming work of Christ has as its end and goal the salvation of the elect, not the world (Matt. 1:21; John 10:11, 14; Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25; Rom. 5:8,9; 8:32; 2 Cor. 5:21; Titus 3:5,6; Isa. 53:5,6; 1 Pet. 1:18,19; Matt. 26:28).

Irresistible Grace. The work of the Holy Spirit in bringing

men to faith and salvation never fails to achieve its object (Rom. 8:29,30; 2 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 4:4).

Perseverance of the Saints. Believers are kept in faith and grace by the unconquerable power of God until they come to glory. The elect will persevere in faith (1 Pet. 1:5; John 10:27-29).

Modified Calvinism.

This group accepts all the points of Calvinism except limited atonement. This group believes that Christ died for the sins of the world to secure forgiveness specifically for the elect.

A summary of the theological basis for Calvinism includes that: (1) God is the first cause of salvation; (2) men are sinners in a helpless and hopeless condition and can never be brought out of this state apart from divine enablement; (3) salvation is supernatural because God truly initiates it. Thus, a Calvinist is a Christian who confesses before men in his theology what every Christian believes in his heart when he prays. A Calvinist cries for Biblical and theological accuracy and an objective approach to Scripture.

THE SEQUENCE OF THE DECREES

How salvation is applied in the scheme of Arminian and Calvinistic theology can best be shown by listing the various lapsarian views. They center around the logical, not the temporal, order of God's decrees of election and the permission of the fall (lapse). While there is some confusion of terms and disagreement among theologians as to what is embraced in each view, the following classifications are generally

accepted. They are conveniently listed by H. C. Thiessen.⁴

1. Supralapsarian view (generally called "hyper-Calvinistic"):
 - a. Decree to save some and reprobate the rest (double election)
 - b. Decree to create both groups
 - c. Decree to permit (some say secure) the fall of both groups
 - d. Decree to provide salvation for the elect (limited atonement)
 - e. Decree to apply salvation to the elect (irresistible grace)

2. Infralapsarian view (Calvinism, with some justification of being called "hyper-Calvinism"):
 - a. Decree to create all men
 - b. Decree to permit the fall of all men
 - c. Decree to elect some and leave the rest to condemnation (unconditional election)
 - d. Decree to provide salvation for the elect only (limited atonement)
 - e. Decree to apply salvation to the elect (irresistible grace)

3. Sublapsarian view (modified Calvinism, Chafer):
 - a. Decree to create all men
 - b. Decree to permit the fall
 - c. Decree to provide salvation for all men (unlimited atonement)
 - d. Decree to elect some to salvation (unconditionally)
 - e. Decree to apply salvation to elect (irresistibly)

4. Modified Sublapsarian view

Henry C. Thiessen, in his Lectures in Systematic Theology, espouses a modified sublapsarian view. In his scheme the last two points of the sublapsarian view would stand as follows:

- d. Decree to elect to salvation all who will believe (conditionally)
- e. Decree to apply salvation to those who will believe.

In reality then, Thiessen is a modified Arminian. Charles M. Horne, in his recent study on Salvation rightly labels Thiessen's views as Arminian and summarizes them thus:

1. Election is a sovereign act of God in that He was under no obligation to elect anyone. All stand equally condemned before God because of sin and therefore all could have been justly damned.
2. It was an act of grace in that he chose those who were utterly undeserving.

⁴Henry Clarence Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), pp. 343-344.

3. It was "in Christ;" He (the Father) chose in the merits of His Son.

4. He chose those whom He foreknew would believe. On this point appeal is made to Romans 8:29-30 and I Peter 1:1-2.

5. It is understood that God graciously grants to all men sufficient ability to accept Christ. "This is the salvation--bringing the grace of God that has appeared to all men. In His foreknowledge He perceives what each one will do with this restored ability, and elects men to salvation in harmony with His knowledge of their choice of Him."⁵

THE SUPPORT OF SCRIPTURE FOR MODIFIED CALVINISM

The Description of Moderate Calvinism.

Dr. Chafer gives an excellent summary of moderate Calvinism:

The men who belong to this school of interpretation defend all of the five points of Calvinism excepting one, namely, "Limited Atonement," or what has been termed "the weakest point in the Calvinistic system of doctrine." This form of moderate Calvinism is more the belief of Bible expositors than of the theologians, which fact is doubtless due to the truth that the Bible, taken in its natural terminology and apart from those strained interpretations which are required to defend a theory, seems to teach an unlimited redemption. Men of this group believe that Christ died actually and fully for all men of this age alike, that God has ordained that the gospel shall be preached to all for whom Christ died, and that through the proclamation of the gospel He will exercise His sovereign power in saving His elect. This group believe in the absolute depravity of man and his total inability to believe apart from the enabling power of the Spirit, and that the death of Christ, being forensic, is a sufficient ground for any and every man to be saved, should the Spirit of God choose to draw him. They contend that the death of Christ of itself saves no man, either actually or potentially, but that it does render all men savable; that salvation is wrought of God alone, and at the time the individual believes.⁶

The Discussion of Limited Atonement.

The present writer feels that a moderate Calvinism is a more Biblically tenable position than the position of limited atonement.

As Dr. Chafer points out, an important difference exists between limited

⁵Charles M. Horne, Salvation (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), pp. 15-16.

⁶Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), III, 184-185.

and unlimited atonement:

The limited redemptionist considers the death of Christ as actual for the elect and of no saving benefit for the nonelect, while the unlimited redemptionist considers the death of Christ as actual for the elect and potential and provisional for the nonelect. The notion is without foundation which assumes that a thing is less real because its acceptance may be uncertain or conditional.

The human estimation of the immeasurable value of Christ's death in behalf of lost men is in no way lessened or discredited by the belief that its value is received at the time that saving faith is exercised, rather than at the time the Savior died. The unlimited redemptionist is in no way forced, because of his belief, to take a second place in magnifying the glorious saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁷

Strict Calvinists insist that if Christ died for all men, then God would actually demand from those who will never be saved that they pay the penalty for their sins again as they are consigned to hell, even though Christ already did pay for their redemption. But, as Dr. Chafer shows, one must make a clear distinction between that particular aspect of the saving work of God in providing a Savior, and the saving work of God in which the mighty transformations which constitute a Christian what he is, are accomplished. Personal salvation is not automatic because of Christ's death, but it is effected only through saving faith. Despite the fact that strict Calvinists emphasize Christ's death for the elect only, they do not minimize the infinite value which accrues to men from the death of Christ in general.⁸

Some insist that even Calvin accepted the unlimited theory of the atonement later in life. How else, for instance, can one explain

⁷ Ibid., pp. 186-187.

⁸ See the discussion in John Murray's Redemption Accomplished and Applied (Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids Book Manufactures, Inc., 1970), pp. 61-62.

his comment on 1 John 2:2 which reads as follows:

Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world, and in the goodness of God offered unto all men without distinction, his blood being shed not for a part of the world only, but for the whole human race; for although in the world nothing is found worthy of the favor of God, yet he holds out the propitiation to the whole world, since without exception he summons all to the faith of Christ, which is nothing else than the door unto hope.⁹

The Defense of Unlimited Atonement.

Some passages of scripture relating to the death of Christ are simply too universal in scope than to be explained away by the limited redemptionists as referring to the elect only.

Christ's death is universal. "But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9).

Christ's salvation is universal. "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe" (1 Tim. 4:10).

Christ's redemption is universal. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter 2:1). It should be noted that these false teachers, who are obviously unsaved ("damnation," v. 3), were bought by the Lord.

⁹A. H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1907), p. 778.

Language cannot be plainer than this.

Christ's reconciliation is universal. "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:19).

Christ's propitiation is universal. "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). Advocates of the limited atonement are very adapt in destroying the real meaning of these verses so that they can be made to apply to the elect. And then they proceed to challenge moderate Calvinists to show them a single verse in which the word all must definitely mean every person on earth. This challenge can easily be met. Thomas W. Jenkyn, in an old volume on the atonement, has a statement worth quoting:

The word "ALL" has often been most candidly and dishonorably tortured and wrested, to mean a generality of kinds and degrees, and not a universality of the mass of the human race. Prophecy, however, supplies us with one text at least, that has bid stubborn defiance to all theological tortures. It is Isa. 53:6, "ALL we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned EVERY ONE to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Some of the advocates of particular atonement have challenged their opponents to present one single text in which the word "all" means indisputably every individual of the human race. Here it is. The word "all" in the last part of the sentence means the "all" mentioned in the first part; and both mean the "every one," in the middle portion of the verse. If you apply to the word "all" in the first sentence, the torturous criticisms which are generally employed on the "all" in the last sentence, you offend equally against sound interpretation, theological fairness, and logical deduction.¹⁰

¹⁰Thomas Jenkyn, Extent of the Atonement (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1833), p. 196.

Chapter 3

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

THE DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

In order to understand the doctrine of election, there are a number of key terms with which a person needs to be familiar. (1) Omniscience: God's knowledge of all things actual and possible. (2) Decree: The decree of God is His one eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His own will, whereby for His own glory He has unconditionally foreordained whatsoever comes to pass. Such words in the Bible as counsel, will, and purpose refer to the divine decree. Often the word foreordination is used theologically to speak of the preplanning of all events. (3) Election: Election has been defined as "God's unconditional and pretemporal choice of those individuals whom He would save."

Election is an active word whereby God picks out certain individuals among the mass of humanity for Himself according to the good pleasure of His will. Election comes from the Greek eklego (ἐκλέγω) which means to choose or to call out of. The word is always middle in the New Testament, indicating that God chose for Himself. In Ephesians 1:4, the word is in the aorist and it thus looks at an event rather than a process.

a. Different Elections Mentioned in Scripture

1) Election of Christ; 1 Pet. 2:6

- 2) Election of Israel; Isa. 45:4
- 3) Election of the Apostle Paul; Acts 9:15
- 4) Election of certain individuals; Eph. 1:4; Rom. 8:28-30; 2 Thess. 2:13,14.
- 5) Election that is negative; John 6:70

b. Different Terminology Having the Same Meaning as Election

- 1) Appointed; John 15:16
- 2) Ordained; Acts 13:48
- 3) Choose; Eph. 1:4

c. Different Views of Election

Thiessen's view. Thiessen bases election on God's foreknowledge of what man would do instead of on God's eternal counsel. Thus, he defines election to "mean that sovereign act of God in grace whereby He chose in Christ Jesus for salvation all those whom He foreknew would accept Him."¹ How unbiblical such a view is will be demonstrated shortly.

Thieme's view. Robert Thieme, pastor of Berachah Bible Church in Houston, Texas, offers a rather novel interpretation of the Biblical concept of election. According to him, and some pastors in the Iowa area, individuals are not elected, only Christ (Isa. 42:1). This completely contradicts the teaching of 2 Thessalonians 2:13, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." According to Thieme, an individual is elect because he is in Christ and this happens at the moment of salvation.

(4) Predestination: An active word which indicates a predetermining of the destiny of the elect and looks to the end of God's choices, the glorification of the saint (Eph. 1:5, 11; Rom. 8:29, 30). The word predestination is used only of the destiny of the elect.

¹Henry Clarence Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), p. 344.

Predestination comes from the Greek word prooritzo (προορίζω), which means literally "to mark a boundary." God, therefore, marks off certain individuals out of the mass of humanity for a certain end which is, according to Ephesians 1:5, that of adoption which involves certain privileges. Another end is that God might bring glory to Himself.

(5) Foreknowledge: An active word to indicate a loving relationship, based on the deliberate judgment of God in the eternal plan, which God sustains with certain individuals which results in His choice of them for salvation. Foreknowledge is only used of persons, not events.

Definition. Defined Biblically, foreknowledge refers to a loving relationship which God sustains to certain individuals by choosing them. Theologically, it indicates prior knowledge of actual things, involving conscious relationship and certainty.

Usage. As to usage, the verb "to foreknow" is employed five times in the New Testament (Rom. 8:29; 11:2; Acts 26:5; 2 Pet. 3:17; 1 Pet. 1:20). The noun foreknowledge occurs twice (1 Pet. 1:2; Acts 2:23).

The Arminian interprets these passages relating to salvation as God's foreknowledge or prescience of what man would do and on which basis God could elect or predestine the person to salvation. But here is one of the basic errors of Arminianism: a failure to do justice to the Greek word. Arminians say that because God knows all things, He looked down to the corridors of time and saw how men would believe and then elected and predestined them on that basis (i.e. He saved those who would of their own free will repent of their sins and believe the gospel) and thus elected these.

The Greek verb form of foreknowledge is proginosko (προγινώσκω)

and the noun form is prognosis (πρόγνωσις). Pro (πρό) means "before" and ginosko (γινώσκω) means "an active or experimental knowledge."

Proginosko denotes a selective knowledge beforehand. It is not equivalent to omniscience. Prognosis acknowledges a special relationship beforehand (cf. Acts 2:23; 26:5; Rom. 8:29; 11:2; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1:20). While 1 Peter 1:2, in the KJV, speaks of believers as "elect according to the foreknowledge of God," the same word is used in verse 20 in reference to Christ, but with this more correct rendering: "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world." It would be totally meaningless to say that God simply foreknew Christ, since the two coexisted eternally. Foreknowledge must therefore mean more than just knowing beforehand.

The Hebrew verb know (yadah, יָדָע) has likewise a much deeper meaning than the English word. In Amos 3:2, God speaks to Israel, saying: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." The Lord certainly knew about all the families of the earth, but He knew Israel in a special way. His knowledge is one of a special loving relationship. This is disclosed explicitly to Israel through the prophet Jeremiah. Yahweh speaks: "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. 31:3).

God, in speaking to Jeremiah, said: "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you" (Jer. 1:5). The meaning here is not that God knew about Jeremiah but that He had special regard for the prophet before He formed him in his mother's womb.

The Relationship Between Election, Predestination, and Foreknowledge. While the three concepts are definitely related to each

other, they nevertheless emphasize different aspects of God's redemptive program. Election deals with the method or process, the choice from a mass. Predestination, or foreordination has in view the goal in salvation. The immediate goal is that of salvation (2 Thess. 2:13); the intermediate goal is holiness in the sight of God and adoption (Eph. 1:4,5); and the ultimate goal is that it brings glory to God (Eph. 1:6). Foreknowledge looks at the relationship which God is establishing. It is the love of God toward those whom He predestines to be saved.

The Defense of Our Meaning of Foreknowledge. It is a basic rule of hermeneutics that the first mentioning of a word or concept must always receive careful consideration. And so it is with the word "foreknowledge," first mentioned in the New Testament in Acts 2:23: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Wuest demonstrates that foreknowledge here is closely connected to God's counsel, it is causative. Through foreknowledge God does not simply know something but He effects something. An extended quote from Wuest will clear up any misconceived ideas the reader might still have concerning this crucial term:

There is a rule in Greek syntax that is connected with the presence and absence of the article, called Granville Sharp's rule. It is as follows: "When the copulative $\kappa\alpha\iota$ connects two nouns of the same case, if the article δ or any of its cases precedes the first of the said nouns or participles, and it is not repeated before the second noun or participle, the latter always relates to the same person that is expressed or described by the first noun or participle, denoting a further description of the first-named person." In other words, when two nouns in the same case are connected by $\kappa\alpha\iota$, and the first noun is articular, and the second is anarthrous, the second noun refers, and is a further description of it.

This rule is of invaluable assistance to the exegete. For instance, the word "foreknowledge" occurs first in the New Testament, in Acts 2:23. Its usage here should throw a flood of light upon the usage of the word in other places where it is found. The word πρόγνωσις in classical Greek meant merely previous knowledge. But here it means more than that, as our rule of syntax brings out. The words, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," in the Greek text τοῦτον τῇ ὠρισμένῃ βουλῇ καὶ προγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ. βουλῇ is articular, προγνώσει anarthrous. The latter word refers to the same act that the former refers to. This will give us our clue to the New Testament usage of πρόγνωσις when it is used in connection with God. βουλῇ refers to the counsel which is the result of the deliberations of a council; here, a council composed of the three members of the Triune God. The participle describing βουλῇ is perfect in tense, indicating that the deliberations of the council had been concluded and the members had come to a decision. The verb ὀρίζω, means "to fix limits upon, to mark out the boundaries of, to determine, appoint." Thus, the purpose of the council was to appoint the member of the Triune God who would become the Lamb to be slain. πρόγνωσις in classical Greek, we noted, meant merely "foreknowledge." But here it partakes of the nature of the noun with which it is grammatically connected, βουλῇ, and is a further description of it. The βουλή was one in which the Lord Jesus was appointed to a certain destiny. That act is also referred to by the word προγνώσει, which by this association has added to itself in the New Testament, the idea of foreordination, where it is used in connection with an act of God. Thus, a rule of Greek syntax has opened up to us the New Testament content of the meaning of this word.²

Another crucial passage in the discussion of foreknowledge is 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." It does not say "what" but "who." In fact, foreknowledge is never used in Scripture in connection with events or actions; instead, it always has reference to persons. It is persons God is said to "foreknow," not the actions of those persons. For example, Scripture never speaks of repentance and faith as *being* foreseen or foreknown by God. Truly, He did know from all eternity

²Kenneth S. Wuest, The Practical Use of the Greek New Testament (Chicago: Moody Press, 1946), pp. 22-24.

that certain ones would repent and believe because of His decree, yet this is not what Scripture refers to as the object of God's foreknowledge. The word uniformly refers to God's foreknowing persons. From all eternity the Father foreknew the Christian as a person, and based on that loving, deliberate, personal foreknowledge He chose, and predestined the Christian. It must be concluded, then, that faith cannot be the cause of foreknowledge, because foreknowledge is before predestination, and faith is the effect of predestination. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).

Murray, in rejecting the view that foreknew in Romans 8:29 refers to the foresight of faith, is certainly correct in stating that:

It needs to be emphasized that the rejection of this interpretation is not dictated by a predestinarian interest. Even if it were granted that "foreknew" means the foresight of faith, the biblical doctrine of sovereign election is not thereby eliminated or disproven. For it is certainly true that God foresees faith; he foresees all that come to pass. The question would then simply be: whence proceeds this faith which God foresees? The only Biblical answer is that the faith which God foresees is the faith he himself creates (cf. Jn. 3:3-8; 6:44,45,65; Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:29; 2 Pet. 1:2). Hence His eternal foresight of faith is preconditioned by His decree to generate this faith in those whom he foresees as believing, and we are thrown back upon the differentiation which proceeds from God's own eternal and sovereign election to faith and its consequents. The interest, therefore, is simply one of interpretation as it should be applied to this passage. On exegetical grounds we shall have to reject the view that 'foreknew' refers to the foresight of faith.³

Spurgeon, in his superb sermon on election, has an interesting observation on the same problem:

'But; say others, 'God elected them on the foresight of their faith.' Now, God gives faith, therefore He could not have elected

³John Murray, The Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), I, p. 316.

them on account of faith, which He foresaw. There shall be twenty beggars in the street, and I determine to give one of them a shilling; but will any one say that I determined to give that one a shilling, that I elected him to have the shilling, because I foresaw that he would have it? That would be talking nonsense. In like manner, to say that God elected men because He foresaw they would have faith, which is salvation in the germ, would be too absurd for us to listen to for a moment. Faith is the gift of God. Every virtue comes from Him. Therefore it cannot have caused Him to elect men, because it is His gift.⁴

Ultimately, the meaning of foreknowledge cannot be ascertained through dogmatic or theological considerations, but only through grammatical and exegetical study of the language. Rudolf Bultmann, whose theology is as bad as his knowledge of Greek is good, should not be ignored in this important discussion. He writes the article on γινώσκω in Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. As a superlative Greek scholar, his conclusions should be given careful consideration:

Thus knowledge [in the Old Testament] has an element of acknowledgement. . . . Finally, the element of will in יָדָה [yadah] emerges with particular emphasis when it is used of God, whose knowing established the significance of what is known. In this connection, יָדָה [yadah] can mean "to elect," i.e., to make an object of concern and acknowledgement. Gen. 18:19; Ex. 33:12; Amos 3:2; Hosea 13:5; Jer. 1:5.

In the New Testament προγινώσκειν [proginoskein] is referred to God. His foreknowledge, however, is an election or foreordination of His people (Rom. 8:29; 11:2) or Christ (1 Pet. 1:20)

⁴Charles H. Spurgeon, Election (Philadelphia: Great Commission Publications, 1964), p. 13. Other detailed discussions of the true meaning of foreknowledge can be found in the following sources: J. Dwight Pentecost, Things Which Become Sound Doctrine pp. 138-139; David N. Steele, The Five Points of Calvinism, pp. 85-91; Bibliotheca Sacra, July, 1965, p. 215-219, "Is Foreknowledge Equivalent to Foreordination?"

The corresponding use for knowledge on God's part in the sense of election, which is so characteristic of the Old Testament, is occasionally found most clearly in 2 Tim. 2:19. . .but also 1 Cor. 18:3; 13:12; Gal. 4:19.⁵

Lexical evidence of this meaning of foreknowledge could be multiplied. One other quote must suffice to demonstrate that God's foreknowledge is more than just a knowing beforehand of something. Cremer writes:

It is simplest to take προγιν, . . .as denoting a knowing . . .equivalent to "unite oneself before with someone."

προγινώσκειν , [to foreknow] denotes the divine γινώσκειν [to know] as already present in the divine decree before its manifestation in history, i.e. the union between God and the objects of His sovereign grace implied in His decree of salvation, and accordingly already in existence before its accomplishment; . . .[it] essentially includes a self-determining on God's part to this fellowship (Rom. 8:29, whom God had beforehand entered into fellowship with).

Πρόγνωσις, η, [noun, foreknowledge]...denotes the foreordained relation of fellowship of God with the objects of His saving counsel; God's self-determining towards fellowship with the objects of His sovereign counsel preceding the realization thereof. . . .a resolution formed beforehand. . . .or, quite generally, as foreknowledge. . .⁶

In the light of these grammatical and exegetical considerations, one can understand Dr. H. O. Van Gilder's righteous indignation over the Arminian view of foreknowledge:

Let me repeat that statement: 'Scripture nowhere declares what it is in the divine foreknowledge which determines the divine election and predestination.' Therefore, it is the

⁵Rudolf Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (eds.), Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964) trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, I, 689-715.

⁶Hermann Cremer, Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1880) trans. William Urwick, pp. 161-162.

height of presumption for any man to say what it is in the divine foreknowledge which determines the election. The Arminian who says that God foresaw who would believe, and, on that basis, elected them to salvation, is reading beyond what is written, and is guilty of as great presumption as ever the infra-super-hypo-ultra Calvinist was guilty of, for God has not said what it was in His divine foreknowledge which determined His election.⁷

THE DEFENSE OF MODIFIED CALVINISM

Divine Sovereignty.

Both the Calvinist and Arminian subscribe to the sovereignty of God and yet when sovereignty is applied to specific situations, the difference between the two systems becomes very pronounced. J. K. S. Reid, in his introduction to Calvin's treatise, Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God, rightly observes:

The point at issue between Calvin and his opponents is thus simple, but it is of course fundamental. Substantially what they do is to wrest the ground of salvation out of God's own hand where alone, Calvin holds, it rightly belongs, and to deposit it within the contingent realm of human volition and freewill. Clearly this is to derogate from the sovereignty of God.⁸

Arminians vehemently deny this, of course, but it is true nonetheless. The Scripture teaches that the ultimate destiny of every individual is decided by the will of God. Arminians assert that God permits man to exercise his own freewill in the matter of salvation.

Two passages of Scripture especially emphasize God's sovereignty in salvation and as long as they remain part of the inspired canon, God's absolute sovereignty must be maintained. The passages are Romans 9 and Ephesians 1.

⁷H. O. Van Gilder, "Election and . . ." p. 3. (This unpublished paper is an excellent brief statement of the historic Baptist position on election.)

⁸John Calvin, Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God (London: Camelot Press Ltd., 1961), p. 11.

In Romans 9, Paul points out that God's selection for salvation is not according to natural generation (9:7-9) or human merit (9:10-13) but rather according to His mercy (9:14-18) and power (9:19-24). Election is never related to man's wish or desire but to God's omnipotence. Two individuals, Jacob and Esau, experienced God's sovereign activity. Jacob is loved by God, but Esau is hated by Him (Rom. 9:14). Paul anticipates immediately the charge against his assertion, that therefore God is unrighteous. It is interesting to note that Paul does not reply as the Arminians would have him reply, that God simply foreknew what they would do, and therefore the charge of unrighteousness is false, but rather he answers with a strong expletive, "God forbid," and then continues to anchor God's elective decree in His sovereignty, not man's free choice: "For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Paul introduces this objection to God's election with good reason. Were election based on the foreknowledge as to which man would believe once the gospel was presented, then such an objection of unrighteousness would be totally inane. And it cannot be too strongly emphasized that unless the Bible student today gets a similar response to his preaching, he is not preaching the true Biblical doctrine of election. The Arminians, unlike the Apostle Paul, would never be charged with preaching that God is unrighteous, for if God simply foresees what man would do and acts in accordance to this foreknowledge, then of course God is not acting unrighteously.

A second important objection that Paul anticipates is that God cannot find fault with those whom He bypassed with His elective decree,

those who are reprobate. The objection is formulated thus: "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will?" (Rom. 9:19). Paul answers very simply but firmly, "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" (Rom. 9:20,21). To paraphrase verse 20, Paul is saying, "It is none of your business." Creatures do not have the right to ask why their Creator has elected some and bypassed others any more than a symphony by Beethoven has the right to ask, "Why have you written me thus?" Charles Hodge has some pertinent comments on Romans 9:19:

If the fact that one believes and is saved, and another remains impenitent and is lost, depends on God, how can we be blamed? Can we resist his will? It will at once be perceived that this plausible and formidable objection to the apostle's doctrine is precisely the one which is commonly and confidently urged against the doctrine of election. There would be no room either for this objection, or for that contained in the 14th verse, if Paul had merely said that God chooses those whom he foresees would repent and believe; or that the ground of distinction was in the different conduct of men. It is very evident, therefore, that he taught no such doctrine.⁹

A second major passage dealing with God's sovereignty in election is Ephesians chapter 1. The basis of election, the reason why God chose some to eternal bliss, is shrouded in eternal mystery. But Paul relates it to God's will, purpose, and good pleasure (Eph. 1:5,11). He works all things after the counsel of His own will. He does nothing arbitrary. If the believer asks about the motive behind his election,

⁹Charles Hodge, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), p. 317.

then he is brought to the goodness and love of God, the good pleasure or the kind intention of His will. But why God foreloved some and gave others over to their just punishment is not revealed. We know from Ephesians 1 that the source of our election is the Father (1:4), that the sphere of election is Christ, and that the time of election is before the foundations of the world (cf. 2 Thess. 2:3).

Human Effort.

A. W. Pink, in his significant volume, The Sovereignty of God, has correctly placed the emphasis where it belongs. God makes the effort to save man. Man never decides on his own to come to God.

Why is it that all are not saved, particularly all who hear the Gospel? Do you still answer, because the majority refuse to believe? Well, that is true, but it is only a part of the truth. It is the truth from the human side. But there is a Divine side too, and this side of the truth needs to be stressed or God will be robbed of His glory. The unsaved are lost because they refuse to believe; the others are saved because they believe. But why do these others believe? What is it that causes them to put their trust in Christ? Is it because they are more intelligent than their fellows, and quicker to discern their need of salvation? Perish the thought, 'Who maketh thee to differ from another?' And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?' (1 Cor. 4:7). It is God himself who makes the difference between the elect and the non-elect, for of His own it is written, 'And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true' (1 John 5:20).¹⁰

Two passages of Scripture which completely refute the Arminian assertion that each man has been given sufficient grace to believe and that therefore man on his own makes an effort to come to God are John 1:13 and Romans 9:16.

¹⁰A. W. Pink, The Sovereignty of God (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1961), p. 46.

John writes that those who are the sons of God "were born, not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). This verse refutes Arminianism once and for all, because here, in unmistakable language, is told what is excluded in man's salvation: (1) human means--"of blood", i.e., salvation is not a physical process; (2) human urge--"of the will of the flesh"--not an emotional response; (3) human decision--"of the will of man"--salvation is not due to man's mental activity. Man is not saved because he decides to be saved, because he wants to be saved, but because of the effort on God's part on his behalf.

In the well-known passage of Romans 9:16, Paul shows that salvation is not by the will of man: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy." Man is saved because God shows mercy, not because man decided to be saved or wanted to be saved. The verse excludes any human volition or active assertion for salvation.

If the two verses prove anything, it is that man does not have a free will when it comes to the matter of salvation. Man is so totally depraved and so dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1-5) that he is a spiritual corpse. This state, as any concept of death, includes the two ideas of separation and inability. Every man born into the world is separated from God and eternal life and is unable to respond in the area of the spiritual. And so Jonah was correct when he prayed from the belly of the fish: "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9). Total depravity makes human efforts impossible in salvation, as Spurgeon has so well illustrated:

Now, the reason why man cannot come to Christ, is not because he can not 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 a babe in her arms. You put a knife into her hand, and tell her to stab that babe in the heart. She replies, and very truthfully, "I can not." Now, as far as her bodily power is concerned, she can, if she pleases; there is the knife, and there is the child. The child can not 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 can not 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 can not 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 can not 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 can not 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 is 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 toward Christ.¹¹

¹¹Charles H. Spurgeon, Spurgeon's Sermons on Sovereignty (Ashland, Ky.: Baptist Examiner Book Shop, 1959), pp. 123, 124.

Human Responsibility.

In discussing the doctrine of election, theologians frequently fall into the logical error of assuming that man cannot be held responsible unless he has a free will. But while the Bible plainly teaches that man does not have a free will in salvation, it teaches just as plainly that man is a free moral agent. Free agency and free will are not the same, as Hodge points out. He writes.

The doctrine of man's inability, therefore, does not assume that man has ceased to be a free moral agent. He is free because he determines his own acts. Every volition is an act of free self-determination. He is a moral agent because he has the consciousness of moral obligation, and whenever he sins he acts freely against the convictions of conscience or the precepts of the moral law. That a man is in such a state that he uniformly prefers and chooses evil instead of good, as do the fallen angels, is no more inconsistent with his free moral agency than his being in such a state as that he prefers and chooses good with the same uniformity that the holy angels do.¹²

It is commonly assumed that responsibility implies ability. The fallacy of this has been shown repeatedly, but the error seems to live on. Pink has well written:

The assumption that responsibility implies ability is a philosophical argument and not a biblical one. It was nevertheless popularized in the last century by such evangelists as C. G. Finney and has become almost universally accepted. Reviewing Finney's position, Charles Hodge wrote:

'With him it is a 'first truth' that freedom of the will is essential to moral obligation, and that no man is bound to do what is not in his own power.'

The fallacy of which he is guilty is very obvious. He transfers a maxim which is an axiom in one department, to another in which it has no legitimate force. It is a first truth that a man without eyes cannot be under an obligation to see, or a man without ears to hear. Within the sphere therefore of physical impossibilities, the maxim that obligation is limited by ability,

¹²Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), II, 260-261.

is undoubtedly true. But it is no less obviously true that an inability which has its origin in sin, which consists in what is sinful, and relates to moral action, is perfectly consistent with continued obligation. It is one of the most familiar facts of consciousness, that a sense of obligation is consistent with a conviction of entire inability. It is a dictum of philosophers, 'I ought, therefore, I can.' To which every heart burdened with a sense of sin replies, 'I ought to be able, but I am not.' Such is the testimony of conscience and such is the plain doctrine of the Bible. . . . It was, says Neander, the radical principle of Pelagius' system that he assumed moral liberty to consist in the ability to choose between good and evil.¹³

The publishers of Pink's book have also shown how man can be held responsible although he is incapable of choosing Christ. In a footnote they declare:

It may be asked why, if this is the true condition of man, do the Scriptures address themselves to man's will? Is it not written, 'And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely?' (Rev. 22:17) This fact is readily acknowledged. Such exhortations show that man is responsible to repent, believe and receive Christ, and all these duties involve a response of the will, but, as other Scriptures show, whether or not men do thus respond depends on the state of the nature of which the will is the expression. The will is the immediate cause of man's actions, not the primary cause.

It is often assumed that man cannot be held responsible for his response to the Gospel unless he is capable of choosing Christ; thus it is generally taken for granted that 'freewill' and human responsibility are synonymous and that you cannot deny one without denying the other. On the basis of this confusion and Reformed Faith is frequently charged with not doing justice to man's responsibility because it denies his 'freewill.'

The Biblical and Reformed view of man's responsibility is in fact much more profound than the popular Arminian conception. Man is responsible not merely for his will, but for his whole nature, and as long as his nature remains what sin (not God) has made it, he 'receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God' (1 Cor. 2:14) and he 'will not come' to Christ that he might have life (John 5:40).¹⁴

¹³A. W. Pink, The Sovereignty of God (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1961), p. 108.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 99.

Saving Faith.

The faith which leads to salvation is God's gift to man. Man never cooperates with God in salvation, in the Arminian sense, because no man ever has the desire or willingness to come to God unless God draws him and then gives him the faith to believe. No one was more emphatic on this "Calvinistic" doctrine than Christ. "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). "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). "And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father" (John 6:65). Leon Morris has well stated the matter in his new commentary:

People do not come to Christ because it seems to them a good idea. It never does seem a good idea to natural man. Apart from a divine work in their souls. . . men remain contentedly in their sins. Before men can come to Christ it is necessary that the Father give them to Him.¹⁵

Faith is God's gift, and "all men have not faith" (2 Thess. 3:2) to come to Christ; therefore, it is seen that God does not bestow this gift upon all. Upon whom then does He bestow this saving favor? The clear Biblical answer is: "Upon His own elect." The reason some people do not believe is because they are not elect. "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you" (John 10:26). It is not that they are not Christ's sheep because they do not believe. Rather, they do not believe because they are not

¹⁵Leon Morris, Commentary on the Gospel of John (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), p. 367.

His sheep. It is imperative that the Bible student note the divine order. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts. 13:48). Paul does not say: "As many as God foresaw would believe he ordained to eternal life." God first ordains certain individuals to be the special objects of His favor. Then He draws them to Himself and enables them to believe. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8,9). What is the gift of God? Salvation, which includes faith. "For unto you it is given in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:29). "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

The Biblical approach, therefore, is that God so works in the person, drawing him to the Savior and giving him faith, that man desires this gift of salvation. Man's enabled will responds because God willed to bring this person to salvation. The correct view is this: "Faith is worked by God then willed by man."

THE DENIALS OF UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

Even the Apostle Paul expected opposition to such a doctrine from men who were deceived by the impulses of their depraved minds. Both the natural man and the old nature in believers have no regard for divine things and ever oppose God and His plan. Thus it should not come as a surprise that the Biblical doctrine of election is assailed on every hand.

Ness' words are not too strong when he asserts:

The Arminians deal with this doctrine as the heathen Emperors did with the 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.'¹⁶

God is Unjust.

This objection has already been partially answered under the section of Romans 9. Ness observes:

God's decree is not an act of justice, 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?' (Matt. 20:15). If He gives grace to some and not to others, it is no wrong in Him that is not bound to give it to any.¹⁷

While election secures the salvation of some, preterition or the bypassing of the non-elect does not procure the damnation of others. Sin is the cause of damnation, but reprobation is not the cause of sin. God, as the sovereign of the universe, does as He pleases. Supposing there are 100 women equally suitable for marriage. Is it unjust to marry one unless a man marries all? Does Christ have the right to choose His bride from the larger mass? The poet has well expressed

¹⁶Christopher Ness, An Antidote to Arminianism (Millersville, Pa.: Classic-A-Month Books, 1964), p. 34. (Ness proceeds to answer some of the questions and charges concerning unconditional election. Various other works deal in detail with the problems of election. One of the most thorough is Loraine Boettner's The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination. The interested reader is urged to consult works like Ness or Boettner. The bounds of this paper allow only brief attention to the major objections against God's sovereign predestination.)

¹⁷Ibid., p. 36.

this truth:

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 works, 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.

God is Arbitrary.

It is true that we do not know the reason why God selected some and bypassed others. But to charge God with arbitrariness is to do Him an enormous injustice. Does not God say of Himself, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25). God "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11). His is a well-thoughtout, wonderful plan rather than an arbitrary act of will.

May not the Sov'reign 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!

God Wishes All Men to be Saved.

In 1 Timothy 2:3,4 Paul refers to "God our Saviour, who would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." And Peter informs the Christian that God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).

The word for will used in the first passage (θέλω, thelo) is to be understood as God's wish or desire, not His decretive will (boulomai, βούλομαι), which is that will which invariably comes to pass. The fact is that God includes some things in His plan which are not His desire. God specifically planned the crucifixion of His own Son by His "determinate counsel and foreknowledge" (Acts 2:23). Yet did He want Him slain by these "wicked hands"? God's plan included the fall of His creatures and their ultimate salvation. Yet did He want Eve to willfully disobey Him? The obvious answer is a resounding, "NO!" God is never the author of sin, nor can any creature ever blame Him for his own sin. If any man had the right, it would have been Judas, the predetermined Son of Perdition. And yet what were Judas' words?" I have betrayed innocent blood" (Matt.27:4).

In 2 Peter 3:9 the strong word, bulomai, is used. In the context here the any have to be the elect. God is holding back His eschatological judgment until that time when everyone on the earth, written in the Lamb's book of life from before the foundation of the world, will be saved. It is not God's will that any of His own should perish. This is why Christ has not yet returned for judgment.

Implied here is also the fact that God does not directly decree the damnation of the lost. They are responsible for their own destiny.

God does not bulomai that any should be damned. Double predestination is a Biblically untenable view. While God exercises His decretive will to accomplish the salvation of some, He thereby does not predestine the others to hell. The unsaved are simply left to go to their justly deserved eternal destiny. This is preterition, the bypassing of the non-elect.

Boettner, in summarizing passages like the two above, comments:

These verses simply teach that God is benevolent, and that He does not delight in the sufferings of His creatures any more than a human father delights in the punishment which he must inflict upon his son. God does not decretively will the salvation of all men, no matter how much He may desire it; and if any verses taught that He decretively willed or intended the salvation of all men, they would contradict those other parts of the Scripture which teach that God sovereignly rules and that it is His purposes to leave some to be punished.¹⁸

The Gospel Cannot be Offered Sincerely to All.

The Arminians, too, should have a problem with this. According to them God foreknows who will believe. How can the offer of salvation be sincerely made to those who God foreknows will despise and reject it, especially when their guilt and condemnation will only be increased by their refusal? But Arminians also know themselves to be under a divine command to preach to all men, and they do not feel that they act insincerely in doing so.

Several lengthy quotations from Boettner answer this charge very ably:

God commanded Moses to gather together the elders of Israel, to go to Pharaoh and demand that they be allowed to go three days' journey into the wilderness to hold a feast and offer sacrifices. Yet in the very next verse God Himself says, "I know that the king of Egypt will not give you leave to go, no, not by a mighty

¹⁸Lorraine Boettner, The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954), p. 287.

hand," (Ex. 3:18,19). If it is not inconsistent with God's sincerity for Him to command all men to love Him, or to be perfect (Luke 10:27; Matt. 5:48), it is not inconsistent with His sincerity for Him to command them to repent and believe the Gospel. A man may be altogether sincere in giving an invitation which he knows will be refused. A father who knows that his boys are going to do wrong feels constrained to tell them what is right. His warnings and pleadings are sincere; the trouble is in the boys.

Will any one contend that God cannot sincerely offer salvation to a free moral agent unless in addition to the invitation He exerts a special influence which will induce the person to accept it? After a civil war in a country it often happens that the victorious general offers free pardon to all those in the opposing army, provided they will lay down their arms, through pride or malice many will refuse. He makes the offer in good faith even though for wise reason he determines not to constrain their assent, supposing him possessed of such power.

We may imagine the case of a ship with many passengers on board sinking some distance from shore. A man hires a boat from a near-by port and goes to rescue his family. Incidentally it happens that the boat which he takes is large enough to carry all the passengers, so he invites all those on the sinking vessel to come on board, although he knows that many of them, either through lack of appreciation of their danger, or because of personal spite toward him, or for other reasons, will not accept. Yet does that make his offer any less sincere?

.....

Arminians object that God could not offer the Gospel to those who in His secret counsel were not designed to accept it; yet we find the Scriptures declaring that He does this very thing. His commands to Pharaoh have already been referred to. Isaiah was commissioned to preach to the Jews, and in 1:18, 19, we find that he extended a gracious offer of pardon and cleansing. But in 6:9-13, immediately following his glorious vision and official appointment, he is informed that this preaching is destined to harden his countrymen to their almost universal destruction. Ezekiel was sent to speak to the house of Israel, but was told beforehand that they would not hear, Ezek. 3:4-11. Matt. 23:33-37 presents the same teaching. In these passages God declares that He does the very thing which Arminians say He must not do. Hence the objection now under consideration has arisen not because of any Calvinistic misstatement of the divine plan, but through erroneous assumptions made by Arminians themselves.¹⁹

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 283-285.

Boettner continues, and his words should be given utmost attention by those who are puzzled by the "whosoever will" passages:

The decree of election is a secret decree. And since no revelation has been given to the preacher as to which ones among his hearers are elect and which are non-elect, it is not possible for him to present the Gospel to the elect only. It is his duty to look with hope on all those to whom he is preaching, and to pray for them that they may each be among the elect. In order to offer the message to the elect, he must offer it to all; and the Scripture command is plain to the effect that it should be offered to all. Even the elect must hear before they can believe and accept, Rom. 10:13-17. The attentive reader, however, will perceive that the invitations are not, in the strict sense, general, but that they are addressed to "weary," the "thirsty," the "hungry," the "willing," those who "labor and are heavy laden," and not to those who are unconscious of any need and unwilling to be reformed. While the message is preached to all, it is God who chooses among the hearers those to whom He is speaking, and He makes the selection known to them through the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit. The elect thus receive the message as the promise of salvation, but to the non-elect it appears only as foolishness, or if their conscience is aroused, as a judgment to condemnation.²⁰

Calvinism Quenches Missionary Zeal.

This objection to predestination is the least substantial of them all. No one was a stronger believer in election than the Apostle Paul. And no one was engaged in more zealous missionary activities than Paul. The Calvinism of Spurgeon and Whitfield certainly did not quench their zeal for the salvation of the lost. The Calvinist knows that while not all will be saved, at least some will come to the Savior. The Arminian really has no assurance that any will be saved, for all may actively resist the will of the Lord. A Calvinist will not fall into despair when he preaches his heart out and none will respond. An Arminian will blame himself and his message for the lack of response.

²⁰Loc. cit.

"If God wishes to save every person on earth, then it is up to us to see that they are converted. When they do not come to Christ it is our fault," says the Arminian. "Some person may be eternally lost because I have failed." The Calvinist, on the other hand, realizes that while he is commanded to preach the gospel to every creature, no one will be lost because of his personal failure. "All that the Father hath given me will come unto me" (John 6:37). Election gives purpose and direction to one's ministry. A Calvinist will not use gimmicks or tricks to coax men to Christ. He realizes that the Holy Spirit will effectively draw those to the Savior whose names are written in heaven.

It should be perfectly plain by now that one's view of election determines one's method of evangelism. The latter is a direct result of the former. Sound practice is always based on sound doctrine. Orthodoxy precedes orthopraxy, even in Soteriology.

Chapter 4

THE DEMARCATION OF MODIFIED CALVINISM AND HISTORIC BAPTIST BELIEFS

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MODIFIED CALVINISM AND MODIFIED ARMINIANISM

In any discussion or debate it is helpful to see just where the two positions coincide or disagree. Problems and disagreements, whether doctrinal or otherwise, will never be resolved when very real differences are ignored or brushed under the proverbial carpet. Below are the writer's basic disagreements with Thiessen's modified Arminianism.

Election and Faith.

The Arminian, whether strict, or moderate like Thiessen, will say that man is elect because he believes. The Calvinist asserts that man believes because he is elect. As long as Acts 13:48 and John 10:26 are part of the Bible, the Arminian definition of election which bases that election upon God's foreknowledge of faith can never be maintained.

Salvation and Mankind.

The Arminian insists that all men can be saved. The Calvinist holds that not all men can be saved. This is the fundamental difference between Arminianism and Calvinism. Ask a person what he believes about the salvation of mankind. Immediately it will be evident to which of the two categories he belongs. If election (calling out of) and predestination (marking beforehand, "pre-horizoning") mean anything,

it is that in eternity past God selected some, and only some, to be the special objects of His divine favor.

Freedom and Sovereignty.

The Arminian teaches that man has a free will to come to Christ or to reject the grace of God. The Calvinist maintains that man, while not possessing a free will, is nevertheless a free moral agent. None of the elect can ever ultimately reject efficacious grace. God so works through the faculties of man that he is drawn insensibly to God. The words of a song in the Intervarsity Christian Fellowship Hymnal (#78) beautifully express this fact:

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
 He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me;
 It was not that I found, O Savior true;
 No, I was found of Thee.

Thou didst reach forth Thy hand and mine enfold;
 I walked and sank not on the storm-vexed sea;
 'Twas not so much that I on Thee took hold,
 As Thou, dear Lord, on me.

I find, I walk, I love; but O the whole
 Of love is but my answer, Lord to Thee;
 For Thou wert long beforehand with my soul;
 Always Thou lovedst me.

THE DISTINCTIVES OF BAPTISTS

The Concept of Sovereignty.

Historically the Baptists have been divided into two groups.

Schaff, the famous church historian, describes them:

The great body of Baptists are called REGULAR or PARTICULAR or CALVINISTIC BAPTISTS, in distinction from the smaller body of General or Arminian or Free-Will Baptists. They are Calvinists in doctrine and Independents in Church polity.

.....

The GENERAL or ARMINIAN BAPTISTS differ from the Particular or Calvinistic Baptists in rejecting unconditional election and the perseverance of saints, and in maintaining the freedom of will and the possibility of falling from grace. So far they followed the Mennonites.¹

There is thus no uniformity among Baptists. However, the majority of Baptists have historically been Calvinistic, especially those in the United States. Hiscox, in his authoritative work on Baptist polity, lists eight historic distinctives of Baptists. One of these is their Calvinistic view of salvation. He writes:

In doctrine, Baptists agree very nearly with other evangelical Christians. They are what is usually called Calvinistic, as opposed to Arminian views of free-will and the sovereignty of grace. They hold. . .the Holy Spirit and the author and finisher of saving faith and sanctification; the personal election of believers; the perseverance of the saints by upholding grace.²

The Creeds of the Baptists.

Dr. Osgood writes that among Baptists confessions of faith have never been held as tests of orthodoxy, as of any authoritative or binding force; they merely reflect the existing harmony of the views and the scriptural interpretations of the churches assenting to them.³ It should not be forgotten, however, that Baptists in the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches have a heritage to guard. It is never safe nor wise to suddenly overturn hundreds of years of tradition. As can be seen from the appended paper,⁴ the GARBC has historic ties to the great Calvinistic confessions of days gone by.

¹Philip Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948), I, 845, 857.

²Edward T. Hiscox, The New Directory for Baptist Churches (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1954), p. 19.

³Schaff, op. cit. p. 853.

⁴See Appendix I

Is it safe to sever those ties and to turn our backs on our rich heritage? The GARBC church bulletin announcing the Fortieth Annual Conference on June 27-July 2, 1971, at Winona Lake, Indiana, relates on the back cover that the following objectives listed here characterized the founding of the GARBC and are still at the heart of the reason for its existence.

And one of these original purposes of the GARBC is the following:

We purposed to reaffirm the truths of Scripture historically believed by Baptists and expressed through the Baptist Confessions of Faith of London 1689, the New Hampshire, Philadelphia or the Baptist Bible Union Confessions of Faith, or any such which enunciates the same truth though in other words.

The GARBC has therefore from its inception subscribed to various biblical creeds. It should be noted what, for example, The Philadelphia Confession of Faith, one of the creeds to which the GARBC subscribes, says relative to effectual calling and foreknowledge. Chapter X, "Of Effectual Calling," begins thus:

(1) Those whom God hath predestined unto life he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call (Rom. 8:30; Rom. 11:7; Eph. 1:10,11; 2 Thess. 2:13,14) by his word and Spirit, out of the state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation (Eph. 1:1-6) by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds, spiritually and savingly, to (Acts 26:18; Eph. 1:17,18) understand the things of God; taking away their (Ezek. 36:26) heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them (Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 36:27; Eph. 1:19) to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come (Ps. 110:3; Cant. 1:4) most freely, being made willing by his grace.

(2) This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone (2 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 2:8), not from anything at all foreseen in man, nor from any power or agency in the creature, co-working with his special grace (1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:5; John 5:25), the creature being wholly passive therein, 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, and that by no less (Eph. 1:19,20) power than that which raised up Christ from the dead.⁵ [Emphasis added.]

⁵The Philadelphia Confessions of Faith with Catechism (Marshallton, Del.: The National Foundation for Christian Education, n.d.), pp. 29-30.

The old London Confession is even more explicit in defining Baptist beliefs on election:

'3d Article: By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated, or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ, to the praise of his glorious grace; others being left to act in their sins to their just condemnation, to the praise of his glorious justice. These angels and men thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it can not be either increased or diminished. Those of mankind that are predestinated to 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 other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving him thereunto.'

While these human authorities do not determine the rightness or wrongness of a doctrine, they do, however, confirm that view of election which this paper defends. Moreover, it is that position to which the GARBC has historically subscribed. Is it wise to ignore this fact in discussing the doctrine of election?

⁶Charles H. Spurgeon, Election (Philadelphia: Great Commission Publications, 1964), p. 6.

Chapter 5

THE DEMAND UPON THE EXPOSITOR

This paper opened with the duty of the theologian and it closes with an exhortation to the expositor of God's Word. What is the expositor's task in light of this awesome doctrine?

A FAITHFUL EXPOSITION OF GOD'S WORD

It is true that God's judgments are unsearchable and His ways past finding out (Rom. 11:33). But some things are revealed about His plan. The expositor is obligated to expound these truths, not to appeal to human emotions, as Thiessen has done, for example, in his doctrine of election.

In the minds of some people, election is a choice that God makes for which we can see no reason and which we can hardly harmonize with His justice. . . . We are asked to accept the theory . . . which does (not) commend itself to our sense of justice.¹

Nothing is served by saying, as Thiessen does, that because of the "demands of the heart" we believe such and such. Thiessen and others reject the biblical doctrine of election in general and lexical meaning of foreknowledge in particular not because they are convinced by the testimony of Scripture but swayed by their own emotions. At least Thiessen is frank enough to admit that his theology is determined by

¹Henry Clarence Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), p. 345.

the "demands of the heart." With him, as with others, this subjective approach has led to a misunderstanding of God's sovereignty in unconditional election to a misconception of the human role in salvation and to a misinterpretation of basic theological terms such as foreknowledge. These men are actually guilty of adding to the Scriptures. God's Word nowhere discloses on what this predestining foreknowledge is based. "Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate" (Rom. 8:29) is changed by the Arminians to "Of whom he did foreknow that they would believe, he also did predestinate." God declares that He foreknew certain persons, that is, that He established a loving relationship with a special few. Arminian theologians deny this. They know better. They assert that God foresaw something about the person, not the person himself. This difference might seem minor but is actually of momentous importance.

A FAIR PRESENTATION OF THE OPPONENT'S VIEW

It is never right to misrepresent an opposing view in order that a person's position may be enhanced. The God of the Calvinist is not an arbitrary God but one who in His infinite wisdom plans every detail of the universe. Neither is the God of the Calvinist a hard God. The Calvinist is quite convinced that a merciful God will redeem as many sinners as possible without violating His justice and righteousness. The Calvinist is not trying to keep people out of heaven. Election is not a matter of what he wished God would do but rather, what He has revealed He would do.

God said that He is sovereign in the dispensing of efficacious grace. It will not do to claim that God is sovereign in salvation, but that, on the other hand, man is free to accept or reject salvation. This

so-called PARALLEL VIEW, espoused in Fitzwater's Christian Theology,² which sees man's freedom and sovereignty meeting somewhere in the mind of God but appearing contradictory to man, simply will not hold up under close scrutiny. This position not only violates the clear assertions of Scripture but also the most basic laws of logic. A can never be B, if the laws of identity and contradiction means anything. A is not B, neither on earth nor in heaven. Even Spurgeon is sometimes cited in support of the PARALLEL VIEW, but while this great Baptist preacher asserted the free moral agency of man on the one hand and God's sovereignty on the other, he does not subscribe to the Arminian notion that fallen man has a free will. Spurgeon writes for example:

Free-will somebody believes in. Free-will many dream of. Free-will! Wherever is that to be found? Once there was Free-will in Paradise, and a terrible mess Free-will made there; for it spoiled all Paradise and turned Adam out of the garden. Free-will was once in Heaven; but it turned the glorious arch-angel out, and a third part of the stars of Heaven fell into the abyss. I want nothing to do with Free-will, but I will try to see whether I have got a Free-will within.

And I find I have. Very free will to evil but very poor will to that which is good. Free-will enough when I sin, but when I

²Perry Fitzwater, Christian Theology (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948).

In the preface of his book (p. 7) Fitzwater gives this description of the popular parallel view:

Divine sovereignty and human freedom are given their proper recognition. A system of theology should maintain the same balance as do the Scriptures. Divine sovereignty and human freedom are clearly set forth therein, but never explained. It will be the inflexible policy of this book to recognize this principle. When dealing with man's freedom, its factuality will be given the same emphasis as it is given in the Scriptures. The truths of Calvinism and Arminianism will be maintained, and their errors will be avoided. The truths concerning these matters cannot be found in the middle, but in the extremes. There is no mediating position between Calvinism and Arminianism. We shall not vacillate but oscillate between them. Sometimes the viewpoint will be that of a high Calvinist and sometimes that of a low Arminian. [Emphasis added.]

would do good, evil is present with me, and how to do that which I would I find not. Yet some boast of Free-will.³

A FORCEFUL PROCLAMATION OF BIBLE DOCTRINE

Unfortunately, many pastors shy away from the doctrine of election, so that most Christians have never been clearly instructed in this precious truth. Should such a difficult and deep doctrine be proclaimed from the pulpit? Is it not better to skirt such controversial doctrines? In regard to preaching election, it is impossible to improve on C. H. Spurgeon's comments. In preaching from 1 Thessalonians 1:4, he said:

At the very announcement of the text, some will be ready to say, 'Why preach upon so profound a doctrine as election?' I answer, because it is in God's Word, and whatever is in God's Word is to be preached. 'But,' says the objector, 'some truths should be kept back from the people lest they make an ill use thereof.' That is popish doctrine! It was upon that very theory that priests kept back the Bible from the people. They did not give it to them lest they should misuse it. 'But,' says the objector, 'are not some doctrines dangerous?' Not if they are true and rightly handled. Truth is never dangerous, it is error and reticence, that are fraught with peril! 'But,' says the objector, 'do not men abuse the doctrines of grace?' I grant you that they do, but if we destroy everything that men abuse, we should have nothing left. What, are there to be no ropes because some use them as weapons of destruction? Decidedly not! And, besides all this remember that men do read the Scriptures and think about these doctrines, and therefore make mistakes about them. Who then shall set them right if we who preach the Word hold our tongues about the matter?⁴

Did not the greatest preacher of the Christian church, the Apostle Paul, observe that he had not shunned to declare to his flock the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27)? And part of that counsel was the forceful proclamation of God's sovereign selection in eternity past

³C. H. Spurgeon, "Free-Will," The Baptist Examiner, May 11, 1957, p. 3.

⁴Cited by Van Gilder, "Election and. . .," p. 8.

of certain individuals who through spiritual enablement and divinely bestowed faith would become His own (2 Thess. 2:13). Were people offended at the doctrine? Indeed they were! Was Paul silenced by their foolish charges against God (Rom. 9)? Of course not! Paul left a pattern for future pastors, both in decorum and doctrine. May God give the pastors of today grace to preach with like force the blessed doctrine of election and with like balance the fact of human responsibility.

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The experiences that make up our history are varied and exciting, but these objectives listed here characterized the founding of the GARBC and are still at the heart of our reason for existence.

- *We became an Association of churches in order to maintain a testimony to the supernaturalism of Christianity as opposed to the modernist's antinaturalism.*
- *We determined to do our work independent of and separated from the Northern Baptist Convention and all of its auxiliaries. Our determination has met with success and blessing from God.*
- *We purposed to reaffirm the truths of Scripture historically believed by Baptists and expressed through the Baptist Confessions of Faith of London 1689, the New Hampshire, Philadelphia or the Baptist Bible Union Confessions of Faith, or any such which enunciates the same truth though in other words.*
- *We are an organization designed to promote a missionary spirit among Baptist churches for the spread of the gospel to all the world and to "contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints."*
- *Assistance to churches in needy places and those in search of sound and satisfactory pastors for the proclamation of the gospel and the work of the ministry is still a primary objective of the Association.*

Philadelphia Confession

CHAPTER X Of Effectual Calling

1. Those whom God hath predestinated unto life he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call (Rom. viii. 30; Rom. xi. 7; Eph. i. 10,11; 2 Thess. ii. 13,14) by his word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation (Eph. i. 1-6) by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds, spiritually and savingly, to (Acts xxvi. 18; Eph. i. 17,18) understand the things of God; taking away their (Ezek. xxxvi. 26) heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them (Deut. xxx. 6; Ezek. xxxvi. 27; Eph. i. 19) to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come (Ps. cx. 3; Cant. i. 4) most freely, being made willing by his grace.

2. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone (2 Tim. i. 9; Eph. ii. 8), not from anything at all foreseen in man, nor from any power or agency in the creature, co-working with his special grace (1 Cor. ii. 14; Eph. ii. 5; John v. 25), the creature being wholly passive therein, 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, and that by no less (Eph. i. 19,20) power than that which raised up Christ from the dead.

3. Elect infants dying in infancy, are (John iii. 3,5,6) regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit; who worketh when, and where, and (John iii. 8) how he pleaseth; so also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word.

4. Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word (Matt. xxii. 14; xiii. 20,21; Heb. vi. 4,5) and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet not being effectually drawn by the Father, they neither will nor can truly (John vi. 44,45,65; 1 John ii. 24,25) come to Christ,* and therefore cannot be saved: much less can men that receive not the Christian religion (Acts iv. 12; John iv. 22; John xvii. 3) be saved;** be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature and the law of that religion they do profess.

DIVINE ELECTION OR HUMAN EFFORT? STUDY QUESTIONS, pps. 14-53.

by Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

Name _____

1. How does moderate Calvinism differ from traditional Calvinism?
2. Why do some say that Calvin did not really believe in limited atonement?
3. What texts indicate the universality of Christ's
 - a. death?
 - b. salvation?
 - c. redemption?
 - d. reconciliation?
 - e. propitiation?
4. What is the best text showing that Christ died for all, i.e. every person on earth?
5. What is the difference between God's election and decree?
6. What is the Greek word for "elect" and what does it mean?
7. What three other biblical words mean the same as elect?
8. What is Bob Thieme's strange view of election?
9. What is the meaning of the Greek word for "predestinate."
10. What is the Arminian definition of foreknowledge?
11. What is the Calvinistic definition of foreknowledge?
12. What is the difference between God's omniscience and His foreknowledge?
13. What does the usage of foreknowledge in 1 Peter 1:20 teach us?
14. What do Amos 3:2, Jeremiah 31:3 and Jeremiah 1:5 contribute to the meaning of foreknowledge?

15. What important rule of grammar is involved in the interpretation of Acts 2:23?
16. What is the only possible meaning of foreknowledge in Acts 2:23?
17. Why can the foreknowledge of Romans 8:29 not be a reference to a person's faith?
18. According to Murray and Spurgeon, why is the foreknowing of Romans 8:29 not the same as foresight?
19. What is the definition of foreknowledge according to standard grammatical reference works?
 - a. Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the N.T.:
 - b. Cremer's Lexicon of N.T. Greek:
20. What is Dr. H.O. Van Gilder's major criticism of the Arminian definition of foreknowledge?
21. What are the 4 major areas that must be covered in a balanced view of modified Calvinism (see subheadings)?
22. What are the 2 major objections to Paul's doctrine of election in Romans 9, and how does he reply to them?
 - a.
 - b.

23. What are the 2 major chapters on election?
24. What is God's motive behind election?
25. Which 2 clear passages exclude man's free will as the source of his salvation?
26. What are the two ideas involved in spiritual or physical death?
27. According to Spurgeon, what is the condition of the human will in the unsaved?

28. What is the difference between free agency and free will?

29. How can God hold a person responsible though the person is unable to choose Christ on his own?

30. Where is Christ's doctrine of election found?
31. What does the Bible say about the origin of man's saving faith?

32. What are the 5 most common objections to the doctrine of unconditional election and, briefly, what should be our reply:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.

33. How would you explain Paul's statement in 1 Tim. 2:3-4 that God "would have all men to be saved?"

34. Explain the statement of 2 Peter 3:9: "God is not willing that any should perish!"

35. According to Dr. Boettner, how does the illustration of a sinking ship show the sincerity of the gospel offer of all?
36. Name 3 individuals who taught unconditional election but were filled with missionary zeal?
37. Explain the 3 major areas of disagreement between modified Calvinism and modified Arminianism.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
38. Historically, what does the word regular stand for in the name GARBC?
39. The truths of what 4 basic confessions of faith were reaffirmed by the GARBC since its founding?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
40. What are the 3 demand upon the preacher who wants to be true to God's Word?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
41. Why does Thiessen reject unconditional election?
42. What are the Arminian misunderstandings, misconceptions and misinterpretations concerning election?
43. Why did Spurgeon say that we should preach on election?