

The Baptist Examiner

A nation-wide, independent paper, standing foursquare for the distinguishing doctrines of Baptists, and shunning not to declare all the counsel of God.

"To the law and to the testimony if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 3:20).

Vol. 2 No. 5

ASHLAND, KY., TUESDAY, MARCH 1, 1932

Whole No. 21

Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

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"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Psalm 76:10).

"Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isaiah 46:9, 10).

"What his soul desireth, even that he doeth" (Job 23:13).

"And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and no one can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan 4:35).

"Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23).

"For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were gathered together,

For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:27, 28).

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY AND HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY are parallel lines of truth, running through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. He who rejects either of these truths is a "whittler of the word," and has a mutilated Bible. It is a terrible price to pay in order to escape apparent contradictions. It is infinitely better to have a whole Bible with its paradoxes, than to have a mutilated Bible which meets the requirements of human reason. Of what account is a Bible that must be passed upon by man? Better have man give us a Bible to begin with. A Book that must be subjected to scientific investigation cannot be an infallible guide in matters of faith and practice. "FOREVER, O LORD THY WORD IS SETTLED IN HEAVEN" (Psalm 119:89).

DEFINITION OF TERMS

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY means that God does as He pleases. It is the exercise of His supremacy. There cannot possibly be but one supreme being; if men or angels should thwart the purposes of God, they, and not He, would be supreme. To reject the sovereignty of God is to deny the supremacy of God. The sovereignty of God means that God is upon His throne, directing the affairs of the universe, making the wrath of man to praise Him, and restraining that which does not. The question might be asked, "Does the sin of man praise God?" In answering this, we will take a concrete case of the sin of men, namely, the crucifixion of our Lord. This is the greatest of all sins. Did it praise God? Most certainly, and in many ways. It praised Him by fulfilling His purpose that His Son should die. It praised Him in that it was the fulfilling of His prophetic word. It praised Him in the magnifying of many, if not every one, of His glorious attributes. It was to the praise of His justice as well as His grace. At the cross the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalm 85:10). The sovereignty of God means that God's will is done in the army of heaven, and

among the inhabitants of the earth. Right here we would make a distinction between God's will of purpose, and His will of command. His will of purpose is supreme everywhere and in everything. His will of command is often disobeyed. To illustrate: God purposed the death of His Son, but He did not command it. God's will is done in heaven intelligently and voluntarily; His will is often done on earth ignorantly. See 1 Cor. 2:8.

HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY means that man is accountable to God for all his actions. He is responsible to do what God commands, and to refrain from doing what God forbids. Let it be remembered that man's duty is not determined by what God has decreed, but by what God has commanded. See Deut. 29:29. Had God commanded men to slay His Son, they would not have been responsible for doing so. Abraham would have been guilty of murder in his heart if God had not commanded him to slay Isaac. The Israelites would have been guilty of dishonesty, in borrowing from the Egyptians jewels of silver and gold, if God had not commanded them to do so. See Ex. 3:22; 12:35. Uzzah's touching the ark was a sin only because God had forbidden it.

THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

1. IN THE LIGHT OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY. How can man be considered as blameworthy in doing that which God has purposed? How can man be charged with sin in doing that which God has decreed? To be more specific, how could the slayers of Christ be held responsible for doing what God had determined to be done? (Acts 2:23; 4:27, 28). How was Judas responsible for betraying our Lord, when it had been prophesied he would do it? (Ps. 41:9; John 6:64, 71; 12:4; 13:11, 21). How were Joseph's brethren responsible for selling him into slavery if they were doing what God intended they should do? (Gen. 45:7, 8). How could the Egyptians be charged with sin for the affliction of the Israelites, when God had told Abraham his seed should sojourn in a strange land and be evil entreated? (Gen. 15:13). Let us keep these questions in abeyance, while we notice the problem of human responsibility from another angle;

2. IN THE LIGHT OF TOTAL DEPRAVITY. Total depravity means that man is depraved and ruined in every faculty of his being. The carnal mind is enmity against God (Rom. 8:7); the heart is deceitful and wicked (Jer. 17:9; Matt. 15:19; Eph. 4:18); the will is enslaved (John 5:40; 6:44; 2 Tim. 2:24-26). Total depravity does not mean that a man is necessarily as mean as the devil, nor that any man is as bad as he may become. It is a question of extent (the whole man is depraved), rather than of degree. With this brief explanation of depravity, we will consider some more questions. How can man be held responsible for doing that which he cannot do? The reader will probably answer that man is not responsible to do what he is not able to do. But the Bible refutes such an answer. Most of us have been subjected to a "chimney corner theology," which has no backing in the word

of God. We will now give a number of Scriptures which show man's inability to perform that which God requires:

(1) Matt. 5:48,—**"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."** Here is God's requirement for His people. Can they meet it? Certainly not! But they ought to, and chastisement will result from failure to do so. (Heb. 12:7).

(2) John 6:44,—**"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."** This verse plainly and positively states that no person can believe on Christ of himself. But it is every man's duty to believe on Christ, because God has commanded it. If it is not man's duty to believe on Christ, then it is his duty to reject Him.

(3) John 3:3,—**"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."** Here is the affirmation that the unregenerate man is incapable of seeing or discerning spiritual things.

(4) Rom. 8:7,—**"The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."** What a picture of human inability! But is responsibility thereby destroyed? Is the carnal mind free from obligation to be subject to the law of God, because it cannot be? No, a thousand times no! The carnal mind ought to be subject to the law of God.

(5) Rom. 8:8,—**"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."** What a fearful description of the helplessness of man! The unregenerate can do nothing to please God. To be in the flesh simply means to be unregenerate, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh. But every man ought to please God, otherwise God could not judge the world.

(6) 1 Cor. 2:14,—**"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."** A spiritual birth is necessary to spiritual discernment. The unregenerate cannot discern or understand spiritual things. But their inability does not destroy their obligation to do so.

(7) 2 Peter 2:14,—**"Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin."** Peter here speaks of some who were so steeped in the sin of adultery that they could not cease from sin. But did this condition constitute them blameless? If it did, then the way to escape responsibility would be to become as wicked as possible. The premise that "ability is the measure of responsibility" cannot be supported by God's word.

THE GROUND OF HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

We now take up our questions, affecting the problem of human responsibility. We will not enumerate them again, for they will be recalled by the reader as we attempt to answer them. The ground of responsibility is:

1. **In the motive behind the deed.** A wicked deed does not consist in the mere act performed, but in the motive and purpose of the act, which reveals the condition of the heart. In the crucifixion of Christ, His enemies were doing what God decreed, but their motive was wrong. Their motive was not the glory of God. It was an expression of enmity against our Lord. In the case of the Egyptians and their treatment of Israel, their motive was the defiance of God. **"Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?"**, said Pharaoh. In the case of Joseph, his brethren did what God wanted done, in fact their act was called the act of God (Gen. 45:7, 8). But in Gen. 50:20 we learn their motive. They meant it for evil against Joseph, but God meant it for ~~God~~ *good*. In the matter of Judas betraying Christ, he was acting from a covetous heart. Motive has much to do with determining the character of the deed. Two men flag a passenger train in the darkness of the night. They use the same kind of a lamp, and give the same kind of signal. But one of them flags the

train to tell them of a broken rail, that their lives may be saved; the other stops it that he may rob the passengers.

2. **Another thing that makes man responsible for his sins is the fact that he has natural ability.** The sinner's helplessness is not physical, but spiritual. The sinner is dead, but he is not dead like a stone. He has a mind, a heart, and a will. Without these faculties he would not be an accountable being. He has these faculties, but they do not function in spiritual things to the honor of God. He has a mind and can think, but he doesn't like to think about God. He has a heart and loves, but he does not love God. He has a will and chooses many things and persons, but he does not choose Christ. The Psalmist said, **"Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee"** (Ps. 65:4).

3. **The law of God also constitutes man a responsible being.** God is a law-giver, and sin is the transgression of His law. Had no law ever been given, there could have been no sin. Man is responsible to do what is right, and the law of God defines what is right. Under law it avails nothing to plead inability. The law says the wages of sin is death. To illustrate: It is a state law that motorists must drive on the right side of the road. A man gets drunk and starts to Lakeland. He takes the entire road, endangering the lives of others, in violation of the law. He is arrested and brought into court. His plea is that he was doing the best he could, and that he was so drunk that he could not do any better. Would the court justify the man on such a plea? Obviously not. Now the law of God is like the law of the Medes and Persians, it is unchangeable. It cannot be lowered to fit human imperfections. God is not responsible for man being in a depraved condition. **"God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many evil inventions"** (Eccl. 7:29).

Now, coming back to the question of God's sovereignty, it needs to be remembered that God can direct man in his sins without becoming the author of sin. Augustine has a most helpful word here. He says, **"That men's sin proceeds from themselves; that in sinning they perform this or that action, is from God, who divideth the darkness according to His pleasure."** God makes the wrath of men to praise Him by directing their sins into channels that accomplish His purpose. **God is not the causative force, but the directing force in the sins of men. Men are in rebellion against God, but they are not out from under His control. God's decrees are not the necessitating cause of the sins of men, but the foredetermined and prescribed boundings and directings of men's sinful acts.** A brother in England expresses the truth clearly in the following quotation: **"The wishes of sin are the wishes of man: man is guilty: man is to be blamed. But the All-wise God prevents those wishes from producing actions indiscriminately. He compels those wishes to take a certain divinely narrowed course. The floods of iniquity are from the hearts of men, but they are not allowed to cover the land; they are shut up to the channel of God's sovereign appointment, and men unwittingly are thus held in bounds, so that not one iota of God's purpose shall fail. He brings the floods of the ungodly into the channel of His providence, to turn the mill of His purpose."**—P. W. Heward.

This is a most practical and comforting doctrine for every day life. Because God controls and makes the sins of men to work to the accomplishment of His purposes, He can and does assure His children that all things work together for their good.

**"God holds the key of all unknown,
And I am glad,
And I am glad.
If other hands should hold the key,
Or if He trusted it to me,
I might be sad,
I might be sad."**

"What if tomorrow's cares were here
Without its rest,
Without its rest?
I'd rather He'd unlock the day,
And, as the hours swing open, say,
My will be best,
My will be best.

"The very dimness of my sight
Makes me secure,
Makes me secure.
For, groping in my misty way,
I feel His hand; I hear Him say,
My help is sure,
My help is sure.

"I cannot read His future plan,
But this I know,
But this I know:
I have the smiling of His face,
And all the refuge of His grace,
While here below,
While here below.

"Enough; this covers all my need
And so I rest,
And so I rest;
For, where I cannot, He can see,
And, in His care I safe shall be,
Forever blest,
Forever blest."

HOW THE SINNER MAY ESCAPE RESPONSIBILITY

The result of human responsibility depends upon man's relationship to God. Responsibility under law issues in eternal death, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3:10). The sinner can escape responsibility only by getting out from under the law. This is done by pleading the blood of Christ, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. 10:4). Responsibility under grace is the responsibility of a child to his Father, and involves Fatherly chastisement. The unbeliever is under law, and is viewed as a criminal before God; the believer is under grace, and is viewed as a child of God. He who sees this blessed truth can sing with the spirit and understanding,

"Free from the law, oh, happy condition,
Jesus hath died, and there is remission,
Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,
Grace hath redeemed us once for all."

HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

Another questioner asks: "If, as you state, men and women repent and believe because they are elected, then why did the Apostle Paul state what he did in Acts 17:30, 31; 20:21; 26:19, 20?" The Apostle Paul stated what he did in these passages because man is responsible to God to repent and believe, and because it is through repentance and faith that men are saved. Were men not responsible to repent and believe, unbelief would be no sin. God's law and not man's ability fixes man's responsibility. See the article by Brother Cole in this issue for an excellent discussion of this. Man is responsible for the impotent condition he is in just as truly as a drunk man is responsible for his condition. We sinned in Adam (Rom. 5:12) and brought ourselves into the condition we are in. Note that in Rom. 5:12 the Greek verb "sinned" is in the aorist tense, pointing to one sin in which we all took part, viz., the sin of Adam. We sinned in Adam just as Levi paid tithes in Abraham. See Heb. 7:9, 10.

IS MAN FREE?

Much controversy has raged over the question of man's freedom. The matter has been discussed pro and con. And, as usual, the question has been often darkened by a failure to think and speak clearly. We venture the following comments of this much discussed subject.

1. **The sinner is free to do as he pleases.** And he always pleases to continue in sin unless the Spirit of God implants a new disposition in him. He loves sin (John 3:19), and, therefore, pursues it. Thus he is a bondsman of sin (John 8:34). His will is held captive by sin, and he voluntarily serves sin. No outside pressure is brought to bear upon him to make him sin, he does it of his own accord.

2. **Therefore, the sinner is not free to turn from sin to Christ.** His very freedom to do as he pleases, robs him of his freedom to turn from sin, because he never pleases to do that in his natural state. Rom. 8:7, 8. To talk of one having the freedom to act against his own will and nature is consummate nonsense. Man seeks what he loves. Therefore, in his natural state he seeks sin.

3. **The believer acts freely in the exercise of faith.** This is by no means saying that faith proceeds from the carnal mind. It proceeds from the new mind. But it proceeds voluntarily. Man believes because the implantation of a heavenly affection makes him want to believe. He does it because he wills to do it, just like he sinned previously because he willed to sin. The secret of the difference between him and his former self is that his affection has been changed. Thus he has been made free from bondage to sin that he might follow righteousness. See John 8:32; Rom. 6:20, 22.

4. **But the believer is not free to depart from Christ.** Why? Because the presence of the new life in him makes it impossible for him to want to depart from Christ. He cannot act against his predominating nature. Just as he once followed sin because he loved it, now he follows righteousness because he loves it. And it is now as impossible for him to turn away from righteousness as it once was for him to turn to righteousness. Jer. 13:23; 32:40; 1 John 3:9; 5:4.

Therefore, if in the question: "Is man free?" we mean to ask: "Is man free to choose any supposable course of action that is physically possible?" we must answer that he is not free; and the Scripture bears us out in our answer. Jer. 13:23; John 6:64, 65. But if we mean to ask if man is free from outside constraint upon his will so that he may follow his own inclinations and desires when such is physically possible, then we answer most assuredly that man is free. As surely as water runs down hill, man always follows his strongest desires and inclinations when such is physically possible. ~End.

Now may we inquire in what sense the New Hampshire Confession of Faith uses the term "free agency" when it states that election is "perfectly consistent with the free agency of man." Does it use free agency in the former or latter sense discussed above? We affirm that we are to understand the term in the latter sense. For certainly one of the important rules for the interpretation of place "in a manner above our comprehension or calculation" (N. H. C.) and "in the region of the soul below consciousness" (Strong). By means of this new nature we are instantly induced to voluntarily repent of sin and believe on Christ. But this new nature is not an outside force. It is within us, and is as truly a part of us as any other faculty. Therefore, whether man follows sin, or, enabled by the implantation of a new nature, he turns from sin to God, he acts voluntarily and according to his own choice; and is thus a free agent according to the only sensible meaning of that expression.

The Baptist Examiner

Published Semi-Monthly By The Editor
At 5025 Williams Avenue,
Ashland, Kentucky

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SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

1 Year in advance - - - - - \$1.00
6 Months in advance - - - - - \$.50
Foreign Subscriptions, per year - - - - - \$1.25

The paper will not be sent to any one beyond time paid for, except by special arrangement.

Entered as second-class matter Jan. 6, 1932, at the post office at Ashland, Ky., under the act of March 3, 1879.

IS SALVATION CONDITIONAL?

We are commanded to give diligence to be approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). It is said that the verb for "rightly dividing" literally means "cutting straight," as in laying out a road or making a furrow. It is not easy for a novice to plow a straight furrow. It is somewhat difficult to keep from varying from a straight line. It takes even greater diligence and skill to plow a straight furrow in spiritual tillage. But when we do not do it, we present a marred representation of God's perfect spiritual pattern.

On the above question it is easy to vary from the straight line of Bible truth. Some vary from it when they say salvation is unconditional, for in so saying they mean to deny the necessity of repentance and faith to salvation. Others vary from it when they say that salvation is conditional, for in so saying, because of the meaning they attach to the term, they make repentance and faith the cause of the sinner's salvation. In this, as in everything else, an answer to the question depends upon the meaning of terms. Because of the ambiguity of language, the whole truth is clearly expressed by neither an unqualified affirmative nor by an unqualified negative reply to this question. But if we had to choose either an unqualified affirmative or an unqualified negative reply to this question, we should choose the affirmative. We believe the affirmative comes nearer the truth than the negative. For salvation is conditional in some sense, and that in the essential sense of the term; and to say that salvation is unconditional is to say that it is in no sense conditional. This logically denies that repentance and faith are prerequisite to salvation.

Therefore, in answering this question, we are going to give an affirmative reply; and then explain both what we do not mean and what we do mean. We are going to say that **salvation is conditional**. Now what do we mean by this? First of all, we will tell—

1. What we do not mean.

(1) **We do not mean that Christ failed to fulfill any condition in the covenant of redemption between him and the Father.** Christ met every condition in this covenant. He left none in the covenant for the sinner to meet. He made salvation absolutely free to those whom God purposed to save through him.

(2) **We do not mean that anything man does or can do is the efficient cause of his salvation.** Salvation "is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Rom. 9:16). God's purpose is the efficient cause of salvation.

(3) **We do not mean that the salvation of the elect is contingent or uncertain.** The ultimate salvation of all the elect is as certain as though they were already in heaven. In Rom. 8:29, 30 this certainly is clearly expressed. The Holy Spirit here speaks of the calling, justification, and glorification of the elect in the past tense. These have already taken place in the purpose of God; and, since he "**worketh all things after the counsel of his own will**" (Eph. 1:11), saying: "**My council shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure**" (Isa. 46:10), they must take place actually. Therefore, there is nothing uncertain or contingent about the salvation of the elect.

(4) **We do not mean that there are any conditions to salvation that the dead sinner can meet.** The dead sinner is as unable to turn from his sins as the Ethiopian is to change his skin, or the leopard his spots (Jer. 13:23). All the issues of his life are wicked, because they are from within his heart (Prov. 4:23), and his heart is desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). A clean thing cannot come out of an unclean thing (Job. 14:4). In his natural state, man cannot please God, for "**The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God; NEITHER INDEED CAN BE, SO THEN THEY THAT ARE IN THE FLESH CANNOT PLEASE GOD.**" The natural man cannot even comprehend spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14). Therefore, no man can come to Christ, except the man to whom it is given of the Lord to come.

(5) **We do not mean that election is conditional.** Election is absolutely unconditional; but election is not salvation. Election is unto salvation. Election is God's choice of the ones to be saved.

2. What we do mean.

When we say that salvation is conditional we mean what is essentially implied in that term; nothing more and nothing less. We read from the dictionary that "**A condition is something that necessarily precedes a result. BUT DOES NOT, PRODUCE IT.**" This is said in showing the difference and distinction between a "cause" and a "condition." Loosely speaking the terms "cause" and "condition" may be used synonymously; but essentially they differ.

Repentance and faith are conditions of salvation in the essential and distinctive sense of that term, for they are prerequisite to salvation. These, to be sure, do not spring from the carnal mind. They are wrought in us by the regenerating Spirit of God. Nevertheless, they are prerequisite to salvation, for no man, according to the pattern of sound words in the Scripture, is said to be saved until, enabled by the Spirit of God, he repents and believes. Salvation consists of more than regeneration. It consists of the application of the benefits of Christ's death and the imputation of his righteousness. These come to us **THROUGH** faith. See John 3:18; 5:24; Acts 16:31; Rom. 3:28; 4:5; 5:1; Gal. 3:26, which has reference to adoption and not to regeneration; Eph. 2:8-10.

THE ORDER OF REGENERATION AND REPENTANCE AND FAITH

The same questioner as referred to above also asks: "**Do you believe that people are regenerated before they repent and believe?**" We believe most implicitly in the statement of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith that "**repentance and faith are sacred duties and also inseparable graces wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God.**" We believe that the order of regeneration and repentance and faith is the order of cause and effect. But that does not necessarily mean that there is a chronological difference between regeneration and repentance and faith. We believe they are synchronous. Else we would have a regenerated unbeliever, which is a monstrosity. How can there be a logical difference without a chronological difference? Easily. Suppose we have a tube extending from New York to San Francisco filled with an imaginary incompressible fluid. If pressure is applied to this fluid in New York, it will be instantly exerted in San Fran-

cisco. And while there will be no chronological difference between the application of the pressure in New York and the exertion of it in San Francisco, yet there exists the logical order of cause and effect. The pressure had to be applied in New York before it was exerted in San Francisco. Thus man must be quickened into life before he can repent and believe. Before the quickening he is dead and helpless. But the moment he is quickened he repents and believes. By way of illustrating this point Alvah Hovey says: "At the same time that God makes the photographic plate sensitive, he pours in the light of truth whereby the image of Christ is formed in the soul. Without the 'sensitizing' of the plate, it would never fix the rays of light so as to retain the image. In the process of 'sensitizing,' the plate is passive; under the influence of light, it is active. In both the 'sensitizing' and the taking of the picture, the real agent is not the plate nor the light, but the photographer. The photographer cannot perform both operations at the same moment. God can. He gives the new affection, and at the same instant he secures its exercise in view of the truth."

WHO WILL JOIN HIM?

"B. E. of Feb. 15th was a 'hammer,' and by all means put your answer to papal clams in pamphlet form. I have had to borrow money to pay my taxes, but I will pay one dollar on creating a fund to publish that answer in pamphlet form. How many of you will join me in this freewill offering?"—B. F. Vance, Bristol, Tenn.

EXTRA COPIES OF THIS ISSUE FOR SALE

We are having quite a few extra copies of this issue printed, because we thought that perhaps the interest of our readers in the contents would make many of them want some extra copies for friends and others who may enjoy or need this issue. If we should furnish these free to you, we would do so at a loss, for it costs money to get them printed. So we are asking you to help us by buying them. We will sell you five for fifteen cents or ten for twenty-five cents. See that the opposers of the Bible doctrine of election get a copy. Just send your money in stamps. It will save the buying of stamps.

False Views of Election Refuted

By THE EDITOR

The doctrine of election is one of the most valuable doctrines in the Bible. It yields a veritable mine of spiritual wealth to the devout and humble student. It is the foundation of all God's dealings with his people.

This doctrine has a broad and deep foundation in the Scripture. It is woven into the very warp and woof of divine revelation. Like a continuous scarlet thread this gracious purpose of God runs through the fabric of his word. "The Bible not only teaches the doctrine, but makes it prominent—so prominent that you can get rid of election only by getting rid of the Bible" (Bishop, in "The Doctrines of Grace.") "Let the Scripture be read with reference to this doctrine, and every passage marked which indicates God's dealing with men as an absolute sovereign, and also every declaration which ascribes election or the fruits of it to his choice and not to the will or acts of men, and every illustration afforded that this is God's usual method, and it will appear that scarcely any book of Scripture will fail to furnish testimony to the fact that in the acts of grace, no less than those of providence, God 'doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth' (Dan. 4:3-5)" (Boyce in "Abstract of Systematic Theology.")

But since this doctrine is so stripping and humbling to man and so thoroughly distasteful to the carnal mind, it has many opposers—even quite a few who pose as Baptists. It is even as the immortal J. R. Graves said: "All men are by nature Arminians; and the absolute sovereignty of God is a doctrine hateful to the natural and depraved heart. False teachers have taken advantage of this natural feeling and have for ages inflamed the prejudices of Christian men and women against any exercise of sovereignty on the part of God" ("The Seven Dispensations," pages 95, 96.)

It is our purpose in this article to refute some of the foolish and vain notions of men by which they would explain away this glorious mystery. Their theories, if true, would drag God from his throne and subordinate his will to that of man in the bestowal of his grace. These theories are nothing more than an effort toward the "measuring of supernatural mysteries with the crooked mete-wand of degenerate reason."

We will take up the following theories:

1. That election is not to salvation, but to service.

This passage represents the even tenor of Bible teaching.

we have but to turn to the following passage of Scripture:

"We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning CHOSEN YOU TO SALVATION" (2 Thess. 2:13)

This passage represents the even tenor of Bible teaching. It is true that election is secondarily unto service, but it is primarily unto salvation.

2. That election embraced only a sufficient number of individuals to guarantee that in every generation some would believe and propagate the gospel; others being left to themselves to believe or disbelieve.

It will seem strange to some of our readers to hear these first theories mentioned, but we have actually known of both of these first two being advocated by those who were supposed to be Baptists. For a refutation of this second view we turn to the ninth chapter of Romans. We find there that in respect to election there are but two classes: one God loves, the other he hates—which implies nothing more than the withholding of his love (v. 13); on one he has mercy, the other he hardens (v. 18); one consists of vessels of mercy afore prepared unto glory, the other of vessels of wrath fitted to destruction (vs. 21, 22). There is no hint here or elsewhere of a class that were neither elected to nor are excluded from the saving provisions of God's grace, but were left to themselves to believe or disbelieve. Again we turn to John 6:65, and there we find that the sinner's coming to Christ for salvation is the result of God's sovereign bestowal of ability upon those who come. That this gift of ability to come to Christ is not general, but sovereign, discriminating and particular, is shown by the preceding verse. Christ spoke of it in explanation of why some did not believe on him. Therefore, since none can come to Christ except those to whom God gives the ability, since he has not given this ability to all, and since that which God does now he purposed to do in the beginning, it being impossible that there should be any new thought or purpose with God, in the beginning God purposed to bestow upon some and to withhold from others the ability to come to Christ and be saved. This is election; and it is seen to include not merely some but all that will receive the blessings of salvation.

3. That personal election takes place in time and not in eternity; that we are elected when we believe.

This theory teaches that repentance and faith are the cause of election, and not election the cause of repentance and faith, as is truly the case. In refutation of this view let us note the following Scriptures:

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

"As many as were ordained to eternal life believed."
Acts 13:48)

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4).

"And they that dwell upon the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 17:8).

"I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim 2:10).

Now let us note these passages carefully. The first one makes the coming of sinners to Christ the result of the Father's giving them to Christ. This giving of sinners to Christ, in this passage, has literal reference to the regenerating work of God's Spirit by which men are brought to Christ. But since that which God does now he purposed to do in eternity, the purpose to give these to Christ is eternal. This purpose is election. In eternity God in his purpose gave to Christ those whom he should save, and in time he carries out his purpose by bringing these into actual possession of Christ. Therefore, since their coming to Christ is the result of God's giving them to Christ, their coming is the result of election, and not their election the result of their coming. The second passage teaches that only those who are ordained to eternal life believe. This ordination to eternal life is election. And since this passage puts ordination to eternal life before belief, election precedes salvation. And since all of God's purposes are eternal, this election is eternal. The third passage says that we are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. No comment is needed to show that this refutes the view of election which we are discussing. The fourth passage says that those whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will worship the Beast (Rev. 13:8) and be lost (Rev. 14:9, 10). The others are the elect. And their election took place from the foundation of the world, and consisted of the writing of their names in the book of life. From the foundation of the world means before the foundation of the world. In the last passage Paul tells why he endured all the privations and hardships which he bore. It was in order that the elect might be saved. Not that there was any possibility of any of them not being saved, but Paul was impelled by the Holy Spirit in carrying out God's purpose by predestinated means. This passage shows that there is an unsaved elect, and thus refutes the view we are considering.

Had we thought of it, we might also have well included in our list of passages in this connection *Psa. 65:4*. This passage says: **"Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth and causeth to approach unto thee."** This passage puts election before salvation because it puts the choosing before the approach to God.

4. That election took place in eternity, but that it was based upon God's foresight of the repentance and faith of the ones elected.

We presume the following are the chief passages which the advocates of this view would rely on for proof:

"Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29).

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:2).

We will closely investigate these passages, but first of all, let us ask what the advocates of this view hope to gain. Do they seek to vindicate God of responsibility for those that perish, which they think unconditional election imposes upon him?

If so, and they are capable of thinking, they must see the futility of their efforts. Suppose God exercised no sovereignty at all in the bestowal of his grace. Did he not of his own pleasure create the universe and the human race with full knowledge of the outcome? Did he not know who would be saved and who would be lost? Why did he inaugurate a plan that would terminate with some, even a countless multitude, in hell? Why did he create the men whom he knew would perish? Could he not have ordered it so that every one he created should be saved? Would this have made man less free? If so, then those who receive salvation are less free than those who reject it! Then why didn't God order his creation, providence, and grace so that all he created would be saved? Certainly he could have done it. And since he could have and didn't, under this theory we are now discussing, he is as responsible for the perdition of men as he can possibly be under unconditional election. **"I at once admit that the mere foreseeing an event, which we cannot hinder and have no agency in accomplishing, does not involve us in any responsibility. But when the creator, of his own sovereign pleasure calls an intelligent agent into being, fashions him with certain powers and appetites and places him amid scenes where he clearly sees that temptations will overcome him—in such a case it is self-evident that our feeble faculties cannot separate foreknowledge from foreappointment"** (Richard Fuller, in "Baptist Doctrines," by C. A. Jenkins.)

Do they adopt their theory of election because they fancy unconditional election abrogates the free agency of man? If so, then, again they are striving in vain. If it is the certainty that prevails under unconditional election that causes them to charge it with destroying man's freedom, then we have but to remind them that their theory is open to the same charge. If God merely foresaw an event, that event is as certain as it possibly could be under unconditional election. Do they bring this charge against unconditional election because it involves the necessity of God taking the initiative in the actual work of saving men? If so, can they prove that God cannot do this without violating man's free agency? They cannot; neither by Scripture, human experience, psychology, reason, or common sense. If the advocates of this theory are capable of sound thinking, they will see, so long as God's work in salvation is such as to leave man at every moment free to follow his own desires and inclinations, to act voluntarily, being conscious of no outside force compelling against him against his will to this or that course of action, that man's free agency is not destroyed. Is the work of God in saving men, as involved in unconditional election, such a work as this? It assuredly is. We suppose no advocate of this theory would say that saved people are not free agents. Yet God works in them both to will and to do his good pleasure (*Phil. 2:13*)! And this work is so effective that by it God secures the certain perseverance of every believer (*1 John 5:4*)! This will be admitted by every Baptist. Then if God can work effectively in the saved person without abrogating his freedom, can he not do the same in a lost person and thus bring that lost person voluntarily to Christ? Certainly he can. And does the implantation of the new nature antecedent to faith (in order of thought) any more abrogate man's freedom than the implantation of it subsequent to faith? Emphatically not. Any advocate of this theory with a fair mind and the ability to think will discard it after thorough study.

Do the advocates of this theory seek to avoid the thought of some men being born into this world without any possibility of salvation? If so, again they show themselves exceedingly foolish. For is there any possibility of any being saved except those whom God foresaw as the ones that would be saved? Not unless the foreknowledge of God can be made a farce! Then, in respect to this matter, how much better off is the advocate of this theory than the advocate of unconditional election? Truly did Richard Fuller say: **"The denial of preordination does not, therefore, relieve any objection. It**

only conceals the difficulty from the ignorant and unthinking" ("Baptist Doctrines," as previously quoted).

Then, may we ask, what accounts for the certainty involved in God's foreknowledge? If God knew that certain ones would be saved, it was certain that they would, and that certainty existed before these individuals had any being in the universe. They could not, therefore, have been the author of the certainty. To the question as to the source of this certainty there can be but one of two answers. IT WAS EITHER AN ALL-WISE, OMNISCIENT, JUST, HOLY, GRACIOUS GOD; OR IT WAS STUPID, COLD, HARD, MERCILESS FATE. Take your choice, friend, take your choice. Help yourself generously to either horn of the dilemma you prefer. They are both free. In case either horn should prove insufficient to satisfy you, write us and we will send you another car load.

Turning now to an investigation of the two passages given at the outset of our consideration of this theory, we will find that the use of "know" and its cognate forms, when expressing an act of God toward his people, means more than merely to apprehend intellectually. When God said to Israel: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:2), was he speaking of mere intellectual knowledge? If so,

then he was not aware of the existence of any other nation! Plainly, the knowledge here spoken of is the knowledge of approbation; to regard with favor. This necessarily is the case with every use of the term "know", or any of its cognate forms, when it expresses an act of God toward his people. The presence of the Greek prefix "pro" before the verb does not alter this. This addition merely fixes the time of the act.

Then the lexicon will inform us that the word is not confined in its signification to a mere mental act. The form in Rom. 8:29, according to the Classic Greek Dictionary, has, as a secondary meaning, the significance of "to judge or decide before hand." The form in 1 Pet. 1:2, according to both Thayer and Hickie, means both **foreknowledge** and **pre-arrangement**.

We conclude that the forms of the word in these passages have reference to the sovereign fixing of God's favor upon certain individuals in eternity, marking them as recipients of his saving grace, for reasons known only to himself. This implies and involves sovereign choice, which is UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION.

To represent God as looking down through time and seeing certain ones as believers, without his prior purpose to work faith in them, is a denial of total depravity.

Election

ELD. RAY KELLEY, Lexington, Okla.

The election of a sinner to salvation is personal, unconditional, and eternal, with resistless grace in regeneration wrought in the soul and mind by predestinated means, bringing the sinner out of a state of sin into grace, where he is kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

My definition of God's purpose of grace in predestination is hard, but not as hard as the Word of God makes it, and the word is our standard. Some will accept it, but many will reject it. I one time rejected the grand old doctrine of grace, holding to the idea that with just a little effort on our part and then some effort on God's part we could be saved; and, like all Arminians, I envied many passages of Holy Scripture, and confess I got no comfort in reading them. I do not undertake in this work to explain this high mystery, neither do I profess to understand it; but I believe it. I have heard it "fully explained" only one time, and that was by an Arminian. He said God had predestinated men to eternal life on condition that they would repent and believe. If that is not salvation by human merit, pray tell us what it is.

Adam was placed under a covenant of works, and that covenant, with him as representative, included all his seed, so that in his transgression all for whom he stood fell. All rights of protection and blessings offered under this covenant passed away in his transgression, and the penalty of the broken law only was left to be inflicted, and that upon all, for all sinned. The first covenant offered no redemption, mercy, or pardon, for it was not designed to redeem but to live by; neither could it be of any use to those who transgressed, since nothing in this covenant could remove their past sins.

But was God under any obligations to visit fallen man with His mercy of redemption? This I answer in the negative. God cannot be obligated only as He may obligate Himself by way of promise. Therefore, He bestows His blessings, not because of conditions fulfilled on the part of the fallen, but because of a purpose which He has purposed in Himself. See Rom. 9:16. Space forbids a discussion on this paragraph.

All parties concerned in the first covenant were present when the first covenant was made. We were represented by our race head, and have never been consulted as individuals concerning its nature; but have had the sentence of condem-

nation passed upon us. God did this prior to any moral action on our part. Has not God decreed all men to be sinners, and fit subjects of His wrath? This is evident from the teaching of God's word. But upon what grounds was the sentence of death passed upon all men? Upon the grounds of Adam's transgression. So far, so good, but let us next consider the fact that there are only two covenants that pertain directly to men's eternal destiny.

These two covenants are the covenant of works made with Adam, and the covenant of grace, made with Christ. The destiny of all men is included in one of these covenants; and, as God deals with individuals, He deals with them under one of these, imputing condemnation under the covenant of works, and the righteousness of Christ under the covenant of grace.

As Adam in the first covenant represented all of his seed, so Christ in the covenant of grace represented all those given to Him to save; and it is through Him that all benefits of the covenant are bestowed on the heirs of promise, and that upon no other grounds than that Christ represented them in His death and suffering. This, I trust, will not be disputed. But, did Christ represent all mankind in the covenant of grace? Let us notice.

The covenant of grace was made between the three persons of the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and Christ, the second Adam, was to stand as the representative of those given Him to redeem, assuming all responsibilities and conditions demanded in the agreement, making salvation absolutely free to the seed. Now we conclude that all represented by Him were to be joint heirs with Him in His inheritance, and for this reason He is engaged to seek and to save them, that they may be with Him and behold His glory. But to proceed.

In His death He removed all legal claims against them, nailing the law which condemned them to His cross, paying the price of their redemption from its curse; and this He did because the covenant under which He represented them contained mercy. But mercy could not have its perfect work in them until the penalty of the broken law was satisfied, and the seed free from its curse. This freedom was wrought for them on the tree of the cross as it is written: "It pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt

make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." Again: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree."

Now if Christ represented all men in His death, he removed the curse and consequently there is no broken law by which any sinner could be punished, and this would be universal salvation. But some were given to Christ to save, and they were a covenanted people which God foreknew as heirs of promise, and predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. **"For whom he foreknew, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son."** This not only expresses the fact that God predestinated some, but tells the effect of the predestination; they were to be made like the Son. There could be no other purpose of grace in predestination.

Those born to Adam under the first covenant were born of corruptible seed, and inherited a corrupt nature, but those who are born under the second covenant are born of incorruptible seed and are heirs of things incorruptible. The only way of being a partaker of the benefits of either covenant is by birth; a birth of the flesh under the covenant of works, and a birth of the Spirit under the covenant of grace. Those who are born of the Spirit were especially given to Christ, for **"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will that sent me, that OF ALL WHICH HE HATH GIVEN ME I should lose nothing, but raise it up again at the last day."** If God has given all men to Christ to save, all will come to him and be saved, but notice again, **"No man can come to me except the Father which sent me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day."** We conclude that the reason all men are not saved is because all are not drawn to Christ. And the reason all are not drawn to Christ is because they were not given to Christ in the eternal covenant.

The History of the Redeemed

Compiled by ROGER L. CLARK, Martin, Tenn.

1. THEIR PAST IN ETERNITY

1. Their redemption was determined before times eternal. 11 Tim. 1:9.
2. They are factors in the eternal purpose of God. Eph. 3:9-11.
3. They are foreordained unto the glory of Christ. Eph. 1:11, 12.
4. They had a history before they existed. Rom. 4:17; 8:30.
5. Their character was determined before they were conscious of themselves: Rom. 9:11, 12; Eph. 1:4, 5.
6. They were chosen (elect) before the foundation of the world: Eph. 1:4; John 13:18.
7. They were given to Christ. II Tim. 2:19; John 6:37-39.
8. They were enrolled as belonging to Christ. Phil. 4:3; Luke 10:20; Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27.
9. Their lives were planned for them. Eph. 2:10.
10. Provision was then made for them in Christ. Col. 2:10; II Tim. 2:10.
 - (A) As Creator: Col. 1:16; Jn. 1:1-3; Jn. 17:5.
 - (B) As Archetype: Col. 1:15-17; Jn. 17:24.
 - (C) As Author and Perfecter: Col. 1:17; Heb. 2:10; 5:9; 12:2.
 - (D) As Redeemer: Col. 1:14; Rom. 3:24; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-20.
 - (E) As Propitator: Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10.
 - (F) As Sanctifier: 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 5:25, 26.

(G) As One with Christ: Heb. 2:13.

11. They are to be conformed to the image of Christ. Rom. 8:29; 1 Jno. 3:3.
12. They were sealed with the Divine Seal: 2 Tim. 2:19.

2. THEIR EXPERIENCE IN TIME

A. BY NATURE:

13. They are conceived in sin. Ps. 51:5.
14. They are born children of wrath. Eph. 2:3.
15. They live in the lusts of the flesh. Eph. 2:3.
16. They are dead in trespasses and sins. Eph. 2:1.
17. They cannot, of themselves, come to God. John 6:44.
18. They are alienated from and at enmity with God. Col. 1:21; Rom. 8:7.

B. BY REGENERATION:

19. They are called through the Gospel. 2 Thes. 2:14.
 - (A) Through the Spirit and Word: Rom. 11:7; 10:15-17; Jas. 1:18.
 - (B) Through preaching: 1 Cor. 1:21.
20. They are begotten by the Spirit. 1 Pet. 1:23; Jno. 3:5-8.
21. They are born again. Jno. 1:13; 3:5-8; 1 Oct. 1:23.

C. BY CONVERSION:

22. They receive Christ:
 - (A) They hear the Gospel. 1 Cor. 15:1, 2.
 - (B) The Lord opens their hearts. Acts 16:14; Lk. 24:45; 1 Jno. 5:20.
 - (C) They are convicted of sin. Jno. 16:8; Acts 2:37.
 - (D) They sorrow after a godly sort. 2 Cor. 7:9, 10.
 - (E) They repent. Acts 2:38; 2 Cor. 7:10; Rom. 2:4; Acts 3:19.
 - (F) They believe into Christ. Jn. 3:16, 36; Jn. 6:40; Acts 16:31.
 - (G) They receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. Acts 2:38; Rom. 8:16.
24. They are adopted into God's family. Rom. 8:15-17.

D. BY SANCTIFICATION.

25. They are led by the Spirit. Rom. 8:14.
 - (A) Sealed unto the day of redemption. 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13.
 - (B) Enabled to work out their salvation. Phil. 2:12, 13; 1 Pet. 1:22; 21:1-5; Rom. 6:12-14.

E. BY JUSTIFICATION.

26. Their present standing:
 - (A) Justified and accepted. Eph. 1:6; Rom. 3:24.
 - (B) Christ's righteousness imputed. Rom. 4:3-8; 23-25.
 - (C) Made heirs with Christ. Rom. 8:17.

3. THEIR FUTURE GLORY

27. As they suffer they are to be glorified with Christ. Rom. 8:17.
28. Death is defeated and overcome. Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 15:53-55.
29. They shall be raised with Christ at His coming. 1 Thess. 4:16, 17.
30. Jesus will receive them unto himself. Jn. 14:3.
31. They will receive the reward of their labors. 1 Cor. 3:8-14.
32. They will reign with Christ. Rev. 22:3; Matt. 25:34.
33. They will inhabit a new haven and a new earth. 2 Pet. 3:8-13; Rev. 21:1-7.

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