

# **SALVATION**

**The Gift of God or the Choice of Man?**

**W. H. Molland**

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All Biblical quotations are taken from the  
Authorised Version of the Holy Scriptures.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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To Mr Malcolm Watts, Minister of Emmanuel Evangelical Church, Salisbury <sup>3</sup>, for writing a foreword.

To the members of the church, for their encouragement and enthusiastic support, some of whom have also been closely associated in checking, etc.

For the prayerful involvement of everyone in the Fellowship, in consequence of which, this book goes out as the united voice of the church.

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1. Mr K. Matrunola (1920 – 1994), Minister at Salem Chapel 1971 – 1994.
  2. Mr J. Goodwin, member at North Road 1982 – 1988. Mr L. Gee, member from 1977, appointed Deacon 1978, Elder 1980, died 1989.
  3. Mr M. Watts (born Barnstaple 1946), Minister at Emmanuel Church since 1971.

## FOREWORD

In this little volume, Herbert Molland shows that ‘the Doctrines of Grace’, often designated ‘the Five Points of Calvinism’, originated in the written and infallible Word of God. The testimony of Scripture is presented throughout with clarity, succinctness and accuracy. Not only is the evidence in support of each doctrine satisfyingly full, but it is interestingly written and makes a lasting impression on the reader.

It is a convincing treatment. While the author emphasises the sovereignty of God in fulfilling His eternal and immutable purposes, he also insists on human responsibility and accountability. He strenuously maintains that true Calvinism is entirely consistent with the command to preach the gospel to all and that in no way does it interfere with the freeness and universality of gospel invitations. Indeed, he asserts that: “Hyper-Calvinists who oppose the invitation and general call of the gospel are as much in error as the Arminian with his universal atonement and human decisionism”.<sup>4</sup>

An important feature of the study is its teaching on the Covenant of Grace. The author rightly believes that the whole work of salvation has a covenantal form at its roots. As stated in The Shorter Catechism: “God having, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of

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4. Quoted from an early draft. See Chapter 4 ‘Effectual Calling’, Part 2.

salvation by a Redeemer”.<sup>5</sup> Although it is beyond the author’s purpose to develop this, the book’s value is certainly enhanced by its underlying presupposition.

This book is to be welcomed because, although the mid-twentieth century witnessed a recovery of Reformation truth, at the present time determined attacks are being made upon the doctrines of Sovereign Grace. Of course, there will always be opposition of one kind or another to the doctrines which break down the pride of sinners’ hearts and exalt the distinguishing mercy and grace of a covenant God. But those who oppose might consider Bishop Horsley’s words: “Take especial care, before you aim your shafts at Calvinism, that you know what is Calvinism, and what is not”.<sup>6</sup> They could also bear in mind that however much they fight against them, they shall never destroy the tenets of the Calvinistic system because those tenets are the truths of Divine Revelation.

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5. Answer to Question No. 20: “Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of misery?” ‘The Westminster Shorter Catechism’, 1647.

6. Samuel Horsley (1733 – 1806) Bishop of St. Asaph (1802 – 1806) in ‘A Charge to the Clergy at the Primary Visitation in the Month of August 1806’. In relation to attacks being made against Calvinistic Methodists of the time, he says: “Of all things I entreat you to avoid what is now become very common, acrimonious abuse of Calvinism and of Calvin. Remember, I beseech you, that some tenderness is due to the errors and extravagancies of a man, eminent as he was in his day for his piety, his wisdom, and his learning, and to whom the reformation in its beginning is so much indebted. At least take especial care before you aim your shafts at Calvinism, that you know what is Calvinism and what is not: that in that mass of doctrine, which it is of late become the fashion to abuse under the name of Calvinism, you can distinguish with certainty between that part of it, which is nothing better than Calvinism, and that which belongs to our common Christianity.”

In recent years these doctrines of grace have been faithfully preached to the believers gathered in North Road Chapel, Bideford, and the ministry has been to the church's edification and strengthening. It is good that the ministry has now assumed a written form. Under the blessing of our sovereign God, may the readers of this book not only be brought to a knowledge of free-grace salvation but also to the confirmation of these doctrines in their own experience.

**Malcolm H. Watts**

Minister of Emmanuel Evangelical Church,  
Salisbury



# INTRODUCTION

The contents of this book concern matters which the writer found greatly confusing, and which caused him much heart searching over a long period of time.

Having been brought up in Arminian circles from the earliest days, he heard that men were dead in trespasses and sins, yet, as such, were called upon to exercise their wills, and decide for Christ.

When Atonement was preached it was set forth as being a finished work, yet universal as to extent, making out that Christ died for every man. Although not having full conviction that these things were really so, the writer himself preached along these lines for many years.

At length the crisis point was reached some fifteen to twenty years past. How could a finished propitiatory work for all men be reconciled with countless numbers being doomed at the last? And it cannot: the thought is preposterous!

Through diligent study and under the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit, he was led into a fuller understanding of this great and vital subject, which does not stand in isolation in the Word of God, but is an integral part of, "*the faith* [singular] *once delivered*" (cf Jude 3).

It is only as the wholeness of Holy Scripture is seen, and truth held in its entirety, that the unity of that faith is comprehended.

It is the purpose of this book to set out the glorious, sovereign grace of God in salvation, and to contrast it with that which, alas, is so often substituted for, and preached as, the gospel.

**W. H. Molland** <sup>7</sup>

Minister of North Road Chapel,

Bideford, Devon.

1986

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7. Mr William Herbert Molland (1920 – 2012) first preached at North Road Chapel in 1941, and joined in membership, together with his wife, in 1944. He was appointed an Elder in 1950, Trustee in 1964 and Church Secretary in 1971, ministering regularly throughout that time. During the 1970s, he was instrumental in establishing consecutive, expository preaching at the Chapel, and recovering some of the original doctrine of the founding members. He was formally recognised as the church's minister in 1980. Concerned with the wider dissemination of truth, he commenced production of 'The Link' quarterly magazine, and authored numerous articles, pamphlets and books over the following decades, of which this present work was the first, and most significant. These continue to be published and distributed by the church to the present day.

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Thirty years have elapsed since the original production of this book, but the passage of time has done nothing to lessen its relevance, or the need for its teaching in the wider Christian church. The ‘easy-believism’ of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century is still rampant amongst liberal evangelicals; while at the other extreme, there remain some who deny any man-ward component to Salvation, and thus turn faith into fatalism.

The way of truth has always been found in the perfect balance of these two integral elements: Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility – ‘decline not from it, to the right hand or to the left’ – for where one aspect is emphasised to the detriment of the other, there error abounds.

Another more subtle attack upon the doctrine of salvation in recent years has been the increasing acceptance of, and connivance at ‘Covenant Theology’ and the associated practice of infant sprinkling. Any teaching which confers salvation, or even a degree of spiritual advantage, upon the natural children of believers, is fundamentally at variance with the Word of God. Those that believe, are born, “*not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*” (John 1:13). Throughout the Old Testament, God declares Himself to be ‘the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob’, and not ‘the God of Abraham, Ishmael and Esau’, in illustration of this essential truth. The flesh only begets bondage and corruption (cf Galatians 4:23, 1 Corinthians 15:50); all that a man can inherit from his biological parents is sin. Salvation is exclusively of the Lord (cf John 3:6, Psalm 37:39).

In the mercies of God, demand for this book has necessitated a number of reprints over the years, amounting to several thousand copies. Amidst the plethora of available works upon this subject, its appeal perhaps lies in its relative brevity, and the sincerity of its language. It is written, not with the complacent familiarity of one brought up in this truth, but with the zeal and lucidity of one who arrived at it from first principles and careful study of the Scriptures. Indeed, by one who, on the first occasion of being charged with preaching ‘Calvinism’ by an unfriendly congregation, was obliged to look up the meaning of the word in a dictionary.

Within this new and re-typeset edition, opportunity has been taken to correct some minor errors, obtain an ISBN, and also provide footnotes and references for quotations; all of which, it is hoped, will prove beneficial to the reader and ensure the longevity of this book. It is four years since the home-call of the beloved minister and servant of the Lord who authored this work; but by it, ‘he being dead yet speaketh’, and the Word of God continues to grow and prevail.

Renewed thanks are due to the members of the church at North Road for their invaluable assistance and prayers in connection with the present work; but principally to the Lord, for His preservation both of the fellowship, and its doctrinal position – such that, after three changeful decades, this volume continues to be: “*a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us*” (Luke 1:1).

**R. J. Steward**

Minister of North Road Chapel,  
Bideford, Devon.  
October 2016

Father, 'twas Thy love that knew us  
Earth's foundations long before;  
That same love to Jesus drew us  
By its sweet constraining power,  
And will keep us  
Safely now, and evermore.

Pause, my soul, adore and wonder!  
Ask, O why such love to me?  
Grace hath put me in the number  
Of the Saviour's family;  
Hallelujah!  
Thanks, eternal thanks to Thee!

Since that love had no beginning,  
And shall never, never cease;  
Keep, O keep me, Lord, from sinning,  
Guide me in the way of peace!  
Make me walk in  
All the paths of holiness.

God of love, our souls adore Thee!  
We would still Thy grace proclaim,  
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,  
And in glory praise Thy Name:  
Hallelujah  
Be to God and to the Lamb!

vv. 1 and 2 Anonymous  
vv. 3 and 4 James George Deck (1807 – 1844)



# 1. HUMAN DEPRAVITY

This subject is of the utmost importance. If we have a shallow or deficient view of this matter then it is almost inevitable that we shall have defective, and it may be erroneous, views upon other vital tenets of the faith.

To understand the relationship between Adam and his posterity is essential to a right understanding of Holy Scripture.

The depravity of the human heart stems from the original offence committed in Eden's garden. Here the whole race of mankind was placed on probation; on trial. Adam acted, not for himself as a private individual, but he transacted for all who would issue from him. Adam stood as federal head, and as such, legally represented the whole human race, so that in the sight of the divine law, what he did they all did.

The first sin committed by Adam was a **typical** sin, that is, a sin in which the real essence of sin is clearly made manifest. The essence of Adam's sin lay in the fact that he placed himself in opposition to God: he refused to subject his will to the will of God: he declined to allow God to determine the course of his life, actively taking the matter out of the hands of his Creator, to determine the future for himself. By so doing Adam fell from his original state of holy perfection. Immediately there was an aversion against God in his heart – they “*hid themselves*” (Genesis 3:8). The sentence of death spoken of by God in Genesis chapter 2 verse 17 took effect. Spiritual death was immediate, physical death would ensue in due course, and eternal death was the ultimate,

apart from divine grace. In this condition Adam, the legal head of the human race was driven out from God and cut off (cf Genesis 3:24). But the vital point is, that all the children of Adam are equally affected and all come under the same sentence. *“In Adam all die”* (1 Corinthians 15:22). *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”* (Romans 5:12).

This is designated the **Fall of Man**: it is the entrance of sin into the world.

This sinful state and condition in which men are born is termed theologically **original sin**. Original, because it is derived from Adam, the prime root of mankind, not in his primal state as created, for that would imply that God created man a sinner, but in his fallen state. The Scriptures abound with evidence that no person is born clean and pure. Whatever is born of the flesh or comes into the world by natural generation, is flesh – carnal and corrupt. *“Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one”* (Job 14:4). *“They are all under sin”* (Romans 3:9).

The question now arises: when is sin actually transmitted? And the answer is: original sin is from the womb. *“The wicked are estranged from the womb”* (Psalm 58:3). *“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me”* (Psalm 51:5). *“Transgressors from the womb”* (Isaiah 48:8).

All are born sinners. Not as many erroneously teach, that babes are innocent until they reach an age of responsibility, for this is a denial of



original sin. Furthermore, not only are all born sinners, but all are born condemned sinners. The sentence passed upon Adam is upon all the race. If this was not the case, no infant would ever die, for they have neither capacity nor opportunity to commit actual sin. Yet, death reigns, *“even over them that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression”* (Romans 5:14). Infants may be free from the act of sin, but they certainly are not free from the taint and corruption of sin, and their death is evidence to the fact of the guilt of original sin.

The question of the salvation of infants is another matter. As with adults, it is according to the sovereign election of God. *“For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth”* (Romans 9:11).

In such delicate areas as infant mortality, let all take comfort in that word: *“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”* (Genesis 18:25). But let none be so shallow in their conception of truth as to look upon infants as innocent. This is contrary to Holy Scripture. All are born with Adam's guilt and Adam's sentence upon them.

## **ORIGINAL SIN**

Original Sin is described in the Word of God in various ways. Some of the terms used appear to be contradictory, but they are not, for each metaphor used is expressive terminology of a differing aspect, and is for

the purpose of graphically conveying to us the comprehensiveness of man's depravity.

**1. Original Sin is said to be indwelling.** "*Sin dwelleth in me*" (Romans 7:17). Not something which comes and goes, not a visitor which pays an occasional call, but an inhabitant, and a very troublesome one. It is set upon hindering all the good and producing all the evil it can.

**2. Original Sin is a law.** "*The law of sin*" (Romans 7:25). It has force and power: authority which binds its subjects to allegiance. It reigns not as a king, but as a tyrant, for it reigns, "*unto death*" unless grace prevents it.

**3. Original Sin is positive.** It is not something passive, for it not only cuts a man off from God and renders him spiritually dead, but is also active hostility to God. Because of original sin man becomes by settled purpose in his own heart a transgressor, making him an enemy of God. There is a deep-seated enmity in the will against God, and with this all are born. Man's will always crosses God's will, seeking its own fulfilment. "*Enemies in your mind by wicked works*" (Colossians 1:21).

**4. Original Sin binds men.** Through original sin they are bound as captives: "*taken captive by the Devil at his will*" (2 Timothy 2:26); "*all their lifetime subject to bondage*" (Hebrews 2:15).

**5. Original Sin makes man untractable.** He is void and incapable of spiritual instruction: "*the natural man receiveth not the things*

*of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).*

**6. Original Sin renders a man dead.** What could be more expressive of human depravity? Is it possible for the Almighty to convey with greater clarity the fact that our depravity is **total**? We are just like Lazarus in the tomb, bound hand and foot, corruption upon us and not a spark of life in us: *“dead in trespasses and sins”* (Ephesians 2:1).

This is the description that God has given of fallen man; his utter ruin, and the depths into which he has sunk. All are born in this sad and hopeless condition. This is **Original Sin**. It is a vigorous and active principle within us and it is the cause of all actual sin.

Original sin is worse than actual sin. Whilst actual sin may be the more scandalous, original sin is the more heinous, for the cause is ever more important than the effect. Original sin renders us dead unto God and to spiritual matters, and alive unto Satan and to evil: *“a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit”* (Matthew 7:17). Man in his fallen state fulfils: *“the desires of the flesh and of the mind”* (Ephesians 2:3). This is his natural bent and inclination; he can rise no higher, neither does he want to. The thought of a Holy God and any claim which He might have upon him is not countenanced; man deliberately chooses the evil and not the good. Sinners love darkness rather than light: they do not retain the knowledge of God in their minds – He is dismissed. This is not an involuntary ignorance. It is not passive, it is active. When confronted with the truth about themselves and inescapable judgment to come, men do not repent, rather do they view God as their enemy, as One bent upon their

eternal punishment. There is in the mind of every unregenerate person an aversion to the Almighty. The Scriptures give us an apt summary: *“the carnal mind is enmity against God”* (Romans 8:7).

There is a common belief that sinners are those who have wandered from God, but still have some lingering regard to return, and would do so if they knew how, and that by powerful persuasion they can be influenced to come back. This is not so. Whilst the Bible likens sinners unto sheep that have gone astray, this is but one metaphor which is used, and we must employ it in conjunction with others. Unregenerate man is an alien, he is an enemy, he has no hope, he is without God, and is dead in trespasses and sins. Total Depravity is the teaching of Holy Scripture.

Man of himself is totally unable to change his character or act in any way other than that which his fallen nature dictates. He is in bondage to sin and Satan: *“for I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not... I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members”* (Romans 7:18, 23). *“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be”* (Romans 8:7). *“Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart”* (Ephesians 4:18). *“Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled”* (Titus 1:15).

## HUMAN INABILITY

Inseparably linked with human depravity is human inability and just as depravity is **total**, so is inability. Original sin treats of our depravity. Inability has reference to the fact that our depravity is humanly irremediable. With respect to this it is necessary to qualify or to distinguish. By ascribing total inability to the natural man it is not to be inferred that it is impossible for him to do good in any sense of the word. This would be patently untrue. In all men there is an ability to display moral virtues. There are men and women in society who actively manifest such qualities and this demands our sincere approval: for such we should be grateful and thank God.

Total Inability is a theological term which means two things:

1. The unrenewed sinner cannot do any act, however insignificant, which fundamentally meets God's approval and answers to the demands of His Holy Law.
2. He cannot change his fundamental preference for self to God, nor has he any serious desire even to attempt the change.

In a word he is unable to work any **spiritual** good. “*Verily verily I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin*” (John 8:34). “*Without faith it is impossible to please God*” (Hebrews 11:6).

The doctrine of the total inability of man naturally raises the question: does man through original sin lose his **free will**? This is a matter over which there is much controversy and has been throughout history.

Man has liberty to choose as he pleases, but in this he acts in accordance with the prevailing disposition of his soul. Man has not lost the faculties necessary to constitute him a responsible moral agent. He still has reason, conscience, and freedom of choice. He has ability to acquire knowledge, to recognise moral obligations, and to choose or refuse as he sees fit. He also has ability to appreciate many things that are good, benevolent and just, relative to his fellow beings; but man has lost the power to determine his course for his highest good. To spiritual things he is blind; they are foolishness to him. To real truth he is dead; completely insensitive, his foolish mind is darkened. He has the law of sin in his heart; it dwells there permanently and that law is authoritative to him. He is in bondage to it and it reigns within his personality. So, by his very nature he has an irresistible bias for evil. He still has a will but it is totally depraved spiritually. He still has the ability of choice, but of himself he will always choose wrong. This is inevitable, for he is: "*in Adam*". Pertaining to spiritual matters, Adam's choice is his. He has precisely Adam's nature and he is totally unable to alter that nature. "*Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil*" (Jeremiah 13:23).

If Adam, created in holy perfection, with the powers of an unblemished mind and heart, chose the wrong, it is the height of foolishness to believe that fallen man in all his depravity is going to choose the right. What is more, as soon as Adam fell, immediately he hid from God. He lost all

desire to meet or commune with his Maker, and of himself never returned. It was God who sought him. As with Adam, so with all men (for his case is ours). No one of himself ever returns to God or seeks spiritual things.

As was stated earlier, these truths have been flatly contradicted throughout history. Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism and Arminianism, although having different approaches and emphases, are essentially one.

**1. Pelagianism.** Pelagius, a British monk, first sought to erode the Biblical teaching on Original Sin. He taught that man is born in innocency like Adam before the Fall. He is free from guilt and pollution through sin. At any moment he is perfectly free to choose good or evil. That men sin at all is only due to bad example and the force of habit. These teachings were effectively countered by Augustine of Hippo in the fifth century.

**2. Semi-Pelagianism.** About the same time a man named John Cassian, an abbot in a Marseilles monastery modified the Pelagian heresy into what has come to be known as Semi-Pelagianism. It states relative to human inability that, “the human will takes the initiative in regeneration, but needs divine assistance”.<sup>8</sup> The Order of Jesuits founded in 1540 has always been identified with Semi-Pelagianism.

**3. Arminianism** is but Semi-Pelagianism modified by James Arminius, a Dutch theologian, born in 1560. His view was that the Holy

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8. A. A. Hodge (1823-1886), ‘Outlines of Theology’ 1878, Chapter 19: Original Sin.

Spirit operates on all when the gospel is preached, being in every case resistible. Again, the consent of man's will is made the deciding factor. Whilst the Holy Spirit is present, yet it is the human will which is the immediate cause of conversion. In other words, salvation is entirely dependent on man's free will in the final analysis.

These teachings have always been regarded by the faithful as not true to Scripture; yet, such teaching has held great sway for many generations, and it permeates the church today. Very many have been brought up on the errors of Arminianism, and have genuinely received it as truth (not knowing its source) and have preached it as the gospel.

Theological thinking for years has been saturated to an alarming degree with these erroneous beliefs. It is the main content of today's revival literature. Full-blooded Arminianism is the principal thrust of evangelistic meetings, the whole emphasis being on man's choice, and he is led to believe that he has of himself ability to choose and exercise faith, whereas the plain teaching of Holy Scripture is that, "*Salvation is of the Lord*" (Jonah 2:9).

From first to last, in every detail pertaining to man's salvation it is all of grace, sovereignly and gratuitously bestowed upon the sinner. It is, "*not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*" (John 1:13).

The reaction of some who read this may well be that this teaching hinders evangelism. It must be said however, that one of the greatest hindrances to the spread of the gospel is the lack of this very teaching.



Today's preaching is, to a large extent, producing decisions of the will of man without any evidence of the presence and the power of God. Such are being treated as true conversions and received into many of the churches, riddling such companies with false professors. The only gospel of Scripture is that which rests upon the assumption of the total inability of man. This is the very truth which lays the foundation for the glory of the gospel of grace.

The gospel of the grace of God rests upon despair of all human resources. It is only when man's total depravity and complete human impotency are realised that the full glory and power of the gospel can be declared. Then only can it be that the sinner will cast himself unreservedly upon God crying, "*God be merciful to me a sinner*" (Luke 18:13).

Warnings against the errors of Arminianism which once used to thunder from so many of the pulpits of this land, are scarcely heard today. In fact, more often than not, it is the Doctrines of Grace (commonly called Calvinism) that are denounced in this age.

May God, even yet, raise up men who will preach the Word of God in its fulness!

*"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert"* (Isaiah 35:5-6).



## 2. ELECTION

This is a subject which has been the centre of much controversy throughout history, and still is; although sad to say in this age, the majority seem to know very little about this all-important doctrine of Scripture. Those who have a fixed opinion on the matter are divided into two camps known as ‘Calvinist’ and ‘Arminian’; the former after John Calvin and the latter after James Arminius.

These theological labels can be very misleading if not fully understood, for they can savour of the teachings of men or the intrusion of personalities, such as occurred at Corinth: “...*I am of Paul: and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 1:12). However, that which we are considering now goes back far beyond the days of Calvin or Arminius. They were but champions of the two lines of a controversy already in existence – one Biblical and the other not – and there is no alternative to them. All who have given any thought to this matter are to be found in one or other of these two schools.

It is not the object of this book either to extol Calvin or to denounce Arminius, but rather to set forth positively the truth of Holy Scripture. Nevertheless, in dealing with this subject, it is inevitable that theological terms are used in order to make it relevant to our day.

Before we proceed further, it should be stated that if we are to have sound views of the deep teachings of the Word of God, then it is essential to be thoroughly grounded in the **Doctrine of God**. All His

glorious attributes and perfections must be known and fully appreciated. They must also be held in balance, never forgetting that every attribute of God is active and positive. Before any dare to discuss the subject or endeavour to teach others, they must know God. To this we must add that our view on Election will be largely determined by whether or not we accept the teaching of Human Depravity in its **totality**.

It is feared that many freely make use of terms such as Total Depravity and Divine Sovereignty and yet are quite unaware of the depth of spiritual meaning contained in them. This also applies to Election.

## **UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION**

Election – as set out in the Word of God – is unconditional and absolute. This must follow from the doctrine of Total Depravity, for, if man is dead and held captive etc., then it is obvious that only a power outside of himself can remedy his situation; “*Salvation is of the Lord*” (Jonah 2:9). The Bible speaks of God coming out to man, not man returning to God. The first link in the chain is Election.

The Scriptures unmistakably reveal that God made choice of certain persons from all eternity. Before the world was framed, or time or matter existed, a people was elected to salvation in Christ and predestined to partake of His glory.

The Westminster Confession of Faith states, concerning the decrees of Almighty God:

“God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass... Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret council and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen, in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto: and all to the praise of His glorious grace.”<sup>9</sup>

Article 17 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England states:

“Predestination to Life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) He both constantly decreed by His counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom He hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore, they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God be called according to God’s purpose by His Spirit working in due season; they through grace obey the calling; they be justified freely; they be made sons of God by adoption; they be made like the image of His only-

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9. ‘The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1647’, Chap. 3 “Of God’s Eternal Decree”, Section 1.

begotten Son Jesus Christ; they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity".<sup>10</sup>

These articles of religion here stated are absolutely true to the Holy Scriptures and are basic tenets of the Faith. That men should have turned from such fundamental truth as is contained in the historic Creeds and Confessions and embraced Arminian theology, is a calamity of the greatest magnitude.

The truth of sovereign election runs right through the Bible (both Old and New Testaments). To ignore this golden thread of the eternal design is to mar and distort the whole pattern. The eternal purpose concerning man's salvation is said to be "*according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love*" (Ephesians 1:4). "*God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth*" (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

This initial act in man's salvation issued from the Trinity, within the secret and solitary majesty of the Godhead, and all Three Persons were involved – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They can never be divided or isolated; all work in absolute harmony and unity. Nevertheless, Election, for the most part, is attributed to God the Father, He is said to bless men with all spiritual blessings and choose them in Christ (cf

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10. 'The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion', 1563, Article XVII: "Of Predestination and Election".

Ephesians 1:3-4). Hence, it is called the: “*Election of God*” (1 Thessalonians 1:4). The persons chosen are called: “*God’s Elect*” (Romans 8:33; Luke 18:7). They are said to be: “*elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*” (1 Peter 1:2).

Therefore, Election, being an act of God, it is **for ever**. The God of heaven does not change His mind. “*The gifts and calling of God are without repentance*” (Romans 11:29). The Almighty does not change course. If He chooses and decrees to bless, it is irrevocable. Men choose their friends but, if after a while something comes between, then they drop them and choose others. This is not so with God. Man’s fall in Adam made no difference to His love for His own. “*I have loved thee with an everlasting love*” (Jeremiah 31:3). To the elect, the mercy of God is: “*from everlasting to everlasting*” (Psalm 103:17). “*He is in one mind, and who can turn Him?*” (Job 23:13).

## **CHOSEN IN CHRIST**

The purposes of God concerning election are sure and unalterable. Every soul elected of the Father in a past eternity will be saved, not one will be lost; for all are chosen in Christ and chosen unto salvation (cf 2 Thessalonians 2:13). This is infallible. The Holy Spirit does not go into the ‘far country’ searching for sinners, and as He finds one, so that sinner is elected and put into Christ. Such however, appears to be the thinking of many. Indeed, this is not the case. The whole body of the elect were chosen together in Christ before any were created or had a being.

Christ was first elected as Mediator (for all those chosen and predestinated were known to fall in Adam, and therefore, must be redeemed from sin and bondage). As Mediator He was Head of all those given to Him by the Father. Christ is styled by Jehovah as: “*My servant... mine elect*” (Isaiah 42:1). Isaac Watts puts it well:

“ ‘Christ be My first elect’, He said;  
Then chose our souls in Christ, our Head,  
Before He gave the mountains birth,  
Or laid foundations for the earth.” <sup>11</sup>

The names of the elect are said to be, “*written in heaven*”, and to be, “*in the book of life from the foundation of the world*” (Hebrews 12:23; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 17:8). Men’s names are not recorded in heaven **because** they believe, as Arminians preach. Rather, they believe because their names **are** recorded there. Such choruses as, “Write my name in the book of life” are unscriptural, and show an appalling ignorance of Biblical truth.

All men do not believe, because the names of all men are not recorded. “*I speak not of you all*”, says Christ, “*I know whom I have chosen*” (John 13:18). “*I lay down my life for the sheep*” (John 10:15). Here ‘Sheep’ and ‘Elect’ signify one and the same. John chapter 10, verses 15 and 16 infer that they are Christ’s sheep before they are called and regenerated. He does not lay down His life in order to make them His sheep and so

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11. Isaac Watts (1674-1748), Hymn: “Jesus, we bless Thy Father’s name”.



enable God the Father to elect them. **No!** It is because they are already His, given to Him by the sovereign election of the Father that He lays down His life for them, for they, in common with all Adam's sons and daughters are dead in trespasses and sins. The elect are, "*children of wrath, even as others*" (Ephesians 2:3). Christ came explicitly, "*to save His people from their sins*" (Matthew 1:21). He was the Lamb of God... foreordained before the foundation of the world but manifest in these last times for you (the elect) (cf 1 Peter 1:19-20). The elect are delivered from going down to the pit because of the ransom (cf Job 33:24).

The blood of the Redeemer was not shed for all men. The work of Atonement was not a token payment for all; it was an **absolute satisfaction** to God for **many**. Christ died not for the **goats** but for His **sheep**. The Son of God did not come to this earth to make the salvation of all men **possible**. He came to make the salvation of the elect **actual**. Further to this, Christ's obedience, sufferings and death are not the **cause** of our election; men are not elected **because** He shed His blood; rather, Christ shed His blood **on behalf** of those elected. The blood and righteousness of the Mediator are **meritorious for redemption**, not the **cause of election**. The Bible speaks of men and women who are redeemed out of every kindred tongue and people. This is because God the Father elected, out of every tribe and nation, a people for His praise.

Election and redemption pertain to the **same** persons, they are vessels of mercy and are distinct from vessels of wrath. They are a seed; a remnant, according to the election of grace.

## ELECTION AND PREACHING

Whilst the gospel is to be preached throughout the world, comparatively few are saved. *“Many be called, but few chosen”* (Matthew 20:16). It is this **little flock** who are to be given the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world (cf Matthew 25:34). Although by comparison they are said to be a ‘little flock’, yet, when considered absolutely, they are, *“a great multitude, which no man could number”* (Revelation 7:9). They are the elect of God the Father, redeemed by God the Son, and effectually called by God the Holy Spirit.

All the elect are redeemed, and all the redeemed are effectually called. Sovereign election is **absolute**: none will be lost. For further evidence, consider these additional scripture references to substantiate this point:

*“The children being not yet born... that the purpose of God according to election might stand”* (Romans 9:11). *“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou earnest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee [or, set thee apart] and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations”* (Jeremiah 1:5). *“God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation”* (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

When the gospel was preached at Thessalonica we read that it was, *“in power, and in the Holy Ghost”* (1 Thessalonians 1:5), but not all believed. Indeed, we learn from the account given in Acts chapter 17 that there was an uproar in that city, so much so, that Paul and Silas had to move out. Why was this? Was the Holy Ghost defeated? Was the purpose of God in election thwarted? Of course not! Neither was the great apostle

disappointed; he knew that his God was infallible. He had a similar experience as recorded in Acts chapter 13, but he states: “*as many as were ordained to eternal life believed*” (Acts 13:48). Then, when they raised a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, the apostles shook the dust off their feet and left filled with joy (cf Acts 13:50-52). To many this would appear a strange attitude.

The servant of Christ who has a clear understanding of divine sovereignty and unconditional election will not be downcast, for he knows that the purposes of God according to election stand, and all such will savingly believe; but, no others. Goats do not believe: “*Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you*” (John 10:26).

The faithful preacher will never be dismayed, for the Word of God will never return unto Him void, but it shall accomplish that which God pleases, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto He sends it (cf Isaiah 55:11). Every preacher should preach in the light of Paul’s words: “*For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life*” (2 Corinthians 2:15-16). The one exalts the attributes of holiness and justice, whilst the other magnifies divine grace and mercy, but one is not more important than the other.

The apostle Paul had one great aim, and that was to declare, “*all the counsel of God*” (Acts 20:27). How his preaching was received was not his concern. He served a God whom he knew to be sovereign and invincible; in this he rejoiced. “*Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His*

*knowledge by us in every place*” (2 Corinthians 2:14). Through faithful exposition of Holy Scripture, God is always glorified whatever the outcome as seen or not seen by us. “*Therefore*”, states the Inspired Book, “*preach the Word*” (2 Timothy 4:2).

By faith, we can rest fully assured that eventually all elect souls will be effectually called. “*Whom He did predestinate, them He also called*” (Romans 8:30). However rebellious a sinner may be, every elect soul will, in God’s time, be ‘made willing’, for such are chosen ‘unto obedience’ (cf 1 Peter 1:2). All the sheep for whom Christ died will hear His voice: none will ever perish. However far a sinner may wander in the ‘far country’, if he be elected of God he will not perish in his sins. The providence of God will so order his life that ultimately by some means he will hear the gospel and salvation will be wrought in his heart and he will be preserved until he is called of the Holy Spirit (cf Jude 1).

## **IS ELECTION FAIR?**

Some accuse the Almighty of being unequal because of the doctrine of Election. Indeed, this is a doctrine which is hated, to a large degree, by the world and even professing Christians. C. H. Spurgeon, in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century said:

“Men will allow God to be everywhere except on His Throne! They will allow Him to be in His workshop to fashion worlds and to make stars. They will allow Him to be in His almshouse to dispense His alms and bestow His bounties. They will allow Him

to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars thereof, or light the lamps of heaven, or rule the waves of the ever-moving ocean. But when God ascends His Throne, His creatures then gnash their teeth – and when we proclaim an enthroned God and His right to do as He wills with His own, to dispose of His creatures as He thinks well, without consulting them in the matter – then it is that we are hissed and cursed.”<sup>12</sup>

The fact that God favours some and passes by others, in no way warrants the charge often made against the truth of election, namely, that it is unjust. Injustice only enters into a case when one party has a claim upon another. If God owed forgiveness of sin and eternal life to all men, then it would be an injustice to only save a given number. But the sinner has absolutely no claim whatsoever on the blessings which come to him because of Divine election. In fact, he forfeited all rights to spiritual blessing in Eden. Man has no occasion to call the Almighty to account for electing some and passing others by, for God would still have been perfectly just and equitable if He had not saved any (cf Matthew 20:15-16). *“What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For He saith unto Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion’”* (Romans 9:14-15).

This is the mystery of the Divine will. It is according to God’s good pleasure which He purposed in Himself (cf Ephesians 1:9). By election, the free and sovereign grace of God is displayed, for He was not obliged

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12. C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892), ‘The New Park Street Pulpit’, Vol. 2, No. 77, 4<sup>th</sup> May 1856

to choose any, and as it is, He chooses whom He will and for no other reason than His own glory. “*What if God willing...*” (Romans 9:18-24).

## ELECTION AND HOLINESS OF LIFE

Election is unconditional and absolute, and all elected are predestined unto the adoption of children and unblameable holiness, the end being the praise of the glory of His grace (cf Ephesians 1:3-6). Saved sinners are: “*a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him that hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light*” (1 Peter 2:9).

In a true work of grace, holiness of life and unblameable conduct will **be seen**, for this is the object of sovereign election. “*This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise*” (Isaiah 43:21). “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*” (Ephesians 2:10). Good works in the life of the believer give evidence of the work of The Trinity (cf 1 Peter 1:2).

Where there is no desire to walk in the paths of righteousness we have **no warrant** to believe that a work of grace has been wrought. “*For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes*” (Luke 6:44). In election, God foreordained good works to the praise of the glory of His grace which has been **given to**, and **is in**, all His own.

## ELECTION IN CONCLUSION

Many who read this chapter will have been brought up in Arminianism, and to such, the doctrine of Election has never been taught. Indeed, some even go so far as to dismiss it altogether. Others, admitting it to be true, are of the opinion that it should never be preached from the pulpit. The only explanation which the writer ever had on the subject of Election, in the circles in which he was brought up, and in which he had fellowship for many years, was, 'that God foresaw who would repent and turn to Christ, and those He elected'. What a travesty of truth! The Word of God is impregnated with sovereign **unconditional** Election.

Why do so many by-pass this doctrine? The main reason is, as previously stated, they do not know God in the full splendour of all His attributes. They major on certain of the Divine qualities, rather than hold all in their entirety. Their thinking revolves around those attributes which they can best understand. In other words, they have reduced the **Supreme Being** to a dimension compatible with finite reasoning. "*Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself*" (Psalm 50:21). As a consequence, their theology is completely out of balance, and their preaching sadly deficient and oft-times erroneous.

A preacher must not fight shy of declaring 'all the counsel of God'.

The doctrine of election is no secret. It was at one time; it was a 'mystery' concealed in the counsels of Deity, but now that mystery has been made known (cf Romans 16:25-26, Ephesians 1:9). It is perfectly

true that it cannot be said by us that ‘such and such a person in an unregenerate state is elect’, or that another is ‘not elect’. The preacher in his preaching is to treat all alike in presenting the gospel, and command all men to repent, and to urge all to seek the Lord. This is the general call of the gospel. He is to sow beside all waters and to preach to every creature. With all his heart he can say, “*Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved*” (Acts 2:21).

Who ultimately responds is not our concern: “*the Lord knoweth them that are His*” (2 Timothy 2:19). He knows every one given to Him by the Father in a past eternity. He knows every sheep for whom He died, and the Holy Spirit, working in the harmony of the Godhead, knows every one whom He must effectually call in every generation. The preacher is to call the **many**, whereas the Holy Spirit will operate upon the **few** (the chosen).

There are still others who will argue that, if election is ever mentioned, then many will despair, or become distressed and question, ‘Am I elect?’ ‘How do I know?’ ‘Until I know, what can I do?’ These are not the questions. The questions are: ‘Am I born again?’ ‘Am I a new creature in Christ Jesus?’ ‘Have I repented of my sins?’ ‘Am I truly converted?’

The doctrine of Regeneration, which asserts that a man must be born again or he will not see the kingdom of heaven, might as soon be objected to as that of election. The doctrines of election and predestination in no way inhibit our preaching, indeed they are a fundamental part of the message. Neither does it put us in bondage in



our intercession for the salvation of the lost, as some seem to imagine. We are to pray for **all men** everywhere. Abraham, that great hero of the faith in the Old Testament, prayed fervently over Sodom although God had told him that it was about to be overthrown. Probably, no mortal ever preached or prayed like the Apostle Paul; his words are permeated with the truth of election, but this placed no restriction upon him whatsoever: *“I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men”* (1 Timothy 2:1). *“For necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel”* (1 Corinthians 9:16).

At the commencement of His ministry our Lord, on the Sabbath day went into the synagogue at Nazareth, and after reading a passage from Isaiah, He preached. Part of the sermon was, *“I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias... but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta... and many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian”* (Luke 4:25-27). What is this if it is not the truth of unconditional election? If the Divine Preacher withheld not the teaching then dare we? Though we notice the result of that preaching was, that, *“all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust Him out of the city... But He passing through the midst of them went His way”* (Luke 4:28-30). The declaration of ‘all the counsel of God’ has never been popular, but it is always God glorifying, and through it His ‘eternal purposes’ will be accomplished.

It was a sad day when the church in large measure cast aside, and ignored such fundamental teaching of Holy Scripture and commenced to

embrace the deficient and erroneous views revived by Arminius. One does not deny that vast numbers have been saved under Arminian preaching (for the Holy Spirit will effectually call all the elect in every age). Nevertheless, God will call to account, in a coming day, those people who have so grievously departed from the revelation delivered to them. Also, it is correct to say that Arminian preaching with its ‘**decisionism**’ has produced down through the years many who are merely false professors. They have a faith but it is of man; it is not the, “*work of faith with power*” (2 Thessalonians 1:11). No fruit is ever seen in their lives. It is a faith without works – dead (cf James 2:20). It is vain. It is the exercise of the will of man who is still dead in trespasses and in sins; whereas the faith of God’s elect is imparted by the Holy Spirit – it is “*the gift of God*” (Ephesians 2:8).

Such who through God’s sovereign grace receive this gift become new creatures, “*created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*” (Ephesians 2:10).

Calvinism – a man-made system? No! The infallible teaching of Holy Scripture!

### 3. THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT

#### PART 1

For many years (generally speaking) the preaching of Universal Atonement has been dominant in Evangelicalism, and those who have exposed this fallacy have often been treated with scorn, even to the point of being branded heretical.

However, the fact that others do not agree, must in no way inhibit us from championing the truth. It is the charge of the Church to “*earnestly contend for the faith*” (Jude 3). The word contend means: ‘To strive with opposition’; ‘to compete against’; ‘to defend or support’; ‘to maintain a position with convincing truth’. Our object is to do just this; though not to convince by the writings of men, but by the authoritative Word of the Almighty God.

The question to be answered is: ‘For whom did Christ make satisfaction?’ Or, expressed in another way: ‘For whose sins did He make atonement?’

As is the case with all the deeper teaching of Holy Scripture, one needs to have a thorough grasp of the doctrine of the eternal God in **all** His glorious attributes, together with a working knowledge of His eternal counsel, as set out particularly in the Covenants. It is the firm belief of the writer that it is ignorance of these vital subjects which is responsible for the shallow, and oft-times erroneous beliefs held by the majority.

Many things are revealed to us in the Word of God as being planned from **all eternity**. Let it be clearly stated that to suggest that any detail of that which the God of Heaven has planned could be frustrated or nullified is nothing short of blasphemy.

These matters pertaining to God's eternal design and plan are seen under various headings in the Scriptures: "*His purpose*" (Romans 8:28); "*the eternal purpose*" (Ephesians 3:11); "*His counsel*" (Hebrews 6:17); "*the counsel of God*" (Acts 2:23); "*My counsel*" (Isaiah 46:10); "*the everlasting covenant*" (2 Samuel 23:5; Hebrews 13:20).

Part of the eternal purpose was that the only begotten Son of God should become incarnate in order to fulfil righteousness and atone for sin. Coupled with this engagement was the Father's promised reward to the Son: "*...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. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities*" (Isaiah 53:10-11).

Upon the performance of the work assigned to Him, Christ was to receive the spoil. John records that He says to His Father, "*I have finished the work*" (John 17:4). Therefore, Christ **must**, "*see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied*". The '**many**' whose iniquities He bore must **all** be justified. If a single one of those for whom He made satisfaction be not regenerated, justified, sanctified and one day glorified, then the Father's promise would be void, His counsel would have failed, the everlasting covenant would be broken, yea, the very character of the

Almighty would be sullied. The immutability of God is at stake in this issue. To have other than sound Scriptural views and convictions on this matter is to grossly dishonour the Trinity.

The enmity of, “*that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan*” (Revelation 12:9), in one of his most deceptive forms is apparent as we consider the subject before us. Though it is absolutely impossible for Satan to undo the finished work of the Saviour or to destroy any of its fruits, yet he can, indeed he does, misrepresent it, and nowhere has he exercised greater subtlety than in this matter of the **extent** of the Atonement. Here he appears as an angel of light. His very attempt to discredit this mighty transaction, is done under the guise of **magnifying** it.

In consequence, not only has he deceived great numbers of the elect, but also he has succeeded in getting very many of them to assist him in his foul work, by their so-called gospel preaching. In the declaration of Universal Atonement, the adversary has wrought one of his greatest frauds and acts of deceit.

From a superficial standpoint, which would appear to exalt Christ the most? To say that He died to make possible the salvation of **all** men, or to say that He died **only** for the elect? Which seems to display the greatest compassion for sinners? Or again, which would appear the more to increase the value of the blood of Christ? To say that it avails for a given number only, or, that it redeems all of Adam’s race if only they will decide for Christ? Were it not for the truth set out in Holy Writ everyone would answer these questions in the wrong way. This in itself is proof that the venom of the serpent is behind the theory of Universal Atonement.

How worthless, how dangerous, is natural thinking and carnal reasoning when dealing with spiritual matters! When men bring their **thoughts** and **opinions** to bear upon God's revealed truth there is the hiss of the serpent in it. The wisest Christian who has ever lived is utterly incapable of thinking right thoughts about divine things, unless his thinking be governed by the Holy Scriptures. To read our thoughts into the Word of God, is to handle that Word deceitfully. By doing this we deceive ourselves, and we shall deceive others. Whence cometh deceit? From the Devil. He is the author and the promoter of deception. How tragic it is that so many Christians imagine that the glory of God is greatly enhanced by affirming that Atonement is universal, and that Particular Redemption places a restriction upon His benevolence.

If we are to arrive at a right conclusion we dare not speak outside of divine revelation. Remember God's thoughts are not our thoughts. A. W. Pink wrote: "Only that is glorious in God which He ascribes unto Himself".<sup>13</sup> However splendid our thoughts may appear to us, however reasonable our theories are in our own eyes, if they are at variance with the Word of God, then they are an abomination unto Him. The same author said: "Many objects present a fair appearance when viewed at a distance, but their defects become apparent when viewed at close quarters".<sup>14</sup> Most assuredly is this the case when the theory of Universal Atonement is closely examined.

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13. A. W. Pink (1886-1952), 'Studies in the Scriptures', July 1931, "The Satisfaction ('Atonement') of Christ", Part 19, "Its Extent"

14. Ibid.

The assertion that God's design in sending His Son into this world was that every sinner might be saved, may at first sight seem conducive to the magnifying of His grace, but closer inspection will show the contrary to be the case. Is it really to the honour and glory of God that He should so deal in wrath and judgment with His Only Beloved Son for every man that has ever lived, and then leave the success of that propitiatory work to the will and decision of a fallen creature? Can honour really be measured in this way? The propounding of a general redemption does not magnify the grace of God, it degrades it. What is more, it debases the work of Christ. According to this theory, God has only provided a precarious salvation. (Precarious means: 'depending upon the will of another'; 'not well established'; 'with a large element of chance'; 'doubtful'; 'uncertain').

Is this the salvation set out in Holy Scripture? Is there some element of chance in that which pertains to the True and Living God? Is that Everlasting Covenant uncertain? Are the decrees of the Almighty doubtful? Is the mighty work of Christ but a mere possibility which can only become actual with the compliance and agreement of a fallen sinner? Are the Father and the Son, having gone to the lengths of Calvary, ultimately dependent upon the wills of depraved mortals to effect that salvation?

This is to depict a God who, although having done so much, yet in the end, as to the final result of that work, is helpless; He can do no more; He stands back and must await man's permission. Could a more God-dishonouring theory ever have been thought out by the Devil? Even so, this has been, and still is the so-called gospel of the great majority of

mission and evangelistic preachers. Shame upon them for such a distortion of Truth!

How immeasurably superior is the gospel of Holy Scripture which secures the absolute and certain salvation of **every one** for whom it was made; leaving nothing uncertain or dependent upon fallen, fickle man. Is it not a fact that if salvation were but a **possibility** to man, then its application and blessing would be an **impossibility**, for because of total depravity, none would accept it?

Which sets forth the true value of atonement, and which demonstrates its efficacy? That which effectively secures the actual salvation of everyone for whom it was made, or, that which ends in the great majority of those for whom Christ shed His precious blood as a ransom being eternally punished in Hell? It is staggering to think that any could hold such a view as this, but a great many do, and the writer was once among them. Why? Because of a lack of understanding concerning the work of the Atonement. In Arminian circles the Biblical concept of the Atonement is never preached.

What is the true Scriptural nature of this work? It was the specific and actual bearing of the sins (in full) of definite persons. It was the actual discharge of their debt. It was the positive suffering of the law's penalty in order that those persons might go free. Further, it must be remembered that God, as Supreme Judge, has accepted that satisfaction made by the Surety. So, where would God's honour, His justice and His faithfulness be, if, notwithstanding the work of Christ, He yet eternally punished millions for whom His Son died? If atonement is



universal, the Mediator having died for all, and God having accepted that ransom, then all men **must** be saved.

There is no alternative. Or do we harbour in our minds the God-dishonouring thought that He punishes twice? That He put His Beloved Son to death upon the cross for the sins of all men, and for the **same** sins He punishes eternally the **same** sinners who committed those sins for whom Christ died?

What faith, what confidence can anyone have in a God of this nature? To present a Redeemer who has actually shed His blood for countless millions who are now in Hell, will give neither assurance nor confidence to anyone. What guarantee is there but that one day we shall all end in the same doom? If this atonement has failed for them, then how can any be persuaded that it will succeed for us? It must be categorically stated that an atonement which fails to atone and a sacrifice which fails to deliver, are worthless.

The costly price of redemption was far too precious in the sight of God for it to be cast away on souls that perish. Christ never died in vain for a single child of Adam. The Bible teaches **particular redemption**, not **universal atonement**. The Mediator, “*was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification*” (Romans 4:25). That is, for the Elect. He was **not** delivered for the reprobate, neither did God raise His Son for **their** justification. It is all whose offences Christ bore, who are justified.

God has made Christ to be sin for us... that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (cf 2 Corinthians 5:21). As the Mediator was made sin for all those for whom He died, so inevitably must those for whom He was made sin be made the righteousness of God in Him. Again, the Scripture states, *“He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”* (Romans 8:32).

If God delivered up His Son for all mankind then He will, indeed He must, freely bestow (not offer, but actually give) repentance and faith (all that pertains to salvation) to all mankind, since there is an **absolute** and **sure** connection in the Word of God between Christ’s definite purchase of salvation and the actual deliverance of those persons for whom it was made.

John Owen, prince of theologians, wrote:<sup>15</sup>

“Can it possibly be conceived that there should be a redemption of men, and those men not redeemed; that a price should be paid, and the purchase not consummated? Yet all this must be made true, and innumerable other absurdities, if universal redemption be asserted: a price would be paid for all, yet few delivered; the redemption of all consummated, yet few redeemed; the judge satisfied, the jailor conquered, and yet the prisoner inthrall!”

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15. John Owen (1616-1683), ‘The Death of Death in the Death of Christ’, 1648, Chapter 5.

Let it be said again, a greater nonsense the Devil could never have invented, yet large sections of the Church believe and preach this. The questions which, nevertheless, must be answered are:

1. Was the work of Christ designed to make the salvation of all Adam's race **possible**, or was it designed to make the salvation of all His own **certain**?
2. Was it to remove those obstacles which stood in the way of God pardoning all men, or was it to remove **all the sin** of those whom God had predestinated to eternal glory?
3. Was it simply to open a way whereby sinners could approach unto God if they **so desired**, or did Peter understand aright when he wrote, "*Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God...*" (1 Peter 3:18)?

Of course Peter was right! The apostles did not set forth these Arminian theories, indeed, the Devil had not invented them at that point in history! No! Peter, inspired by the infallible Holy Spirit, was declaring eternal truth. The work of Christ is invincible. It **brings** all to God for whom satisfaction was made. Though repentance and faith are vital (and this will be dealt with later) yet this is all provided for. It is a **part** of Christ's finished work. He purchased and gives that very faith and repentance through which we believe and turn: "*Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins*" (Acts 5:31).

The Word of God is most explicit in setting forth that Christ's purchase and the Holy Spirit's application pertain to the same individuals. Those for whom Christ obtained eternal life and spiritual blessing are those to whom the Holy Spirit applies these benefits.

How well we know Isaiah chapter 53; or do we? "*The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed*" (v. 5). Could it be any clearer? His chastisement and our healing are **inseparably** associated. That which Almighty God intended from all eternity, and Deity enshrined in the Everlasting Covenant, will infallibly come to pass; all of it; no more no less. Alexander Carson said:

"If the wisdom of men cannot reconcile this with their views of what is right, then let them be prepared to dispute the matter with the Almighty at the Day of Judgment."<sup>16</sup>

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16. Alexander Carson (1776-1844), 'Works', 1847. "The Doctrine of the Atonement", Section 5.

## PART 2

We are now to consider this subject from the aspect of the uprightness or rectitude of God. The God of heaven is a God of truth. With Him is no variableness, no shadow of turning. Just and right is He. “*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right*” (Genesis 18:25)? To do right is a principle which can never be violated by the Supreme Being.

God will not remit sin without full satisfaction, neither will he punish sin where a full satisfaction has been received. To infer anything other is inconsistent with the perfect equity of the eternal God. If the punishment of sin has been borne, then the remission of the offence **must** be granted. The very principles of uprightness must suppose this; God’s rectitude demands it.

The death of Christ being a legal satisfaction for sin, all for whom He died must enjoy the clearance of their guilt. It would be as much at variance with justice and equity, that any for whom Christ made satisfaction should continue in sin and die under condemnation, as it would be for God to grant pardon and life to a sinner without satisfaction having been made at all. Holy Justice indispensably requires that all the benefits of Christ’s work be imparted to everyone for whom it was made; for not only was satisfaction made by the Mediator, it was also **accepted** by God at the bar of divine justice on behalf of all those for whom it was made.

All will admit that multitudes of men are not delivered from the punishment of sin, and that vast numbers perish in condemnation. The very nature of atonement being an efficacious work and unfailing in its

end, must surely compel any Christian who intelligently thinks this through, to conclude that for such as perish no satisfaction was made. If this is denied, as it is by the preachers of Universal Atonement, then one must maintain the monstrous belief that the infallible Judge refuses to remit the punishment of millions for whose offences He has received full compensation; that He finally condemns those for whom He has received the full ransom price; that He seeks satisfaction in their personal, eternal punishment, having **already** obtained and **accepted** that satisfaction through the sufferings of Christ. Or, to put it another way, an infinitely righteous God takes **double** payment for the **same** debt; **double** satisfaction for the **same** offence, exacting without mercy, first from the Surety, then again from those for whom the Surety stood.

“Complete atonement Thou hast made,  
And to the utmost Thou hast paid  
Whate’er Thy people owed;  
How then can wrath on me take place,  
If sheltered in Thy righteousness,  
And sprinkled with Thy blood?

If Thou hast my discharge procured,  
And freely in my room endured  
The whole of wrath divine;  
Payment God cannot twice demand,  
First at my bleeding Surety’s hand  
And then again at mine.”<sup>17</sup>

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17. Augustus Toplady (1740-1778), Hymn: “From whence this fear and unbelief?”.

Such conclusions are revolting and totally alien to the truth of Holy Scripture. Teaching and preaching which is so deficient in doctrinal content as to allow for such inferences to be drawn, should be firmly withstood. Just as Election must ever be held within the context of Total Depravity, so also must the Atonement ever be taught within the framework of Sovereign Election.

This man-devised scheme of Universal Atonement, which has been accepted by such large sections of the Church, is an assumption without Biblical warrant, and careful analysis shows it to be a gigantic nonsense. It sets forth Christ as a Saviour of those who are **never** saved. It portrays Christ as a Redeemer of those who are **never** redeemed. It heralds Him as a Deliverer of untold millions who are **never** delivered.

What kind of atonement is this? It is not the Biblical revelation of the satisfaction which the Mediator made. No! this theory is an invention of the Devil to dishonour Christ by distorting truth. Alas! Vast numbers of Christians have been deluded; they not only hold this but they preach it, world-wide: It is their 'gospel'.

No doubt as some read this, they will be thinking, 'I believe that Christ made atonement for all men universally, but vast numbers are not saved because they do not trust Him'. Reasoning of this kind only goes to prove that such have never really come to understand the true meaning of Human Depravity. What is more, it is a deviation from the doctrines of Election and Divine Sovereignty. Two very important issues must be faced:

1. At the time when the work of Christ was actually effected, vast multitudes were already forever imprisoned in darkness. Did Christ die for them? Did they have opportunity to trust Him?

2. It is no exaggeration to say that at least one half of the human race has never heard the message of salvation, so how can they believe it? Some will argue that this is the fault of the Church, they should have carried the message: but let none lose sight of such inspired words as are found in Acts 16:6-7. Here the Holy Spirit forbade the gospel to be preached to certain persons; neither were the apostles allowed to enter certain countries. God is sovereign and it is the prerogative of the great Head of the Church to close doors as well as to open them (cf Revelation 3:7-8). Whatever blame may rest upon Christians for their failure, the Holy Spirit is supreme and invincible in the calling of the elect. The means as well as the end are taken care of by the Trinity in the matter of salvation.

If God has elected a person, and Christ has paid the ransom for that person, then the Holy Spirit will so order, that someone will be stirred up to carry the glad tidings, or by some other unfailing means that person will be reached, and effectually called. To think or suggest otherwise is nothing short of blasphemy, for it is the express mission of the Holy Spirit to apply the saving work of Christ to **all** for whom it was made; and **none** for whom His blood was shed will be overlooked.

To harbour the thought that the outworking of the Eternal Counsel of the Godhead is affected by the coldness and lack of zeal on the part of the Church is a fallacy; it is a denial of Divine Sovereignty, and it is the



reasoning of unbelief. That God will one day call His people into account for their apathy and failure in their commission to preach the gospel to every creature is another matter, and this truth must not be overlooked, but in no way does the Church's slackness mean that elect souls are being overlooked and will be lost at the last.

In the Bible we learn that, according to the good pleasure of His will, a number, which no man can number of Adam's race, taken from every nation under heaven, were chosen before time began, or creation was effected. All these were predestinated unto the adoption of children by virtue of the redemptive work of Christ. This is the undeniable truth of Ephesians 1:4-7.

Herein is the love of God manifested to this fallen world, in that a vast remnant of Adam's family, according to God's grace, are to be eternally saved; whereas, in the case of fallen angels none will be saved. They, with the remainder of Adam's race, will suffer the due reward of their iniquity. No atonement for them has been made; none can be applied.

Therein is set forth the severity of God. As was stated earlier, never must any of the holy perfections of the Godhead be forgotten or left out of our theology, for all His attributes are active, and all are to be openly displayed. *"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off"* (Romans 11:22).

The Bible teaches, God chose to Himself a people of Adam's posterity (not all, but some). These were redeemed by Christ, and every one of

them in his generation will be effectually called by the Holy Spirit. It will be apparent to a careful reader of the Scriptures, who has not a preconceived notion, but comes to its pages with a clear and open mind, that mankind is seen to be divided into two classes. This is common to Old and New Testaments and runs from Genesis to Revelation: Cain – Abel; Jacob – Esau; Israel – the Heathen nations; the Church – the World; the Sheep – the Goats, etc.

With this division we also note that what is affirmed to the one class is denied to the other. This is the very tenor of Holy Scripture. Every assertion that Christ died for His people is a repudiation that He died for all the race. “*He shall save His people from their sins*” (Matthew 1:21). “*I lay down my life for the sheep*” (John 10:15). “*Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it*” (Ephesians 5:25). This language of discrimination is meaningless if He died for all mankind.

The Son of God came into this world to make absolute and complete satisfaction to God, both preceptive and penal, for **His people**; that company given Him by the Father before time began. Foreknown by the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, their names are enrolled in the Book of Life (cf Revelation 17:8; Philippians 4:3). Every name was before Him from Bethlehem to Calvary. “*I know my sheep*”, said the Saviour. He was not working out a spotless righteousness en masse, but for individual sinners. Calvary did not constitute a lump sum payment to provide for anybody and everybody. This is a gross distortion of the work of Christ. He bore **our** sins. This was specific, not indiscriminate. The work of the Mediator was not some kind of **token payment**. On the cross the Redeemer had every individual elect soul

before Him. What is more, every sin which every one of His sheep had ever committed or would commit, was fully known to the Lamb of God. He identified and knew them to be the specific, actual sins of each elect soul. The curse and judgment of each individual sin was upon Him in all its ghastly reality.

Calvary was not some hit-or-miss transaction. The Mediator was there on behalf of a people, "*whom He did foreknow*". Every sin of every individual of that company was fully, positively, finally and eternally put away. When He returned to heaven He appeared as Advocate at the bar of Divine Justice, bearing the names of all those for whom He had made satisfaction, and those names tally with the names enrolled in the Book of Life.

Further to this, every one of those names is known to the Holy Spirit; and in the time appointed, in the providence of God, the rod of God's strength is put forth out of Zion and such are made willing in the day of His power (cf Psalm 110:2-3). "*Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called*" (Romans 8:30). "*The Lord knoweth them that are His*" (2 Timothy 2:19). Of course He knows them! They are the very members of His Body. Christ did not die for unknown members who **might** or **might not** decide to be a part of His Body. What a ridiculous theory! The members which form the Body of Christ were chosen and given to Him before the foundation of the world.

In sharp contrast to this, we read, "*Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast*

*out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity”* (Matthew 7:21-23).

Arminian preaching maintains that the Saviour, at the cross of Calvary, knew everybody and was making satisfaction for all men everywhere. Yet, in the coming judgment day, vast numbers of them He will not know. What an absurdity this is when examined in the pure light of Scripture!

Let it be repeated: Christ laid down His life for **the sheep**. These sheep are called by name: they follow Him. He gives unto them eternal life and they shall never perish (cf John 10). Does not this make it abundantly clear that all for whom Christ died will be saved and that He died for none other than those upon whom the gift of faith is bestowed? It is the **sheep** who hear His voice, believe, and follow. These are the ones for whom the Good Shepherd laid down His life – not for all.

To infer Universal Atonement renders the tenth chapter of John meaningless, for as the Lord continued the discourse, the doctrines of Election and Particular Redemption are the more emphasized: *“Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd”* (John 10:16). ‘Other sheep’ means future generations and includes Gentile sheep (cf Romans 9). But note the wording: *“other sheep **I have**”*. They were His before they believed. *“I know them”*; *“Them also I must bring”*. None will be overlooked. *“They shall hear my voice”* – everyone in his or her generation at the appointed time. How apt are the lines of John Kent:

“There is a period known to God,  
When all His sheep, redeemed by blood,  
Shall leave the hateful ways of sin,  
Turn to the fold, and enter in.”<sup>18</sup>

*“But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep as I said unto you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me”* (John 10:26-27). What could be plainer? Men believe not, because they are not of His sheep. If they had been amongst that number then they would have been atoned for, and in consequence would hear His voice, and follow: *“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out”* (John 6:37). All that number shall come and as they come (one by one) under the Holy Spirit’s mighty power, none will ever be cast out.

Nothing is left to chance in the economy of the Eternal God. It is unthinkable that in this great matter of Atonement, God should have poured out His righteous fury and exacted full and final payment from His only begotten Son on behalf of untold millions who will be eternally damned.

Let it be asserted again that the Bible teaches Particular Redemption. Any other teaching is not just at variance with, but is diametrically opposed to, the clear statement of Holy Writ.

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18. John Kent (1766-1843). Hymn of the same title.

### PART 3

That our subject is a vexed question with many, one is fully aware, but because the **extent** of the Atonement depends upon the very **nature** of the Atonement, it is of paramount importance that we have firm and sound convictions on this matter; for the honour of God and the glory of Christ is indissolubly tied up with this question of extent. Because the doctrines of Sovereign Grace are so contested and scorned by many Christians in this age, it may be helpful to make a few observations.

The theory of Universal Atonement became widespread from the early part of the last century. Christ's death for His people only, was not so universally decried when the basic truth of Election was held; but tragically in the early 1800s the doctrines of Foreknowledge, Election, and Predestination were shelved by great numbers. Arminianism was already widespread in certain sections of Nonconformity and at this period in history it began to infiltrate into others.

To fail to teach, and to neglect to emphasize, such a basic and fundamental element in the economy of Redemption could bring nothing but error and disaster in its wake. This was the period which saw the commencement of vast missionary enterprises, the bringing into being of religious societies, the beginnings of mass evangelism, and the evolving of new movements which claimed that they alone were according to the New Testament pattern. This was acclaimed by many to be a golden age. If any still harbour such a notion they would do well to think again and re-assess, for it was at this very period that the seeds

were sown and the stage set for the rot which we now witness in today's Evangelicalism.

At the Reformation God brought the Church out of her darkest night – one thousand years of ignorance and superstition. How was it done? First, by the unearthing of the true Word of God. Then, men such as Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and others were raised up. These men expounded the truth. They were not evangelistic gospellers; they were preachers in the Biblical sense. Their preaching was expository – not sketchy. John Calvin preached 343 sermons on the Book of Isaiah alone; 200 from Deuteronomy, and so on. Then followed the Puritan era, with such giants of the faith as Owen, Manton, Charnock, Bunyan, Flavel and numerous others all over the country. These dug deep into the Word of God and expounded its glorious truth systematically and thoroughly. However, as always the Devil made his counter-attack, and through Arminius, the old Semi-Pelagian theory had already been revived, that Atonement was universal and that divine grace was resistible and not sovereign. This gathered momentum with the advent of John Wesley.

In no way is the writer denying the fact that the ministry of the Wesleys was used in the sovereignty of God to the salvation of thousands. Chapels sprang up too numerous to count; in some places there were three or four in one parish alone. But Wesley was a travelling preacher, he would pass through an area preaching and then be gone. Consequently, there grew up a vast number of companies of believers, but few shepherds: few men gifted of the Holy Spirit to teach. This led to a circuit system of ministry, with itinerant preachers travelling

around from place to place; good men, sincere men, but it was an isolated ministry. This system caught on in varying degrees in other sections of Nonconformity.

Then the advent of the Brethren movement saw a similar development. The result of this was that thorough doctrinal preaching was bound to suffer, and as for systematic theology, it was well-nigh extinct. Consequently, each generation became less grounded than the former. Any thinking person is bound to see the inevitability of this, for how can a preacher ever deal with such subjects as the Atonement or other vital tenets of the faith in a single sermon, or even a fortnight's meetings? It is an impossibility.

The itinerant type of ministry naturally produces text preaching, that is, giving isolated addresses. This in turn tends to the taking of Scriptures out of context and often to the careless handling of the Word of God.

Other factors also have a bearing on this. Some have not the time to study in depth and many have not the ability. In all charity let it be said, the Word of God does not yield up its meaning to lazy or casual readers. This is one of the reasons for that 'means of grace', namely, public ministry. The Great Head raises up men who are to give themselves to the ministry, and He gives to a church such as will diligently and prayerfully search the Scriptures and faithfully and fearlessly sound out the truth. If a church has not such a gift, then it might well question its Biblical position. What scathing remarks have been made in some circles regarding that which they pejoratively style as 'one-man ministry'! When in fact, it is 'any man ministry' which is unscriptural.



The fact that Christendom has created a hierarchy of religious professionals must in no way make a true church depart from the Biblical ordinance of the ministry, or to relinquish the God-ordained office of the teaching elder.

Further to this, the itinerant system tends to engender laziness. Is it not a fact that many preachers travel far and wide with the same, isolated sermon? The irony is that, in the main, these are the very men who claim to be following the Biblical pattern!

The object of saying all this is not to cause offence, but to point out that these are the main factors which have led to the present confused state of doctrine. Expository preaching has so declined over the past 150 years as to be almost extinct in so-called Evangelicalism, and if one begins to speak of Systematic Theology most Christians today look blank. History alone will prove the point that when the Scriptures are expounded in all their fullness the Church is strong, even, "*terrible as an army with banners*" (Song of Solomon 6:10); but when the ministry becomes weak and patchy, and large sections of the Word of God are never studied, and doctrine is abandoned, then will the people of God become stunted, deficient and weak; prone to any and every error, with consequent confusion.

Possibly it is in this matter of the extent of the Atonement that more bewilderment has been caused than in any other area. The preaching that Christ died for the whole human race and that the Holy Spirit is now seeking to win and woo every sinner to Himself, has been widespread. So uniform has this teaching become over the past 150

years, and so fervently has it been advocated and accepted, that to affirm the contrary is immediately to be denounced by some as heretical, and will meet with fierce opposition and ostracism.

Three matters must, however, be carefully considered and held:

1. Since all Adam's race are **not** pardoned and saved, and never will be, then Christ cannot have made atonement for their sins.
2. Holy Scripture cannot contradict itself. Being the inspired Word of God there cannot be inconsistencies. It cannot teach that Christ died for the elect and also affirm that He died for all mankind as well. One or the other must be an erroneous deduction which men have drawn.
3. If the Bible teaches particular redemption (which it does), then there must be both a legitimate and honest answer and interpretation to those passages which prove difficult to so many.

At this point the writer again stresses the importance of holding the Scriptures in their entirety. Sound doctrine does not hang upon an isolated text, rather in the aggregate of truth. Therefore, we have to "*Search the Scriptures*" (John 5:39); "*Give attendance to reading*" (1 Timothy 4:13); "*Search ... daily*" (Acts 17:11); "*Comparing spiritual things with spiritual*" (1 Corinthians 2:13). Whilst this applies to all in private, yet it has a far greater bearing on the office of the minister. He is to study "*in meekness*" (Psalm 25:9); coming to the Scriptures with an open mind, not with preconceived ideas, or swayed by denominational

tradition. Never must pride keep us in a faulty belief. If we have not got it right, then let us admit it. Let none be arrogant.

If our interpretation has been wrong, then let us confess it, and come to the Word again in complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit, fervently crying after knowledge, lifting up the voice for understanding, seeking as for silver, searching as for hidden treasures (cf Proverbs 2:3-4).

For this a man must have time, and one who is fully occupied with business cannot give the time required. Others there are who have the time but are not diligent and thorough in study. There are ministers who appear to spend a disproportionate amount of time on matters other than study, and some are little more than errand boys for the saints: this is wrong. It was a saying amongst the Puritans that the minister must be kept chained to his desk! This is the Biblical pattern (cf Acts 6:4).

The Word of God must be studied, not casually read as one would a newspaper or an ordinary book. Neither can the 'mysteries of the Kingdom' be solved as one might solve a mathematical problem. It is not as simple as saying two plus two equals four. If we look upon portions of the Word of God as being so simple and plain that we fully understand them, then we shall receive no further light upon the matter, for such an attitude closes the mind to further illumination by the Holy Spirit.

It is sadly possible for a man to assume that he is now in possession of practically all that the Bible teaches. He may be able to quote chapter

and verse in a most precise way and be looked upon as a veritable living handbook and walking encyclopaedia of Biblical knowledge. We need to be wary of such, remembering that word, "*if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know*" (1 Corinthians 8:2).

No man or church knows it all, or ever will. This is why there must be constant study, constant preaching, constant examination, constant reassessment, continual reformation and continual readjustment.

No person or church fully attains in this life. True spirituality is ongoing and progressive, never static. Also, the Word of God being a living word will ever be yielding up to us fresh wonder and glory, different aspects of truth being suited to our state and growth. It is as the believer progresses from 'milk' to 'strong meat' that he begins to realise that the Bible is not a collection of isolated texts but is a vast compendium of doctrine and a mighty embodiment of truth. Therefore, it must be explored and grappled with in order to attain a right understanding.

## PART 4

One of the major faults of loose evangelicalism is that texts take precedence over doctrine; the preaching from isolated verses as opposed to the exposition of Scripture. This is a highly dangerous practice and if it be the norm in ministry will invariably lead into error. Lest any should take issue on this, let it be substantiated.

Take the teaching of ‘Soul Sleep’. Quite a few there are who teach that between death and the great day of resurrection, the believer is in a state of unconsciousness. They will quote such verses as, “*the dead know not anything*” (Ecclesiastes 9:5); “*He giveth His beloved sleep*” (Psalm 127:2); “*the dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence*” (Psalm 115:17). From such isolated texts they teach the sleep of the soul until the last trumpet shall sound. Here, the question must be raised: ‘Is soul sleep a doctrine of Holy Scripture?’ The answer is no. If these verses were expounded within their context then the true meaning would be plain to see, but extracted and placed in isolation of course they can be used for the basis of such a belief. Such use of the Scriptures is to handle the Word of God deceitfully. Indeed, it changes the truth of God into a lie (cf Romans 1:25).

Take as another example the great controversy surrounding the Romanist dogma of ‘Transubstantiation’. They maintain that the bread is the actual body of the Lord, and quote, “*This is my body*” (1 Corinthians 11:24). It is true that the text is there, and that is precisely what it says, but is the Romish interpretation correct? Is Transubstantiation the teaching of Holy Scripture? Of course not.

Neither can the issue which is before us, the extent of the Atonement be settled by an appeal to such verses as, “*God so loved the world*” (John 3:16), or, “*Christ ... died for all*” (2 Corinthians 5:14). Such expressions must be studied and held in keeping with the analogy of the Faith, and within the context of the doctrine of Atonement.

If it be preached that the work of Redemption was designed for all, then it must necessarily be assumed that Christ’s sacrifice procured for all sinners that quickening grace of the Holy Spirit which is indispensable to salvation; and that the Mediator’s work, both preceptive and penal, was for all Adam’s race; and that not only did the Redeemer finish and finalize the work for all, but God at the bar of divine justice has accepted that as **full** and **final** payment. If this be true, then reason demands that such preachers state the ultimate: it must be that **all** men are infallibly saved.

Yet when Arminian gossellers are faced with the sheer logic of this, they will hedge and say, ‘Oh! I am not a universalist’. But their very preaching is a fallacy, for they believe in a Universal Atonement, but they do not believe in Universal Salvation. They fervently speak of the finished work of Christ, and the efficacy of the blood, yet, their preaching is a denial of this. How can it be a finished work, accepted at the bar of Divine Justice for those who at the end will stand before the Eternal Judge in their sins? How can the blood of Christ be efficacious for all, if countless millions are assigned to the lake of fire? Such preachers should be reasonable, and either declare themselves universalists or cease using empty and meaningless words which not only deceive souls, but also dishonour Christ.

The real issue in this is not so much the **scope** of the Atonement as the **efficacy** of it. In an attempt to square the situation, men who preach Universal Atonement will often say: ‘There is a fullness in the Atonement, but it is **if** men believe’. This proviso to the theory makes the efficacy and sufficiency of the Atonement **conditional**. Surely this is a contradiction in terms?

We are being told that Christ has made satisfaction to God for the whole of Adam’s race on **condition** that the whole of Adam’s race believe. What then has happened to the doctrine of election? Further, this conditional aspect is not the easy matter which Arminian evangelists make it out to be. The Word of God represents man as ignorant, blind, spiritually in fetters, bound with chains, confined in a prison of absolute darkness; indeed, dead in trespasses and sins; and that nothing short of sovereign, supernatural power can free him.

The story is told of a wealthy philanthropist who once visited a dungeon in which a wretched captive had for many months lain bound in chains and fetters. Strongly imprisoned was this man within secure walls and barred doors. Looking in through a small lattice, the only opening for light and air, the wealthy man looked at the hopeless spectacle and shouted aloud to the captive, that he had come **with sufficient** (note the word) gold for a ransom, on condition that he (the captive) would shake off his chains, wrench open the door and quit his miserable position. “Alas!” exclaims the poor fellow, “your kindness does not reach me, your offer is but a mockery: for unless your ransom **positively effects** my deliverance it is of no value to me”.

All this talk of the sufficiency of the Atonement is only an **empty offer** of salvation if it is made conditional upon the action of fallen man; for man is totally unable.

So, we establish that Arminian preaching is defective as to its teaching regarding Human Depravity. It is erroneous as to Election. It is a gigantic nonsense as pertaining to the Atonement.

How different is the true gospel of Holy Scripture: *“By the blood of Thy covenant I have sent forth the prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water”* (Zechariah 9:11). By His life and death, the Lord Jesus has not only paid the ransom, but He has made the captives His own. He purchased them, they are His legal possession, and with the arm of His power He delivers and brings them out. The Mediator is not only the Saviour, He is also the Deliverer. *“I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles: to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house”* (Isaiah 42:6-7). *“He sent redemption unto His people: He hath commanded His covenant for ever: holy and reverend is His name”* (Psalm 111:9).

The Scriptures infallibly teach Particular Redemption. He sends redemption to His people (the elect). He does not offer it to all and leave it to depraved mortals to say yes or no. If this was the case then the extent of the Atonement would be nil, for not a single soul would accept it. The Christ which the Holy Scriptures reveal is an **Efficacious Redeemer** and a **Sovereign Emancipator**.



## PART 5

Let us examine some of the principle verses which Arminians use in an attempt to give credence to their theory, commencing with John 3:16 and in particular the words, “*God so loved the world*”.

The first exercise in this controversy must be that we sit down with a concordance and check every reference in our Bible to the word ‘world’, and it is immediately apparent that this word is used in a variety of ways. For example: “*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you*” (John 15:18). This is not everyone. Rather is it the world of unbelievers in view. Sometimes the word refers to the planet, sometimes to the people who inhabit the planet: “*He was in the world and the world [planet] was made by Him and the world [people] knew Him not*” (John 1:10).

There are other instances where ‘world’ has reference to but a handful of people: “*The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold the world is gone after Him*” (John 12:19). This could have only applied to a few hundred people around Bethany and Jerusalem. Very rarely in Scripture does ‘the world’ refer to all men of all generations from Eden through to the end of time. By far the most common usage of the word in the New Testament is its reference to the Gentiles, in contra-distinction to the Jews. Therefore, in focusing attention on John 3:16, we must be careful, as in all parts of the Word of God, to keep it within its context. We dare not wrench a statement out of its setting, or twist the meaning of a word which is used within a given connection (cf 2 Peter 3:16).

*“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). This is part of a long discourse which the Saviour had with a Jew on the subject of New Birth, therefore the verse must be read and explained against this backcloth. There is an unvarying rule of interpretation, that both definite and indefinite terms or phrases must be defined or explained in accordance with the subject about which they are employed or connected.

Unmistakably the subject of this verse is the Love of God, but joined to the subject are the indefinite expressions ‘world’ and ‘whosoever’. The burning question with Arminians is: ‘who are the objects of God’s love?’ But before defining or explaining who are the objects or persons concerned, it is necessary to make a detailed study of the subject, the Love of God, since the indefinite term must be defined within the context of the subject. Accordingly, we first ascertain what the Bible teaches concerning the Love of God:

**1. It is Eternal.** *“The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee”* (Jeremiah 31:3). *“According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world”* (Ephesians 1:4).

**2. It proceeds from God’s Spontaneous Will.** *“The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you”* (Deuteronomy 7:7-8).

**3. It cannot be intercepted or severed.** *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ... For I am persuaded that nothing ... shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:35-39).

**4. It is Immutable.** *“Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it”* (Song of Solomon 8:7).

**5. It is Sovereign.** *“It is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated”* (Romans 9:13).

These five aspects of the Love of God must be held as a whole; and because of the nature of that love there are manifest effects. There is an infallible connection between the Love of God and the blessing of the objects of that love. **Absolute results** follow in the wake of God’s love. The God of heaven works to a plan, He has a pattern, and an end in view, from which He does not deviate: *“But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation”* (2 Thessalonians 2:13). *“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not”* (1 John 3:1).

Those loved of God are chosen to salvation, they also, are called to be sons. We must also register the fact that the term ‘world’ here in 1 John 3:1 is in no way within the range of God’s love as pertaining to salvation. The love is upon ‘the **called**’. Their calling is the certain and **infallible consequence** of a sovereign, eternal, and immutable love. The teaching of Holy Scripture is that the objects of God’s love

will be effectually ‘called’, ‘made sons’, and ‘partakers of His holiness’ (cf Hebrews 12:10).

So we return to John 3:16, where the subject is the Love of God, with the indefinite expressions of ‘world’ and ‘whosoever’, which must be defined and explained within the confines of that subject. We have now established that there is a design in God’s love. Therefore, if we bring this principle to bear on this verse we discover that the design is, that all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ shall have everlasting life, and that the number who believe will come from all parts of the world (or planet) from among Gentiles as well as Jews. This is summed up perfectly in the Bible by Caiaphas (who himself little knew the profound truth which he uttered): “...*being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation [Jews]; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad*” (John 11:51-52). This can mean none other than the elect of God, those chosen in Christ, scattered abroad amongst both Jews and Gentiles; and Christ was to die for both, to be ‘lifted up’, just, “*as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*” (John 3:14-16).

That is not Universal Atonement. The term ‘world’ here must be held within the context of our Lord’s discourse with Nicodemus (a Jew). ‘World’ within this setting has special reference to the Gentiles, whom the Pharisees would have considered accursed. This reference to the

world of Gentiles continues throughout the New Testament: "...on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 10:45); "...then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18); "...declaring the conversion of the Gentiles" (Acts 15:3).

At this point further questions arise:

- (i) Is the expression 'The Gentiles' in these verses universal?
- (ii) Is it indefinite or absolute?
- (iii) Are all Gentiles granted repentance?
- (iv) Is the Holy Spirit poured out on all Gentiles?
- (v) Can all Gentiles be declared converted?

To these questions the Word of God gives a straightforward and plain answer. "God ... did visit the Gentiles to **take out of them** a people for His name" (Acts 15:14). It is not universal, it is sovereignly selective.

In conclusion let it be stated, the popular misinterpretation of John 3:16 is repudiated by the very facts of history. First, take the record of the human race before Christ was born. Unnumbered millions lived and died without God and without hope. The Old Testament declares, "*The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God*" (Psalm 9:17). If they were all eternally and immutably loved, then where is the evidence of it? With reference to a later period in history, recall the Dark Ages. Not for a decade, nor for a generation, not even for a century, but for one thousand years, the Bible was to a very great degree withheld. The Papacy dominated the major part of Europe whilst other continents were in the darkness of heathenism. Over those many

centuries, generations lived and died in abject darkness. Then, since the mighty work of God in the Protestant Reformation, right up to the present day, who can attempt to number the vast multitudes that have lived and died in ignorance, never having heard of Christ or the gospel? Is it not inexplicably strange that a sovereign, omnipotent God of all power should so love multitudes and yet be unable even to convey that love to them, so leaving them to die in ignorance?

Many Christians who read this will be saying: 'I cannot reconcile this with God's love'. This, of course, cannot be done if one has a faulty conception of the Love of God. Men of the world are not so foolish as to propound such a theory as universal indiscriminative love, neither will they accept it, if it be preached to them, for it is contrary to reason, as well as contrary to God's truth. Other Scriptures are equally as true as John 3:16. For example, "*God in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways*" (Acts 14:16); "*God gave them over to a reprobate mind*" (Romans 1:28).

There are many other attributes within the Godhead beside that of Love, and one does not over-ride another. Each attribute is equally active and important. The Bible does not ask men to endeavour to reconcile these truths, let alone explain them away by inventing a universal love theory. We are to hold doctrine in its entirety.

Summarizing this section on God's love: the Scriptures teach that there is an **infallible connection** between the Love of God and the blessing of the objects of that love.

## PART 6

Attention must now be drawn to another text, which if removed from its setting and quoted in isolation, takes on a completely different meaning to that which the Spirit of God intended. *“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world ”* (John 1:29). These words were spoken by John the Baptist. He was the herald of the Saviour, the forerunner, and the link between the Old and New Testaments. The old era was to be brought to a close and a new ushered in. The ritual of ceremonial offerings was to give place to one offering which would forever take away sin. The One whom all the Old Testament Scriptures typified was about to be revealed, and His coming, and the offering of Himself, would mark the end of the old Tabernacle and Temple economy.

John the Baptist was the man raised up by God for the mammoth task of preparing the way for this new order which would mark the end of the old. His coming was prophesied over seven hundred years before he was born, by Isaiah: *“the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord ”* (Isaiah 40:3); and later by Malachi: *“Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant”* (Malachi 3:1).

These prophecies find their fulfilment in the Baptist: *“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea and saying, repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye*

*the way of the Lord, make His paths straight*" (Matthew 3:1-3). This is the same man who spoke the words of John 1:29.

One of the leading distinctions between the Old Testament order and the New was with regard to its **scope**. The Old Testament era was one of great restriction. For the two thousand years which immediately preceded John's appearance, spiritual revelation was almost exclusively confined to one single nation. To this limitation the people of God of that age were thoroughly accustomed; they knew no other; indeed, they would have no other. However, the new era about to dawn was totally different. In fact, it was an opposite order, for 'the middle wall of partition' by which Jew and Gentile had been kept separate for many generations was to be 'broken down' (cf Ephesians 2:14). Henceforth there would be **no difference** between Jew or Greek, bond or free. However, the previous order of exclusive privilege which the Jews had enjoyed had produced a bias and a prejudice which would be no easy thing to break down. So as we enter the Gospel era we are about to step from the one economy into the other. Now we are confronted with this great man, John the Baptist, who had such an arduous mission of preparing the way, heralding forth the **new order**: "*John bare witness of Him... for the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*" (John 1:15-17). As we view this heaven-sent diplomat preparing the way for the new economy, we hear him say in one of his discourses: "*All flesh shall see the salvation of God*" (Luke 3:6). Strange words indeed to fall upon the ears of favoured Jews!

Then, one day, Christ appeared in John's audience, who immediately and publicly identified Him by saying: "*Behold the Lamb of God which*



*taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). Let the question be faced honestly by those who quote this text in support of their Arminian theory. Is the Holy Spirit setting forth Universal Atonement through John the Baptist? Was that the object of this great man’s mission? If so, then it is evident that both the ministry of the herald and of the One heralded has not succeeded, for the sin of the world is not taken away, and neither has ‘all flesh’ seen the salvation of God.

No! The mission of John was to announce the advent of Christ who had come to accomplish that which the ceremonial law given by Moses did but typify. Now further truth was being revealed through John; more of the eternal counsel was being unfolded. The one great sacrifice for sins forever was soon to be made. This would be an efficacious offering. By the one offering Christ would perfect forever them that are sanctified, that is, those who were **set apart** by God from all eternity. Who were they? Jews? In the main it had been so until this point in human history, but now, very soon after Calvary and the coming of the Holy Spirit, Luke states, “*It shall come to pass, that **whosoever** shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved*” (Acts 2:21).

John was not preaching Universal Atonement at Bethabara; rather was he declaring that the outside world of Gentiles was also included in God’s election of grace. This is in perfect harmony with our Lord’s words (referred to already in Part 2): “*other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring*” (John 10:16). To remove John 1:29 from its context and to impose upon it a literalism which is absolute, is obtuse and illogical. For when John the Baptist announced Christ as ‘the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world’, a vast number of

the human race were already in hell. This fact alone precludes absolutely the thought that the term 'world' in this verse is the whole of Adam's posterity. It would be more foolish still, and totally beyond the bounds of reason, to say that every one of those incarcerated in darkness had previously heard the message of salvation and rejected it.

The words of Christ Himself are clear, and He leaves us in no doubt, that He did not take away the sin of all. To men with whom He came in contact in that generation, He said: "*Ye shall die in your sins*" (John 8:24). To the Pharisees He said: "*Your sin **remaineth***" (John 9:41). Are the Saviour's own words at variance with John's? Of course not! The truth is that such words as John 1:29 have been taken out of their framework; consequently, they have taken on a meaning which opposes the true teaching of Atonement; for Atonement is Particular and not Universal.

The finest commentary ever written on John 1:29 is Revelation 5:9: "*Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation*". That is the sequel to the Baptist's announcement. The Lamb was slain, and a people have been redeemed unto God by His blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation.

If Arminian theology is right and John 1:29 taken literally and made absolute, then Revelation 5:9 must be reworded, to state that the Lamb was slain and **every** kindred and tongue and people **have been** redeemed unto God by His blood. When analysed, what nonsense such preaching is seen to be.

## PART 7

*“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).*

This is a verse which Arminians hide behind as a formidable fortress. They say, ‘Here it is stated that the Lord is not willing that any should perish but that **all** should come to repentance’. If this Scripture is to be taken in the sense in which it is presented by so many loose preachers, then, any thinking person must conclude that the will of God is being thwarted, His purpose frustrated and the Devil is winning. To talk about all men coming to repentance is absurd, because very few are. They have always been in the minority; it is but a few who are saved. The many are on the ‘broad road’, according to the Lord’s own words.

How then can this verse be explained? The key to the question is as always to keep it within its setting. Then it will present no problem. Uproot these verses and not only are difficulties created, but the truth of God can be turned into a lie. It is a fearful thing to so mishandle the Word of Truth.

Who are addressed in this portion of Scripture? This we are told in the previous verse: *“Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8)*. The Spirit of God is addressing the ‘beloved’. The subject of this chapter is the Second Advent, ‘the promise of His coming’. The scoffers suppose this will never be fulfilled (cf 2 Peter 3:3-4). However, the

Holy Spirit instructs the beloved in order that **they** be not ignorant. It will be fulfilled, they are told, but God is longsuffering to us-ward. Who then are included in the 'us-ward'? The scoffers? No! It is the beloved, and God is not willing that any of **these** should perish, and they never will, because it is not the will of God. Throughout, it has been clear from the Scriptures that all things pertaining to salvation are 'after the counsel of His own will' (cf Ephesians 1:11).

The reason why God has not sent His Son back to this earth in judgment, is that the number of His elect (His beloved), is not yet accomplished. Those chosen from before the foundation of the world, loved with an everlasting love, are His beloved. Never are the reprobate addressed in this way. Every one of those predestined to glory will come to repentance before human history can be wound up. When the last chosen one is regenerated, then, 'the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night' (cf 2 Peter 3:10).

The 'any' in 2 Peter 3:9 does **not** refer to all men in general. It has reference to **us-ward**, the elect, the beloved, the people of His choice, that number which He loved from all eternity; and God will not break in upon this scene in the final Judgment, however rebellious and godless this world may become, until all that company are effectually called; for not any of that number will perish.

Put the Arminian interpretation upon this Scripture, that 'any' means **all men** in an absolute sense, then the scoffers of verses 3 and 4 are correct! All things **will** continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. The Lord will **never** return. If their theory is right, God

will never deal in judgment, for He is not willing that any should perish. So, verse 10 which states, “*that the day of the Lord will come... the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up*” (2 Peter 3:10) can be eliminated from our Bibles. It will never happen. This is the only conclusion which can logically be drawn from such an interpretation. What a travesty of truth is produced by faulty interpretation!

## **PART 8**

There is one other aspect to which attention must be drawn. It concerns the use of the word ‘all’ in some verses of Holy Scripture. “*Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time*” (1 Timothy 2:6), is one such reference. To make this verse mean that Christ died in the stead of all people of all ages without exception, is to create yet further absurdities and do despite to the doctrine of Atonement. There is no part of Scripture which would oblige us to give to the ‘all’ in this verse and other similar verses an unlimited and absolute meaning.

The word ‘all’, like ‘world’, is employed in the Word of God with considerable latitude. Take as an example the verse which states, “*and there went out unto him [John the Baptist] all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river Jordan confessing their sins*” (Mark 1:5). If the word ‘all’ is taken literally and in an absolute sense, then we must conclude that not a single person was left unbaptized in all Judaea and Jerusalem. Later, however, we read in

Luke 7:30: “*But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him [John the Baptist]*”. Is this a contradiction? Indeed not. It is an absurdity caused by persons who lay total stress upon one word, making the little word ‘all’ absolute, when what is actually to be understood is, that from all over the land of Judaea and from every part of the city of Jerusalem, men went out to Jordan and were baptized of John.

Let the Scriptures produce further evidence: “*And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake*” (Matthew 10:22). This was spoken to the Twelve Disciples. Are we to understand by this, that all men of every generation hate the Lord’s chosen apostles? “*All men come to Him*” (John 3:26). Do all men literally come? “*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me*” (John 12:32). Here the Lord Himself is referring to His death. He says, ‘After I have been lifted up on the cross I will draw all men unto me’. Does the man who preaches that Atonement is universal really believe what he is saying when he makes these ‘alls’ limitless and absolute? If so, then Atonement has been far from successful, for comparatively few are drawn. The work of the Mediator has proved to be very disappointing.

Perish such God dishonouring thinking and preaching! Let the sacred Word of God interpret itself. The ‘all men’ whom the Saviour draws in John 12:32 are the, “*all that the Father giveth me*” of John 6:37. All **that** number shall come to me, says Christ. Within **this** circle, the word ‘all’ is absolute, for here we are speaking within the orbit of Election. We are within the scope of **The Everlasting Covenant** which is, “*ordered in all things and sure*” (2 Samuel 23:5). Hence, within

this area we can categorically state, all are ransomed, all will be drawn, all will come, all will be saved, all will be glorified. Never in Holy Writ will we come up against a contradiction, or create an absurdity by so affirming. Preach Particular Redemption and there are no loose ends. All truth will dove-tail perfectly. Preach Universal Atonement and nothing will fit.

That there is universality with regard to the proclamation of the gospel we heartily agree. It is to all nations; to all the world. The efficacy of the work of the Atonement is to men of all ages, as for example Abel, Abraham, David, Peter, Paul, Luther, Bunyan, Whitefield. It includes men of all nations, whether Jew or Gentile. It includes men of all generations right up to the end of time. It is in this relative sense that the Scriptures use these universal terms.

The writer is aware that there are certain other places where ‘all’ is absolute. Examples include: “*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). Here, the ‘all’ is absolute. It is sweeping, embracing every child of Adam. Why should this be? The answer is that it perfectly ties in with the doctrine of sin. Sin is universal in an absolute sense. “*In Adam all die*” (1 Corinthians 15:22). The ‘all’ here includes every one of mankind. “*In Christ shall all be made alive*”. This ‘all’ does **not** include every member of the race. Why the difference? It is because the doctrines of Election and Particular Redemption come in here. Those ‘in Christ’ are the chosen (cf Ephesians 1:4).

Just as the ‘all’ in the first part of 1 Corinthians 15:22 must be interpreted within the context of the whole of divine revelation

concerning sin, which is all embracing, so must the second part of that verse be interpreted within the framework of the whole of the truth pertaining to Atonement, which is particular. No isolated text must ever be used to contradict the overall doctrine.

Is it not the lack of grounding in the Faith which has led to the confused preaching of past generations? It is not without reason that the Holy Spirit has stated that an elder in the church of God is not to be a novice (cf 1 Timothy 3:6). Those who minister the Word of God are to “*Speak the things which become sound doctrine*” (Titus 2:1).

To say that the Atonement has made the salvation of all men possible may sound very plausible and it may be an easy way of presenting it, but it is not the truth of Holy Scripture. It is a theory of man, which when scrutinized is not only meaningless jargon, it is contrary to the Word of God. To make such an assertion completely ignores sovereign election by the Father. It makes a shambles of the efficacy of the work of Christ. It is a denial of the invincible work of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, it is a repudiation of the total depravity of man. It is a grievous and God-dishonouring distortion of truth. Those who profess to be magnifying God’s grace by widening the extent of the Atonement are in actual fact compromising its holy reality and shattering its efficacy.

To say that Atonement was made for all men, and now everything hinges upon the sinner’s acceptance of that work, is to affirm that Christ has done nothing more for those who are saved, than He did for those who are lost. Can anyone who really thinks this subject through, ever believe such a thing? It is not faith which gives efficacy to the blood of



Christ. It is not our belief which makes the work of Christ efficacious. It is the Atonement wrought by the Mediator in all its intrinsic worth and power which was efficacious to purchase faith imparted to us by the invincible and infallible working of God the Holy Spirit, so that, “*by grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God*” (Ephesians 2:8).

While there are probably other verses which may appear difficult to some, the writer feels sufficient has been said. In the main, the confusion is fairly uniform and stems from the emphasis being placed upon the two words ‘world’ and ‘all’, and the taking of verses out of context in order to substantiate a theory; which when examined, is seen to be at variance with the Biblical doctrine of Atonement.



## 4. EFFECTUAL CALLING

### PART 1

It has been shown from the Scriptures in previous chapters that the work of God in salvation is predetermined, as are all His ways. “*Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world*” (Acts 15:18). In nothing is the God of heaven haphazard. He, “*worketh all things after the counsel of His own will*” (Ephesians 1:11). He is sovereign, and all things move to their appointed goal. “*My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure ... I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it*” (Isaiah 46:10-11).

In the execution of His eternal counsel, no power on earth or in hell can thwart, hinder, or deter. “*He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?*” (Daniel 4:35). The **Everlasting Covenant** is ordered in all things and sure (cf 2 Samuel 23:5; Isaiah 55:3; Jeremiah 32:40; Psalm 89:34-35).

Since the Church was: “*elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*” (1 Peter 1:2); and chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (cf Ephesians 1:4); and that Christ the Mediator and Head of all that number, acted as Surety for them, fulfilling all righteousness, and bearing the curse and judgment to the full; which ransom price a Holy God accepted at the bar of divine justice; it logically follows that all the benefits of the Father’s election and the Son’s atonement, must be made

real and actual to all for whom they were designed. However, while this assumption is logical, it must also be proved to be Biblical, as was the case with the doctrines of Human Depravity, Election, and Particular Redemption.

Popular Arminian gospel preaching declares that God has done His part in providing a remedy for sin, now it is up to the sinner to decide whether or not he will avail himself of it. Such preaching is a negation of ‘Total Depravity’; it completely eliminates ‘Election’, it makes an absolute nonsense of ‘Atonement’, that glorious finished work of the Redeemer which is not only efficacious, but is emancipating, since it has effected a full satisfaction to God and liberates the captive from the bondage of Satan. *“By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water”* (Zechariah 9:11).

How then is one to preach? This is the question asked by many. Others foolishly say, ‘What is the point of preaching at all, for if this Covenant of Grace is so watertight, then all the elect will be saved in any case?’ Such reasoning shows a pathetic ignorance of the Holy Scriptures. God, who has designed the **end** of the sinner’s salvation, has also designed the **means** for its accomplishment.

Having considered previously the election of the Father, and the redemption of the Son, we now look at the work of the Holy Spirit. In the economy of Redemption all three Persons of the Godhead are active, and all work in absolute harmony. The Church is chosen of God the Father, sprinkled by the blood of Jesus Christ, sanctified by the Holy Spirit (cf 1 Peter 1:2).

As the work of Christ in atonement is within the scheme of the Father's sovereign election, so the work of the Holy Spirit in effectual calling is within the confines of the Son's work of atonement. This is not to say that the Holy Spirit of God is not engaged in any other work, for He is; but, that in the matter of effectual calling, the making good to sinners of all the benefits of the Covenant of Grace; this is within the design and bounds of election and atonement.

To hold the view that the Holy Spirit is 'doing His best' in trying to influence and persuade men to trust in Christ, is not only a foolish notion, but is a concept of the Third Person of the Trinity which is so dishonouring as to be well-nigh blasphemous. Is not the Holy Spirit God Himself? Is He in any way inferior to either Father or Son? Is not the Holy Spirit all powerful and invincible? Are we to understand that He is oft-times thwarted in His purpose or defeated in His objective? Never! Let it be categorically stated that when the Holy Spirit of God works upon the heart of an elect person His power will be irresistible. It may not be immediate or instantaneous, but such **will be** regenerated and ultimately brought to repentance and faith: "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

However far a sinner may have gone into the 'far country', for even elect souls are, "*by nature the children of wrath, even as others*" (Ephesians 2:3); yet, when the rod of God's strength is put forth out of Zion, men are made willing in the day of His power (cf Psalm 110:2-3). God is found of them that sought Him not (cf Isaiah 65:1).

In the initial working of the Holy Spirit in regeneration there is no co-operation of the sinner whatsoever. The Third Person of the Trinity works directly upon the heart of a man and changes its spiritual condition. *“I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh”* (Ezekiel 11:19). *“It is not of him that willeth ... but of God that showeth mercy”* (Romans 9:16). *“For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure”* (Philippians 2:13).

This, of course, does not mean to say that man does not co-operate in later stages, for it is quite evident from the Scriptures that he does; but in the initial stages of regeneration and new birth, as in the natural, so in the spiritual, the person born is passive. *“Salvation is of the Lord”* (Jonah 2:9).

Seeing then that this is an operation of divine power, is it an act which will automatically come upon all God’s elect? If it is not, what means has the Almighty devised to bring it about? This is our next section.

## **PART 2**

The God of heaven has ordained that His truth be declared throughout all nations: *“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mark 16:15). It is undeniably taught in the Word of God that there is a call to sinners in the gospel which is **not** efficacious. This is sometimes called ‘the external call’ or ‘the general call’. The Lord Himself set this out very clearly, as for example, in the parable of the Great Supper

(Luke 14:16-24), and in the parable of the Marriage Feast (Matthew 22:1-14), which concludes, “*many are called, but few are chosen*”.

In obedience to the great commission given to the Church by the Head Himself, His servants are to preach all truth among all nations (cf Matthew 28:19-20). Part of this truth is ‘Redemption’. This is to be set forth clearly in all its aspects: God’s eternal plan, the finished work of Christ, and the transforming operations of the Holy Spirit. However, the mere presentation of the **doctrine** of redemption does not constitute all the gospel. In it there is also a **call**: “*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money: come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price*” (Isaiah 55:1). “*Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth*” (Isaiah 45:22). “*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28). The Hyper-Calvinist will say that such invitations as these can only be issued to ‘concerned’ or ‘sensible’ sinners; those who, they would say, show some evidence of their election. The parables of the Marriage Feast (Matthew 22:1-14) and the Great Supper (Luke 14:6-24) however, completely destroy such a theory, as does also such a Scripture as Proverbs 1:24-26, where it is clearly stated that the Lord calls sinners who evidence no regard or concern whatsoever.

Hyper-Calvinists who oppose the general call and invitation of the gospel are as much in error as Arminians with Universal Atonement and Man’s Freewill.

It is the Church's mandate to preach the gospel, and to **call** sinners to repentance and faith. The pros and cons of election are not to enter into our thinking or to deter us in any way in this. No man knows who the elect are, only the Lord knows His sheep (cf John 10:14-15).

He Himself, though omniscient, knowing all things, issued a **general call**: "*Repent ye, and believe the gospel*" (Mark 1:15). Again, the Hyper-Calvinist will retort by saying, 'because of Total Depravity man is unable to repent'. This may be so, but it is no more unreasonable for God to require repentance, than it is for Him to demand obedience to His holy law. The fact that man has become totally depraved by virtue of the fall of his federal head (Adam), in no way releases him from his responsibility to obey God and His law.

Should any be asking the question, 'why does God require the gospel to be preached indiscriminately with a general call to all?' The answer is twofold:

1. In this way, God maintains His claim upon the sinner. It is the absolute right of the Creator so to do. The fact that man is now incapable of rendering complete obedience to his rightful sovereign in no way abrogates the Creator's claim upon the creature, or releases the creature from his responsibility to the Creator. The right of God to demand absolute obedience remains; and He asserts that right in both the law and the gospel. Therefore, the sinner who does not heed the call to repentance but disregards and slights still further the just claims of God in such a call, so increases his guilt and becomes more hardened.



In this the preacher becomes a savour of death unto death in them that perish (cf 2 Corinthians 2:14-17).

2. By the universal proclamation of the gospel and the general call, the Holy Spirit gathers the elect from among the nations of the earth. This is the divinely appointed means to accomplish the end decreed. The preacher must of necessity be general in his preaching for he cannot identify the elect in their unregenerate state. These are among the secret things which belong unto Jehovah. This does not mean, however, that he is to convey to his hearers the thought that Christ died for each one, neither is he to give any kind of assurance that God intends to save all men. Therefore, his message is addressed in general terms. He does not say, 'Christ died for you'. Rather does he say, 'Christ died for sinners', calling men to repent and to believe the gospel, fully assuring them that, "*whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*" (Acts 2:21).

The Arminian preacher can be heard to say, 'I could not preach like that! If I had to watch so closely my phraseology I should have no liberty!' One quite understands this, for where there is little doctrine, thinking is shallow and phraseology becomes loose. Although it may not be intentional, there is a careless use of language which can not only be misleading, but also completely erroneous. The person concerned may feel freedom in his preaching, but this is not the liberty of the Holy Spirit.

A preacher must **first** concern himself with doctrine; for primarily he is the declarer of God's truth. Then he must choose out acceptable

words and so discipline his phraseology that truth be conveyed to the hearers, and in no way be distorted. He is not to put Christ up ‘on offer’ to all men; rather is he to **present** Christ in all the wonder of His Person, and the perfection of His Work for sinners, then **call** upon them to repent and believe.

As has already been stated, all truth must be preached. Many will object that subjects such as Election, Predestination, Effectual Calling, etc., are only for believers and should never be mentioned to the unsaved, for they would only confuse and mislead. Such are, however, in direct conflict with the Lord Himself. For in one of His greatest discourses, to a very mixed audience, He said: “*All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out ... no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of My Father*” (John 6:37, 65). What is this if it be not Election and Effectual Calling? No preacher is to pigeon-hole truth.

Others argue that in the light of human depravity and man’s total inability to repent, believe and turn to Christ (because he is dead in trespasses and in sins) it is a nonsense, or even a mockery, to call men to repentance and faith. The answer is that we are never to assume that a person is reprobate or non-elect. While all are dead, yet, in the issuing of the general call, if elect souls are there, and the time of effectual calling has come, the Holy Spirit will be so present as was the Lord at the grave of Lazarus. It was impossible for Lazarus in his condition to hear, let alone obey the command given. He was dead, even corrupt. Yet, the One behind the call to ‘come forth’, immediately gave the **life** and the **ability** so to do. No preacher must withhold any aspect of truth

or fail in his responsibility to apply the message to his hearers, and call sinners to repentance.

Through this divinely ordained medium of preaching, it pleases God to save them that believe (cf 1 Corinthians 1:21). It is conceded that on occasions men are truly converted apart from preaching. God is Sovereign and He can and will bring all His Elect to salvation; but apart from rare exceptions it is “*through the foolishness of preaching*” (1 Corinthians 1:21). “*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*” (Romans 10:17).

It is when the Word of God is preached and that Word applied by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit that men are saved and delivered from sin and bondage. This is effectual calling. It is the invincible work of the Third Person of the Godhead. It is not merely a decision of man’s will. It is an irresistible call, “*according to God’s purpose*” (Romans 8:28). In His eternal counsel, God has chosen certain persons whom He will call. He has fixed the time when He will call them, and the places whence they will be called, as seen in the New Testament: Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, etc. He has appointed the means of their calling, and will providentially order the circumstances that it be infallibly accomplished. Why was Paul bidden to remain at Corinth? “*For I have much people in this city*” (Acts 18:10). They are not yet effectually called, nevertheless, God says that they are His; His by virtue of election.

This is further illustrated in the account of the Ethiopian eunuch, in Acts chapter 8. Philip was so controlled and his movements ordered, that he was on hand in the desert at precisely the right time to explain the truth

of the gospel. The time of effectual calling had arrived for another elect soul, and the Ethiopian was brought from darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God (cf Acts 26:18).

The truth is again exemplified in Acts chapter 16. Paul planned to go into Asia and Bithynia but the Spirit suffered him not. The providential hand of God directed him instead to Philippi. In that city, by the river side, there was a certain woman named Lydia who heard the words of Paul and Silas – the general call – *“whose heart the Lord opened”* – the irresistible work of the Holy Spirit – and, *“she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul”* – the effectual call (Acts 16:14).

Yet another in that city was to be ‘called according to God’s purpose’. In the providence of the Almighty God this took His two servants into prison, for at midnight the hour of effectual calling would strike for the jailor at Philippi, and God wanted His servants there to make known to him His Truth. So, two preachers were shackled in a human prison in order that a prison governor would be released from the chains and bondage of the spiritual dungeon of Satan. *“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out”* (Romans 11:33).

It makes no difference who or where God’s chosen ones are; at the appointed time the Lord will make bare His holy arm and men shall see His salvation, even to the ends of the earth (cf Isaiah 52:10). So it is that at the last, there shall be a great multitude which no man can number out of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues, who will stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and

palms in their hands. These will cry with a loud voice, saying, *“salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb”* (cf Revelation 7:9-10).

No soul in heaven ever talks of having ‘decided for Christ’. All use the language of Holy Scripture: *“Salvation is of the Lord ”* (Jonah 2:9). *“By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God ”* (Ephesians 2:8).

Every man and woman who through grace is brought into the family of God is born again: But it is not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (cf John 1:13). It is all according to the sovereign purpose of election, through the merits of the efficacious work of Christ’s atonement, and made actual and vital to us by the invincible power of the Holy Ghost.

Election, Atonement, and Effectual Calling are of equal extent. Each has reference to the same people. The objects are the same, neither more nor less. They that were chosen in eternity and redeemed by Christ at Calvary are all called in time. Every one called in time was specifically atoned for at Calvary because elected in eternity. *“Whom He did predestinate them He also called ”* (Romans 8:30). *“The vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles”* (Romans 9:23 -24).

The elect are called, *“according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began”* (2 Timothy 1:9).

Because of God's eternal purpose and grace given to the elect in Christ before the world began, there is a sense in which they are preserved until saved. For as they are all Adam's posterity, the elect are born in sin and under the sentence of death; 'condemned already', until regeneration takes place. Nevertheless, in the providence of God such are preserved; "*them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called*" (Jude v. 1).

Those set apart (sanctified) by the Father are seen to be in Christ, and will be preserved unto the day of effectual calling. This is not only Biblical, it is utterly logical. How could it be conceived that an Almighty, Invincible, Immutable God should choose unto Himself a company of sinful people for whom the Son should become Surety and make Atonement, yet, somehow these very people should die in their sins before the Holy Spirit could call them? Is not the thought preposterous? Indeed, it is well-nigh blasphemous; setting aside the divine attributes of wisdom, power, justice, goodness and truth.

The elect are all redeemed by Christ, and effectual calling is the certain consequence of it. "*I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine*" (Isaiah 43:1); "*This is the Father's will . . . that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day*" (John 6:39).

**Election, Particular Redemption, and Effectual Calling are the plain teaching of Holy Scripture and inseparably stand together.**

## 5. ETERNAL SALVATION

The Biblical doctrine of salvation can be summarized in five words: “*Salvation is of the Lord*” (Jonah 2:9). In salvation, as in all things, God is sovereign.

Already, in relation to the absolute sovereignty of God in salvation, much reference has been made to those who do not accept this doctrine in its entirety, but have been side-tracked by the deficient and often heretical interpretations that have been propounded throughout history. Some preach depravity, but not as being total, clinging to the notion that man has an ability still to turn to God if he so will. Election may not be entirely dismissed by such, but it is held to be conditional upon man’s decision. Atonement is presented as having been made for all men, but not necessarily delivering any unless they accept it. The call of the Holy Spirit in regenerating power can be received or rejected at the sinner’s will. When carefully examined, these views amount to the declaration that ‘salvation is of man’! In the final analysis, whatever God may have done it is completely dependent on man’s will.

The origins of these beliefs have been briefly explained in earlier chapters and are amplified in the Appendix. They stem in the main from the teachings of Pelagius, Cassian and Arminius, and are usually described as Arminianism; but, even within this term there are considerable variations.

The question is frequently asked by many, ‘Is salvation eternal?’ ‘Is it possible for one born of God to fall from grace so as to be lost at the

last?’ Arminianism teaches that just as man’s will is all important in initial belief, so it is in the Christian life also; and that it is possible to be once saved yet lose that salvation.

“It is an inseparable part of the Arminian system, flowing necessarily from their views of election, of the design and effect of Christ’s death, and of sufficient grace and free will, that those who were once justified and regenerated may, by neglecting grace and grieving the Holy Spirit, fall into such sins as are inconsistent with true justifying faith, and continuing and dying in the same, may consequently finally fall into perdition.”<sup>19</sup>

It is fully recognized that not all sections of Arminianism hold and teach this, for many have added to their free-will theory that which they term ‘Eternal Security’. Such terminology when used within the Biblical framework of the doctrine of Salvation is absolutely correct, but within the context of other Arminian tenets, it is a nonsense; for it implies that man can opt for salvation yet he cannot opt out. Of his own depraved will he can decide to get into the Kingdom, but once in, he cannot decide to get out. This is surely extraordinary!

There can be no doubt whatsoever that Arminian free-will preaching with this so-called eternal security ‘tacked on’ has deluded and deceived many.

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<sup>19</sup> A. A. Hodge (1823-1886), ‘Outlines of Theology’ 1878, Chapter 36: Perseverance of the Saints. The reference is to: Simon Episcopius (1583-1643) ‘Confession or Declaration of the... Remonstrants’, 1621, Chapter 11 “Of Faith in Jesus Christ”, para. 7 – translation.



Christ is portrayed as having made complete satisfaction to God for all men, and it is up to the individual to avail himself of that salvation. It rests with him entirely as to whether or not he will decide to have it. So of his own will and by his personal choice, an individual is said to decide for Christ. Such a one is then immediately informed of what is termed ‘assurance of salvation’. He is told that he is now saved; God has given him eternal life; he will never perish; he is perfectly justified at the bar of divine justice; ‘once saved – always saved’. Henceforth he is eternally secure, and various verses of Scripture are given to provide the proof.

All this is perfectly true within the context of the true doctrine of salvation; indeed, it is part of that very doctrine; but when such vital truths are given within the framework of the free-will system they can, indeed have, put many in a false position. In missions and so-called gospel campaigns many there are who have been given words of assurance of salvation; but, in the course of time it becomes apparent that such words never really applied to them at all. One of the classic verses used is, “*As many as received Him, to them gave He power [authority] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name...*” (John 1:12).

It is usually expressed like this: ‘You have decided for Christ; you now believe on the Lord Jesus; you have received Him as your Saviour. Then you are a child of God, an authorized member of His family’. But is this the truth of this portion of Scripture? Does it not go on to say, “*...which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*” (John 1:13)?

It is the sovereign power of God that regenerates the spiritually dead and imparts new life. It is not just that man has made a decision to believe. Only those truly born of God can be given the assurance that they are children of God and that they have eternal salvation.

What then is the Biblical teaching? Are true believers eternally secure? The simple answer is yes! But we are not to be trite about it. We must understand the underlying teaching on the subject.

Great theologians of the past spoke of the Perseverance of the Saints. This too needs to be defined carefully, for it is liable to be misunderstood. When fully explained however, it is very meaningful and conveys the truth in a most comprehensive way. What does it mean? Able men of God have stated it thus:

“Those who are truly regenerated, effectually called, and really converted, and internally sanctified by the Spirit and grace of God, shall persevere in grace to the end and shall be everlastingly saved; they shall never finally and totally fall, so as to perish everlastingly.” (John Gill) <sup>20</sup>

“They whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere

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<sup>20</sup> John Gill (1697-1771) ‘A Body of Doctrinal Divinity’ 1767, Book VI, Chapter 15: “Of the Perseverance of the Saints”

therein to the end and be eternally saved.” (Westminster Confession of Faith) <sup>21</sup>

“The... doctrine does not affirm certainty of salvation because we have once believed, but certainty of perseverance in holiness if we have truly believed.” (A. A. Hodge) <sup>22</sup>

“Perseverance is that continuous operation of the Holy Spirit in the believer, by which the work of Divine grace that is begun in the heart, is continued and brought to completion. It is because God never forsakes His work that believers continue to stand to the very end.” (L. Berkhof) <sup>23</sup>

A mere profession is not of itself sufficient. If a true work of grace has been wrought in the heart, then it will be evidenced in the life. *“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them”* (Matthew 7:20).

The Bible teaches that there are those who profess the faith and yet are not of the faith. Such have a name to live yet are dead (cf Revelation 3:1). *“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they*

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21. ‘The Westminster Confession of Faith’, 1647, Chap. 17 “Of the Perseverance of the Saints”, Section 1.

22. A. A. Hodge (1823-1886), ‘Outlines of Theology’, 1878, Chapter 36: Perseverance of the Saints, Section 6.

23. L. Berkhof (1873-1957), ‘Manual of Christian Doctrine’, 1933, Part 6, Chapter XI, Section B: “Statement of the Doctrine of Perseverance”.

*might be made manifest that they were not all of us” (1 John 2:19). “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:22-23).*

If a person is effectually called of the Holy Spirit it will soon become apparent, for such a one is converted. That word means ‘changed’. They will give diligence to make their calling and election sure (cf 2 Peter 1:10). That is, the reality of their salvation will be evidenced, and evidenced convincingly. On this John Calvin has the following comments:

“God effectually calls whom He has preordained to life in His secret counsels before the foundation of the world; and He also carries on the perpetual course of calling through grace alone. But as He has chosen us, and calls us for this end, that we may be pure and spotless in His presence; purity of life is not improperly called the evidence and proof of election, by which the faithful may not only testify to others that they are the children of God, but also confirm themselves in this confidence ... The import of what is said is, that the children of God are distinguished from the reprobate by this mark, that they live a godly and holy life, because this is the design and end of election.”<sup>24</sup>

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24. John Calvin (1509-1564), ‘Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles’, 1551, on 2 Peter 1:10.

As has been previously stated, these varying tenets of the Faith are inseparable; they stand or fall together for they are the complete body of truth. Effectual calling presupposes election, and the result of the call is conversion; a changed life. This will be followed by perseverance in the paths of righteousness. *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:10).

God did not elect men and call them by His Spirit just to accept Christ, but in order that there should be this ongoing life and walk of faith; persevering unto the end; being saved to the uttermost. *“He that endureth to the end shall be saved”* (Matthew 10:22). *“The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger”* (Job 17:9).

This is the hallmark of grace. The proof of a genuine conversion is that the person shall hold on his way. He will not go back, turn aside, or stand still but *“press toward the mark”* (Philippians 3:14); running, *“with patience the race... looking unto Jesus”* (Hebrews 12:1-2). Those who thus look away unto Jesus and wait upon the Lord, renew their strength. They become stronger and stronger. They run and are not weary, they walk and are not faint (cf Isaiah 40:31). They are seen to be those who are going on to perfection (cf Hebrews 6:1); *“perfecting holiness in the fear of God”* (2 Corinthians 7:1).

If these distinguishing features are missing, and there is never any evidence of change, no striving after holiness, no perseverance, then we are not to speak of preservation or eternal security; for such persons

may still be in the, “*gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity*” (Acts 8:23). They are ‘goats’ and not ‘sheep’. It is the sheep for whom Christ died, and it is the sheep who are effectually called. They follow, they have eternal life, and only they have eternal security. “*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand*” (John 10:27-28).

The sheep for whom the Good Shepherd gave His life were known by Him. Each one was chosen by God and given to Christ in eternity – Election. He gave His life for those sheep – Particular Redemption. They hear His voice – Effectual Calling. They follow Him – Perseverance. He gives unto them eternal life and they shall never perish – Eternal Security.

These are the great principles of the doctrine of salvation. Each is a vital part of the whole, and must ever be kept together. It is only when held and taught in their entirety that the truth is presented. To fail to teach that salvation is eternal is to deny the truth and do dishonour to God.

It is equally dishonouring to Him, as well as deceiving and leading many into a false position, to attach the truth of Eternal Security to that which is in fact ‘another gospel’.

Eternal salvation pertains only to the Elect. Thus the apostle Peter says that those who are, “*elect according to the foreknowledge of God*” and “*begotten again unto a lively hope*”, are, “*kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*” (1 Peter 1:2-5).

By almighty power, the true child of God is preserved and kept so that he ultimately enters into the final blessedness of salvation in glory. It cannot be otherwise, for this is the eternal purpose. It is according to the Everlasting Covenant which is 'ordered in all things and sure'. When God established His covenant with His people in Christ it was sure and eternally secure. None within its embrace will ever perish. *"For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee"* (Isaiah 54:10).

When the Holy Spirit works effectually upon an elect soul 'dead in trespasses and in sins', that person is regenerated and born again. New life is imparted; spiritual life; eternal life. This life never dies: *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life"* (John 5:24). This life cannot be lost. If so, how could it be eternal? But again, it must be emphasized, such life will bear fruit after its kind.

Spiritual life will produce spiritual fruit. *"The root of the righteous yieldeth fruit"* (Proverbs 12:12). The life which is given us at regeneration is rooted in Christ, that is why it is eternal. In consequence of the root there is bound to be fruit. Christ is certain to be manifested in the life of one who has been born of God; it can be no other. This verse in Proverbs chapter twelve, implies that if there are no fruits of righteousness then quite obviously the root has not been implanted. This would indicate a false profession.

There are, sad to say, many who come into this category, as is so clearly set out by the Lord himself in Matthew 13:20-21 and Luke 8:13. “*They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away*”. Though the word be preached to them, their hearts are of stone; there is no sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in taking away that stony heart and replacing it with a heart of flesh (cf Ezekiel 36:26). No effectual call took place, consequently there was no root implanted within; although ‘they received the word with joy’.

Many do this. Herod heard John gladly, but later took off his head! (cf Mark 6:20, 27). Also, in Mark 12:37 we read of the Lord, that the common people heard him gladly; yet, after a very short space of time they were saying ‘away with Him, crucify Him’. Not a few have listened with favour to the preaching of the Word of God, and there are those who find an interest and enjoyment in subscribing to religious exercises. Others have expressed joy after making a profession at an evangelistic campaign, but alas! it has so often to be said, ‘There is no root’. It is the joy of the hypocrite – false. Their faith was an act of man; a belief of the will of man. It was not the faith of God’s elect, for that faith is from the same source as grace: it is the gift of God (cf Ephesians 2:8). This is a faith which is not a mere assent or decision, rather is it a principle sovereignly implanted within, which not only saves and justifies a person, but from henceforth enables that person to live by faith. “*The just shall live by faith*” (Hebrews 10:38).

This Scripture continues, “*But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but*



*of them that believe to the saving of the soul*” (Hebrews 10:39). The man who draws back was never justified, he had no true faith, no true work of grace in the heart, consequently no perseverance. His was not a belief to the salvation of the soul.

In conclusion, the answer to the question, ‘Are believers eternally secure?’ is – within the fullness of the teaching of God’s Holy Word – yes! That is, where it is held that man is of himself totally depraved; that God has unconditionally elected every believer; that Christ has made absolute atonement for all the elect; that all of these will be effectually called by the Holy Spirit in their generations; then we affirm with confidence, such will persevere in faith by the grace of God, be preserved unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and thus saved with an eternal salvation. But to those who are relying upon some experience or decision, where there has been no true work of the Holy Spirit, and no consequent change of heart and life, the authoritative Word of God demands that we say: no! For such have a hypocritical hope. It is fallacious. *“The hypocrite’s hope shall perish: whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider’s web”* (Job 8:13-14).

It is not without very real purpose that the Holy Spirit, speaking through the apostle Paul, says, *“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”* (2 Corinthians 13:5). What a pertinent word this is for today! *“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen”* (Jude vv. 24-25).



# APPENDIX

## ARMINIANISM – CALVINISM

There are many Christians today who have been brought up in the traditions of the evangelicalism of the past 100 – 150 years, who now find themselves somewhat puzzled and bewildered when they hear terms such as ‘Arminian’ and ‘Calvinist’. It is necessary to clarify in simple language what lies behind these names.

The **Arminian** line of teaching, deriving from James Arminius (a Dutch professor in the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century) is:

1. Man is fallen, yet the effects of the fall do not render him incapable of choosing spiritual good. He is not so completely corrupted by sin but that he can savingly believe the gospel if it is put to him. He can of his own will exercise faith and choose salvation and thus bring himself into all the blessings of the gospel.
2. God elected those whom He foresaw would respond to the gospel; ones He knew would want of their own free will to be saved.
3. Christ made atonement for all men. The death of Christ creates the possibility for any man to be saved if only he chooses to believe. There is a potential salvation, but it depends upon man’s will before it becomes actual.

4. Man is never so completely controlled by God that he cannot reject the gospel. In other words, the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration is restricted by the human will. Spiritual life can only be imparted subject to the consent of man's will.

5. It rests with the believer to maintain his faith in order to prevent himself finally falling from grace.

To go into these vital matters, a Synod was convened in 1618 to meet at Dort in Holland. The great theologians of that day sat for 154 sessions over a period of many months, prayerfully searching the Scriptures, and could find no Biblical warrant for these propositions.

At that Synod, the warriors of the Faith reaffirmed the position of the Reformers that God is sovereign in salvation. Five points were formulated to counter the Arminian line of teaching, becoming known as 'The Five Points of Calvinism'. They rest upon the principle that 'Salvation is of the Lord'.

The **Five Points of Calvinism** are:

1. **Total depravity.** Man's fall in Eden was total; when he sinned he died spiritually, and spiritual death has passed upon all men. Fallen man therefore has no more power of his own will to believe the gospel and receive salvation than he has to keep the law.

2. **Unconditional Election.** God of His own sovereign will, from all eternity made choice of a multitude of sinners to be redeemed by Christ, given faith, and brought to glory.

**3. Particular Redemption.** The goal of the work of Christ was the redemption of the Elect. Full atonement was made absolutely for that number and not as a remedy for sin on a 'take it or leave it' basis.

**4. Irresistible Grace.** When the Holy Spirit seizes upon a man to work grace within He never fails. He is never frustrated or defeated. The Elect are all effectually called.

**5. Perseverance of the Saints.** Believers are kept in faith and grace by the power of God until they are received into glory. The hallmark of a man's salvation is that he perseveres in the things of God and so gives diligence to make his calling and election sure.

Thus is set out in essence the two lines of teaching. Some Christians have endeavoured to mix them, holding, for example, to the first points of Arminianism but substituting Eternal Security in place of the fifth point. When scrutinized carefully, to be even logical, the Five points of Arminianism must stand together; and when analysed theologically in a thorough manner, Arminianism is very far from the truth of Holy Scripture. If considered prayerfully and carefully we see these two lines totally opposing each other. It is not a question of emphasis but of content. One sets forth a God who saves, the other a God who enables man to save himself. One makes salvation actual, the other makes salvation possible. One states that the work of salvation depends upon God exclusively, the other that in the final analysis it is dependent upon the will of man. One regards faith as being bound up with, and part of God's gift of salvation, the other, that faith is of man and he has to exercise this in order to obtain salvation.

The Arminian says: 'I owe my election to my faith'. The Calvinist says: 'I owe my faith to my election'. The Arminian says: 'I could not have obtained my salvation without Calvary'. The Calvinist says: 'the Lord Jesus Christ obtained salvation for me at Calvary'. The differences are legion and in almost every instance, Arminianism will be found to be a reversal of truth. Some argue that Calvinism makes preaching the gospel meaningless, but the truth is that Arminianism makes preaching the gospel unnecessary; for if Christ bore the sins of the whole race, and full atonement was made by Him for all men, and accepted by God, then all the world is saved. Calvary was a finished work. An Arminian to be consistent must be a Universalist!

No! God has His Election of Grace, that vast number out of every nation under heaven. They have been redeemed and will be effectually called. The God who ordained the end of their salvation has also ordained the means of their salvation, that the gospel shall be preached amongst all nations in order that by this means the Holy Spirit shall call effectually God's elect. Thus the eternal purpose is accomplished.

It is that which is called 'Calvinism' which alone makes sense. The Calvinist does not preach for, and urge decisions, of man's will. He knows that the choice is of God, not of man. Rather does he declare the truth and apply it to the sinner, leaving to the Holy Spirit who is sovereign to grant repentance and faith to all that the Father has given to Christ. One is bound to agree with C. H. Spurgeon when he said:

“...there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified unless you preach what is nowadays called Calvinism... It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism

is the gospel and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the gospel ... unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of Grace; nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the gospel, unless we base it upon the peculiar redemption which Christ made for His elect and chosen people; nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called.”<sup>25</sup>

The slide towards Arminianism was great in Spurgeon’s day, but what an avalanche has followed since!

Thankfully today we see a return to truth as the Holy Spirit is pleased to work in the hearts of believers. It may be as yet only ‘a little cloud like a man’s hand’, but companies here and there have come to see afresh the Sovereignty of God and the Doctrines of Grace. Such are still today labelled ‘Calvinists’. Let us not be concerned at this, but walking humbly with our God, press on in the path of holiness, earnestly contending for the faith once delivered unto the saints (cf Jude v. 3).

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25. C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892), ‘The New Park Street Pulpit’, Vol. 1, No. 7-8, 11<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1855

