

The Remnant

*“Even so then at this
present time also there
is a remnant according to
the election of grace.”
Romans 11.5*

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UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

IN light of my previous remarks on the total depravity of all mankind, I now begin an exploration of the unconditional election of a portion of humanity to glory. The word unconditional is not used in conjunction with the scriptural word election in the Bible. Many of those opposed to absolute predestination say that the word *absolute* does not accompany predestination in the Bible, and therefore is an unscriptural term. Nevertheless, they have no problem with the term *unconditional* election; this along with many other things is an example of their inconsistencies.

Man is a finite, limited creature. From necessity he must use the tools at his disposal to define the world around. Words are one of tools that human beings make use of, to help them better understand the world in which they live. The Bible itself was written in the language of man, not that of God, except as He expresses Himself in man's language. When man makes use of the expressions of language, it is the only means at his disposal by which he can understand a thing or help others to understand the same.

The term unconditional election should be defined in the context of Scripture. The term unconditional, in regard to God's sovereign election of a portion of man to salvation, means that God did not base his decree on anything in man. We acknowledge that the Lord is sovereign (independent), unchangeable (immutable), all-knowing (omniscient),

and all-powerful (omnipotent). In consideration of this it follows that he may do as he absolutely pleases. “But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased (Psalm 115.3).”

The decree to elect a certain number of people in Christ from all eternity was based on the sovereign will of Jehovah alone, “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (1 Timothy 1.9).” Scripture declares that the elect were chosen by God by the good pleasure of his will and not for any goodness or merit of their own. “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will (Ephesians 1.4-5).”

The term *sovereign* election is just as appropriate as is *unconditional*; the intent of the words is the same. This is why the terms sovereign and free grace mean so much to the children of God, enlightened by his Spirit. “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)”; “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy (Romans 9.16).”

The word elect or election means choose, chosen, or choice. The elect of God are the chosen of

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God. Sovereign, unconditional election means the absolutely free and independent choice of God. From all eternity, before creation, God decreed to demonstrate the magnificence of his goodness and mercy by choosing a certain number of mankind to live with him in glory. In contrast to this, God chose to display his infinite justice by rejecting or reprobating a portion of mankind to eternal punishment.

“What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew [demonstrate] his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted [prepared, made] to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory...(Romans 9.14-23)?”

It should be understood that the children of grace were not chosen out of the polluted mass of Adam’s fallen race; they were not chosen in Adam. The Scriptures declare emphatically that the children were chosen in Christ. Christ has eternally been the Husband, High Priest, Mediator, and Surety of all of the children of God, given to him in the eternal Covenant of Grace. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 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 1.3-4).”

If the Eternal One had based his choice upon what he foresaw or foreknew would take place in time, in regard to the fall of man, then election would not be unconditional. This would basically be saying that the plan of redemption was based on events taking place in time. This would be a conditional plan. The theory of God acting after he foresaw the fall of man is known as Sublapsarianism. *Sub* meaning under or below, and *lap* meaning fall. This is the position that most Calvinists and other assorted Conditionalists take.

That is not the position that I take or the Old School Predestinarian Baptists take. The view that God rules supreme over all things is based upon Scripture. "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist (Colossians 1.16-17)."

God is before all things; therefore if he is over all things then the position we must take is Supralapsarian; *Supra* meaning over or above, and *lap* meaning the fall. God was above or over the fall. The plan of redemption, including election, was decreed before the fall of man without any conditions. All things originate in the mind and will of Jehovah God. He is the great First Cause of all causes.

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ...(1 Peter 1.2)." The plan of redemption is the Covenant of Grace. The Triune or Three-In-One God entered into this covenant to deliver the elect unto eternal glory. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Romans 8.30)." Man has no part to play or any function to perform in this plan. It is all of God.

The religionists of the world place all power in the hands of man. They make salvation dependent, either partially or completely, on the works of man. The Holy Scriptures of eternal truth speak far

differently concerning the redemption of fallen man. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to hope of eternal life (Titus 3.5-7)."

Works consist not only of so called good deeds, but also of belief. Because of the finished work of Christ, the elect receive faith as a gift from God. This is one of the promises of the New Covenant, which is ordered in all things and sure. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2.8-9)." Faith is a product of the Spirit of God. It is produced in the elect by the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith...(Galatians 5.22)." Man cannot contribute faith, works, or anything whatsoever to his salvation.

On the contrary, faith is a consequence of salvation. "For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed (Acts 13.47-48)." Only those ordained, predestinated, and elected to eternal can and do believe. In the quoted text, the Apostles were sent by the Lord to declare the gospel message. Those elected to eternal life are the only ones who can receive this message.

The result of this message is, "...rejoice, because your names are written in heaven...(Luke 10.20)." It is evident from Scripture that those who believe in Christ are known in heaven. "...and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life (Philippians 4.3)." This refers to the entire number of the elect of God. "To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven...(Hebrews 12.23)." "...but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 21.27)."

There is an error set forth by some religionists that God elected nations and not persons. This is not taught in Scripture and is false. "Before I formed

thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations (Jeremiah 1.5).” Election, as taught in the Scriptures, is personal. “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood (Galatians 1.15-16).” The elect of God is a company made up of individuals.

The elect of God, when blessed by his Spirit, are enabled to take great comfort and consolation from the knowledge of this decree. It contains all their salvation, and all their desire. Being embraced in the Covenant of Grace, they receive all the benefits and assurances of being chosen in Christ. “Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire...(2 Samuel 22.5). “The assurances of salvation are not grounded upon the feelings of the children of God, but upon the sure foundation of the decrees of the Lord as revealed in his word. “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 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? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth (Romans 8.31-33).” Again, “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).”

Only the children of grace experience the doubts and fears in regard to their position before God. The reprobates may be deceived and have a constant assurance of their salvation and of good standing before God; they encounter no doubts of their salvation because it is based on their false notion of free-will. “But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you (John 10.26).”

The true Christian struggles from time to time, when the Lord for a season denies him the assurance of faith. The revealed word of God brings great comfort to the believer when blessed by the Holy One. “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 10.26-27).” “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let ever one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity (2 Timothy 2.19).”

Election is unconditional and unchangeable because it is based upon the immutable purpose of Jehovah. “wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie; we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil...(Hebrews 6.17-19).”

Election is taught in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. A pattern is clearly revealed in the Scriptures. The first-born or elder brother is rejected by the Lord in favor of the younger. This is seen in the case of Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Issac, Esau and Jacob, and even in the case of David. Most importantly is the case of the First Adam and the Last Adam. “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second is the Lord from heaven (1 Corinthians 15.45-47).” Surely all things consist by the design of the Thrice-Holy-God.

Among the nations of the earth Israel was chosen, though few in number. The Gentile nations were rejected of Jehovah. If the reader will reflect upon the record of history, it can be seen that nation after nation is subject to the sovereign pleasure of God in election.

In the present day, if given eyes with which to see, we observe the people all over the world as never before: magnificent wealth to the point of decadence in contrast to the lowest depths of poverty. Some are born in countries with seemingly every opportunity, while others dwell in lands of indescribable despair. While others may attribute this to blind fate or chance, the faithful in Christ can come to only one conclusion. It is the will of God.

To the elect throughout the world the message of their salvation is sent. “And they sang a new song,

saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation...(Revelation 5.9).” Wherever the Lord has a people, he will send the good news of the finished work of Christ. He has ordained, that out of the midst of their afflictions, his children shall have a reason to hope. Man will not send the message, but the Lord sent it in the way that pleased Him. “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matthew 28.18-20).”

The true gospel comes only by the Spirit of God. The Lord does not rely upon the schemes of man to deliver this most important of news to His precious children, whom he has chosen and foreknown. God has always providentially opened the door and given utterance to his servants. This is the manner in which the Lord has spread his message of hope to the elect. Old School Baptist Churches have been, and are still established in this way.

Spiritual life or quickening is a direct act of God in the sinner. This work is begun in the elect by the Holy Spirit without means or measures. Salvation is of the Lord.

Conversion, being also ordained of the Lord, comes to the elect in due time. The knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ delivers the child of grace into this world. Having faith produced in them by the Holy Spirit, they embrace the hope of the true gospel message. “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8.31-32).” This is the new birth. This experience frees the elect child of God from many errors, sorrows, and much confusion. From first to last all is ordained of the Lord for his chosen people.

None of the children of grace can know their election except by their calling. This calling is effectual to accomplish the purpose of God in them. It is irresistible and cannot fail to bring the elect into an experimental knowledge of their salvation. “This

is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent (John 6.29).” As the Lord wills I shall take up this important doctrine another time. May God bless what has been written to the building up of his people.

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THE FAMILY OF GOD

“**T**he Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together (Romans 8.16f).” The children of God are heirs of an inheritance that is “incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1.4f).” God’s children are predestined unto this inheritance according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the council of His own will (Ephesians 1.11). The heirs of promise are members of the family of God. Members of the general assembly and church of the Firstborn and the children of God are one and the same.

The apostle Paul said, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named (Ephesians 3.14f).” This is the only place in the New Testament where the word *family* is mentioned. Yet, these two verses of scripture have brought me great joy when meditating about the family of God.

A natural family is made up of a father, a mother, and their offspring and is a type and shadow of the true family, the family of God. In this great and timeless family, God is the Father, Jerusalem, which is above, is the mother, and Christ and the heirs of promise are the children.

We become a member of an earthly family in one of three ways; by birth, by adoption, or by marriage. We become a member of the family of God in all three

ways. A manifested child of God is born of God, adopted by God, and married to Christ.

“Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God (1 John 4.7).” “And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2 Corinthians 6.18).” A child that is born of God is a manifested member of the family of God and has eternal life and will not come into condemnation but has passed from death unto life. We must be born again, not of a corruptible seed, but born of God. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him (1 John 5.1).” God’s children love one another.

“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will (Ephesians 1.5).” God’s children wait for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of their bodies. They were bought with a price; therefore, they glorify God in their body and Spirit which are God’s. “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s (1 Corinthians 6.20).”

“Wherefore my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even Him, who is raised from the dead that we should bring forth fruit unto God (Romans 7.4).” Those who are married to Christ, and members in particular of His body, do not commit adultery by clinging to the law. Nay, they stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free, and are no longer in bondage to the law of sin and death, but are in bondage to the law of LOVE.

Jesus said unto Mary, “Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God (John 20.17).” What glorious words! The risen Son of God, the one with all power in heaven and earth, sent a message by Mary that rejoices the hearts of His brethren even to this day: I am not only your Saviour; I am your Brother. God is my Father and your Father. God gave to His Son power over all flesh to give eternal life to as many as the Father gave to His Son. “These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven,

and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him (John 17.1, 2).”

How wonderful it is when brethren dwell together as children of God. Their meetings are full of praise to God and rejoicing in Christ Jesus. These children are saints of God and not of men. They look only to Christ as the author and finisher of their faith and the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. They seek not the praise of men, but hope to manifest love according to the ordination of God’s Holy will. The only order in the family of God is love and the fruits thereof.

The children of God daily take part in true communion, which is communion of the Holy Spirit. Though they are a thousand miles apart, they wash their brethren’s feet when they see themselves as less than the least of all the Saints, if one at all. They partake of unleavened bread when they remember the nail prints in His hands, and the riven side of that broken body that perfected forever them that are sanctified. They drink of the fruit of the vine when they remember that His shed blood fulfilled a new and everlasting covenant. God’s will through the Holy Spirit controls true communion, not man. Our regular communion services are a type and shadow of true communion and are a beautiful memorial service of Christ’s sacrifice for the sins of His brothers and sisters, and nothing more.

God’s ways are not man’s ways. When we are born of our natural mother, we come forth from her, and the navel cord is broken. When we are born of our spiritual mother we enter into her and the navel cord is never broken. “But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the Mother of us all (Galatians 4.26).”

By revelation, the apostle John saw his spiritual mother, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her Husband: “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Revelation 21.2).” The apostle Paul described his spiritual mother as “the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven (Hebrews

12.23).” Mother Jerusalem and the church of the Firstborn are one with the family of God.

God’s children call one another brother or sister because they believe and trust that they have the same parents. His children love one another. Their greatest joy on earth is to be in the presence of those they hope to spend eternity with at HOME. They greatly rejoice in the family reunions they are blessed to attend here on earth, and they look forward with joy unspeakable to that everlasting reunion of the family of God around that great white throne in the presence of their Father God, and their beloved elder brother, Jesus Christ.

Love binds God’s children together on earth as it will in that heavenly home. The doctrine of God and of Christ feed those that are bound together by the Holy Spirit of God’s love. The apostle Paul makes plain that without love nothing else matters. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling symbol. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing (1 Corinthians 13.1-3).”

Eloquence of speech, knowledge of scripture, faith, offerings, and works are nothing unless each is a result of God’s love ruling our thoughts and actions. If any natural urge is the source, our actions are vanity in motion, and profit nothing. Worship God and love Him, His Son, and one another, are the great commandments to His children.

The Lord Almighty has promised to be a Father unto His children. What an exceeding great and precious promise! His children that He has loved with an everlasting love will be called home with their brother David to dwell in the house of the Lord forever. They will no more see through a glass darkly, but will see their Father and His Son and bask in their glorious presence throughout all eternity. “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body, shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust, for thy dew is the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead (Isaiah 26.19).” God’s

children will arise triumphant and cry out, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Our Father has given us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord, our friend, and our brother.” They will then inherit that Kingdom prepared for His children from the foundation of the world.

Is the family of God ruled over by any man or group of men? No. God’s will rules the thoughts and actions of His children. No man or group of men has ever had any control over the family of God. Even the apostles were subject to God who works all things after the council of His own will both in heaven and in earth.

Is the family of God divided? No. They are one in Christ Jesus. Hatred, judgment, and condemnation may divide people into warring factions. Self-righteous hypocrisy may exalt one above another. Jealousy and love of money may rear their ugly heads. All these things are works of the flesh and do cause aggravation and heartache to those who truly love one another. They can never stop the children of God from loving one another through every trial and temptation, for their love is of God.

Is the child of God subject to man-made laws and rules of worship? No. God writes and puts His laws in the mind and heart of each one of His children. These are the laws that rule the actions of a manifested child of God. A brother or sister that you love cannot offend you; therefore, no offense can take place between God’s children.

Does the child of God know who is or who is not a brother or sister? No. Only God knows them that are His. We can only hope that we ourselves and everyone whose life touches ours is a child of God.

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Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity...as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

—Psalm 133.1, 3.

THE IMMUTABLE WILL OF GOD

There are certain, reoccurring, false doctrines that trouble the church in each succeeding generation. They are characterized in that they always cause considerable trouble within the church, often resulting in splits. They are rediscovered when some brother finds some “new” understanding or light, and begins to expound it. If left unchecked, he will begin to convince others of the validity of his discovery, until he has a significant following.

This will continue until faithful brethren rise up and beat it back with careful exegesis of Scripture and God-blessed preaching. It is usually too late to retain all of those that have followed after this new preaching and dissimulation occurs. We ought to ever be mindful that there is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9-11). This includes, scriptural knowledge and understanding. Is it any wonder that we are admonished to heed the ancient landmarks (Proverbs 22:28)? When any person comes with some new understanding or interpretation we ought to examine him by “Thus saith the Lord (Acts 17:11)!” If his new doctrine will not stand the light of Scripture and experience then let him be shunned.

As evidenced by Elder Morris’ recent excellent article, the specious doctrine that “God is the author of sin” seems to be rearing its ugly head once again. I came into the church in the middle of this controversy in the 1970s. During a meeting in Texas back then, an Elder said: “God is the author of sin! There, I’ve said it and I’m glad.” I had never heard the phrase before and had no idea what he meant by it; but not only did I know that it was wrong, I also believed it was intended to be divisive. Before the summer was out, that incident precipitated a schism within the association where the statement was made, and between it and its sister associations. Although this false doctrine has been somewhat concealed in the intervening quarter century, it has not gone away. It is too good a tool in Satan’s bag for him to discard it. For this reason, I feel constrained to try once again to refute this blasphemous, heretical, specious, spurious, pseudo-doctrine.

As a beginning place, let’s define “Doctrine.” Webster states that a doctrine is something taught as

the principles of religion. The Greek New Testament uses *didaskalia* as the substance of that taught and *didache* as the act of teaching. Both are used for true teaching and for false teaching. The context must define the usage and meaning. The primary word for doctrine in the Old Testament is *leqach* meaning properly receiving (therefore learning) instruction.

So God says in Deuteronomy 32:2 “my doctrine (properly received instruction) shall drop as the rain.” Therefore, I understand that a **doctrine** is a body of knowledge from biblical writings that in its totality sets forth a principle or truth. The development of a doctrine requires direct, literal biblical evidence *and* careful exegesis of related scripture. This is done by good men over time and confirmed by believers in the pew.

This truth, in order to be understood and assimilated, depends on expressions of language that like minded persons can receive, understand, and act on. A fundamental teaching must not be strictly bound to only Bible words and no other. If we are limited only to Bible words to express our belief, then what business do we have expounding on the Bible in scriptural preaching? We would only have oral Bible reading without any exposition thereof. Certainly, public Bible reading is profitable to the body, but God has manifestly used sound, expository preaching to edify, exhort, and instruct the church through the ages.

As evidence that this specious, troubling doctrine is not new, let’s briefly review the historical records. A perusal of the documents will convince an honest seeker that many of the church patriarchs strongly denounced such a concept as heresy and blasphemy.

A few quotations should suffice. In chapter one of his history, Hassell said; “...the third chapter of Genesis implies that evil or sin originated from the ungodly exercise of creaturely free-will. Sin is not an attribute of matter, but of spirit. The most holy God is not in any sense its cause or author...such a thought were (sic) the most awful blasphemy. Man’s body, as created was very good...and not sinful. Christ’s body was never the seat of sin ...and the glorified bodies of the saints shall be free from sin...” (references omitted for brevity; Hassell; page 32). In a footnote on the discussion of the seventh century

(page 415) he quotes Neander who attributes this perversion of the truth to

“...Mohammedanism, and not Christianity; it is the most wretched perversion of Scripture and the most awful imaginable blasphemy, to identify God with Satan, the source of holiness with the source of sin...to maintain that the Holy Spirit, who is God, inspires sinful thoughts or purposes in any of His creatures. He foreknows, and permits, and controls all things, not instigating, but bending the wickedness of men and devils into that channel that shall enhance His own glory and His people’s good. The Divine Spirit is the author of all holiness, and not the author of any unholiness. No Baptist, no Christian believes that God is the cause or author of sin.” (Hassell, page 415, note)

In his discussion of the sixteenth century (The Reformation), Hassell quotes Jonathan Edwards at length on the subject (pages 484ff). In part he says: “...God, by the withdrawal of His sustaining influence, is no more the proper cause of sin than the sun, by its departure, is the proper cause of darkness and cold...” (the entire discourse is noteworthy.) On page 495, Hassell points out that Calvin may have traced sin to the direct agency of God in his *Institutes*, but pulled back in a later writing when he averred that “every decree of the Almighty springs from reasons which, though hidden from us, are good and sufficient...” Hassell further declares in this discussion on page 497, that “all Calvinistic confessions, without exception, trace the fall to a permissive decree, make men responsible and justly punishable for sin, and reject, as blasphemous slander, the charge that God is the author of sin.”

Isaac Backus, in an article titled “The Doctrine of Particular Election and Final Perseverance,” wrote in 1789 that “God never injured Cain in giving saving faith to Abel, nor the Midianites, who were of the seed of Abraham, in electing Israel for his church...And he never injured any man in uniting the priestly and kingly offices in Jesus Christ and in souls who are born again, who are only the kings and priests in the Gospel-church...Wages can be recovered by law, but a gift is bestowed on whom, and in what manner the giver pleaseth.”

The motivation, at least in part, for Parker publishing his dissertations on the Two-Seed Doc-

trine, was an apology against this false [*God/author of sin*] theology. In one place he said; “Dare we poor mortals, who have to appear at the awful bar of God, contend for a doctrine which gives God the lie, and charges him with being the author and that by, and for the blessed Saviour, of such base, wicked, corrupt things; and even of being the source and cause of wickedness in high places. Oh blush at such a thought, and pray to God of grace that the wickedness of your heart may be forgiven you.”

One only has to read Elder Beebe’s last editorial on the subject of Predestination published in the *Signs of the Times*, October, 1880, to know that he considered the subject doctrine to be grievous error. In one instance in this editorial he said, “We regard it a very serious matter to charge that God cannot govern the world, by His own determinate counsel, wisdom and power, according to the eternal and immutable design or purpose purposed in Himself before the world began, without subjecting Himself to the charge of being the author of sin.”

How anyone can, in the face of so great a cloud of witnesses, expound and advocate this proposition is beyond my reason. But they can and they do. As recently as 1994, the Editor of a “Limited Predestination” periodical, in writing on the subject of “Scriptural Limits on Predestination” declares that predestination is limited to God’s people and is only in reference to whom and unto what they are predestinated. He refuses to allow for a doctrine of predestination apart from the limited use of the word predestinate and its derivatives in the Bible, disavowing the obvious principle of all the other great Bible words expanding and expounding the principle.

Evidently he does not allow for exegesis of scripture if it interferes with his pat system. However, he does allow that God purposed to suffer—but not predestinate—the entrance of sin into the world, and he does emphatically (but for the wrong reasons) aver that “It is the height of wickedness to charge God with being the Author of sin.” Even Job’s miserable comforters declared truth while woefully misunderstanding and interpreting it.

An examination of historical records and literature will discover the vestiges of the arguments of the source of sin and evil in created order in the writings of the Persian philosopher Zoroaster, who, more

than 500 years before the Christ event, wrote about a “cosmic” strife between the god of light and the principle of evil. Zoroasterianism finally gave way to Islam, which is a strange amalgamation of Zoroasterian philosophy and Hebrew and Christian theology.

This “*self-existing evil*” principle keeps creeping into Christian thought, and I think that the “Author of Sin” heresy is an attempt to explain the presence of evil in created order without falling into this philosophy. One side seems to argue that to acknowledge absolute predestination requires the incantation of such a creed as “God is the author of Sin,” and since this offends their sensibilities, they attempt to restrict the great Doctrine of Predestination. At the same time the other side boldly proves their absoluteness by proudly acknowledging such a creed. Both are heretical misinterpretations of the revealed word of God, seeking to explain logically that which cannot be explained by logic, reason or philosophy.

The answer to the dispute is, in part, well stated by Hassell (P 655):

Why God decreed to *permit sin* to arise and continue in the universe, when He is infinitely wise, righteous, merciful, and powerful, is a mystery equally insoluble by both Predestinarian and Arminian. But whether we understand the mystery or not, we know that the righteous Judge of the universe doeth all things right....” [Italics are Elder Hassell’s.—Ed.]

An examination of Scripture will validate the Conditionalist’s assertion that the word predestinate (or a direct derivative) occurs only four times in the King James Version [KJV] Bible—twice each in Romans and Ephesians. But we must reject his notion that the Great Doctrine does not contain the other great words of predestination such as election, foreknowledge, foreordination, calling, omnipotence, eternal I AM, *etc.*

How in the world of men can you expect to adequately expound the unlimited power of Almighty God not only to purpose, but to bring to pass in time as well as eternity His immutable design, without including all of the Holy Scripture? For this Conditionalist editor to say that

God purposed to suffer (*allow*) the entrance of sin into the world, otherwise it could not have entered. But to say He foreordained that Adam... would sin is to free Adam... from any responsibility in the matter and lay the blame for sin squarely at God’s door as its irrefutable Author.

is very presumptive on the part of that editor’s wisdom and intellect.

I know of no humble sinner that blames God for anything that he himself has done. It is an utterly demeaning experience for a man to come to the knowledge that he, himself, has actually sinned. That he, himself, is guilty without any recourse. True religion is not a philosophy, theology, or system. It is a soul-felt knowledge that God is God, and having declared the end from the beginning, He perfects His purposes in time, without the “letting” of any man or group of men. To have any hope of understanding this great doctrine of absolute predestination of all things in time and eternity by the unchangeable God, we must rely on the Holy Spirit leading us into an exploring of all of the Bible, believing in its reliability and veracity. There is no other word anywhere, of any time or by any writer, that will efficiently emend its truth.

The Word of Truth, nowhere within its pages in English or ancient languages, describes God as the author of sin. (I find no place where it defines any being as *the* author of sin.) The KJV translators use **author** to translate a word that means “cause or occasion” in Hebrews 5.9, when it says, “...he became the author (cause) of eternal salvation.” They use **author** to translate a compound word (literally meaning ‘the prime I am’) meaning the beginner of, or chief leader in Hebrews 12.2, where it says that “...Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith....” They translate the same word as “prince” in Acts 5.31 and 3.15, and as “captain” in Hebrews 2:10. It is interesting to note in 1 Corinthians 14.33 that the translators supplied the word “author” for better readability in the English. There in no such word in the Greek versions. It is so indicated by italics in the originally published KJV. The use of the word author in these references suggests that Jesus is the one who begins all things and the life He brings is not from another, but wholly from Himself. After all, He *is* the life which is unstained by sin.

I utterly reject the unscriptural label with which Conditionalists attempt to smear us. I utterly refuse to subscribe to any such false creed in order to prove that I believe in absolute predestination. It is enough to acknowledge that understanding why or how an infinitely wise, powerful, holy, and benevolent God should have permitted the existence of sin and misery in the world is beyond the mind of men to comprehend (Psalm 131). We neither know nor understand precisely how, when, where, or why Satan is in created order. But we must acknowledge that he is. Perhaps Editor Hassell said it best in his Appendix in an article titled "Predestination." It reads, in part; "I believe, and I think that every Bible Baptist believes, that God is the All-Mighty, All-Wise, and All-Holy Sovereign of the Universe; that He could have prevented the entrance of sin into the world; that He perfectly foreknew the fall and all the wickedness of men; that He had a purpose worthy of Himself, however inscrutable to us, in regard to the entrance of sin, as well as in regard to all things else; that by His supreme power and decree He restricts all the rage and malice of wicked men and devils to do no more nor less than what He will overrule for the good of His people and for His glory; that men act voluntarily when they commit sin, and are neither tempted nor compelled by God to sin; that God hates sin with a perfect hatred, forbids and resents and punishes it, unless properly atoned for and repented of, with an everlasting curse."

Our beliefs, doctrines, and the tenets of our faith must, without exception, be based completely on Bible knowledge and understanding, and not in any way founded on reason, logic or philosophy. There is nothing wrong, when faced with an unfathomable mystery, to simply admit that 'we don't know.' (Lloyd's hymn 305 is a delightful commentary on this point.)

We must test every declaration of men as the Berean Baptists did, by searching the Scriptures daily to see if these things be so. Before a man can come to God he must believe that God is (Hebrews 11.6). In this faith, all other needful knowledge will be added to him. The natural model is to believe a lot of things and then attempt to add God's imprimatur to it by specious interpretations. God forbid that the Body of Christ would be so presumptuous (Psalm 19.13).

The answer of a good conscience toward God recognizes the intrusion of sin and discord into the world without striving or arguing about its origin. It will confirm the fact of sin and the guilt of sinners without having to prove anything.

Nothing can be 'proved' or 'disproved' by arguing or debating the Bible, because it is a book of God-endued faith, and not a book of empirical facts with which one proves anything. Those who believe do so by grace, while those who disbelieve are already condemned. It is God who so judged before the beginning. Amen.

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THE SOVEREIGN DOMINION OF GOD OVER ALL THINGS

By: Elder Stanley C. Phillips
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The Baptist Confession Of Faith of 1689, Presbyterian Westminster Confession of 1647, and the Congregational Savoy Confession of 1658 all have the same Chapter III, which begins with the statement "*We believe that God hath decreed all things whatsoever comes to pass,*" and they all state clearly that "*God is not the author of sin, nor does He have fellowship with any therein.*" This is undeniably the historical position of Protestants and Baptists in the United States. The Great Awakening was a Holy Spirit revival on the colonial frontiers within these three major groups, and it produced Predestinarian or Calvinistic churches in large numbers. In the 1820s, Satan spurred a counterfeit revival, which divided all religious orders in America, and spawned Arminian groups innumerable that denied the historical and biblical faith of our forefathers. Most of these New Light groups kept the Articles of Faith, but insisted that they held to "no creedalism." Thus, they went from bad to worse, from Arminianism, to Pelagianism, to Decisionism, to Religious Entertainmentism. All four of these

“isms” falsely accuse the Calvinistic and Old Baptist groups of preaching that “God Is The Author Of Sin;” and this, they say, is the reason for their rejection of the Five Principles of Grace; i.e., they say predestination leads to lasciviousness. (John Gill wrote an excellent rebuttal to this charge when John Wesley laid it at the feet of Christians. It is well worth studying again.)

As our forefathers taught, so we yet hold today, to wit, that God is absolutely sovereign over all things, yet He is not the author or approver of sin. Gordon Clark often used this argument in rebuttal to the charge that predestination made God the author of sin, saying gently, “I am the author of this book, but every word in it was predestinated by God. He did not author the book. I did!” The Lord willing, we shall discuss this Third Chapter in two parts. First, that God is not the author of sin, and the second, that God does not approve of sin. For a living experimental Christian, there should be no dispute with these two positions.

In modern religious concepts, there are found two very strange contradictions: (1) multitudes of ministers spend much of their time preaching on futuristic and sensational prophesies while outright opposing the sovereignty of God and predestination! A more inconsistent foolishness one cannot imagine; for if there is no “predestination” of future events, by what means, then, can any certainty of their occurrence be predicted? (2) the largest group of moderate Calvinists in this country preach that God is sovereign over His heavenly estate in the “eternal” salvation of His children; but exercises no authority or control over His earthly and spiritual kingdom in this “time world.” Rather, they say, He leaves each of His redeemed children to work out their own salvation unassisted according to “their own free will,” and misquote the text, “choose ye this day whom ye shall serve” whether it is the gods of their Gentile fathers on the other side of the flood waters, or the false gods of the Amorites; or be, as they say, “disobedient little children of God,” who miss their blessings, or earn them by their own merits. This, too, is a glaring inconsistency.

That one can preach that Christ is *King* over His spiritual kingdom and church, and yet not be *sovereign* over His created subjects seems to be an irreconcilable contradiction; for, to be an *absolute*

monarch (sovereign) necessitates an *absolute reign*. One cannot be an “absolute monarch” (sovereign) with a “constitutional” democracy. The two terms are mutually exclusive.

How would it fare for one to be the “*HEAD of His body, the church,*” yet have one eye looking toward heaven and heavenly things, and the other eye looking toward the earth and earthly things; one foot attempting to walk in the “broad way;” and the other attempting to walk in the narrow; or, one hand reaching by faith to the promises of God, and the other clasping the treasures of Egypt? Such a body (each member thereof with an independent will of its own) not be a schismatic and deformed body? Would this not deny the Head of His control, wisdom, understanding, and will? Certainly it would!

If God is not *King* in Zion, then where is He a “king” at all? If Christ is not the *Head* of His church, then who is? We firmly believe that God is sovereign over all His creation and His kingdom, and is “*Head over all things* to His church (Ephesians 1:22).”

Brethren of the Old School—and I can address you thus because you only believe the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God and the *only rule of faith and practice*—our Confession does not say that God “predestinated all things, both good and evil” as we are so wantonly charged by our free will adversaries. It says, in much stronger language “God hath *decreed* all things whatsoever come to pass....” We have no objection to one saying he believes that God “*predestinated*” (rather than “decreed”) “all things” if it is clear that he is acknowledging God’s absolute control and direction of all events; nor do we object to one’s not prefixing the word “absolute” to “predestination” of all things if it is clear he is not attempting to limit God’s sovereignty over all His dominion. If predestination is rightly understood, the prefix is unnecessary. Paul didn’t use it.

But we cannot fellowship those holding the Arminian or Pelagian concept of a “limited” sovereignty; such denies the concept of God’s Lordship over His own created dominion. As “King of king, and Lord of lords,” whose “powers to be are ordained of God,” He is sovereign in all three powers of government: He is the Chief Executive of all His dominion; He is the only Legislature, and His commandments, laws and statutes are only of Him;

and He is the final and awesome Judge in His judicial powers. In short, God is SOVEREIGN.

The eternal decree of God respecting His angelic and Adamic creations falls into Scriptural branches that we shall attempt briefly to present in this part.

First, the decree of God respecting His felicity towards men include the *predestination and election* of those He loved with an everlasting love to salvation in time and eternal glory, to the praise of the glory of His grace (Ephesians 1:1-11). Arthur W. Pink rightly notes that salvation's chief end is NOT the salvation of any man. The chief end of election and predestination is His own eternal glory, or, "*to the praise of the glory of His grace.*" That is one reason we say that modern evangelism is misdirected. It has "getting folks saved" as its chief end, and hence has become quite Machiavellian, i.e., "the end justifies the means." Since to them the end is the salvation of all mankind, any means may be employed that they assume will reach that end. To us, however, the end is "to the praise of the glory of His grace," and this "end" required restraint on inventing unscriptural "means and measures," for such defeats the scriptural end. It only glorifies man.

Second, the decree of God relative to those whose standing was not in Christ by divine election before the world began includes the perdition and reprobation of the wicked fallen sons of Adam, and this too, is to the end that it renders praise to His justice and absolute immaculate holiness (Jude 4). For the first class of Adam's offspring, eternal life was given them IN Christ in divine election before the world began. They will, in time, receive it in divine quickening to life. For the second class, no such life is given them other than what they had in their father, Adam, and they will never have another "eternal life" imparted to them in this time world.

I. The Decree Of Predestination and Unconditional Election.

The Apostle to the Gentiles wrote, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings....*" If we were able to list all of them, the list would at least include election, all events to bring the elect to birth, life, regeneration and salvation, justification, imputed righteousness, redemption, ransom, sanctification, the atonement, reconciliation, propitiation,

adoption, glorification, to but name a few. These, and others, were given to us *in Him* "in heavenly places" before our natural existence. He continued: "*According as He [God the Father] hath chosen us in Him [not "in Adam"] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath MADE US ACCEPTED in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:3-6).*"

We understand that all spiritual blessings are of the free gift of God to His people as viewed *IN Christ* and was actually and really *given to them* before the world began. These blessings are enumerated in the verses following, to wit: their "election" to holiness and sanctification; the "adoption" as children, which according to Romans will be secured at their bodily resurrection (Romans 8:23); their "acceptance" in the Beloved; "redemption" through His blood; the "forgiveness" of sins; the "knowledge of the mystery of His will," that in the dispensation of the "fullness of times" that He will "gather together in one all things in Christ"; the obtaining of an "inheritance" to which they are "predestinated," the "sealing of the Holy Spirit of promise," which is their "earnest of the inheritance" until the redemption of the purchased possession (their bodies); and all this is "*to the praise of the glory,*" rather than to the praise of their most diligent works, or high-powered preachers. It is all by free grace!

Within these verses is found the difference in our faith and that of the legalists. We believe the chosen were "*in Christ Jesus*" while others view the elect [if they believe in election] as being chosen *in Adam*. That within itself is a profound difference within Christianity. Those who view the election in Christ, recognize that the family of God has always had a union via their "eternal life" given them in Christ's seed substance, and in time this eternal life given them will be communicated to them in divine quickening. Thus they believe the second birth to be altogether different from the first, being spiritual and of the "incorruptible seed, the Word of God that LIVETH and ABIDETH forever (Christ)." Those who see this election *in Adam* view the second birth as a "being born all over again" in the natural man,

or Adamic man. The first find a violent conflict between that which is spiritual and that which is fleshly; while the second speak of “progressive sanctification,” or the flesh getting better and better.

The election in Christ is to an end, for the elect, that they be “holy and without blame.” But notice, it is not merely “holy and without blame,” but “before Him.” They will always be blameworthy in themselves; but “before Him,” He has removed the enmity and wrath of God against sinners Himself, and made them “holy,” and by the imputation of His righteousness, has made them “without blame.” If He merely elected and predestinated them to eternal salvation, as some suppose, then none of these enumerated blessings are needful or useful. To heaven they would go whether Christ died for them or no; whether the Spirit called them or no; or whether they were sealed until the redemption of their bodies or no!

The church was chosen in Christ and blessed with all spiritual blessings, before the foundation of the world, and she had her standing in Him (representatively and in seed-substance) before Adam fell. They were not, as mentioned above, chosen in Adam - that is, that God foresaw their fall in Adam, and rushed in with a make-shift emergency rescue plan of salvation to save and bless some of them upon certain, or rather, uncertain conditions.

This is made clear by the apostle when he said, “*For the children [referring to the twins, Jacob and Esau] 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). What is this *purpose of God* that is according to election? Not election itself, but “according to” it—“...*they which are the children of the flesh, these not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed*” (verse 8), and the whole chapter is devoted to the proof thereof.

Our differences with some others would not be so great relative to the predestination of God in the election of Children by Jesus Christ but for their denial of God’s sovereignty and dominion in it. When Paul wrote that “*we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose*” (Romans 8:28), he places election squarely in the setting of

God’s eternal counsel. This he says, “*In whom also we have obtained (past tense) an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh ALL THINGS after the counsel of HIS OWN WILL: that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ*” (Ephesians 1:11). By what great means did we *obtain* that predestinated inheritance? Certainly so long as the “*testator liveth*” the testament is not in force (Hebrews 9:16-17). So when did the elect people obtain it? Is it not recorded, “*For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and counsel determined before to be done*” (Acts 4:27-28).

Now, is this one of those “all things” which work together for the good to those that love God? Then it was predestinated. Shall any child of God say “No!”? And was this an event in *time*? Was it conditional with “ifs” and “admonitions to make choices” by sinners? Was it a righteous act? Let the reader judge. Again, is it not recorded: “*Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel*”—to fix, ordain, determine, predestine—and *foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain*” (Acts 2:23)? Was it, or was it not, predestinated? And, can we not clearly see that they did it as freely and without compulsion as if no higher counsel was involved; but which in fact was, and had been revealed by many prophets from Adam to John in the most minute detail?

Most of our opponents agree with us that the elect are “*predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ,*” at least in phraseology. However, we differ as to the meaning of this conformity. We believe it commences in divine quickening and continues through sanctification of the Spirit through the regeneration and restoration of our changed and glorified bodies in the resurrection. Many of them believe that one can be born *over* again, yet never believe, repent, or maintain good works and yet after death reap eternal salvation. Many of our readers will find this surprising since it is without any biblical warrant and contrary to experimental grace. But it is advocated by large numbers of Baptists in this country. It is a denial of Holy Spirit sanctification as the experience of God’s children. It disputes

the promise of Christ that the Holy Spirit will “convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.”

The elect are “predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ.” It is illogical and unscriptural to assume that they can be conformed to His heavenly image and bypass the sufferings of Christ *in His people*, when it is an established fact that He took “on Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of man: and being found in the fashion of man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:7-8). His *image*, or that which His eternal mind conceived for man’s appearance when fashioned, is that of both God manifested in the flesh and man in whose form He was partaker. That image, being both spiritual and corporal, His children are therefore predestinated to bear that spiritual and corporal likeness. Any and all admonitions that are given are for His children in this dual nature. (The very fact that God gives admonitions establishes His sovereign dominion over His creatures.)

The elect are chosen “to salvation.” That is to say, they are not chosen to go to heaven, but to be saved. They are saved from condemnation together with the ungodly world through eternal election by virtue of their standing *in Him* as their Head from before the foundation of the world. Their election was by the Triune Godhead. They are saved prior to their holy calling in divine quickening by their position in Christ in His redemptive work. As it is written, “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any (of us) should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9)”; and as Jude, “the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James” wrote: “sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called (Jude 1).” It is certain that it is God’s will that all the elect be brought to repentance, and this can only be in this time world by experience. “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.”

The elect are partakers of all things that work together, or jointly, for their good. “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them HE ALSO CALLED....” (Ro-

mans 8:29). Does God call them all, or just some of them? In other words, did He predestinate to eternal salvation that includes heaven, but fail to call them in time? Do any of the elect “miss the blessings of their time salvation”? Indeed not! For it is *salvation in time* to which they are called by the Holy Spirit. It is in this time world that they are “called to be saints” (1 Cor. 1:7), were “called to fellowship” (1 Cor. 1:9), and He has “called you out of darkness” (1 Peter 2:9), etc. There are many more proofs of God’s sovereign dominion in both heaven and earth, and in time and eternity.

The elect are saved in divine quickening from spiritual death and alienation from their God. They are saved in sanctification from the dominion of sin and delivered from the kingdom of darkness. In other words, salvation is the whole and complete deliverance of God’s people, and this salvation is never completed in this time-world in all of its parts. The victory is, however, certain: “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work IN YOU will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6)”; and “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:3-5).” This is what is wrong, in principle, with boasting that “I know that I am saved.” Salvation is not completed in all its parts (glorification) yet, nor can one “know it” until it is “revealed in the last time.” None of this salvation is conditioned on the will or work of the creature. It is only conditioned upon the sacrifice and imputed righteousness of Christ, and the calling of the Holy Spirit.

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EDITORIAL: SHIBBOLETHS

Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim: and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim... And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand. (Judges 12.4-6).

Jephthah, a judge in Israel, found his homeland of Gilead in civil war with the tribe of Ephraim. Gilead's army strategically took control of the Jordan River where the Ephraimites would cross it as they headed for home in retreat. To escape capture and death at the fords, the Ephraimite soldiers tried to pass themselves off as civilian travelers of some tribe other than Ephraim's.

When a stranger approached, Jephthah's army put him to a simple test: They asked him to say "Shibboleth," the word for a *stream*. Ephraimites, having a distinctive dialect, would say "Sibboleth." Failing that one-word test—actually the sound of one letter, the difference between the *sh* and *s* sounds—was the occasion of 42,000 Ephraimites being slain.

The term *shibboleth* has been brought directly from the Hebrew into the English language and has found a place in our dictionaries. A *shibboleth* is any slogan used as a test of fellowship (religious, political, academic, *etc.*). It is a use of language regarded as distinctively associated with a particular group. It is used as a standard test to find out if someone fits in as a member of that group or not. It is, "If you can't say what we say, and say it the way we say it, then you don't belong with us."

A *shibboleth* is a handy tool, whether it is used in religion, politics, or any number of fields, wherever men maintain exclusive groups. Shibboleths may be thought of as whatever "politically correct" beliefs and opinions we must affirm or deny in order to survive in our respective groups.

"Taking the world for Christ," "Don't mix religion and politics," "the five points of Calvinism," "absolute predestination of all things," "who-soever will may come," "social reform," "conditional time salvation," "one nation under God," "God is [or is not] the author of sin," "this is a Christian nation," "put Christ back into Christmas," "everyone is equal," "a woman's right to choose," "equal pay for equal work," "academic freedom," "put prayer back into the schools," are but a few current shibboleths. Some people get nervous, testy, defensive, or even angry when some of these phrases are only casually mentioned, let alone when the shibboleth is aggressively advanced or attacked, as the case might be. Even though I've only listed the above phrases without comment, pro or con, a reader might yet bristle at one or more of these phrases and say, "What is **that** doing in *The Remnant*?"

A shibboleth that seems "good" to one group seems evil to another. Each phrase has a special meaning to the group's members. Each shibboleth is a touchstone to test the orthodoxy of the group's members or of an unsuspecting stranger who, like the unwary traveling Ephraimite, comes among them. One's expressed attitude toward any of these and other phrases determines whether he fits in as a friend of—or he is excluded as a foe of—whatever group is applying their test.

All one must do to be banished from a group is to seriously challenge one of their pet shibboleths. For instance, go among those advocating "Let's put Christ back into Christmas" and tell them, "Christ was never *in* Christmas, so how can you talk of 'putting Him back in' somewhere He never was?" You will be immediately classified as an anti-Christian oddball, as far as the pro-Christmas people are concerned.

Shibboleths are good to have, because they are a fast, shorthand method of finding out who stands with us and who stands against us, who is for us, and who *ain't*. Whether we like it or not, **confessions of faith** can be thought of as shibboleths. If a church or an association has—say—ten points of doctrine in their confession of faith, and a visitor begins telling the brethren, "Well, I don't believe this one, and I don't believe that one, and I don't believe *that*, and I don't believe this....," how close will he get to joining those brethren?

Consider. Ask someone, “Do you believe in (1) the virgin birth of Christ, (2) His deity, (3) His literal bodily resurrection, (4) that He really wrought miracles, (5) the absolute predestination of all things, and (6) that Jesus Christ is coming again to rule on earth with a rod of iron?”

Regardless of who you are and what your beliefs are about these particular points, you will react considerably differently to the person who gives you six yes answers, the person who gives you six no answers, and the person who answers some of these points yes and some no.

Suppose one is of a mind that he wants five of these points answered “yes” but wants one answered with a resounding “NO!!!!” Shall he, as Gilead, put a brother to the sword who doesn’t answer *all* the questions *exactly* to his liking? Such happens.

Ask twenty such yes-and-no questions, and you can pigeonhole any person, by his answers, in one of over a million compartments (actually, in one of 1,048,576 compartments, to be exact).

Shibboleths are bad to have when they divide brethren on “nonessentials.” But the question always arises, “What is a *nonessential*”? Everyone talks of “nonessentials,” but we are not prone to think of any of our own beliefs as nonessential. Each has his own lists of what he considers to be essential beliefs and nonessential beliefs. Who is to say? Who can divide up the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, His apostles, His prophets, and the Bible from cover to cover, and say anything therein is “nonessential”?

There is, or seems to be, an unwritten rule that we don’t “split” over the practice of foot-washing, for instance; it has always been a nonessential “local option.” However, there are always a few, who, believing foot-washing is an essential point of practice, are seemingly on the verge of withdrawing from those who do not.

Instances could be multiplied of borderline issues such as this. Where does one draw the line? I do not know. I do not pretend to have the answers. The ones who would make anyone an offender for a word (Isaiah 29.21) should be able to give us the answers, and to say why their opinion is essential and why yours or mine is not. The fact that some individuals and groups define what is essential for themselves and then insist all others must conform to

their essentials or else be consigned to the pit of the everlasting burnings, is—from the human, earthly, experimental standpoint—why there are so many factions among the Primitive Baptists.

From God’s standpoint, however, “There **must be also heresies** among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you (1 Corinthians 11.19).” The fact that there **must be** heresies indicates it is predestinated that heresies will be introduced into the church, because the Lord has a purpose for them. The Lord does not so fix anything without a reason or a purpose, and Paul says exactly what that purpose is: “...that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.” Does this verse not mean that heretics will adhere to the heresies while they who are “approved” of God will adhere to the truth as it is in Christ Jesus? So God has a purpose for heresies, divisions, splits, and factions.

As individuals, we are unique: No two people on earth see all things exactly alike. Each is really in his or her own special category, one of the 1,048,576 compartments.

God made us so. “For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it (1 Corinthians 4.7)?” God never made two leaves, two pebbles, two stars, two snowflakes, or two people exactly alike. Did He do this so oak leaves should withdraw fellowship from each other or snowflakes should not affiliate with one another? If two brethren agree on forty-nine of fifty doctrinal points, and they have beautiful fellowship for decades, must they end up withdrawing fellowship from each other because they disagree over the fiftieth point? Such happens.

Having said all this, I find I have trodden on a shibboleth or two of a few of our readers.

First, I’m guardedly thankful that, if I am not deceived, the brother who sent the query letter that prompted my editorial (in the July-August issue) received my remarks in a good spirit. He wrote a letter to me that was not for publication. In it he brought up several Scripture passages and questions worthy of consideration, but this is neither the time nor place to consider them, for several reasons: (1) a lack of space to properly address them, (2) to honor his request not to publish his letter, and (3) so that

he and I might address the issues by personal correspondence (which I hope we can do).

On a more positive note, there was considerable support and encouragement regarding the July-August issue. I have received many letters, phone calls, and e-mails supporting the editorial position set forth in the last issue. This support does not mean that I am right, although I would hope the many encouraging remarks are an indication of it. What it does mean to me is, simply, that most of *The Remnant's* readers do not believe "God is the author of sin."

Such was not a unanimous response, of course. There were two or two who disagreed, and a couple readers who raised side issues. None who disagreed want their views printed herein over their names. I can understand why, and I will honor their requests.

No Conditionalist responded to my invitation to send documented cases where Absolute Predestinarian Elders in good standing in their home churches and associations have publicly advocated the "God-author-of-sin" error. We suppose they did not because they could not. As they are forever saying the doctrine of absolute predestination "makes God the author of sin," we would think they would have sent long lists of names, dates, and locations where Absoluters have preached such. And, on the other hand, since we have consistently denied their accusations through the years, it seems strange that no one who claims to believe God is the author of sin has ever openly risen up to defend his position, either against the Conditionalists or against us.

I might be wrong, but it seems that this incident has served a good purpose, as do *all things* (Romans 8.28). If this does not once and for all prove that there IS a third and scriptural position that advocates neither "God is the author of sin" nor the free-willism of the Arminians and Conditionalists, *what would it take to prove it?*

The Remnant, as an Absolute Predestinarian paper, has for several years published fifteen principles on page 20 upon which Primitive, Old School Baptists can agree. What over 99% of our readers have in common is an appreciation for and belief in these principles. We are a little flock, a *remnant*, and there are few readers who would have us further divide over man-made, hair-splitting shibboleths.

In this issue of *The Remnant*, four or five "factions" are represented by the articles and their

authors; *but they are all absolute predestinarian factions*. There are differences among us, to be sure—in doctrine, practice, views on the understanding of specific Scriptures, local issues, and even the way we express ourselves. All this, we cannot deny; but—amazing grace!—these differences do not prevent our fellowship in the doctrine of Christ, including a clear-cut, unequivocal, united stand on God's absolute predestination of all things, the purpose upon which this paper was originally founded. This unites us and brings us together while some differences remain that are "essential" enough to keep brethren in Christ out of each other's stands.

Even though we will always find it necessary to withdraw from disorderly members and groups from time to time, there are some brethren who labor to discover whether or not all the divisions are truly and scripturally necessary; and, if possible, to remove (or have removed) some of the unscriptural, man-made bars that separate "Absoluters." While so doing, have no doubt about it: There will always be the need for *some* bars because of errors in doctrine and practice. If the Lord is truly in the matter, then discerning the difference between (a) valid scriptural reasons to "split" (as in 1 John 2.19) and (b) splitting because someone stepped on a brother's pet shibboleth (as in Isaiah 29.21) will be of major concern. At least on the surface of things, each and every group honestly believes it has valid reasons for the divisions it maintains. We would pray that, while brethren work toward reuniting factions here and there, we might all be given to listen with patience and discernment, and to respect one another's principles and honest understanding of the Scriptures.

By God's grace and mercy, we can yet have "fellowship" when we cannot have "affiliation." If the Lord God leaves us to our sinful selves, we will certainly draw the sword on one another whenever one can't say "Shibboleth" to suit the other. "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another (Galatians 5.15)."

Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not (Malachi 3.18). Discernment is a gift of God's Spirit (1 Corinthians 12.10f). May He bless us helpless sinners to **discern** between the essential and nonessential differences.

—C. C. Morris

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The following is an outline of principles the readers of *The Remnant* may expect to see maintained in this publication. Under no circumstances do the publishers or writers for *The Remnant* seek to delineate herein a standard of doctrine or views to be imposed upon the readers. Rather, we set these principles before the readers that they may know what general principles guide our efforts. All attempts at declaring articles of faith will be marred by prejudices and frailty, and ours are by no means any exception.

We believe these principles are, in the main, harmonious with the articles of faith published by predestinarian associations and churches of the old order of Baptists known as Primitive, Particular, or Old School Baptists the world over.

1—The eternal existence, sovereignty, immutability, omnipotence, and perfections of Jehovah God; He has revealed Himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these sacred Three are One; Jesus Christ was and is God manifest in the flesh, and in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

2—The Old and New Testaments in their original languages are the verbally inspired word of God, and they are the complete and only valid guide of faith and practice; the King James Version is the preferred English translation;

3—The will of the eternal God is the first cause of all causes;

4—The absolute predestination of all things;

5—The eternal personal election of the redeemed in Christ, before the world began, and their eternal, vital union with Him; their number is fixed, certain, and sure, and can neither be increased nor diminished; their fall in their federal head Adam into

spiritual death, total depravity, and just condemnation; their utter inability to recover themselves from this fallen state;

6—The blood atonement and redemption by Jesus Christ are for the elect only, and are both efficacious and effectual in accomplishing the will and purpose of God to reconcile His people unto Himself;

7—The sovereign, irresistible, effectual work of the Holy Spirit in quickening the elect of God; the new birth is by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit without the use of any means;

8—The final preservation, perseverance, and eternal happiness of all the sons of God, by grace alone;

9—No works are good works other than those which God Himself has so designated; none of the works called good are left up to men to perform or not, at the creature's discretion; nor do the works of the creature, either before or after regeneration, result in merit accruing to his account in God's sight;

10—The peaceable fruits of righteousness are the certain result of God's working in His people both to will and to do of His good pleasure, and His people will be found walking in paths of righteousness for His name's sake;

11—The separation of church and state;

12—The principles outlined in the Black Rock Address of 1832;

13—The bodily resurrection, first of Christ, and also that of all the dead;

14—The final and eternal judgment; and,

15—The bliss of the redeemed and the torment of the wicked are both eternal and everlasting.