

"CHOSEN IN HIM"
THE CASE FOR UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

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The controversy over the free will of man and its relationship to salvation has raged from the early days of the church. The related question concerning the nature and extent of the atonement has also inspired much discussion and research. How one answers these questions has far reaching impact on his practical theology.

There are, in reality, only two views on the issue of election. Either God foresaw those who would believe and, on the basis of that faith, elected them or, God, for reasons known only to himself, unconditionally chose persons upon whom to bestow the blessings of salvation. Throughout the Scriptures, God is portrayed as giving His favor to particular men merely because He wished to do so. The call of Abraham, for example, is an illustration of God's moving to bless a man because of sovereign grace. Likewise in the New Testament, God chooses men to privileged positions. The example of Paul is an outstanding illustration of the sovereign appointment of God. In the New Testament Epistles, frequent allusions is made to the unconditional choosing by God of individuals to be joined in a vital union with Christ.

Election is necessitated by the depraved nature of man. He is dead to the message of God until the Spirit illumines him concerning his condition and God's remedy. Man is dead and unable to do anything which will provide a basis for acceptance with God. His will is free in that he does as he wants. However, he always wants to do wrong. It is impossible for man, in and of himself, to break this cycle. He is a prisoner of his own nature. Therefore, God acts in His providential dealings to execute in time His decree of election.

Opponents of the doctrine of unconditional election often appeal to verses such as I Timothy 2:4; II Peter 3:9 and Titus 3:11. This apparent contradiction is resolved when the verbs *θέλω* and *βούλομαι* are distinguished. God does "will" (*θέλω*) the salvation of all in that He "desires" or "wishes" on an emotional plane. But, He has not decreed (*βούλομαι*) the salvation of all. Further, some benefits of the atonement accrue even to the non-elect. The atonement of Christ rendered all men electable. It did not actually accomplish the salvation of any. It is, however, the only basis of salvation and it's saving benefits are sovereignly applied to the elect. The infralapsarian view best explains the order of decrees as the transaction occurred in the mind of God.

The objections to unconditional election usually flow out of a misunderstanding of the doctrine. It is not fatalism and does not stifle evangelism or efforts toward holy living. Rather it is the only proper doctrinal foundation for effective evangelism and proper Christian assurance.

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Advisor

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INTRODUCTION

The Importance of the Question

There are comparatively few people who are neutral in the discussion of the doctrine of election. It is an emotional subject and frequently more heat than light has been generated in its examination. However, to attempt to evade it is theological suicide. This writer was once cautioned that while election was Biblical it must be withheld from believers. While this writer does readily admit that the doctrine must be handled carefully, it seems that following this procedure has robbed the people of God of a very blessed truth and laid the foundation for doctrinal disaster. This writer must insist that, given enough time, Arminianism will degenerate into liberalism. Both systems, substitute the logic of man for Biblical revelation and both give man credit for a good deal more nobleness than he possesses. Far too often modern evangelism loses sight completely of man's total depravity and resultant inability. In the new scheme of things man has become the master and God apprehensively waits to see what man will do. Will man allow God to save him or not? Will God be able to work His plan of salvation out or will He be defeated by His own creature? Who is in charge of the universe?

All of the above questions have direct bearing on the subject at hand. The view one takes of election will probably be determined by the view one takes of man. The view one takes of election has a relationship to the view of the sovereignty and the atonement. Finally, there is the question as to why God launched the plan of salvation in the first place. The question of election is very basic, for upon it hinges the whole con-

cept of a salvation by grace.

The Scope of this Study

Volumes have been written on the subjects that will take up mere chapters in this paper. Therefore, this study will be only the briefest of surveys. The doctrine will be followed through the Bible, in an attempt to observe how it is unfolded. Attention will be given to the necessity, the application, and common objections to election. Some consideration will be given to the historical context in which the controversy has raged. Lastly, some observations will be made on the practical implications of the doctrine.

The Thesis of the Study

This paper will seek to defend the doctrine of unconditional, particular election. It will be shown that it is this doctrine, not eternal security as some claim, that has historically separated Calvinists from Arminians. This writer believes that election is necessitated by the depravity of man and his inability to perform any acceptable good work. The view of an unlimited atonement will be defended. Although the atonement was given on behalf of the whole world, God has chosen to apply it only to the elect. It will be shown that, logically, the decree to elect followed the decree to provide Jesus as Savior.

Preliminary Definitions

Much confusion is generated by the interchangeable use of such terms as "election," "predestination," and "foreknowledge." They are different terms and one who uses them should take care that he is

specific in his usage of them.

Predestination is the more general term and refers to the total plan of God. Included in this plan are both rational beings and events. Predestination includes both the decree of election, which is causitive, and the decree of reprobation, which is permissive. God predestinates all things, He elects the saved. Election is one aspect of the doctrine of predestination but not its only aspect.

Election, on the other hand, refers to the decree to save. It is presented in the Scriptures only as a positive decree. God is never said to "elect" anyone to hell. Strong writes:

Election is that eternal act of God, by which in his sovereign pleasure, and on account of no foreseen merit in them, he chooses certain out of the number of sinful men to be the recipients of the special grace of his Spirit, and so to be made voluntary partakers of Christ's salvation.¹

The reprobate is finally lost, not because God willed him so, but as a result of his own sinful nature. God owes him nothing and chooses to pass him by and allow him to suffer the just consequences of his sinful behavior.

Some special consideration must be given to the word "foreknowledge." In order to make his theology stand, the Arminian must make this word to mean "to know before." In other words, it becomes more or less equivalent to the term "omniscience." Although this view is common it fails to adequately explain the use of the term. Much of the Arminian

¹A. H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell, 1907), p. 779.

argument hinges upon the occurrence of the word in Romans 8:29. Paul writes, "For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to become conformed to the image of His son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). Godet gives the common Arminian interpretation by saying they were "foreknown as sure to fulfill the condition of salvation, via faith; so: foreknown as His by faith."¹

This view fails to give full justice to the distinctive Biblical use of the word "know." A good example is Genesis 18:19. God is preparing to destroy Sodom but states that He cannot hide this fact from Abraham because He has "known" him. Certainly, more is involved here than just a simple cognitive knowledge of Abraham. What God means is that He maintains a special love relationship with Abraham and, therefore, has certain responsibilities to him. Hodge writes:

as to know is often to approve and love, it may express the idea of peculiar affection in this case; or it may mean to select or determine upon. . . . The usage of the word is favorable to either modification of this general idea of preferring. 'The people which he foreknew,' i. e. loved or selected, Rom. 11:2; 'Who verily was foreordained (Gr. foreknown), i. e. Fixed upon, chosen before the foundation of the world,' I Peter 1:20; II Tim. 2:19; John 10:14, 15; see also Acts 2:23; I Peter 1:2. The idea, therefore, obviously is, that those whom God peculiarly loved, and by thus loving, distinguished or selected from the rest of mankind; or to express both ideas in one word, those whom he elected he predestined, etc.²

Therefore, it is concluded that foreknowledge implies a loving, special relationship. To relegate it to the mere cognition of certain facts is to rob the doctrine of its precious value.

¹F. Godet, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, Reprinted 1969), p. 325.

²Charles Hodge, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Reprinted 1950), pp. 283-284.

CHAPTER I
HISTORY OF THE CONTROVERSY
The First Three Centuries

In early days of the church, the main concern was that of apologetics, especially as related to the doctrine of the deity of Christ and the Trinity. Comparatively little attention was given to the systematizing of other doctrines. Much of the time of the Fathers was spent refuting error instead of articulating truth. The greatest menace of the day was Gnosticism in its various forms. Gnosticism was more of a philosophy than a religion and it has been suggested that for a time the majority of those who regarded themselves as Christian adhered to one or another of its forms.¹ The Fathers were consistent in their opposition to Gnosticism in all its forms. However, in their zeal, it would seem that there were some over-reactions in the doctrines of sin and salvation.² The M'Clintock and Strong Cyclopedia notes:

The gnostic idea that man, by his very creation, is sinful, and that he has no freedom of will, was keenly opposed by them. They strenuously affirmed, on the contrary, that man at his creation was holy, that he was absolutely free from all taint of moral evil, and that he became a sinner only by his voluntary rebellion against God.³

¹Kenneth S. Latourette, A History of Christianity (New York: Harper and Row, 1953), p. 123.

²C. Norman Sellers, "An Analysis and Evaluation of the Writings of Robert Shank in Light of the New Testament Doctrines of Election and Perseverance" (Unpublished Th. D. Dissertation: Grace Theological Seminary, 1977), p. 7.

³John M'Clintock and James Strong (eds) "Pelagianism" Cyclopedia of Biblical Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature. 12 Vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1882), p. 868.

The Fathers further rejected the fatalism of the Gnostics. The tendency to confuse this idea with the doctrine of predestination was quite probably the reason that the doctrine received so little attention from the Fathers.¹ Therefore, to avoid any resemblance to Gnosticism some of the Fathers propagated the view that man's will is truly free and that he becomes a sinner because he chooses to, not because of any innate sin nature. On the whole, the emphasis upon the free will of man would remain until the coming of Augustine.²

Augustine and Pelagius

As the church entered the fourth century, the focus of conflict was to change. Farrar notes:

The East had been convulsed by questions about the Godhead; the West was now to be agitated by a question about manhood. As the dogmatic definition of the Trinity and the twofold nature of Christ had been chiefly elaborated amid the theological struggles of Eastern councils, so now it was mainly left to the Fathers of the West to lay down the doctrinal limits of questions which bore on sin and grace.³

The traducianism of Tertullian, a radical departure from the creationism of Greek theology, laid the foundation for the doctrine of innate sin. The idea that the soul, as well as the body, was propagated by the parents led to the obvious conclusion that every man received the nature of his parents and ultimately the nature of the first father,

¹Loraine Boettner, The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1932), p. 366.

²Lewis Berkhof, The History of Christian Doctrines (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), p. 132.

³Frederic W. Farrar, Lives of the Fathers, 2 Vols. (New York: Macmillan & Company, 1889), Vol. 2, p. 407.

Adam, the sinner.

The first to set forth a detailed statement concerning original sin and election was Augustine of Hippo. Augustine, carrying the ideas of Tertullian to their logical conclusion, recognized that the human race is united realistically, not federally.¹ Therefore, man is totally depraved and unable to do any spiritual good. As a result, man's will is in need of a complete reversal and this is a work of God from start to finish.

Pelagius, an Irish monk, took great exception to the views of Augustine. He had arrived in Rome in 384 and been shocked by the low moral standards of the city.² It would seem that he attributed this laxness to the belief that man was an incurable sinner. As a remedy, he began to proclaim the idea that man indeed had the capacity for righteous living. Knox offers these observations:

Pelagians denied the need of internal grace to keep God's commandments. Human nature was created good; and was endowed by its Creator with power to live an upright life easily if a man willed to. In fact, many heathen and Jews had lived a perfect life. In addition to this supreme grace of creation, Pelagius affirmed further grace from God in his provision of the illumination of the law and the example of Christ. Pelagianism knows nothing of redemption.³

It is quite possible that Pelagius could accept this view because he had not known the great travail of soul that Augustine had. Augustine was more than adequately convinced of his own wickedness which aided in

¹Lewis Berkhof, The History of Christian Doctrines (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), p. 134.

²F. F. Bruce, The Spreading Flame (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), p. 335.

³David B. Knox, "Pelagianism" Baker's Dictionary of Theology Everett Harrison, Ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), p. 400.

in his acceptance of the view that man is innately a sinner.¹ In any case, the conflict was intense as Pelagius exerted all his energies in the propagation of his views. Augustine in like manner, stood firm and denounced Pelagianism. Finally, Pelagianism was condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431.²

The Reformation

The official position of the church was not Augustinian but in the years between the days of Augustine and the coming of Luther the mediating movement of Semi-Pelagianism was most commonly held. In this attempt at compromise man was viewed as the instigator of his redemption. It is fair to say that this tenet laid the philosophical foundations for the ritualistic, self-attained salvation still offered by the Roman Catholic Church.

It is in the midst of the greatest darkness that the light shines brightest and God raised up a great light in Martin Luther. The great travail of Luther's soul is well known to students of Church History. The agony of his own experience instructed Luther well concerning the sinfulness of his own heart. Luther was staunchly Augustinian in his theology. This is illustrated by his remarks on John 6:44:

¹Earle E. Cairns, Christianity Through the Centuries, Revised Edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), p. 148.

²Kenneth S. Latourette, A History of Christianity (New York: Harper and Row, 1953), p. 180.

when Christ says in John 6: 'No man can come to me, except My Father which hath sent me draw him' (v. 44), what does he leave to 'free-will'? He says man needs to hear and learn of the Father Himself, and that all must be taught of God. Here, indeed, he declares, not only that the works and efforts of 'free-will' are unavailing, but that even the very word of the gospel (of which He is here speaking) is heard in vain, unless the Father Himself speaks within, and teaches, and draws. 'No man, no man can come,' he says, and what he is talking about is your 'power whereby man can make some endeavor towards Christ'. In things that pertain to salvation, He asserts that power to be null.¹

It seems that Philip Melanchthon is responsible for the defections from Augustinianism that caused the Lutheran Church to return to what is basically a Semi-Pelagian stance.

The task of presenting a detailed exposition of Reformation theology fell to the frail man of Geneva, John Calvin. Perhaps no other name in the history of the church has been so revered and reviled as that of John Calvin. Four hundred years after publication, his Institutes of The Christian Religion remain as a classic of theological perception. Calvin began with the principle of the transcendence of God.² It is in light of this principle that all theological statements must be measured.

The Post Reformation Period

James Arminius was a Dutch pastor and seminary professor who lived from 1560 - 1609. Originally a strict Calvinist, he had studied

¹Martin Luther, Translated by James I. Packer and O. R. Johnston, The Bondage of the Will (Westwood: Fleming H. Revell, 1957), pp. 310-311.

²James Atkinson, The Great Light: Luther and the Reformation (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), p. 173.

under Beza, Calvin's successor at Geneva.¹ When confronted with the argument that the doctrine of predestination makes God the author of sin, Arminius began to rethink his Calvinism. In the writings of Arminius there is a tension evident as he struggles to distinguish his thoughts from Pelagius. In the final analysis, Arminius leaves the final determination of salvation to man and therefore illustrates that he has made no improvement over the ideas of Pelagius.

In 1610, a year after the death of Arminius, a group of his followers drew up five articles of faith based on his teachings. They insisted that the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism be changed to conform to their teaching.² Roger Nicole summarizes the five articles as follows:

- I. God elects or reprobates on the basis of foreseen faith or unbelief.
- II. Christ dies for all men and for every man, although only believers are saved.
- III. Man is so depraved that divine grace is necessary unto faith or any good deed.
- IV. This grace may be resisted.
- V. Whether all who are truly regenerate will certainly persevere in the faith is a point which needs further investigation.³

In 1618, the Synod of Dort convened to consider the articles of Arminianism. The articles were rejected and five canons were formulated

¹R. G. Clouse, "Arminianism" in The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church, James Douglas, editor (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), p. 70.

²David H. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas, The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, Documented (Nutley: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1963), p. 13.

³Roger Nicole, "Arminianism" in Bakers Dictionary of Theology Everett Harrison, Editor (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), p. 64.

which are known as the five points of Calvinism. It should be noted that this is the reason the five points came about and that they in no way exhaust the theology of Calvinism. It is of further interest to observe that there was wide divergence at Dort on the question of the extent of the atonement.¹ It is very likely that Calvin himself did not hold to a "limited atonement." It seems quite plausible that the main reason for the rejection of the Remonstrant position was the interest in unanimity. The synod members may have felt that to accept even one of the Remonstrances may have lent credence to the others.

In other places, the battles between Calvinism and Arminianism continued. The English Reformation began as a Calvinistic movement but slowly drifted into the Arminian camp. It would seem that the man who was most instrumental in making this change complete was John Wesley. In fairness to Wesley, it must be understood that he was confronted by a perverted Calvinism which considered any human effort as unspiritual. Wesley's rejection of Calvinism was searing and complete:

This is the blasphemy clearly contained in the horrible decree of predestination. And here I fix my foot. On this I join issue with every asserter of it. You represent God as worse than the devil. But you say, you will prove it from Scripture. Hold! What will you prove by Scripture? That God is worse than the devil? . . . But it cannot be. Whatever that Scripture proves, it can never prove this; whatever its true meaning be, this cannot be its true meaning. Do you ask, 'What is its true meaning then?' If I say, 'I know not,' you have gained nothing;

¹Robert W. Godfrey, "Reformed Thoughts on the Extent of the Atonement to 1618" Westminster Theological Journal 37:3 (Winter, 1975), pp. 133-171.

for there are many Scriptures, the true sense of which neither you nor I shall know till death is swallowed up in victory. But this I know, better it were to say it had no sense at all, than to say it had such a sense as this.¹

It was this doctrine which caused the celebrated split between George Whitefield and John Wesley. They parted friends and Christian brothers but each confident that the other preached a gospel different from his own.

Wesley was the first to openly preach about conditional security. This, along with his distorted view of election, was to have wide effects not only in England but also in the United States. Wesley is considered not only the founder of Methodism but also the spiritual and intellectual father of the modern holiness and pentecostal movements.²

At the same time there were those who had separated from the Church of England who were termed "Baptists." There was a further separation into the General Baptists and the Particular Baptists. The General Baptists were Arminian while the Particular Baptists were Calvinistic.³

No discussion of English evangelicalism can be complete without reference to Charles H. Spurgeon. Spurgeon is of particular interest because of the view which many present-day Arminians have of him. In their minds, he is the genial Victorian pulpeteer, ever to be admired

¹John Wesley, The Works of John Wesley, Third Edition, Thomas Jackson, Editor, 14 Volumes (London: Epworth Press, 1934), Volume 7, p. 373.

²Vinson Synan, The Holiness--Pentecostal Movement in the United States (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), p. 13.

³Earle E. Caines, Christianity Through the Centuries, Revised Edition, p. 367.

because of his ingenious methods of evangelism.¹ It is a popular idea that to be successful one must avoid explicit statements of doctrine, especially any that smack of "harsh" Calvinism. Spurgeon stands as the definitive answer to that opinion. He was an eminently successful preacher and a staunch defender of election. He speaks his view:

I believe the doctrine of election, because I am quite certain that, if God had not chosen me, I should never have chosen Him; and I am sure He chose me before I was born, or else He never would have chosen me afterwards; and He must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why He should have looked upon me with special love. So I am forced to accept that great Biblical doctrine. I recollect an Arminian brother telling me that he had read the Scriptures through a score or more times, and could never find the doctrine of election in them. He added that he was sure he would have done so if it had been there, for he read the Word on his knees. I said to him, 'I think you read the Bible in a very uncomfortable posture, and if you had read it in your easy chair, you would have been more likely to understand it. Pray, by all means, and the more, the better, but it is a piece of superstition to think there is anything in the posture in which a man puts himself for reading; and as to reading through the Bible twenty times without having found anything about the doctrine of election, the wonder is that you found anything at all: you must have galloped through it at such a rate that you were not likely to have any intelligible idea of the meaning of the Scriptures.'²

The United States: Seventeenth Century to the Present

In the early days of the United States, the theology of its churches was mainly Calvinistic.³ In the era of the Great Awakening,

¹Iain Murray, The Forgotten Spurgeon (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1966), p. 12.

²Charles H. Spurgeon, The Early Years (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, Reprinted 1976), p. 166.

³Earle E. Cairns, Christianity Through the Centuries Revised Edition, p. 395.

George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards were solidly Calvinistic. However, due to the onslaught of Deism the influence of the Great Awakening was largely dissipated.¹ A Second Awakening began at Hampton-Sidney College in 1786.² Directly following this revival began the ministry of a man whose theology would forever change the face of American Evangelicalism.

Charles G. Finney was a converted lawyer with an incisive mind and exceptional oratorical skills. So many ideas and practices in modern fundamentalism derive from him that his theology bears some investigating. Finney was decidedly Arminian in his theology. He himself states, "Instead of telling sinners to use the means of grace, and pray for a new heart, I call on them to make themselves a new heart and spirit."³

Henry described the climate of Finney's day:

By mid-nineteenth century, however, republicans behaved as if they had domesticated God's Spirit, at times even avowing by their speech what their actions proclaimed - that the Spirit had no choice but to accept them if they walked a particular path, which, as it happened, was accessible to all men.⁴

Further, Finney introduced several new, strange ideas. He prepared a manual which promised revival results exactly "in proportion to the union of prayer and effort within."⁵ By far the most controversial

¹Earle E. Cairns, Christianity Through the Centuries Revised Edition, p. 454.

²Ibid, p. 454.

³Charles G. Finney, Autobiography (New York: Barnes, 1876), p. 189.

⁴Stuart C. Henry, Unvanquished Puritan: A Portrait of Lyman Beecher (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), p. 254.

⁵Charles G. Finney, Lectures on Revivals of Religion (Cambridge: University Press, 1960), p. 325.

of Finney's innovations was his practice of calling for public decisions. His method consisted of calling for those who wished to "inquire" about the condition of their soul to come forward to the "anxious seat." Those who came were pronounced "converted" and sent off to live a supernatural life by the power of the natural man. It seems that Finney the preacher had never quite forsaken the methods of Finney the lawyer as he attempted, by emotional appeals and logical persuasions, to produce conversion. Finney himself freely admitted that his measures were "unprecedented."¹ It is apparent that Finney's method was a direct result of Finney's theology. Dod, a contemporary, states:

We do believe that Mr. Finney's mistaken views of the nature of religion lie at the bottom of his measures, and have given to them their character and form; and that these measures, therefore, wherever used, will tend to propagate a false form of religion . . . Our readers will have observed that there is a close and logical connexion between Mr. Finney's theology and his measures.²

The call for public decisions is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it can be used to great advantage if used properly. The problem is with the perversion of this method. This perversion generally manifests itself in one of two ways. There can be an undue reliance upon "gimmicks" to get people to make some kind of public response. This is unacceptable because it tends to make for shallow decisions. Or the method may be perverted by failure to make clear the fact that in no way

¹Charles G. Finney, Lectures in Systematic Theology (Oberlin: E. J. Goodrich, 1846), p. 49.

²Albert B. Dod, Essays Theological and Miscellaneous (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1847), p. 103.

does "coming forward" save one. At best, "coming forward" is a testimony to what God has already done. To deny completely the validity of the invitation system is to over-react. However, the careful servant of God must guard against the perversion of this method.

In the years that followed there was still a separation of some extent between the Arminian and the Calvinists. It was in the days of the Modernist - Fundamentalist conflict that the distinctions between Calvinists and Arminians were put aside in order to do battle with the forces of Liberalism. It was at this juncture in history that Arminianism gained the strong foothold in the Fundamentalist movement that it still holds today.

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF ELECTION

Election In The Old TestamentHebrew Word Study

In the Old Testament, the word for choose is בָּחַל . The verb is used of the action of both God and men.¹ Seebass suggests that the word implies a well-reasoned decision.² While not necessarily definitive, this point is interesting in light of the charge that unconditional election posits a choice which is frivolous. At any rate, comparatively little about election can be said solely upon the basis of this verb.

Election of Individuals for Specific Tasks

The incidents which follow will be briefly reviewed for the light they shed on election. These incidents illustrate that God is always unconditional in His choice of persons. He does not feel constrained to give any reasons for His choice and, indeed, none can be found.

Abraham

In Genesis 12, one of the pivotal events of Bible history occurs.

¹Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 103.

²Horst Seebass, " בָּחַל " Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, Edited by G. J. Botterneck and Helmer Ringgren. Translated by John T. Willis (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), Vol. 1, p. 75.

God, who has been dealing with mankind as a unit, now begins to focus His attention upon the family of one man. Again, there is no reason either stated or implied as to why Abraham was chosen to be the recipient of this great blessing. From Joshua 24:2 and 15, it is clear that the father of Abraham, Terah, was an idolater. There is no compelling reason to believe that Abraham himself was not an idolater before his revelation from God. The shameful incidents recorded of Abraham in the later chapters of Genesis show him to be anything but a shining champion of faith. But, the promises to Abraham were unconditional as to their fulfillment just as they were unconditional as to their bestowal. Nehemiah 9:7 offers this interesting commentary on the selection of Abraham. "Thou art the Lord God who chose Abram and brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees, and gave him the name Abraham."

The doctrine is further expressed by God's dealings with Jacob (Genesis 28:13-15); Isaac (Genesis 26:2-5); and Joseph (Genesis 45:7). In each case God determines what blessing each man will have. These blessings are based, not upon personal merit, but upon God's unconditional choice.

Other Examples

It is sufficient to bring attention to just a few of the other examples of unconditional election in the Old Testament. For instance, Moses became the leader of Israel because he was God's choice (Exodus 3:15). Saul became Israel's king not because he was an outstanding leader but because he fulfilled God's purpose. Jeremiah was set apart for the prophetic ministry before his birth (Jeremiah 1:5). Obviously,

if he was chosen before birth, he was not chosen because of merit on his part.

One of the most fascinating instances of election is that of Cyrus, king of Persia. Isaiah writes:

Thus says the Lord to Cyrus His anointed,
Whom I have taken by the right hand,
To subdue nations before him,
And to loose the loins of kings;
To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut;
"I will go before you and make the rough places smooth;
I will shatter the doors of bronze, and cut through their iron bars.
"And I will give you the treasures of darkness,
And hidden wealth of secret places,
In order that you may know that it is I,
The Lord, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.
"For the sake of Jacob My servant,
And Israel My chosen one,
I have also called you by your name;
I have given you a title of honor
Though you have not known Me. (Isaiah 45: 1-4 NASV)

God chose him to perform a particular task based upon no merit in Cyrus.

The Election of the Nation Israel

The election of the nation Israel is somewhat unique in that it was a corporate election. Their election stemmed from their relationship to Abraham and the promises God made to him. Their election consisted of a place of high privilege and responsibility. It was not, however, equivalent to individual salvation. Paul makes this clear when he says, "they are not all Israel, that are of Israel" (Romans 9:6).

Sellers writes:

What then is the comparison between Israel and the Church regarding their respective corporate elections? Since the Church, the body of Christ is entered by spiritual birth, since there are no non-elect (by anyone's definition) in that body, and since the Church is also

an elect group (I Peter 1:9) with a purpose, is it not possible that both ideas in Israel's election are incorporated into the one election of the Church? The Church would then be an elect body of elect individuals, both corporate for God's corporate purposes and particular with respect to salvation. On the other hand it could be that the Church is considered as the professing Church, believers and unbelievers. This group, also referred to by Jesus as the "kingdom of the heavens" (Mt. 13:24), would include both believers and unbelievers (wheat and tares). In this case it would exactly parallel Israel as a covenanted group, a mixed multitude. In either case the Church does have a corporate election and purpose.¹

It is to be concluded that, while the election of the church has a corporate aspect, that in no way means that it cannot also have a particular aspect.

Election in the New Testament

Greek Word Studies

The words "elect" and "election" are transliterations rather than translations. They are derived from the verb ἐκλέγομαι. This word had a military usage in Classical Greek and referred to the conscription of men to the service.² Again, the word itself settles very little but must be interpreted in light of its usage.

¹C. Norman Sellers, An Analysis and Evaluation of the Writings of Robert Shank in Light of the New Testament Doctrines of Election and Perseverance (Unpublished Th. D. Dissertation: Grace Theological Seminary, 1977), p. 43-44.

²Lothar Coene, "ἐκλέγομαι" "New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology", Colin Brown, Editor (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), Vol. 1 p. 536.

The term *ἐκλέγω* deserves mention because of its use in II Thessalonians 2:13. Schlier considers this to be a synonym of *ἐκλέγομαι*.¹ However, Coenen gives this term the special significances of calling attention to the end of election.² It is probably best to not attempt to maintain a sharp distinction between the two words.

Election of Christ

Robert Shank has produced the most complete and recent defense of Arminianism. Essentially, Shank puts forth the view that Christ is the Elect One and that election is the proper relationing of oneself, through faith, with Him. In other words, one becomes elect by believing in Christ. Primarily, he bases this on the reference in Isaiah 42:1-6 to Christ as the chosen servant of Jehovah.³

It is readily admitted that Christ is the Elect One. This means however, that He is the one chosen by God to execute God's sovereign plan of redemption. It seems that what Shank insists on is that every reference to "election" refer to Christ. This idea is simply untenable because many persons and groups are called "elect" in the Bible.

¹Heinrich Schlier, "*ἐκλέγω*" Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Volume I, Edited by Gerhard Fredrich, Translated and Edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), Vol. 1 p. 180.

²Lothar Coenen, "*ἐκλέγω*" New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. I, p. 534.

³Robert Shank, Elect In The Son (Springfield: Westcott Publishers, 1970), p. 28.

Election in Christ

It is well to now consider what the New Testament does say about the Christian's election. It is the thesis of this work that election is particular and unconditional in nature. It is not possible to even briefly consider all the New Testament passages that bear upon the subject because the doctrine is woven into the very fabric of the New Testament. A cursory examination will be made of some of the more familiar passages dealing with this subject and then a summation of the principles they contain.

Election in Ephesians 1:4

This writer readily admits that Ephesians is his favorite book of the Bible. In no other section of Scripture, is the wealth of the believer so vividly portrayed. The message of Ephesians is a message of the sovereign activity of God on behalf of His chosen people. Paul states that "He chose us in Him from before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4). It is well to make some exegetical observations concerning this verse.

The verse begins with the adverb $\kappa\alpha\theta\omega\varsigma$ which logically connects it with verse three, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." Westcott comments on this connection:

The several points which follow display the mode and the measure of the blessing which God has blessed us. The historical fulfillment in time corresponds with the eternal Divine will. St. Paul piles up phrase upon phrase to show that all is of God's timeless love.¹

¹B. F. Westcott, Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n. d.), p. 28.

The verb ἐξελέξατο occurs in the middle voice. The middle voice has no direct parallel in English and thus is somewhat difficult to translate into English. Robertson notes:

The only difference between the active and middle voices is that the middle calls especial attention to the subject. In the active voice the subject is merely acting; in the middle the subject is acting in relation to himself somehow. What this precise relation is the middle does not say. That must come out of the context or from the significance of the verb itself.¹

In any case, it is clear that the reasons for the selections were in God Himself not in the individuals chosen. It may be noted in passing that this is a concept completely missed by many modern Christians. The primary motive for launching the plan of redemption was the glory of God not the bestowal of blessing upon man. The failure to recognize this fact is one of the major factors in the rejection of election. After all, if God's primary purpose is to make people happy it would seem logical that He owed this equally to all.

The phrase "in Christ" is used repeatedly in this chapter. It occurs in verses 1, 3, 4, 7, 9, 12, 13 (twice), and 20. It is the phrase in verse 4 that is the occasion of the greatest interpretative difficulty. In what sense is the believer "chosen in Him?" Eadie concludes:

Believers were looked upon as being in Christ their federal Head when they were elected. To the prescient eye of God the entire church was embodied in Jesus - was looked upon as "in Him."
The church that was to be appeared to the mind of Him who fills

¹A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in Light of Historical Research (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), p. 804.

eternity, as already in being, and that ideal being was in Christ. It is true that God Himself is in Christ, and in Christ purposes and performs all that pertains to man's redemption; but the thought here is not that God in Christ has chosen us, but that when He elected us, we were regarded as being in Christ our representative - live as the human race was in Adam, or the Jewish nation in Abraham.¹

Lenski offers these comments:

The phrase is evidently to be construed with the participle. The point is important for the understanding of v. 4 where we propose to construe the same phrase in the same way: "he elected us in connection with him." The sense of the phrase has been given in v. 1. When "through Christ" and "on account of Christ" (per and propter) are offered as translations for ἐν, or even as interpretations, the thought is changed. It may seem harmless in the present clause, it is not so in v. 4. "In" denotes union, vital connection. The whole action of blessing with every blessing as well as the recipients of these blessings are in the sphere formed by Christ and not an inch beyond that sphere; are in the union and vital connection expressed by this significant preposition.²

Few readers of the New Testament would deny that, in Paul's mind, the phrase "in Christ" denotes a close and vital union. It would seem possible to interpret Paul as saying that, in eternity past, God looked upon the lives of Christians and saw them as being united with Christ and therefore, saw them as possessing the righteousness of Christ. This would still leave the question of how the selection was made open.

However, another interpretation presents itself. It may well be that Paul is here looking at the result of the selection rather than its

¹John Eadie, Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians (Minneapolis: The James and Kloch Christian Publishing Company, Reprinted 1977), p. 20.

²R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians and Phillipians (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), p. 353.

source or reason. The phrase "in Christ" is used in the Scripture to indicate that close and vital relationship that flows out of the believer's position. It may be that Paul is simply saying that God elected certain people to be brought into this relationship and is, in reality, looking at that which election assures. Smedes suggests:

Divine election is God's decision to re-create the world in Christ. We are elect within God's loving desire and sovereign decision to establish, dominate, and realize a new creation, a creation which has Christ as the center, the Lord, the imminent power. Our position in the new creation is rooted in the loving freedom of God's decision.¹

This writer prefers this interpretation because it seems that the Scriptures are completely silent as to why certain people were chosen. It would seem also that the idea that Paul here has in mind the result of election is more in harmony with the subject matter of Ephesians. In the first three chapters Paul described the believers position both before and after his conversion in time. In the last three chapters, Paul goes into the practical outworkings of this new position. No doubt God chose individuals on the basis of Christ's righteousness because there simply wasn't any other basis. But, this verse does not contribute to the understanding of how the decision of who to include was reached. In fact, it may well be that, even in eternity, that fact will not be revealed.

Paul clearly states the time of election in this verse. Concerning

¹Lewis B. Smedes, All Things Made New (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), p. 127.

the expression $\pi\rho\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\beta\omicron\lambda\eta\varsigma$ Salmond writes:

It expresses most definitely the fact that the election in question is not the setting apart of certain persons at a definite period, an act in time, a historical selection, as some (e. g. Beys.) strive to prove, but an eternal choice, a determination of the Divine Mind before all time . . . It is, as is here clearly intimated, an eternal determination of the Divine Will, and it has its ground in the freedom of God, not in anything foreseen in its subjects. Of a provision of faith as the basis or motive of the election there is no indication here. On the contrary, the character or distinguishing inward quality of the subjects of the election is presented in the next clause as the object of the election, the end it had in view.¹

In conclusion, it is seen that the interpretation of Shank is not valid. He wished to have Christ as the only Elect One and all election of Christians coming from their relationship to Christ. Thus, election is based on foreseen faith. This is no improvement over the standard view of Arminianism. What Paul has in view here is the end of election. In other words, Christians are properly related to Christ because they are elect. Likewise, they are not elect because they are properly related to Christ. The result of God's act of election in the past is being brought into vital union with Christ.

Election in Romans Nine

The most conclusive passage in the Bible on unconditional, particular election is Romans 9:6-29. Even Shank admits it teaches unconditional election.² He maintains, however, that the subject

¹S. D. F. Salmond, The Epistle to the Ephesians Vol III The Expositors Greek Testament 4 Vols. W. Robertson Nicoll, Editor (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Reprinted 1970), p. 249.

²Robert L. Shank, Elect in the Son (Springfield: Westcott Publishers, 1970), p. 115.

of this passage is the election of Israel rather than individual salvation.¹ It is well, then, that an investigation of the passage be made. It should be noted at the outset that in reply to Shank's idea, neither Israel nor the church has any existence except as collections of individuals.

In Romans chapters nine through eleven, Paul is dealing with the perplexing question of Israel. Concerning the context of Romans nine, McClain writes:

The ninth chapter admits to the fact that the Jewish nation has not received the gospel, and it also declares that the Word of God has not failed. Why? Because some Jews have believed and these Jews, says Paul, are a part of that elect remnant that the Old Testament tells about. So the conclusion is that there is always a continuing line of believers, in whom the promises of God are being fulfilled.²

Paul first states the problem of the rejection of Israel and then proceeds to explain the problem in terms of God's sovereign election. There is ample evidence that Paul, in this passage, is dealing with individuals. Again, it must be insisted that Israel or any other nation is merely the sum total of certain individuals. Further, Paul makes reference to Jacob, Ishmael, Moses, Isaac, Esau and Pharoah who are all individuals. Sellers calls attention to the fact that the singular pronoun *ὁ ὁ* appears in verse 15, the singular articular participles *τοῦ θελοῦτος* and *τοῦ τρεχόντος* are used in verse 16 and the

¹Robert L. Shank, Elect In the Son, p. 118.

²Alva J. McClain, Romans: The Gospel of God's Grace, Compiled and Edited by Herman A. Hoyt (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), p. 174.

objector in verse 19 is in the singular $\epsilon\rho\epsilon\zeta\varsigma$ not a group.¹ Again, the contention that chapter nine deals with a group, not individuals, will simply not stand in the fact of a close examination of the passage.

If it is admitted that the passage indeed deals with individual salvation, some general observations may be made. First, it is the apparent teaching of Paul that election is based upon the sovereign choice of God not the works of men. Therefore, the idea that election is based upon foreseen faith is left without support. Paul illustrates this principle by appeal to the case of Jacob and Esau. It seems that Paul brings up Jacob and Esau because some might argue that the preference for Isaac above Ishmael, which Paul alludes to in verse 7, was because of Ishmael's birth to a handmaid. To make sure that there is no misunderstanding on this point, Paul uses the reference to Jacob and Esau who were born to the same mother. Harrison remarks:

Paul feels impelled to cite the case of the twin brothers, both of them sons of Isaac and Rebecca, with nothing in the least lacking regarding their parentage. According to ordinary human expectation, they should stand on equal terms before God in his dealings with them. But it was not so. Natural generation from Isaac, the promised seed of Abraham, did not assure them of the same place in the divine economy. God made a distinction between them before they were born - before their characters had been shaped or any deeds had been performed that might form a basis for evaluation. The freedom and sovereignty of God were thus safeguarded. He deliberately disburbed the normal pattern of the culture into which the children were born by decreeing that the elder should serve the younger.²

¹Norman C. Sellers, "An Analysis and Evaluation of the Writings of Robert Shank in Light of the New Testament Doctrines of Election and Perseverance," p. 53.

²Everett F. Harrison, "Romans" The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume I. Edited by Frank Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 104-105.

It may be argued by those who reject particular election that this is only God's action in a specific case, not a principle for all time. Again, this will bear a close study of the text. When Paul says that this choice was made so that God's purpose might "stand" he uses the present subjunctive *μείνῃ*, instead of the aorist subjunctive *μείνῃ*. If Paul had only been thinking of the specific instance of Jacob and Esau, he would have logically used the aorist. Therefore, Paul refers to a timeless principle of God's work of which the case of Jacob and Esau is a specific example. Godet writes:

by using the present *μείνῃ*, may stand, instead of the aor *μείνῃ*, might stand, extends this consequence of the fact to all times: it applies therefore also to the Jews of Paul's day.¹

In verse 15, Paul delivers a crushing blow to the Arminian position. Critical to their view is the concept that man is accepted because he makes the first move to God and God chooses man on that basis. But, Paul clearly states that the bestowing of God's mercy is not based upon "the man who wills." Paul simply disallows the idea that the final determination of the bestowal of God's mercy rests upon the will of man. Murray remarks:

The emphasis falls here on the exclusion of man's determination as the negative counterpart of God's exercise of mercy. The first negation refers to human volition, the determination belonging to man's will; the second refers to man's active exertion. The mercy of God is not an attainment gained by the most diligent labour to that end but a free bestowal of grace. No statement could be more anathematic to what accrues from claims of justice or as the awards of labour.²

¹F. Godet, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, Reprinted 1969), p. 349.

²John Murray, The Epistle to the Romans in the New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959), p. 26.

Paul continues his argument throughout the remainder of this chapter. In verse 17, Paul turns his attention to the case of Pharoah. God expressly states that He raised Pharoah to a position of authority so that He could make a public exhibition of His power in defeating Pharoah. In verse 18, Paul declares an awesome truth, God's mercy is bestowed upon the basis of sovereign grace. In verse 19, attention is immediately turned to the objection Paul is certain will be raised, God is unjust. This argument is echoed even today as an objection to the doctrine of unconditional election. Paul settles the issue in verse 20 by simply stating that no man has the proper spiritual discernment to question the justice of God. Concerning verse 20, Hodge writes:

In these words we have both a reproof and an answer. The reproof is directed against the irreverent spirit, whence such cavils always arise. After the clear proof given in the preceding verses, that God claims this sovereignty in his word, and exercises it in his providence, it argues great want of reverence for God, to assert that this claim involves the grossest injustice.¹

In essence, this is the final argument against those who question God's fairness in choosing some and passing others. It is God's prerogative to do with His creatures as He pleases. This writer must maintain that, in reality, all arguments against unconditional election must, of necessity, come from a heart that has set itself up as judge over the fairness of God's sovereignty. Man has absolutely no right to question the righteousness of God's decision. God owes no man anything, neither

¹Charles Hodge, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Reprinted, 1950), p. 318.

salvation nor explanation of why He did not provide it.

Election in Acts 13:48

Any discussion of the subject of unconditional election must deal with this verse. Paul and Barnabas were ministering at Pisidian Antioch and were the object of great opposition from the Jews of that city. In verse 46, they make the formal pronouncement that they were turning to the Gentiles. Luke says of the Gentile response to the gospel that "as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." It is obviously necessary that those who reject unconditional election must in some way soften this verse. Robertson writes:

The word "ordain" is not the best translation here. "Appointed" as Hackett shows, is better. The Jews here had voluntarily rejected the word of God. On the other side were those Gentiles who gladly accepted what the Jews had rejected, not all the Gentiles. Why these Gentiles here ranged themselves on God's side as opposed to the Jews Luke does not tell us. This verse does not solve the vexed problem of divine sovereignty and human free agency. There is no evidence that Luke had in mind an absolutum decretum or personal salvation.¹

The question that presents itself is that of whether or not this interpretation fully explains the verse. This writer must insist it does not. Some observations on the text are in order. The word "appoint" is the particular *τεταγμένον* from the verb *τάσσω*. This verb has a military background in classical Greek and is used more by Luke than any other New Testament writer. It implies an acknowledged authority and power residing in the person from whom the decisions and directives

¹A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the Greek New Testament (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1933), Vol. III, p. 200.

issue.¹ It would seem that all those who reject the idea that some divine agency is involved in this verse fail to consider the fact that the participle appears in the passive voice. If Luke wished to convey the idea that those who believed had appointed themselves then he should have used an active voice. This is the construction Paul uses in I Corinthians 16:15 (ἐταξεν ἑαυτοῦς) when he speaks of those who appointed themselves to the ministry. By definition, the use of the passive carries the idea that someone outside the Gentiles set them apart into eternal life. This verse is probably the best single expression of the idea of unconditional election. Those who did not believe acted of their own accord while those who did believe did so by divine intervention. This writer must insist that it is impossible to fairly examine Acts 13:48 without accepting the fact of unconditional election. Pink aptly summarizes the theology of this verse:

Here we learn four things: First, that believing is the consequence and not the cause of God's decree. Second, that a limited number only are "ordained to eternal life", for if all men without exception were thus ordained by God, then the words "as many as" are a meaningless qualification. Third, that this "ordination" of God is not to mere external privileges but to "eternal life," not to service but to salvation itself. Fourth, that all - "as many as," not one less - who are thus ordained by God to eternal life will most certainly believe.²

¹J. I. Packer, "ταξεν" in The New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology Volume I (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), Vol. I, p. 476.

²Authur W. Pink, The Sovereignty of God (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), p. 52.

Election in John Six

In John chapter six, verses 37, 44, and 65 teach the doctrine of unconditional election. This chapter records a very critical juncture in the earthly life of Christ. At this point, His popularity was at a peak and the people were openly speaking of making Him king by force. However, after His discourse on the bread of life, many disciples quickly turned from His side. After that, the opposition grew more and more intense.

In verse 36, Christ makes the flat declarations, ". . . you have seen Me and yet you do not believe." It should be noted in passing that this stands as an eternal rebuke to those who today cry that miracles will convince the unregenerate world. That is simply not the case. More is involved than the mere existence of evidence. Illumination is required so that a depraved mind can properly evaluate the evidence. In verse 37, Jesus explains the real reason why anyone believes, namely, because they are given Him by the Father. Morris comments:

People do not come to Christ because it seems to them a good idea. It never does seem a good idea to natural man. Apart from a divine work in their souls (cf. 16:8) men remain contentedly in their sins. Before men can come to Christ it is necessary that the Father give them to Him. This is the explanation of the disconcerting fact that those who followed Jesus to hear Him, and who at the beginning wanted to make Him a king, were nevertheless not His followers in the true sense. They did not belong to the people of God.¹

In verse 44, Jesus further states and expands His explanation of God's work in salvation. He says that "no one can come to Me, unless

¹Leon Morris, The Gospel of John in The New International Commentary on the New Testament, F. F. Bruce, Editor (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), p. 367.

the Father who sent Me draws Him." The word "draw" is a translation of ἐλκύω, a rather strong word. Hendrickson remarks:

When Jesus refers to the divine drawing activity, he employs a term which clearly indicates that more than moral influence is indicated. The Father does not merely beckon or advise, he draws! The same verb (ἐλκύω, ἐλκύνω) occurs also in 12:32, where the drawing activity is ascribed to the Son; and further, in 18:10; 21:6, 11; Acts 16:19; 21:30; and Jas. 2:6. The drawing of which these passages speak indicates a very powerful - we may even say, an irresistible - activity. To be sure, man resists, but his resistance is ineffective. It is in that sense that we speak of God's grace as being irresistible.¹

It is clear that the initiative rests with God not man. It is equally clear that more than just an invitation is involved, because of the force of the verb ἐλκύω. Shank is quick to point out that the same verb is used in John 12:32 where Christ states that He draws all men to Him.² Shank's objection must be treated satisfactorily.

This writer deems it best to consider the "all" as meaning "without regard to race." The phrase must be interpreted in light of the context of the verse. Some Greeks had asked to see Jesus and this was the occasion for the discourse in which verse 32 appears. In His earthly ministry, Christ primarily went to the Jewish nation. In verse 32, He assures the reader that His death will be the basis for the salvation of both Jew and Gentile. Hendrickson remarks:

¹William Hendrickson, Exposition of the Gospel of John in New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1954), p. 238.

²Robert L. Shank, Elect in the Son, p. 176.

Jesus promises to draw all men to himself. This all men, in the given context which places Greeks next to Jews, must mean men from every nation. That idea is found in the Fourth Gospel again, and again: salvation is not dependent upon blood and race (1:13; cf. 8:31-59); Jesus is the Savior of the world (4:42); he has other sheep which are not of this (Jewish) fold, those others being from the Gentile-world (10:16); he will die not for the (Jewish) nation only, but that he may also gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad (11:51); in brief, he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29).¹

Since $\epsilon\lambda\kappa\omega$ is so well attested as to meaning, it is not necessary or desirable to permit its use in John 12:32 to forbid unconditional election.

In verse 65 of chapter six, Jesus again states the principle that man is unable to come to God apart from divine action. The words of Pink are to the point:

He presses upon them their moral inability. He affirms their need of Divine power working within them. It was very humbling, no doubt. It furnished proof that "the flesh profiteth nothing." It shut them up to God. To the Father they must turn; from Him they must seek that drawing power, without which they would never come to Christ and be saved. Not only "would not" but could not. The language of Christ is unequivocal. It is not "no man will," but "no man can come unto me, except it were given him of my Father. The will of the natural man has nothing to do with it. John 1:13 expressly declares that the new birth is "not the will of the flesh." Contrary this may be to our ideas! distasteful to our minds and hearts; but it is God's truth, nevertheless, and all the denials of men will never alter it one whit.²

In conclusion, it must be stated again that the words of Christ Himself clearly teaches that man must be brought to Him, he will not come

¹William Hendrickson, Exposition of the Gospel of John in New Testament Commentary, p. 203.

²Arthur W. Pink, Exposition of the Gospel of John (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1945), pp. 358-359.

on his own. Further, the use of the word $\epsilon\lambda\omega$ shows that more than a mere invitation is involved.

Election In Other Scriptures

There are several other passages which merit mention because they assist in showing that the doctrine of unconditional election is woven into the very fabric of the New Testament.

In Acts 18:10, Luke writes, "For I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you; for I have many people in this city." Evidently, Paul was on the verge of giving up on Corinth and going elsewhere. In a vision, God tells him that He indeed has many people in the city. Now, it is admitted that this verse does not prove unconditional election. However, it implies it and it must be noted that the statement is made before anyone had been saved. All must admit that in some way, a certain number of people were certain to be saved.

When the angel appeared to Joseph and spake to him concerning the birth of Jesus, the angel stated that Jesus would save "his people" from their sins. Evidently, He knew who "his people" were. This would at least imply that they were definite in number and identity.

In John 17:2, Christ states that He will give eternal life to "as many as" the Father had given Him. Logically, there must be some who had not been given to Him. Again, in order to know whom to give eternal life to, His knowledge must be definite and particular.

In Luke 4:25-27; Jesus reaches back into the Old Testament to defend the sovereignty of God and His right to elect anyone to whatever blessing He chooses. He refers to the ministry of Elijah to the widow

of Sarepta and the ministry of Elisha to Naaman the Syrian. There were both widows and lepers in Israel but God did not choose to grant favor to them. It is well to note the reaction of the Jews to these words of Jesus. They were "filled with rage . . . rose up and cast Him out of the city." Further, Luke startles the reader by announcing (verse 29-30) that they were ready to kill Him because of these remarks. Is it not possible that one still hears that rage echoing the outrage of a rebellious heart that God would dare be selective in His mercies? Sadly, that is exactly what one hears. In most cases, when all the logical and pious language of the objectors is stripped away, the naked argument against unconditional election is simply this: God has no right to treat anyone differently from another. That reasoning was rejected by the Son of God Himself.

Conclusion

The testimony of the Scripture is unanimous: election is particular and unconditional. It is readily admitted that there are problems with this view. This is to be expected because in this doctrine God has revealed a portion of His innermost thoughts. But, as others have well said, God commands man to believe what He has said, not to totally understand it.

God in His perfect wisdom has chosen to save some out of a group to whom He owed nothing except damnation.

Election cannot be said to be based upon foreseen faith because left to his own devices man is not capable of arriving at saving faith. The mind which continually searches for the cause of God's election will

either surrender in faith or twist the Scriptures to accomodate his sense of justice.

CHAPTER III

THE NECESSITY OF ELECTION

The Total Depravity of Man

There is considerable truth to the idea that one's soteriology is determined largely by his anthropology. The question of the nature of man must be settled before it can be determined just what kind of a redemptive plan he needs. It should be admitted freely that the doctrine of total depravity is offensive to man. It makes him a dependent creature and this is repulsive to him. That notwithstanding, the Bible portrays him as a helpless prisoner of his own evil nature.

Because of the misconceptions concerning the doctrine of total depravity it is well to give some question to the matter of what total depravity is not. First, it is not absolute depravity. It does not mean that every man is as bad as he can be one hundred percent of the time. His sin is not as terrible as it is possible for it to be. Neither does the doctrine hold that man's sin is as comprehensive as possible. Every man does not commit every sin. Some are habitual liars, others generally truthful. Comparatively few murder, but many hate. It is not necessary to do all sin in order to qualify as totally depraved.

Secondly, it must be acknowledged that total depravity does not mean a complete absence of relative good. He is capable of a certain amount of good, provided the word "good" is properly interpreted, Palmer notes:

The Heidelberg Catechism gives a clear definition of good. In answer to the question: "But what are good works?" the Catechism answers: "Only those which are done from true faith, according to the law of God, and to His glory" (Question and Answer 91). According to the Catechism, then, three elements go to make up truly good works: true faith, conformity to the law of God, and a proper motive. A relatively good work, on the other hand, may have the correct outward form but not be done from a true faith, or to the glory of God. Thus non-Christians can perform relatively good deeds, even though they themselves are totally depraved.¹

The unregenerates do many things that are laudable, but their works are always, in the final analysis, defective.

Positively, total depravity means that man is only and always sinning. He is never able to do anything that is fundamentally pleasing to God. He can never provide God with even the slightest act that would provide any kind of a basis for his deserving God's favor. Chafer comments:

When Adam sinned his first sin he experienced a conversion downwards. He became degenerate and depraved. He developed within himself a fallen nature which is contrary to God and is ever prone to evil. His constitution was altered fundamentally and he thus became a wholly different being from the one God had created. A similar fall into degeneracy had been experienced before by the highest of all angels and by the angels who joined his rebellion against God. No other human being than Adam has ever become a sinner by sinning. All others were born sinners. Distinction is made at this point between sin as an evil act and sin as an evil nature. By a sinful act Adam acquired a sinful nature, whereas all members of his family are born with that nature.²

There is ample support from Scripture on this point. Consider Genesis 6:5, "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The heart of man was not only evil, it was greatly evil. Further, it was only evil and that evil extended through-

¹Edwin H. Palmer, The Five Points of Calvinism, pp. 10-11.

²Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology, 8 Volumes (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), Vol. II, p. 217.

out all facets of his personality.

In Job 14:4, the author presents the terrible predicament of man: "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Man is born of sinners and therefore he too will be infected with the disease.

Most of the Scriptures on this subject are self-explanatory. Certainly anyone observing the plight of men in everyday circumstances comes to the quite obvious conclusion that something is horribly wrong. If all recognize that fact, then why doesn't man remedy it? The terrible truth is he is unable to do anything but sin. As Jeremiah 13:23 states, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good who are accustomed to evil."

Positively, then, total depravity means that man is incapable of doing that which pleases God. This thought will be further developed in the next section.

It must be further noted that Paul extends this condition to the entire human race. In Romans 3:10 and 11, he declares "and it is written, There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, There is none who seeks after God." No, it ought to be readily apparent that if "none seeks after God," then God seeks after them. Also, it is logical to assume that if this condition affects the entire race, then it is something that man cannot remedy. It would seem, frankly, that those who subscribe to a total freedom of man want for Scripture to sustain their view. Man is not portrayed in the Bible as anything but a slave to his own nature. His sin has infected every aspect of his being. His mind thinks the wrong things, his love desires the wrong things, and his will does the wrong things. Renovation will not help, he is in need of resurrection.

The Total Inability of Man

As a result of his depravity, man is not capable of coming to a proper understanding of God. Usually, it is at this point that the objection is raised, "Then man has no free will." Now, if by "free-will" it is meant that man may choose good as opposed to bad on his own, then, no, man does not have a free will. On the other hand, if one means that man freely does what he will without coercion, then, yes, man does have a free will. Man does do what he wants. The problem is evil appeals to him more than good because of his evil nature. To say that man is unable to do good is not the same as saying he has no free will. Hodge writes:

The doctrine of man's inability, therefore, does not assume that man has ceased to be a free moral agent. He is free because he determines his own acts. Every volition is an act of free self-determination. He is a moral agent because he has the consciousness of moral obligation, and whenever he sins he acts freely against the convictions of conscience or the precepts of the moral law. That a man is in such a state that he uniformly prefers and chooses evil instead of good, as do the fallen angels, is no more inconsistent with his free moral agency than his being in such a state as that he prefers and chooses good with the same uniformity that the holy angels do.¹

This inability manifests itself in a number of ways. Man is not able to do good. The fruit which he produces is the product of an evil heart. Further, he cannot understand the good. Man is blind to the truth about himself and about God. Anyone who has counseled with unsaved people has experienced the utter frustration of their inability to grasp spiritual truth. There are many today, particularly of the charismatic persuasion, who honestly feel that, if presented with "miracles,"

¹Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, 3 Volumes (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Reprinted 1970), Vol II, p. 260.

the world will, in mass, be converted. Thus, the big push for manufactured miracles. To adopt this view is to seriously misunderstand the nature of man. Apart from the illumination of the Spirit, man is not able to properly interpret the miraculous. Jesus Christ did miracle after miracle, but men were unable to understand their meaning. It was because of their basic inability. Finally, man is unable to desire good. This writer gets somewhat weary of seeing man portrayed as someone who is desperately searching after God. Again, this simply isn't true. In most cases, man is seeking relief from the consequences of his own wickedness. There is nothing particularly noble in desiring to avoid hell or to be rid of the complications sin causes him. This is not to say that there are none seeking after God, but, if they are, it is because God has first dealt with them.

It is proper here to give some consideration to Paul's description of man as being "dead in sin." This has become a point of contention between strict and moderate Calvinists because of those who have taken it to mean that man must be regenerated before exercising faith. Girod expresses this view:

Do you know why so few people today understand that regeneration is completely and totally an act of God? I shall tell you why. They confuse regeneration with conversion. When a man is converted, he repents of his sin; again, when a man is converted, he expresses his faith in Christ as his Savior. Many people confuse these acts with regeneration, but repentance and faith are not synonymous with the new birth. They grow out of and follow from the new birth. One must be born again before he can repent of his sins and express faith in Christ as his Savior. A spiritual corpse does not repent of his sins; in truth, the unregenerate man does not as much as think of himself as a sinner. A spiritual corpse does not possess a faith in Christ. God must bring the corpse forth from his grave. God must give life to the lifeless. And then, because life has been restored, man is able to repent

of his sins and to express faith in Christ as his Savior.¹

The question becomes: What is the relationship between faith and regeneration?

It is always good to admit what is obvious and that shall be done in this case. There is a problem here and it is the better part of wisdom to not become too general or too dogmatic in one's statements. How literally should one take the word "dead"? This writer believes that to attempt to soften this word is to walk in theological peril. Man is indeed dead and only the resurrection of God can help Him. At the same time, it is clear that the Bible makes faith the activity of reception through which life comes. Lightner sums up the apparent dilemma.

The scriptural teaching of the universal necessity of personal faith for salvation does not militate against the scriptural teaching of total depravity. Men are not merely spiritually sick and in need of divine medication; they are dead and in need of divine life (Eph. 2: 1,2). Obviously, the Bible views faith or belief as a separate thing in relation to salvation. Scripture does not teach that faith follows regeneration as some Calvinists would have it. Always in the Bible men are exhorted to believe in order that they might receive life. It is never the other way around. The message of the gospel is not to regenerated people to believe in something they already have, but to believe so that they might receive what they do not have but so desperately need.²

It is probably best to accept Walvoord's solution:

The normal pattern for regeneration is that it occurs at the moment of saving faith. No appeal is ever addressed to men that they should believe because they are already regenerated. It is rather that they should believe and receive eternal life. Christians are definitely told that before they accepted Christ they were 'dead in trespasses and sins' (Eph. 2:1, A. V.).³

¹Gordon H. Girod, The Way of Salvation (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), p. 66.

²Robert P. Lightner, The Death of Christ (Des Plaines: Regular Baptist Press, 1967), p. 52.

³John F. Walvoord, The Holy Spirit (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1954), p. 135.

The Divine Initiative

In what manner does God work out in time the decree of election which He purposed from eternity? Since man does not understand either his condition or God's provision, there must first be a work of illumination. Man must be convinced of his plight. In some mystical way, an operation of the Spirit takes place and he preceives spiritual truth.

God does not, in His working out of the decree of election, violate man's free will. His plan includes the acts of free moral agents. Rather, He acts through the agency of man's free will. He does this by conditioning, through providence, the circumstances so that the man is choosing what he wants to do. Gerstner observes:

That is, in any given instance when I see a particular course of action as appealing to me, as having the strongest arguments in its favor, I will certainly choose that course of action. There is no possibility in the world that I will do what does not seem good to me. There is no possibility in the world that I will not choose what does seem good to me, for I did choose what did seem good to me that would be the same thing as choosing what I did not want, what I was not inclined to.¹

There is no force being used. Both those who believe and those who don't do so because they desire to. Gerstner continues:

There is no power with which we are acquainted in this world which can actually force our will. It can force our body. A person can tie us, rope us, and carry us if we do not choose to go. He can take our life away from us when we do not want to relinquish it. The powers of this world can do virtually anything they want to but this one area is invulnerable and impervious to anybody and anything, namely, the sovereignty of our own will. I choose, in the last analysis, what seems good to me and there is no such thing as my choosing anything other than that. Not even Almighty God, once he has given me this faculty of choice, can make me, coerce me, force me to choose. If God forced the will it would no longer be a will. Just as if he squared the circle it would no longer be a circle.²

¹John H. Gerstner, A Predestination Primer (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963), p. 27.

²Ibid, p. 29.

It is this inability of man that makes election necessary if any are to be saved. God must take the initiative because man is unable to do anything. The significance for the doctrine of particular, unconditional election should be obvious. That election is particular is shown by the fact that not all are recipients of this mercy. God chooses some and passes by others. Further, it shows that election is unconditional because both groups are in the same plight. Neither has done anything to merit God's interest in them.

CHAPTER IV

THE APPLICATION OF ELECTION

The Extent of the Atonement

The student who launches into the study of this subject with the hope of finding a consensus of opinion shall return from his quest with keen disappointment. The student will find himself in opposition to men whom he greatly respects. Some of them he will of necessity oppose. It is well to consider the words of Lewis S. Chafer:

It is not easy to disagree with good and great men. However, as they appear on each side of this question, it is impossible to entertain a conviction and not oppose those who are of a contrary mind. The disagreement now under discussion is not between orthodox and heterodox men; it is within the fellowship of those who have most in common and who need the support and encouragement of each other's confidence. Few themes have drawn out more sincere and scholarly investigation.¹

God's Will for the Salvation of All Men

In any discussion with one who opposes unconditional election, almost invariably reference will be made to such texts as I Timothy 2:4; II Peter 3:9 and Titus 3:11. All these verses refer to the fact that God "wills" all men to be saved. These texts will be examined later but some preliminary remarks are in order. Many times these verses are quoted with an assurance that they are final in their relation to the subject at hand. Sadly, this is often done by those who have not carefully studied the passages to see what they really teach. If God had decreed the

¹Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology, 8 Vols., Vol. II, pp. 183-184.

salvation of all men then one of two options must result. Either all will eventually be saved or, if some are indeed lost, then God is not sovereign and His purpose has failed. Obviously, both these alternatives are completely unacceptable. It is well, then, to carefully consider the true significance of these passages. This writer will defend the view that these verses teach that the atonement was sufficient for all but God has not decreed the salvation of all.

It is best to begin this discussion with a consideration of I Timothy 2:4 and II Peter 3:9. In both texts the word "will" appears. However, two Greek terms are involved. In I Timothy 2:4 the word is *θέλω* and in II Peter 3:9 the term is *βούλομαι*. Unless one makes a proper distinction between these terms, it is impossible to arrive at a correct interpretation of these verses.

The term *βούλομαι* is the term which means "decisions of the will after previous deliberation."¹ In classical Greek, the word means to will on the basis of reason. Schrenk writes:

If a decision must be made concerning the original meaning, the fact that 'to prefer' or 'to choose' (often with *ἤ*) seems to be the first sense of *βούλομαι* in Homer and Herodotus strongly favors the view, inaugurated by Ammonius, that *βούλομαι* originally means volition on the basis of choice, preference or decision.²

It is well to note the other six times that *βούλομαι* is used of the activity of the Godhead:

¹William Arndt and Wilbur F. Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 145.

²Gottlieb Schrenk, "*βούλομαι*" in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. I, p. 630.

. . . nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him (Mt. 11:27).

. . . and (no man knows) who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him (Luke 10:22).

. . . saying, "Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but thine be done" (Luke 22:42).

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills (I Cor. 12:11).

In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath (Heb. 6:17).

In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth . . . (Jas. 1:18).

In each, except one, it is evident that what is referred to is something God did, in actuality do. The exception is the reference in Luke 22:42. This poses no real problem because Jesus was certain that if removing the cup was God's *Βούλομαι* then it would be removed. So there is still no uncertainty involved in the use of *Βούλομαι*. If this is the case, then those who use this as a proof-text against unconditional election become universalists by default. If the "all" refers to all men, then all will be saved for *Βούλομαι* is a term which speaks of that which will surely be accomplished. This, of course, turns out to be a rather unattractive alternative.

The critical question becomes, to whom does the "all" refer? It is obvious that Peter is writing to believers. This fact must influence the interpretation of the term "all." It is best to maintain that the "all" refers to believers. Therefore, this verse says that God has decreed that none of the elect shall perish. This idea is further supported by the elliptical construction of the verse. The complete

thought then would be "is patient toward you, not wishing for any (of you) to perish but for all (of you) to come to repentance." It is concluded, therefore, that this is a reference to God's sovereign decree to save the elect and rather than dispute unconditional election, it teaches it.

In I Timothy 2: 3-4 Paul writes, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires ($\theta\epsilon\lambda\omega$) all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." The same problem of universalism is faced if the term $\theta\epsilon\lambda\omega$ is pressed to mean God's decreed will. This, however, is neither necessary nor correct.

The verb $\theta\epsilon\lambda\omega$ is primarily a term of a wish or desire based upon the emotion.¹ It is generally understood as God's benevolent inclination, desire, or wish, but not necessarily what He has sovereignly decreed. Again, if He decreed the salvation of all then all would be saved. The distinction between $\theta\epsilon\lambda\omega$ and $\beta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\omicron\mu\epsilon\iota$ is seen best when the verses where they appear together are examined:²

And Joseph, her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting ($\theta\epsilon\lambda\omega$) to disgrace her, desired ($\epsilon\beta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\omicron\theta\eta$) to put her away secretly (Mt. 1:19).

Saying, Father, if you are willing ($\beta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota$), remove this cup from me; yet not my will ($\theta\epsilon\lambda\eta\mu\alpha$), but Thine be done (Luke 22:42).

For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; We want ($\beta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\omicron\mu\epsilon\theta\alpha$), to know therefore, what these things wish ($\theta\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota$) to be (literal translation) (Acts 17:20).

¹William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 355.

²Kenneth J. Stoll, "A Critical Re-Investigation of II Peter 3:9" (unpublished M. Div. Thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1974), p. 11.

Whom I wished (ἐβούλομην) to keep with me . . . But without your consent I did not want (ἢ θελήσας) to do anything (Phile. 13-14).

Therefore, God does wish that all men might be saved. However, for reasons unknown He has not chosen to fulfill His desire. In some way, the fulfillment of this desire was not the best plan. Just as Christ desired to avoid Calvary, but this was not the best plan. There is mystery here and the only proper response is one of faith. In any case, this verse cannot be used to deny unconditional, particular election.

The Benefits of the Atonement

It is best to consider Titus 2:11 under this heading because this writer feels that this is the idea of the verse. Paul writes, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men." Again, if the verse is pressed, one ends up with universal salvation, which is a totally unacceptable position. However, it is not necessary to arrive at that conclusion. There are some benefits to the non-elect in the atonement. It is their desire to deny this fact that has caused particular redemptionists to misinterpret this verse.

In commenting on this verse, Kent states: "God is the Savior of all men, although His blessings are limited chiefly to physical provision during this life for unbelievers, while His saving work includes spiritual salvation for believers and is eternal in duration."¹ There are, therefore, benefits even for the non-elect in the atonement of Christ.

¹Homer A. Kent, Jr., The Pastoral Epistles (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), p. 234.

Purdy suggests:

God is the Savior of all men in that on a temporal basis he gives them life and strength, awakens within them high ideals, provides for their pleasure and sustenance, and graciously allows them to live for a time in the light of His countenance.

God is specially the Savior of the believers in that he has a special call for them, answers their prayers, and provides for their well-being, not only in this life, but also in the life which is to come.¹

That there are benefits that accrue to the non-elect from the atonement is admitted even by the most ardent particular redemptionists.

Berkhof writes:

Reformed theologians generally hesitate to say that Christ by His atoning blood merited these blessings for the impenitent and reprobate. At the same time they do believe that important natural benefits accrue to the whole human race from the death of Christ, and that in these benefits the unbelieving, the impenitent, and the reprobate also share. In every covenant transaction recorded in Scripture it appears that the covenant of grace carries with it not only spiritual but also generally as such a kind that they are naturally shared also by unbelievers.²

Hodge admits benefits for the non-elect but attempts to hedge on its implication:

Nor does the question relate to the design of Christ in dying as it stands related to all the benefits secured to mankind by his death. It is very plain that any plan designed to secure the salvation of an elect portion of a race propagated by generation and living in association, as is the case with mankind, cannot secure its end without greatly affecting, for better or worse, the character and destiny of all the rest of the race not elected.³

There is no argument with those who wish to posit that the atonement benefits all men. However, the distinction between eternal and

¹Warren E. Purdy, "The Meaning of the Phrase 'Savior of All Men' in First Timothy 4:10" (Unpublished critical monograph, Grace Theological Seminary, 1954), p. 48.

²Berkhof, Lewis, Systematic Theology p. 438.

³Archibald A. Hodge, The Atonement (Grand Rapids: Guardian Press, Reprinted 1976), p. 438.

temporal benefits must be maintained. God is able to bless the non-elect temporarily because of Christ's death. In no way does this admission rule out particular, unconditional election. There are benefits in the atonement that God has chosen to apply only to the elect. There is no contradiction involved in holding to unconditional, particular election and, at the same time, to unlimited atonement.

The Reception of the Atonement

The Universal Message

Almost everyone who argues against particular, unconditional election will eventually bring up the matter of the "whosoever will" message. This is a very valid question because the issue is the veracity of God. Is the general call sincere? Theissen objects:

Surely, these are not mere mockery, - invitations that will in the case of some be backed up by God's efficient work of regeneration, and in the case of others be held out as glorious opportunities that can neither be appreciated nor appropriated for lack of God's efficient assistance.¹

The one who accepts unconditional, particular election must respond to this position. It is best to begin by noting that the Arminian with the view of foreseen faith faces exactly the same problem. Boettner notes:

We might ask, How can the offer of salvation be sincerely made to those who God foreknows will despise and reject it, especially when their guilt and condemnation will only be increased by their refusal? Arminians admit that God knows beforehand who will accept and who will

¹H. C. Thiessen, Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), p. 346.

reject the message; yet they know themselves to be under a divine command to preach to all men and they do not feel that they act insincerely in doing so.¹

Therefore, the debate again returns to the nature of man. He cannot exercise his free will except as the dictates of his depravity direct him. It must be insisted that the problem here is not in the sincerity of God. The problem is in the ability of man to respond. God is ready to give what He promised if any will come. This is all that is necessary for Him to be called sincere. If God had chosen none to salvation, then the "whosoever will" would still be sincere. Roger Nicole has admirably stated the case:

Most advertisers who offer some objects on the pages of a newspaper do not feel that honesty in any way demands of them to have a stock co-extensive with the circulation figures of the newspaper. If this be true even at the humble level of our finite lives, on what basis shall we presume to say that a co-extensive provision is necessary for a divine offer? Really, the only requisite for a sincere invitation is that if the conditions stated in the offer be fulfilled that which is proffered by actually granted.²

It is fair to consider the reason for God's use of this method.

Hodge offers this suggestion:

A bona fide offer of the gospel, therefore, is to be made to all men --- 1st. Because the satisfaction rendered to the law is sufficient for all men. 2nd. Because it is exactly adapted to the redemption of all. 3rd. Because God designs that whosoever exercises faith in Christ shall be saved by Him. Thus the atonement makes the salvation of every man objectively,

¹Lorraine Boettner, The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1932), p. 282.

²Nicole Roger, "The Case For Definite Atonement" Bulletin Of the Evangelical Theological Society 10:4 (Fall, 1967), p. 207.

possible. The design of Christ's death being to secure the salvation of His own people, Incidentally to the accomplishment of that end, it comprehends the offer of that salvation freely and honestly to all men on the condition of their faith. No man is lost for want of atonement, or because there is any other barrier in the way of salvation than his own most free and wicked will.¹

There is, however, a more important consideration. Jesus Christ commanded the preaching of the gospel and the response of faith does preach the gospel. Cunningham writes:

It is very evident that our conduct, in preaching the gospel, and in addressing our fellow-men with a view to their salvation, should not be regulated by any inferences of our own about the nature, extent, and sufficiency of the provision actually made for saving them, but solely by the directions and instructions which God has given us, by precept or example, to guide us in the matter, -- unless, indeed, we venture to act upon the principle of refusing to obey God's commands, until we fully understand all the grounds and reasons for them. . . . God's revealed will is the only rule²

Lastly, there is a very practical consideration. Since God has decided to use human instruments this requires that the method be adaptable to humans. It is fair to ask: What other method could God use since man doesn't know the identity of the elect? It becomes obvious that only a universal offer can be accommodated to all these requirements. Whether one understands it or not it is true that "whosoever will may come." To say differently makes God a liar.

The Order of the Decrees

All who can correctly be called Calvinists agree upon the doc-

¹A. A. Hodge, Outlines of Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, Reprinted 1972), p. 420.

²William Cunningham, Historical Theology, Volume II (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1864), Vol. II, p. 345.

trine of sovereign election. However, great discussion has arisen over the logical order of the elective decrees of God. The point of controversy is the logical relationship between the decree to elect some and the decree to allow the fall. Three views of this relationship have been espoused.

Supralapsarianism

In this view, the order of the decrees is:

1. to elect some
2. to create man
3. to permit the fall
4. to provide Jesus as the Savior for the elect
5. to send the Holy Spirit to accomplish this salvation in the elect.

This view has never enjoyed very wide acceptance. When one considers the ramifications, then the reason becomes obvious. It is not logical to do something to a man (elect him) before his creation is contemplated or determined. Further, this view would mean that the non-elect were created for hell and go there simply because God wants them to. This view must be rejected.

The second view is known as sublapsarianism. The order of decrees is:

1. to create man
2. to permit the fall
3. to provide Jesus as the Savior for all
4. to elect some
5. to send the Holy Spirit to accomplish this salvation in the elect.

This view has been held generally by the strict Calvinists. This view is the basis for the position known as particular redemption. It should be

noted that the phrase "limited atonement" is not the best to properly convey the thoughts of this view. Murray says:

Did Christ come to make the salvation of all men possible, to remove obstacles that stood in the way of salvation, and merely to make provision for salvation? . . . Did he come to put all men in a savable state? Or did he come to secure the salvation of all those who are ordained to eternal life? Did he come to make men redeemable? Or did he come effectually and infallibly to redeem? The doctrine of the atonement must be radically revised if, as atonement, it applies to those who finally perish as well as to those who are the heirs of eternal life . . . This we cannot do . . . If some of those for whom atonement is not redemption wrought perish eternally, then the atonement is not itself efficacious . . . We shall have none of it. The doctrine of "limited atonement" which we maintain is the doctrine which limits the atonement to those who are heirs of eternal life, to the elect. That limitation insures its efficacy and conserves its essential character as efficient and effective redemption.¹

Many have supposed that the key issue is, "For whom did Christ die?" This is not the precise issue. A better way of stating it is, "why did Christ die?" What was the motivating force behind His decision to be the sacrifice? There are certain scriptures which seem to limit the purpose to the securing of the elect. Some examples are:

Isaiah 53:5: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

Matthew 1:21: ". . . For he shall save his people from their sins."

Matthew 20:28: "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Matthew 26:28: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

¹John Murray, Redemption - Accomplished and Applied (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955), p. 71.

John 10:15: ". . . I lay down my life for the sheep."

Galatians 3:13: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us"

Ephesians 5:25: ". . . Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."

Hebrews 9:28: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many"

Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock . . . to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

In evaluating these texts, Lightnes offers these remarks:

These selected passages serve to illustrate the fact that the Bible does speak of the atonement in relation to specific individuals and groups. According to these and other passages, Christ came to redeem His own, to provide a ransom for many, to die for the sheep and to give Himself for the church. Any the unlimited redemptionist has absolutely no problem reconciling all such references with his view. It should be understood, however, that none of the passages which speak of Christ's death for specific groups or individuals can be used to exclude others. This is true since they only tell us of a certain group for whom Christ did die, and they do not tell us that He did not die for others. In other words, nowhere in Scripture does it ever say Christ did not die for all men.¹

It is necessary to give attention to some verses which give an unlimited view of redemption. It would seem that the greatest difficulty the particular redemptionist faces is that group of passages where the term "world" appears.

John 3:16 is no doubt the best known verse in the Bible. The word *κόσμος* ("world") does not necessarily mean every person of mankind. Arndt and Gingrich give eight different usages of *κόσμος*

¹Robert P. Lightner, The Death Christ Died (Des Plaines: Regular Baptist Press, 1967), p. 62.

in the New Testament: (1) adornment; (2) philosophically for the universe; (3) all beings above animals; (4) the planet earth; (5) mankind; (6) the world as the sense of joys, sorrows, possessions; (7) the world at enmity with God; and (8) totality, sum, total.¹ The deciding factor in interpretation is context. In John 3:16, there is a complete absense of anything in the context to suggest that *κόσμος* should be interpreted as anything but mankind in general. Particular redemptionists usually insist on restricting "world" to the elect, but it would seem that this comes from theological necessity rather than from contextual considerations. If only the elect is referred to, then verse 17 becomes meaningless.

Another verse which must claim attention is John 1:29, ". . . Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Again, there is a lack of any contextual factors that would prevent one from interpreting "world" in its broadest sense. Westcott sees "world" as:

the sum of created being, which belongs to the sphere of human life as an ordered whole considered apart from God, and in its moral aspect represented by humanity.²

Again, there is no good reason for interpreting "world" in any sense but the broad one.

In John 4:42, the Samaritan converts acknowledge that Jesus is

¹William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, pp. 446-448.

²B. F. Westcott, The Gospel According to John (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p. 186.

"the Savior of the whole world." It has been suggested that the point here is that Jesus is the Savior of the Samaritans as well as the Jews. This is possible but certainly not necessary. The Bible here speaks potentially. Christ has provided a sufficient salvation for every individual. Of course, He is actually the Savior only of the elect.

John 6:33 offers further evidence that the sacrifice of Christ was for the whole world. He says that the purpose of His coming from heaven was to give life to the world. This life He gives is not automatic, it is conditional upon personal appropriation by faith. Potentially, it is salvation for all men, but it is received only by believers.

In addition to the "world" passages, the particular redemptionists face a severe problem in these other passages containing the word "all". These are II Corinthians 5:14, 15; Hebrews 2:9; and I Timothy 2:6. All of these made reference to a universal redemption.

In II Corinthians 5:14, 15, the key phrase is ὑπὲρ πάντων . The word ὑπὲρ carries the idea of "in behalf of, or in the place of." It is most clearly a word that presents the idea of substitution. The price was paid on behalf of all men. As Lenski says, "He laid down the price, and that price was reckoned as if we all had laid it down."¹ God looked upon the death of Christ as the legal death of every man. Hughes correctly states:

¹R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of Saint Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1946), p. 1031.

The two aorist verbs - "one died . . . all died" - point back to the one event, namely, the crucifixion of Christ. A passage which is complementary to this is Rom. 5:12ff., where the Apostle teaches that when the one man, Adam, sinned death, the penalty of sin, passed on to all men on the ground that all sinned, that is, were identified with Adam in his sin. In the case of both Adam and Christ, one action has had consequences of universal significance, and the involvement of all men in the action of each is a real involvement.¹

It would seem that the particular redemptionist is left unable to explain away this verse. There is no contextual limitation on the word "all." Legally, objectively, and judicially, all died when Christ died. Walvoord offers this summation:

This concept of the universality of the provision of reconciliation is borne out in the context, in which reconciliation is discussed. In 2 Corinthians 5:14, emphasis is given to the fact that all were dead spiritually. The three instances of 'all' in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 seem to be universal. This is followed by the limited application indicated in the phrase 'they which live.' Hence the passage reads: For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we judge that one died for all (universal), therefore all (universal) died; and he died for all (universal), that they that live (restricted to elect) shall no longer live unto themselves but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again' (2 Cor. 5:14-15). The word 'all' is used, then, in a universal sense in this, followed by the restricted application indicated in the phrase, 'they which live.' This is reinforced by the use of the word 'world' referring to all men, in verse 19.²

Hebrews 2:9 is yet another thorny text for particular redemptionists. The last clause reads: "that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man." The word "man" is not in the original. This

¹Phillip E. Hughes, Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians in New International Commentary, Edited by F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), p. 195.

²John F. Walvoord, "Reconciliation" Bibliotheca Sacra. CXX (Jan - Mar., 1963), p. 10.

has become the key issue in the contest between the general and the unlimited view of the text. Murray, for example, insists that the "all" refers to believers only.¹ The problem is that there is simply no compelling reason for interpreting the "all" in any but a general sense.

Alford notes:

If it be asked, why $\pi\alpha\nu\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$ rather than $\pi\alpha\nu\tau\omega\nu$, we may safely say, that the singular brings out, far more strongly than the plural would, the applicability of Christ's death to each individual man.²

It must again be noted that the word $\psi\iota\tau\epsilon\rho$ is used. Consequently, the idea of substitution is paramount in the thought. The tasting of death for everyone was to serve the Divine purpose of bringing many (His elect) to salvation.

Further evidence for the general view of redemption is found in I Timothy 2:6. Again, Paul states that Christ "gave himself a ransom for all." The same arguments apply here as for the preceding verses. Logically, the "all" must refer to the "men" of verse 5. Since Christ is the mediator between God and all men, it seems compelling that the "all" of verse 6 be construed as all mankind.

The evidence for general redemption is abundant in the New Testament. There has been a universal propitiation (I John 2:2). There has been universal reconciliation (Gal. 1:20). There is a universal offer (John 3:16) backed by a universal provision (I Tim. 4:10). It is to be concluded from Scripture that the atonement of Christ was universal

¹John Murray, Redemption Accomplished and Applied (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955), p. 71.

²Henry Alford, The Greek Testament, 4 Volumes (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), Vol. IV, p. 41.

in its extent.

Above and beyond the Biblical evidence, there is another argument against the sublapsarian view. There is a logical problem with the view because, as Smith says, "it requires a certain amount of irrationality to believe that God elected those persons to whom He could apply a salvation which He had not yet contemplated."¹

In light of the preceding evidence, it is best to embrace an infralapsarian view of the decrees. The arrangement is:

1. to create man
2. to permit the fall
3. to provide Jesus as the Savior for all
4. to elect some
5. to send the Holy Spirit to accomplish this salvation in the elect.

This view best accommodated all the evidence. It allows for the Scriptural viewpoint that Christ's provision was motivated by God's love for the whole world. Further, with this view it is necessary to rob all the universal texts of their universality. Again, it must be admitted that here the human mind delves into a great mystery. The responsibility of man is not to understand, but to believe.

Faith and Election

Since Arminian also accept the infralapsarian order of the decrees, it is well to give some treatment to the relationship between election and foreknowledge. There are two and only two views of election.

¹Charles R. Smith, Did Christ Die Only for the Elect? (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1975), p. 15.

Either election is based upon foreseen faith or election is the sovereign choice of God. The foreseen faith view is based upon a confused understanding of the word foreknowledge. It is not proper to confuse foreknowledge with omniscience. God does indeed know all things. He knows all things possible as well as all things actual. The reason He knows all things actual is because He predestines all things. By that it is meant that He decrees either to cause or to permit everything that comes to pass. Logic dictates that predestination is necessary for God to be sure of what will come to pass. Again, this is not foreknowledge. Yet, the failure to make this distinction is a failure of practically everyone who argues on Romans 8:29-30.

It has been shown previously that the words $\gamma\iota\gamma\omega\sigma\kappa\omega$ and $\gamma\iota\gamma\omega\sigma\kappa\omega$ express more than mere perception. They express a loving, personal relationship. When the $\pi\rho\omicron$ is added to $\gamma\iota\gamma\omega\sigma\kappa\omega$ it means that that relationship existed even before the existence of the loved one. When the word foreknowledge is used, God is not merely saying, "I knew what you were going to do before you did it." That is to state the obvious. Rather He means "you were the object of my discerning love even before your existence."

Acts 2:32 shows that foreknowledge goes beyond mere knowledge and also beyond intimate knowledge. Foreknowledge is active in nature and is equivalent to foreordination. Peter says that Jesus was crucified by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. The Greek construction is $\tau\eta\ \omega\sigma\epsilon\sigma\mu\epsilon\acute{\nu}\eta\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \pi\rho\alpha\gamma\omega\sigma\epsilon\iota\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$. Therefore, the Granville Sharp rule applies. Dana and Mantey explain this usage:

When the copulative connects 2 nouns of the same case, if the article or any of its cases precedes the first of the said nouns or participles, and is not repeated before the second noun or participle, the latter always relates to the same person (or thing) that is expressed or described by the first noun or participle, i. e., it denotes a farther description of the firstnamed person (or thing).¹

Therefore, foreknowledge is the same as foreordination.

The foreseen faith view suffers from other scriptural difficulties. For example, Peter says believers are "elect . . . according to foreknowledge . . . unto obedience." (I Peter 1:1-2). If election is based upon foreseen faith the verse should read "elect . . . according to foreknowledge . . . of obedience." Further, God says He foreknows people, not events. Romans 8:29 says "whom he foreknew." Also, Paul says that the same people who were foreknown were also called, justified, and glorified. Now, if foreknowledge means only to know in advance then all people are foreknown. If all are foreknown, than all are glorified. This results in universalism and is, of course, unacceptable.

It is to be concluded that the foreseen faith view is wholly untenable. Further, it solves nothing since the outcome of all things is still certain. Why then do so many embrace it? This writer earnestly wishes to avoid being harsh with those who espouse the view. However, he cannot help but believe that the real reason is a rebellious heart that resists bowing to God's sovereignty.

The relationship between faith and salvation was examined somewhat in a previous section. It cannot be denied that faith is the chan-

¹H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manuel Grammar of the Greek New Testament (New York: Macmillian Co., 1927), p. 47.

nel of salvation. Neither can it be denied that faith is man's responsibility. This is a mystery, but no contradiction in the divine-human interaction in salvation. It is well to conclude with these profitable words from Machen:

The faith of man, rightly conceived, can never stand in opposition to the completeness with which salvation depends upon God; it can never mean that man does part, while God merely does the rest; for the simple reason that faith consists not in doing something but in receiving something. To say that we are justified by faith is just another way of saying that we are justified not in slightest measure by ourselves, but simply and solely by the One in whom our faith is reposed.¹

¹Gresham J. Machen, What is Faith? (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1925), p. 172.

CHAPTER V
THE OBJECTIONS TO UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

"Predestination is Fatalism"

This is one of the most common objections against predestination. It results from a confusion of two similar, but not identical ideas. The only real agreement between predestination and fatalism is that both posit the absolute certainty of all future events. The key difference in the two systems of thought is that fatalism has no place for a personal God.

In the fatalistic system, events are in the grip of an impersonal non-moral force which cannot be distinguished from physical necessity. Events have no unifying purpose, there is no goal toward which history moves. The term "blind fate" is often invoked. This description of the concept "fate" is essentially correct. Fate pictures man as a hopeless victim of chance with absolutely no hope of anything better than what he now enjoys.

This is fatalism and, sadly, the Biblical doctrine of predestination is confused with this pagan idea. The comments of Rice are typical:

There is no essential difference between the unbelieving fatalism of Calvinists and the fatalism of Moslems or other heathen people. Essentially Calvinism would teach that there is no real right or wrong, no moral responsibility for men and women. Essentially Calvinism would teach that the laws of sowing and reaping, of rewards and punishments, are not valid, honest laws. All the fundamental doctrines involved in sowing and reaping, in praying and getting the answer, in winning souls or leaving

them to go to Hell because of our cold, compassionless heart-I say these basic fundamentals are denied by Calvinism. Yes, Calvinism is a moral impossibility in the light of Bible doctrine.¹

It is extremely regrettable that Dr. Rice would resort to this "straw man" argument. Obviously, Dr. Rice has not carefully researched what John Calvin taught and what Calvinists have believed for years. Dr. Rice is so vindictive against the Calvinist position that he refused permission to quote from his book Predestined for Hell? No! when it was requested by Kenneth Good, a Calvinist, for use in Good's book Are Baptists Calvinists?² This writer strongly believes that Dr. Rice would be unable to produce statements from responsible Calvinists that would uphold the ideas he has credited to them. Again, the confusion is over the difference between predestination and fatalism.

Predestination does posit that the outcome of all things is determined. It does allow for the free will of man, but recognized that God in His omniscience and providence can overrule the intentions of man. Further, predestination is the act of an all-loving, all-wise, all-powerful God who has a holy and just purpose in all He does. If no believer, no matter how much he wished, could say with confidence, "all things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:29), if God had not foreordained the outcome of all things the very best He could say would be, "I sure hope to work out all things to your good" or "I'm going to try to work

¹John R. Rice, Predestined For Hell? No! (Murfreesboro: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1958), p. 81.

²Kenneth H. Good, Are Baptists Calvinists? (Oberlin: Regular Baptist Heritage Fellowship, 1975), p. 158.

all things to your good." This writer believes that, if carried to its logical conclusion, the rejection of the doctrine of predestination leads to a rejection of the sovereignty of God. Most Arminians would deny that charge and this writer desires to be fair in his assessment of their view. However, this writer honestly fails to see how God could assure the Christian that all things are working together for his good unless God had predetermined all those things.

This attempt to identify fatalism with predestination must be refuted. Those who reject predestination must not be allowed to sweep it away with the charge, "It is a pagan philosophy." Predestination is Biblical and must be defended as such. To be sure, some have perverted the doctrine, but this does not mean it must be abandoned. When faced with problems, man abandons Biblical revelation at his own peril and the cure is worse than the disease. It is readily admitted that some Christians have perverted the doctrine. This, however, does not invalidate it. Besides, the perversions of the doctrine come from another source. As Good observes:

When an unscriptural attitude of "Christianized fatalism" invades the soul, it can be said that the individual suffering from this malady is not the victim of faith in predestination, but lack of faith in God. If either the prayer life or the area of effort become stultified in a Christian's experience, it is not because he believes in the doctrines of election, but because he has either misunderstood them, or is using them as an excuse for laziness, or both.¹

Fatalism leads to despair. Predestination leads to hope.
 Fatalism leads to moral laxness. Predestination leads to holy living.
 Fatalism leads to a cold, impersonal force. Predestination leads to

¹Kenneth H. Good, Are Baptists Calvinists?, p. 279.

the arms of a loving Father. The difference between the two views is the difference between theism and atheism.

Predestination is Inconsistent with the Free Will of Man

Very probably, this is the most popular campground for the focus of anti-Calvinism. "Free-will" is their most popular and emotional battlecry. After all, no man is satisfied until he be the master of his own soul and captain of his own destiny. Man seems determined to merit salvation rather than receive it. It is well to examine the validity of this argument.

In the first place, no one could seriously argue that man is totally free. His free will faces many real, serious physical limitations. He is not "free" to walk through walls. Does this mean he is not a free moral agent? Obviously, no man has total freedom in the physical realm. His free will in the physical realm is limited by his physical nature. Likewise, his freedom in the moral realm is limited by his moral nature.

Previously, it has been pointed out that man is totally depraved. Left on his own, he would choose evil everytime because of his evil nature. Unless the Spirit of God performs a supernatural work, he will perish in that condition. Certainly, he is free. He always does what he wants, but he always wants to do bad. Preaching on John 5:40, Spurgeon once commented:

But I hear another of these babblers asking a question, saying, 'But could they not come if they wanted to come?' Yes, my friend, but the problem is that they are dead and do not want to come. But, that is not the question this morning. I am talking about what they will do, not what they CAN do.¹

¹Charles H. Spurgeon, God's Will, Man's Will and Free Will (Wilmington: Sovereign Grace Publisher, 1972), p. 49.

Luther echoed this thought:

If, now, there were any in the world who endeavored after good by the power of 'free-will' (as there should be, if 'free-will' had any power), then, out of respect for them, John should have modified his statement, so as not, by generalising, to implicate them in all the evil deeds with which he charges the world. But this he does not do; from which it is clear that he is making 'free-will' guilty of all that is charged against the world. And his reason is, that the world does all that it does by the power of 'free-will' that is, by will and reason, its own most excellent parts.¹

This writer fears that many times the term free-will is misused and intended to convey the idea that man is totally free. Unfortunately, this idea has no support in the Bible. Conversely, the Bible always portrays man as a slave of his sinfulness.

It must also be noted that certainly does not violate freedom. One may know his wife so well that he knows what she will do in a given situation. This certainly constitutes no infringement upon her freedom of choice. God knew that Judas would betray Christ. But, there is no evidence that God forced Judas to do it. Judas acted in accordance with his free will. He chose what he desired, namely, thirty pieces of silver. Yet this act was in the plan of God and God overruled the evil motive of Judas and accomplished a good purpose. The providential activity of God in this fashion is illustrated in the comment of Joseph, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Gen. 50:20). The brothers acted of their own accord, in response to their own evil natures, and God used their actions to further His program. The actions of the brothers were evil and they were responsible for them, but God in His providence overruled their intended effect. In any case, their actions were free,

¹Martin Luther, The Bondage of the Will, p. 303.

they were certain, and they were part of God's program.

It must further be noted that the objection that certainly is inconsistent with free will bears equally against the foreseen faith view. The outcome of everything is still certain and only certain people will be saved. Why then do some insist upon foreseen faith? This writer hesitates to present his answer to that question for fear of sounding too dogmatic and self-assured. However, he feels compelled to state that the reason is in the sinful heart of man. He resists at all costs a salvation in which he does not have the final determinative voice. It is as if he wishes to stroll through the portals of glory humming the popular song, "I Did It My Way." It has been this writer's experience that most people, including Christians, refuse to acknowledge how wicked they actually are. Consequently, they do not consider how lost they were. To be headed for destruction is terrible. To be headed for destruction and not know it is doubly so. Yet, this is the plight of unsaved man. Further, he would slip into hell unaware if not awakened by the Spirit of God. This is too much for man and, therefore, he rejects predestination.

It must be maintained that the argument that predestination is inconsistent with free-will fails to be convincing. The argument stands upon a misunderstanding of free-will and makes postulations which are unwarranted. It is obvious that there are problems with this subject. It is shrouded in mystery. However, to deny that God is in control of His world will not solve the problem. On the seeming contradiction between free will and predestination, Boettner remarks:

Predestination and free agency are the twin pillars of a great temple, and they meet above the clouds where the human gaze cannot penetrate. Or again, we may say that Predestination and free agency are parallel lines; and while the Calvinist may not be able to make them unite, the Arminian cannot make them cross each other.¹

Predestination Makes God the Author of Sin

In beginning the treatment of this subject, there is an admission that needs to be made. God's program does include sin. Evidently, it was necessary for the attainment of God's goal. Certainly, all would admit that sin was essential to any plan of salvation. Whatever His reasons, God chose to include evil in His plan. This, however, is by no means the same as saying that God is the author of sin.

The Scriptures are unanimous in their testimony that God hates sin. God never takes sin lightly, never condones it, and never leaves it unpunished. Therefore, faith requires that one believe that God is not the author of sin. God has merely decided to permit sin to enter His plan. It must be remembered that the origin of sin goes back to a time when there was a total moral free-will. The rebellion of the angels was a result of the exercise of a will which could have chosen good. They were under no compulsion to choose evil and their nature, if predisposed, at all, was probably predisposed to good. Robert Ingersoll once asked, "Why did God create the devil?"² The answer is, of course, that God didn't create the devil. God created a good angel. That good angel

¹Lorraine Boettner, The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination, p. 222.

²A. H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell, 1970), p. 365.

created the devil. God permitted the fall of both Satan and Adam. He didn't, however, cause their fall.

It must also be noted that God does not desire that people sin. He does not, however, always decree implimentation of His desires. He has not willed actively to have sin continue. He desires sin to cease but has decreed to permit it when it occurs. Again, this is a mystery beyond the finite limitations of the mind of man. However, faith assures that this plan is good and will, in the end, accomplish all God desires it too.

It is probably not possible to refrain from speculating to one degree or another as to why God allowed sin. It may well be that it is related to God's purpose of glorifying Himself. It would seem that there is much more glory in redeeming man than merely creating him and decreeing that man would not sin. On the human side, man unfallen and unredeemed, would have not appreciated the grace of God as vividly as do the saved. Fearsome as it sounds, another reason why God may have permitted sin was to allow some to be damned and stand as an eternal testimony to the horrible consequences of rebellion. In this way, even the persons in hell will give glory to God in showing Him to be the just and righteous judge.

God is not the author of sin and the doctrine of predestination does not purport Him to be. The logical problem involved in God's relation to the origin of sin is one shared by all Christians, whether Calvinist or Arminian. As long as God is admitted to be sovereign, then He could have prevented sin. If this makes Him the author of sin, then the Arminians are stuck with the same problem because they too acknow-

ledge that God is sovereign. The only real solution is to take the Bible at its word: God hates sin yet He permits it in order to work out His perfect plan.

Predestination Discourages All Motive To Exertion

This is one of the more common objections against the doctrine of predestination. It results from a failure to fully understand the relationship between the predestined ends and the means of achieving those ends. God has predestined every believer to be conformed to the image of Christ. In order to accomplish this transformation, He has ordained many means. Prayer, Bible study, fellowship and suffering all play a part in shaping the new character of the Christian. It certainly must be maintained that if the end is certain, then the means must be certain also. Any conflict between free agency and predestination is apparent and not real. To imagine a conflict is like making the statement, "what is to be will be whether it happens or not."

The only way this objection could be valid is if the content of the decrees were known by man in advance. This however, is not the case. The only way man knows what God has predestined is that which he observes in the past. Therefore, it is legitimate to make exertion in accordance with Biblical principles. Properly understood, predestination offers the greatest possible motive for exertion. The purpose of God must stand, therefore, man is encouraged to work for its attainment. Again, faith in the revealed plan of God is the ultimate solution to the problem. For anyone to use God's sovereignty as an excuse for his own slothfulness is to give evidence of a rebellious heart.

Predestination Makes God A Respector of Persons

This, unfortunately, is another example of men speaking from ignorance. This would be a valid argument if the reason for election were found in the persons themselves. This is clearly not the case for God deals in an election of grace. The mind of man cannot conceive of an election apart from merit. This type of logic is another example of what can occur when a finite mind applies his standards in the realm of the infinite.

The philosophical basis for this argument lies in the mistaken belief that God owes it to man to save him. Therefore, since salvation is a debt on God's part, it is not just for Him not to treat all men alike. This is the reason that those who use this argument will refrain over and over again. "God gives everyone the same opportunity and it is up to man to accept or reject." But, everyone does not have the same chance. Many have lived and died never having heard the name of Jesus Christ. What of them? Is God unjust? No, God is not unjust. His very nature prohibits Him from being unjust. By definition, any action of God is perfectly just. Further, if God "owes" man anything it is damnation. That is the only thing man has earned from God. If God had chosen to save none, He would have remained perfectly just. Until one is ready to admit that God is correct in whatever He does, the doctrine of election will be a serious burden to him.

It is obvious that God is partial in His granting of physical blessing. Some are born beautiful, others not so attractive. Some are born with strong bodies, others deformed, never to know a day free from pain. Some are born into families of love and joy, others are rejected

by parents who consider them a burden. Some are born in lands of freedom, others in political bondage. The evidences of election abound in the physical realm. If God has not decided who will be the recipient of these favors, who has? If the Arminian dares answer "chance" then it is he, not the Calvinist, who is the fatalist. It must be admitted that God does not, for reasons known to Himself, deal with all men in the same manner. However, even at this, God still deals better with man than he deserves.

A parallel question in this issue relates to the reason God did not elect all. Again, God has His reasons and man must accept that. However, it may be that the non-elect will serve as an eternal monument to God's justice. They shall be living proof that God does indeed judge sin. They shall testify forever to the folly of rebellion against God. It is certainly to be remembered that God owes no man anything. Election is a gift to the undeserving. It is not, as some Anti-Calvinists make it out to be, the withholding of rightful property from the deserving. Election does not shut the door of heaven to anyone. Rather, it opens the door to some who are already otherwise shut out.¹

Predestination Makes Preaching The Gospel Useless

The person who makes this objection would do well to ask himself, "why do I preach?" Preachers are supposed to preach because this is

¹Charles R. Smith, "Salvation and the Christian Life" (Unpublished class notes: Grace Theological Seminary), p. 82.

what God has told them to do. Whether it is "useless" or not has nothing to do with the commission to preach. Jeremiah, for example, was promised failure for his preaching. But this did not diminish the responsibility to proclaim the message God had given him. It is the height of arrogance for any man to demand from God a guarantee of success in some activity that God has commanded man to do. Actually, the people who make this objection reveal that their heart is more interested in results than in merely doing what God has commanded.

It must also be noted that the preaching of the gospel is God's ordained means of bringing the elect to Himself. While the message is proclaimed to the non-elect and the elect, God's Spirit works a special work in the heart of the elect causing them to respond to the message. Since God has ordained preaching by men and He had not revealed to men the identity of the elect, then obviously the gospel must be presented to all. God has decreed that salvation will be accomplished by preaching. Therefore, it is necessary to preach. Again it would seem that the prideful heart of man is not contented with the position God has allotted to him. He is not satisfied with just preaching, he also insists on being the one who convicts of the truth of the message.

Far from making the preaching useless, the doctrine of election empowers the preacher as he understands that a sovereign God will take His Word and accomplish that which He pleases. The preacher can cease to worry about results and concentrate on properly understanding and delivering the message. It brings peace and joy to the heart of a man who knows that his responsibility is the accurate proclamation of the message.

CHAPTER VI

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION AND PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Election and the Philosophy of Evangelism

To many, the ideas of election and predestination are best suited to the seminary classroom and offer little in the way of practical value. This idea has come about as a result of the failure to think through the significance of one's theology. Whether one is an Arminian or a Calvinist has much to do with his approach to evangelism.

Anti-Calvinists generally assert, and sometimes with a great degree of smugness, that a believer in election will invariably stifle evangelism. If permissible, this writer would like to suggest that evangelism was not invented by modern day "soul winners" and they do not hold a patent on it. Rice, for example, repeatedly says that people who believe in election do not believe in or practice evangelism.¹ Again, this is an overstatement of the case.

In the lines that follow this writer would like to put forth some opinions on a philosophy of evangelism. If one begins with the presupposition that man is truly free and it is only by the expertise of the preacher that he is going to be persuaded to be saved, then this idea will obviously affect the philosophy of evangelism. The evangelist must procede to devise all manner of weapons for his arsenal. It is this underlying Arminianism that led to an unhealthy over-emphasis upon

¹John R. Rice, Predestined For Hell? No!, Chapter 10.

evangelism. Again, this arises out of the belief that it is up to the evangelist to convince the hearer. This is not the responsibility of the evangelist as outlined in the Bible.

It might be well to consider the question of the nature of evangelism. The evangelist is a teller of the good news of God's provision of salvation and the availability of that salvation to all who believe. The concept of evangelism is further defined by the use of the term "witness" which is a telling of the blessings of salvation from an individual standpoint. When kept in this context evangelism is something natural. When changed to the concept of high pressure salesmanship, the result is a perversion of what God intended.

This writer has no wish to be abusive or harsh, but he is very concerned about the responsibility of the Arminian view among Fundamentalists. Has the reader ever wondered about those who have responded to the high pressure gimmicks of some evangelist, but yet have exhibited not one spark of divine life since they "went forward and received Christ." Fearful as it may be, it is this writer's belief that multitudes of people in churches where the doctrinal statement is quite orthodox, have responded to an emotional appeal by some preacher rather than being converted by the Spirit of God. The latter condition of such a man is worse than his former because he now has a sense of false security.

The Calvinist is not against evangelism. He merely insists that evangelism be carried out properly. The evangelist realizes that he is only a messenger and that God must produce the response if it is to be

genuine. The thing that the Biblical evangelist should dread more than any other is the encouragement of a response not produced by the Spirit. Salvation is the business of resurrecting the dead and only God can do that. Pickering has spoken well:

We are participants in the victorious evangelism of a sovereign God. He is moving through the nations of the earth gathering out a bride for His Son. He is speaking, convicting, and wooing His elect. He is gathering out of the continents of earth a 'People for His name' (Acts 15:14). He is the successful Evangelist. We are like Manoah and his wife, the parents of Samson, who were spectators at a divine demonstration -- 'the angel of the Lord did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife looked on' (Judges 13:19).¹

Election and Practical Christian Living

Election is not a cold, sterile doctrine. Its practicality is very revealing when properly analyzed. Election helps one understand himself. The necessity of election is grounded in man's total depravity. Therefore, election helps one to recognize the extent of his own wickedness and to continually seek the power of God for victory over that nature. Likewise, the doctrine helps one to better understand the world in which he lives. He can see man as a captive of his own depravity and better understand and minister to those around him.

Election assists the believer in appreciating the greatness of God's grace. God, under no compulsion, launched this great plan of redemption and that plan necessitated the giving up of His Son. Unconditional election holds that though man merited destruction God gave His most precious possession, namely His Son. Further, election helps

¹Ernest D. Pickering, The Theology of Evangelism (Clarks Summit: Baptist Bible College Press, 1974), p. 39.

the believer to see that that prime purpose of God's plan is His own glory. This encourages the believer to not regard lightly his responsibilities and his magnificent good fortune as being one of the objects of God's mercy. The realization that God, with no basis in foreseen merit, made one the object of His love will produce humility and thankfulness.

Election provides the basis for assurance in the Christian life. The believer can rest upon the knowledge that God will complete that which He has begun. Election promises success in all that God has commissioned the believer to do. The fact that God has foreordained all things provides great comfort to the believer. Though the situation seems hopeless, the believer rests in the knowledge that it rests in the hands of a sovereign God who will turn it to the believers advantage.

CONCLUSION

This study has been too brief to provide more than a cursory survey of election. An honest attempt has been made to deal with the major implications and major objections to the doctrine. This writer has come away from his study with the settled conviction that unconditional election stands as one of the pillars of faith. Sadly, because of misrepresentation and misunderstanding, the word election has become a forbidden word to many Christians. This is most unfortunate because the doctrine of election is closely bound up with the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. The truth of God's controlling hand is sorely needed in these trying days. Further, the doctrines of total depravity and sovereign grace should be boldly proclaimed in this day of exalted humanity.

Certainly the most important question is not what Calvin or Arminius taught, but what the Scriptures teach. This writer must insist that election is a Biblical doctrine. It is portrayed in the Bible as particular and unconditional. Abraham, Noah, Isaac, and Jacob are all portrayed as being chosen unconditionally. There was a corporate aspect to Israel's election, as there is to the church's, but Paul makes it clear that there is an election within the nation.

In the New Testament, the election of the Apostles is presented as unconditional and individual. Paul is certainly an example of unconditional election. The election of individuals to salvation is likewise presented as unconditional. This election results in a vital union

with Christ and is unto holy living.

The necessity of election is found in the total depravity of man. Man's will is captive to the dictates of his evil nature. Therefore, God must take the initiative and draw man to Himself. Faith is the positive response of the elect to God's drawing.

God has provided an atonement for all mankind in the death of Christ. He is, however, selective in the application of that atonement. Even within this selectivity there are certain benefits in the atonement that accrue to all mankind. God makes a sincere offer of salvation to "whosoever will" in the general call. However, there is also an efficacious call that causes the elect to come.

Election is an immensely practical doctrine. If properly understood it becomes the basis for humility and great thanksgiving. It provides hope for the work of evangelism in the cemetery of mankind. It produces a holy boldness secured from the knowledge that God is sovereign and has predestinated all things to the accomplishment of His holy purposes.

There are logical problems with the doctrine. This comes from the limitations of man's mind, not from inconsistencies in the Doctrine. Man knows in part only and because of that fact certain aspects of election remain a mystery. But the heart filled with faith can rejoice with Paul:

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways" (Romans 11:33 NASV).

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