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**IN DEFENSE OF BAPTIST
DOCTRINE
By S. C. Phillips**

To my young friend, Tommy

My daughter tells me of your interest in religion, and of this magazine, which, she says, is over the heads of many desiring to understand what Predestinarian Baptists believe. I have given consideration to this, and will attempt to give a defense of the historic Baptist doctrine, or, better - Biblical Christianity.

Predestinarian Baptists - sometimes called "Old Order Baptists" - emphasize the basic *doctrine* more than the evangelical fervor so often characteristic of other Baptists. To us true religion is a direct and individual experience with God. Second in importance is a love and delight in His precious word, which is: knowledge of doctrine, or teaching; and living consistently with His word, or Christian morality.

Baptists of past ages have left us a rich heritage of what they believed relative to God's word. Almost every local church has articles of faith, and almost all associations and conventions have them as well. I will, at first, cite from these, merely to show that my topic is very well documented in the annals of Baptist history. I will use bold letters to emphasize concepts I wish to use in this article.

First: the oldest Baptist Association in Mississippi is the Mississippi Baptist Association, constituted in 1806. Quoting from the 1806 minutes of this association: "Article 3. We believe in the fall of Adam; in the IMPUTATION of his sin to

ALL his posterity. And in mans INABILITY TO RESTORE HIMSELF to the favor of God.”

“Article 4 We believe in the everlasting love of God to HIS PEOPLE. In the ETERNAL UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION of a DEFINITE NUMBER of the human race to grace and glory.”

“Article 6. We believe ALL those who WERE CHOSEN in Christ BEFORE the foundation of the world; are in time EFFECTUALLY CALLED, regenerated, converted, and sanctified; and are KEPT by the power of God. through faith unto salvation.”

That is what our first Baptists said they believed in 1806. Modern Baptists still print the above, annually, in their minutes.

Second: the oldest state Baptist Convention affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention is the Georgia Bapt. Convention formed in 1800. Their articles state the basic doctrine in the most concise manner. I quote:

“Article 3. We believe in the fall of Adam, and the IMPUTATION of his sin to his posterity: In the CORRUPTION of human NATURE, and the IMPOTENCY of man to recover himself by his OWN FREEWILL.”

“Article 4, We believe in the everlasting love of GOD TO HIS PEOPLE, and the eternal ELECTION of a DEFINITE NUMBER of the human race, to grace and glory: and that there was a COVENANT OF GRACE or redemption made between the FATHER and the SON. BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN, in which THEIR salvation is secure, and THEY IN PARTICULAR are saved.”

I have yet to discover any Baptist

churches or associations which better state the doctrine than the above. It is clear and very precise.

In considering the doctrine of unconditional election and predestination, notice how our forefathers predicated it upon God's own purpose before the foundation of the world. In stating it, they correctly based it upon the total inability of man to recover himself from his fallen condition. The relationship between election and total inability seem clear. If man by his sinful fall passed his corrupt nature to all his posterity, so that they are totally unable to do anything to recover themselves by their own free will, then our forefathers saw clearly that God himself must recover them. It was, and is, very obvious that he does NOT recover all mankind, but only some. Thus, as you can see, they pointed out that in recovering some, (His covenant people, the elect, or those whom He loved with an everlasting love). He entered into a covenant or an agreement with His Son BEFORE He created the world, that they (“a definite number”) would be called by the Holy Spirit, regenerated or born-again, and converted to a new life, and sanctified by God who works mightily in them. They expressed what most Baptists still teach, that is, that his people will be K Eli’ (once saved - always saved) by the power of God through faith UNTO salvation.

The major difference in doctrine between the modern and primitive Baptists today is that Predestinarians still actively believe and preach the above articles of God’s Word. Modern Baptists, today, seldom mention them, or they actively oppose them. They have become very much in agreement with the

Arminian school of Methodists on all points except “once saved, always saved. However, originally the Baptists and Calvinist Methodists agreed; whereas the Baptists and Arminian (freewill) Methodists in America differed on almost all points of doctrine.

When Peter wrote “*Wherefore the rather, brethren, give DILIGENCE to make your CALLING and ELECTION sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:*” (II Peter 1:10) he commanded two things of us. First: to give diligence to make our calling sure, and second, to give diligence to make our election sure. To give diligence to this certainly implies these two things ought not to be taken lightly. True religion is indeed a serious matter – the eternal happiness of the soul is at stake! Peter places *calling*, in this verse, before *election*. Both from the Scriptural standpoint as well as our forefather’s, election as before the foundation of the world, whereas calling is in our time experience. never have any evidence of divine elect, Peter’s order is important: We can never have any evidence of divine election in our souls until we are called to a knowledge of our sins, and of our Savior. Thus, the articles of faith emphasize.

I suppose most Baptists will still agree that Adam fell from his former state of happiness in the garden of Eden. (At least those that are not evolutionists) But many will not go so far as their forefathers and we, in saying he passed his corrupt nature to ALL his posterity. Yet, the Scriptures declare: “*Wherefore, as by one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed*

upon ALL men, for that all have sinned.” (Rom. 5:12) And, “*Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation.*” (Rom. 5:17) Again, “*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*” (Rom. 3:23) Thus sin leaves man in a state from which he cannot recover himself of his own freewill. Consider that Adam was made in the image of God and fell; nor could he recover himself, for God barred him from the Tree of Life “*lest he take of it and live for ever.*”

This, I hope, is easy to prove. Do infants die? If so, why? “*The wages of sin is death.*” Whose sin, then, brings them into such condemnation? Their’s or another’s? “*As by ONE man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin.*” Again, do we have to teach children to lie? Families, churches, and schools constantly try to teach children to be honest, with varying degrees of success but none are successful, considering the time and effort put forth. On the other hand, “*The wicked are estranged FROM THE WOMB: they go astray AS SOON AS THEY BE BORN, speaking lies.*” (Psalms 58:3) That is pretty early, wouldn’t you agree? When? – “*estranged from the womb.*” Estranged from God that early! No wonder Jesus told Nicodemus “*Ye must be born again*” and “*born from above.*” (John 3~3-6) Man is in a far worse condition than he supposes he is, principally because he grew up daily, little by little, “*waxing worse and worse.*” His corruption is so natural he can’t believe he is totally unable to recover himself by nature.”The *heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?*” (Jeremiah 17:9)

The point I wish to make here is: if we consider the race of man in the condition of sin and rebellion which Scripture and common observation demonstrate, then there has to be, yea, must be, some intervention made by God Himself on man's behalf, else, hell would await us all, for "*all have sinned.*"

But, seeing and believing that God has demonstrated His mercy (at least to some of the fallen race), what moved Him to do anything at all? The articles above state that it was: "He loved His peoples with an everlasting love." Jeremiah said it this way: "*The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I DRAWN THEE.*" (Jer. 31:3) Did not Jesus say: "*No man CAN COME TO ME, except the Father which hath sent me DRAW him: and I will raise him up at the last day*"? (John 6:44) Also, do we not read Him saying: "*Therefore said I unto you that NO MAN CAN COME unto me, except it were GIVEN unto him of my Father.*"? (John 6:65)

Jesus Himself declared that "no man can come unto me." Is this what you hear during an invitation at the end of most sermons? There are two conditions Jesus put upon one's coming to Him. One must be DRAWN by the Father, or one must have it GIVEN to him to come. Jeremiah placed this drawing by God squarely upon God's own everlasting love. Surely the love of God is the moving cause of anyone being drawn to Him by the Holy Spirit. It is not that God draws all to him, and then they must decide about it. As you see, the same ones that are drawn are also raised up in the last day. This drawing is

effectual to their salvation. Surely God cannot fail, or else He is very frustrated by it. And what kind of god would that be?

I can almost hear an objection here from some reader. "But doesn't God love everybody?" I have no idea where such an idea originated. It is not supported by Scripture, nor by common observation. If He is God, doesn't He have power sufficient to keep one He loves from going to hell? If he does have, yet does not, then what kind of love is this He is said to have? It would be less than what we mortals possess. Yet, the Scriptural answer is an emphatic "no!" But I suppose I must prove this too, since it is so commonly held. "*I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and I HATED Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.*" (Mal. 1:2-3) Again, "*For the children not yet being born, neither having DONE any good OR evil, that the purpose of God according TO ELECTION might stand, not of works, but OF HIM that calleth; It was said unto her (Rebecca), The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I HATED.*" (Rom. 9:11-13) And again it is recorded: "*The foolish shall not stand in Thy sight: Thou hatest ALL WORKERS of iniquity.*" (Psalm 5:5) "*All their wickedness is in Gilgal: for there I HATED them.*" (Hosea 9:15) "*The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that IS ABHORRED OF THE LORD shall fall therein.*" (Proverbs 22:14) No, the Scriptures knows no concept of universal love. The whole tenor of divine revelation in the Bible is

this: *“He loved US, and gave Himself for US.”* Invariably, the love of God is almost always placed within the context of a personal pronoun! *“He died for OUR sins.”* Why? So that true religion might be founded upon a personal vital experience with God. Never once is it said He died for “them”. Thus the articles quoted always referred to “his people.” divine election is placed upon the dark backdrop of hopeless sin, corruption, and inability of man. From there it shines the brightest and glorifies the love and mercy of God!

Leaving that objection, consider this: That if man is corrupt in his nature, and that if God does not love all mankind, the necessity for election and predestination can be better presented. If we see that man’s corruption is so total that he cannot recover himself by his own free will and ability, we find him left in a hopeless state, unless God does the whole work of saving him. That man is in this condition, both the Scriptures and common observation prove. Something has certainly incapacitated him spiritually. No one can possibly come to Christ unless his will is actively involved in this coming. Yet Jesus said: *“And ye WILL NOT come to me, that ye might have life.”* (John 5:40) Why is it they are not willing to come that they might have life? *“And this IS the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men LOVED DARKNESS rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil HATETH the light, neither cometh to the light, LEST his deeds should be reprov’d.”* (John 3:19-20) That is a condition that binds his will. Coming to Christ, the “light of the world,” exposes one’s sins and brings the guilty rebel into

the greatest reproof he will ever know in this life. It’ll make him cry out, *“Have mercy upon me, a sinner.”* And, that is humiliation he can not bear to face before men or God. Men cannot come to Christ because, being dead in sins, their will is corrupt and shackled. The will is as impotent as any other faculty of his being. Yet, *“THY PEOPLE shall be WILLING in the day of THY POWER...”* is a promise to our Lord in the covenant of grace. (Psa. 110:3) By this promise, Christ is assured that God will make those that are His willing.

No one can come to Christ as a Savior unless he believes on Him as such. Men may believe in a historical Jesus, Caesar, or Mohammed, yet, in nature, men cannot believe evangelically. Christ gives the answer as to why, saying: *“But ye believe NOT, BECAUSE YE ARE NOT OF MY SHEEP, as I said unto you. MY SHEEP hear my voice, and I know THEM, and THEY follow me.”* (John 10:26.27)

One cannot come to Christ, if he can not hear the call to life and salvation. Yet many are in that very condition. Jesus said: *“He that is OF GOD heareth God’s word: ye therefore HEAR THEM NOT, BECAUSE YE ARE NOT OF GOD.”* (John 8:4 7) For one to believe upon Christ, God Himself must give him hearing ears with which to hear. *“He that hath ears to hear, let HIM hear.”* In other words, God Himself must do the work of making him believe. *“This is the work OF GOD, that ye believe on Him whom he hath sent.”* (John 6:29) And a familiar text: *“By grace are ye saved through faith, and that (faith) NOT OF YOURSELVES, it is THE GIFT OF*

GOD.” (Eph. 2:8) Salvation then (including faith), is wholly a free gift of God. It is not something one can “accept or reject” as popularly held. Consider this; if I “offer” you something, you can accept or reject it. But if I “give” you something, the giving by implication necessitates you having “received” it. (Why not check me out on this? Look up every place in the Scriptures where the words “offer” and “accept”, and “give” and “received” is found. Not one place is salvation “offered” or “accepted”. In every place. it is “given” and “received.”)

For a man to come to Christ saving surely pleases God. Yet, before God regenerates (or give life) him, this is not possible “*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is NOT subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh CANNOT PLEASE GOD.*” (Rom. 8:7,8)

To come to Christ, receiving Him as a Savior, can be achieved only by being born from above, which birth is outside our power to accomplish by nature. “*But as many as received him, to THEM gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, NOT of blood, NOR of the WILL of the flesh, NOR of the WILL of man. but OF GOD.*” (John 1:12-13)

Our forefathers defended the basic Biblical position that man’s corruption in his nature was total. So total that they “believed in man’s inability to recover himself.” They understood, better than Baptists in our age. that there is a basic difference between the “nature of man” and the “spirit of man.” They understood that the distance between the natural and spiritual realms was impassable by man’s

efforts. As Paul said: “*The natural man receiveth NOT the things of the Spirit of God: for they (spiritual things) are foolishness unto him: neither CAN HE KNOW them, because they (spiritual things) are SPIRITUALLY DISCERNED.* (1 Cor. 2:14) That leaves man totally helpless and dependent upon the grace and mercy of God. If saved from this condition, the credit and glory belongs only to God.

This grace and mercy is exceedingly great. He does indeed save sinners. He saved the chiefest of sinners; publicans, harlots, drunkards, fornicators, liars, and thieves. In a word, He saved the “base things.” As Paul put it: “*But God hath CHOSEN the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath CHOSEN the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty: and the BASE things of the world, and the things which are DESPISED, hath God CHOSEN, yea, and things which ARE NOT, to bring to nought things that are: THAT NO FLESH SHOULD GLORY IN HIS PRESENCE.* (I Cor. 1:27-29) This Scripture tells of God’s discriminating graceto elect to salvation the poor and less intelligent (*Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called*” — I Cor. 1:26) and pass over the greatest minds of the world is indeed a marvel of free grace: In nature, you and I would pick the very opposite! A favorite value game played in classes in school is one in which a group is on a ship and must decide who to throw overboard as useless. Believe it or not, those that God chose would be the first overboard! Common observation confirms this corruption in nature to be total. The first command of

God is: *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, amid with all my strength.”* To offend in one point of the law, is to offend the whole according to James.

The law is a total piece, and any breach of it will destroy forever any hope of salvation by its further keeping. Needless to say, the law is the only one God has given - “plans of salvation” notwithstanding. Since the law of God was given by himself, whereas “plans of salvation” are devised by man without any authority; and yet with the law God found it faulty - then just how faulty are plans of salvation? But, how much time is given by us to the law of God, to Christ, or to righteousness? Not much, comparatively speaking. Does God call or save everyone? Surely He does not. Are all mankind willing to follow Christ? Again, no. Those who have attempted for over two-hundred years now to “win the world to Christ;” have they met with any success? Not much! Two hundred years of Sunday schools are past; are people better versed in the Scriptures? A miserable failure! Do the vast majority of church members walk uprightly before God and man? Again, a disgraceful history of religion! Are there fewer drunkards, fornicators, adulterers, and broken homes? Again, no improvement can be detected. In fact, the contrary is the present style of living. In every known category of Christian morality, are people more or less sanctified in their outward deportment than in ages past? Far less so, I feel sure. Today, a godly person must walk alone, even in the midst of large church memberships. I believe the point is made,

that our forefathers rightly understood that man IS totally corrupt in all his natural faculties and unable to recover himself from his fallen state by his own free will and ability.

Thus, to find the source, or spring, of saving grace, we MUST look beyond man. It MUST be by the free grace of God, or else we all shall perish. We find this spring in God’s “everlasting love to his people.” As the Georgia Baptist Convention articles state so well, “We believe in the everlasting love of God to his people (*not everyone*), and the eternal election of a DEFINITE NUMBER of the human race, to grace and glory; and that there was a covenant of grace or redemption made between the Father and the Son, BEFORE the world began, in which THEIR salvation is secure, and that THEY in PARTICULAR are saved.” Thus, we move beyond and above the creature to the Creator as the moving cause of salvation.

Does the Bible sustain such a view, now so shocking to humanistic man? Indeed, it does. The whole of the first chapter of Ephesians deals with the subject. *“According as he (the Father - verse 2) HATH chosen (past tense) us in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world,”* Why? *“that we should be HOLY and WITHOUT BLAME before him in love.”* (Eph. 1:4) Here divine election is said to have taken place before the world was created, and is inseparably connected with predestination: *“having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself.”* It is important to watch the next portion if we seek the moving cause for election, i.e., *“according to the GOOD PLEASURE OF*

HIS WILL, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath MADE US ACCEPTED in the Beloved.” (Eph. 1:5-6)

The next verse shows clearly that election and predestination was the moving cause of Christ dying for the elect: *“In whom we have redemption through His blood,”* - which was shed two-thousand years ago, long before we believed - *“even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”*

We insist that God’s power in predestination is irresistible upon the following basis: *“In whom (Christ) also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh ALL THINGS after the counsel of HIS OWN WILL”* (Eph. 1:11) Since God works all things after the counsel of His own will, then what is His will in regard to the salvation of his elect people? *“For I came down from heaven,”* says Jesus, *“not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the Father’s will, that of ALL which he hath GIVEN ME I should lose NOTHING, but raise it up again at the last day.”* (John 6:38-39)

Dear friend, have you ever heard a minister plead for sinners to come to Christ, and quote: *“And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out”*? Look at the whole verse: *“He that the Father GIVETH ME SHALL COME TO ME; and him that cometh I will in no wise cast out.”* - John 6:37. The passage is clearly a reference to the elect coming to him, is it not?

Notice how Paul states it to Timothy *“Who HATH saved us, and CALLED us with an holy calling, not according to OUR works, but according to His OWN*

PURPOSE AND GRACE, which was given US in Christ Jesus BEFORE the world began.” (II Tim. 1:9) In the light of the above, why not read Romans 8,9, 10, and 11; along with John chapters 6 and 10. These chapters are a full exposition of the whole subject before us. A

portion of it reads: *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be CONFORMED to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”* (Rom. 8:29) It should appear by that, that in our age, there are not very many predestinated to this conformity. Maybe there never has been in any given age, for Paul states again, saying: *“God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew. Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession AGAINST Israel, saying. Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my, life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have RESERVED unto myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a REMNANT according to the ELECTION OF GRACE.”* (Rom. 11:2-5) Today, there are not many who manifest a love of the truth; rejoice in Christ’s salvation; and walk circumspectly before God and the world. Only a precious remnant is left.

“Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called.” Look at that. The very ones predestinated to be conformed to Christ are the very same which are called to salvation. Watch the rest: *“And whom he called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified..., who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.”* (Rom. 8:30-33) Now, dear friend, can these Scriptures be ignored so generally today? Upon the basis of the

above, how many people will believe the Gospel? *“and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”* (Acts 13:48) I trust that you can see this: God loved them even as sinners; gave them to Christ before the world; Christ died for them; the Spirit regenerates and calls them: and they follow him and believe. Thus, all the glory and credit belongs rightfully to God. Man can not boast in this, for none of them are better than any other. This is mercy magnified.

To a person converted to God, and believing His word, the above is indisputable. I realize it raises many, many questions, but this is good. The questioning, in belief rather than disbelief, sharpens the spiritual understanding greatly. It forces one to lay aside every false concept that rises up against the truth of God's grace. Since the subject is so large that many volumes have been written upon it. I will conclude with a simple summary of it.

Man by nature fell into ruin by Adam's fall. He lost his spiritual fellowship and communion with God, and his nature became totally depraved and corrupt. He is SO corrupt, depraved, and dead that he cannot come to Christ unless God draws him to Christ. This act of salvation commenced with God before he created the world.

In saving His people, God chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world, and predestinated them to an inheritance. The certainty of this inheritance is based upon God's will and ability to save them. He has this purpose and ability *“as he works all things after the counsel of His own will.”* He has this ability, for it is declared that *“all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to His*

will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” (Dan. 4:35) They were elected or chosen that they should be “holy and without blame before him in love.” Why, then, should any oppose election to holiness?

They are not only chosen in Christ unto salvation, but also are called to it by a “holy calling”. This calling is by the holy Spirit. *“And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee in thy blood, Live: yea, I said unto thee in thy blood, Live.... Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was THE time of love; and I spread My skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest Mine.”* (Ezek. 15:5-10)

These that are called, believe in Christ, they hear His voice, and they follow him, and he calls such “My sheep.” They are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ. For this end they are sanctified by the Spirit and belief of the truth. Again,

Those foreknown (loved before), are predestinated, and those predestinated, are called, and those that are called are justified, and those justified are glorified in Christ.

Finally, it is impossible for one of His sheep to finally deny the doctrine of Christ, because even if they do not understand all things, yet they believe all things revealed in His word. And because *“God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth”* (II Thess.

2:13-14; and verses 8-12)

USING ACCEPTABLE WORDS

By WW. Hudson

“Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.” - II Tim. 2:14.

Two people may believe the same things, but a misunderstanding results because they use terms or expressions that are misleading, or they cannot agree on the definition of their terms. If it happened with two, then it could happen with a number of people. The text means that it is not profitable to argue over words to no profit.

We hear expressions that are misleading and that are not for the edification of the brethren. It is written: *“speak the words that become sound doctrine.”* *“Words to no profit”* is not sound doctrine, is it?

What is written about those that consent not to wholesome words? *“If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.”* (I Tim. 6:3-5) *“Wholesome words”* is sound doctrine and it is comforting, is it not? What causes

those to consent not to wholesome words, and use expressions that are misleading and which causes “strifes of words”? It is the wrong spirit that prompts this. *“Giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils”* (I Tim. 4:1)

“Hold fast the form of sound” (11 Tim. 1:13) *“The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.”* (Ecc. 12:10) These are expressions that are sound and can easily be understood. *“Utter by the tongue words easy to be understood.”* (I Cor. 14:9) All of this has reference to the doctrine of God which His people can understand because they are all taught by the same teacher, which is the Spirit of the Lord.

“Offender for a word...” (Isa. 29:21) It is the wrong spirit that causes one to strive or argue over words and be an offender for a word.

Is it profitable to debate or argue over this expression: “God is the author of sin”? What is your definition of the expression do others agree or disagree with your definition? Is this expression: “God is the author of sin”? What is your definition of the expression? Do others agree or disagree with your definition? Is this expression edifying to the brethren? Is it “wholesome words”? Is it “acceptable words”? Is this term “words easy to be understood”? Does this expression lead to strife among brethren and even divisions among the people?

Let us quote Gilbert Beebe: “For death and hell can do no more than His hand and counsel hath determined shall be done. Does this make God the author of sin? Or, in other words, does this make Him a sinner, or charge on Him an

imputation of impurity? By no means, Against whom is it possible for God to sin? Is he amenable to any law above Himself?" (Signs, Oct. 1. 1880)

My understanding of Beebe's definition of the expression, "God is not the author of sin" is: God does not force, lead, direct, or cause one to sin, and God is not a sinner.

The Arminians bring this charge against those that believe in the predestination of God: "That makes God the author of sin." What does one mean by that expression? Notice Beebe's definition quoted above. Satan attempts to cause division among those that believe in predestination by arguing over these expressions: "God is the author of sin" and "God is not the author of sin."

May the Lord bless us to practice these inspired words of Almighty God: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things where with one may edify another." (Rom.14:19)

THE SOLEMN ASSEMBLY

By Mr. Prince, 1885

"I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee to whom the reproach of it was a burden. Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame." - Eph.3:18-19

No doubt these words have reference to the church which was in captivity in Babylon and to her return into her own land at the end of seventy years as God had promised. But, not to dwell here (for I

never like to dwell on the historical part). I like, as the Lord helps me, to get into the experimental part where I feel more at home. A man's experience is the key to his text. Those are good hearing times when a preacher brings out marks and evidences of the work of grace in a sinner's soul and you feel that you have them. There are some people who say that the Lord is always telling them something, but I find that I have to wait long and be on the watch tower whole nights before I get a word from the Lord. One said, "*When I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.*" (Lam. 3:8) but where the Lord gives a spirit of prayer He will answer. I do not say you must wait such a time before God answers your prayer, but you will find that it is generally after much labor and sorrow, watching and crying that the Lord appears.

In the words of the text the Lord says He will *gather* them that are *sorrowful*. Every one of God's family, from Adam to the last that shall be called by grace, will be a sorrowful soul. All real religion begins with sorrow; all false religion with joy. The longer I live the more I value any marks that the Lord has done something for me that will stand the storms of life and the shock of death. There is a true faith and a false faith, a good hope and a false hope. As there are counterfeit coins so the devil can imitate every grace. People may come very near the truth and receive the word with joy, but in the end comes to nothing; "*Their foot shall slide in due time.*" God's people know there is a possibility of being deceived and this makes them anxious to know that their spot is the spot of his children. When the Lord takes a man in hand He pricks him in

his conscience. Real religion is something felt. It is impossible for a man to have the life of God in his soul and not feel it. A man may be walking the downward road and may have a profession with which he is pleased and of which self is the end; the devil does not disturb him. But can the Lord put divine life into the soul, whereby a man is brought out of the kingdom of Satan, and he feel nothing? I admit that he may not at first know that his soul is regenerated, but something will be felt. When those of old were pricked in their hearts they said. "*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*" They felt something. And what does a man feel when he is pricked in his heart? He feels that the way he has been pursuing is one that leads to hell. He feels that there is a God that looks right into his heart and this has an effect on his ways. He has to do with God and God with him. In his judgment he may have believed before that there was a God that made the earth and all things, "*for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen;*" but now he has to do with a righteous God. Something works like leaven within him and he has solemn thoughts of an awful eternity, and says, "What will come of my soul and where will it be when my body is in the grave?" He is ashamed of himself, for one sin after another is brought to his remembrance and the burden the Spirit lays upon him is intolerable; it is a burden he cannot get rid of. This will make a man sorrowful.

There is no trouble like soul-trouble. I have had heavy troubles which have made me groan; but I confess I never felt any trouble like soul trouble. There will come an end to other troubles; but if things are

not right between God and my soul there is an awful eternity awaiting me. How a feeling of this will make a man walk alone and get into secret places to cry to the Lord. The Holy Spirit gives the wound which will never heal till God heals it. When under this feeling I used to think the parsons with their gowns and surplices looked like angels and I would try and do all they said to get things right between God and my soul. I felt there was a God and a hell. I had also felt the pains of hell in my conscience, and what I felt had brought me out of the company of the ungodly into secret places to cry unto the God of heaven to have mercy upon my soul. Then came sorrow of heart indeed; such as makes a man groan. He feels he is under the curse and must be damned unless there is a Surety. This will make a man sorrowful. I am not setting up a standard, but I say that sin must be felt to be that bitter and abominable thing that the Lord hates, and a man must hate it too, that Christ may be known. All religion short of this will sink a man into hell. Christ must be received into a man's conscience before he can go to heaven. This trouble of the soul is the beginning of God's work. It is sorrowful meat. The man will mourn over his past wicked life and he will not be able to see how he can be saved.

Such characters can never have their hearts comforted till God speaks. The Lord's people may tell them it is the work of God, but that will not comfort them. None can comfort but the God that wounds. Pardoning blood let down into the conscience will comfort as Christ is revealed to the enlightened understanding: "*To him that worketh not, but believeth*

on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” (Rom. 4:5) This is set before the enlightened mind and the Blessed Spirit enables the soul to put forth the hand and touch it. Paul speaks of “laying hold” of the hope set before us. If you have a feeling religion you will know your lost state and feel when you are saved. When the Blessed Spirit takes a line of a hymn or a portion of the Word and the understanding is enlightened to see Christ in it, then there is a feeling that I cannot describe. The soul ventures on it and feels love and mercy dropped into the heart. Do you know what this is? It is the vital touch. The Blessed Spirit works this before the soul can come forth and say, “I am delivered.” I believe soon after the Blessed Spirit has quickened the soul He raises it to a *hope*, by a word, or even without a word; as Paul says: “*Not in word only, but in power.*” When it comes there is always a feeling of love springing, up to God. This is tasting that the Lord is gracious. If you have tasted I am sure you have felt love to Jesus Christ and wanted to feel more, so as to be able to say, “I feel I am saved.” Well, you *will* feel it. It was revealed unto Simeon that he should not die until he had seen the Lord’s Christ. You will never be able to look death in the face till you have this revelation. You may be all your life subject to bondage through fear of death, and yet the Lord will come at last. Little faith has looked to Christ and, from that time, can never look God in the face and say he has done nothing for him. You may sink low; and your living hope may fluctuate; but, if you have a hope in the way I have described, it is a *living hope*,

though you may not always feel your faith strong. God has put *faith, hope, and love* into your soul, but the moving of it is by the influence of the Spirit on the graces He has put in you and which all centre in Christ. Without this divine movement they lie dormant.

The way to heaven is a path of sorrow, for the Lord has ordained it to be a path of tribulation. If you are dreaming of going to heaven and having a smooth path, it is a delusion. There is a need for tribulation. After the Lord has blessed your soul He will go and come again, for this is not to be your heaven. Heaven lies beyond the dark river. The Lord comes and then withdraws from His people. When He is with them they rejoice and when He goes they are sorrowful. You may have everything that money can buy, but, if you have the life of God, nothing will satisfy you by Jesus Christ, and if He does not appear you will be sorrowful: “*Ye now therefore have sorrow, but I will see you again;*” but he does not say when. It may be five years hence. If you did not hear from the Lord for five years don’t you think you would be sorrowful? Or if you did not hear from him for six months, would you not be sorrowful? We do not have manifestations of Christ every day. I *would* always feel him near, but this is not the way. He goes, and nothing can comfort us but Himself. When he is not with us we are cold, dark, and unfeeling; and then the enemy comes with his *ifs* and *buts*. If he dared to throw an *if* at Christ, he will throw one at us, and every way-mark shall be hidden from us. You will not be able to see that you have a feature of a child of God. The worst part of your religion is put foremost and the best part

kept back; so that you walk about as a deceiver, as if you had deceived the church of God, and there is a fear whether your faith, love, or hope is right. This will give you sorrow when you feel more like a hypocrite than a child of God. "We see not our signs." *"My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?"* (Psa. 42:3) This is sorrow. The only thing that will comfort you will be the coming of Jesus Christ.

But there are also the trials of the way which you must have in some measure. We need cross upon cross to make us walk steadily or concerning faith, we should make shipwreck. You may think if you could but get rid of your present trouble you would be easy, but a ten times worse trouble may come tomorrow. We need God's hand to be continually pulling us down. Perhaps your child may give you trouble. You may have counseled him, cautioned him, and he grows up and brings such a weight of trouble as makes your heart ache and your soul is bowed down like a bulrush. Satan says, "Look how you have prayed for your child! Just see his disgraceful conduct! What will people think of you?" Many a parent has had his heart burdened with sorrow through his children. But there is One looking on Who is never far off, and waits to be gracious. He will bring the soul to prove his God to be the God of the Bible, who makes a way through the waters. The waves divide, and the soul has to look on. This is how the Lord gets gratitude from our hearts. Your religion is of no use unless tried in the fire. How do you know God is what he is but by experience! People may burn the Bibles but cannot

burn the God of the Bible out of my heart: they cannot burn the Christ that has been revealed to my faith out of my soul, even that God that has answered my prayers. All our trials are most needful to make us little and open up the wickedness of our hearts.

"I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly." This solemn assembly is the church of God. Wherever God's quickened people are, though it may be but two or three, there is Mount Zion: *"here will I dwell,"* says God. This solemn assembly is where the ordinances of God's house are attended to. God says, *"I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly."* If you know not any thing of this sorrow of heart you do not belong to the church of Christ. This "solemn assembly" has also reference to the judgment day. Poor mourning, sin-bitten soul, that mournest an absent God, mournest over a wicked heart, and because of the trials of the way the time will come when the Lord will gather all such home. All the sorrowful ones are to be gathered for the solemn assembly. O what a multitude there will be out of every nation! And they shall hear the words. *"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."* (Matt. 25:34) With what admiration will they look upon Christ! What bursts of acclamation will issue from their lips when He shall say, *"ye blessed of my Father!"* *"Their voice is as many waters."* Shall we be there? Are we sorrowful now? Wherever there is a saint on earth he will be a sorrowful man. *"Who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden."*

You cannot have this religion without being cast out. Men will hate you as they hated Christ. If your religion has not brought you hatred and contempt, you may stand in doubt of it. What! Have this religion and have the smiles of your carnal relations! A man whom I met in the train just now, and whom I had never heard speak of such things before, said, that from the time God took him and left his wife there had been a division, for he goes one way and she another. How can he that believeth have communion with an unbeliever? When the Lord brings a man out of the world he will not go back again finally.

"I will undo all that afflict thee;" that is, destroy them. God will punish those that touch His people, for He will resent it. He did so at Babylon, for she had delighted in the captivity of Israel; but God destroyed Babylon.

"And I will save her that halteth." What a blessed promise! All these sorrowful people are halting people, and they get sometimes to a dead stand and cannot get on unless the Lord help them, in your religion you come to a stop. If God does not help, what can you do? You cannot act faith and bring life and feeling. According to your feeling your religion is coming to an end. Have you ever feared you were nothing but stony ground hearers and felt you had no more love than the devil? This will make a man shake. He will feel as if it were an utter impossibility for God to dwell in such a heart as his. This makes you know where all your strength lies, and keeps you from ever going about and saying, "What a holy man I am!" it will make you fall down and say, "Chief of sinners," while you tell God it is

of His mercy you are not consumed.

"I will save her that halteth;" that is, save her from giving up. Have you not thought you should give up? And yet you have felt you could not go back. What is to be done? *"I will save her that halteth."* David said, *"I am ready to halt."* You will be brought to know that all your springs are in God: *"Behold, as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God."* (Psa. 123:2) The Lord saves by seeing us again. He creates a feeling of love to His Blessed Name. Then we feel our hearts encouraged and can run the way of His commandments with delight, and feel sweetness in the things of God. At such times there is life in prayer, life in reading, life in preaching, and you can run through a troop of devils and leap over a wall of unbelief. But when shut up you can do nothing. *"I will save her that halteth,"* - take her to heaven. You sorrowful ones have the God of heaven on your side and you have the work of God in your souls. It stands in the power of God. It is though He said, "Poor soul, all these things shall never be able to separate you from My love." All through the text God says, "I will."

"And gather her that was driven out" of the company of the world, out of a false profession, and out of the congregation of the dead. But, *"I will gather them."* And they will find out where others like themselves are to be found. *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."* *"A stranger will they not follow."* These sorrowful ones are driven by the devil, and sometimes by the power of temptation to the ends of the earth. Child of God, you

will never be let alone by the devil. He has hatred to you as much as to Christ. His aim is, since he cannot get you into hell, to drive you to despair. He drives with fears and doubts; and sometimes so great has been his power that you have been almost gone, but have been saved by the skin of your teeth, for the Lord interposed. There have been times when you have forgotten every thing you have passed through: "My soul forgot prosperity." You may have been driven by temptation to forget all that God has ever done for you, every blessing he had bestowed, and even the marked answers to prayer that you have had. Look where the devil drove Peter, even to curse and to swear that he never knew Christ, although he had been with Him on the mount of Transfiguration. Where would the devil not drive us? But he shall never drive us to hell or out of the affections of the Lord. "I have seen his ways and will heal him."

"And I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame." Wisdom shall be justified of her children. It shall be seen that there are a people God has blessed. He can make their enemies speak well of them. May the Lord add His blessing.

— Gospel Standard, 1885

THE BONDWOMAN AND THE FREE

By Elder Isaac Backus, 1756

"So then, brethren we are not the children of the bondwoman, but of the free." - Galatians 1

Although mankind are awfully inclined

to disregard God's law when in careless state, yet when they are wounded by conviction, instead of coming to Christ, they fly to the law and their own works for relief. And though man's legal disposition has little need of being encouraged by legal preaching, yet some will teach people in this way: which it seems was the ease among the Galatians, that occasioned the writing of this epistle. Some, teachers (it appears) had zealously brought in the same doctrine among them which before was preached to the disciples at Antioch, viz., That "*except they were circumcised and kept the law of Moses they could not be saved.*" Which then was called a *subverting their souls*, (Acts 15:24). And now 'tis called a *perverting the gospel of Christ*, (Gal. 1:7). Therefore the apostle warns them sharply against such snares, and he intimates that the reason why men cleave so close to the law is because they don't hear the law, nor understand its true nature and strictness, context, (verse 21). And in order to make this matter more plain, he sets before them the instance of Abraham's two sons that he had, one by a *bondmaid*, the other by a *freewoman*, which things he shows to be an allegorical representation of the two covenants: and after some discourse upon each, he concludes with these words; "*So then, brethren, we are not the children of the bondwoman, but of the free.*"

Which expressions naturally lead us to enquire who each of these women are, amid also to look into the characters and conditions of their children.

I. Who is this bondwoman? Answer I - The moral law, as it was first given to men, commonly called the covenant of works, the tenor of which is Do this and

thou shalt live, but in the day that thou sinnest thou shalt surely die, (Gen. 2:17; Lev. 18:3; Gal. 3:12) Which shows that in order to enjoy the blessing promised, we must perfectly and constantly live in a conformity to this law without the least failure, for if we don't *continue to do all things that are written in the law*, we are immediately bound under the curse, (Gal. 3:10) and so stand exposed to eternal damnation, from which nothing can deliver but a complete satisfaction to divine justice for the offenses committed, for *without shedding of blood there is no remission.*" (Heb. 9:22) This law and covenant of works was evidently given to and made with our father Adam in Paradise, though we have it not so fully expressed and recorded till Moses' time. Then as Paul says, "*The law entered,*" (Rom. 5:20) or was published and proclaimed to the congregation of Israel from Mount Sinai, out of the midst of the fire and smoke, even the ten commandments. hence the apostle says here, (verse 25) that this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, i.e. 'tis the law that was delivered from thence, which gendereth to bondage.

2. This bondswoman includes also the ceremonial law, which likewise was given to Moses, and from him to the children of Israel at Sinai. (Ex.25) I know indeed that the ceremonial law, as it was a *shadow of good things to come* and typified Christ and the blessings of His grace, brought very joyful news to perishing souls; and those who were enabled by faith to look through those signs to the things signified, enjoyed great blessing therein. But then those rites and ceremonies in themselves could never

take away sin, and they seem to be given much after the tenor of the old covenant. If any man had sinned, then he must provide his own offering, and bring it for his sin that he had sinned (Lev. 4) And so for any uncleanness: what a long train of ceremonial labors must they do in order for cleansing! (Lev. 14th & 15th chapters) And from what the apostle says concerning the end of the law's being given, viz., "*That the offence might abound;*" and that it was "*added because of transgressions.*" (Gal. 3:19; Rom. 5:29) I humbly conceive that we may learn, that one great thing designed in those ceremonies, was to show the heinous nature, and great evil of sin, and thereby to discover more clearly man's awful, and helpless condition, and his necessity of a Christ. That when he had brought the greatest and most costly sacrifices, even thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil, (Mic. 6:7,8) all would avail nothing for the taking away of sin and guilt. As says our glorious Mediator, "*sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offering for sin, thou wouldest not;* (which are offered by the law) "*then said he, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O, God. He taketh away the first that he may establish the second.*" (Heb. 10:8,9) Indeed it is plain that the body of the forms and ordinances of the Jewish church are often represented as a yoke of bondage. In the council at Jerusalem Peter calls them, "*A yoke which neither they, nor their fathers were able to bear.*" (Acts 15:10) And in our context Paul shows that one part of the bondage which he warned those people against consisted in being held under those *beggarly elements* and in observing ceremonial *days, months, and years.* (ver.

9,10)

And further, by the bondwoman seems to be intended the Jewish church in her legal standing hence the apostle adds. *“And answereth to Jerusalem that now is, and is in bondage with her children,”* (verse 25) and in the beginning of the next chapter he warns them as they would keep clear of this bondage, to beware of *circumcision*. Should it be said that what is here designed is not that those ordinances were such a yoke in themselves but only the Jews had perverted them from their proper use, I reply-, that ‘tis in a measure so, though in themselves they were an insupportable task. In short, by the bondwoman I understand the *covenant of works* in general, and *all* the ways in particular, wherein men seek for life by what they can do, and think, either in whole or in part. to satisfy for their sins, and purchase divine favors, either by duties of morality or by observing any ordinances and forms of worship whatsoever.

II. Let us consider WHO her children are and what condition they are in.

I. And here the case is very plain that the children of the bondwoman are all that are *“born after the flesh,”* (ver. 23) that is, all mankind in their natural condition. But should any say that Ishmael’s being born after the flesh intends an unlawful birth, his mother not being Abrahams lawful wife. I answer no, by no means, for then he would have been a bastard, and such an one must not come into the congregation of the Lord under the law, (Deut. 23) hut he was circumcised and admitted to outward privileges as well as Isaac. This objection might as well be laid against four of

Jacob’s sons as against this, their mothers being maids or handmaids before, yet they are ever reckoned to make up the twelve tribes of God’s Israel. But it is evident, beyond dispute, that his being born after the flesh does not intend a being illegitimate, but only that he had no other than a natural birth. He was never *born again*, without which none can enter into the kingdom of God. And so now all who have only a natural birth are children of the bondwoman. Paul says of himself, and other saints, *“We are, by nature, children of wrath even as others,”* (Eph. 2:3) and tells the Romans that he had proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin. (Rom. 3:9) Jews, Pharisees, and all the world are guilty before God. (vs. 19)

And never did a child more naturally run to its mother for help than man when wounded with a sense of guilt flies to his own works for relief. His cry is, *“have patience with me, and I’ll pay thee all.”* But very sad is the condition of such souls. They may justly be called children of the bondwoman for these reasons: I. Because their work is hard. Slaves have often both hard work to do. and are driven hard in it to do a great deal. So in the case here. The law not only’ requires that which is hard but that which is impossible for us to do. It requires us to make us a new heart and a new spirit as we would escape death. (Ezek. 18:31) And it demands that we make recompense for All PAST faults and walk in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, as we would hope to live. (Ezek. 33:15) Yea. it follows the soul up so that it says, *“If thou keep the WHOLE law, and yet offend in one point, thou art guilty of ALL.”* (James 2:10) I know some say that God cannot

justly require of us more than we can do. But this discovers men's awful blindness. What! is it become an unjust thing for this glorious Creditor to demand this full due because man is turned bankrupt and is in no way able to pay it! (Luke 7:42) O heaven-daring madness! Nay, this sets aside all that Christ has done as vain, for he came upon this very footing, namely, because we were "*without strength, therefore in due time he died for the ungodly.*" (Rom. 5:6) "*And what the law could not do (i.e. justify a sinner) God sent his Son to do.*" (Rom. 8:3)

2. Souls under the old covenant are like bondservants in this, that they can claim no right to the inheritance or even to a continuance in the family but may be sold away, or shut up in prison notwithstanding all that they have done when the master thinks proper. "*The servant abideth NOT in the house FOREVER: but the son abideth ever.*" (John 8:35) Since the law is broken, man can claim nothing by it but wrath and damnation. "*The law worketh wrath (Rom. 4:15) and as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.*" (Gal. 3:10) So that, after all their performances which they boast themselves in, the sentence will justly be given out and executed upon them. "*Call out the bond woman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman SHALL NOT be heir with the son of the free woman.*"

3. Bondservants, when they have toiled and labored many years are no more released from their bondage than when they begun. So all that are under the law, let them fast twice in the week and make many and long prayers and be as exact as ever the Pharisees were in all their walk,

yet our Lord assures us that they must have a righteousness beyond all this or they can in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven. (Matt. 5:20) By the deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified in the sight of God. So that every unbeliever will eternally remain under condemnation after all their doing. Ah! deplorable case indeed! Well might the apostle think that those who desired to be under the law did not hear it nor know its true nature and strictness. Surely if they did, they would soon cry (as Israel did at Sinai) for a mediator to stand between God and them hence I proceed,

III. To show Who the freewoman is here spoken of. And by this I understand, first the glorious covenant of grace made between the Father and the Son, before the world began. Therefore God says, "*I have made a covenant with my chosen: I have laid help upon One that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.*" (Psa. 89:3, 19) The stuff of which covenant (for I cannot be large in describing of it) is that the Son of God should assume our nature and in that nature perfectly obey the law which we have broken and bear the punishment due unto us for sin, and so make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in an everlasting righteousness through which God could be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly. As the fruit of which the Father engaged by the influences of the holy Spirit effectually to draw many of the sons of men to Christ, work faith in their hearts, justify and sanctify their souls, and keep them by his power through faith unto eternal salvation. (Heb. 2:9-17; Psa. 40:6-8; Dan. 9:24; John 16:7-13; Rom. 8:29-30; and I Peter 1:2-5)

Which glorious plan, is so far from destroying or setting aside the law that it establishes, yea, magnifies and makes it

honorable, (Rom. 3:31; Isa. 42:21) and shows how heinous every breach of it is, even so great that no transgressor of that law could escape eternal punishment without a perfect satisfaction for every offence against it. But by Christ's obedience and suffering there is a way opened wherein the greatest sinner may be pardoned and God's image be re-stamped on his heart, and that he may come to enjoy all divine blessings here and for evermore. Hence the Lord says, "*This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days: I will put my law into their minds and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.*" (Heb. 8:10)

Further, by the freewoman is intended the Gospel-Church in her pure standing. hence in our text she is called *Jerusalem* which is above - which is the mother of us all." (vs. 26) So in Heb. 7:18-24, it is said that "*we are not come the mount that burned with fire, but we are come to Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are writ ten in heaven, and to Jesus, the Media/or of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel.*" On mount Sinai the fiery law was proclaimed which gendereth to bondage, but now on mount Zion or in the Church of the living God is proclaimed the Gospel of peace and salvation. And souls are brought to embrace the same. All the saints in heaven and earth make but one church, but it is in the Gospel-Church here below that God appears to publish his grace and to draw others in. Therefore we

are told that "The law shall go forth out of Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, and many nations shall flock in." And again, "*The Lord shall send the rod of his strength out of Zion,*" the effect of which will be that his "*people shall be willing in the day of His power.*" (Psa. 110: 2,3) In short, by the free woman we may understand the glorious way of salvation laid in the eternal mind from everlasting, which in time has been made manifest, first by gradual discoveries thereof in the Old Testament, and then by Christ's actually coming in the flesh and working out salvation which he began to preach Himself, and 'twas afterwards confirmed unto us by them that heard Him whereby the Gospel-church was gathered and increased. His *usual* way of bringing others in being to cause Zion to travel* and so bring forth children, for God is the Father and the church the mother of all the saints. (**Note: Backus max' have meant by "travel" what early Old Order Baptists called the whole process of the deliverance of a dead sinner to gospel peace and pardon; or he may have meant "travail" - to give birth*) The apostle here, ver. 27, adds a passage from the fifty-fourth of Isaiah where, note, that the foregoing chapter concludes with the happy fruits of Christ's sufferings, viz., That He should "*see his seed, justify many, etc.*" upon which the church, who had been desolate as a widow, is comforted with a declaration that her Maker is her husband and that she should have numerous offspring and her seed should inherit the Gentiles, etc. Which leads us:

IV. To describe the character and state of her children. And here we are told

that (as the child of the bond-woman was *born after the flesh*,so) the child of the freewoman was *by promise*. God promised that son to Abraham long before he was conceived in the womb, and he was exercised by a strong faith in that promise by which *he gave glory to God.*" (Rom. 4:20) And 'twas through faith that Sarah also received strength to conceive this seed. (1kb. 11:11) There appeared nothing more than the actings of *nature* in Ishmael's birth, but in Isaac's there was faith on both sides, which made him a wonderful type of the seed here pointed at. He was promised *before* he had a being, and so was every child of the freewoman here spoken of. They were *chosen in Christ before the world began*, (Eph. 1:4). And "*God that cannot lie, promised*" eternal life so early. (Titus 1:2) Therefore Christ refers to this promise in His glorious prayer, (John 17:1,2) "*Father, glorify Thy Son that Thy Son also may glorify thee. As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.*" But this election of grace is not known to us till we are *born again*. Therefore, as Isaac was born according to promise so every one of these who are promised to Christ shall be *converted in due time*. Hence He says, "*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.*" (John 6:37) Such are born "*not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God.*" (John 1:13)

These souls may well be called children of the freewoman because:

1. They are set *free* from that condemnation and dreadful load of guilt which they lay under before. "*There is*

now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made them free from the law of sin and death; Yea, so that no things present nor things to come shall ever be able to separate them from His love. (Rom. 8:1,2,38,39) Agreeable to this is what our divine Master tells us, (John 5:24) *that he that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, HATH everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but IS PASSED from death unto life.*

2. These children are set free from Satan's tyranny. By nature they are his slaves. [he is called the *prince of this world, and the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience.* (John 12:31; Eph. 2:2) Hence we are told that "*Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, Christ took part of the same that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*" (Heb. 14:15) Christ casteth Satan out and takes from him all his armor wherein he trusted and *divideth the spoils.*"

3. They may be called children of the freewoman because they are made free from the dominion of sin. Christ tells us that "*Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin, but if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*" (John 8:34,36) And Paul told the Romans that, being made *free from sin, they became the servants of God, had their fruits unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.* Yea, says he, *sin shall NOT have dominion over you,*" Be. cause "*ye are not under the law but under grace.*" (Rom. 6:14,22)

Sin takes occasion by the law and often beats down and overcomes souls when they essay to reform and turn to the Lord by throwing their past transgressions and guilt in their way and representing to them that such guilty creatures as they can never come to a holy God, and therefore they had better go on and get what pleasure they can in sin, for they'll never have any thing better. And God's own children are often worried here when they have backslidden (*sic*) from Him; and Satan will not be wanting to help keep them back. Hence he is called "*the accuser of the brethren which accuseth them before God day and night.*" The Spirit of God *convinceth* of sin, and the devil *accuseth* of sin, but one special difference between them lies here, the one shows us our transgressions in order to awaken us to repentance and reformation and says, "It is high time to awake out of sleep, and the time past of our lives may suffice, and more than suffice, wherein we have served sin? But Satan says 'tis in vain to turn now for there is no help for you. Nay, because souls are got once into his snare, he claims a sort of propriety in them, and if at any time they would attempt to reprove another for iniquity, he will immediately throw their own faults in their teeth and tell them that 'tis vain to pretend to deal with another when they are so vile themselves; and so, because we have once done *wrong*, he would make *that* a sufficient argument against our ever doing right again. O, this cruel adversary! how miserably are sinners be-fooled, that they'll hearken to him more than to Jesus Christ! But what shall a poor soul do when the tempter throws such things in his way as he knows he is guilty of? He

can't deny the charge. Why, we are told that *they overcame him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony and they loved not their lives unto the death.*(Rev. 12:11) Therefore, O soul if Satan tells thee of thy guilt, learn to overcome him by flying immediately to the blood of the Lamb who, if we confess our sins, is (not only merciful and gracious but also) *just and faithful to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* (I John 1:9) Does the tempter say thy sins are very heinous? Learn to make that an argument with Christ saying, "*Pardon, O Lord, mine iniquity, for it is great.*" (Psa. 25:11) Which leads me:

4. To another point of their freedom which is *open access to God.*

When Adam had sinned he was turned out of Paradise and cherubims and a flaming sword were set to keep him off and to guard the way of the tree of life. (Gen. 3:24) But now through Christ we have access by one spirit to the Father. (Eph. 2:18) Saints have riot received the spirit of bondage again to fear but they have received the spirit of adoption whereby they cry *Abba Father.* (Rom. 8:15) And they may come with as great freedom as children do to a father, for the blessings they need. (Luke 11:13) Yea, we are bid to be careful for nothing but in every' thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to let our request be made known to God. (Phil.4 :6) Once more:

5. They are made free to serve God and walk in his ways so that His commands are not a yoke of bondage but a law of liberty to their souls.(James 1:25) as on the other side the children of the

bondwoman drag on like slaves, and they say of God's service, "what a weakness is it." so the children of the free-woman obey Him not out of slavish dread but (like free born souls) they serve I him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of their lives. (Luke 1:74,75) Hence David reckons it his freedom to observe the divine will. Says he, "*I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy precepts.*" Psa. 119:45. And the saints at Galatia. being brought into this freedom, the apostle (in the words next after our text) charge them to stand fast in that liberty wherewith Christ had made them free and riot to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

In short, the children of the free-woman are freed from the condemnation of the law, from the power of sin and Satan and have freedom of approach to God through Jesus Christ, and it is made their freedom anti liberty to walk in holiness all their days. and they have the liberty of Christ's house and have a right to all privileges of the sons of God here and are heirs of an incorruptible inheritance above, and by and by they shall be received to that glory. And in the great day their bodies shall be raised from the dust and shall be delivered from the "*bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.*" (Rom. 8:21 , 23) And when the bondwoman and all her children shall be cast out into outer darkness then shall these children of the freewoman be openly received to enjoy the kingdom prepared for them before the foundation of the world. (Matt. 25)

Let us proceed to some improvement of what has been said.

Use 1. We may here see the great

folly of all those that seek salvation either in whole or in part by their own doings. This Mount Sinai gendereth to bondage, and those who would get life by the law let them come before it and see the darkness, fire, and smoke and hear the thunderings and the fiery law that comes from thence. Surely if souls come here, they' will soon see the need of a Mediator to stand between them and this God who is a consuming fire. Alas! how blind are men that they should ever imagine that they can satisfy divine justice or get life by a broken law! "*Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?*" What does it say? Why it says, "*If the wicked restore the pledge, give again THAT he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life WITHOUT COMMITTING INIQUITY he shall surely live, he shall not die.*" (Ezek. 33:15) Observe the terms well: you MUST restore the pledge, give AGAIN that you have robbed: not only what you have unlawfully taken from your fellow men but also what you have done against the Eternal God, for he says. "*you have robbed me, even this whole nation.*" (Mal. 3:9) You must FULLY PAY that dreadful debt and walk in the statutes of life for the future without EVER committing another sin, else there is NO LIFE BY THAT LAW. If you say that this is too strait, be entreated to look a little further into the nature of the law', and you will find it is so strait that heaven and Earth will pass away, before one tittle of the law can pass away, till all be fulfilled. (Matt. 5:18) When God treats with men in the old covenant He deals with them according to the strict tenor of it, and when He treats with them in the Covenant of Grace then though their debts

are very great, “yet when they have nothing to pay he frankly forgives them all” (Luke 7:42) But sinners vainly expect some of the blessings of grace while they yet cleave to the law.

Use II. hence we may learn who have a right to the blessings of the New Covenant, viz., those (and those only) who are born again. The children of the freewoman partake of her blessings, but the children of the bondwoman shall not be heirs with the children of the freewoman. I am sensible that there are many contentions among professors of religion about these things. Many think that sinners may claim a right to some of the *promises* of grace, particularly such as these, “Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find. “And “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.” But if they look a little further, they are told that they must “ask in faith” if they would think to receive anything from the Lord. (James 1:5-7) Indeed, here God appeals to their consciences and says, “are not my- ways equal?” (Ezek. 18) “are not your ways unequal?” If you keep under the old covenant, I deal with you according to the tenor of it: but if you perfectly obey its precepts, you shall have the blessings promised, but he that offends in one point is guilty of all, and then there is “tribulation and wrath, upon every soul of man that doeth evil” (Rom. 2:9) The promises and threatenings of the old covenant belong to the children of the old covenant, and the promises of the new covenant belong to her children. Hence such alone are styled “heirs of promise” who have “fled for refuge to lay hold on

the hope set before us.” (Heb. 6:17,18) None others can claim the promises of grace for “*ALL the promises of God in Christ Jesus, are yea, and in Him amen.*” (II Cor. 1:20) Therefore to those only that come to and receive Him does He give power (or privilege – sic) to become the sons of God. (John 1:12) And if sons, then heirs to all the blessings of Heaven. (Rom. 8:7) And as these alone are heirs to those eternal blessings so none others have a right to the special privileges of Christ’s house here below.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

The time in which we live is exceedingly trying to poor quickened sinners. Where can one go to hear the pure words of grace proclaimed. Few, precious few, are preaching the Gospel of the Grace of Christ. Yet, here and there, we find many (mostly all alone - isolated) who appear to have an experimental work in their souls, and without any words of the Gospel preached to them. To such of you, our hearts and prayers, we hope, are in your behalf.

We appreciate the financial help we have received from so many of you in support of this work. Hopefully, it has not been in vain to such who love the truth of free grace. We need your prayers and help. If you know others who love or inquire after the truth, please send us their names and addresses. - **S.C.P.**