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ASSOCIATIONS S.C. Phillips

We published the original Plan of Union for the formation of Baptists' associations, chains of correspondances, and state conventions in the August issue. It was devised during the late colonial period when we were, as a nation, under transition from the Articles of Confederation to our Constitutional federal union. It was a time when many individuals in Puritan, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian societies were questioning both the "mode" of baptism (by immersion, rantism, or sprinkling) and the proper subjects of the ordinance (believers, or infants of believers).

The early Puritan theocracy in New England had allowed, at first, only church members to vote or hold political offices. Later, the franchise was extended to children of Puritan church members; yet, children of non-church members could not vote. The Halfway Covenant during the Great Awakening period attempted to rectify this grievance among the decendants of non-Puritans and opened up the whole question of baptism of infants, or — pedo-baptism. The result was a rapid growth of Baptist sentiment among the pedo-baptist religions, or, Protestants. These Baptists (called Separates) were mixed with non-baptist congregations, and, by law, were legally bound to them. In New England alone over 300 Separate congregations withdrew from Protestant churches to form "Baptist" churches.

The document we printed in the August, 1983 issue, called for the following steps: (1) the formation of *baptized assemblies* in every community, so as to have places of worship for those holding to believers' immersion; and (2) the formation of *association* in each province to expedite correspondance between these congregations. This would be necessary: for in order to establish the first above, the whole legal structure of the

theocratic colonial governments would have to be attacked and modified; no disunited and scattered group of people could achieve this and thus gain religious freedom; and (3) the *chartering of*, and seating of representatives from each provincial association with the then “central governing body” — the Philadelphia Baptist Association. For a *legal* baffle, *Legal institutions* were necessary.

Historically, the Plan was put into use and under severe persecutions the “baptized churches of Christ” (as they were then called) eventually were victorious. By the time they had achieved this, John Leland, Isaac Backus, and other “antifederalists,” had moved the whole debate away from exclusive religious issues to the broad political freedoms and rights later incorporated into the first ten amendments — the Bill of Rights — in our Constitution. The Constitution was ratified, the Bill of Rights was added to it; and by 1806 religious institutions were finally separated from the states’ governments, and the established “churches” disfranchised. The Plan had been highly successful.

Alas! Now that religious freedom for “baptized churches of Christ” had been secured, the leaders of this new and dynamic organization had to find new work upon which to focus the energies of this new force. If they could not, their prestige and status among the Baptists would fall. In fact, from 1807 to 1815, many churches ceased to meet annually with the General Committee. Independence of churches was growing rapidly as new churches were being formed, while the power of associations was declining. But, what would this useless organization discover to recreate and direct the force of the Baptists’ organization? It needed something badly, and Satan was more than willing to supply it!

The documents give a clear answer — Judson and Rice, the evangelical Puritans, and their Armiman Fullerite missionism! In 1813,

the call went out for the meeting in Philadelphia to devise some plan to support missions, and create the *national* organization (which was in the original plan). So, in 1814, the “Baptist Board of Foreign and Domestic Missions” was formed, and Philadelphia did indeed become the “central location” or capital city of this new religious order — as planned. Thus, the new bureaucracy of the Baptist organization had found their destiny — *missionism!* And destiny it was: decreed of God, and foretold to the church — as this writer and Beebe understood it — in Revelation 9:3-21. It was associations and correspondances which made the whole mission effort possible! Without this organizational vehicle, the mission enterprise could never have found the instrument, or means, among Baptists, necessary to collect the monies and achieve their design.

During the Colonial Period and up to approximately 1820, most churches were independent. Even most associations were independent of corresponding chains. (In our use of “independence” we include independent associations as well as independent local churches — Ed) However the proselyting zeal of the missionaries, following the original plan, drew most of these independents into associations (as with Landmark groups) and state conventions. In fact, the documents of the period — particularly the records and letters of the Board of Foreign and Domestic Missions — prove conclusively that the overwhelming majority of “missionaries” were actually sent to established churches to draw them into the denominational organization. Apparently in “saving souls,” the missionary also intended to save these from their liberties as independent churches and associations! Very few, if any, independents were spared. At least none remained free grace that ever embraced Fullerism. Arminianism and conventionism eventually destroyed most, if

not all, of them.

In the midst of the missionary and Fullerite controversy, the Black Rock Address stands as a witness against the *new* idolatry. Those churches and associations which rejected the strange new theories, concepts, movements, and practices inaugurated by the central organization in Philadelphia refused the fellowship of those being swept into it. The Address gave the reasons for this rejection and discussed some of the most blasphemous and wide-spread innovations.

The old order churches also utilized associations and correspondances, but to a lesser degree. These would be much later in developing the tyranny of these organizations than the earlier missionary groups. They generally corresponded with associations in close proximity, or those with which they were familiar and had close ties in doctrinal unity among themselves. Churches withdrawing from missionary associations established "Primitive" associations. Out of the chaos of the Great Baptist Separation there gradually evolved several different Old School correspondances. [Such as the Clark "Regulars" or "Primitives", Old Regulars, Old United, Kehukeites, Beebe Baptists, Bourites, etc. et. al. I Out of all of these, there were always some independents who did not believe in associations or correspondances, nor would they allow associational overlords to dictate to the churches. In fact, the basic position relative to associationism held by the Predestinarian Old School correspondances until after the turn of the present century was that the associations had no power over the churches; that associations were the creatures of the churches, and churches were not created by associations; and that if a church ever allowed an association to dictate to it, such a church ceased to be a church of Christ Jesus, and became a tool for tyrants.

That associations are no more Scriptural than Sunday Schools and Mission Boards; no

more Biblical today than in New Testament times; and no better for Old School Baptists than for Missionary Baptists is indisputable. However, there is less agreement that they are inherently evil. Associations of churches consisting of members who love one another and respect the rights of their individual churches enjoy more peace and harmony than those with goats intermixed. Nevertheless, even in the most loveable and orthodox groups, outside troubles follow the chains of correspondance from distant places into their member associations; and at times disrupt their peace.

We printed Gilbert Beebe's article on Associations, written in 1838 in the October issue because we basically agree with Beebe's position that churches should *associate together* (the general church of Christ is *interdependent* —being "*one*" *body*"). Nevertheless they should neither *organize* their fellowship and unity, nor *surrender* their independence to man-made institutions. These institutions are unwarranted by Christ and the apostles of the church in the pattern given to the churches in the New Testament.

Our own feelings upon associations are that they are unscriptural, and being so, they can not solve the problems which are sent to try our faith and purge out the leaven from our midst. We believe that those churches which achieve independence should fellowship those churches which hold to like precious faith with them. They should also realize that churches of like precious faith within associations and correspondances are, in general, churches of Christ; and therefore should treat brethren therein with all the respect that spiritual love signifies.

Independent churches should promote the interest of the Gospel and the peace of the general church; but not go so far as to compromise the Scriptural pattern of the New Testament; nor join in organizational union with the correspondances. Certainly, they

should not be the cause of confusion among others - this in itself is a violation of the very concept of independence. By love and by example they should teach others; but to make themselves obnoxious is contrary to the Gospel of Christ.

Nor do we wish to be understood that all Independents ought to be united. That surely would destroy the truth and purity of Gospel order; for "how can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3) Some assemblies see nothing wrong with receiving unrepentant nominal believers; some believe it disorder to reject polygamy; and some believe a church must commune with anyone with whom a sister church communes. They certainly could not achieve unity together any more than could associations and correspondances. Many Independents have withdrawn from Conditional associations, while many others have withdrawn from Predestinarian associations. So long as they retain their doctrinal differences, there could be no more unity between them than between these two types of correspondances. Nevertheless, experience has demonstrated that when the powers of the "esteemed overlords" of the correspondances are broken, churches and ministers move more rapidly toward Biblical positions: polly-parrot preaching is no longer necessary; the fear of man is broken and boldness replaces it; and Gospel liberty is experienced and promoted. When such churches achieve commonality of faith and experience, then unity is achieved with their fellowship in Christ upon a sound foundation of truth. This we encourage. But we do not advocate amalgamation of all manner of heresies. The chains of correspondances have done that with their "catholic" (umbrella) structure.

Many independents have had bitter experiences with their former affiliates which linger on. Surely, we should not be found fighting or persecuting others; or gossiping

about them; or rejoicing in their afflictions. God forbid that such should be found in those who love the truth! We are taught that if we see that others are wrong, to "let them alone. They be blind leaders of the blind; and if the blind lead the blind, both of them shall fall into the ditch." So, just leave them alone. God will settle all matters according to His own sovereign will. It may be so that others fight, or boast, or brag, or persecute and say all manner of evil against you — then let it be them; but let it not be becoming of us!

The above is the basic position of the churches of the Little Zion in Mississippi. We are independent Predestinarian Old School Primitive Baptists. Our association conducts no business, has no committees, nor permanent organization. All business is conducted by the host church when the churches meet together for the exclusive purpose to worship God and maintain their fellowship. - SCP

ARE OUR BLESSINGS CONDITIONAL? W. W. Hudson

"I am the Lord: that is My name: and My glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to graven images." - Isaiah 42:8.

As the Lord blesses us, we desire to comment upon this expression: "My glory will I not give to another." We believe the Scriptures teach that all the honor, praise and glory belongs to the Lord. "From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the Lord's name is to be praised." (Psa. 113:3)

The Scriptures teach that salvation is of the Lord, and man does not do anything to merit this salvation. What causes the world to advocate that salvation depends upon certain conditions performed by man in order to seal the contract-or merit his blessings? What is the hidden motive? Do you believe Satan is

behind this? “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” (Gen. 3:15) We understand enmity to mean “ill will on one side or both, hatred.” This enmity has always been between the church and Satan.

“Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.” (Gen. 3:1) Satan was very crafty in introducing the conditional theory in the churches a few years ago. The hidden motive is to praise man by robbing God of the honor, praise and glory that belongs to the Lord. What are the words of Almighty God? “MY GLORY I WILL NOT GIVE TO ANOTHER.”

Satan is very cunning in bringing forth the theory that the responsibility is upon man to perform certain conditions. After one performs the necessary conditions, Satan tempts him to actually praise himself because he completed the deeds by his own ability. This is one of Satan’s methods of robbing God of the praise that rightly belongs to His Holy Name. This method by Satan could apply to the doctrine of salvation as well as blessings in this life.

(Briefly, here are a few references upon: Salvation — see Titus 3:3-7; Eph. 2:1-10 and Gal. 3:13. Blessings in this life — see Eph. 1:3; Rom. 4:4; Phil. 2:12-13; and Heb. 13:20-21)

“Conditional Time Salvation”: According to this theory, man has the natural ability, after grace, through his own merits to perform good works, and by doing so, he will enjoy a peace of mind and obtain blessings which God has promised to them who take advantage of the opportunity offered. In other words, the advocates of this theory teach that God has laid out the blessings before the children of God, and that they may enjoy the benefits of them (here in time) if they take advantage of the opportunity offered them. If

they do not perform certain conditions, then they will miss the blessings offered.

Such a doctrine as this is erroneous. It does not give to God the praise for the blessings we enjoy. It exalts man, because man is responsible for obtaining the blessing, since he took advantage of the opportunity to perform the conditions. According to that theory, man is the author of “time salvation! ~ This is similar to the condition of the Galatians. Notice the expression of Paul: “Are ye so foolish? Having begun IN THE SPIRIT, are ye NOW MADE PERFECT BY THE FLESH?” (Gal. 3:3) And, “But now, AFTER that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?” (Gal. 4:9)

This error is to puff man up. It is to give man the credit for the blessings he receives. In other words, man deserves the praise because he took advantage of the blessings offered, and by performing certain conditions, God was obligated to bless him. Or, since man did perform these conditions, God became indebted to man and obligated to bless him. Therefore, man controls his spiritual seasons, according to this theory, and by man’s own ability, he can always enjoy seasons of basking in the sunshine of God’s mercy, if only he would.

But this is error. ALL praise, honor, and glory belong unto the Lord. We cannot control the natural seasons, and we cannot control our spiritual seasons. If it is midnight with our souls, we cannot drive the darkness away, and we cannot hasten the coming of morning.

Let us remember that God takes care of His people. Satan uses such error as the conditional time salvation theory to attempt to rob God of His glory, and to puff man up; but “Though thou shalt exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord.” (Obadiah 1:4)

Though we do not believe this theory, we believe Satan still tempts us in our experiences with the evil *principles* of it. And, Oh how cunning Satan is! In Genesis 3:1, we read, “The serpent was more subtile than any beast of the field.”

For example: Let us assume that we perform good deeds or works, such as visiting the sick and shut-ins, and helping our needy brethren, etc. Now, this is good on the surface. “Pure religion and undefiled before the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” (James 1:27) In the epistles of John, we notice that he admonishes the ones who have this world’s goods vouchsafed to them to help the ones in need.

On the surface, these deeds are good, but what about the motive involved? “Men looketh upon the outward appearance, but God looketh upon the heart.” (I Sam. 16:7) “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have the glory of men, verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly.” (Matthew 6:1-4)

Now, are we doing these deeds because we feel impressed to do so? If so, then the motive is good. On the other hand, are we doing these deeds in order to be seen of men, and to receive the praise of men? Are we doing these deeds for the purpose of gaining the favor of God, and to receive a blessing from Him? If so, then a selfish motive prompts us

But, Satan does not give up. Let us

assume that we are impressed by God to perform certain deeds. After it is performed, Satan may slip thoughts as this in our mind: “My, you sure are a good person to do this. There are not many people like you. You should be proud of yourself, etc.” Thoughts as this tend to puff one up also.

Let us remember that Satan does not have a set pattern. He may set thoughts as this in your mind to attempt to drive you to despair: “You really think you are somebody, don’t you? These people you visited think you are a little saint. But they just do not know you. The reason you visited them was for a selfish reason. You wanted their praise, and admiration and wanted them to think you are a good person, etc.” Accusations as these tend to drive us to despair, except the Lord intervenes and speaks sweet peace to our poor souls.

Let us briefly state another selfish motive in performing good deeds. Doing a good deed for the motive of expecting a favor in return is wrong. The motive of helping our brethren with the expectation of receiving a favor in return is not prompted by love. It is just a selfish motive.

In closing out our thoughts concerning the error of conditional time salvation theory, we quote from J.C. Philpot:

“But the Lord has attached — I will not call it a condition, (it is a word I abhor), but a declaration; which declaration is linked on with the promise. The Lord has appointed a certain path, wherein the soul is to walk. The walking in that path is a necessary step, to obtain the blessing that lies at the end of the path. It is *no condition to be performed by the creature*; it is nothing that springs out of, or depends upon, human will or human merit; but it hangs upon the Lord’s appointment. God has connected certain promises with certain appointments; He has connected certain deliverances with certain trials; He has

connected certain blessings with certain states and positions of the soul. The text states that the Lord has declared a certain path; He has made a positive declaration: and to this positive appointment He has graciously annexed a certain promise. "He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him." Thus it is no matter of free will, it is no matter of man's righteousness or man's wisdom, whether he shall "call upon God;" it is *appointed* he should call upon Him. God has said so in positive terms — (and His "I will," and His "he shall," never can be broken) — "He shall call upon Me." It therefore does not rest with the creature, whether he will call upon Him or not; its not a matter poised in the balances of the creature, whether he shall pray or not; God has not left it to man, whether he shall take up prayer or lay aside prayer; but He has made it a part of His own sovereign appointments, of His own eternal decrees, which can no more be frustrated, than salvation itself. Therefore this soul, that "dwells in the secret place of the Most High" — "he shall call upon God." It is not left to him, whether he will call or not; but it stands in a way of eternal decree, in a way of sovereign good pleasure. He must call upon God, because God says "he shall." (*Selected Sermons*, by J.C. Philpot, pg. 105-6.)

COMMENTS FROM THE EDITORS

We appreciate both the gifts and the names and addresses you have been sending us. We have found that addresses received from subscribers most often are the ones who subscribe for themselves. A couple of months ago the financial aspects of the paper were discouraging, but your liberality recently has taken the worry out of it again.

If you wish to help, may we suggest you send gift subscriptions to those you believe

love the truth; send us articles of "real gold" to print; predestinarian literature for the library; and your prayers.

THE WILL OF GOD

By Gilbert Beebe, Oct. 15, 1855

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth." - Isaiah 52:7

When duly impressed with a sense of the superlative perfections of Jehovah, the enlightened Christian contemplates the principle on which God governs and controls all things, with inexpressible delight; and in the inspired language of the Psalmist will say, "*The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice.*" (*Psa. 97:1*) The grandest theme that moved the prophetic pen, was that in which the absolute government of God is declared unto Zion. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth." If He were only *trying to reign*, and unable to overcome the impediments thrown in His way by men and devils, the anxiety of His people would be very great. But the good tidings of good, the publication of peace, the proclamation of salvation, by heaven inspired, is based upon the assurance that the God of Zion REIGNS. He "rules in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." (*Dan. 4:35*) Sparrows are guided and protected by the orders from His throne, and the "very hairs of our heads are all numbered," so that not one of them can by any casualty fall to the ground without His decree. The natural heavens declare His glory, the marshalled hosts are governed by His law. The sun, moon and stars obey the sovereign orders of their God. The earth and seas also obey Him, and the islands shall wait for His law. The winds and storms

are His messengers. He rides upon the wings thereof, and makes the clouds His chariots. The troubled ocean is calm when He rebukes the tempest, and the monsters of the deep are swift to obey His mandates. Angels, men, and even devils, are encircled by His power; they can neither think nor act in any sphere beyond that which He has appointed them.

In the administration of the divine government, as exemplified in creation, providence and grace, many things are inscrutable to us, for we can only know and comprehend His government so far as He is pleased to enlighten us. The faith which He has given us is brought into active operation, affording us that confidence in God, that we can cheerfully trust in Him, where we cannot trace Him. When He plants His footsteps in the sea, and when His ways are past finding out, "we know that all things do work together for good to them that love" Him, "who are the called according to His purpose." When darkness veils the sky, when thick darkness of the sky is His pavilion, when He keepeth back the face of His throne, and spreads His cloud upon it, even then we learn to "Be still and know that He is God." And the more dark and inscrutable His government is to us, the more clearly is our faith and confidence in Him demonstrated. If the sun and the land were always in sight, the mariner would have no use for his compass. Faith is a fruit of the Spirit, in the saints, which God has ordained shall be subjected to fiery trials; but it has power to shine the brightest when most opposed. Nothing would be allowed to come in conflict with it, if it were not necessary for our good, and God's declarative glory.

But the principle or standard of the divine government, is what we design to notice more particularly in this article. Seeing that all things are governed by the power and providence of our God, how consoling it is to know that Zion's God is perfectly competent

to administer the government over all His works; for, "*He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.*" (Eph. 1:11) Now if we have confidence in His will, if we are reconciled to it, and in the language of the dear Redeemer can say, "*Not my will, but Thy will be done;*" or in the language of the prayer, "*Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven,*" then we shall rejoice that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. If His government were administered according to any other than God's will, we might fear the result. If He consulted our wills and inclinations, alas, how fickle and trifling are we! Or should the government of earth be left to the popular vote of the race of mankind, how uncertain would be the result. But all is made to depend on His own will, and hence the final result of all things is secure.

The supreme will of Jehovah is the standard of all the actions and government of God. He has no other law by which to do His pleasure in the armies of heaven, or among the inhabitants of the earth; and we rejoice that it is so, for His will is perfect, pure, infallible, immutable and holy. No other rule of government therefore could be so honoring to God, or safe for us, as that by which all the orders of His throne are administered. In His will all the eternal attributes of the Godhead are embraced. His wisdom, truth, justice, immutability, omniscience, omnipotence and eternity, affords us indemnity that nothing will be administered that can possibly conflict with the eternal perfections of the Godhead. Who then would wish to shorten the sceptre of His power, or pluck one gem from His crown? Could we act rationally or consistently in asking or desiring Him to change His administrations, however dark or inscrutable they may seem to us, or to adopt as a rule of His government the will of any or all of His creatures? Or who that knoweth the Lord, can desire to limit His control over the events or destiny of all beings and all worlds?

Nay, we can but rejoice that He is King of kings, and Lord of lords.

We rejoice not only that the saints are governed by His law, but also that wicked men and devils are under His control; were it otherwise all would be confusion. Their limits are fixed, their bounds are irrevocably set; hereunto they shall come, but no farther. The hearts of kings and proud monarchs of the earth "*He turneth as the rivers of water are turned.*" Truly the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His Anointed, saying, "*Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords away from us.*" But, "*He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision.*" The monarch of Babylon may attempt to ascend above the clouds, to set His throne above the stars, and to be like the Most High, but he shall be brought down to hell, to the borders of the pit. Pharaoh may determine to detain the Lord's chosen tribes in Egypt, or to pursue and bring them back after God has broken their yoke, but God will display all His wonders on Pharaoh and His host, and Israel shall sing the song of deliverance in full sight of their vanquished enemies. All this results from the administration of the divine government according to the will of God. Can any saint be found to say, This is more power or government than what properly belongs to God? Will any say that His power should be restricted to "good" men, and their "good" actions, and that He has *no right to control* evil men, and evil actions of men, according to the counsel of His own will? We hope not.

But it is sometimes objected, that if "*God works all things after the counsel of His own will,*" and nothing after the counsel of His creatures' will, and if His will is eternally the same, [Which it must be if immutable — Ed.] from everlasting to everlasting, so that He has "*Declared the end from the beginning,*" and said, "*My counsel*

shall stand, and I will do ALL MY PLEASURE," (Isa. 46:10), then we are only machines, bound fast in the decrees of Fate, and only like clay in the hands of the potter. If this be true, they say, we are not accountable beings, and "Why doth He yet find fault? Who hath resisted His will?" "*Nay, who art thou O man that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?*" (Rom. 9:20-22) The apostle did not shrink from a defense of the sovereignty of God because men would surely say, "*Why doth He yet find fault?*" etc., but rebukes the fault-finder with merited severity. The inferences and conclusions of men in regard to the nature and tendency of this doctrine are not reliable. Man is by no means released from his accountability, nor is he propelled like a machine in his action; he acts *voluntarily in his course of wickedness*, and he is held accountable for his conduct, and will be punished for his sins, according to the testimony of the Scriptures. [This is exactly what we here believe relative to this subject — all of us! — S.C.P.]

Many have failed to perceive how God can govern the world, and control all events, without influencing men to sin, or being the author of sin. By the terms "author of sin", we suppose they mean the fountain or source of sin. If this be their meaning, nothing can be more remote from the truth. For God is perfectly holy in His nature, and in all His administrations. Men are *never influenced to do wickedly by any impulse directly from Him*. Their *fallen natures inclines them to do wickedly*, and so far as God will permit them to have *their own way*, they will drink in iniquity as the ox drinketh water. This we know to be the case by our own experience, as well as by the testimony of the Scriptures. Hence, God's perfect knowledge, and even

His design in ALL they do, does NOT CHANGE either their inclination to sin, or their accountability for sinning. Joseph's brethren acted voluntarily in meditating his murder, and in selling him to the Ishmaelites to be carried down to Egypt; and they were held accountable for their wickedness, as much so as though God had no purpose in the matter; yet the event shows, and the Word of God declares, that God had a purpose in it all; [*"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive."* (Gen.50:20)I and we conclude that God had as much purpose in Joseph's going into Egypt, as though his brethren had had no agency in the matter. How these things can be, may be a mystery to men, but all is plain with God.

The Jews and Romans were guilty in putting Christ to death, although they could only do what God's hand and purpose had before determined should be done. (Acts 2:23 and 4:28) It was not a divine influence that filled them with malice and hatred to Christ, nor was it by any gracious impulse of the Spirit of God, they crucified the Lord of glory. The spirit of their carnal minds, and the influence of Satan, urged them on in the bloody work, and they were without excuse. And as it was in the case of Joseph, and in the crucifixion of Christ, so we believe it is in regard to all the wicked acts of men.

A brother has used the figure of the "good tree" and the "evil tree", which were created with all their subsequent developments in them, and under the unavoidable necessity of bringing forth the fruit which was according to their nature. This is unquestionably true in regard to trees, but trees have no volition; they are passive, and to them attaches neither blame nor approval. Men are accountable beings, *and act voluntarily in sinning, and are subject of condemnation and wrath. The figure of trees*

is applied to men, we admit, but not in reference to *their original creation*. Christ says, "First make the tree good, and his fruit shall be good," &c. But His application of the figure contemplates man *as a fallen sinner, already condemned*; he is like a corrupt tree; in his present state he can bring forth corrupt fruit, *but he cannot bring forth good fruit*. All men are by nature, that is, in their fallen nature, evil trees, and polluted fountains, so that until God makes good the tree, and cleanses the fountain, no pure or holy productions can be developed.

We would not indulge in any vain speculations in regard to God, or in the contemplation of His perfections; the subject is too sacred to be approached but with the most profound reverence, but we do rejoice in believing that the God of Zion presides in power and majesty over all the works of His hands, and accomplishes His own purpose, and worketh all things after the counsel of His own will; causing the wrath of man to praise Him, and restraining the remainder of their wrath.(Psa. 76:10) And we do rejoice to know that the will of God is the invariable rule of all His work of creation, providence and grace. *"Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth."* We entertain no fear of His exceeding His eternal right in executing the counsel of His will; and so far as He instructs us that justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne, we shall be led in Spirit to cry out, *"Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most Almighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty; and in majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things."* - Psalm 45:3-4.

— Editorials of Gilbert Beebe, Vol.3

NOTE: The above is a good representative sample of Beebe's free grace writings in the Signs. If you enjoyed it and desire copies of

his works, please contact James F. Poole, P.O. Box 157, Salisbury, Md. 21801. Please encourage them to continue to publish the rest of his works.

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THE BODY OF CHRIST By S. C. Phillips

“And when He had spoken these things. while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.”

— Acts 1: 9-11.

There is an error which has long been associated with other groups of Baptists which now appears occasionally among Old School Baptists. Briefly, it is a view that in order to be in the Bride of Christ, or The Church, one must be baptized into water, and thus into Christ. That is close to the truth. But its chief error lies in the inability of men to make a difference between “into Christ” and “into the body of Christ.” The conclusion, with which our inward spirit recoils, is that one cannot be (a) married to Christ if not baptized in water; or (b) an object of mercy if not baptized in water. If either of these two

conclusions is reached, then the individual holding such a view is unsound upon the doctrine of Christ.

We are categorized by theologians as “supralapsarians” because we believe the church of Jesus Christ was chosen in Him, rather than in Adam, before the foundation of the world. (Eph. 1:4-6) This church — the whole church — has ever been “in Christ”; and Christ has ever stood as the actual and federal Head of the church from all eternity. While the Scriptures use the expression of the church as “the body of Christ,” we can not conclude that the “body of Christ” used in these instances has reference to that body of Christ the disciples steadfastly gazed upon as He ascended into glory. It is important that this difference always be kept in mind. It seems so easy for heresy to creep, or gallop, into the churches, and its horse is Biblical ignorance, or outright blindness.

One thing is certain, water baptism was not practiced in the Old Testament dispensation. How were any of the saints in Christ? or were they? Were they married to the Lord? Of course they were, for He saith, *“Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for Jam married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.”* (Jere. 3:14)

Equally important, were the saints of the Old Testament espoused to Christ, or, that is, the Bride of Christ? Of course they were, for He saith again, *“And I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord.”* (Hos. 3:19-20) And again, *“For thy Maker is thine Husband; the Lord of Hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall He be called.”* (Isa. 54:5) It is clear, it seems, that where there is a husband, and one betroth to him, that one must be a

bride.

So many seem to see some great problem in harmonizing the saints of the old dispensation with those of the new. We see no such problem. They too, were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. The external dispensations under which they lived did not change their standing and relation to Christ.

Water baptism, we believe, is necessary as a pre-requisite to membership in the body of Christ, as a collective group of people belonging to Him. But to be “in Christ Jesus”, as being represented in and by Him as the Head of the general church, one does not have to be baptized into water for this blessed standing or state. We believe one must be “in Him” for the Holy Spirit to ever call him, or ever lay upon him within his soul the divine command to “Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Acts 22:16)

Then, in what sense is the “body of Christ” meant as it relates to the church? A people ruled by one government is, by definition, a “body politic.” A “body of people” (the preposition “of” denotes possession) elected, redeemed, called, and sanctified by Christ as His peculiar people is “His Body,” the church, in a possessive sense. The Greek word for “body” is “soma”: *the body (as a sound whole.)*

The way one is brought into Christ Jesus is by divine election (Eph. 1:1-6). It seems strange that a free grace person can be blind to this. The way one is experimentally manifested “in Him” is by effectual calling. It is equally strange that any child of grace does not know and feel this. The way one is added to the local, collected, body of Christ is by a heavenly experience of grace in the soul, followed by water baptism, and consent of the local body (a sound whole). But, addition to the number of that local body (which is His assembly) is a far cry from being added to

“Christ Jesus!”

Why do we object to such high churchism? In particular, why does the unscriptural view that all the elect will be baptized into a Baptist church, and that anyone not a Baptist is going to hell offend us? First, because our spirit returns to our own bosom when we hear it. The witness is strong that it is a dangerous heresy. Second, it appears to us as idolatry — the worship of the elect people, rather than the worship of God. Third, it is papacy. To declare that a certain body of people is the Body of Christ, and that you must be an accepted member of that particular Body in order to be *IN CHRIST* is the root, or fundamental doctrine, of Rome. Wherein does the Papal Church differ? Only in degree.

We can rejoice when Christ is preached, but we cannot fellowship will-worship of men — even righteous men. We question the very motive for this great emphasis on “the Church,” when there is so little preaching today on what God the Father, Son, and Spirit has done for His elect people; so few left to preach it; and such an apparently short time left to preach it. Surely the priorities of ministers are severely out of balance when they can’t find enough about Christ to occupy their time.

The Church belongs to Christ. None of us shall add one member to it, nor hinder one member from entering it. Preaching “the Church” in hope of adding to it those not included in it, in the Person of Christ, is vain. All the powers of men, angels, or demons will never increase the “body of Christ” — that elect nation of antiquity. To preach “the Church” to glory in it, may prove far more than one wishes proved — it may just prove one is not in it!

Satan has always found ways to prevent Christ from being preached. This writer is fully persuaded that he has found a new — yes, NEW — doctrine for a hobby-horse. It is

foolish to ride a hobby-horse — they never go any place. It is NOT Old Baptists belief!

DIFFICULTY AND SWEETNESS OF GOD'S WILL

By I.K. of Abingdon, Eng., 1847

[Editor's Note: I understand that I.K. was a Mr. Kay, who wrote a book entitled *Inward Kingdom*, and, of course, was associated with the Strict Baptist brethren. We select these writings, primarily because so little "inward" evidence of divine experiences are now given much consideration. As with the period in which he lived, so in our own, much which is passed off as "Gospel preaching" is either that rotten duty-faith of the carnal flesh, or else cold dead orthodoxy — dry doctrine.

In making that condemnation, We do not mean it to be a ringing denunciation of our ministers. This editor feels the barrenness of experience very keenly, and desires the dear Lord to rectify this condition in his own soul. We offer these hoping that they will be profitable in giving us a mirror to examine our poverty-stricken ministry more thoroughly.]

Never scarce in all my life did I, under God the Spirit, labour under a doctrine of Scripture more than the one just below. If you observe, therein is included all that is or ever was known of experienced Christianity since the creation of the world. Therein you will observe lukewarmness, and rebellion, and all manner of things, good and bad, equally cut at or supported. The text is this: "*Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in aU the will of God.*" — Col 4:12.

From this text I gather what has stunned me many a time, namely, that God has a will. And that WILL also embraces the minutest

circumstances of our lives, both of bitters and sweets, joys and sorrows. If "five sparrows are sold for two farthings", and, as we are assured, are "not forgotten by the Heavenly Father;" if "the very hairs of our head are all numbered;" if "every idle word" and "secret thought" is taken into account; I gather from this that the Infinite God is no careless Looker-on, observing and regulating the affairs of the sons of men.

The stature is FIXED; the "number of our days is appointed," also the "boundaries of our habitation," — our days of sorrow and joy, our sinkings and risings, our pleasures and pains. And are all these, even to the least, the smallest circumstances, appointed executively or permissively of God, even to the most exact and nice degree? Is it all weighed out unalterably by Him by whom "actions (not notions) are weighed?" O tremendous "deep!"

I have been long convinced of the folly of striving against God. I believe I pass a good part of my time in communion with God, the Appointer of all things executively or permissively. And how do I pass that time in communion? In dictating? No. I know God has a will, as Epaphras says. My employment in the communion with God is, to find out by the Holy Spirit's goings experimentally in my soul, what that will is. Thus, Enoch, Abraham, and Noah "walked" with God. People walking always together are likely to know a good deal of one another. How certain I am that I shall have all the trouble I am to have! How this makes me cleave with purpose of heart to God! "I have stuck unto Thy testimonies." Epaphras labours fervently for ALL THE WILL OF GOD TO BE DONE IN US. O the terrible deep!

I have known the time when I have been brim-ful of trouble, my heart almost fit to break. And yet I durst not lift up my little finger to alter anything without God. And I have found that God can alter things better than I can. How He can speak to men (and to

me to) out of the whirlwind, or melt them sweetly in the sunshine, to mould them to His secret will!

O how my soul trembles with adoration before Him! Now those who tremble at His threatenings, and those who tremble with delight at His consolations; those who tremble at their own ignorance and a sense of God's superior wisdom, at their own infinitely less than littleness, (for we are five hundred or ten thousand talents terribly in debt!) and at God's unsearchable greatness; those tremblers thus, these are the men, that living so near God get acquainted by secret revelation (in accordance with Scripture) as to what God's will is.

Epaphras laboured fervently to this end in prayers. As Hart says, "Accomplish in me all Thy will."

But it may be objected, if none beside we are elected, bought with a price, and redeemed thus in particular redemption, that it is a needs-be we must fall into all the sin we are redeemed from. But does that encourage me in sin? Just the reverse! I know I shall have the rod for my sin. I know it killed the Beloved Redeemer. Thus love and fear makes me watch, fight, groan, wrestle, and struggle unto blood against sin, and die, in Christ, to it, in evangelical crucifixion and mortification thereto; insomuch so, that Arminians who trust less or more to their own righteousness, and bitterly reject Christ's righteousness imputed by gift as the only possible foundation and salvation; these Arminians, I have long perceived, with their wretched self-righteousness, have not a fiftieth part of the tenderness of conscience that I feel.

Epaphras's fervent labouring certainly embraces both the sorrows and joys we are predestinated to go through, before we launch out of time into the next world. His fervent labouring in his prayers embraces all things that the elect have to go through, and must go through, in the time-state of this present

world. And who is sufficient for these things? Excruciating bitters and insupportable sweets; "Stay me with flagons; comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love;" and, "rivers of tears running down one's eyes" spiritually, because of insupportable troubles: every-day troubles less or more: all is included: as is also every-day comfort more or less; which quickened souls must go through, in their being God's "workmanship." All, all the wondrous catalogue is included in the wondrous grasp of Epaphras's ample prayer!

And who, I ask again, is sufficient for these things? God "will spue" (vulgar word for our refined hypocrisy!) lukewarm Christians out of His mouth. (Rev. 3:16) He will fill backsliders with their own ways. He will keep rebels in a dry land. He will let foolish virgins and wise ones slumber together in professedly experimental churches, for some deep purpose. He will maul the head of pride. He will work contrition, poorness, and trembling, into the souls of His people.

And herein let me make a remark or two. Contrition, poverty, and trembling, which spiritually our first Adam's nature huffs at, are in the sight of God of great price. God will "look" at them. When, alas! the brightest mere knowledge shall pass away as of not the slightest account with God, like the idle noise of a jingling bell or a sounding cymbal.

O the glories, beauties, and grace of ripening to stand complete and perfect in all (the whole of) the will of God! O the labour, continuing, and fervency to this wonderful end! The text says Epaphras was "always" at it, at this prayer. "Thy will be done" is the A and Z of the alphabet. All his modes, &c., in "prayers," he was thus enabled to drive to this end. And O the immortal sweetness of success and triumph herein, in which severity and comeliness shine! He was winning the prize, and travailing for it for others of the elect.

Now, any one "saluting" saints with this

doctrine is not well received by many. Here were no perverse loopholes for rebellion, carnality, worldliness, free-will, self-righteousness, or antinomianism. Here, like racers running a race, as Paul says, we are reminded that many run in a race who are never to win. Here a saint is cautioned to cleanse his way by taking heed thereto according to God's word. Here the noble Epaphras cautions any one to see whether any part at all of God's word is against him. "All the will of God." Crucifixion, and making dead, or mortifying, to the world and the flesh, as well as salvation by grace without works, ("the body is of Christ") and keeping ourselves from idols, and being crucified to the flesh and the world, thus in a victory and triumph over inordinate affections, &c.; these and such like are the glorious effects. Glorious! For destitute of oil, the foolish virgins, (sound in every thing but the secret life of God in Christ within), I say these foolish virgins have neither the body actual nor the effects, and it is to be feared they are among us in rightly constituted experimental churches. What is to become of the brains of the notional Calvinist? the false fire of the Arminian? in all their shades, splits, divisions, and denominations? But I must leave them as ripening for the knife of final slaughter, and drop a few words more to those who are planted and ripening as really elect in God's garden.

You may see by Epaphras's prayer that God intends to realize in you the drift of what is written in Scripture. Now I ask you plainly, can you see your character as in a looking-glass in Scripture, as there written of the saints, by the hand of God Himself? I shall conclude with this, that "God is not mocked." And, ask your conscience, reader. And the beginning, middle, and end of religion shall be gradually and finally fulfilled in the elect of God, as Epaphras prayed for, and as Scripture sets forth; while all prating fools, as

Solomon calls them, and notional, and stony-ground, and thorny-ground hearers, as the Lord calls them; yes, those even who are thus possessed of, even as Goodwin justly calls it, the "shallow enlightenings of the Holy Ghost," (short of the exceeding greatness of His power, which latter is confined to the elect alone;) all those, I say, mentioned in Hebrews 6: 5,6, and 10:26, are not included at all in Epaphras's prayer as above; for it would have been better for those not to have known the way of Christ in the shallow enlightenings of the Spirit, who have lamps burning with outward apparent consistency, and who never get at all in wars, changes, and victories, to the marrow hinted at in Epaphras's prayer. (Selected from the *Gospel Standard*, 1847)

NOTE: You may help us extend our circulation by sending subscriptions to any you have reason to believe have spiritual life within them. - Editors.

THE FULFILLMENT OF THE SCRIPTURES

By H.M. Curry

I suppose that every one who professes to believe the Bible at all looks for the fulfillment of the prophecies. To what quarter then are we to look for this fulfillment? How can those who deny predestination, either in part or in whole, ever expect the exact, timely, and certain fulfillment of any or all of the prophecies of the divine oracles? God "*has declared the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand and I will do ALL My pleasure.*" (Isa. 46:10) Part at least of this declaration He has made known unto us by the mouths of His prophets as recorded in the Holy Scriptures. The events thus foretold must certainly have been foreordained or

predestinated, and therefore must be fulfilled, each in its time and season. The Saviour said, "*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass, until all be fulfilled.*"

When God says a thing shall come to pass, does He mean that He will bring it to pass? When He says a thing shall be done, does He not pledge His word for its performance? Were the prophecies of the Scriptures uttered upon any other authority than the authority of God's decree? Do they rest upon any vicissitude of time for their fulfillment that God's decrees do not embrace? Would mere foreknowledge, or bare permission warrant or even justify the expression, "*It shall come to pass*"? or the expression "*shall*", in any sense of the word? In this part of the country people read and notice Hick's weather forecasts. When such changes come as have been prophesied, they will say, "Hicks hit it this time!" when the forecast fail, they say, "Hicks missed it this time." Are we to look upon God's prophecies in this way? Are we to say, when we see the Scriptures fulfilled in this thing, "God hit it this time"? or when we fail to see them fulfilled in that thing, "God missed it this time."?

Are we to treat His prophecies as mere prognostications? One would say, O no, God knew all these things would certainly come to pass, and so He was kind enough and thoughtful enough to tell us of them beforehand. This is a very puerile makeshift, a very fallacious and deceptive subterfuge, and involves the one accepting it in a difficulty far more serious and ungodly than he supposes the one to be which he is trying to evade, to wit, God's decree of predestination; for if God knew that an event would transpire, that event is *inevitable*, that is, it cannot fail to come to pass exactly as foreknown; if inevitable, then it has been determined, and if determined, who determined it? If God did not, who did? The difficulty that I meet here is an absolutely

determined future, and either no determining power or some determining power outside of God, and independent of Him determined it. This is Fatalism, and the one accepting such a theory is a fatalist in the fullest sense of that word. So here he is plunged into the very thing which he flatters himself that he was avoiding. In endeavoring to shun an imaginary Scylla, he has fallen into a real Charybdis.

How often do we come upon the expression in the New Testament, "This was done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled." When Herod sent forth and killed the little children in Bethlehem and all the coasts thereof, it was said "then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, In Ramah there was a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted because they are not." Suppose Herod had not sent forth and killed the little children, then the words of Jeremiah would not have been fulfilled; if his word should fail in one thing, what confidence would his prophecies be entitled to in anything? But it is not Jeremiah's word which is at stake here, it is God's Word that must be fulfilled. Herod's persecution also caused the flight into Egypt, and this was done that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "Out of Egypt have I called My Son." On the return from Egypt, notwithstanding Joseph had been warned of God to take the young child and His mother and go into the land of Israel, He though unbelief, fearing Archelaus, turned aside and dwelt in Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene." Here not only the wicked persecution of Herod, but also the unbelief of Joseph alike fulfilled the Scriptures.

When the time arrived that Jesus should be betrayed into the hands of wicked men, the betrayer was at hand, not as one who accidentally turned up in time of the

emergency, but one who had been foretold by prophecy. David had given a pen picture of him hundreds of years before. It had also been said by the Christ that one of the twelve should betray Him. Not only was the man marked out by prophecy who should do this, but it had also been foretold how much the traitor should receive for his work (thirty pieces of silver); and also what should be finally done with the money. The Son of Man truly went as it was written of Him. He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, [whether any Baptist of any kind believes it or no — Ed.] and when Herod and Pilate and the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together against Him, they were gathered to do whatsoever “God’s hand and counsel determined before to be done.” (Acts 4:27, 28)

When the Saviour was crucified, He was put to death between two thieves. This was done that the Scripture might be fulfilled which said, “He was numbered with the transgressors.” Suppose there had been no thieves or transgressors, how then could the Scriptures have been fulfilled? It was the custom to break the legs of those who were put to death by crucifixion, but on this occasion they broke the legs of the thieves, but did not break the legs of Christ. This was done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled which said, “Not a bone of Him shall be broken.” This prophecy was fulfilled in its reference to the literal body of Christ, but it still remains in force in its relation to His spiritual body, and must be fulfilled to the utmost in this also. So this prophecy warrants the eternal security of all the redeemed family, for we are members of His body and of His flesh and of His bones; so not a bone of Him shall indeed be broken. Instead of breaking His legs according to the custom and the request of the Jews, they pierced His side with a spear. This was done that the Scripture

might be fulfilled, “They shall look upon Him whom they pierced.” When in His last agony He said, “I thirst,” they in their fiendish cruelty, gave Him vinegar to drink. This was done that the Scripture might be fulfilled, “They gave Me vinegar to drink.” And after all, when they came to dispose of His raiment, they gambled for that, in order to fulfill the Scripture, “They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture did they cast lots.” In the most exact way, the Scriptures were fulfilled in the life and death of Christ, so that it may well be said, “He died for our sins according to the Scriptures.”

Men are saved to fulfill the Scriptures. “Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion,” is a prophecy that must be fulfilled; but for it to be fulfilled, the redeemed of the Lord must return and come to Zion. This prophecy cannot be satisfied as long as one for whom Christ died is away from Zion. “All that the Father giveth Me shall come unto Me,” saith the Son. The righteousness, wisdom, power, and grace of God are all engaged to fulfill these words, therefore there is no power or contingency that can ever interfere with the timely and triumphant victory of all the election of grace over every enemy. On the day of Pentecost when that great number of people cried out, “Men and brethren what shall we do?” was exemplified in the fulfillment of prophecy. A great number of these men were Jews, those who only a few days before had crucified the Son of God with wicked hands: they had spit upon Him, had called Him Beelzebub, the prince of devils; and to express their resolution never to repent, they said, “Let His blood be upon us and our children.” But their obdurancy could not hold out — God’s prophecy must be fulfilled. The redeemed of the Lord must return and come to Zion. When Abel offered unto the Lord a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, this prophecy lay at the root of the matter. In the days of Seth, when

men began to call upon the name of the Lord, the words of the prophet, "Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion," was being fulfilled in them. One might say that this prophecy had not been written in the days of Seth. It had not been written upon parchment, but it had been written in the book of God's decrees, and experienced in the hearts and consciences of men. All the prophecies of Jehovah are from eternity, and are yea and amen in Christ. Every poor pilgrim, whose anxious heart and weary footsteps seek that city whose Builder and Maker is God, is upheld, forwarded, and guided on his journey by the immutable decree that the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion; and through the certain fulfillment of God's word, he shall reach the holy city and rest forever in her sacred palaces.

Men are lost to fulfill the Scriptures. Is this a hard saying? Can you not hear it? I am not responsible for the saying, however hard it may appear to be. The Saviour said to the Father in speaking of the twelve, "All of them have I kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled." (John 16:12) Had Judas not been lost the Scriptures would have been broken (See Psalm 109, all of which pertains to Judas and his crime and punishment). The thoughtless and presumptuous man would say, If Judas had to do what he did, he would have been exempt from crime; he would have had no sin. Upon what ground would he have been without sin? What law would exempt him? According to whose judgment would he be innocent? State the law and name the judge, and if it be the law of God and God Himself be the Judge, then I will agree that the conclusion is the correct one. Jesus, Who is Himself the embodiment of all law, and the Judge both of the living and the dead, said with regard to this matter in reply to Pilate, "Thou couldst have no power at all against

Me except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin." (John 19:11) Instead of the judgment of Christ in this matter concurring with the judgment of men, that under such circumstances a man would be without sin, He declared that for this very reason Judas had the greater sin. Here is a question of responsibility for some of the champions of that cause to settle. And here is another one: Christ said to the Jews, "Behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of righteous Zacharias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar." (Matt. 23:34-35) The Saviour here declares that these men should fill up the measures of their fathers. He also designates the crimes that they should commit in order to do this, not only generic crimes but specific crimes; and the end to be answered thereby was that upon them might come all the righteous blood that had been shed upon the earth, from the blood of Abel to the blood of their most recent victim.

Now upon what principle of justice and judgment could four thousand years of crime be required at the hand of one generation? Let some of the champions of free agency solve this problem from their favorite standpoint of accountability. I have been accused of denying human responsibility, but in this as in many other things, I have been willfully misrepresented. I have only denied that the atonement of Christ left any responsibility upon His people; and further, I have denied the foolish, imaginary, sentimental and ungrounded conclusion that predestination relieves men of accountability and acquits them of crime upon principles of equity and justice, and that therefore in order to be

accountable, a man must be what *men are pleased* to call a free agent. I have here referred to these things to show that in the fulfillment of God's decrees according to His word, a deeper principle of justice is involved than human standards set forth, or human pleaders comprehend.

Again it is said of some in the divine record that they were before of old ordained to this condemnation. (Jude 4) Now if they were before of old ordained to this condemnation, when the condemnation came, did it not come in fulfillment of a decree? Who made the decree? Some would say that God made it, but He made it upon *conditions*. This *they think* necessary in order that the character of God stand above reproach in the judgment of men. They admit that the decree of election unto life is unconditional, but that the ordination of condemnation is conditional, and that the subjects of this decree are endowed with a free agency whereby they are permitted to work out their condemnation. This notion involves a monstrous absurdity, and that absurdity is this, That God has denied to man the freedom and ability *to righteousness* whereby he may be saved, but that He has endowed man *with that freedom and ability* whereby he may and can work out a sure and foreknown condemnation! And this is resorted to in the vain imagination that the *character of God* is thus vindicated from the charge of unrighteousness, and He justified in His ways to man! Peter, in speaking of certain ones, says they *were appointed to disobedience and stumbling*. (I Peter 2:8) Now if they were appointed to disobedience, must they not fulfill the appointment? This they must do, even though God send them strong delusions to accomplish it. (II Thess. 2:11)

Many are ready to exclaim now, If this be true, who is to be blamed? This is an old question, and I will give an old and authoritative answer. I will first state the

question in its ancient form: "Thou wilt say unto me then, Why doth He yet find fault? for who hath resisted His will?" Reader, do you recognize the question? If you have never seen it before, if you will read the ninth chapter of Romans, you will find it. I will now give the ancient, time-honored answer: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?" Do you recognize the answer? If not, read the ninth chapter of Romans and you will find it. This is not your question; this is not a question of this age only. This question was asked two thousand years ago. Neither is this my answer. This is God's answer, and I am satisfied with it. This question comprehends everything that the cavilers of all ages have urged against the doctrine of God's sovereign decrees. Is not the answer of Inspiration plain and decisive? If the solution of this problem is to be found in exceptions to God's decrees, and in making excuses for Him, would He not have put a very different answer in the mouth of His inspired apostle? Is not this the place above all places for such an excuse to be given? Is not this question sprung here for the express purpose of giving a decisive and unequivocal answer? Is not such an answer given? Shall we receive it as final and decisive, as coming from God Himself, or shall we seek another, which, although necessarily false, is more pleasing to our pride and presumption, and more acceptable to ignorance and unbelief?

The unbelief of the Jews fulfilled the Scriptures. It is recorded by John that, although He had done many miracles, "yet they believed not on Him: That the saying of Esaias, the prophet, might be fulfilled: Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore *they could not believe*, because that

Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.” (John 12:37-40) Here it is expressly stated that the reason they could not believe was that Esaias had foretold their blindness and hardness, and further that this blindness and hardness of heart was given of God. The object of this blindness and hardening was to prevent them from being converted that He might heal them. This language seems to imply that there might have been a possibility of their believing and being converted, had not God’s decree intercepted and cut them off.

“Heaven and earth shall pass away,” says Christ, “but My word shall not pass away until all be fulfilled.” Whatever the divine record says shall be, must be. The same authority that says, “The redeemed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion,” has also said, “The wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand.” The same book that says, “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me,” has also said, “Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse.” The same God that opened Lydia’s heart, that she attend to the things spoken by Paul, hardened Pharaoh’s heart that he would not let the people go. The same God that works in His people “both to will and to do of His good pleasure,” has also put it in the hearts of wicked rulers “to fulfill His will, and to agree to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God be fulfilled.” (Rev. 17:17)

When Paul was arraigned by the Jews for preaching what was to them an obnoxious and destructive doctrine, his defense was that he had preached nothing but what Moses and the prophets said should come. If I am censured for what I have herein written, I have but one defense to make and that is, I have only written what Moses and the prophets and Christ and the apostles have said should be.

CORRESPONDENCE

Salisbury, Md. 21801

October 10, 1983

Dear Elder Phillips,

Greetings in the name of our sovereign Lord. Though we have never met in the flesh, I hope that I know something of the things of which you write. I have not been getting *The Predestinarian* very long, though I have intended to subscribe since I saw the very first issue. That shows how good the intentions of men are, doesn’t it? Through the kindness of a brother, however, I am now a subscriber.

As a subscriber, I wish to tell you how much I enjoyed the August issue. The excerpt from Morgan Edwards’ *Materials* was very timely and your comments were very true. I, too, would like to see the present make-up of associational correspondence be radically changed (in other words done away with). What in the previous two centuries *may* have been necessary for communication between distant brethren is in no way what we need today. I think I see some agreement in what you wrote on this subject with Elder Berry’s position (with which I, for one, heartily concur). There are those in associations who no more hold to the doctrine which we have been made to believe, but we are “in fellowship” because the associations are “lined-up” that way. In the same manner, there are those who rejoice in the doctrine but because the associations are not “lined up” we cannot sit down together in “Church fellowship.”

Your editorial, “Duty Faith” was also very good in its expose of the conditionalists. I was associated with them for a while (until they excluded me for heresy, i.e., believing in Absolute Predestination). I only wish that you would have also exposed their *universalism* more plainly. Perhaps in another article you will be blessed to do that.

My only suggestion (and it is a minor

one) is that I wish you would have stated that the Ketocton Association of Virginia has been since 1853 a Clark Baptist (now conditionalist) association and not in fellowship with the Predestinarians of that day, i.e., Beebe, Trott, Dudley. I would hate for those who do not know to think that any body of Predestinarian Baptists is in fellowship with them. This is in the Morgan Edwards' excerpt. [I was very much aware that the Predestinarian Old School and Conditional Primitives were separate bodies in the mid-nineteenth century. But I was unaware of the Ketocton's present affiliations or doctrines -. S.P.]

Please do not think that I would make anyone an offender for a word, but "Primitive Baptist" can (as you well know) mean almost anything in this day. Please take this as a suggestion, not a complaint, that a differentiation should be made when talking about those, who as the "seven women" have laid hold of one man and want to eat their own food (have their own doctrine) and wear their own apparel (go about to establish their own righteousness) but want the name of the Man to take away their reproach. They are deceivers of the simple and many other things which could be added here. But I will forbear. You know them well without my telling you.

I was also glad to see the articles by I.K. In my first reading of the old *Gospel Standard*, I had no idea who I.K. was, but knew he wrote the truth. In learning it was John Kay, my opinion did not lessen, but rather grew. He was the best writer that the *Standard* ever had. He wrote a book, *The Inward Kingdom of God*, which I have not been able to find.

Elder Hudson I knew when I lived in Oklahoma. I always thought the world of him. I first met him at Pilgrim Rest Church just out of Fordyce, Ark., and until the trouble struck would see him there and other places in my

travels. I have always enjoyed his writings.

I will close with the prayer that God will continue to bless you for Christ's sake in the work He has called you to do. Is there any way of getting a complete set of the back issues of the paper? I would be glad to purchase them if they are available. May the Lord bless you.

Yours in hope,
Robert N. Lackey

Lexington, Ky. 40503
Sept. 22, 1983

Dear Mr. Phillips,

I have been thinking about you lately and so thought I would write you. There have been many good articles in *The Predestinarian* in the recent issues and I am glad I learned of the paper. In the last issue, your article on "Duty Faith" was very good and from this article and others that you have written, I feel that the Lord has shown you and me some similar truths. I don't know how familiar you are with the "Baptist Bride" group, or the Conditional Primitive Baptists, but you have been shown the same thing concerning them that the Lord has shown me. [I've been "schooled" by the Lord in both of these groups — S.C.P.] I am very familiar with both of these groups and their beliefs — (and I believe that *basically* all the denominations of today are in the same condition). Regardless of what "set of doctrines" they claim to believe, nearly all groups today are filled with worldly people who give no evidence of being different from the world in talk, act, or dress, and so rather than hurt anyone's feelings or take a chance on reducing their numbers, they water the Scriptures down to suit their own situation. The "Baptist Bride" group tell the people that if they don't bring forth good works that they will not be in the "Bride" and will lose many rewards in heaven (but they will still get to heaven!): and the conditional group of

Primitives tell the people that they will only lose blessings in this life if they don't bring forth good works (but they will still get to heaven!) And so is it any wonder that we are in the cold, dead, carnal condition that we are in today? Is it any wonder that the "churches" are filled with worldly people? Surely not! Certainly these are perilous times when evil is called "good" and good is called evil: and men are lovers of *pleasure* more than lovers of God: and because iniquity abounds the love of many has waxed cold! It is sad and discouraging to view the wickedness of non-professors, but how much more so that those who profess to be God's peculiar people partaking of the same wickedness. I don't know your beliefs about these things, and I hope I write this in humbleness and love and not in a holier-than-thou attitude, but I don't believe that God's people should have a T.V. and watch all the ungodliness that is shown on it, and I don't believe God's people should attend movies and other such worldly places. I don't believe God's people should go around half-naked or wear revealing clothes either. It never ceases to amaze me how people can live in the above, but yet talk so freely of God. Maybe I am wrong, but I don't believe that one can be in close communion and fellowship with the Lord and at the same time have their minds on such stuff as is poured through the T.V. screen and go around half dressed. I haven't even touched the tip of the iceberg yet, but hope you can see what I am trying to say.

Please don't misunderstand me. I know that either doing or not doing the above things will not save a man's soul I believe that salvation is *entirely of the Lord from start to finish*, and that God *shall* save all those whom He chose before the foundation of the world and none of them shall be lost. I believe that man is *totally* dead spiritually and *cannot* and *will not* seek God until and unless the God of mercy gives him spiritual life, and even after

possessing spiritual life, the Lord must make us *both to will and to do* of His good pleasure; for without Him we can do *nothing*. All these things are true, but I am afraid that we are resting on a few doctrines and are omitting many others! It is easy to profess to believe in the sovereignty of God, election, predestination, etc.; and to always be talking and preaching on them, but these truths are not all the Scriptures teach. I don't want to be a legalist, and I hope I am not, but regard. less of what I am, I am convinced that "faith without works is dead" and I believe that God's elect people *shall* bring forth good works; not because they are better than other people and not of their own doings, but they shall bring forth good works because God has before ordained that they should walk in them. (John 15:16; Eph. 2:10)

I hope you can understand what I have tried to say. I must confess that I am not perfect and that I fall far short of what I *should be*, and hopefully what I *desire to be*, but this is no excuse for sin. Not only must I war against these *outward* evils, but I find that *inwardly* I am full of sin also. How cold and lifeless I am as I try to read or pray and how my mind wanders. And even worse than this, what lustful worldly thoughts I find in my heart so often! O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death and this deceitful heart? Only the Lord God Omnipotent is *able* and the Lamb *worthy* to deliver me. And so unto Him who loved us and died for us and washed us from our sins in His own blood be glory, power and dominion forever and ever! I am insufficient to even write of these things, and seeing and feeling the sin that is in me, I often fear that I am not born again, but a self righteous hypocrite.

Well, I must stop. Write if you feel led to and I will appreciate it.
In a low place,
(editors withhold name)