

The Remnant

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

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EDITORIAL: ANSWER TO A QUERY

In response to something I wrote in the March-April issue of *The Remnant*, a reader writes:

Dear Brother,

The latest issue of *The Remnant* has designated me as a heretic, and has also denied that I am an “absolute predestinarian”. I speak specifically of the article “Job: God’s answer to all Freewill Systems”, page 11:

“Satan is a living, personal, spirit-being, not merely (as some cults teach) a bad influence within us, or the corruption of our mortal flesh. Such ideas are still more of the Sadducean heresies. When run to its conclusion, the erroneous idea that Satan is our flesh, or a weakness within our flesh, implies two ugly heresies, at least:

(1) that when “the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul,” this error implies that the flesh of Adam was flawed as it came forth from his Maker’s hands, in spite of God’s pronouncement, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.... And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. (Genesis 1:27-31).” This error is the equivalent of charging God with being the author of sin, a heresy of which Absolute Predestinarians are often accused, and which we everywhere deny: “...(as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,” Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just (Romans 3:8).”

Would it be possible for you to expand upon these statements in a future issue of the paper? My request is really two-fold. If “of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things” **how is it that He is not the author of all things? Secondly, do you really feel that all who believe in the Lord’s “causative” absolute predestination of all things actually lead licentious lives?**

Please do not take this enquiry as being antagonistic or acidic in any manner. I have enjoyed taking the paper, and I appreciate you, your efforts, and the help which you have offered me. However, **I feel that the stand of *The Remnant* should be well defined in this area.**

As enabled, please keep this poor, weak, and worthless sinner in your prayers. [Bold emphasis supplied.—Editor]

In a second message he asks more questions. I will address the second set of questions immediately below, on pages 2-4, before I address (on page 4 and following) his above query. To keep repetitive quotes and “he said”s to a minimum, I will insert my comments [in square brackets [like this], if it seems necessary, in order to distinguish my remarks from his] within his paragraphs. For further clarification, I will continue to set his words in different type. In his second message, the writer of the above correspondence said the following:

I know that there is a difference among Old School Baptists on the issue of God’s being the Author of sin, but I have never seen in the pages

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Elder C. C. Morris
Editor and Publisher
P O Box 1004
Hawkins, Texas 75765
Phone 1-903-769-4822

The Remnant is sent free of any obligation
to all interested persons.

Address all correspondence to:

THE REMNANT PUBLICATIONS
P O BOX 1004
HAWKINS, TX 75765-1004

E-mail: cc2morris@aol.com

Web site: www.the-remnant.com

Phone 1-903-769-4822

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*

If the Lord has so willed, we hope to continue Elder Bruce Atkisson's series on the doctrines of grace in our next (September-October) issue.

of "The Remnant" those who hold this view being declared as heretics, or holding to an "ugly heresy". Did I misunderstand that statement in your article?

My observation, such as it might be, is that those who believe God is the author of sin are an extreme minority, disfavored by the overwhelming majority of Old School Baptists, regardless of the factionalism which divides them on other issues. You have not seen anything about this subject in *The Remnant* because it has not been brought up before, at least under my watch. You did not misunderstand me. I believe **saying *God is the author of sin* is an ugly heresy**, and I hope to continue saying it as the Lord gives me life and breath.

I would not contact you with the intention of haranguing you over some issue which we may or may not agree, and if you feel that my concern does not warrant a reply, I would certainly understand as I am nothing and less than nothing. Or, if I have misunderstood, please bear with me and forgive me. However, I cannot see how man could possibly be the "author" of a crucial component in the scheme of salvation. I do not charge God with sin, as He is under no law and it is impossible for Him to sin. I also do not charge that the Lord is anything less than "Holy, and Just, and without iniquity".

I deeply appreciate your first two sentences and the last two. Your points are well taken, and I hope to be thankful that you do not intend to charge God with sin or with being anything less than holy, *etc.* I think, however, your apparently saying man's being the "author" of a crucial component in the scheme of salvation **is the only alternative to saying *God is the author of sin***, if that is your implication, widely misses the mark of the truth.

Our inquirer next says, Yet we are told that He causes evil.

I have found no Bible text that told us "He causes evil" in the sense of *moral evil or sin*. If there is one, I ask your forgiveness, and I ask you to produce it.

Before you say Isaiah 45.7, see the Jerome Zanchius and John Gill quotes, below. If you say Amos 3.6, the same principle applies. Most commentators on these and like texts say that the *evil* under consideration is *calamitous evil and adversity*, such as wars, famines, and storms (Compare Job 1.13-19 with Job 2.10), and *not moral evil*. Saying

“God causes calamitous evil” is a far cry from saying “God approves of and causes unrighteousness.”

Is evil righteous or unrighteous?

Evil in the sense of adversity, as in “we had a **bad** storm,” or “it was a **bad** wreck,” is neither righteous nor unrighteous. Moral evil is unrighteous, of course, but the question is irrelevant since it is building on an invalid point, a nonexistent text.

Aren't we told that all unrighteousness is sin?

This is irrelevant for the same reason.

And if the Lord purposed or predestinated for sin to enter into the world, did He not Authorize it?

This is the logical fallacy of **begging the question** or assuming as a premise the conclusion you are trying to prove. It is also the fallacy of **equivocation**: You seem to equate the noun “Author” (as in “God is the author of sin,” which I do not concede) with the verb “Authorize,” which, if possible, would be worse yet:

Webster's definition of **author** (promoter, originator): One that originates or makes: CREATOR; especially God.

authorize: 1: To invest with esp. legal authority: EMPOWER. 2: To establish by authority: SANCTION. 3: to furnish a ground for: JUSTIFY.

To say God is the author of sin variously means that He would be the promoter of sin, originator of sin, creator of sin, and maker of sin. To say God authorizes sin is even worse, because that would mean He invests sin with legal authority, establishes sin by His authority, and sanctions it. *God does not justify sin*, as the definition of **authorize** demands. In Christ Jesus, He does not justify sin; He justifies *from* sin. Before proceeding further along these lines, I would need from you a clear statement from Scripture saying God sanctions and legally authorizes what He has legally prohibited, which is a contradiction in terms. To your question, “if the Lord purposed or predestinated for sin to enter into the world, did He not Authorize it?” my answer is a categorical “No!”

The faulty syllogism implied by this line of questioning, stripped of the question marks and boldly stated, is, or so it seems to me to be:

God causes [moral] evil
 Evil = unrighteousness = sin
 Therefore, God authorized sin.

This appears to be an attempt to lead me down a path I do not wish to take. Is it not an attempt to make me say, by answering your questions, what you have concluded but you dare not say?

If “of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things” do we need to protect God's Holiness by saying that His authority is less than universal and that sin is not “of Him”?

Do not confuse God's universal *authority*, in the sense of “a person in command” (Webster), which is true, with His being the author of sin or authorizing sin, neither of which is true. I did not say His authority is less than universal. I *do* say sin is not of him, except negatively and remotely. About this and about protecting God's holiness, see the Zanchius quote on page 12 and following. He speaks for me.

I would rather believe that the Lord does not purpose, cause, or authorize only those things which we judge as being holy and just...

It is not a matter of what you or I would rather believe. Millions would rather believe Christ died for everyone, but that does not make it so. Nor is it a matter of what you or I judge to be holy and just.

...but rather all of His works are Holy and Just merely because He does them. [I agree.]

Nor would I aim to justify the transgressions of men or say “Let us do evil, that good may come”.

I am glad you wouldn't. I wouldn't either.

His people are made to hate sin [I agree.], and they are certainly accountable for sin, but are they responsible for it? Are they the authors of it?

As the Bible does not use either word, **accountable** or **responsible**, this question is also irrelevant.

Also, the article stated in certain [sic] terms that Absolute Predestinarians are slanderously reported to say “Let us do evil, that good may come” because they do not hold to the ugly heresy that God is the Author of sin. **The reverse of this is to say** that those who do believe that God is the Author of all things, are not slanderously charged, but justly charged. Is this what you meant to say?

This question also contains the logical fallacy of equivocation and cannot be answered until a number of terms are clarified: (1) for what reason I do not know, you have changed the Scriptures' “slanderously **reported**” to “slanderously **charged**.” This change may or may not signify anything at this point; (2) the term “God is the Author of all things” leaves

me wondering if you have merely substituted a euphemism meaning “God is the Author of all things *including sin*”; (3) do you substitute yet another euphemism, “justly **charged**,” thereby meaning to soften Paul’s “justly **dammned**”—“whose damnation is just”?

Until at least these three questionable points are clarified, I could hardly address just what your statement is the reverse of. But, I do not ask you to respond by giving me the differences between **reported** and **charged**, or those between **charged** and **dammned**, *etc.* Perhaps your questions will be answered, or at least addressed, in what follows.

As for what I meant to say, I meant to say what Paul said, and I thought I said it: “...(as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.”

As for whom Paul means by “*whose damnation is just*,” whether it is those (a) who say, “Let us do evil that good may come,” or, (b) who slanderously report that such is our doctrine: It seems to me that Paul intended (b), those who slanderously report that we preach “Let us do evil that good may come.” But since those who preach “Let us do evil that good may come” give occasion (*via* guilt by association) for the false accusation against us, I would not want to be in either the one’s shoes or the other’s.

Any clarification you can provide on this issue would be greatly appreciated by this poor sinner.

We are certainly going to try.

REPLY TO THE FIRST QUERY

The request is from a highly esteemed brother in another order of Old School Baptists. I would not offend him or anyone else if it could be prevented. In fear and trembling I do rejoice at the opportunity to try to answer his questions. *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God* (2 Corinthians 3.5).

Before I address his questions, though, I must first address on a rather personal note the state of affairs with *The Remnant* and me, the circumstances which no doubt contributed, through the weakness of my flesh, to the vagueness of my language that prompted our brother’s question. You need to know, because the very future of *The Remnant* is affected.

EDITORIAL PROBLEMS

Regarding the confusion resulting from what I wrote in the words he cited above (see page 1), I can only say I am more inclined to mistakes than darkness is prone to reside on the face of the deep. This is especially true since I have worked as I have for four years now as Editor and Publisher. I often put in nineteen and twenty hours at a stretch, never less than eighteen, six and seven days a week. To the detriment of other areas of my life, the majority of that time is spent trying to get the next issue of *The Remnant* written, rewritten (“*Writing is nothing*,” one has said; “*rewriting is everything!*”), edited, and to the print shop on schedule, while trying to juggle my other responsibilities: the churches, *The Remnant*’s correspondence, book orders, bank deposits, phone inquiries, bookkeeping, and updating the mailing list, as well as trying to read the Bible and helpful books, and to maintain the semblance of a family life and a home. *Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother’s children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept* (Song of Solomon 1.6).

So I ask you sincerely, please forgive me if, in the weakness of the moment when I’m writing a paragraph at two or three o’clock in the morning, I sometimes take it for granted that the intent of my written thoughts will be as clear to the reader as they seem to be to me as I try to keep my eyes open, to concentrate, and to continue writing.

Here, may I say, I would be glad beyond words for the luxury of having lots of well-written, doctrinally sound articles pouring into *The Remnant*’s mailbox and stacked on my desk ready to publish. Along with such a blessing of having many such articles, if we had them, I would hope for the resultant luxuries that this might afford me: first, of a regular six hours of sleep per night, and second, my not constantly having to weigh in my mind whether I can afford to take the time away from *The Remnant* to mow the lawn or go to the grocery store.

The Lord is unspeakably gracious and kind to me. I say none of this as an excuse for my weaknesses and imperfections, or to blame anyone other than myself, or as a complaint against my lot. These things are statements of behind-the-scenes facts the readers of *The Remnant* are entitled to know, and I

am now telling all who read this so that, if and when I must reduce the size of *The Remnant*, those who read these words will understand why.

A Lack of Writers and Articles

Lately, the well-written, doctrinally sound articles from the brethren have not been readily forthcoming, and *to beg I am ashamed* (Luke 16.3). *Well-written and doctrinally sound.* We owe this and nothing less to our God and to our readers. For us to consider publishing an article, it must be written reasonably well and doctrinally sound. (For what we think is doctrinally sound, begin with our Principles on page 20. For what we consider well written, see J.C. Tressler's *English in Action* series or any comparably good high school, junior high, or grade school grammar textbook.)

Since Elder Poole committed *The Remnant* into my custodial care in the summer of 1998, I have tried to maintain it as it was entrusted to me, a twenty-page bimonthly. But then, back in 1998 and before, we had several writers who, as blessed of the Lord, often submitted excellent, doctrinal, spiritual, well-written articles. For one reason or another (God knoweth), these brethren have not lately been given from above to write for our pages. One does not edit and publish what he does not have. An Editor needs something to edit, or he must write it himself, or he must publish a smaller paper, or quit. **If we are to maintain a twenty-page magazine, then what others do not write, I must.** That, I believe, must change.

It is either the above alternatives or reprint already reprinted reprints of Philpot, Beebe, and other writers from the past, something we sometimes, but rarely, do. Since reprints of reprints are already available in other formats, that is not our preferred way of doing things.

Elder Poole cannot write any longer due to his failing health. From the human standpoint, if it were not for his deteriorating physical condition in the first place, he would still be the Editor and Publisher of *The Remnant*. In the purpose and providence of God, however, such was not meant to be. Elder Poole (may the Lord bless him in his trials) has yet to complain to me about his afflictions. I know from others, not from him, that they are severe. Please remember Elder Poole and his dear wife, Sister Peggy, in prayer as the Lord gives you the utterance.

We hope and pray that the Lord will raise up other writers for us, and that He will again give the brethren who used to write for these pages a ready mind to continue writing for His honor and glory. **I say the truth and lie not, if it were not for the able writings of Brother Chet Dirkes, Elder Bruce Atkisson, and Elder Stanley Phillips, these who have written more or less regularly during this last year or so, I would have already either gone to a smaller paper or would have had to quit altogether.** The prayers we've asked for Elder and Sister Poole, we would ask for all these brethren who can write and who have written, and this we beg for ourselves, that you would remember us before God's throne of grace as He gives you the mind to do so.

The Unclear Expression

Since my expression in the Job article was unclear to this brother, it may have been unclear to other readers. I will be glad to attempt to clarify for him and for all our readers our editorial or doctrinal policy he has questioned, if I can. I may well "take the long way around," and I've done some of that already; but I hope to be as clear and complete in my expressions herein as I was unclear and incomplete in the March-April issue of *The Remnant*. So, dear reader, please bear with me in my infirmities.

I will now try to address the brother's first inquiry.

The latest issue of *The Remnant* has designated me as a heretic, and has also denied that I am an "absolute predestinarian".

Dear brother in the Lord, I trust: I did not identify you as such. Writing in generalities, I only said that *whoever says God is the author of sin* is a heretic. The only way I would know someone believes "God is the author of sin" is for him to say he believes it, which I *almost* understand your query to say. Perhaps you protested too much, too soon. If I misunderstand you, please forgive me and clarify what you meant. I may not be the only one in this exchange who is capable of writing vague and misleading expressions.

I did not say that anyone who believes God is the author of sin is not an Absolute Predestinarian. Nor did I say that no Absolute Predestinarian believes God is the author of sin. Nor did I say that you are

not an absolute predestinarian. I said, “This error is the equivalent of charging God with being the author of sin, a heresy of which Absolute Predestinarians are often accused, and which we everywhere deny.”

WEBSTER’S DEFINITION OF HERESY

According to Webster, **heresy** means **1 a:** adherence to a religious opinion contrary to church dogma **2 a:** dissent from a dominant theory or opinion in any field **b:** an opinion or doctrine contrary to the truth or to generally accepted beliefs. A **heretic** is **1:** a dissenter from established church dogma **2:** one that dissents from an accepted belief or doctrine of any kind. **Heretical** is of, relating to, or characterized by departure from accepted beliefs or standards.

In harmony with Webster, I would say: The “God is the author of sin” expression is contrary to church dogma, a dissent from the dominant opinion among Absolute Predestinarian Old School Baptists and historical Christianity in its best and broadest sense; it is an opinion or doctrine contrary to the truth and to generally accepted beliefs, and it is a departure from accepted beliefs or standards.

An Absolute Predestinarian can be a heretic (See Elder Frederick W. Keene’s statement on page 17).

As for the *we* in “which *we* everywhere deny,” I could have said as easily, “which *I* everywhere deny,” and perhaps that is what I should have said. As Editor of *The Remnant* *I* deny God is the author of sin. As the called pastor of Saints Rest Church in Dallas, Texas, and four other Predestinarian Primitive Baptist churches in Texas and Oklahoma, *I* deny God is the author of sin. As the called Moderator of the Sulphur Fork Association in east Texas *I* deny God is the author of sin. When I said *we* deny God is the author of sin, I had in mind not only myself, but these churches I try to serve, their sister churches and associations of our affiliation, and the ministerial brethren who share the stand with me. **WE** deny God is the author of sin.

Would it be possible for you to expand upon these statements in a future issue of the paper?...I feel that the stand of The Remnant should be well defined in this area.

I hope our stand in this area *is* well defined, when I am finished with this issue. Since I have never directly addressed this question in *The Remnant*, and

there may be some confusion about some of the issues you have brought up, this issue of *The Remnant* in its entirety is my answer to your request.

My request is really two-fold. If “of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things” how is it that He is not the author of all things?

This question does not boldly ask, “How is it that He is not the author of **sin**?” This seems either commendable or hesitant in the querist. The quotes from Zanchius (page 12ff), who expresses my belief on this, addresses this question well enough.

Secondly, do you really feel that all who believe in the Lord’s “causative” absolute predestination of all things actually lead licentious lives?

Be astonished, O my soul! I am dismayed by this question and its implications. It is so misleading I scarcely know where to begin.

1st, what I “feel” has absolutely nothing to do with any issue I address in print or from the stand. It is true, I have *feelings*, as do all human beings; and I have strong *feelings* about the doctrine and gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and those *feelings* sometimes show through in what I say and write. **But my feelings do not determine my doctrine.** If the Bible Scriptures alone, under the light and leadership of the Holy Spirit of God alone, do not dictate my doctrinal beliefs, regardless of my *feelings*, then I should be immediately removed and discharged from *The Remnant* and anything and everything else having to do with the church and religion.

2nd, I have nothing to do with “the Lord’s ‘causative’ absolute predestination of all things,” since predestination is not “causative”; as will become increasingly clear, I trust, in the historical quotations section, below.

3rd, I would not ordinarily categorize “all who believe” *anything* as leading licentious—or any other kind of—lives. I try to avoid blanket categorizations like this.

4th, Anyway, from whence did this kind of question come? I see nothing in our querist’s quote from my article, or in my article itself, which even remotely implies that I was saying, thinking, or *feeling* that all—or any—who believe in a “causative” predestination actually lead licentious (or any other kind of) lives. I did not mention “causative” predestination at all in my “Job” article, did I? And where did I mention *licentious living*? I didn’t. I am

quoted as saying, “This error is the equivalent of charging God with being the author of sin, a heresy of which Absolute Predestinarians are often accused,” *etc.* How could anyone get “do you really feel that all who believe in the Lord’s ‘causative’ absolute predestination of all things actually lead licentious lives?” from *that*?

A Related Question

I am glad to say our querist seems to have taken no issue with my remarks about Satan’s being a literal, personal spirit-being and not merely a bad but impersonal influence within our flesh. But since our inquirer begins quoting me there, I will go back to the same place. In the Job article, Part 1 (*The Remnant*, March-April, 2002, page 10-11), I said:

Satan is a living, personal, spirit-being, not merely (as some cults teach) a bad influence within us, or the corruption of our mortal flesh. Such ideas are still more of the Sadducean heresies.

Another reader, whom I answered on this very point in private correspondence, asked: *Which cults teach that Satan is the corruption of our mortal flesh? Also, any places where such teaching is articulated or elaborated.* To this I replied, in part:

Some of the **modernists** who deny the supernatural world attempt to explain away the Scriptures by allegorizing them. In so doing, they deny that Satan is a personality and say he is only a metaphor for any evil influence that might lead you astray, including the frailties of the flesh.

There are others, but the “Christadelphianism” cult comes to mind immediately. According to my 1953 copy of William C. Irvine’s “Heresies Exposed,” page 64, this is what **they** teach about Satan:

The Devil is not (as is commonly supposed) a personal supernatural agent of evil, and that, in fact, there is no such BEING in existence. The Devil is a scriptural manifestation of sin in the flesh in its several phases of manifestation—subjective, individual, aggregate, social and political, in history, current experience, and prophecy; after the style of metaphor which speaks of wisdom as a woman, riches as mammon and Satan as the God of this world, sin, as a master, *etc.*

Mr. Irvine draws upon a pamphlet of A. J. Pollock entitled, *Christadelphianism, briefly tested by the Scripture*, but Irvine does not give the source of the Christadelphian quote as given above.

My point as to Satan, or the devil, is this: I affirm exactly what the Christadelphians deny on this point. I believe and affirm, in contradistinction to the above quote from their writings, that the devil IS A PERSONAL SPIRIT-BEING who exists as a personality, a supernatural agent of evil. He is a **he**, not an **it**. He is NOT merely, as they say,

...a manifestation [scriptural or otherwise] of sin in the flesh in its several phases of manifestation—subjective, individual, aggregate, social and political, in history, current experience, and prophecy; after the style of metaphor....

What Is “Modernism”?

Modernism, to which I alluded above, is not merely some appellation I made up. It is a generally understood term within “religion” at large, identifying a school of humanistic religious thought that rejects the concept of divine revelation. *Modernists* are satisfied that human reason is an adequate interpreter of the human experience.

By *modernism*, mentioned above, then, is meant that rationalistic system, which **in general** includes but is not limited to the following points. *Modernism*, also known as religious *liberalism*, while professing to be mainstream Christianity, (1) denies the supernatural, or much of it, (2) denies the creation account as given in the first two chapters of Genesis, (3) denies the biblical account of Adam and Eve being created directly by God in His own image as a race, separate and distinct from all other species of animal life; (4) denies the existence of spirit beings such as angels, archangels, cherubim, seraphim, Satan, demons, and devils; (5) denies the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve, as revealed in Genesis 3, and the fall into sin, death, and ruin of Adam’s and Eve’s as yet unborn posterity in them, (6) denies the resultant inherent total depravity of all of Adam’s posterity, (7) denies the literal virgin birth of Jesus Christ, (8) denies the deity of Christ Jesus, *i.e.*, that He is essentially the second person of the Godhead; (9) denies the divine personality of the Holy Spirit, denying He is the third person of the Godhead;

(10) denies Christ's blood atonement for His people—and indeed denies the very necessity of a blood atonement; (11) denies the literal bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, (12) denies the plenary verbal inspiration of the Scriptures in their original language, as God the Holy Spirit moved men to write the very letters and words, down to the very jots and tittles; and modernism denies many other cardinal doctrines of the gospel of Christ.

On their “positive” side, we are safe in saying that *modernists in general* advocate (1) Darwinian evolution, (2) Freudian psychology, and the ideas that (3) the biblical accounts of the creation, the fall of man, and the flood during Noah's day, *etc.*, are myths not to be understood literally; (4) all mankind are the children of God, (5) there is a spark of divinity in all of us, and that this spark merely needs encouragement; (6) Jesus was a good man in the sense we are all good, (7) Jesus was a wise teacher such as Confucius, the Buddha, Mohammed, and many others; (8) the Holy Spirit is only God's good influence, and (9) Satan is only bad influences and tendencies within us and within society, which can be overcome by education, psychology, and culture; (10) the world is really getting better and better, and (11) the miracles of the Scripture, including the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, are only figurative, metaphorical, allegorical myths that are not meant to be taken literally. The *modernist* may hold to many similar and related heresies.

Modernism generally dominates the major “Christian” denominations of our day, but it finds its roots in the doctrines of the Sadducees, as summarized in Acts 23.8: *For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit.* We emphasize that modernists *in general* hold to those points enumerated above, realizing there may be some individuals within modernistic circles who do not subscribe to each and every error we have listed. But the above explains in general what I mean by the terms *modernism* and *modernist*.

The Heresy Problem

Then I said: *When run to its conclusion, the erroneous idea that Satan is our flesh, or a weakness within our flesh, implies two ugly heresies, at least: (1) that when “the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nos-*

trils the breath of life; and man became a living soul,” this [please see the next paragraph—Ed.] error implies that the flesh of Adam was flawed as it came forth from his Maker's hands, in spite of God's pronouncement, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them....And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. (Genesis 1:27-31).”

I am sure there is a question in at least some minds as to what the antecedent of **this** is, in the phrase, *this error implies that the flesh of Adam....*

What is “**this** error”? Is it “*the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul*”? Of course not, but I can see how the wording, as I left it, might be confusing.

I meant the antecedent of “**this** error” to be the error *that Satan is [only] our flesh or a weakness within our flesh.*

It is the erroneous idea that *Satan is our flesh, or a weakness within our flesh*, which contributes to **the two errors or heresies I cited, namely:**

(1) The error that the flesh of Adam was flawed as it (he) came from his Maker's hands, in spite of God's pronouncing everything He had made, including Adamic flesh, “very good”; and,

(2) The error that “since Jesus was tempted of Satan, then He must have had sinful flesh.”

Both of these positions are heresies of the first magnitude, the first being blasphemy against the Lord Jesus Christ as the Creator God (John 1.1-4, Colossians 1.13-17, Hebrews 1.1-4), and the second being blasphemy against the Lord Jesus Christ as the sinless Savior.

On the latter point, the implied syllogism is something akin to this:

Satan is only an evil principle in our flesh;

Satan tempted Christ;

Therefore, Christ was tempted by an evil principle in His flesh.

The argument is false in its conclusion because its major premise, “Satan is only an evil principle in our flesh,” is false. Paul says, “God sending his own Son *in the likeness of* sinful flesh,” but he does not say that God sent His own Son *in* sinful flesh. “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all

points *tempted* like as we are, *yet without sin* (Hebrews 4.15).”

His virgin birth was designed of God in this respect to circumvent Jesus Christ’s inheriting Adam’s sin (through an earthly father). The Father of Jesus of Nazareth is God Himself; yet Jesus *was* virgin-born into the race of mankind, made of a woman, so He would have the flesh of a man: “Forasmuch **then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same**; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2.14).” I repeat from the earlier article,

If that were the case [i.e., the heretical idea that Jesus Christ had sinful flesh], [then] His virgin birth was for naught, He was a mere sinner such as you and I, and we have no hope of a Savior.

If my doctrinal position regarding Jesus Christ’s sinless, holy, righteous, perfect humanity needs further clarification, I will be glad to try to oblige.

Was Adam Flawed?

Next, I said: *This error is the equivalent of charging God with being the author of sin, a heresy of which Absolute Predestinarians are often accused, and which we everywhere deny...*

The antecedent of the word **this** in “*This error*” was meant to be the error that **the flesh of Adam was flawed as it came forth from his Maker’s hands.**” I am sorry this was not more clear.

To clarify my statement, what I am saying is, *there was nothing whatsoever “wrong” with Adam as he was created. God did not create him a sinner.*

Nowhere does the Bible say Adam was created *perfect*. But again, nowhere does the Bible say Adam was created *a sinner*. He was, as part of God’s creation, “**very good** (Genesis 1.31).”

Solomon said, “Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man **upright**; but they have sought out many inventions (Ecclesiastes 7.29).” I understand “upright” to mean Adam was upright morally and spiritually, and all that implies, and not merely that he was standing upright, as opposed to going on all fours as do the beasts. But “perfect”? No. Perfection in the sense of being incapable of sin is an attribute of God alone. As far as I can tell from

the Scriptures, all created beings, from mankind to the highest of the angelic hosts, have the capacity to sin if they are not individually kept by the sustaining grace and power of God.

In this regard Paul said, “For the creature [Greek, *ktisis*] was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature [*ktisis*] itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that **the whole creation [*ktisis*]** groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now (Romans 8.20ff).” It is my understanding that *ktisis* includes mankind, but it is more than that. It is the entire creation, as verse 22 and the definition of the Greek word *ktisis* makes clear.

When Paul said “not willingly,” he does not at all mean it was **God** who was unwilling to have it so, for God “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will (Ephesians 1.11).” It is the creatures themselves—you, I, and all mankind—who, due to our inherent depravity, are unwilling to be made subject to vanity by the will of God. But God, according to His perfect wisdom and will, had a reason for making His creation subject to vanity; hence Paul’s “**by reason of Him** who hath subjected the same in hope.” God’s reason as Paul gives it is, “because the creature [*ktisis*, creation] itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

But there would be no “*deliverance* from the bondage of corruption” unless there were first a bondage of corruption from which the creation could be delivered and shall be delivered.

This leads directly to the gospel of Christ, His salvation of His people, and His eternally being “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Deliverance, in the sense of Romans 8.21, is another word for salvation. If His people were not under the bondage of corruption, why would they need deliverance or salvation from it? They would not. Then how would God demonstrate His grace and salvation if there were none to whom He would be gracious and there were none to save? And if they were not under the bondage of corruption and in need of deliverance from it, what becomes of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in it the display of God’s attributes of love, grace, righteousness,

mercy, wrath, judgment, and holiness? “For therein [i.e., in the gospel, Romans 1.16] is **the righteousness of God** revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For **the wrath of God** is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1.17f).” Beyond this, as lovely as the theme of the gospel is, I cannot digress further at this time.

Adam, then, was created “very good” and made “upright,” but “subject to vanity”; and then God told him, “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Not, “If you eat thereof, you will die,” but just exactly what God said. It was decreed eternally that Adam would eat and die.

Again, we cannot now hope to go into all that transpired between Genesis 1.26 and the end of chapter 3. What we do know from the Scriptures is that Adam sinned, and that God was not in complicity with him in that sin. Before the original creation, it was certain, fixed, and therefore what we call “predestinated” that Adam would sin, because the Scriptures tell us Jesus Christ was foreordained as the Lamb slain *from* (Revelation 13.8) and *before* (1 Peter 1.18-21) the foundation of the world. The eternally decreed death of the Lamb of God was for the sins of His people. If there were somehow no sins from which to save them, then what would have become of God’s eternal purpose entailed in the Lamb’s being slain from eternity: namely, to save His people from their **sins**?

Yet, God was not in collusion with either Satan or Adam in this fall into sin. God for all practical purposes left Adam alone. Thereby He proved and demonstrated for all time the fundamental principle that man cannot stand without the grace of God continually, continuously, and momentarily sustaining him in all things he is and does.

Answer this rhetorical question, if you will: “Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with Thee, which frameth mischief [Hebrew, *amal*] by a law (Psalm 94.20)?” One of the many ways *amal* is rendered in the King James Version is *iniquity*. The psalmist is addressing God (see the preceding verses). A clearer rendering of this question might be, “Shall

the throne of iniquity, which frames iniquity by a law, have fellowship with Thee?”

The implied answer is of course, no, ten thousand times no! God has no fellowship with those who frame iniquity by a law; how much more does He Himself not participate in iniquity? “What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial (2 Corinthians 6.14f)?”

Paul says, “Wherefore, **as by one man sin entered** into the world, and death by sin... (Romans 5.12).” He does not say, “as by Satan sin entered into the world,” or “as by the devil sin entered into the world”; much less does he say, “Wherefore, as by God sin entered into the world...” This fact stands. It stands, even though we are given to know that God could have prevented sin from entering the world, and more particularly He could have prevented Adam (and Eve) from sinning, had it been His desire, His mere sovereign pleasure to do so; for, “**What His soul desireth, even that He doeth** (Job 23.13),” and “...being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1.11).”

As plainly as we know how, we therefore deny that Adam was flawed in any way as he was created, made, and formed by God. To say otherwise (*i.e.*, to say that God built a sinful tendency into Adam) in effect would say that God caused Adam to sin by building a sinful character-flaw into him. If that were true, it seems to me that it *would* imply that God, not Adam, was the author, originator, and cause of Adam’s sin. It is from this line of reasoning from the Scriptures that I based my statement,

This error is the equivalent of charging God with being the author of sin, a heresy of which Absolute Predestinarians are often accused, and which we everywhere deny.

Nor is this line of reasoning something I alone have recently invented. As I will presently demonstrate, this has been the mainstream position of the Old School (Primitive) Baptists and their spiritual forebears since this controversy was first thrust upon them.

First, though, to be candid, I do not deny that there are those who call themselves “Absolute Predestinarian Primitive (Old School) Baptists,” “Absoluters,” or some similar appellation, who openly advocate the heresy that “God is the author of sin.” Some of them I have known have called me an “Arminian,” saying I am “weak on predestination” because I would not join them in their blasphemy.

There is only one man I know of who canceled his subscription to *The Remnant* because (by God’s grace) I would not join in saying God is the author of sin. Years ago, another Elder of the God-is-the-author-of-sin variety told some inquirers that I was “soft on predestination” because I did not preach that God is the author of sin as he did. It would be amusing, even laughable, if it were not so serious: The Arminian Conditionalists say we go too far, and say our doctrine “*makes* God the author of sin” (as if man could make God *anything*), while these others who actually *do* preach that God is the author of sin say we are Conditionalists or Arminians who do not go nearly far enough! *But wisdom is justified of her children* (Matthew 11.19).

We cannot prevent their calling themselves “Absoluters,” or anything else they wish to call themselves, any more than we can prevent Arminians from calling themselves “Old Line Primitive Baptists” to fool the multitudes. Just because a terrorist calls himself a “family man” does not mean all family men are terrorists. But for what it is worth, *we* withhold affiliation from anyone we know who openly says God is the author of sin.

IS PREDESTINATION “CAUSATIVE”?

I am not merely playing with words here. I do *not* believe predestination is causative, and to my recollection I have never advocated a “causative predestination,” either from the stand or in writing. Personally, I have borne with that kind of language or implication (that “predestination is causative”) in others, as may have been occasionally (and if so, rarely) suggested by some of the brethren, because at the time no one of my affiliation sought to make an issue of it, and it passed relatively unnoticed. In any case, I do believe the Scriptures teach that **there is something greater than predestination that causes all things including predestination**. My position is

as stated on page 20 in Principle #3: “The will of the eternal God is the first cause of all causes.”

Behind predestination is the eternal purpose and counsel of God. “In whom 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** (Ephesians 1.11).” Few people I know ever seem to inquire into God’s eternal purpose. **Purpose** has to do with the **reason behind why** something is done. God has a purpose for all that transpires; hence, absolute predestination ensures that His purpose will be accomplished in all things. “**Every purpose is established by counsel:** and with good advice make war (Proverbs 20.18).” So, the Lord’s counsel underlies His purpose.

Without the *counsel* of God’s *will*, which in eternity settled forever His *purpose*, there would have been no *predestination*. Further, without God’s *willing* it, there would have been no eternal counsel. So, behind predestination is God’s counsel, and behind His counsel is the expression of His *will*. His counsel is **of** (*i.e.*, finds its source in) His own **will**. This position is much stronger than a causative predestination, because it is scriptural, direct, and it traces all things and events of eternity and time back to the will of God Himself.

So now I am comfortably ensconced between two extremist positions: One is that of the Conditionalists, who, failing to comprehend anything greater than their own merit, insist that our position somehow “makes God the author of sin.” The other is that of the God-is-the-Author-of-Sin people who say I am an Arminian, “soft on predestination,” because I refuse to say “God is the author of sin.” Between these two extremes I long to be.

QUOTES FROM HISTORY

I will now give some quotations from Old School Baptist brethren and other predestinarians of earlier days that reflect our position. Where possible, I have tried to retain the authors’ original spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization as they wrote and published these quotes.

Before beginning, I know that simply multiplying quotes from the past does not establish the truthfulness of any doctrine (*e.g.*, ten thousand thousand quotes and comments favoring infant baptism would not prove its validity). What quoting the church’s

patriarchs does do, however, is, it substantiates the doctrinal position of our spiritual forefathers. Although some may disagree with any or all of the conclusions of these brethren, this at the very least establishes a historical precedent for our present position.

I am grateful and deeply indebted to the late Elder C. M. Haygood of Sulphur Springs, Texas, for much of the following research and documentation. I also thank Elder Bruce Atkisson for his providing some of the quoted citations, including those from John Calvin and Dr. John Gill.

JEROME ZANCHIUS (1516-1590)

In 1960, I came to Texas looking for the people who endorse three documents: (1) The 1611 King James Version of the Holy Scriptures, (2) the Baptist Confession of Faith issued in London in 1689, and (3) *Absolute Predestination*, by Jerome Zanchius (also Zanchi or Zanchy). In God's grace and providence, I was led to Saints Rest Predestinarian Primitive Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas. This, my home church, and their affiliated brethren have kindly and lovingly allowed me to live and travel among them ever since. In the ensuing forty-two years, I have shared Zanchi's book with the brethren at home and away, and I've never had reason to regret my whole-hearted endorsement of it. Further, as far as I know, all of the brethren with whom I've shared it have also enthusiastically embraced its contents.

Jerome Zanchius wrote the book synonymous with his name, *Absolute Predestination*, over four hundred years ago. Although Arminians, Pelagians, and Conditionalists of every stripe have railed against this magnificent treatise for over four centuries, it has been said that no enemy of the truth of the doctrine of predestination has ever made a serious attempt to write a refutation to it. I begin, then, with Zanchius:

From what has been laid down, it follows that Augustine, Luther, Bucer, the scholastic divines, and other learned writers are not to be blamed for asserting that "God may in some sense be said to will the being and, commission of sin." For, was this contrary to His determining will of permission, either He would not be omnipotent, or sin could have no

place in the world; but He is omnipotent, and sin has a place in the world, which it could not have if God willed otherwise; for who hath resisted His will? (Rom. ix). No one can deny that God permits sin, but He neither permits it ignorantly nor unwillingly, therefore knowingly and willingly...Luther steadfastly maintains this in his book *de Serv. Arbitr.* And Bucer in Rom. i. However, it should be carefully noticed: (1) That God's permission of sin does not arise from His taking delight in it; on the contrary, sin, as sin, is the abominable thing that His soul hateth, and His efficacious permission of it is for wise and good purposes. Whence the observation of Augustine, "God, who is no less omnipotent than He is supremely and perfectly holy, would never have permitted evil to enter among His works, but in order that He might do good even with that evil," *i.e.*, over-rule it for good in the end. (2) That God's free and voluntary permission of sin lays no man under any forcible or compulsive necessity of committing it; consequently the Deity can by no means be termed the author of moral evil, to which He is not, in the proper sense of the word, accessory, but only remotely or negatively so, inasmuch as He could, if He pleased, absolutely prevent it.

We should, therefore, be careful not to give up the omnipotence of God under a pretence of exalting His holiness; He is infinite in both, and therefore neither should be set aside or obscured. To say that God absolutely nills the being and commission of sin, while experience convinces us that sin is acted every day, is to represent the Deity as a weak, impotent being, who would fain have things go otherwise than they do, but cannot accomplish His desire. On the other hand, to say that He willeth sin doth not in the least detract from the holiness and rectitude of His nature, because, whatever God wills, as well as whatever He does, cannot be eventually evil: materially evil it may be, but, as was just said, it must ultimately be directed to some wise and just end, otherwise He could not will it; for His will is righteous and good, and the sole

rule of right and wrong, as is often observed by Augustine, Luther, and others. (From Zanchius' chapter on *The Will of God*, Position 10)

...God does not, immediately and *per se*, infuse iniquity into the wicked; but, as Luther expresses it, powerfully excites them to action, and withholds those gracious influences of His Spirit, without which every action is necessarily evil. That God either directly or remotely excites bad men as well as good ones to action cannot be denied by any but Atheists, or by those who carry their notions of free-will and human independency so high as to exclude the Deity from all actual operation in and among His creatures, which is little short of Atheism. Every work performed, whether good or evil, is done in strength and by the power derived immediately from God Himself, "in whom all men live, move, and have their being" (Acts xvii 28). As, at first, without Him was not anything made which was made, so, now, without Him is not anything done which is done. We have no power or faculty, whether corporal or intellectual, but what we received from God, subsists by Him, and is exercised in subserviency to His will and appointment. It is He who created, preserves, actuates and directs all things. But it by no means follows, from these premises, that God is therefore the cause of sin, for sin is nothing but **ανομία**, illegality, want of conformity to the Divine law (1 John iii 4), a mere privation of rectitude; consequently, being itself a thing purely negative, it can have no positive or efficient cause, but only a negative and deficient one, as several learned men have observed.

Every action, as such, is undoubtedly good, it being an actual exertion of those operative powers given us by God for that very end; God therefore may be the author of all actions (as He undoubtedly is), and yet not be the Author of evil. An action is constituted evil three ways—by proceeding from a wrong principle, by being directed to a wrong end, and by being done in a wrong manner. Now, though

God, as we have said, is the efficient cause of our actions as actions, yet, if these actions commence sinful, that sinfulness arises from ourselves.... (From Zanchius' chapter on *The Omnipotence of God*, Position 3)

God is the creator of the wicked, but not of their wickedness; He is the author of their being, but not the infuser of their sin.

It is most certainly His will (for adorable and unsearchable reasons) to permit sin, but, with all possible reverence be it spoken, it should seem that He cannot, consistently with the purity of His nature, the glory of His attributes and the truth of His declarations, be Himself the author of it. "Sin," says the apostle, "entered into the world by one man," meaning by Adam, consequently it was not introduced by the Deity Himself. Though without the permission of His will and the concurrence of His providence, its introduction had been impossible, yet is He not hereby the Author of sin so introduced. (From Zanchius' chapter, *Of Reprobation or Predestination as it Respects the Ungodly*, Position 5)

Here the author adds this footnote:

It is a known and very just maxim of the schools, *Effectus sequitur causam proximam*: "An effect follows from, and is to be inscribed to, the last immediate cause that produced it." Thus, for instance, if I hold a book or a stone in my hand, my holding it is the immediate cause of its not falling; but if I let it go, my letting it go is not the immediate cause of its falling: it is carried downwards by its own gravity, which is therefore the *causa proxima effectus*, the proper and immediate cause of its descent. It is true, if I had kept my hold of it, it would not have fallen, yet still the immediate, direct cause of its fall is its own weight, not my quitting my hold. The application of this to the providence of God, as concerned in sinful events, is easy. Without God, there could have been no creation; without creation, no creatures; without creatures, no sin. Yet is

not sin chargeable on God: for, *effectus sequitur causam proximam*.

In leaving Zanchius, observe that (1) his views are substantiated by an abundance of quotes from Augustine, Luther, and Bucer (and many others, elsewhere in his book), some of the greater lights of his era and those preceding his own. This shows that in his day Zanchius was hardly “unorthodox.” Also note that (2) Zanchius originally wrote *Absolute Predestination* in Latin. The book was translated into the English language by Augustus M. Toplady, the author of *Rock of Ages*, *Prepare Me*, *Gracious God*, and many other hymns. It has been said that Toplady’s enthusiasm for the doctrine of Absolute Predestination shows so powerfully in his translation of Zanchi that the book could almost be thought of as Toplady’s own writing on the subject. Give **that** a thought the next time you sing *Rock of Ages*.

JOHN CALVIN

Although Calvin was certainly not a Baptist, we have in other issues of *The Remnant* shown how, doctrinally, he was heavily influenced by the Baptists of his day. Perhaps no one in history is more associated in people’s minds with the doctrine of predestination than John Calvin. Prolific writer that he was, he addressed the issue of whether God was the author of sin or no. Writing about Satan, Calvin says:

“...John in his Epistle...says that he [Satan] “sinneth from the beginning” (1 John iii. 8), implying that **he is the author, leader, and contriver of all malice and wickedness**.

16. But as the devil was created by God, we must remember that this malice which we attribute to his nature is not from creation, but from depravation. **Everything damnable in him he brought upon himself, by his revolt and fall. Of this Scripture reminds us, lest by believing that he was so created at first, we should ascribe to God what is most foreign to his [i.e., God’s] nature.**” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin, Book 1, Chapter XIV, Sections 15-16. Bold emphasis and bracketed words supplied—Ed.)

VIII. We believe that he [God] not only created all things, but that he governs and directs them, disposing and ordaining by his sovereign will all that happens in the world; **not that he is the author of evil, or that the guilt of it can imputed to him, as his will is the sovereign and infallible rule of all right and justice**; but he has wonderful means of so making use of devils and sinners that he can turn to good the evil which they do, and of which they are guilty.... (From the *French Confession of Faith of 1559*, written by John Calvin. Bold emphasis and bracketed word supplied—Ed.)

JOHN GILL

Do not err, my beloved brethren. “For to make God the author of sin, or to charge him with being concerned in temptation to sin, is a very great error, a fundamental one, which strikes at the nature and being of God, and at the perfection of his holiness: it is a denying of him, and is one of those damnable errors and heresies, which bring upon men swift destruction; and therefore to be guarded against, rejected, and abhorred by all that profess any regard unto him, his name and glory.” (*John Gill’s Commentary* on James 1.16)

“*I make peace, and create evil*; peace between God and men is made by Christ, who is God over all; spiritual peace of conscience comes from God, through Christ, by the Spirit; eternal glory and happiness is of God, which saints enter into at death; peace among the saints themselves here, and with the men of the world; peace in churches, and in the world, God is the author of, even of all prosperity of every kind, which this word includes: ‘evil’ is also from him; *not the evil of sin*; this is not to be found among the *creatures* God made; *this is of men, though suffered by the Lord, and overruled by him for good*: but the evil of punishment for sin, God’s sore judgments, famine, pestilence, evil beasts, and the sword, or war, which latter may more especially be intended, as it is opposed to peace; this usually is the effect of sin; may be sometimes lawfully engaged in; whether on a good or bad foundation is permitted by God; moreover, all afflictions, adversities, and calamities, come under this name, and are of God.” (*John Gill’s Commentary* on Isaiah 45.7)

THE LONDON BAPTIST CONFESSION OF 1689

The English Baptists in the year 1689 published this Confession of Faith, which was reaffirmed by the American Baptists in the Philadelphia Confession of 1742. Both confessions contain the following statement under the heading of God's Decree: "...yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin, nor hath fellowship with any therein; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."

ELDER GILBERT BEEBE

This Elder and prolific writer is well known to those who name the name of Old School or Primitive Baptists. In 1832, the year he began his periodical, *Signs of the Times*, he was an active participant in the meeting in Black Rock, Maryland.

In the case of Joseph, we are taught that notwithstanding the foreknowledge and determinate counsel of God, which bounds the rage and wickedness of all beings that exists, men and devils act voluntarily in sin, without the least regard to the purpose or decree of God; of whose purpose or decree they are totally unconscious...men and devils act from wicked motives, with wicked hands, God means it for good; overrules even their wicked acts and murderous designs for his glory, and the good of all such as are the called according to His purpose.... (Elder Gilbert Beebe, *Signs of the Times* March 19, 1834)

That the purpose and predestination of all things do not exculpate men from blame, nor involve the Supreme Jehovah as the author of sin, in the manner urged by the opponents of the doctrine, is very apparent from what is recorded in connection with the events to which we have made allusion. Although Christ was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; those who were charged with his crucifixion were guilty of doing it with wicked hands. They acted as voluntarily and maliciously as though no such determinate counsel had determined beforehand what they should do...Every intelligent being knows that in committing sin, he acts voluntarily, and follows the impulse of his own depraved

nature, and every one who is born of God and taught by his Spirit, knows that sin is the opposite of holiness; that God is holy, and that sin is of the devil, and not of God. (Elder Gilbert Beebe, *Signs of the Times* May 1, 1858.)

Men act voluntarily when they commit sin; they have no more knowledge of or respect for the purpose of God, than Joseph's brethren or Potiphar's wife had in his case, for there is no fear of God before their eyes...Yet such is the wisdom, power and righteous government of our God that He can and does *set the exact bounds* by which the wickedness of men and devils is *limited*, and beyond which they cannot go.... (Elder Gilbert Beebe, *Signs of the Times*, October 1, 1880)

ELDER SAMUEL TROTT

Elder Samuel Trott, in an article entitled "The Absolute Predestination of All Things, Part 1," published in the *Signs of the Times* (Volume 2, dated February 24, 1834), explains the Greek word *proorizo*, from which we get the word *predestination*, this way: "*Pro* = before, and *Orizo* = to bound, or limit, to determine, to define &c., and is derived from the theme: *oros* = a bound or limit, or the end of a thing. Hence the literal signification of the word used is: *a fixing before, the bound or limit, of a thing or event.*" (*Select Writings of Samuel Trott*, page 53f.)

Again Elder Trott explains, "...God decreed or predestinated every wicked act, which He permits man to perform, so that man does not act out any part of the enmity or corruption of his heart further than God has predestinated to permit him, and so that every act, however vile, has its allotted place in the government of God, and accomplishes the very purpose for which it was designed in the eternal council." (*Ibid.*, page 56)

Elder Trott ends his companion piece, "Further Remarks relative to Predestination" (*Ibid.*, pages 72-76) with these words: "Thus the *predestination* of God, instead of making God *the author of sin*, secured that all the glory of redemption should result from the malice of Satan and the native weakness of man." (Italics are Elder Trott's.—Ed.)

ELDER J. R. HARDY

“It is taught, and I suppose believed by some, that the term absolute if connected with predestination means causative, and therefore all predestination that is absolute is the cause of everything coming to pass that is predestinated. Absolute as defined by Webster means:

“1st. Free or independent of anything extraneous.

“2nd. Complete in itself, positive, as an absolute declaration.

“3rd. Unconditional, as an absolute promise.

“4th. Existing independent of any other cause, as God is absolute.

“5th. Unlimited by extraneous power or control, as absolute government.

“Now these are the different phases of meaning that are given the word absolute according to its different uses, and if anyone can see the meaning causation that some so delight to charge to this word, they can see more than it means.”

ELDER JONAS C. SIKES

Elder Sikes and Elder J. R. Hardy were together the presbytery that constituted Saints Rest Predestinarian Primitive Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, within a month or so of the Fort Worth Council in 1902. Elder Sikes had no equal in his day as a God-blessed doctrinal preacher and a gifted, brilliant debater.

A question was once sent to Elder Sikes, asking, *If God's predestination embraces all the wicked works of men and devils, as well as it does His own works, and bears the same relation to both, how does it appear that he is the cause of what he predestinates on the one hand, and not on the other?* To this dishonestly-worded question, Elder Sikes replied:

Answer: Let me first disabuse your mind relative to the clause, “and bears the same relation to both.” I know of no one who believes this, and certainly I do not, neither have I so read. It is at once self-evident that there is and must be a radical difference between their wicked works and God's own works, wrought by His Spirit and grace, which are always works of holiness; therefore it is impossible for His predestination to bear the same relation to wickedness that it does to

holiness. For all sin and wickedness proceedeth from and are the works of unholy creatures, but all sinless righteousness proceedeth from God, who is infinitely holy, and is wrought in the hearts and lives of His saints by His Holy Spirit and gracious power. You plainly see the difference. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” So He is the source of righteousness and holy obedience, and the only source of salvation unto holiness. On the other hand, all sin and unholiness have their source in guilty creatures, whether men or devils, and God is not the author, neither the doer or the cause of their wickedness. Therefore, it is evident that His predestination is not the prompting, inciting or impelling cause thereof.

Neither God's predestination nor His foreknowledge influences the action of men either in righteousness or unrighteousness. But God (not His predestination nor His foreknowledge) does cause or influence man to act in all that he does that is spiritually good: but He never causes nor influences him to do that which is wrong.

Also by Elder J. C. Sikes: “The predestination of a wicked act does not make God the author of sin. We do not believe that God is in any way the author or approver of sin. God's predestination does not cause or influence any to sin. When men sin they act willingly with evil intention and are both accountable to God and justly punishable for their sins. God's free and unchangeable decree of all things does not justify men in their sins, and we would not fellowship a man who would try to use this doctrine as a cloak for his sins.”

Also by Elder Sikes: “The advocates of limited predestination have hatched a new definition to predestination, and make it mean to authorize, to cause, or to influence. This is their own definition and not ours. So when we say predestination, they apply their new definition and say that we make God the author of sin. But strange to say when they get on the crucifixion of Christ, they will not have their own definition.”

Also by Elder Sikes: “Those who regard predestination as causative and contend that God is the

author of all he has predestinated to take place in the world, can never, according to that argument, get around the position that God is the author of the murder of His own innocent Son, unless they can show a meaning of the word predestination, and the words found in Acts 4:28 'For to do whatsoever Thy hand and Counsel determined before to be done.' I do not believe that God is the author of sin, and those who took and crucified the Saviour were moved thereto by and without consideration of God or godliness and the same is true of all the sinful acts of men from the first transgression. Yet it is clearly evident, that the things done by Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles and the people of Israel, when they were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ were predestinated. But to say that the above makes 'God the author of sin,' is to charge Him foolishly, and reply against Him. Man is the author of sin, for it is "...by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

ELDER H. B. JONES

"We believe that God's eternal and Holy purpose embraces all things whatsoever comes to pass, as 'The Lord of hosts hath sworn saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed so shall it stand.' That God has purposed that all righteousness shall come to pass by His authority and influence, and that all unrighteousness shall come to pass without His authority and influence; as is most explicitly set forth in the London Confession of Faith of the Baptist of 1689, and reaffirmed by them in the Philadelphia Confession of 1742, upon the authority of the Holy Scriptures. We do not believe that the *predestination of God* is the *cause* which moves men to action either in righteousness or unrighteousness; but that all righteous acts are the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and that all unrighteous acts are the works of the flesh under the influence of Satan. Therefore we do not believe that God is or can be either the author or approver of sin, as we have been unjustly accused."

ELDER FREDERICK W. KEENE

"There are many millions of Christless predestinarians in the world today. The Mohammedans are firm believers in the predestination of all things, but

they do not know our precious Savior Jesus Christ. According to Josephus, the Pharisees were predestinarians, but with the exception of a remnant of them according to the election of grace they were enemies of God and of Christ. Let not any one think that I am making light of predestination, for with all my heart I believe in God's predestination of all things." ("Predestination," 1926, pamphlet by Elder Frederick W. Keene, page 1)

"Does any one imagine God's predestination is an excuse, license, to continue in sin? If there is any such person let him know that he does not know the grace of God, and let not his seared conscience flatter him that all is well with him, for the grace of God is an effectual teacher. Read Titus 2:11-14, and the "us" of whom the apostle speaks find this grace effectual to denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts... Instead of wickedly imagining that we have license to sin because grace abounds, if we know the grace of God in truth, col. 1.6, we shall exclaim, "God forbid." Rom. 6:2." (*Ibid.*, page 12)

B. L. BEEBE (Son of Elder Gilbert Beebe)

"There has been an effort to make it appear that the *Signs* advocates and its patrons believe, that God, or the Holy Spirit of God, prompts man to sin. Some have even gone so far as to say that with us a man can commit any sin, and if arraigned before the Church, he can plead that it was all predestinated, and we are obliged to accept his plea and can take no further action in Church discipline.

"Now if anyone will show us a single number of the *Signs of the Times* in which any such a sentiment is published, either in the editorial or correspondents' columns, we will make a public acknowledgement of the error, if in an editorial or if by a correspondent, we will refute the same, and beg the forgiveness of our brethren for having published it.

"Does it then follow that we are led or prompted by the Holy Spirit to sin? God forbid."

ELDER W. N. GREEN (1866-1949)

Elder Green was the long-time pastor of Little Flock Primitive Baptist Church in Altus, Oklahoma. At the time of his departure from this life, he was pastor of Little Flock Church in Altus and churches in Mangum, Oklahoma, and in Amarillo, Texas. He

was a powerful, well-beloved preacher and pastor among those whom he served, and he was well received by the brethren among whom he traveled and preached for so many years. In his booklet, "The Experience and Writings of Elder W. N. Green," he wrote:

Predestination doesn't have any effect whatever upon the coming to pass of the events of time, neither aiding nor hindering them. Predestination is not causative now, nor never has been." ("The Experience and Writings of Elder W. N. Green," Chapter entitled "Predestination, As I See It," page 13.)

This would be a most amazing statement for a man to get away with, unchallenged by men like Elders Sikes, Hardy, Rhodes, and others, if the prevailing opinion of the Absolute Predestinarian Primitive Baptists of that day had been that predestination is causative!

"Then can an event fail to come to pass that God decreed should come to pass, or can any event not yet come be sure to come without God determining it shall be? To not accept this would destroy God as a sovereign...*This doctrine neither makes God the author of sin, nor having any fellowship therewith, for God is eternal, immortal, without the beginning of days or the end of time...*they say that kind of doctrine would get God into trouble, and get him mixed up in sin entering the world. *Perish the thought.* God in his entirety is divine and eternal and cannot be touched or influenced by the corruptness of sin. All corruption and sin came into the world by and through an act of the creature God made. God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man...The law was holy and just, because it came from the eternal God, but the violation of that law came by man. (*Ibid.*, page 24.)"

ELDER R. W. RHODES

Elder Rhodes, of Lillie, Louisiana, was beloved of the brethren and churches whom he served and preached for decades in Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Alabama, and elsewhere. Together with Elder C. E. Turner of Amarillo, Texas, he conducted the funeral of Elder W. N. Green (above). In his 1943 debate on predestination with the

Conditionalist Elder Ariel West, Elder Rhoades denied that God is the author of sin, and at least eight times he denied that predestination was or is causative.

THE FORT WORTH COUNCIL, 1902

This called council, representing seven associations and six states, convened at, and at the request of, the Old School Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, on October 21-23, 1902. This assembly met to address a number of controversies disturbing the Old School or Primitive Baptists at that time.

First on their agenda was the issue of Absolute Predestination. The late Elder C. M. Haygood, who thoroughly researched and studied after this council practically all of his life, stated: "To my knowledge not one church or association of our affiliation declared against this council."

The Council's record begins with the seating of the representatives of the various churches and associations, among them being Elder D. Bartley of Lebanon, Ohio. After the record of those seated, the record continues:

"The Council was duly organized by electing Elder J. H. Fisher, Moderator and Elder J. R. Hardy, Clerk.

"The Moderator then appointed Elders S. N. Stephens, J. C. Sikes, W. G. Green, D. Bartley, J. H. Daniell, J. C. Kilgore, W. B. Sikes, J. W. Martin, and Brother J. I. Money, after which the Moderator and Clerk were added as a Committee to prepare matter and submit to the Council for their consideration, which they did with much deliberation and caution as shown below, which was then read first as a whole before the entire Council, then re-read and carefully considered and unanimously adopted, article by article by the entire Council, and the Committee was discharged.

"By motion and second the entire work of the Committee was then unanimously adopted as a whole by the entire Council. After which the Assembly sang the song, "Blessed be the Tie That Binds," and engaged with Elder J. H. Fisher in prayer and thanksgiving to God for His mercies and protection.

"Minutes were then read and adopted.

ELDER J. H. FISHER

MODERATOR

Graham, Texas.

ELDER J. R. HARDY

CLERK

Tidwell, Texas."

The first item the Council addressed was **AS TO PREDESTINATION**. Their statement on it was:

“We believe that God’s eternal and Holy purpose embraces all things whatsoever come to pass, as “The Lord of Hosts hath sworn saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.” That God has purposed that all righteousness shall come to pass by His authority and influence, and that all unrighteousness shall come to pass without His authority and influence; as is most explicitly set forth in the London confession of faith of the Baptists of 1689 and reaffirmed by them in the Philadelphia confession of 1742, upon the authority of the Holy Scriptures.

“We do not believe that the Predestination of God is the cause which moves men to action either in righteousness or unrighteousness; but that all righteous acts are the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and that all unrighteous acts are the works of the flesh under the influence of satan [*sic*]. Therefore we do not believe that God is or can be either the author or approver of sin, as we have been unjustly accused.”

ELDER DAVID BARTLEY

This sound Old Baptist preacher and writer, author of *The Christ-Man in Type* and participant in the 1902 Fort Worth Council, is on record as having written, “Of two things we are assured, both by the Scriptures and our own consciences. 1st. That God is not the cause or the author of sin, but hates and punishes it; and 2nd. That we are ourselves blamable and justly punishable for our sins.”

*

This concludes our quotations from historic documents and from some of the predestinarian brethren who have gone on before us. I have not quoted many **Scriptures** to prove God is not the author of sin; not because it cannot be done, but because of an obvious lack of space, which ends with this page.

In summary, citations are herein contained from creeds and confessions of faith from the United States, England, and France. Quotations are given from many brethren and Elders, including the delegates to the 1902 Fort Worth Council, all fit representatives of their churches and associations and steadfast in the faith once delivered to the saints; and, of course, Jerome Zanchius (and Toplady, his

translator), who cited Augustine, Bucer, Martin Luther, and other historic theologians.

While reviewing the material from which these quotes are drawn, I noticed one thing of particular interest: These men’s understandings of specific Scripture texts varied tremendously between one another. Get any two together and you would probably have heard a serious debate on some text or doctrine; but when it comes to their understanding of the attributes of our holy God, **to a man they denied that God is the author of sin.**

In closing, for comparison with my little list of witnesses, I ask anyone who truly believes God is the author of sin (or anyone who doesn’t!), including our querist, to submit a list of men (from history or from the present) who advocate that “God is the author of sin,” which I have called *heresy*.

Since the Conditionalists or “Old Line” limited predestinarian Primitive Baptists are always and forever yammering about us “making God the author of sin,” although we deny it at every opportunity, I include them in this invitation: **Send us your documented, provable list of names, dates, and quotes of all the Absolute Predestinarian Old School or Primitive Baptist ministers, in good standing in their home churches and associations, who teach, preach, or write for publication that God is the author of sin.** If we are as bad as you say we are, compiling such a list should be easy for you. Such a validated list would be interesting enough to examine publicly and share with our readers.

To the brother who sent the query, I say: I expect the Conditionalists to accuse us of saying God is the author of sin, since God has not given them understanding of these things (Job 39.17); but it came as a complete surprise that a brother predestinarian would protest my denying that God is the author of sin. I hope our love in Christ for one another is not diminished by this exchange. Please forgive whatever fleshly harshness I’ve used herein, and examine the Scriptures and the facts. I have only desired to speak and to write according to Peter’s words, “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

—C. C. Morris

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A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES:

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

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

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

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

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

4—The absolute predestination of all things;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

11—The separation of church and state;

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

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

14—The final and eternal judgment; and,

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