

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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THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

by Elder David K. Mattingly

PART II

(Continued from the July-August Issue)

V. The Clear Conclusion Drawn From Christ's Resurrection

From the accounts given concerning Jesus' resurrection one very plain conclusion can be drawn. That is, the resurrection consisted of the same body that had died.

During the occasion in which Jesus drove out those who made merchandise of the Lord's house, the Jews asked for a sign to justify what He had done. His reply to them was: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews thought His reply was ludicrous. They responded: "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?" To this, the Gospel writer interjected the meaning of Christ's words: "But he spake of the temple of his body." It appears the disciples also did not understand at that time what Jesus had meant. It was not until the Lord arose that they understood. So, John wrote: "When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said (John 2.13-22)." These words are too plain to miss. The Lord had foretold that His slain body would be restored in three days.

This is not a hard conclusion to draw from the record of the gospels. The women who came to the

tomb early in the morning of the first day of the week "found not the body of the Lord Jesus" (Luke 24.3). Why was that? Hear the word of the angel: "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay (Matthew 28.6)." Does this not show it was the same body that had been laid to rest in the grave that now had come forth from this grave? If the resurrection meant no more than a soul winging its way to heaven one would expect the spiritless body still to have been there. If the resurrection meant that the Lord would have been put in a replaced body, such as one of spirit form, or whatever, when they visited the sepulcher, these women still should have seen the body that had been slain.

The fact the body was gone, and the fact the angel had announced Jesus had arisen should be sufficient proof His resurrection consisted of the restoring to life of the same body that had died. However, since this does not seem to be enough evidence to convince some, more proof shall be given. Was His restoration to life actually in some phantom form? No, it was not. Luke's account made it very clear He did not return apart from His body.

When the Lord appeared to His apostles, the Bible says: "And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus

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spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet." Further, the disciples gave Him fish and honeycomb: "And he took it, and did eat before them (Luke 24.33-43)." His resurrected body partook of food. Did not John's account also provide the evidence of His bodily resurrection with regard to what was said about Thomas? Since Thomas was not present when Christ first appeared unto the other disciples, they, "therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God (John 20.25-28)." The fact the body presented to Thomas was the body that had borne the piercing during His sufferings only adds to the evidence His resurrection consisted of the same body that had died.

Although John's account stated Jesus appeared to the disciples despite the doors being shut, this should be no argument against the literal resurrection of the body, as I have heard some contend. After all, throughout His ministry, Christ had performed many miracles, including the one when He walked on water

before His death (Matthew 14.22-33). If the Lord was able to defy natural forces by walking on the sea He most certainly was able to travel through walls after His resurrection.

The bodily resurrection is also proven by the way Peter interpreted Psalm 16:8-10: "For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption (Acts 2.25-27)." Here, Peter interpreted the meaning of David's words. He pointed out the psalmist was saying the one buried in the grave would not stay there long enough to decay. But Peter went further with this psalm by showing that although David wrote the words he was not speaking of himself but rather of the Lord: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption (Acts 2.29-31)." The thrust of Peter's preaching on that day was to declare the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord. He had said before: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it (Acts 2.23-24)."

By saying, "thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption," he was interpreting the words to mean someone's body was going to be raised back to life before there was time for it to decay. Because David's remains were still in the tomb in a decayed state David could not possibly have been speaking about himself. On the other hand, because God had not left Christ in His grave but raised His body up before it saw corruption, the apostle was proving David's prophecy was fulfilled by Jesus' resurrection. Unless you see that Peter was speaking about the same body that had died but did not

have time to start decaying, the whole case Peter is making to his audience makes no sense. His whole line of reasoning points to the fact the resurrection consisted of the same body that had been buried.

Paul argued along the same lines as Peter did. He not only quoted from Psalm 16 but he also quoted from Psalm 2.7 to prove both these psalms foretold Christ's resurrection: "God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption (Acts 13.33-37)."

The cavils of men cannot stand against these plain truths: the temple of His body was restored in three days, the tomb where He had been placed was empty, the angel announced He was risen, He was seen to have flesh and bones, He was not in spirit form, He ate with His disciples, the markings of His sufferings were witnessed in His flesh, He was handled, and, according to the prophecy, His flesh did not see corruption. All of these things testify to the resurrection of the same body that had died.

Even the Sadducees, "which say there is no resurrection (Matthew 22.23)," understood that the doctrine they opposed concerned the bodily resurrection.

VI. The Firstborn From The Dead

I would like to return to one of the texts Paul cited in his preaching to the Jews: "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee (Psalm 2.7)." Paul prefaced his reference to this verse with the words: "And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again (Acts 13.32-33)." In other words, the apostle used the second psalm to prove that the promise to the fathers was fulfilled through the resurrection of

Jesus Christ. The term “begotten” as used in this passage had reference to Christ’s resurrection.

In this connection, let’s look at a familiar text: “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8.29).” I am afraid that many Old School Baptists become so caught up with the verb “predestinate” in this verse that they never bother to pay attention to what results from this predestination. Look at it: “to be conformed to the image of his Son.” Look further: “that he might be the first born among many brethren.” What does all this mean? Well, let’s examine a couple of other verses. One is a reference to Christ in Colossians 1.18: “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.” The other passage is found in Revelation 1.5: “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead.” In our English Bibles the word in Romans 8.29 and Colossians 1.18 is “firstborn.” In Revelation 1.5 it is “first begotten.” However, in each case the Greek word is the same: “prototokos.” The language in Romans 8.29 is “the firstborn among many brethren.” The language in both the Colossian letter and the Revelation indicates it refers to a first begetting from death.

Put the thoughts of these texts together and you should be able to see what the message is. In Paul’s preaching he applied the word “begotten” to the Lord’s resurrection. Although Paul did not quote the full text, the psalm did indicate there was a declaration of God’s decree that His Son be resurrected. Consistent with the psalm, Paul’s epistle also included God’s decree; this time, however, concerning the people He foreknew. God predestinated them to be conformed to Christ’s image. Christ was to be the firstborn among His many brethren. Although the apostle did not specify here what it meant to be the firstborn, the other references make it plain it related to a first begetting from death. On the basis of these things, I submit the meaning of the passage in Roman is this: all of the elect of God were predestinated to be just like the resurrected Jesus, when they too shall be raised up from the dead.

Someone may wonder why the term “first” is affixed to “begotten” if this expression concerns Jesus’ resurrection. The Bible makes it quite clear that His

resurrection occurred after there were instances of other resurrections. In Elijah’s day a widow’s son was raised to life again (I Kings 17.17-24). The gospels record three instances in which Christ raised up the dead before His own sufferings: Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5.22-23; 35-43); the widow’s son (Luke 7.11-18); and Lazarus (John 11.1-46). If the term refers to the first resurrection, how is Christ first? The answer is this. The term refers to a particular kind of resurrection. All the others before Him were raised up again into mortal bodies. Christ was raised up into an immortal body. It is in this sense that the term applies. The resurrection of the saints into bodies of immortality follows, not precedes, His resurrection. Therefore, He is the firstborn. There are several verses that teach the children of God shall be like the Lord in the resurrection. It is, therefore, not a stretch to hold that this is the meaning of Paul’s words: “conformed to the image of his Son.” Try David’s words: “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness (Psalm 17.15).” Try another one: “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself (Philippians 3.20-21).” Try yet a third: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3.2).”

Although Christ, the firstborn, was the first to be raised in an immortal body, I readily admit the full appearance of a glorified body probably did not occur until sometime after He ascended into heaven. I say this on the basis of John’s words. I quote it again: “it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” One might wonder at this statement. Of all people, why did this apostle say this? After all, he had seen his resurrected Lord. Even though he said, “We shall be like him,” he denied knowing what we shall be like. But should he not have been able to tell what we shall be like simply by having been with Christ after He arose from the grave? The fact John was still waiting to know what our own appearance would be leads to the conclusion He was still expecting

to see Christ differently than He had appeared after He was raised.

That the Lord's body was not presented in the fullness of its glorious splendor in the days before His ascension was probably a gesture to accommodate the disciples. Let me explain. First, the disciples needed to be fully assured it was Jesus who was raised up in the same body that was buried. Second, they needed to be presented with a body that their own natural eyes could behold.

Notice Isaiah 52.13-15. These verses contain a prophecy dealing with both the glory and the sufferings of our Lord. With regard to His suffering, notice verse 14: "his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." These words lead into the 53rd chapter. You know, the chapter where such words are found as: "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed (verse 5)." Or add to this: "for the transgression of my people was he stricken (verse 8)"; "when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin (verse 10)"; and "he bare the sin of many (verse 12)." I submit His body was so marred by bearing His people's sins that it made it difficult for the disciples to recognize Him. Think of the tremendous weight of sin Christ bore on the cross. He took upon Himself the total sins of all of His people. I could not bear just one of my sins. He gave His life for all of His elect. Only the Son of God could do such a thing. Well did the Father speak of His Son: "I have laid help upon one that is mighty (Psalm 89.19)." I believe it was this heavy burden of sin laid upon Him in death that resulted in His marred appearance.

I once attended a wake and a funeral for a teenager who was killed in an automobile crash. The casket lid was never raised to show the body. The reason given by his mother was that the injuries were so severe that the body did not look like her son. With regard to Christ, there may have been a similar situation. The marred body due to all that Jesus bore made it difficult for the disciples to quickly recognize Him. Follow the record of the gospels. Until He spoke her name, Mary Magdalene did not know it was Jesus when He appeared to her near the gravesite (John 20.16). The evidence it was Christ came to the two that journeyed with Him to Emmaus only after He took, blessed, broke, and gave bread to them (Luke 24.30-31). It was

only after He displayed the markings of His suffering to them that the eleven disciples were convinced it was He.

In short, His voice, mannerisms, and the marks on His body proved to be the evidence Christ was resurrected. It was not by sight they recognized Him. But here is how the Lord accommodated His disciples. They needed to see that the body taken to the grave was the same body raised up from the grave. Although His marred body presented them with the problem identifying Him by first sight; nevertheless it was the fact of the marred body that in the end convinced them it was His same body.

Return to Isaiah, chapter 52. This time notice verse 15: "the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider." This is part of the text that spoke of Christ's glory. Yet, the complete fulfillment of the verse must yet await us to see. Mortal eyes cannot bear such glory. True, the disciples saw enough in His life to confess He was the Son of God. So, it is recorded: "(and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (John 1.14)." Further, before the Lord died, Peter, James, and John saw His body in some glorious splendor when they saw Him transfigured (Matthew 17.1-9). However, this must only speak of a partial glimpse of what yet awaits men to see. The Lord's body was probably in its fullness of splendor only after He had ascended into heaven. Such was His glory then that Paul was blinded for a time by the appearance of His "great light" as he journeyed to Damascus (Acts 22.6-11). The light of His glory was too great for a mortal man to behold. Thus, by being resurrected void of the appearance of a fully glorified body He also made this accommodation to men. They, in their own mortal flesh, could not bear to witness such glory.

VII. The Resurrection of Two Sorts of People

I will not linger on this point too long but it does need to be noted that the resurrection concerns the just as well as the unjust. Several scriptures shall be cited to show this.

Not only did Daniel foresee the holocaust that took place upon the Jews during the first century A.D. in which God delivered His elect while He spared not the lives of unbelievers, but the prophet also was enabled

to cast his eyes beyond that time of trouble to speak concerning the day in which both those who had been spared the tribulation and those who had not should have their bodies raised up again. He said: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12.2)."

Jesus, during His days on earth, also spoke of the resurrection involving two kinds of folk: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5.28-29)." Paul likewise made this declaration before the Roman authority: "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all the things which are written in the law and the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust (Acts 24.14-15)."

From these verses it is clear the doctrine is of two parts. There is a resurrection of the holy that results in their blessed state. There is also a resurrection of the unholy that results in their damnable state.

Lest accusations will be hurled against us that in citing these scriptures we have proven false one of Old School Baptist's main tenets, that is, that salvation is not based upon mankind's works, but upon the sovereignty of God, I will simply point out that it is the grace of God that determines what manner of man each person is. Sinners are just, not on the basis of their deeds, but because they are justified. So, Paul wrote: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3.23-24)." So also Paul wrote: "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight (Colossians 1.21-22)." Therefore, men are just because they are made so by the merits of their Savior, Jesus Christ. Others, however, are left in the state of their sins. They remain unjust. God left them in that condition. Both shall be raised by the power given to Christ. Thus, the Lord

acknowledged He had been given "power over all flesh"; but He also acknowledged He should give eternal life only to those given to His charge by God the Father (John 17.2). In short, some are to be raised up simply because the Lord has the power to do so while others are raised up by the power of His redeeming, justifying blood.

There is another way to approach this as well. At some point in their lives, the Lord's redeemed will have their stony hearts replaced by new ones (Ezekiel 36.26); the law of God will be written within them (Jeremiah 31.33); they shall be brought to both repentance and forgiveness (Acts 5.31); they shall be given faith (Philippians 1.29); and they shall be God's workmanship to perform the good works God has before ordained for them (Ephesians 2.10). Thus, they are distinguished from the wicked who are left with the stony hearts, left without the law within, left without godly sorrow or the faith of God's elect, so that they shall continue to display their enmity toward God.

(To be Continued, Lord willing)

ABOUT THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE

In the July-August *Remnant*, we printed approximately two pages of the next article, "The Determinate Counsel and Foreknowledge of God," by Elder Stanley Phillips. What was then printed, which was complete enough in itself to warrant being published at that time, really comprised little more than an introduction to the complete article. In fairness to Elder Phillips and our readers, the introductory remarks in the first two pages should not be separated from the rest of this excellent article, which must be continued into the next (November-December) issue anyway, because of its length. Accordingly, for completeness and for continuity's sake, we are repeating in this issue the brief excerpt previously published.

THE DETERMINATE COUNSEL AND FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD

By Elder Stanley C. Phillips

FOREWARD:

In the separation of the Old School Primitive Baptists from the Conditional, or Old Line, Primitive Baptists (1900-1940), most of the issues centered around the doctrine of predestination and the relationship of God's sovereignty to the origin and existence of sin. It is granted that here and there one could find a traditionalist having a head-knowledge of the doctrine that insisted God was the author of sin; however, this position was not that of the overwhelming number of Predestinarian Old School Primitives. Repeatedly, they denied (and still must rebut) the false charges lay against them by the progressive Old Line Primitives.

In 1900, a large assembly of progressive Primitives met at Fulton, Kentucky, to solve ecumenical and doctrinal problems dividing them from each other. In the doctrinal agreement, the whole assembly endorsed the revisions of the Old London Confession of Faith, which revisions were inserted in footnotes to The Confession. Below, we cite selected paragraphs of The Confession, and their footnotes to that section.

"1. God hath decreed in Himself from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of His will, freely and unchangeably, **all things whatsoever come to pass**; yet so as thereby is God **neither the author of sin nor hath He 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, in which appears His wisdom in disposing **all things**, and power and faithfulness in accomplishing His decree," (Chapter III, Paragraph 1).

The Old Line Primitives' footnote is: "This clearly distinguishes between God's attitude to sin and His attitude and relation to holiness. A failure to make this distinction has been a fruitful source of division and distress of our holy cause, and a failure to so distinguish between God's permissive and **overruling decree of sin** and His causative decree of holiness will ever cause distress and confusion among our people [meaning, conditional Primitives -ed.]. This distinction is ex-

pressed in the last clause of Section 4, of Chapter V: "Which also He most wisely and powerfully **boundeth and otherwise ordereth and governeth** in a manifold dispensation to **His most holy ends**; yet so as the sinfulness of their acts proceedeth only from the creatures, and not from God," etc. This is the very position held to by the Predestinarian Old School party and today denied by the Old Line Primitives.

They [at Fulton, Kentucky] wrote: "We believe that God is perfect in wisdom and knowledge, knowing **all things both good and evil from the beginning that would take place in time. That He is a Perfect Sovereign over all things, and that He absolutely and causatively predestinated all His works of creation and eternal salvation of His elect.**" [The Predestinarian party will agree with the statement, but does not see need to qualify it as they did in the statement, "and eternal salvation of His elect". Predestinarians will leave the statement as the London writers stated it.]

The London Confession continues: "1. God, the good Creator of all things, in His infinite power and wisdom, doth **uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures and things, from the greatest even to the least**, by His most wise and holy providence, **to the end for which they were created**, according to His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness and mercy."

The Old Liners reject this, since many of them do not believe in Divine Providence. They footnoted this, saying, This "should not be construed to mean that God directs and governs all creatures and things *in all they do*, so that He brings to pass *all their acts, both good and evil.*" It is difficult to understand how they are able to explain the acts of Judas, Herod, Pontius Pilate together with the Jews and Gentiles when they fulfilled all the Scriptures had foretold should come to pass in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, all of whose acts "were bad." Sadly, today, many, many of the Primitive Baptists deny these aspects of God's absolute sovereignty over all things.

The following scriptures are given as a foundation for our discussion on the relationship of God's decrees, council, determinate counsel, foreknowledge and absolute predestination of all things, whereby God is not the author of sin.

“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain (Acts 2: 23).”

“For to do whatsoever Thy hand and counsel determined before to be done (Acts 4:28).”

“Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world (Acts 15:18).”

“...being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11).”

“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath (Hebrews 6:18).”

“Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure: calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth My counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it (Isaiah 46:10-11).”

“...and the counsel of peace shall be between them both (Zechariah 6: 13).”

An analysis of the above texts demonstrates the following things quite clearly: God’s **counsel** is **determining** of all things. It is **immutable** or unchangeable. It is established in a council between more than one constituent parties of the Godhead (*the counsel of peace shall be between them both*, which necessitates a “council” to establish it). It is **infallible**—it shall come to pass. It makes use of **means**, or **instrumentalities** (*the man of the east that executes it*). It is connected to God’s **foreknowledge**, which foreknowledge is knowledge of all things beforehand. At the least, that much is evident from the above selection of Scriptures.

On a practical level, when a soul is made to know and feel the exceeding sinfulness of sin and his total lack of ability to save himself, and thus is made to cry out to God to have mercy on his poor soul, how does predestination benefit him directly? Isaiah records, *“And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear (Isaiah 65:24).”* There is an *absolute and certain rendezvous* between the hearing, the answer, and the call. How can He do that, unless He has **foreknowledge** of that call, and has in fact, ordained it in His own

eternal counsel? And, *“how shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?”* If we ascribe any part of salvation to predestination, then we are forced to acknowledge that even the smallest and most minute details of it are embraced in it.

There have been many individuals and many ways these individuals have used to destroy the doctrine of God’s foreknowledge of all things, and/or His determination of all things. The above texts can stand alone to refute any such attempts of an unregenerate mind. The plain, or self-evident truth, is, that God’s determinate counsel, foreknowledge, and predestination are *inseparable* entities of the divine Mind, and are inclusive of all things that have, are, or ever will exist. While some charge the above as being “Calvinism,” it is just as much the position of “Hypercalvinists,” “Augustinians,” and Thomists alike. Basically, it is the truth of the Christian faith, even if denied or disputed by some called “Christians.” It is the foundation principle of chapter three of the major Christian confessions of faith in America. This is the topic, then, of this short treatise.

Before entering further into this discussion, let us preface it with this brief notation: If we relegate all things evil, wicked, and contrary to God’s moral law to men or devils, we leave very little else under the dominion of our Maker. We need not speak of God being “sovereign,” for certainly He would not be. In our day, we have been so evilly entreated by Arminians and Calvinians for our belief in God’s absolute sovereignty over all things, including His utility of sin and wicked men and devils that we have become hesitant to mention His sovereignty in this area of truth. On one hand, we do not wish to encourage men to sin, for men are judged for such acts. On the other hand, to leave this field in complete silence is to fail to *“declare the whole counsel of God.”* The Scriptures give a balance to these otherwise extreme positions, and so must we. The doctrine of the predestination of all things **does not** thereby make, or imply, that God is the author of sin, because, first, sin is not a created thing or being. The Bible clearly identifies sin to be the *“transgression of the law of God (1 John 3:4).”* Paul declares, *“Where no law is, there is no transgression (Romans 4:15).”* Had the Lord God not prohibited that one single thing, thus making a “law,” sin would have

never entered into the world and death by sin. This fact is self-evident and indisputable.

The Lord God declared that everything He made was “good.” The man was “upright,” the ground was good, the trees of the garden were all good, the fruit of the trees were good, and we surmise that originally, the serpent was “good”—at least for whatever purpose God had made him. The law, or command, was “*just, holy, and good*” as well. How then did sin enter the garden? **It entered by the transgression of that one law.** Who did it—God or man? You know the answer.

Second, in that first transgression, and every transgression since then, God did not infuse sin, nor force sin upon any man. Men act freely according to their **fallen nature**. God cannot be the “author of sin” simply because IF He commands anyone to commit an act forbidden by His published law, that act is not now forbidden to him, and hence cannot be a “sin.” The second command negates the antecedent command, and thus is to be obeyed. God can do this because He is the only Lawgiver. An illustration is at hand: According to **the law**, a priest or prophet is commanded to “*take a wife in her virginity. A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, or a harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife* (Leviticus 21:13, 14).” Yet, God commanded Hosea, saying, “*Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing the Lord. So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son* (Hosea 1:2,3).” No matter how one wishes to approach that text, yet, was it a sin for Hosea to take a wife of whoredoms (plural) as commanded by God? Would it not have been a sin if he had not obeyed the Lord? The point being made is that God is the Lawgiver, and as such, His law does not bind Him. It bound His creatures under Him. Therefore, **God cannot be the author of anyone’s sin**, plain and simply put, for that is impossible for a Lawgiver to do. He is the one commanding, and His commandments are to be obeyed. That is the role of a **sovereign**. Now, we will continue on our topic.

GOD’S FOREKNOWLEDGE

God’s foreknowledge must be based upon something. That something must be **knowable** by Him. If it is argued, as it is by some, that God merely *saw*

things coming to pass, and then reacted to it (or did nothing at all) rather than *determine it*, then His foreknowledge is only telescopic. Such a view leaves God, as if with arms folded, a bystander observing inevitably undetermined events transpiring. In relation to “evil” events, it makes Him a complacent *accessory to the crime*. Those that think they are honoring God by denying His sovereignty over sin are not helping themselves when they know that He can prevent it, but believe that He will not!

In principle, such a position differs none at all from the Arminian who claims that God will not interfere in man’s “freedom of choice” by divine election and effectual calling. He certainly has power to prevent any, or all, evil deeds, and has done so many times. Where is there a true believer that has not had his evil tendencies interrupted and restrained by God’s grace? Those who will limit God’s activity believe these forces that are combined in their intricate patterns of events to bring them to pass is left believing they come strictly by chance, or the old heathen goddess of Fate. Hence, limited predestinarians are Fatalists, if not worse, atheists. If God allows things to come to pass in the absence of His determinate counsel, He is not the “*one only true and living God*”—He is not the one in charge! There has to be another one out there somewhere bringing these events to pass that God merely foresees. That someone, or thing, must either be the Goddess of Fate, Satan, or astrology. Again, the above texts allow no such views. There is but one only true and living God. In the modern shallow views of far too many “Christians,” denial of God’s sovereign reign over all things is due in great part to the limited understanding they have of God’s eternal counsel. It seems that they never give it any thought, or if they do, it is fleeting.

GOD’S COUNCIL AND HIS DETERMINATE COUNSEL

There seems to this writer an orderly arrangement to this subject. God’s *council* seems to be necessary for a “*counsel*” to have been formed. In that council, God’s *counsel* is automatically **determinate** in its very nature. His *determinate counsel*, is an **eternal purpose**, therefore, and is the basis for His eternal purpose to bring all things into existence according to that counsel. One could say “*eternal plan*,” but that is misleading because it suggest a planning stage, which

is inconsistent with His attributes as God. But, His **creative decree** commenced bringing into reality all things in His determinate counsel and by His *predestination* (which is not causative, but consists of providence, grace, and contingencies of secondary causes) this eternal counsel is according to the good pleasure of *His own will*. It is certain that in Ephesians 1:11, this *purpose of His own will* embraces **all things**. Paul said it did! The quickened child of God is bound thereby to believe it. Let us, then, take each of these concepts in the order respectively given above.

FIRST: GOD'S ETERNAL COUNCIL

There are very few, if any, free grace believers that do not believe in a *covenant of grace* between the Father and the Son, which covenant was established **before** the creation of the world. It is perfectly consistent for God to **determine** to do something **before** He does it! It is quite foolish to say that He determined to do something **after He did it!** The fact of an establishing of a covenant implies a *coming together* for the purpose of making the agreements of such a covenant.

This writer has difficulty agreeing with the *way* in which John Gill *states* this covenant, but has no disagreement with the *fact* of such a covenant. God speaks to man in terms that man can understand (*anthropomorphism- speaking in the form of man's speech*) but Dr. Gill seems to be even more anthropomorphic than the Scriptures, when he says, "...it "was necessary that the will of the Son should be "expressed, and His approbation and consent had; for "which this council was called and held."

This appears to present God in the tri-personality trinity as separate Gods being called together, sitting down around a table and planning and scheming as men would do in forming a council to make a plan, or a contract, or an agreement. God "*is in one mind, and who can turn Him? And what His soul desireth, even that He doeth* (Job 23:13)." It is the writer's opinion that, God being eternal and unchangeable, then so is His mind and thought. If He presents "thoughts" to us, it is for *our understanding* Him as finite creatures, but in reality, He possesses one eternal Mind. This seems to be the meaning of this passage: "*The Lord of Host hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand*

(Isaiah 14: 24)," where His thought is synonymous with His eternal purpose. Be that as it may, the fact that there is a covenant of grace within the Godhead, whereby the "*counsel of peace shall be between them both*" gives substance to there having been, at least in the form of speaking, a council where roles were assigned to the different parties in the Godhead. This council, of course, preceded the formation of His eternal counsel ("plan"), and the creative decree to put into force the consequent counsel of His will. As the psalmist wrote, "*The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations* (Psalm 33:11)."

This council seems to be alluded to in the text, "*I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send Me* (Isaiah 6:8)." I say, *seems to be alluded to*, because the New Testament says, "*Then said I, Lo I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God* (Hebrew 10:7 and Psalm 40:7-8)." Again, it is implied in the very beginning, when the Lord God said, "*Let us make man after our own image,*" and seems to be an agreement between parties to do so. Again, this was during the deliberation of the Godhead in council together, whereby His *counsel* was determined, and prior to His creative decree "*before the foundation of the world.*" This is confirmed in the bringing of the First Begotten into the world, for it was by an agreement, "*Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifices and offerings Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me* (Hebrews 10:5)." (He did not say, "Thou prepared for me a body"; but "a body Thou hast prepared Me." There seems to be a difference in these two thoughts.)

Without going specifically into the New Covenant and its agreements, we point out only that such appears a product of an *Eternal Council*, and in that council, there was an agreement, not only to the parts each party would perform, but also the creation and establishment of all things necessary to bring this counsel to fulfillment. This, of course, was **inclusive of all things**, because the recipients of the covenant agreement are sprinkled throughout all ages and in all countries, and the "*bounds of their habitation*" are determined. Paul preached this in Athens, saying, in part, "*And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath*

determined the times appointed, and the bounds of their habitation (Acts 17:26).” When did He determine the **appointed times**? When did He **set the bounds** of men’s habitation? Surely it must have been in the Eternal Council before He set out to create the world and all things in it. See how minute this determinate counsel is! See how inclusive it is? No wonder Paul expresses it as inclusive of “*all things*,” for certainly it must be if it is to be settled and certain, so that God’s *counsel shall stand and He will do all His pleasure*.

When considering God’s **council**, keep in mind that this is in the planning stage (speaking as a man) prior to the creation of the universe and all things in it.

The results of this council are the full, complete, and comprehensive total of all that the Godhead will create, establish, control, direct, and produce for His own glory. The finished, or conclusive scheme of the Godhead is now His “*eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Ephesians 3:11).” That eternal purpose is none other than His *determinate counsel*.

Next to be discussed is:

SECOND: GOD’S DETERMINATE COUNSEL

God’s determinate counsel is a direct product of His eternal *council* and the covenant agreement with His Son Jesus Christ. When we speak of it embracing *all things, all persons, and all events*, we are considering it in the **full picture**, not in some isolated events. There are innumerable details, many brush strokes, to putting together such a massive picture. We are attempting to express history itself, from creation to glorification, yet must be *consensus historians*, because no one can truly write “history.” We must speak of bits and pieces. Included in this determinate counsel when it is completed, we have revealed many things of which free grace believers often speak. “*I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world*” is said of Christ’s words (Matthew 13:35). “*Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world* (Matthew 25:34).” The glory of the Son of God was included in that counsel (John 17:24). All God’s elect people were

“*chosen in Him from the foundation of the world* (Ephesians 1:4).” Christ was “*foreordained before the foundation of the world* (1 Peter 1:20),” and the elects’ names were then written in the Book of Life of the Lamb (Revelation 17:8). If for no other reason (yet there are many), the existence of nonelect individuals serve as a channel for the production of the elect in this world throughout history. Why? Because the elect are from “*every nation, kindred, tribe and people*.” In the purpose of God, it was in the eternal council that Christ became the “*Lamb slain*” (Revelation 13:8). All of these, and many more, are revealed to us, but His **eternal counsel included the whole of all creation from eternity past to eternity future** (if it is legitimate to use such an expression).

To illustrate: It was God’s determinate counsel that in all the land of Egypt that not a dog wagged its tongue as the horde of Israelites and strangers left that nation following the first Passover. It was fulfilled accordingly, in time, and not a dog sounded the alarm for the Egyptians. But, tell me, dear friend, was the active purpose of chocking down the dog’s nature, the end itself? Was it not for a greater purpose than this? It was one small tiny bit in the total events of God’s determinate counsel. It played its specific role, that is true. It was one of those “*all things that work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose*.” It was “a contingency of secondary causes,” to use the London Confession’s expression. I doubt God was merely playing with dogs that night! Again, that “little bitty” worm that cut down Jonah’s gourd was in God’s determinate counsel, but was it the main event that day? Or that specially prepared whale that swallowed him? Of course it was not. In your own life, the day your father proposed to your mother, and she consented—was that the end of the whole purpose? If so, what are *you* doing here? Was it necessary for your father and mother to meet? It surely must have been. Was it an accident? I speak foolishly, for there is no such thing! But there are “contingencies of secondary causes” and they are provided for in the eternal counsel of God as means to bring to pass His own will.

Hopefully the reader can grasp the point being made: **the determinate counsel of God must be inclusive of all things** or only chaos would reign. *Time* itself is one of the most important “contingency of

secondary causes” as means to order events in a manner to establish an orderly arrangement of God’s eternal counsel. Can you imagine the chaos if all things took place at once!?

Again, We must eat, for we are created that way. The small nitrogen fixation microbe is necessary for other plants to feed upon the soil’s nutrients, or else they would die. Without them, so would we! Can any sensible person think that each microbe is not covered by the determinate counsel of God, in all ages past, present, and to come, as surely as the sparrows, of whom our Lord said not one would fall without the heavenly Father?

If God prevented a single fly to be found in all the land of Goshen (Exodus 8:22), surely He has a purpose for all things else. It is difficult to separate unbelieving “children of God” (if such can exist) from outright atheists, when those identified with “Christian churches” deny the full extent of God’s sovereign dominion over all things. It is certain that such give *aid and comfort* to the enemies of God by denying the absolute predestination of God over all His works.

It is certain that the ungodly, wicked, and unbelievers all deny the absolute predestination of all things! Why would a child of God agree with such infidels? It is obvious they have no light or understanding, yet even infidels talk seriously about the *environmental balance* in nature. Should Christians be less predestinarian than infidels, Marxists, environmental extremists, and unbelievers? What is to separate them from the ungodly world if they all agree to limit God’s sovereignty?

(Elder Phillips’ article will be continued in the next issue of the Remnant, Lord willing.)

Psalm 78.41

**Yea, they turned back and tempted God,
and limited the Holy One of Israel.**

EDITOR’S NOTE: The following excerpt of an editorial article written by Elder Gilbert Beebe appeared in *The Signs of the Times* in January, 1871. It was reprinted in the October-December, 1980 *Old Faith Contender*, edited and published by Elder W. J. Berry, who added the following note at the head of the article:

Following in an excerpt from Gilbert Beebe’s remarks on the preceding year 1870. The reader will note the amazing similarity between what was working then and now by the religious leaders. The avowed purpose and argument remain unchanged; and it behooves God’s Nobodies to take no part in it.—Editor (Elder W. J. Berry)

A RELIGIOUS BREED OF POLITICIANS NOT A CHRISTIAN NATION

The religion of all the pagans and tribes of the earth was and is the religion of the world; it is not revealed from heaven, but has its origin in the world. Revolting as the pagan religion is, it is no better, nor is it any worse than any other worldly religion. It possesses the essential elements of the religion of Cain, delusion and bloodshed. It is doubtful whether the human sacrifices made to their idols would suffer by comparison with the religion of the world which in this day claims the Christian name, either papal or Protestant. All will agree that the pope in the dark ages of their power excelled the pagans in the shedding of human blood, all who have faithfully observed the murderous propensity of her Protestant daughters, have seen in them again, where ever and whenever they had the power, that they have always been equally intolerant and oppressive. The Protestant anti-Christ in our country since the puritanic persecution of the Baptists, Quakers and other dissenters, checked and restrained by the revolution, have been held under restraint but never satisfied. They have been, ever since the establishment of our government, eager to handle and control the reins of civil government, and at this very moment are forming alliances with other denominations and with influential men of the world, to so change the fundamental principles of our national government as to recognize their creeds and dogmas.

We now have on our table a circular signed by sixty-five names, thirty-five of which have "Reverend" prefixed, together with judges and Honorables, calling for a convention to be held at Newburgh, New York, "to consider such an amendment of the National Constitution as will remedy this great defect," of which they complain, "and indicate that we are a Christian nation." They complain that our National Constitution makes no acknowledgment of Almighty God, "nor of Jesus Christ," "nor of the Bible," which they say is the fountain of law and good morals, as well as of religion. They suppose that the omission of our fathers to make constitutional provisions for Sabbath Schools, etc., and for the prevention of intemperance, blasphemy, impurity or cruelty of our country allows them to pursue this Constitutional amendment. But they have failed to see that it was no oversight. It was a matter of grave deliberation and debate, and one of the avowed objects of the revolution was to free us from priestcraft, as well as from kingcraft. It was then argued that as no king, potentate or legislature can answer at the bar of God for the individual responsibilities of men, that no legislation of men should be allowed to interfere between them and their God, and they on this principle did provide in the Constitution that no religious test should ever be required.

To protect the people from coercive interference with the sacred rights of conscience in matters of religion, the first Congress of the United States that ever assembled under the Constitution was convened in the city of New York, March 4, 1789, at which time and place the following amendment to the Constitution was proposed and submitted to the several states for their approval and was concurred in by the states and became a part of our Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." What is now sought for is to so change our Constitution as to indicate that the United States "are a Christian Nation." The scriptures of truth recognize but one such nation, and that is called, "A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a peculiar people." Into that nation can none enter except they be born of water and of the Spirit, and none can ever see it except they be born again. A Christian nation must be an establishment of religion, and no law concerning it has Congress any power to make, nor have any power to prevent the free exercise of it.

A complete subversion of the whole provisions of our Constitution under which all classes have been protected in all their social, civil and religious rights more than eighty years, [written in 1871] is sought by an over-reaching intolerant, puritanic and persecuting spirit of priestcraft, by converting our government into a church and state establishment.

The Hebrew nation was a theocracy, but they did not make themselves so, nor is it possible for this or any other nation to constitute themselves a theocratic nation. Every nation under heaven that has ever attempted to legislate for God has entailed oppression and distress upon the people. The king of Babylon made a decree and published it, saying, "Therefore I make a decree, that peoples, nations and languages which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego shall be cut to pieces and their house shall be made a dunghill, because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort" (Daniel 3). Did this decree make Babylon a Christian nation? When that great empire passed into the hand of Darius the Mede [Persian—now Iranian], he also sent forth a decree, saying, "I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel for He is the living God and steadfast forever, and His kingdom that shall not be destroyed." Of the only existing Christian nation over which Christ the Prince of Peace presides, it is said, "Behold how they love one another." Can this be said of Prussia and France? Or of any other of the professed Christian nations of the earth? Heaven and hell are not more dissimilar or in greater opposition to each other, than are those professed Christian nations, to the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. This side of the infernal regions of perdition, the cause and kingdom of God and truth has no more virulent enemies than those sanctimonious hypocrites who are now engaged in sapping the foundation of our government to subserve their wicked designs to elevate themselves to a position that shall give them power to domineer over the consciences and religious rights of their fellow men. Judging only from the present and past our prospect for the future might awaken fearful forebodings, but the assurance which we have that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, affords support and consolation to all who truly trust in the living God, "They shall be as Mount Zion that cannot be moved." His wisdom directs and His power controls all events.

Under His over-ruling providence the wrath of man shall praise Him, and the remainder He will restrain. He has fixed the exact measure of the cup wicked men shall fill; beyond that limitation neither wicked men nor devils can go. The prevalence of iniquity in the world, or what is called the church, need not appall the saints, for in it all we see the fulfillment of prophecy. What could we think of the scriptures if in the world the saints had no tribulation, if there come no perilous times, if evil men and seducers did not wax worse and worse. The present day has not come unawares unto the children of the light. Relying on what God has told us in His holy word, we have long been watching the signs of the times and we are now just as certain that victory and immortal triumph is in store for all who fear the Lord as we have been that in these last days should come perilous times, times in which all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. And even now, we both labor and suffer persecution because we trust in the living God. But the conflict will soon be over, Babylon shall sink like a millstone, and rise no more forever.

—Elder Gilbert Beebe

(The above editorial was furnished by Brother Hoyt Sparks of Sparta, NC. His email address is hoytsparks@hotmail.com)

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The eleventh of *The Remnant's* principles (page 20) is that of "The separation of church and state." It is grievous to hear professing Christians, not to mention Primitive Baptists, clamoring that "our only hope" is the election (or defeat) of this or that political party's candidate(s), yet we do hear it, and often, especially every four years or so. From apostolic times, however, the saints' only hope has ever been as Paul expressed it: "Looking for **that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ** (Titus 3.13)."

There are some who quote Christ's statement, "My kingdom is not of this world," out of context, as though He is not the King of kings and Lord of lords who "doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and *among the inhabitants of the earth*: and none can stay his hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou

(Daniel 4.35)?" Those words, "My kingdom is not of this world," do not mean that our Creator has renounced His throne as King of kings and Lord of lords or that He cannot or will not yet rule this earth with a rod of iron. Because His kingdom is of [from] heaven and not of this world does not mean that He cannot or will not rule over His evil enemies in this world. How odd it is to hear men in one breath declare that the earth is the Lord's footstool (which it is—Psalm 66.1), and in the next breath say Christ will never put His feet on His footstool again! Feet are what footstools are for!

"...He removeth kings, and setteth up kings: He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with Him (Daniel 2.21f)."

It is not our purpose at *The Remnant* to support the election or the defeat of any political candidate or the passage or defeat of any legislative measure whatsoever, whether "good" or "bad." **There is no political solution to the world's problems.** My kingdom is not of this world, which is ever being moved closer to its predestinated end: "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. For our conversation [Greek, *politeuma*, citizenship, from the same root word as the word *politics*] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3.19f)." Our citizenship is in heaven. Our politics are in heaven.

It is my fervent prayer that, as long as the Lord can see fit to graciously and mercifully continue to spare us from the persecution our brethren endured in other ages, He will restrain self-serving politicians and earthly governments that they shall not interfere with His saints' worship of their God, any more than we intend to interfere with their worship of Mammon and earthly power. In the fear of the Lord we hope to watch as God's decree unfolds, to see which kings He removes and which He sets up, "to the intent that *the living* may know that **the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men** (Daniel 4.17)." We will remember that only as the Lord gives us to remember.

—C. C. Morris

THE WORD “CERTAIN” IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.— 2 Samuel 23.5

Everything in God’s everlasting covenant is ordered in all things and sure. That is, everything in His everlasting covenant is “fixed” or predestinated. An item or an event cannot be ordered in all things and yet unordered in some things. It cannot be both sure and unsure at the same time.

It is the same with the word certain. Nothing can be both certain and uncertain at the same time.

We find the following about the word certain in “Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary” (1973) (Webster’s examples of how the word is to be correctly used are given inside the < > marks):

1 a: FIXED, SETTLED <guaranteed a certain percentage >

b: proved to be true

2 : of a specific but unspecified character, quantity, or degree : PARTICULAR <the house has a certain charm > <everyone has a certain amount of success >

3 a : DEPENDABLE, RELIABLE <a certain remedy for the disease >

b : INDISPUTABLE <it is certain that we exist >

4 a : INEVITABLE <the certain advance of age and decay >

b : incapable of failing: DESTINED—used with a following infinitive <she is certain to do well >

5 : assured in mind or action

syn[onym] see SURE. Ant[onym] uncertain

Every so often it is good to address the question, “Why should we be concerned about dictionary definitions?” We should all be interested in what words mean because we all communicate with words, all words mean something, and Webster is the generally-accepted arbiter of what our words mean, what they do not mean, and how we should use them.

Unless two people agree on what the words they are using mean, they are not communicating, no matter how much they talk to (or shout at) each other.

Take the word *baptize*, for instance. If two men are discussing baptism, and one is thinking “sprinkle” or “pour” while the other is thinking “dip, plunge, immerse,” they are not communicating. No matter how much heat their conversation generates, there is no light.

The word **certain** is another case in point. As we said earlier, nothing can be both *certain and uncertain* at the same time. Yet this word *certain* is either invisible, meaningless, or both to millions who read this word in the Bible. A certain person, place, event, or time is to them a mere chance event, a happenstance, something random that could have been anyone, anywhere, anything, at any time.

The Scriptures are God’s infallibly-inspired word. Not a jot or a tittle, not so much as the dotting of an i or the crossing of a t, shall fail to convey Jehovah’s precise meaning. It is like the policeman who told the person he caught “speeding” (driving 31 miles an hour in a 30 zone), “If we meant for you to drive 31, the sign would have said ‘31.’”

And if God had meant “uncertain,” He would have said “uncertain.”

From these introductory remarks, let us go to the book of Acts, where the word **certain** occurs over fifty times:

1. “And a **certain** man lame from his mother’s womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple (Acts 3:2).” Could this have been any other man and still be *this* certain man? If so, would the other man have been *this certain* man?

As Jesus told His hearers in His home town’s synagogue, “But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian (Luke 4.25ff).” Of all the lepers and widows in Israel in those days, the certain ones chosen of God were both Gentiles.

The world would say, “They *happened to be* Gentiles.” There was no “happened to be” about it, because—again citing Webster—the primary definition of *happen* means *to occur by chance*. *In that sense, nothing ever “happens,”* because there is no such thing as “a chance event.”

We (at *The Remnant*) only use the word *happen* to mean **occur**, or we would have no use whatsoever for the word. God chose those two **certain** people (Naaman and the widow) in particular because He had eternally predestinated to use those two very people to illustrate a point in Nazareth some nine hundred years later. That point is: God has an elect people among the Gentiles, and He always has had.

Anything God has predestinated is bound to come to pass, and any point He makes is never wasted. The point Jesus made that day was not wasted on the people of Nazareth, who got the point of His message all too clearly. We can know this is true is because of what immediately followed: “And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.” When Jesus says something that makes a nice group of worshipers who had known Him all His life so angry that they want to throw Him off the top of the nearest cliff, you know He has made His point.

Like Naaman and the widow of Zarephath, there were many lame men in Israel at that time described in Acts 3 (see Acts 8.7). Could any other lame man, woman, or child have been there instead of this certain man? If anyone else had been substituted for him, would it have still been this certain man? Of course not. What would have been certain about the whole event? Would it have been any certain person at all?

If it were not this certain man, how could we be sure it would have been someone else who was crippled? Could this certain man, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple, have been anywhere else, other than where he was when Peter and John walked by?

Did God do the healing, or did Peter? Peter said God did (verses 12-16). James later said, “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world (Acts 15.18).” Since God knew all His works from the beginning of the world, we dare believe He knew which certain person He would heal of all lame

people in the world that day. Since He knew it from the beginning of the world, we call it “predestinated,” even though the word does not occur in the text.

Those who so strenuously object to our using the word “predestinated” in such a context would do us a great favor if, instead of wanting to throw us off the nearest cliff, they would give us a better, more acceptable word to use when speaking of God’s actions that, before the foundation of the world, He had eternally determined to bring to pass.

2-3. “But a **certain man named Ananias**, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it, at the apostles’ feet (Acts 5:1-2).”

Could there have been any other man and his wife at that particular time and place, members of the church in Jerusalem, other than this **certain** Ananias and Sapphira, who agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Could this have been another Ananias who had a wife named anything other than Sapphira? Could they have kept back either more or less of their money and have it still be a **certain** part? There is no variable that can be changed and still be certain.

Ananias’ and Sapphira’s appointed time and method of death had come. It is appointed unto man once to die (Hebrews 9.27). This is not merely some general principle that “we all have to die sometime.” Job said, “Is there not an *appointed* time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling? As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work: so am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are *appointed* to me (Job 7.1-3).” “Seeing *his days are determined*, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast *appointed* his bounds that he cannot pass...(Job 14.5).” Can a man extend the days God has determined (fixed) or the number of his months?

Can he pass “the appointed bounds” he cannot pass?

Job said again, “**all the days of my appointed time** will I wait, till my change come (Job 14.14).” Job said again, “But He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth. For He performeth the thing that is *appointed* for me: and many such things are with Him. Therefore am I troubled at His presence: when I consider, I am afraid

of Him (Job 23.13ff).” “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom (Job 28.28).”

The fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 111.10, Proverbs 9.10) and the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1.7), is the God-given result of a God-blessed, Holy Spirit-inspired meditation upon, and consideration of, God’s absolute predestination of all the affairs of our life. Conversely, there is no fear of God before their eyes (Romans 3.18), because God has hid this truth from them and given them over to believe a lie—in this case, the lie that man has a free will into which God Himself cannot intrude with His predestination or His absolute sovereignty over His creation.

It was—to borrow from Webster—**fixed** that Ananias and his wife would agree on an **inevitable** sum of money to lie about, immediately preceding their *appointed* time to die.

4. “Then there arose **certain** of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen (Acts 6:9).” Who the certain ones of the synagogue were, we are not told, but one thing is **certain**: If one speculates that any one of these men could have refrained from disputing with Stephen, then why, by the same reasoning, could not they all have refrained? And if they all had refrained, there could have been no disputation, and Stephen would not have been arrested, and he would not have spoken the amazing inspired sermon of Acts 7, he would not have been stoned to death, and the book of Acts would have been incomplete by so much. Stephen would have himself missed his appointed time and way of death as the first martyr of the church era.

5. “But there was a **certain** man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one (Acts 8:9).” God deals with the individual reprobate no less than with His individual elect children. In Samaria, it had to be this Simon Magus and no other, who was as surely raised up to be an example in New Testament times as was Pharaoh, to whom the Scripture saith, “Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth (Romans 9.17).” For untold years Magus had dominated his city with “sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that

himself was some great one.” The promoter of any free-will system should be able—yea, required—to show there was nothing certain about Simon Magus, or his career leading up to the day he met Simon Peter, or his ultimate doom.

6. “And as they went on their way, they came unto a **certain** water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? (Acts 8:36).” Could this have been any other water than it was—could it have been the Pacific Ocean? The Amazon, Danube, or the Ganges River? Great Bear Lake, or Lake of the Ozarks?

Is it not amazing that there was this water in Gaza, which is desert (verse 26)! Who put the water there, enough for both of the two men to go down into it (verse 38)? More importantly, who put the desire to be baptized into the eunuch’s heart? (It was not Philip, but the same God who had put every drop of the water in the desert that was indeed there.)

In the amazing efficiency of the Scriptures, the text does not say Philip mentioned baptism, for “he began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus”; but the eunuch’s question seems to prove he did include baptism in his preaching Jesus.

More, this **certain** water to which Philip and the eunuch came was in the exactly appropriate place, where they arrived neither too soon nor too late. If they had arrived too soon (speaking after the manner of men), Philip would not have had the time to mention baptism; if they had arrived too late, what then?

Such speculation is foolishness, because everyone’s steps are numbered and ordered of the Lord to get them to the exact place at the exact time that fulfills the purpose of the Lord.

7. “And there was a **certain disciple** at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord (Acts 9:10).” There were many disciples in Damascus (Acts 9.1, 2); but not just any disciple would have served the Lord’s purpose. What other disciple could have done what Ananias did, other than this **certain** disciple, Ananias? “LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for **thou also hast wrought all our works in us** (Isaiah 26.12).” The Lord knew exactly what works He had ordained from all eternity to work in Ananias. Nothing could keep it from being so. Does someone say, “God rewards us for our works, but we have to do those works ourselves”? Such was not David’s belief and

doctrine: “I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth **all things** for me (Psalm 57.2).”

8. “And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul **certain days** with the disciples which were at Damascus (Acts 9:19).” We do not know how long Saul was in Damascus, but there was nothing uncertain about his stay. It was exactly—certainly—long enough to fulfill God’s purpose, which included fellowship with the Damascene disciples, preaching Christ in the synagogues, confounding the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, finally provoking them to try to kill him, **fulfilling** [N.B.] many days, and escaping the Jews’ murder plot) but not a second longer.

“And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him (verse 23).” You will notice, Paul *fulfilled* many days. When we hear the word *fulfill*, we ordinarily think of the phrase “fulfilled prophecy.” This text indicates the certainty that the Lord’s predestination is likewise fulfilled.

To rebut this argument, the opponents of predestination need to prove that something was *uncertain* about how many days Saul stayed, or that he could have left whenever he chose (thereby making the number of the days uncertain), or that he actually stayed more days or less days than the **certain**, fixed number of days God intended.

9. “And there he found a **certain man named Aeneas**, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy (Acts 9:33).” Could this have been anyone else named Aeneas, any uncertain man who was not afflicted with palsy, or could it have been any other palsy victim other than Aeneas? The will-worshippers might answer yes, it could have been anybody; unlike God who operates in absolute certainty, they deal in generalities. We will not linger longer here as the questions already asked and the points already made in previous instances will apply as well to this **certain** man named Aeneas.

10. “Now there was at Joppa a **certain disciple named Tabitha**, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did (Acts 9:36).” Could this have been any other disciple other than Tabitha? She died, and Peter was given a spirit of prayer. The Lord restored Tabitha’s life, with the providential result that it was made known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord (verse 42). How could there have

been anything uncertain about who Tabitha was, why in God’s providence she died, and the astounding results of this miracle?

11-15. The account of Peter’s preaching to the brethren gathered in the home of Cornelius has at least five significant uses of the word *certain* (numbers 11 through 15): Cornelius was a certain man, Peter saw a certain vessel, certain men went with Peter, and they were in Caesarea certain days. Peter reemphasized that he had seen a certain vessel.

“There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band (Acts 10:1).” Could this have been any man other than Cornelius? Could he have been anything other than a centurion, and still been this certain man? Could he have been from anywhere else than from Italy? If so, how could he have been this certain man? Could he have been in any other town than Caesarea? If so, it would seem that Peter would have ended up in the wrong place, because he was sent to Caesarea, and that is where he went. “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way (Psalm 37.23).”

12. “And [Peter] saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth (Acts 10:11).” There are all sorts of vessels: clay and metal pots, sailing vessels, blood vessels, leather bags. This was a certain vessel Peter saw in a vision, like no other vessel, a great sheet knit at the four corners. Strong’s Concordance’s dictionary defines this sheet (Greek, *othone*) as “a linen cloth, i.e. (especially) a sail.” Linen in Scriptures often typifies the righteousness of Christ as imputed to the saints and covering them: “And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints (Revelation 19.8.)”

In the sheet, and in the vision itself, Peter was given a vision of no less a wonder than the salvation of God’s elect among the Gentiles, clothed in and covered with the righteousness of Christ, and carried in His righteousness, by His grace, into the heavenlies. Not just any vessel would do. It must be the righteousness of Christ. It had to be the certain vessel Peter saw. Neither a paper bag nor a trailer-truck would have served the Lord’s purpose here. —CCM

(To be continued, if the Lord wills)

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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;

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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 deprav-

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