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FOREWORD

An introduction to this critical issue has been addressed in my earlier book, *PRAYER: PREMISED on WORSHIP*.

The subject of prayer highlighted the need to be able to address God at a personal level, responding to Him in love for His gracious provision for our salvation through the finished work of the cross. There was no place for a mechanistic or robotic response to a cold dictator God Who would not allow the very willing response that He commanded.

As an expression of our dependence on God, as our creator, there needs to be a trust relationship that is very intimate, personal, and voluntary. Calvinism denies this possibility.

Most serious from the perspective of prayer, is the denial of the opportunity to make requests to a harsh dictator Who does not respond to our free-will requests, but has all things previously determined and non-negotiable.

My experience demonstrates repeatedly that most people that I have encountered, who claim to be “Reformed” or “Calvinistic”, have no idea what that profession is. They spontaneously respond to God as the Bible explains, in terms of a free-will response, and they engage in evangelistic endeavour with the normal zeal of a New Testament Christian.

Only occasionally does one encounter a harsh, legalistic person, like the one referred to in my book (Swincer 2019, Appendix I, #4.1):

I still remember the strong threat of a Calvinist, who having been unwittingly (by the denomination) elected to the denominational

Evangelism Committee, loudly asserting that now he would have all evangelistic appeals stopped! What a strong determination of his will (!!) he expressed. A personal, private agenda, was more important than the salvation of souls through the agency of the Evangelism Committee!! His free will was to deny others the same privilege!

Frequently one finds that the Calvinist tends to replicate the same basic personality insecurity demonstrated by Calvin himself. And it is the sheer power complex and delusions of grandeur of Calvin himself that betrays this religion as not only a sect, but as an expression of Calvin's own assertive authoritarian personality.

This personality insecurity manifests in a very defensive protecting of their position. This is especially noticeable in Pink's volume (Pink 1961).

But it is also highlighted when a Calvinist becomes aware of the cold, harsh, mechanical nature of Calvinism, and seeks to change his position. Instead of moving to a balanced position, the majority of absconders move to the other end of the spectrum and become Pentecostal or the like, with extreme emotion and subjectivity, with complete free will—a complete about-face.

* * * * *

Reformed Theology—Calvinism—came out of the Reformation, and is in particular the theology of John Calvin (1509-1564) although its roots go back to Augustine (345-430).

The terms Reformed theology, Calvinism, and hyper-Calvinism tend to be used interchangeably.

The notable thing in this system, is the idiosyncratic emphasis on the Calvinistic concept of the sovereignty of God, and the faulty superstructure built on that erroneous premise.

This concept of sovereignty is foundational to their position.

* * * * *

CHAPTER 1

CALVINISM AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

1.1 INTRODUCTION

By contrast (to Arminianism), Calvinism is based upon the concept of a sovereign God of the Calvinist's conception.

Arminianism may be defined thus:

Arminianism is a distinct Protestant theology which teaches conditional pre-destination, in which the predetermination of the destiny of individuals is based on God's foreknowledge of whether they will freely accept or reject Christ. Arminius stressed the human freedom to choose salvation, proclaiming that Christ's atonement is unlimited in its benefits but that believers may lose their salvation and be eternally lost.

Elwell 1991, 40.

A.W. Pink—adopting a typical Calvinist persecution complex—details his understanding of the Calvinist concept of a sovereign God, which is premised upon a very normal biblical position, but it is then seriously and erroneously reinterpreted for the Calvinist bias:

The sovereignty of God! What do we mean by this expression? We mean the supremacy of God, the kingship of God, the Godhood of God. To say that God is sovereign, is to declare that God *is* God. To say that God is sovereign is to declare that He is the Most High ...

To say that God is sovereign is to declare that He is the Almighty, the Possessor of all power in heaven and earth, **so that none can defeat His counsels, thwart His purposes, or resist His will.**

Pink 1961, 20, emphasis his.

There is nothing singular about this statement that is not already perfectly clear in Scripture, but there is the faint transition to the Calvinist bias, when he states—correctly—but with a view to the Calvinist assertions, that “God has all power in heaven and earth, so that none can defeat His counsels, thwart His purposes, or resist His will.” This is the premise for then denying man a free will least it be seen to counter in any way God’s sovereignty, especially in regard to man’s free will in respect to salvation. Hence Pink continues:

To say that God the Father has purposed the salvation of all mankind, that God the Son died with the express intention of saving the whole human race, and that God the Holy Spirit is now seeking to win the world to Christ; when, as a matter of common observation, it is apparent that the great majority of our fellow-men are dying in sin, and passing into a hopeless eternity: is to say that God the Father is *disappointed*, that God the Son is *dissatisfied*, and that God the Holy Spirit is *defeated*.

Pink 1961, 21, italics his.

But that is precisely where the argument is wrong, and all the structure built on that erroneous foundation is also wrong. Pink is drawing unfounded conclusions and then trying to “give God an explanation for His failure”. BUT:

- God the Father **has** purposed the salvation of all mankind,
- God the Son **has** died for the whole human race, and
- God the Holy Spirit **is** now seeking to win the world to Christ,

and the observation that many are going to a Christless eternity does not negate any one of these factors. It only highlights the fact that God

has given mankind a free will, and that precisely allows that any man may choose to ignore the salvation thus provided, without negating God's sovereignty. Afterall, God gave the free will, so if he is insecure about that (and He most certainly is not) then He would not have made that provision in the first place—because He most certainly knew the potential and the outcome and therefore provided fully for that eventuality. Part of the creation plan was that Christ would die for mankind. And that does not need some “limited atonement” to try to “protect God”.

Hence, Calvinistically, the Scriptures are bound by a very biased view especially from one man in particular—Benjamin Warfield—and supported by many others:

*** He who believes in God without reserve and is determined [free will!??] that God shall be God to him, in all his thinking, feeling, willing - in the entire compass of his life activities, intellectual, moral, spiritual - throughout all his individual, social, religious relations - is, by the force of that strictest of all logic which presides over the outworking of principles into thought and life, by the very necessity of the case, a Calvinist.*

Warfield n.d., 13.

This can only be described as a ridiculously elitist statement. To believe in God in the terms described, does not even remotely require a person to be a Calvinist. Likewise, the following quote is equally elitist in the extreme.

*** Religion (sic) in its substance is a sense of absolute dependence on God and reaches the height of its conception only when this sense of absolute dependence is complete and all pervasive, in the thought and feeling and life. But when this stage is reached we have just Calvinism.*

Warfield n.d., 21.

**** NOTE: This is arrogant nonsense!** Is this position—absolute dependence on God, etc.—not true of EVERY Christian? It is this arrogant approach that raises a serious concern of an elite theology above the Scriptures. And since Reformed Theology is the basis of Presbyterian, Reformed

(Dutch, etc), Anglican and a variety of other groups (e.g. particular Baptists), as well as the premise of the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., and Banner of Truth Publishing, it has the potential to assume an authority like the Roman Catholic Church, from which Luther had succeeded in breaking. Traditionally, Calvinism is bitterly anti-Roman Catholic.

According to Calvinism, God acts only in grace (or faith) and all salvation stems from His initiative. But equally all condemnation stems from the same initiative! We have no say! This introduces "double predestination": unconditional particular election (for the saved), and unconditional reprobation (for the lost). We have no choice in this. Predestination (as predetermination) is fundamental to Calvinism. Two destinies, neither of which we have any control over, and therefore cannot be held accountable for!

Self-determination of destination is outlawed/abhorrent to Calvinism:

There is nothing therefore, against which Calvinism sets its face with more firmness than every form and degree of auto-soterism.

Warfield n.d., 17.

**** NOTE:** "auto-soterism" = self (determining) salvation. Calvin will not allow that anyone can make a choice to receive Christ. He bitterly opposed Arminius' emphasis on "free will".

Yet Calvin **chooses** (free will!) to conceive of God in a way that is **a denial that God chose to give us free will**. For example, their concept of dependence (already noted):

Religion (sic) in its substance is a sense of **absolute dependence** on God and reaches the height of its conception only when this sense of **absolute dependence** is complete and all pervasive, in the thought and feeling and life. But when this stage is reached we have just Calvinism.

Warfield n.d., 21, emphases added.

This is a terribly conceited position. We accept that God is sovereign absolutely, but we do not tell God that that limits our choice. It is this rigid concept of God that is the basis of Calvinistic thinking issuing in the FIVE POINTS (see below).

**** NOTE:**

1. reminder from the Foreword:

this rigid reasoning expresses a basic personality insecurity of the Calvinist, as if God is threatened by weak creatures that He has made. This insecurity manifests in a very defensive protecting of their position. This is especially noticeable in Pink's volume (Pink 1961).

This personality insecurity is highlighted when a Calvinist becomes aware of the harsh mechanical nature of Calvinism, and seeks to change his position. Instead of moving to a balanced position, the majority of absconders move to the other end of the spectrum and become Pentecostal or the like, with extreme emotion and subjectivity, with complete free will—a complete about-face.

2. On the contrary, God has given us free will and delights to draw us with the cords of love. Speaking to Israel God says:

¹² ... “**Return**, faithless Israel,’ declares the LORD,
‘I will frown on you no longer,
for I am faithful,’ declares the LORD,
‘I will not be angry forever.

¹³ **Only acknowledge your guilt—**
you have rebelled against the LORD your God ... ”

Jeremiah 3:12-13, emphases added.

God will not “maintain His rage”—***I will not be angry forever***—but He demands a change of heart—which can only be by free will—from His people: **Return**. But it is not capricious or partial, because they will need to act with their wills: **Only acknowledge your guilt**. God's love is unchanging toward Israel, but sin must always be dealt with.

3. Later, in Jeremiah, this unchanging love is again manifest:

³ ... ***"I have loved you with an everlasting love;
I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.***

Jeremiah 31:3, emphases added.

ONE EXAMPLE of a free-will response: having deceived his father Isaac, Jacob (= "deceiver, supplanter") and stolen the blessing that was due to his brother Esau, Jacob leaves home to go to Haran, to his uncle Laban, in order to escape the murderous intentions of his brother. He acts with a free will. But God has a plan to bring him back—a sovereign plan—to fulfil His Covenant. Both free will AND sovereignty are in play, but neither detracts from the other—see #5.5.5. Read carefully the account of that transaction:

¹⁰Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran.

¹¹So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. ¹²Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

¹³And behold, the Lord stood above it and said: **"I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. ¹⁴Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. ¹⁵Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."**

Genesis 28:10-15, emphases added.

God reaffirms the Abrahamic Covenant to Jacob (verses 13-14). He then declares that He will be with Jacob in his freely-chosen plan of escape, that He will protect him wherever he goes, but that He will also bring him back to "face the music", so that His sovereign purpose will be fulfilled.