

Election and Predestination

There are a surprising number of ways, invented by mankind, to excuse sin. The erroneous doctrine of “election” (also called “divine election,” “divine decrees,” and “predestination”) is one of them. According to this theory, it is not necessary for anyone to obey God, His Written Word, or His law. You would either do it automatically or be totally unable to do it.

Such a concept is very close to the new theology error, which has been spreading rapidly through our own denomination since the early 1980s. It teaches that no one in the world—saved or unsaved—need obey God’s law; and not until the Second Advent of Christ will any of the redeemed begin obeying it! Prior to that time, all you need do is profess faith in Christ—and you are automatically saved! To add to the hideousness of that error, it is also being taught in our church that anyone who tries to obey God’s law—is a legalist! (The possibility that Christ will, by His grace, strengthen anyone to resist temptation and obey the Inspired Writings—is totally ignored as something that could not possibly happen.)

These various errors, about being saved in sin, are very close to the error of universalism: the concept that everyone, including the devil, will finally be saved!

All of these errors teach that you can be saved while continuing in sin.

In this present study, we will consider what the Spirit of Prophecy teaches about the error of “divine election,” also called “predestination.” Because many Scripture quotations are included, the Bible teaching on this subject is also covered very well.

We will also briefly overview the history of this strange theological error.

“The spiritual declension which had been manifest in England just before the time of Wesley was in great degree the result of antinomian teaching. Many affirmed that Christ had abolished the moral law and that Christians are therefore under no obligation to observe it; that a believer is freed from the ‘bondage of good works.’ Others, though admitting the perpetuity of the law, declared that it was unnecessary for ministers to exhort the people to obedience of its pre-

cepts, since those whom God had elected to salvation would, ‘by the irresistible impulse of divine grace, be led to the practice of piety and virtue,’ while those who were doomed to eternal reprobation ‘did not have power to obey the divine law.’

“Others, also holding that ‘the elect cannot fall from grace nor forfeit the divine favor,’ arrived at the still more hideous conclusion that **‘the wicked actions they commit are not really sinful, nor to be considered as instances of their violation of the divine law, and that, consequently, they have no occasion either to confess their sins or to break them off by repentance’** (McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia*, art. ‘Antinomians’). Therefore, they declared that even one of the vilest of sins, ‘considered universally an enormous violation of the divine law, is not a sin in the sight of God,’ if committed by one of the elect, ‘because it is one of the essential and distinctive characteristics of the elect, that **they cannot do anything that is either displeasing to God or prohibited by the law.’**

“These monstrous doctrines are essentially the same as the later teaching of popular educators and theologians—that there is no unchangeable divine law as the standard of right, but that the standard of morality is indicated by society itself, and has constantly been subject to change. All these ideas are inspired by the same master spirit—by him who, even among the sinless inhabitants of heaven, began his work of seeking to break down the righteous restraints of the law of God.

“The doctrine of the divine decrees, unalterably fixing the character of men, had led many to a virtual rejection of the law of God. Wesley steadfastly opposed the errors of the antinomian teachers and showed that this doctrine which led to antinomianism was contrary to the Scriptures. **“The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.’** Titus 2:11. **‘This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved,** and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all.’ 1 Timothy 2:3-6. **The Spirit of God is freely bestowed to enable every man to lay hold upon the means of salvation. Thus Christ, ‘the true**

Light, 'lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' John 1:9. Men fail of salvation through their own willful refusal of the gift of life.—*Great Controversy*, 260-262.

“It is no arbitrary decree on the part of God that excludes the wicked from heaven; they are shut out by their own unfitness for its companionship. The glory of God would be to them a consuming fire. They would welcome destruction, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them.”—*Steps to Christ*, 18.

“Christ is sitting for His portrait in every disciple. **Every one God has predestinated to be 'conformed to the image of His Son.'** Rom. 8:29. In every one Christ's long-suffering love, His holiness, meekness, mercy, and truth are to be manifested to the world.”—*Desire of Ages*, 827.

“[Ephesians 1:1-8 quoted in full.] **These promises are not made to a few, but to all who will come to the heavenly banquet** that God has prepared by sending His Son to our world to die in our behalf, that through faith in Him, we should become one with God. The praise and glory of His grace, power, and wisdom is the effectual salvation of a peculiar people. Wonderful possibilities are provided for every one who has faith in Christ. **No walls are built to keep any living soul from salvation. The predestination of which God speaks includes all who will accept Christ** as a personal Saviour, who will return to their loyalty, to perfect obedience to all God's commandments. This is the effectual salvation of a peculiar people, chosen by God from among men. **All who are willing to be saved by Christ are the elect of God. It is the obedient who are predestinated** from the foundation of the world.”—*6 Manuscript Releases*, 388.

“**Probationary time is granted us, opportunities and privileges are given us, to make our calling and election sure.** How we should prize this precious time and improve every talent God has given, that we may be faithful stewards over ourselves!”—*In Heavenly Places*, 359.

“In the full assurance of his faith the aged disciple exhorted his brethren to steadfastness of purpose in the Christian life. **'Give diligence,' he pleaded, 'to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'** Precious assurance! Glorious is the hope before the believer as he advances by faith toward the heights of Christian per-

fection!

“**All those who give all diligence to make their calling and election sure,** will feel that a superficial knowledge will not fit them for positions of usefulness. Education balanced by a solid religious experience fits the child of God to do his appointed work steadily, firmly, understandingly. If one is learning of Jesus, the greatest educator the world ever knew, he will not only have a symmetrical Christian character, but a mind trained to effectual labor. Minds that are quick to discern will go deep beneath the surface.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 119.

“**There was no arbitrary choice on the part of God by which Esau was shut out from the blessings of salvation. The gifts of His grace through Christ are free to all. There is no election but one's own by which any may perish. God has set forth in His word the conditions upon which every soul will be elected to eternal life—obedience** to His commandments, through faith in Christ. **God has elected a character in harmony with His law,** and anyone who shall reach the standard of His requirement will have an entrance into the kingdom of glory. Christ Himself said, 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life.' John 3:36. **'Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father** which is in heaven.' Matthew 7:21. And in the Revelation He declares, **'Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life,** and may enter in through the gates into the city.' Revelation 22:14. As regards man's final salvation, **this is the only election brought to view in the Word of God.**”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 207-208.

“O that men were as earnest to obtain a title to their heavenly possessions that would stand the test of law! **The apostle exhorts the follower of Christ to give diligence to make his calling and election sure.** There must be no error, no flaw in your claim to immortality. Says the Saviour, **'Blessed are they that do His commandments,** that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.' ”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, 225.

“**Let the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ be in your minds continually and let them crowd out worldly thoughts and cares.** When you lie down and when you rise up, let them be your meditation. Live and act wholly

in reference to the coming of the Son of man. The sealing time is very short, and will soon be over. **Now is the time, while the four angels are holding the four winds, to make our calling and election sure.**—*Early Writings*, 58.

“The Bible teaches that everything regarding our salvation depends upon our own course of action. If we perish, the responsibility will rest wholly upon ourselves. If provision has been made, and if we accept God’s terms, we may lay hold on eternal life. We must come to Christ in faith, **we must be diligent to make our calling and election sure.**”—*Faith and Works*, 48.

“There is no place in the school of Christ where we graduate. We are to work on the plan of addition, and the Lord will work on the plan of multiplication. **It is through constant diligence that we will, through the grace of Christ, live on the plan of addition, making our calling and election sure.** . . . ‘For if ye do these things ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ’ (2 Peter 1:10, 11).”—*Faith and Works*, 113.

“You are to be diligent ‘to make your calling and election sure.’ **Search the Scriptures, and you will see that not a son or a daughter of Adam is elected to be saved in disobedience to God’s law.** The world makes void the law of God; but Christians are chosen to sanctification through obedience to the truth. **They are elected to bear the cross, if they would wear the crown.**”—*Review and Herald*, July 17, 1888.

“How shall you make your calling and election sure? What is the way of salvation? Christ says, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life.’ **However sinful, however guilty you may be, you are called, you are chosen.** ‘Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.’ Not one will be forced against his will to come to Jesus Christ. The Majesty of heaven, the only-begotten Son of the true and living God, opened the way for you to come to Him, by giving His life as a sacrifice on Calvary’s cross. But while He suffered all this for you, He is too pure, He is too just, to behold iniquity. But even this need not keep you away from Him; for He says, ‘I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’ **Let perishing souls come to Him just as they are, without one plea,** and plead the atoning blood of Christ, and they will find acceptance with God, who dwelleth in glory between the cherubim above the mercy seat. **The blood of Jesus is a never-failing passport, by which all your peti-**

tions may find access to the throne of God.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 251-252.

“God has elected a character in harmony with His law, and anyone who shall reach the standard of His requirement will have an entrance into the kingdom of glory. Christ Himself said, ‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life’ (John 3:36). **‘Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven’** (Matt. 7:21). And in the Revelation He declares, **‘Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city’** (Rev. 22:14). **As regards man’s final salvation, this is the only election** brought to view in the Word of God.

“Every soul is elected who will work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. **He is elected who will** put on the armor, and fight the good fight of faith. **He is elected who will** watch unto prayer, who will search the Scriptures, and flee from temptation. **He is elected who will** have faith continually, and who will be obedient to every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. **The provisions of redemption are free to all; the results of redemption will be enjoyed by those who have complied with the conditions.**”—*Amazing Grace*, 350.

“‘Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.’ Here is presented the only election that is brought to view in the Word of God. It is those who take heed lest they fall that will be accepted at last. There can be no presumption more fatal than that which leads men to venture upon a course of self-pleasing.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, 103.

“There is an election of individuals and a people, the only election found in the Word of God, where man is elected to be saved. Many have looked at the end, thinking they were surely elected to have heavenly bliss; but this is not the election the Bible reveals. **Man is elected to** work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. **He is elected to** put on the armor, to fight the good fight of faith. **He is elected to** use the means God has placed within his reach to war against every unholy lust, while Satan is playing the game of life for his soul. **He is elected to** watch unto prayer, to search the Scriptures, and to avoid entering into temptation. **He is elected to** have faith continually. **He is elected to** be obedient to every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, and that he may

be, not a hearer only, but a doer of the word. **This is Bible election.**—*Testimonies to Ministers*, 453-454.

“Here are your life-insurance papers. This is not an insurance policy the value of which someone else will receive after your death; **it is a policy that assures you a life measuring with the life of God—even eternal life. O what an assurance!** what a hope! Let us ever reveal to the world that we are seeking for a better country, even a heavenly. Heaven has been made for us, and we want a part in it. We cannot afford to allow anything to separate us from God and heaven. **In this life we must be partakers of the divine nature.** Brethren and sisters, you have only one life to live. O let it be a life of virtue, a life hid with Christ in God!”—*In Heavenly Places*, 29.

“Young friends, you should take time to prove your own selves, whether you are in the love of God. **Be diligent to make your calling and election sure.**

“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Make this first and last. Seek most earnestly to know Him whom to know aright is life eternal. Christ and His righteousness is the salvation of the soul.”—*Maranatha*, 71.

“We have but a little time in this world, and let us work for time and for eternity. **Be diligent to make your calling and election sure.** See that you make no mistake in regard to your title to a home in Christ’s kingdom. If your name is registered in the Lamb’s book of life, then all will be well with you. **Be ready and anxious to confess your faults and forsake them,** that your mistakes and sins may go beforehand to judgment and be blotted out.”—*5 Testimonies*, 331.

“Christ Jesus is the only judge of the fitness of human agents to receive eternal life. **The gates of the holy city will open to those who have been humble, meek, lowly followers of His, having learned their lessons from Him, and received from Him their life insurance policy, forming characters after the divine similitude.**

“When the ransomed are redeemed from the earth, the city of God will be opened to you . . . Then the harp will be placed in your hand, and your voice will be raised in songs of praise to God and to the Lamb, by whose great sacrifice you are made partakers of His nature and given an immortal inheritance in the kingdom of God.”—*My Life Today*, 339.

“There never was a more solemn time in the history of the world than the time in which we are now living. **Our eternal interests are at stake, and we should arouse to the importance of making our calling and election sure. We dare not risk our eternal interests on mere probabilities.** We must be in earnest. What we are, what we are doing, what is to be our course of action in the future, are all questions of untold moment, and we cannot afford to be listless, indifferent, unconcerned. It becomes each one of us to inquire, ‘What is eternity to me?’ **Are our feet in the path that leads to heaven, or in the broad road that leads to perdition?**”—*Our High Calling*, 8.

“It depends upon your course of action as to whether or not you will secure the benefits bestowed upon those who, as the elect of God, receive an eternal life-insurance policy.”—*Faith I Live By*, 157.

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.’ 2 Peter 1:10. **We need not have a supposed hope, but an assurance. To make our calling and election sure is to follow the Bible plan** to closely examine ourselves, to make strict inquiry whether we are indeed converted, whether our minds are drawn out after God and heavenly things, our wills renewed, our whole souls changed. **To make our calling and election sure requires far greater diligence than many are giving to this important matter.** ‘For if ye do these things’—live on the plan of addition, growing in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ—ye shall mount up, step by step, the ladder Jacob saw, and ‘ye shall never fall.’ ”—*Our High Calling*, 74.

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.’ **This is the only election that is spoken of in the Bible. Your election is dependent on your course of action.** If you will to make your election sure, you can do so; **if you will to make it uncertain by sinning while professing to be righteous, you can do so.** You can become angry, you can be dishonest in trade, you can in other respects follow the course of the ungodly. But will it pay? I ask you, Will it pay? **Will you not determine to make your calling and election sure, and not only for yourself, but for your children?** Will you not strive to bind up your chil-

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**PART TWO
OF TWO**

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

dren with Christ?"—*Peter's Counsel to Parents*, 30.

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" **'Abide in me, and I in you.** As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.' . . . Here are the most precious jewels of truth for every individual soul of us. **Here is the only election in the Bible, and you can prove yourself elected of Christ by being faithful; you can prove yourself the chosen of Christ by abiding in the vine.**"—*Reflecting Christ*, 355.

"If we comply with the conditions the Lord has made, we shall secure our election to salvation. **Perfect obedience to His commandments is the evidence that we love God**, and are not hardened in sin.

"Christ has a church in every age. There are in the church those who are not made any better by their connection with it. **They themselves break the terms of their election.** Obedience to the commandments of God gives us a right to the privileges of His church."—*6 Bible Commentary*, 1079.

"Here is the condition of the only saving election in the Word of God. We are to become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. We are to add grace to grace, and the promise is, 'If ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'

"There is no such thing in the Word of God as unconditional election—once in grace, always in grace. In the second chapter of Second Peter the subject is made plain and distinct. After a history of some who followed an evil course, the explanation is given: 'which have forsaken the right way, . . . following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.' . . . [2 Peter 2:15-20 quoted.] Here is a class of whom the apostle warns, 'For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.' . . .

"There is truth to be received if souls are saved. The keeping of the commandments of God is life eternal to the receiver. But **the Scriptures make it plain that those who once knew the way of life**

and rejoiced in the truth are in danger of falling through apostasy, and being lost. Therefore there is need of a decided, daily conversion to God.

"All who seek to sustain the doctrine of election, once in grace, always in grace, do this against a plain, 'Thus saith the Lord.' . . . [Eze. 18:21; 33:13 quoted.]

"Those who have been truly converted have been buried with Christ in the likeness of His death, and raised from the watery grave in the likeness of His resurrection, to walk in newness of life. **By faithful obedience to the truth they are to make their calling and election sure.**"—*6 Bible Commentary*, 1114-1115.

"Christ is able to save to the uttermost all who come to Him in faith. He will cleanse them from all defilement if they will let Him. **But if they cling to their sins, they cannot possibly be saved;** for Christ's righteousness covers no sin unrepented of. God has declared that **those who receive Christ as their Redeemer, accepting Him as the One who takes away all sin, will receive pardon for their transgressions. These are the terms of our election.** Man's salvation depends upon his receiving Christ by faith. Those who will not receive Him lose eternal life because they refused to avail themselves of the only means provided by the Father and the Son for the salvation of a perishing world."—*7 Bible Commentary*, 931.

"Whom God elects, Christ redeems. The Saviour has paid the redemption price for every soul. We are not our own; for we are bought with a price. From the Redeemer, who from the foundation of the world has chosen us, we receive the insurance policy that entitles us to eternal life."—*7 Bible Commentary*, 944.

"Turn square about. **Double your diligence to make your calling and election sure. Keep God's commandments,** and live . . . Tax every moment to the utmost in laboring for your own eternal interest and for the salvation of souls around you. By so doing you may save both yourself and those who are more or less controlled by your example. These are motives which should be duly considered.

"Wake up! wake up! You have work to do, and your sun is fast hastening to its setting. Your powers are becoming enfeebled; but all there

is of you, every particle of your ability, belongs to God, and should be used earnestly and disinterestedly in His service. Work while the sun still lingers in the heavens; for the 'night cometh, when no man can work.'—*5 Testimonies*, 353.

“**Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him.** But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.’

“**Here we have the Bible election plainly stated.** Here are specified who shall be crowned in the city of God and who shall have no part with the just. **‘Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life,** and may enter in through the gates into the city.’—*5 Testimonies*, 693.

“**In the work of cleansing and purifying our own souls our intense desire to make our own calling and election sure will inspire us with a yearning for others who are in need.** The same energy and careful thought which we once brought into worldly matters will be put into the service of Him to whom we owe everything. We shall do as Christ did, seizing every opportunity to work for those who without help will perish in their degradation. We shall extend to others a helping hand. Then with singing and praise and thanksgiving we shall rejoice with God and the heavenly angels as we see sin-sick souls uplifted and helped.”—*6 Testimonies*, 304.

“We should carefully consider what the harvest will be. Whether the crown of our eternal rejoicing shall be bright or dim depends upon our own course of action. **We may make our calling and election sure, and may come into possession of the rich inheritance, or we may defraud ourselves of the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.**”—*Welfare Ministry*, 316-317.

“**Abel grasped the great principles of redemption.** He saw himself a sinner, and he saw sin and its penalty, death, standing between his soul and communion with God. He brought the slain victim, the sacrificed life, thus acknowledging the claims of the law that had been transgressed. Through the shed blood he looked to the future sacrifice, Christ dying on the cross of Calvary; and trusting in the atonement that was there to be made, he had the witness that he was righteous, and his offering accepted.

“**Cain had the same opportunity of learning and accepting these truths as had Abel. He was not the victim of an arbitrary purpose. One**

brother was not elected to be accepted of God, and the other to be rejected. Abel chose faith and obedience; Cain, unbelief and rebellion. Here the whole matter rested.

“Cain and Abel represent two classes that will exist in the world till the close of time. One class avail themselves of the appointed sacrifice for sin; the other venture to depend upon their own merits; theirs is a sacrifice without the virtue of divine mediation, and thus it is not able to bring man into favor with God. **It is only through the merits of Jesus that our transgressions can be pardoned.** Those who feel no need of the blood of Christ, who feel that without divine grace they can by their own works secure the approval of God, are making the same mistake as did Cain. If they do not accept the cleansing blood, they are under condemnation. **There is no other provision made whereby they can be released from the thralldom of sin.**”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 72-73.

“**Who are the subjects of the kingdom of God?—all those who do His will.** They have righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The members of Christ’s kingdom are the sons of God, partners in His great firm. **The elect of God are a chosen generation, a peculiar people,** a holy nation, to show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. **They are the salt of the earth, the light of the world. They are living stones, a royal priesthood. They are in copartnership with Jesus Christ.** These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, 422.

“**Those who have risen with Christ to walk in newness of life are the elect of God.** They are holy unto the Lord, and are acknowledged by Him as His beloved. As such, they are under solemn covenant to distinguish themselves by showing humility of mind. They are to clothe themselves in garments of righteousness. They are separate from the world, from its spirit, its practises, and they are to reveal that they are learning of Him . . . **If they realize that they have died with Christ . . . the world will have no power to draw them aside to deny Christ.** If they live the life of Christ in this world, they are partakers of the divine nature.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, 133.

—How thankful we can be for the Inspired Writings, given us of God, to protect us in these last days, when every wind of doctrine is blowing fiercely.

Soon Jesus will return, and we must be ready to meet Him! Be faithful, my brother and sister; be faithful!

—*vf*

Where Did This Hideous Error Originate?

This horrible error teaches that, before he was born, everyone who has ever lived—was predetermined by God either to be lost or saved! Notice that such a concept removes free will. Regardless of what you may ever think or do, your fate is fixed from before birth. This teaching makes machinery out of people. They are merely automatons living out their earthly days.

Then add to this concept, held by all the adherents of this vicious attack on the love and care of God,—the belief that those who are lost—will burn in hellfire eternally!

The result is one of the most evil—*evil*—religious teachings I have ever encountered!

Where did such a wicked teaching originate? Obviously, it was initially formed in the brain of Satan. He knew that, when many people heard either it or its twin, the error of eternal hellfire,—they would hate God and want to flee as far from Him as they could.

“St.” Augustine (A.D. 354-430), who lived in North Africa, can be described as a sex-crazed intellectual, searching for some means of personal salvation.

He spent his earlier years studying one pagan philosophy after another. Like many others who search for a way to be saved, while seemingly being unable to escape from the enchantments of their sins, Augustine finally hit on a most glorious idea: He could be saved without giving up his sins at all!

In Augustine, many of the heathen concepts of the ancients were blended. He mixed them into the pot of neo-Platonism,—and then brought the weird mixture into Christianity.

Augustine had deep faith in the ancient pagan philosophers, believing that they had received divine guidance from God. This divine illumination he believed could be found in nearly all the foreign religions.

Eventually, he arrived at Christianity (the religion of his mother, Monica). Here he found a Saviour revealed. But his will was so weakened, he felt himself unable to escape from his personal sins.

Baptized in the spring of A.D. 387 when he was 33 years old, he spent the rest of his life developing a theory which could accommodate both Christianity and a continual yielding to temptation.

Unfortunately, Augustine also had writing ability; and he used it to expand his theory and defend it in one book after another.

He emphasized faith in Christ, and wrote many beautiful passages,—but interlaced through them all

was the concept that man can be saved in sin. Indeed, Augustine theorized, man was born with something called “*Original Sin*.” According to this error, man is a full-blown sinner at birth!

(The truth is that man is born with a fallen nature, and apart from the help of Christ, is prone to commit sin. But sin itself is “the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). It is only by personally committing sin that man becomes a sinner.)

Augustine was eventually made the head pastor of the church at Hippo, in North Africa. In his writings, he strongly defended his theory of “*Predestination*,” which the first six pages of this tract study refuted.

Why would a highly intelligent person like Augustine believe such an unbiblical theory? It is obvious that, all through the Bible, man’s obedience or disobedience to the laws of God is presented as a significant factor in whether or not he will be saved.

But Augustine had to find a way to crowd his sins into his brand of Christianity. He wanted Christ, but he also wanted sin for a season—a season extending to the end of his life.

This is the underlying reason why the new theology (which teaches that we can be saved in our sins) is so popular in our own denomination. People want to keep sinning! They enjoy its pleasures and earnestly desire a way that they may not have to abandon them—while still obtaining an entrance into the eternal kingdom of God.

Preachers, who want to nourish their own personal sins, are willing to encourage such people in the deception that there is safety in sinning.

Several convenient errors have been devised to assure them of that safety. Here are a few of them:

- Salvation only requires professing faith in Christ; it does not mean we have to put away our sins.

- It is impossible in this life to resist sin, and God never intended that we do so. He never provided any enabling grace so we could resist temptation, and it is impossible to be an overcomer.

- To say it again: Christ provides no empowering grace to overcome sin; He only died to provide forgiving grace. It is not His plan to take us out of sins at this time.

- It is always safe to believe in Christ and keep sinning, but it is quite dangerous to try to obey God’s law or anything He has commanded in Scripture. To do so would be legalism, and God damns legalists to eternal death.

- Christ did not, as stated in Hebrews 2:14-17,

take our fallen nature when He came to the world—and in that nature obey the law of God by relying on Him for strength to do it. Instead, the error teaches that He took an “unfallen nature” which could not sin if He had wanted to! Therefore, He neither provides us with an example of obedience for us to follow, nor does He provide us with enabling grace to obey.

- Since He only gives them forgiving (and not enabling) grace, God does not expect any of His earthly children to obey Him, but expects them to keep sinning until they die or are translated at His Second Advent.

- Those who try to obey God’s Scriptural requirements are legalists and will be lost, unless they repent and stop trying. The only way a person can try to stop sinning is in his own strength (because it is assumed that Christ will never help Him do it), and that is always legalism.

- “Sin” is not transgression of the law (1 John 3:4), but only separation from God. As soon as we profess faith in Christ, the separation ends. (The truth is that separation from God is not sin itself, but only one of many effects of sin.)

- We were all saved at the cross, 2,000 years ago. Now, all we do is profess acceptance of that earlier salvation and await the Second Coming, when our sins will automatically be removed. Therefore, there is no need of Christ’s intercession in heaven to help us resist temptation and become an overcomer. Hence, there is no Sanctuary in heaven.

- The mark of the beast will not be applied to Sabbathbreakers, but to legalists.

(Sweeping aside the refuge of lies, the truth is that, while we are totally saved by the forgiving, enabling grace of Christ, we must actively cooperate with the Holy Spirit at each step in our Christian experience in resisting temptation, putting away sin, and obeying the Word of God. Various aspects of this great truth are taught thousands of times in Scripture.)

Now, of course, you are not going to hear all of the above errors in any one sermon. They are scattered, here and there, in various sermons and articles. But if you check into the matter a little, you will find the package is all there. It is all neatly tied together; and on the outer wrapper is written, “The Gospel of Salvation by Grace Alone,” while inside are stamped the words, “Salvation in Sin.” Although it is very attractive to the carnal mind, which is always in search of an easier way, hundreds of texts still remain in the Bible, similar to this one: “The wages of sin is death.”

But, back to Augustine. The popes loved Augustine for two reasons: First, his theory had the effect of locking people into their sins, and thus kept people com-

ing to mass and confession, and paying money into the church. Second, in his book, *The City of God*, Augustine announced that “there was no salvation outside of the church,” and the only true church was headquartered at Rome.

For that, Augustine was made a saint.

His influence stretched across the Dark Ages to Anselm, Bonaventura, and Thomas Aquinas. Unfortunately, it also touched the lives of Martin Luther (originally an Augustinian monk) and John Calvin.

Both Reformers taught original sin, and Calvin emphasized predestination. John Knox, his student, filled Scotland with the error (Presbyterians); and, by the Synod of Dort (1618-1619) and the Westminster Assembly (1647), it was confirmed in the Church of England (Anglicans and Episcopalians). It has since spread to a large part of modern Christianity (including the largest denomination in the U.S.: the Southern Baptists).

John Calvin made the doctrine of predestination one of the cornerstones of his system of belief. Rejecting God’s plan that all men who would accept and obey Christ could be saved, Calvin maintained that Christ’s atoning death was offered for “the elect” alone. He added to this, the “reprobation of the damned,” to whom salvation is denied throughout all eternity—without any fault on their part. Many leading Catholic theologians, including many Jesuits, have claimed that man somehow has a type of free will, in spite of being predestined. But, as you know, the Jesuits are always good at double talk.

One day, while attending our Seminary in Washington, D.C. (prior to its removal to Berrien Springs, Michigan), I found a complete set of Calvin’s *Institutes* in its library. Intrigued to know how he managed to explain away all the Bible passages which denied his theory, I found the chapter in which he discussed predestination.

He introduced the chapter by mentioning that, yes, there were those who refuse to accept predestination, and “here were the reasons they put forth”: Then Calvin quoted many, many Bible passages which disproved his theory. Then, immediately, he dismissed it all in a sentence, declaring that such were the weak arguments being presented,—and he launched into his theory, without bothering to disprove those Bible passages!

Like many brilliant men, Calvin trusted too much to his own fallible wisdom.

Viewing the pit which the great Calvin fell into, we should learn caution, distrust of self, and humble surrender to God. We are not safe one hour without continual submission and obedience to the revealed will of God.

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