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**The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination**

**Chapter XXII**

**Objection 8. It Contradicts the Universalistic Scripture Passages**

1. The Terms "Will" and "All." 2. The Gospel is for Jews and Gentiles Alike. 3. The Term "World" is Used in Various Senses. 4. General Considerations.

# THE TERMS "WISH," "WILL," AND "ALL"

It may be asked, Is not the doctrine of Predestination flatly contradicted by the Scriptures which declare that Christ died for “all men," or for "the whole world," and that God wills the salvation of all men? In 1 Tim. 2:3, 4 Paul refers to "God our Saviour, who would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (And the word "all," we are dogmatically informed by our opponents, must mean every human being.) In Ezek. 33:11 we read, "As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live"; and in II Peter 3:9 we read that God is "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." The King James Version reads, "Not willing that any should perish..."

These verses simply teach that God is benevolent, and that He does not delight in the sufferings of His creatures any more than a human father delights in the punishment which he must sometimes inflict upon his son. God does not decretively will the salvation of all men, no matter how much He may desire it; and if any verses taught that He decretively willed or intended the salvation of all men, they would contradict those other parts of the Scripture which teach that God sovereignly rules and that it is His purpose to leave some to be punished.

The word "will" is used in different senses in Scripture and in our everyday conversation. It is sometimes used in the sense of “decree," or "purpose," and sometimes in the sense of "desire," or "wish." A righteous judge does not will (desire) that anyone should be hanged or sentenced to prison, yet at the same time he wills (pronounced sentence, or decrees) that the guilty person shall be thus punished. In the same sense and foe sufficient reasons a man may will or decide to have a limb removed, or an eye taken out, even though he certainly does not desire it. The Greek words thelo and boulomai, which are sometimes translated "will," are also used in the sense of "desire," or "wish;" e.g., Jesus said to the mother of James and John, "What wouldest thou?" Matt. 20:21; of the scribes it was said they "desire to walk in long robes," Luke 20:46; certain of the Scribes and Pharisees said to Jesus, "Teacher, we would see a sign from thee," Matt. 12:38; Paul said, "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue," I Cor. 14:19.

In like manner the word "all" is unmistakably used in different senses in Scripture. In some cases it certainly does not mean every individual; e.g., of John the Baptist it was said, "And there went out unto him all the country of Judea, and all they of Jerusalem; and they were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins," Mark 1:5. After Peter and John had healed the lame man at the door of the temple, we read that "all men glorified God for that which was done," Acts 4:21. Jesus told his disciples that they would be "hated of all men" for His name's sake, Luke 21:17. Paul was accused of "teaching all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place" (the temple), Acts 21:28. When Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself," John 12:32, He plainly meant not every individual of mankind, for history shows that not every individual has been drawn to Him. He certainly does not draw the many millions of heathens who die in utter ignorance of the true God. What He meant was, that a large multitude from all nations and classes would be saved; and this is what we see coming to pass. In Heb. 2:9, we read that Jesus tasted death "for every man." The original Greek, however, does not use the word "man" here at all, but simply says, "for every." So in principle, if the meaning is not to be limited to those who are actually saved, why limit it to men? Why not include the fallen angels, even the Devil himself, and the irrational animals?

When it is said, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive," I Cor. 15:22, it must mean not absolutely all, but the all in Adom and the all in Christ. Otherwise the verse would teach absolute restorationism; for through all the writings of Paul, to be "in Christ" means to be a Christian, to be saved; and plainly not all men reach that state. The context also shows this, for there is no reference to unbelievers in the whole chapter. If it were understood to mean that Christ's work was co-extensive with that of Adam, then one of two results would be inevitable; viz: either that all men are saved, or that all men are put in the same position which Adam occupied before the fall; but each of these conclusions contradicts Scripture and experience. The only possible conclusion is that Christ's work was not co-extensive with that of Adam; that Adam represented the entire human race, but that Christ represented only those who are given Him by the Father. The statement in II Cor. 5:15, that Christ "died for all," is perhaps to be explained by the fact that the epistle is written to "the Church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints that are in the whole of Achaia," and the "all" which Paul has in mind are those saved Christians.

It was not the whole of mankind which was equally loved of God and promiscuously redeemed by Christ. John’s hymn of praise, "Unto Him that loves us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood; and made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father," evidently proceeds on the hypothesis of a definite election and a limited atonement since God's love was the cause and the blood of Christ the efficacious means of their redemption. The declaration that Christ died for "all" is made clearer by the song which the redeemed now sing before the throne of the Lamb: "Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation," Rev. 5:9; 1:5. The word all must be understood to mean all the elect, all His Church, all those whom the Father has given to the Son, etc., not all men universally and every man individually. The redeemed host will be made up of men from all classes and conditions of life, of princes and peasants, of rich and poor, of bond and free, of male and female, of young and old, of Jews and Gentiles, men of all nations, and races, from north to south, and from east to west.

# THE GOSPEL IS FOR JEWS AND GENTILES ALIKE

In some instances, the word "all" is used in order to teach that the gospel is for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews. Through the many centuries of their past history the Jews had, with few exceptions, been the exclusive recipients of God's saving grace. They had greatly abused their privileges as the chosen people. They supposed that this same distinction would be kept up in the Messianic era, and they were always inclined to appropriate the Messiah exclusively to themselves. So rigid was the Pharisaic exclusivism that the Gentiles were called strangers, dogs, common, unclean; and it was not lawful for a Jew to keep company with or have any dealings with a Gentile (John 4:9; Acts 10:28; 11:3).

The salvation of the Gentiles was a mystery which had not been made known in other ages (Eph. 3:4-6; Col. 1:27). It was for that reason that Peter was taken to task: by the Church at Jerusalem after he had preached the Gospel to Cornelius, and we can almost hear the gasp of wonder in the exclamation of the leaders when after Peter's defense they said, "Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life," Acts 11:18. To understand what a revolutionary idea this was, read Acts 10:1-11:18. Consequently this was a truth which it was then peculiarly necessary to enforce, and it was brought out in the fullest and strongest terms. Paul was to be a witness "unto all men," that is, to Jews and Gentiles alike, of what he had seen and heard, Acts 22:15. As used in this sense the word "all" has no reference to individuals, but means mankind in general.

# THE TERM "WORLD" IS USED IN VARIOUS SENSES

When it is said that Christ died "not for our sins only but for the sins of the whole world," I John 2:2, or that He came to "save the world," John 12:47, the meaning is that not merely Jews but Gentiles also are included in His saving work; the world as a world or the race as a race is to be redeemed. When John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!" he was not giving a theological discourse to saints, but preaching to sinners; and the unnatural thing then would have been for him to have discussed Limited Atonement or any other doctrine which could have been understood only by saints. We are told that John the Baptist "came for a witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him," John 1:7. But to say that John’s ministry afforded an opportunity for every human being to have faith in Christ would be unreasonable. John never preached to the Gentiles. His mission was to make Christ "manifest to Israel," John 1:31; and in the nature of the case only a limited number of the Jews could be brought to hear him.

Sometimes the term "world" is used when only a large part of the world is meant, as when it is said that the Devil is "the deceiver of the whole world," or that "the whole earth" wonders after the beast, Revelation 13:3. If in I John 5:19, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one," the author meant every individual of mankind, then he and those to whom he wrote were also in the evil one, and he contradicted himself in saying that they were of God. Sometimes this term means only a relatively small part of the world, as when Paul wrote to the new Christian Church at Rome that their faith was "proclaimed throughout the whole world," Rom. 1:8. None but believers would praise those Romans for their faith in Christ, and in fact the world at large did not even know that such a Church existed at Rome. Hence Paul meant only the believing world or the Christian Church, which was a comparatively insignificant part of the real world. Shortly before Jesus was born, "There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled," . . . "and all went to enroll themselves," Luke 2:1, 3; yet we know that the writer had in mind only that comparatively small part of the world which was controlled by Rome. When it was said that on the day of Pentecost, "there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven," Acts 2:5, only those nations which were immediately known to the Jews were intended, for verses 9-11 list those which were represented. Paul says that the Gospel was "preached in all creation under heaven." Col. 1:23. The goddess Diana of the Ephesians was said to have been worshipped by "all Asia and the world," Acts 19:27. We are told that the famine which came over Egypt in Joseph's time extended to "all the earth," and that "all countries came into Egypt to Joseph to buy grain," Gen. 41:57.

In ordinary conversation we often speak of the business world, the educational world, the political world, etc., but we do not mean that every person in the world is a business man, or educated, or a politician. When we say that a certain automobile manufacturer sells automobiles to everybody, we do not mean that he actually sells to every individual, but that he sells to everyone who is willing to pay his price. We may say of one lone teacher of literature in a city that he teaches everybody, not that everybody studies under him, but that all of those who study at all study under him. The Bible is written in the plain language of the people and must be understood in that way.

Verses like John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life," give abundant proof that the redemption which the Jews thought to monopolize is universal as to space. God so loved the world, not a little portion of it, but the world as a whole, that He gave His only begotten Son for its redemption. And not only the extensity, but the intensity of God's love is made plain by the little adverb "so," God so loved the world, in spite of its wickedness, that He gave His only begotten Son to die for it. But where is the oft-boasted proof of its universality as to individuals? This verse is sometimes pressed to such an extreme that God is represented as too loving to punish anybody, and so full of mercy that He will not deal with men according to any rigid standard of justice regardless of their deserts. The attentive reader, by comparing this verse with other Scripture, will see that some restriction is to be placed on the word "world."

One writer has asked, "Did God love Pharaoh? (Rom. 9:17). Did He love the Amalekites? (Ex. 17:14). Did He love the Canaanites, whom He commanded to be exterminated without mercy? (Deut. 20:16). Did He love the Ammonites and Moabites whom He commanded not to be received into the congregation forever? (Deut. 23:3). Does He love the workers of iniquity? (Ps. 5:5). Does He love the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, which He endures with much long-suffering? (Rom. 9:22). Did He love Esau? (Rom. 9:13)."

# GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Nor does the prophetic invitation, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,” Is. 55:1, and other references to the same effect, contradict this view; for the majority of mankind are not thirsty but dead, dead in sin, hopeless and willing servants of Satan, and in no state to hunger and thirst after righteousness. The gracious invitation to come to Christ is rejected, not because there is anything outside their own person which prevents their coming, but because until they are graciously given a new birth through the agency of the Holy Spirit, they have neither the will nor the desire to accept. It is God who gives this will and excites this desire in those who are predestined to life, Rom. 11:7, 8; 9:18. He that will, may come; but a person who is completely immersed in heathenism, for instance, has no chance to hear the Gospel offer and so cannot possibly come. "Faith cometh by hearing;" and where there is no faith there can be no salvation. Neither can that person come who has heard the Gospel but who is still governed by principles and desires which cause him to hate it. He is a bondservant to sin and acts accordingly. He that will may escape from a burning building while the stairway is safe; hut he that is asleep, or he that does not think the fire serious enough to flee from, hasn’t the will, and perishes in the flames. Says Clark, "Arminians are fond of quoting: 'whosoever will let him come,' or 'Whosoever believeth,' implying that belief and decision are wholly the acts of man, and that this is an offset to sovereign election. True as these statements are they do not touch the point at issue. Miles deeper down than this lies the vital point; viz., how does a man become willing? If a man is willing he can certainly choose; but the sinful nature averse to God must be made willing, by God's word, by God's grace, by God's Spirit, or by sovereign intervention." [*Syllabus of Systematic Theology*, p. 208.] Strictly speaking, these are not divine offers indiscriminately made to all mankind but are addressed to a chosen people and are incidentally heard by others.

If the words of 1 Tim. 2:4, that God "would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth," be taken in the Arminian sense it follows either that God is disappointed in His wishes, or that all men without exception are saved. Furthermore, the doctrine which imputes disappointment to Deity contradicts that class of Scripture passages which teach the sovereignty of God. His will in this respect has been the same through the centuries. And if He had willed that the Gentiles should be saved, why was it that He confined the knowledge of the way of salvation to the narrow limits of Judea? Surely no one will deny that He might as easily have made known His Gospel to the Gentiles as to the Jews. Where He has not provided the means we may be sure that He has not designed the ends. The reply of Augustine to those who advanced this objection in his day is worth quoting: "when our Lord complains that though he wished to gather the children of Jerusalem as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but she would not, are we to consider that the will of God was overpowered by a number of weak men, so that He who was Almighty God could not do what He wished or willed to do? If so, what is to become of that omnipotence by which He did whatsoever pleased Him in Heaven and in? Moreover, who will be found so unreasonable as to say that God cannot convert the evil wills of men, which He pleases, when He pleases, and as He pleases, to good? Now, when He does this, He does it in mercy; and when He doeth it not, in judgment He doeth it not." Verses such as 1 Tim. 2:4 it seems are best understood not to refer to men individually but as teaching the general truth that God is benevolent and that He does not delight in the sufferings and death of His creatures.

It may be further remarked that if the universalistic passages are taken in an evangelical sense and applied as widely as the Arminians wish to apply them, they will prove universal salvation, a result which is contradicted by Scripture, and which in fact not held by Arminians themselves.

As was stated in the chapter on Limited Atonement there is a sense in which Christ did die for mankind in general. No distinction is made as to age or country, character or condition. The race fell in Adam and the race taken in the collective sense is redeemed in Christ. The work of Christ arrested the immediate execution of the penalty of sin as it related to the whole race. His work also brings many temporal and physical blessings to mankind in general and lays the foundation for the offer of the Gospel to all who hear it. These are admitted to be the results of His work and to apply to all mankind. Y et this does not mean that He died equally and with the same design for all.

It is true that some verses taken in themselves do seem to imply the Arminian position. This, however, would reduce the Bible to a mass of contradictions; for there are other verses which teach Predestination, Inability, Election, Perseverance, etc., and which cannot by any legitimate means be interpreted in harmony with Arminianism. Hence in these cases the meaning of the sacred writer can be determined only by the analogy of Scripture. Since the Bible is the word of God it is self-consistent. Consequently if we find a passage which in itself is capable of two interpretations, one of which harmonizes with the rest of the Scriptures while the other does not, we are duty bound to accept the former. It is a recognized principle of interpretation that the more obscure passages are to be interpreted i n the light of clearer passages, and not vice versa. We have shown that the evidence which is brought forward in defense of Arminianism, and which at first sight appears to possess considerable plausibility, can legitimately be given an interpretation which harmonizes with Calvinism. In view of the many Calvinistic passages, and the absence of any genuine Arminian passages, we unhesitatingly assert that the Calvinistic system is the true system.

This is the true universalism of the Scriptures the universal Christianization of the world and the complete defeat of the forces of spiritual wickedness. 'This, of course, does not mean that every individual will be saved, for many are unquestionably lost. Just as in the salvation of the individual much possible service to Christ is lost and many sins are committed through the period of incomplete salvation, so it is in the salvation of the world. A considerable number are lost; yet the process of salvation is to end in a great triumph, and our eyes are yet to behold "the glorious spectacle of a saved world." The words of Dr. Warfield are very appropriate here: "The human race attains the goal for which it was created, and sin does not snatch it out of God’s hands; the primal purpose of God with it is fulfilled; and through Christ, the race of man, though fallen into sin, is recovered to God and fulfills its original destiny." [*The Plan of Salvation*, p. 131.]

So while Arminianism offers us a spurious universalism, which is at best a universalism of opportunity, Calvinism offers us the true universalism in the salvation of the race. And only the Calvinist, with his emphasis on the doctrines of sovereign Election and Efficacious Grace, can look to the future confidently expecting to see a redeemed world.

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