

"1. Does God choose men to salvation because of their good works or because he foresees they will believe when the gospel is preached to them? Beyond doubt God foresees their faith. Beyond doubt faith is a condition of salvation. The question is whether it is also the ground of salvation. The Scriptures answer this question in the negative. The gospel is efficacious with some and not efficacious with others because God's grace is operative in the one case beyond the degree of its action in the other.

"2. The second question concerns the human will and choice: Does God's election coerce man's will, or does it leave it free? The answer is emphatically that the will of man is not coerced, but is left free. In his free act of accepting Christ and his salvation man is self-determined. He would not have made the choice if left to himself without the aid of God's grace. But when he chooses, it is his own free act. God's grace is not 'irresistible' as a physical force is irresistible. Grace does not act as a physical force. It is a moral and spiritual and personal power.

"3. A third question about God's sovereignty is this: Can we reconcile the sovereignty of God and human freedom in his electing grace? The answer is in the negative . . . . We are conscious of freedom as an ultimate fact of experience. We are driven to God's sovereignty as an ultimate necessity of thought. One has expressed it thus: 'I am fated; that is false. I am free: that is false. I am fated and free: that is true.' . . .

"4. A fourth question is: Can we assign any reasons why God should adopt the method of election in saving men? . . . . God is limited in two ways in his dealings with men. First, he is limited by human freedom. He made us free. He will not coerce man in his choices. If he did so he would destroy our freedom. We would cease to be persons and become things. God's problem is to save men and at the same time to leave them free. This is the greatest and most difficult of all problems . . . . Human agents of redemption, persuasion, argument, entreaty, prayer, personal influence—in a word, moral and spiritual forces are the only kind available for the end in view. God is limited by man's freedom.

"Again, God is limited in his method by human sin. Sin enslaved men. They are endowed with moral freedom, but their wills have a bias which inevitably leads to the rejection of the gospel except when aided by God's grace in Christ. It is not a question merely of ability, but of inevitability. Man inevitably chooses evil. The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

"Now combine these two thoughts. If man is free, and if he will inevitably reject the gospel unaided by divine grace, what will be the outcome? No one would be saved. But if God interposes, it can only be some form of election. But in adopting the method of election he must work in a moral, spiritual, and personal way on man, the moral, spiritual, and personal being. He must reduce his own action to the minimum lest he compel the will . . . . We conclude, then, that God is limited by human freedom and sin to the method of election, and that in executing his purpose he must, by reason of these limitations, work gradually and through human agents.

"5. A fifth question is: Would it not be fairer and more just if God left men to accept or reject when the gospel is preached to them, without any previous choice on his part?