

The Gospel Herald

"As the truth is in Jesus" (Ephesians 4:21)

For The LORD'S PILGRIMS, STRANGERS & SOJOURNERS

by
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Fatalism by *Elder Roy E. Harrison* *January 1991*

OBJECTIONS THERETO

- 1. Charges God with evil erroneously.*
- 2. Excuses unlawful acts of the creature.*
- 3. Removes ground for discipline.*
- 4. Promotes slothfulness in the children.*

OBSERVATIONS OF OBJECTIONS

- 1. Are made by those who reveal little appreciation of the meaning of Fatalism or Sovereignty.*
- 2. Are most vehement from those who are terrified at the prospect of being named "Absoluters" and being unable to answer such charges with the doctrine of God our Saviour.*
- 3. Inconsistently admit the fore-knowledge of God--making it a passive attribute without influence or relationship with His other attributes.*
- 4. Deny the absolute perfection and the effectiveness of the righteousness of Christ imputed to sinners as sufficient for blessedness.*
- 5. Reveal a lack of appreciation of the reality, presence, and power of the Holy Spirit, or of the work of sanctification of believers.*
- 6. Must be sustained by some appeal to an ability in the creature to perform some duty.*

ANSWERS

OBJECTION 1. Charges God with evil, erroneously. God is the maker and sustainer of all things. Under the power of His sovereign will, all things answer and serve the ends of His wise designs. He doeth according to His will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, What doeth thou? Dan. 4:35. Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. Rom. 9:13. The scripture says to Pharaoh, "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." Rom. 9:17. "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." Rom. 9:18. As for charging God--where shall we find one to hear our protests, or how shall we promote ourselves to find an audience before Him, as the apostle says. ". . . O man, who art thou that replieth against God? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" Rom. 9:20,21. Further, the apostle says to those idol worshipping Athenians concerning God, "He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation--and--in Him we live, and move, and have our being--For we are also His offspring." Acts 17:26,28. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee [God]: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." Psa. 76:10. "All things [that which we discern as evil also] work together for good--etc." Rom. 8:28, in harmony with that testimony of Joseph to his brethren ". . . ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Gen. 50:20 --for--"God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance." Gen. 45:7. Now all these things happened for examples: and they are written for our admonition--ICor. 10:11. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Rom. 15:4. For God "... worketh all things after [according to] the counsel of his own will." Eph. 1:11.

OBJECTION 2. Excuses unlawful acts of the creature [man]. It is a primary purpose of God and a determination [a decree and declaration] of His will and counsel that, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" Ex. 33:19, Rom. 9:15 and, "whom he will he hardeneth." Rom. 9:18. But, while He takes this way of beginning a revelation of His amazing grace ". . . That will by no means clear the guilty." Ex. 34:7, Num. 14:18, and He visits, under law, the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations." It is a deception to suggest that because God turns the aims and ends of evil to His praise, that His wrath and revenge against sin is compromised. Mercy in forgiveness of trespasses does not change the fact of guilt nor the fear of its consequences. That purging work is reserved for a more intimate revelation of God to us in the ministry of His Son "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus 2:14. Here is a greater work wrought--children of wrath and workers of iniquity transformed by the renewing of their minds

into servants of God in love. Out of the bondage of fear of wrath because of sin are the children delivered into the liberty of that perfect love that casts out fear, and the love of Christ that frees them is returned by them to Him who loves them in adoration and acceptable praise.

OBJECTION 3. Removes ground for discipline. The ground for discipline is by no means removed but rather it is moved from the visitation of the wrath of the fathers upon the children and the unfavorable environment of enmity against God and resentment and rebellion and warfare, to that negotiating place of the mediator and Redeemer where Christ came "... to do thy will O God. ." Heb. 10:7 and made peace and so wrought for us and does work in us the ends of all discipline.

OBJECTION 4. Promotes slothfulness in the children. This objection is concisely answered by that scriptural testimony already given which should be acceptable and sufficient for those who receive the record of God: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus 2:11,14.

OBSERVATIONS OF OBJECTIONS

OBSERVATION 1. Objection is made by those who reveal little appreciation of the meaning of 'FATALISM' or 'SOVEREIGNTY'. The uncompromising law of cause and effect inseparably join these two words when we penetrate beyond their connotations by common or vulgar usage to their strict definition. We are justified, I think, when reasoning about ONE, all of whose attributes are absolute, to require that those terms referring to Him be the most strict and pure. So we insist that a SOVEREIGN is ONE who is totally uncompromised. It is charged against Israel in the wilderness as a great presumption that, "...they turned back and tempted God and limited the Holy One of Israel." Psa. 78:41--which limitation is a denial of the Sovereignty of God in His being or His actings. Fatalism has come into common use among us [or been revived] as a more polite epithet for those once derogated as "ABSOLUTERS", especially by those who, in the contentions about the doctrine of predestination, seek a more commonly acceptable position than that of the defenders of the belief that destiny is dependent upon a SUPERIOR and an IMMUTABLE cause. The word [Fatalism] is derived from the Latin, "fatus" (to speak) and evolves from "Fate", defined as, "The power supposed to determine the outcome of events before they occur: hence, inevitable necessity." I feel no stress in my position between these definitions and the scriptures; "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God and there is none like me, 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. ." Isa. 46:9,10. "God is not a man that He should lie; neither the son of man, that he

should repent; hath He said and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken and shall He not make it good?" Num. 23:19. "Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." Psa. 33:8,9. "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to naught; he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." Psa. 33:10,11, and "A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps." A divine sentence is in the lips of the king. . ." Prov. 16:9,10. It seems to me the question is resolved to this, which I trust shall appear clearer in an observation of God's fore-knowledge; that the things that are and shall be, do and shall, proceed from preceding causes, which causes are the determinations of God's eternal counsel--how thorough they are and how efficient.

OBSERVATION 2. Objections are most vehement from those who are terrified at the prospect of being named "ABSOLUTERS", and being unable to answer such charge with the doctrine of God our Saviour. I would be most charitable to these and bring no accusation against them. I think the word of Christ to his apostles against the offended Pharisees speaks to us in this case; "Let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." Mat. 15:14. Only, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." Mat. 16:6. Then understood they how that he bade them beware "... of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees..." Mat 16:12. ".....there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction, and many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of and through covetousness shall they with feigned words made merchandise of you: IIPet. 2:1,2,3. But these ". . . speak evil of the things they understand not; and shall utterly perish. . ." IIPet. 2:12. The errors of these objectors shall, I trust, appear more clearly in the examination of the objections that follow, for, as they press their objections to justify them, they shall be found to deny much scriptural truth.

OBSERVATION 3. Objectors inconsistently admit the perfect fore-knowledge of God--making it an attribute of God, but passive and without influence or relationship with his other attributes. We need not recruit many scriptures to defend our position on this question. We reason that the determinations of, and the emanations from, God's counsel are according to knowledge or else they are according to ignorance. We read that one word, "Whom he did foreknow" Rom. 8:29 and, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. . ." Acts 2:23, and our thoughts are driven back beyond the most ancient times and find the knowledge of God secure in its perfection in Him Who is the beginning. This knowledge, perfectly qualified by wisdom, who says, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old," Pro 8:22, and by power of infinite dimension, according to the voice of a heavenly multitude saying, "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth" Rev.19:6, is a fit stone and seal of the foundation of God in all his actings as inferred by those sayings, "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. . ." IITim. 2:19, and, "known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the

world." Acts 15:18. From this first intimation of the character of God infinite and immutable in perfection, proceeds all that we may know of or receive from God.

OBSERVATION 4. These objectors deny the absolute perfection and effectiveness of the righteousness of Christ as sufficient for blessedness. The word righteousness means, to me, that fitness and conformity to the holy perfections revealed in the law of righteousness that brings us to such accord that, coming in harmony with the divine complacency, we have fellowship and communion with God. This we shall have in its full when, in the resurrection, we shall be fitted for, and shall have put on, immortality. In the interim, we abide in fellowship by the virtue of the imputed perfection and the approval we have of God in Christ, who is our Intercessor, Mediator, and Redeemer. I know of none who deny that Jesus the Christ filled up the full volume of the righteousness circumscribed by the law, both in his person and in his doings, and justly claimed it as his own. God tacitly and audibly approved his work and discharged him from his active duty in the world, into which he came to save sinners, in answer to his prayer, "I have finished the work thou gavest me to do . . ." John 17:4. That full righteousness approved of God in Him imputed unto us as we live in Him and walk in Him is sufficient for us as is described "and of his fulness have we all received and grace for grace." John 1:16.

OBSERVATION 5. These objections reveal a lack of appreciation of the reality, presence, and power of the Holy Spirit, or of the work of sanctification in believers. I shall but declare, and hope we are agreed, that, according to the word of Jesus and in answer to his prayer, God has sent His Spirit, The Holy Comforter, into the world and that he takes the things of Christ and shows them us. Under the divine influences and ministrations of God the Spirit, the things of Christ, His love for us, His compassion toward us, His giving of Himself for us, take on a worth of infinite dimensions in our estimation. Faith, that unfailing fruit of the Spirit, is made in us the evidence of things unseen, even the substance of things hoped for. Those precious things of the Spirit and of the kingdom of God, not discerned nor received by the natural mind, become to us the most vital things, until our desires for them is, in the scriptures, likened to hungering and thirsting. So effective, so powerful, so irresistible is the influence of the Spirit that it is called a quickening, a renewing, a transforming, and conforming to the image of Christ. This is the purging out of the old leaven and, lo!, a new lump. ICor. 5:7. This is sanctification; not just a doctrine, or a promise, or a prospect, but active, powerful in irresistible grace, working in us both to will and to do of His (God's) good pleasure. Phil. 2:13.

OBSERVATION 6. These objections must be sustained by some appeal to an ability in the creature to perform some duty. Moses, that servant and agent of God and of Israel's deliverance, at the end of his sentence of service, stood before the congregation of Israel and sang these words: "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:" [What prospects of pleasure and profit! What refreshing and reviving! What gentleness! How mysterious, yet undisturbing.] "Because I will publish the name of

the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgement: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." Deut. 32:2,3,4. Here is the authoritative answer to Abraham's question, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Gen. 18:25. He does right because He is righteous and all the fulness of the Father was in the Son Jesus, and of that fulness we receive as has been said. "His work is perfect," sings Moses, but some say, "not yet," as concerning the saints in the world. "His work has secured the promise of eternal inheritance, but to it must be appended some things prescribed by the law." I say by the law [they may deny it] because the law has published and prescribed the whole content of righteousness. This is the text and handbook of that pernicious doctrine of two salvations. If that be true, then Christ is dead in vain. As righteousness is our warrant and assurance as partakers of and with Christ, so the Apostle Paul writes that, ". . . if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Gal. 2:21. Paul says that, "if so," he is dead. Because if righteousness could possibly come by the law it were a foolishness and waste for Christ to die. But God approved of Him by miracles and wonders and signs which He did by Him in the midst of Israel. Acts 2:22, even to raising Him from the dead. And so, "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh. God sending His own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. 8:3,4. Not fulfilled by us by a walk in the flesh [we will not recommend an effort in a medium that has been proven vain and weak] but in us who, and as, we walk in the Spirit, and Christ is not dead but, He lives! The apostle writes [ITim. 1:15] "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; . . ." It is evident that sinners were lost in the world. And they are saved by grace! Eph. 2:5,8. And might I add, "In the world?" For ". . . where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so," [in the same manner, to the same degree, in the same place, and subjects], "might grace reign through righteousness" [another medium] "unto eternal life" [another end] "by Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. 5:20,21. Now, "the law was given by Moses," [the strength of sin is the law--ICor 15:56--and in that strength sin reigned,] "but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." John 1:17. Further, ". . . if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. . ." IICor. 5:17,18. And he [the man] ". . . after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Eph. 4:24. "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Col. 3:3. "He that is dead is freed from sin." Rom 6:7. "Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ:" Rom. 7:4. What can be required or expected of these dead? "I am crucified with Christ," cries the apostle, and here is liberation from the old; ". . . nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Gal. 2:20. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Rom. 8:32. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." Col. 3:4. Christ has ". . . by one offering perfected forever them that are sanctified." Heb.

10:14. *In the glory of this do we even now appear in our reckoning as an earnest and in answer to that of which the apostle speaks, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." IPet. 5:10. For by grace are ye saved! "For whom he did foreknow," [in this word is hidden the beginning according to, "These things saith the amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know . . ." Rev. 3:14,15.], "he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." Rom. 8:29. In this purpose accomplished is the ending, described by the psalmist, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." Psa. 17:15, and decreed by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; and all the ways and means of its accomplishment designed therein. In Romans 8:29, our apostle declares the purpose of God from its first rise in foreknowledge to its accomplishment in the perfect conformity to his will and image of the creatures of his delight, according to ". . . my delights were with the sons of men." Pro. 8:31. In the 30th verse he summarizes the ways and means of performing his purpose according to that word, "I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it. I will also do it." Isa. 46:11, for he [the apostle] says, ". . . whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them he also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Rom. 8:30. It is observed that, as in the creation, in the beginning, he had no helper; so, in the bringing many sons to glory, besides God there is no Saviour. He is the author and finisher of our faith. He has made ". . . known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in Himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him. . ." Eph. 1:9,10. "For there is one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ;" I Tim. 2:5. In him the things of heaven and the things of earth meet in perfect reconciliation, and there is peace. The beginning and the ending--The Alpha and Omega--the first and the last--The man Jesus Christ. He that hath him hath life everlasting.*