

# **Does God Love Everyone?**

**Paul Fahy**

## Preface

This study arose from questions asked by church leaders and young Bible students. There seems to be no available booklet or paper on this subject anywhere. Why is that I wonder? Is this not a crucial subject?

The heart of the issue is our understanding of the character of God. This is the foundation of our theology and our walk in the Spirit. We must be true and Biblical in our conception of God or everything will go wrong. If God loves everyone, then he cannot hate anyone (including Satan, whom sinners are said to follow, Eph 2:2, or be children of Jn 8:44). This is patently unbiblical as God is said to hate some people. If God loves everyone, why should a sinner bother to get saved at all? God will not act outside his character, so a loving God cannot send people to hell. This concept is obviously preposterous and untrue. It was Jesus, the fullest representation of God's love, who spoke more about hell and judgment than anyone else.

What concerns me most is that, after reading the first draft of this paper, several leaders commented that, although they could not disprove any of the arguments, they would refuse to accept the conclusion! They could offer no Biblical proof for their position, but were determined to continue to teach something that was evidently unscriptural and false. The consequence of this idea - that God loves all people, at all times, in all places, without exception - is that people act in an unbiblical fashion. Furthermore, many Christian agencies are becoming almost frantic over the consistent failure of evangelistic efforts. [The Alpha Course may involve large numbers but the method and fruit clearly leaves much to be desired. There is not space to discuss that here.] The Evangelical Alliance's magazine, IDEA, announced in a main article title that 'Evangelism Isn't Working' (IDEA January-March 1996). More and more churches are adopting experience or performance-based meetings and dropping proclamation in the hope that people will listen; it seems that they are not.

Is it not time to re-examine the popular message that most Christians utilise in witnessing to see if it is correct? The *God Loves You* approach is not only unbiblical, it is a fairly recent invention that was not the message of the early church and is not working.

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# **Does God love everyone?**

## **Why study this?**

We need to look at this question in view of the apparent contradiction between common evangelistic witnessing methods and Biblical statements. Nowhere in the Old or New Testament do we find the phrase: 'God loves all men' (i.e. mankind). Yet on every hand we see Christians confidently telling enquirers that 'God loves you', or worse: 'God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life'. This may seem like nit picking were it not for the fact that in a number of places in the Bible we are told that God hates sinners. God hates workers of iniquity, man is hostile to God, there is enmity between man and God, God's wrath is abiding upon those who do not believe, etc.

It is obvious that we need to be careful here to avoid misrepresenting God or even blaspheming. If God hates sinners, who dares to tell an individual that God loves him specifically. On the other hand, we are certain that God loves a fallen creation so much that he sent his son to die to provide a means of redemption for man and nature.

## **New methods?**

It is worrying that, in this century, we are seeing a presentation of the Gospel that is significantly different from the historical method. It is common for people to be assured of their salvation simply because they raised their hand at a gospel service, or came to the front in a high powered evangelistic campaign, or prayed a written prayer without any previous heart preparation, or prayed a prayer dictated by someone else. Where is repentance in all this? Repentance, as a result of deep conviction of sin prompted by the Holy Spirit, is a condition for salvation, yet it is noticeably missing.

It should not surprise us, therefore, that official figures for certain campaigns show an 80% fall-away rate for professed conversions. Nor should we be shocked at the general dearth of deep spiritual life, coupled with the desire for emotional experiences in many churches. The increasing level, and growing serious nature of counselling requirements in English churches, seems also to follow in the wake of inadequate counselling for salvation. Many counselling sessions for long-term problems stem from this. Other churches contain significant proportions of unbelievers who presume they are saved and get carried away with the emotionalism only to fall away later on.

Friends, we cannot ignore this question; the results of wrong teaching are serious and long lasting. It is thought to be much easier to witness by telling a person that God loves them rather than by telling them they are guilty before God and will go to hell unless they repent and put their trust in God's provided saviour - the Lord Jesus Christ. But is it right?

As with all doctrines, we have to start with God. We must understand the clear statements of scripture concerning God's eternal purpose in salvation. We cannot let our feelings or mental baggage get in the way. We must simply let the word of God mould us. Ambiguous scriptures must then be interpreted in the light of the analogy of the whole Biblical teaching. This is sound interpretation which no one would argue with. Let's apply it to this question.

This study will look at the support for both sides of the question, evaluate its meaning and establish the way forward.

## **Arguments put forward to show that God loves all men.**

**Man is made in the image of God, therefore, God can love all men.**

**In other words, there is something of God in everyone that enables Him to love them, however, not enough to ensure salvation without atonement.**

Evangelicals have to steer carefully away from universalism (i.e. the teaching that all men will be saved) in making this deduction. To assert that God loves an individual when witnessing to him, who then rejects the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a frightening prospect. A sinner at the day of judgment will have a just complaint against a Christian, representing God, who told him that God loves him but is then condemned to hell.

It is very difficult to assert this and not, at least, be guilty of implying universalism to the enquirer. If God loves everyone, why are not all people saved? It is a poor

theological foundation on which to preach the Gospel especially if it produces complacency in the sinner. If God loves him, what has he to fear?

If we ignore this danger for now, how can it be said that God finds something to love in a sinner because his image is contained in all men? Does this mean that something of God is in hell in all the sinners sent there? Obviously not. What then is this image? Clearly the image of God in man is not spiritual since fallen man's spirit is dead towards God (Eph 2:1,5). These verses also make clear that there is no communication between fallen man and God since worship is spiritual (Jn 4:24). The image must, therefore, be soulish or of the body. Since the body cannot represent a spirit, the image must be of the soul. The only alternative is that the image was something created in Adam which was entirely lost after the fall (Luther's view).

Only in 1 Cor 11:7 do we see this term in the NT referring in general terms to man as a representative of God. However, Paul is here talking to Christians and even so it is in the context of creation. Other references refer to believers (e.g. Col 3:10, Eph 4:24), or redeemed people in glory (Rm 8:29, 1 Cor 15:49). Luther's view could thus be argued. [Jam 3:9 uses the term '*likeness*' (*homoiosis* Greek) not *image* (*eikon*) which means resemblance and is a weaker word.] Most theologians would, however, identify God's image as existing in the soul of man. The intellect, affections and volition raise man above the animal kingdom and, in some way, reflects the nature of God. Essentially, man as a rational being with a moral nature reveals, in a marred way, something of the nature of God. (1)

Having said all that, in what way is this relevant to the argument? It does not assist in any way. Sinners, with this image will go to hell and all agree that God's love cannot be on someone in hell. The ground of God's love to man cannot be based upon his image in man. A love of justice and goodness may elevate man above the animals but at the fall, man ceased to be a perfect vessel to represent God and, as fallen, God's love cannot rest upon him. In any case, Eph 2 tells us that man is dead towards God and Jn 3:18,36 explains that God's wrath is already upon non-believers. Clearly, the image of God in man does not prevent God's anger being upon him and cannot be a ground for his love.

## **God is loving to all he has created, therefore he loves all.**

Texts utilised in support of this are hard to find. An example is Ps 145:9: 'The lord is good to all and his compassion is over all that he has made'. This proves nothing, however, because it is too broad. Men still go to hell despite this compassion, so this love cannot be a love to salvation or which incorporates a 'wonderful plan for your life'.

Let's look at this Psalm: Firstly, it does not say that God loves all men or all that he has made. (NOTE: the NIV translation of v9b that God is 'loving to all he has made', is not found in the majority of manuscripts. Only one manuscript of the Masoretic text has this statement. It seems quite irresponsible, therefore, to include it.) God's compassion, pity or mercy is over all that he created. In an outpouring of praise, David lists some of God's great actions towards his creation (v5-8) and his abundant goodness (v7). The Psalm speaks of God's providence which preserves both the evil and good (Mt 5:45). God preserves the world and all in it without distinction in his providential ordering of nature, so 'the eyes of all look to thee and thou givest them their food in due season' etc. (v15-17).

However, even here there is a distinction between the elect and the non-elect: God is only near to those who call upon him in truth, those that fear him (v18-19). He saves those who cry to him and love him, but the wicked he destroys (v19-20). So even this Psalm sets forth a distinction between the sheep and goats, if you like, and also between his love and anger (v8). This Psalm cannot be interpreted to say that God loves the wicked or all men. All that can be said is that God is good to all and compassionate (pitiful) even to his enemies whom he hates and is angry with.

Even if it could be said that God loves all that he has made, does that enable us to say to an individual: 'God loves you'? There is a clear difference between the two. The fact that God's love controls nature for the good of all men, wicked and righteous, shows that he is a loving being even to those in rebellion to him. It cannot enable us to say that God's saving love is towards all men personally.

Theologians often distinguish two or three kinds of love in God when considering this subject. Although this may be helpful in some ways to analyse what the Bible says about God, there is clearly only one attribute of God called love. This is shown generally in a love for his creation by which he desires to sustain it and rebuild it at the time of nature's redemption; his love is also shown specifically to some individuals which the Bible clearly distinguishes as the elect. A man may have a love for all dogs but has a special and specific love for his own dog in a

way that is different to all others. You cannot apply the force of the specific to the general. However, it is best to describe God's attitude to creation generally as his providential care, since that is what scripture teaches.

**Jesus commands us to love our enemies thus showing that we are sons of God.**  
(Matt 5:44-45).

**In other words, God loves his enemies, therefore, we can say that God loves all men.**

We must be careful in our interpretation of this passage. It also says that we must pray for those who persecute us but God does not pray for the world that persecutes the church (Jn 17:9), or Satan - his enemy. This passage is saying that God preserves all mankind: 'he makes his sun rise on the evil and the good, he sends rain on the just and the unjust' (v45). God's providence is sovereign over all creation. The fact that God's goodness keeps nature safe from chaos and preserves the balance of life for all living creatures does not allow us to interpret this as a father's love for all men as his children. Again the fact that many will go to hell in condemnation proves that this cannot be the case.

The passage emphasises God's good character. In compassion he preserves all life on earth, most of which is in rebellion to him and hostile to his purpose. Despite this hate towards him by his creatures, he still allows their lives to continue as normal and does not wipe out the earth to start again. He is infinitely patient.

Since this is true of God, all Christians should react similarly to those that hate them. They cannot preserve or control the environment of their enemies but they can show love and turn the other cheek, go the second mile and give their coat.

We cannot turn this command around and say - since Christians are to love their enemies and pray for their persecutors that God loves Satan (his enemy) and prays for his welfare. The parallel passage in Luke 6:27-36 adds the action of lending money, again this cannot be turned around to refer to God. The passage is making a general exhortation to Christians on the basis of the overall character of God who is good to a wicked creation. We should also note the passage in Rm 12:17-21. We act like God by returning good for evil treatment. This is love. This action of love, however, does not indicate that there is anything

worthy of love in the enemy. In fact, God says that he will repay vengeance on the enemy after we have loved him. Our good actions result in heaping burning coals upon the enemy's head. Those we love are not loved by God.

If these verses are forced to say that God loves his enemies since his children (the lesser) cannot be able to do something which God (the greater) cannot, then at best it must be a reference to the elect. God shows, therefore, his love to the elect whilst they are in actual fact hostile to God before they find faith in Christ. It cannot mean that God loves sinners which his word everywhere says he hates.

### **God both loves and hates sinners at the same time.**

**EITHER:**   a) **He loves the person but hates the sin.**  
              b) **He loves and hates absolutely but if a person repents, the love covers the hate and the sinner finds salvation.**

Firstly, God everywhere attributes sin to the sinner. It is the soul that sins which will die (Ezek 18:4). Sin is endemic in the heart of the person (Jer 17:9). You cannot separate the corruption from the corrupted person. Furthermore, the phrase '*God loves the sinner but hates the sin*' is not found in the Bible and its sentiments are unbiblical.

The concept in b) also finds no basis in scripture and does not assist evangelistic counselling anyway. Of what use is it to tell someone that God loves and hates them at the same time? There is no clarity in this position. If God loves all men, then he hates no one. Furthermore, if repentance changes God's actions from hate to love, this makes man able to control God. God becomes dependent upon a person repenting in order to love them. This is an insult to God who is 'terrible in majesty' and Lord over all that he has made. He purposes whom he will love.

It is true that Jesus told us to love our enemies, but not to hate them at the same time, so Matt 5:45 is no help here. We have just made the point that we cannot evaluate God's character on the basis of his commands to his creatures in any case.

Everything God does has finality in view; it has a purposeful end. If he loves, the end is glorification. If he hates the end is condemnation. God does nothing

without final purpose. He cannot love and hate the same person at the same time, just as he cannot tell the truth and lie.

The Bible says that God is love, but it does not say that God is hate. Arthur Custance has illustrated this with the analogy of light and darkness (2). Darkness is the absence of light. It is not a thing in itself. Perhaps we could imply that hate is the absence of love. Just as you cannot have darkness and light in the same room at the same time, similarly God cannot love and hate at the same time.

**When we read in Scripture of divine hatred it seems necessary that we not consider it as an active principle, vindictive in its nature and destructive in its expression. It is simply that no light goes on (in the reprobate person PF), no life results, no love is experienced. Darkness overwhelms the soul, and death - and hatred ... the hatred of God is without the vindictive quality of human hostility. (3)**

**Jn 3:16 says that God loves the whole world, therefore he must love all men.**

A full exposition of this would take far too long for this paper. There have been various explanations of this verse to show that there are limitations on this love. These include:

**i) The word 'world' is used in various senses even in John's Gospel:**

a) In Jn 12:19 it says that 'the world has gone after him'. Obviously the Pharisees did not mean every nation but a relatively few people in a country the size of Wales. It does not mean all men here.

b) Jesus in Jn 17:3-9 says that he does not pray for the world but for those given to him by the Father, i.e. those loved by God are a portion of the human race, not all men. It is obvious that Jesus is praying for those whom God loves. These people are not the world, not all men but those given to Jesus by God.

c) We are told by John not to love the world (1 Jn 2:15-17) yet Jn 3:16 says that God loves the world. Again it is obvious that the word 'world' refers to two different things. One world God loves, the other is an enemy to the believer and is perishing.

d) Furthermore Jn 15:18-21 explains that this world hates believers as it hated Jesus. Believers are not of this world and are chosen by Jesus (v16) out of it. There is a difference between this 'world' and God's people.

e) Jn 1:29 Christ did not take away the sins of the whole world or all men would be saved. The context and analogy of scripture must be applied to understand each reference of the word 'world'.

**ii) All that God loves will remain**, nothing that God loves can be lost in hell. Since many are condemned to hell, the word 'world' cannot mean all men.

**iii) With one exception, the word 'world' in John's gospel is the Greek word 'Kosmos'**. It originally meant *ornament*, but came to mean: *order, arrangement, beauty* (from which we get *cosmetics*) in the sense of good orderly appearance. Pythagoras used it to refer to the ordered arrangement of the universe. From this it came to refer to the external framework where man lives and is the moral centre. From this it came to mean all men or all who are alienated from God. Scripture uses all of these meanings (4).

The general meaning then is:

*orderly arrangement* or even *harmony, an organic whole*. When it refers to mankind it always involves man as organically related to the orderly creation.

In Jn 3:16, therefore, the word *world* can simply mean the total of the elect as an organic whole. We've seen that it cannot mean all men, therefore, it must mean all those saved in Christ.

God created the world and mankind to reflect his holiness and character. The Fall did not ruin this plan since God the Father covenanted with his son before time began to rescue an ordered whole, a world, of people who would love him. These Christ would die for. He is still building this unity of people (the church, a people called out of the evil world) to form a new world, a *kosmos*, of people who serve their God in holiness and beauty. This world God loved; this is the world Jesus died for. (We should not forget that creation is also in view in this world Rm 8:19-23.)

**iv) John emphasises the word 'world' in this passage to show that it is not only Jews who will be saved**. Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus who, like all Jews, believed that God's mercy was only for Israel (see Amos 3:2). Jesus is

proclaiming that salvation is now available for all nations (as was supposed to be the case if Israel had obeyed God and acted as his missionary). God's love is broader than Israel, it is for the whole world, all nations.

**v) If 'world' here meant all men, it contradicts many scriptures which declare that millions of men died in their sins and were lost.** 'All men' must include all men of past generations as well as future. It would include the world of men, for instance, that died in the flood which the Bible says clearly was a world of sinners which God hated; or the people of the Canaanite nations which Israel was to utterly destroy because God hated their iniquity.

**vi) If 'world' means 'all men' then God gave his son for all men,** Jesus died for all men without exception, however it is clear that many are lost. God's love, therefore, has failed to save all men. Jesus died for people who still perished. God has failed. This obviously cannot be true.

Commenting on this verse Calvin says: 'While life is promised universally to all who believe in Christ, still faith is not common to all. For Christ is made known and held out to the view of all, but the elect alone are they whose eyes God opens, that they may seek him by faith'. (5)

# What is the Biblical position? Whom does God love and hate?

## God hates sinners?

Scripture is literally full of references to the negative effects of the fall on mankind and its terrible effect of separating man from God. Man has now become God's enemy because firstly, he is dominated by sin, which God hates; and secondly, he is allied to Satan - God's adversary.

Eph 2 makes this situation very clear. It describes man as :

- dead towards God (v1,5)
- hostile to God (v16)
- separated far from God (v12,17) (i.e. there is no love relationship at all)
- a stranger to God's covenant (v12)
- no hope and without God (v12)
- following the devil (v2)
- following bodily desires (v3)
- a child of God's wrath (v3)

If the man pictured here is still in God's image, God's love is nowhere to be seen upon man in his natural state.

John's gospel also makes this clear:

- sinners *do not have the love of God* in them Jn 5:42 These same people did not receive him (v43), they received others (v43) and could not believe (v44) and would be judged (v45)
- sinners *are condemned already* Jn 3:18,36 (see also 2 Cor 4:3)
- sinners do not believe because they *are not of Jesus' sheep* Jn 10:24-27
- sinners *are not of God's family*, they are related (spiritually) to Satan Jn 8: 39-43
- sinners *are not of the people given to Jesus* Jn 17:2,6,9-10
- sinners *are not joined to Christ* Jn 17:23-26
- sinners do not come to Christ and *are cast out* Jn 6:37
- sinners *do not know God* Jn 7:28, 8:19
- sinners *die in their sin* Jn 8:24

Many more such references could be added.

The Old Testament has many texts which refer to God's hate and condemnation for sinners e.g:

- Ps 5:4-5 God hates workers of iniquity
- Ps 11:5-6 God hates violent men and wicked men
- Ps 34:21 God condemns the wicked
- Ps 37:20 the wicked are God's enemies
- Ps 37:38 the wicked shall be destroyed
- Ps 45:7 God hates wickedness and is continually angry (Ps 7:11)
- Prov 3:33 God blesses the abode of the righteous but a curse is upon the house of the wicked
- Mal 1:2-3 God hates specific people

Nowhere in the Bible does it say that God loves all men indiscriminately. Only if it did could Christians tell enquirers that God loved them. There are references to God loving sinners who turn from their sin and believe in Jesus, but how does a Christian know that this will happen to the person they are talking to? In other words - we cannot tell who the elect are in evangelism.

# How do we explain that God loves some but hates others?

## The answer is election

God is outside time. The sinner is under wrath and condemnation from eternity. The elect person is part of God's covenant from before time, just as Jesus was slain from the foundation of the world. Before conversion, Christians are preserved by angels until they inherit salvation by receiving faith (Heb 1:14).

Various scriptures make this election of some people to salvation clear:

**Rm 9:11-13** God's purpose of election is to ensure the salvation of a race of people to show his love and mercy and grace. Before they have done anything, some are chosen by his good pleasure, not because of their future good works. Others are passed by and thus remain in their sinful state. This is all mercy on God's part as his justice would require all to be condemned for their sin. He chooses to send his son to die for the sins of those chosen before time.

The example of Jacob and Esau, in this passage, makes this clear. Before they were born Jacob was called and loved, but Esau was hated. Simply saying that 'hated' means 'love less' does not alter the fact that some are vessels created for destruction v22. The word *hate* and the word for *love* are the usual words for these emotions used elsewhere in the Bible. E.g. the word *hate* is the same word used in Jn 15:25 - a hate strong enough to lead to murder!

**Acts 13:48** Those that were ordained by God to eternal life believed and were saved in Antioch.

**Eph 1: 4-5** Christians are chosen in Christ before the world was made and predestined to be God's sons.

**1 Cor 1:26-31** Those found in the church, the body of Christ, are those chosen by God.

**2 Tim 1:9** Christians are saved because God the father called them as a result of his purpose before time. The grace which results in conversion through the gift of faith was given in Christ before time also.

God decreed before time began who would be saved and who would not. In his mercy, he selected some for life and others were passed by. He did not need to save anyone but he chose to love some. From that point his wrath rested upon sinners (the reprobate) and his grace and love upon the elect. People who do not believe fail to believe because they are not elect (Jn 10:24-27), i.e. God does not love them. Jesus continually separated sheep from goats by his very presence and ministry.

Jesus does not become a saviour to those who believe but comes to save his people, those given to him by his Father from eternity (Jn 17:2,6,9-10). Those people are not of this world (Jn 17:14,16, note this is before Calvary and Pentecost). These people are loved by God as in Christ (Jn 17:23,26)

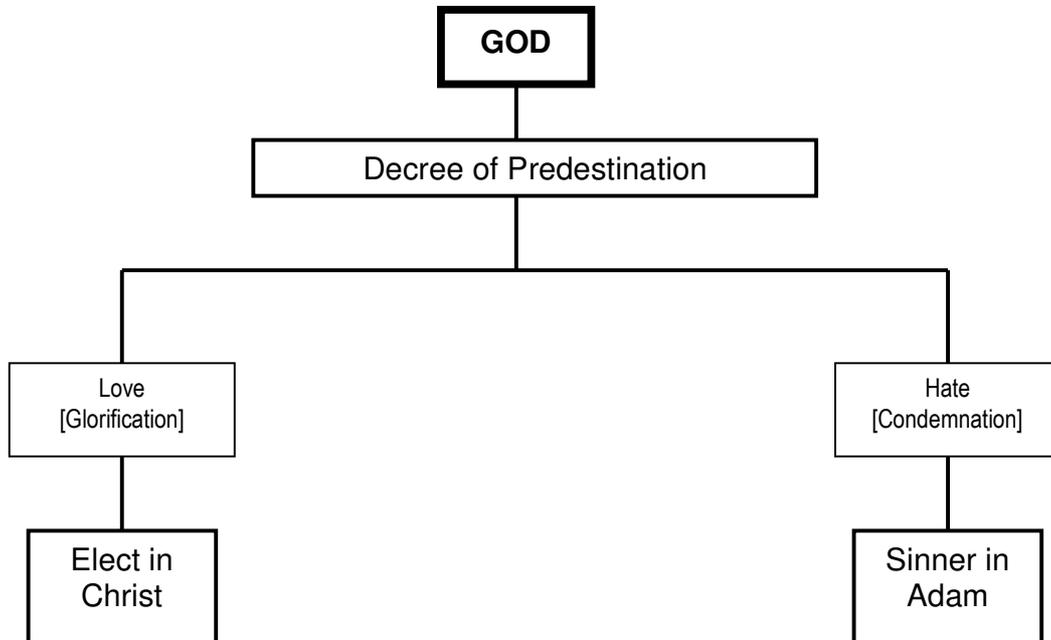
The love of God is eternal; he always has and always will love his people. His love for them has no beginning and no end (1 Jn 4:9, Jer 31:3). All God's love is focused upon Christ, he is the beloved son of God (Mt 17:5). Only those **in Christ** (potentially or actually) i.e. the elect, can have God's love upon them. God's love is positional: if you are in Christ, you are loved by God. Only the elect were put into Christ before time, (Rev 13:8)

To say 'God loves you' to a non-elect person is to misrepresent God. God loves his own, and only his own in Christ, before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:3-5), this love is ours 'IN CHRIST' (Eph 1:3). His love was predestined to us (Eph 1:5). God's love cannot remain upon a man in his depravity. God's love is on those elect that have not yet received Christ as Lord because they are seen as eternally in Christ, just as in the same way that Christians are seen as glorified, although we are obviously not yet actually glorified (Rm 8:30) or just as the Old Testament saints were saved by their faith in Christ before Calvary. Similarly God's love is upon true Christians that have backslidden because he has promised to preserve them to the end. Though they sin, God still loves them even if his love reflects off their back and not their face. They have turned their back upon their Father but he still loves them because they are his children, even if they are wayward children. His love will not only preserve them but will also chastise them as sons to bring about a return to grace through repentance in God's time. In this sense God loves sinners, i.e. Christians who sin. The promises to God's children cannot be transferred to the reprobate.

John makes this clear in 1 Jn 4. God's love is only upon those that know God, and as a result of knowing God, they also show love to others (1 Jn 4:7-11). Those that do not love (i.e. the non-elect) do not know God and do not have

God's love. God's love is for those to whom he sent his son to be the propitiation of their sins (1 Jn 4:10).

Diagrammatically, this can be shown as:



To suggest that God's love turns away (propitiates) the wrath coming upon a person is wrong. It is Jesus' blood which propitiates (Rm 3:25) which shows God's righteousness and grace on the basis of faith. God's love for the elect is revealed in the provision of a sacrifice (Rm 5:8) which saves the elect from wrath.

God's wrath is already upon sinners, they were ordained for condemnation (Jude 4). God's love is already upon the elect (the lamb was slain before the foundation of the world) even if they are not yet converted.

How can God fight against himself? The only time God's wrath and love was on a man was at the cross, but even then God withdrew his love from Jesus for the duration of judgment - an event so shocking that it caused silence in heaven (Rev 8:1).

God's love is effectual; since it is of God it has an inherent power. God's attributes always end in a successful conclusion; his will cannot be broken, it

achieves its end, his power cannot be withstood. Similarly his love has an object - the Bride of Christ. It is set upon a people to be presented to his son. God's love is not some vague emotion available to all who choose it like a lifebelt thrown aimlessly into the sea. No! it has an object - the elect. It ensures the salvation of those people because salvation originates in God's love (Deut 7:7-8, Eph 2:4-5). God's love is therefore a saving love. God's love cannot fail to achieve its end - the procuring of a saved people. As a result of this love, the elect are drawn to God (Jer 31:3). God's love cannot fail, it cannot be resisted since it is sovereign, it is the love of the Most High God.

Since this is true, God cannot be said to love everyone. God cannot love those who are not elect for then God's love would not be sovereign and would have failed in its purpose. God's love is only known by his people, his sheep, his bride. Therefore, God's anger and wrath must rest upon the goats, the reprobate, those in hell. (Ps 11:5,5:5,7:11, Jn 3:36). It is those who God foreknew, predestined, called, justified and glorified that cannot be separated from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rm 8:28-30,39). **'Christ loved the church and gave himself for it'**. Eph 5:25

## Conclusion

It has to be wrong to tell an unbeliever that God loves him or her. That is not to say that the Gospel is not good news. The good news is that there is a sacrifice for sins, there is an escape from death, there is the provision of eternal life, there is mercy, there is the opportunity for a relationship with God. The good news is that we can receive these as we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as our saviour and master. There is lots of good news but it is dangerous to presume that everyone you speak to is an elect person and say : 'God loves you'.

Similarly, we should make it very clear to believers that God, of a certainty, loves them deeply; that this love was for them from the beginning of time; that God is a loving Father who has preserved their whole life from harm right to the point of their conversion and now longs for fellowship with them.

God's love is too precious for us to despise.

All agree that God's love is supremely manifested at the cross. It was there that God showed his love for man by sending his son to die in his place. What greater love can there be than to die for rebels to your authority. However, all

also agree that the cross initiates a separation; it divides the sheep and the goats, those that respond to God's call and those that reject it, the elect and the reprobate. Since this is the case, we can suggest that God's love in action results in separation in practice.

God's love is linked to the expression of his power. The Gospel is the outward expression of that love and the Gospel is expressly spoken of as being the power of God unto salvation (Rm 1:16). Just as God's power to save is only applied to some, so his love is particular and not universal. God's love in salvation separates the sheep from the goats. God's love from eternity has been for his elect, his wrath is to the reprobate.

**Benevolence is the goodness of God viewed generically. It embraces his creatures, *except the judicially condemned on account of sin*, and provides for their welfare ...**

**God's mercy, of which the more passive forms are pity and compassion, is the divine goodness exercised with respect to the miseries of his creatures, feeling for them, and making provision for their relief, and in the case of impenitent sinners, leading to long suffering patience. (6)**

Perhaps we should seriously consider a verse in the Old Testament as we close. In 2 Chron 19:2, a godly king was rebuked and condemned for making a mistake. What was this mistake? Jehoshaphat had not hated Ahab, but had loved him. The prophet Jehu declared that wrath was upon him because he had loved the wicked king Ahab. The obvious point is that God could not have loved Ahab if he condemned Jehoshaphat for loving him. God does not vacillate in his opinions. HE EITHER LOVES OR HATES FULLY AND COMPLETELY. We must take care how we represent him to others.

Can we profit from all this or are we just being contentious and fastidious? Is it worth arguing about anyway? Yes, and for this reason. Current Christianity has lost its reverence and fear of God in many places. Since this is the beginning of wisdom, it is not surprising that a lack of doctrinal understanding has accompanied this debasing of God's character and authority. The starting place for a fresh move of God in the church and the country is a restoration of the honour of God in believers. We must see a return to an emphasis on the sovereignty of God in all things. As Christians put their Lord first and trust in his divine purpose behind all circumstances, we will see a return to righteous behaviour. We must, above all else, learn more about our Father if we are to

become obedient children. This means recovering Biblical truth about his attributes and abandoning teachings and practices that are rooted in sentimentality and not scripture.

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  2. Arthur Custance, *The Sovereignty of Grace*, P&R Pub. (1979); p295.
  3. *ibid* p296.
  4. R. C. Trench, *Synonyms of the NT*, Baker, Grand Rapids (1989); p 227ff.
  5. John Calvin, *Comm. on the Bible*, Baker; *in. loc.*
- A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, Nelson (1883); p158-159.

## Appendix 1

# Word studies

## **Love in the Old Testament** (Numbers refer to Strong's Code)

**CHESED 2617** (Love, mercy, loving kindness, also eagerness, steadfastness)

- In all its varied shades of meaning it is conditional upon there **being a covenant**. 'Without the prior existence of a covenant, there could never be a *chesed* at all'. (1)
- It is very similar to the Greek word *charis* (grace).
- There has to be a recognised tie between the parties for *chesed* to be used.
- It is used of men as well as God.

Ps 145 has *chesed* in v8 'The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love' (i.e. toward his people) but '*rachamim* (i.e. *racham* 7355 compassion, kindness, pity) in v9 'his tender mercies are all over that he made'.

**It is a remarkable fact that the word *chaciyd* (2623, the adjectival form of *chesed*) when applied to man....(indicates) that the persons ... belong in a special sense to God... they are regarded as God's own... they show their love to the Lord by hating evil. (2)**

**'AHABAH 157** (Love, affection trans. by *agape* in LXX)

- Unconditional love, not limited by covenant conditions but only by the will of the lover. '*Ahabah* is the cause of the covenant between God and Israel, *chesed* is the means of its continuance. '*Ahabah* is **God's election love**.
- When used for Israel's love it is a conditional, dutiful love.
- It is used of the sex relationship.
- It is wrong to suggest that there has to be something worth loving in the loved one (e.g. God's image) to make us worthy of God's love (3).

I can find no reference of '*ahabah* or *chesed* used by God to sinners (i.e. reprobates) The general benevolence of God = '*ahabah*, the covenant love of God = *chesed*.

Other words for love: Yediyd 3039, Rea' 7453, 'Aqab 5689, Chashaq 2836, Dowdiym 1730.

Other words translated as love in LXX, eleos 1656 i.e. mercy, sometimes righteousness 1343 also 1654, 1680, 3741.

The Gospel presentation must be careful not to suggest God's covenant love or election love is upon a specific person who has not shown repentance. His mercy is over all, his pity and compassion are to all, but his love is for the elect with whom he enters into a covenant of loving kindness and grace.

- 1 N Snaith; *Distinctive Ideas of the OT*; Epworth Press (1945); p95.
- 2 R.B. Girdlestone; *Synonyms of the OT*; Baker (1983); p31.
- 3 Snaith; op. cit. p137.

## Appendix 2

# Does God desire the salvation of all men?

If God does not love all men, does the Bible imply that he desires to save them? Some texts seem to categorically state that God does indeed desire all men to be saved. However, we have seen that other texts specifically deny this. Both cannot be correct.

In clear statements (e.g. Rm 9) God says the purpose of election of some to life and others to death depends upon his call, not upon future works of a person who has not yet been born. Some are vessels of wrath others are vessels of mercy, therefore, the passages which seem to imply that God desires all men to be saved cannot mean that. God chose some in eternity and, although he does not desire anyone's death, in his mercy he has elected some to life. Others are left in their sin to demonstrate God's justice.

These people chose to die because they chose to sin and continually reject the Gospel. God does not force them to sin and does not enjoy their condemnation, but as the great judge - he will do right. His election of some glorifies God in his love and mercy, his allowance for others to continue in sin shows his justice and wrath. Since God determined this, he would not inspire Biblical writers to deny this by stating his desire to save all. We must look at each passage to determine the correct meaning.

### **Rm 5:18 'One man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men'**

This cannot mean what it seems at first sight or Paul would be preaching a universal salvation which his writings everywhere deny (even earlier in this letter 1:16,17,3:21-25,5:17). The context, as always, must interpret the specific statement and thus restricts the implication. The condemnation is obviously not inclusive: one man's trespass led to condemnation for: '**all** men' (Rm 5:18) since Jesus was excepted and there is no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus (Rm 8:1). Like wise not all are acquitted. Paul's argument concerns the parallel between the way of condemnation and justification.

**'All who are condemned... are condemned because of the one trespass of Adam, all who are justified are justified because of the**

## **righteousness of Christ'.**

(1) cf. 1 Cor 15 : 22-23.

As in other passages, Paul is using strong expressions (all) to make clear to Jews that salvation is given to Gentiles as well (see 1:16-17,2:7-11,3:21-24, 28-30,4:3-16,9:8 etc.).

To maintain consistency within this letter or Paul's doctrine of salvation, 'all men' must refer to those in Christ, all those in this covenant group.

The NT has many passages which use the term 'all' or 'all men' in a restrictive way, e.g. Jn 3:26: 'all men came to him', Lk 2:1: 'all the world should be taxed', Eph 1:10; Col 1:20; 2 Cor 5:4 etc. The context must be the guide to the breadth of the term. The 'all' is all those that have faith having been called by God the Father (see also Rm 11:32).

**1 Cor 15:22 ' For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive'.**

This is a similar passage to the previous one, it compares the result of being in Christ over against being in Adam. Those in Adam will die and be condemned, those in Christ shall live and be glorified. The very sense of the text is destroyed if it is made to say that all men are saved. All men can't die if all men do live. The statement becomes ludicrous. Paul's statement must be read as part of his argument and balanced style (note the parallels v20-22). Verse 22b should not be extracted to be read on its own as a foundation for a doctrinal stance. Very few serious commentators would disagree with this interpretation. In Christ all believers will be made alive just as in Adam all sinners will die.

**1 Tim 2:3-6 (God) 'desires all men to be saved ...Christ Jesus who gave himself as a ransom for all'.**

**Titus 2:11 'the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men'.**

Again the rule of seeing these verses in their immediate context and comparing the statement with the analogy of scripture must be maintained. By itself 'all men' seems to apply to every man, woman and child in the world. If this were true we are again faced with a universal salvation which we know from the rest of the NT is not the case. Paul himself particularly denies this.

We have also seen earlier that 'all' and 'all men' is frequently a restricted term.

Further examples are:

- a) Every individual did not regard John the Baptist as a prophet Mk 11:32.
- b) Every individual did not marvel about the Gadarene demoniac Mk 5:20.
- c) Every individual did not wonder whether John was Christ Lk 3:15.
- d) Everyone in the world was not searching for Jesus Mk 1:37.
- e) All individuals were not flocking to Jesus Jn 3:26.

It is common for us to say that 'everyone' is doing such and such a thing but not mean all people.

In these passages the term 'all men' refers to all classes and types of people. It includes kings as well as paupers. The Timothy passage could not mean all individuals, as it was not possible to pray for every person upon earth. Salvation is not restricted to certain types of people. It incorporates all classes of men and women, of all races, of all ages, rich or poor. (NB that the 'all men' in Titus 1:11 = 'us' in Titus 2:12.)

The ransom of Christ, being paid by his blood, is fully sufficient for all men, but the efficacy of it is only applied by God to those who believe, i.e. those chosen by God before time. Christ's blood is the most precious thing in the universe. Its value is incalculable and could easily atone for all but is only applied to the elect for the reasons mentioned earlier.

The statement that God desires or wishes all men to be saved has been interpreted by some (e.g. Poole, Barnes) to be an example of God's innate character rather than his decretive will. God wills in an absolute sense by decreeing, e.g. the creation of the world. His decretive will is always done. But God also has desires that are not achieved, e.g. that his creatures should be happy because that is in accordance with his nature and he made abundant provision for their happiness.

**God wills that sickness should be relieved, and sorrow mitigated, and that the oppressed go free, because it is agreeable to his nature; though it is not true that he wills it in the sense that he exerts his absolute power to produce it. A parent wills the welfare of his child. It is in accordance with his nature...(but) if the child is not virtuous, it is his own fault. (2)**

**When it said in the text that God will have all men to be saved...and in the same sense 2Pt 3:9 we must understand it not with respect to his decretive will but to his complacential will, that is the repentance and life of a sinner is very pleasing to his holiness and mercy. (3)**

**God willeth, to wit, with a will whereby he inviteth, and putteth no bar; not with a will whereby he effecteth it. (4)**

If it is complained that God's desires must have a final conclusion as we have stated his love must, how can this be true?

God's innate desires of character, e.g. for happiness and health to prevail, will have a final conclusion for we are told that these are the characteristics of heaven Rev 22:2, 3; 21:4. We can only explain on the basis of revelation; we know God's desires for the good of man are ultimately established in the new earth, however, God must also have his justice vindicated. This does not make him happy but man by nature will not repent, consequently, God chooses (elects) some to salvation to satisfy his desire.

**2Pt 3:9 'The Lord is not willing that any should perish but that all should reach repentance'.**

**Ezek 33:11 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live'.**

**Ezek 18:23 'Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live'.**

This follows on from our last discussion. God welcomes all who repent from their sin and turn to him - but not all do so! These texts can be interpreted as referring to the elect whilst in their wicked state, i.e. God is not willing that any he has ordained to life, though not yet converted, should perish but that all his people should come to repentance. The Day of Judgment is deferred until the full number of the elect is complete.

Alternatively, this may refer to God's prescriptive will (i.e. will of command) whereby he calls all to repentance and prescribes one way of salvation, as opposed to God's decretive and effectual will (i.e. will of decree, purpose) whereby he saves a specific number. God commands **all** people to turn, to repent. It gives him pleasure when they do. Those that turn are saved and are thus elect. Those that do not repent will die eternally. The Ezekiel passages particularly emphasise a distinction in salvation

God does not desire the death of anyone and has chosen some to eternal life, despite their headlong rush towards hell, in his great mercy. The death of his own son gave him no pleasure, but he allowed it because it glorified himself. God genuinely doesn't enjoy the death of anyone, but since all men by nature refuse him, he has sovereignly chosen some to life.

**Such passages simply assert the essential benevolence of God. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He does take pleasure in the salvation of men. Yet as a matter of fact, in perfect consistency his benevolence, for reasons sufficient, though not revealed to us, he has provided no redemption for lost angels, and no efficacious grace for the non-elect of mankind. These passages simply assert that if it were not for these reasons, it would be agreeable to his benevolent nature that all men should be saved. (5).**

**2 Cor 5 : 14-15 'He died for all'.**

The context clearly is not speaking of every person. Paul is talking to all who 'no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised'. Jesus died for all of us (Christians) so that we might die to ourselves. 'To die to ourselves is to live to Christ'. (6 )

**1 Jn 2:2 'He is the expiation for our sins, and not only ours but also for the sins of the whole world'.**

John is clear that the world is antagonistic to God (2:15-16, 4:5-6), will pass away (2:17) and does not know God (3:1). Yet Jesus is the propitiation for the whole world. Clearly there are differences in the meaning of 'world' here. Calvin saw the interpretation of this verse by some that extended salvation to all people (inc. Satan?) as so foolish as to deserve no refutation. He sees John's design as simply meaning all people who would believe as well as those who were already believers scattered through the various nations, i.e. the whole church.

An alternative interpretation is that John has in mind the structural entirety of the world (i.e. the harmonic whole we saw in Jn 3:16), i.e. the universe rediscovers its old order through Christ's propitiation. (7)

Jesus' propitiation extends as widely as sin. Not one elect person will be missed; but Jesus' sacrifice extends to all believers everywhere.

## Conclusion

It is important in looking at these scriptures that we examine all the relevant Biblical statements and that we have in mind the analogy of the faith. Commentators on individual passages are focused upon the specific text before them and, though they may refer to other scriptures, their intention is to expound what is before them and some miss a balanced Biblical view. Many of the brief modern commentaries fall into this trap. Other commentators have a doctrinal axe to grind on this subject and endorse an Arminian interpretation, despite their excellence elsewhere (e.g. Lenski - 8).

If God desires that all should be saved then he has manifestly failed in that desire. If God desires that all should be saved then Jesus died to apply that sacrifice to all. Again God has failed to effect his desire and Jesus' blood has been wasted. How? Because men reject the Gospel. There is no other reason. This makes man stronger than God in being able to resist him and means that God has failed to effect his will and Jesus' sacrifice has been negated in many instances by the will of man. This cannot be true. These scriptures then, must not be taken at face value but interpreted according to the context of the letter and intentions of the writer.

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- 4 Trapp, J. *Comm. on the NT*, Baker (1981), p639
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- 6 Calvin, J. *Comm. on the Bible*; Baker; in. loc.
- 7 Polman, ADR. *Barth*; Presbyterian & Reformed Pub. (1982), p48
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## Appendix 3

# Supporting quotes from eminent theologians

## Introduction

I think that it is important to make the case for the doctrine under discussion entirely from the Bible. The original draft of this paper did not draw from theological works for support of the thesis. Slavish following of men is a repeated failure in these days.

Having said that, some have questioned the results of this thesis criticising it as novel, lacking in academic support, against doctrinal standards and without any theological precursors. Whilst my defence is my own, there is a large body of academic support for the proposal. The quotes here, and in the body of the thesis, were added subsequent to the completion of the paper.

This appendix enters some of the evidence which will major on the paper's title, but will add a few quotes on Limited Atonement. There is no particular order of priority.

## Technical Note

Different theologians sometimes use different terms to describe the same thing. This does not help clarity. Some theologians subdivide God's love (itself sometimes called God's goodness as exercised toward his creatures) into three aspects. These are commonly called:

- **BENEVOLENCE** - love in intention or disposition
- **BENEFICENCE** - love in action
- **COMPLACENCE** - approval of good actions or dispositions.

God's goodness or love is also noted differently towards its objects:

God's goodness to the unworthy is called GRACE

God's goodness toward the suffering is called PITY or MERCY.

## Herman Hoeksema (d 1965)

For almost fifty years he was the pastor of one of the largest Reformed congregations in the USA. For almost forty years he was professor of Dogmatics in the Theological School of Protestant Churches.

**God cannot be merciful to the reprobate wicked... His mercy toward his people must be founded in his sovereign election, according to which he beholds them eternally as perfectly righteous in the beloved.**

*Reformed Dogmatics*, Reformed Free Pub. Assoc. Grand Rapids 1985, p116

**One must choose between these two: either Jesus purposed to save all men and He is only a possible saviour who does not actually save; or Jesus came to save the elect unto eternal life and then he actually saves... It follows from the nature of the atonement, that he died, not for all, but for the elect, that is, for a certain number in whose stead He died and for whom He arose. *Atonement is satisfaction. And satisfaction is the actual payment of our debt with God. If Christ paid the debt for all, all are righteous and saved, which is absurd.* If, nevertheless, you maintain that He died for all men without distinction, you must deny the truth of atonement, namely, that He actually satisfied fully for all our sins. However, such is not the truth. Christ's death is a real and full satisfaction for the sins of those for whom he died. Hence He only died for the elect. You must choose between an actual satisfaction for the elect only and the denial of this satisfaction through the blood of Christ. You can express this same truth in another way. *Jesus' death was vicarious; He died instead of those whom He represented, whose head He is. Now either He vicariously represented all men and then all are surely saved, which no one believes, or He represented a certain number and these are the elect.* And, secondly ... the sinner is dead. He must be raised to life. He must be born again. Therefore, the actual realisation of the salvation which Jesus merited cannot depend on his will, for he will not and cannot will.**

*Jesus saviour and the Evil of Hawking Him*, Tract of First Prot. Ref. Church; 1986, p13-14. (Emphasis PF)

## **Francis Turretin (1623-87)**

Francis Turretin (1623-87) was called 'the best expounder of the doctrine of the Reformed church' (Samuel Alexander). His *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* was published in 1679-85 after thirty years teaching at the Academy of Geneva.

**The mercy of God ... has its own objects and vessels into which it is poured out (viz., the elect and believers upon whom he determined to have mercy from eternity, who are distinguished from others whom he decreed to pass by and are therefore called "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," Rm 9:22).**

*Institutes*. P&R Pub. Phillipsburg, 1992, p244.

**The question is not whether God is borne by a general love and philanthropy towards men as his creatures, and also bestows upon them various temporal benefits pertaining to the things of this life. We do not deny that God has never left himself without witness with regard to this (Acts 14:17). And we are ready to grant that there is no one who does not owe some gratitude to God and who, whatever he is or can do, is not bound to give thanks to his creator. But the question concerns the special and saving love which tends to spiritual benefits, and by which God willed to have mercy upon them to salvation. We think this is particular to the elect alone, not universal and common to all.**

*Institutes*, p396-397

**Since his love cannot be vain and inefficacious, those whom he loves unto salvation he ought to love fully and even unto the end (Jn 13:1).**

*Institutes*, p400

**The love treated in Jn 3:16 ... cannot be universal towards each and every one, but special towards a few.**

*Institutes*, p405 (see his argument)

## **John Leadley Dagg (1794-1884)**

Was one of the most respected Baptists of his time. In 1879, the Southern

Baptist Convention endorsed Dagg's theological position and requested him to draw up a catechism for the instruction of the young.

**God is kind to the unthankful and evil, and bestows blessings on the just and the unjust; but his benevolence, though infinite, does not produce in every one of his creatures the highest degree of happiness ... The justice of God limits the exercise of his benevolence.**

*Manual of Theology*, Gano books, Harrisonburg, 1990, p319-320

### **Augustus Hopkins Strong**

Was one of the foremost Baptist theologians. His work is a standard. He was President and professor of Biblical Theology in the Rochester Theological Seminary, USA.

**The immanent (or absolute, i.e. an attribute which respects the inner being of God, independent of his connection to the universe - PF) love of God is not to be confounded with mercy and goodness toward creatures. These are its manifestations and are to be denominated transitive (or relative, i.e. an attribute of God that refers to his outward revelation of being, related to the creation - PF) love... The imminent love of God therefore requires and finds a personal object in the image of his own infinite perfections. It is to be understood only in the light of the doctrine of the Trinity ... So the love of God is shown in his eternal giving ... This he does eternally in the self-communications of the Trinity; this he does transitively and temporarily in his giving of himself for us in Christ, and to us in the Holy Spirit (p127)**

Note: Thus God's love can only ever be upon Christ and that which is in him.

**By mercy and goodness we mean the transitive love of God its twofold relation to the disobedient and to the obedient portions of his creatures ... Mercy leads him to seek the good of sinners (pre-conversion elect) i.e. compassionate grace or benevolence, goodness leads him to communicate his life and blessedness to those who are like him, i.e. complacency. (sic)**

**Notice, however, that transitive love is but an outward manifestation of immanent love. The eternal and perfect object of God's love is his**

**own nature. Men become subordinate objects of God's love only as they become connected and identified with it's principle object, the image of God's perfections in Christ. Only in the Son do men become sons of God. (p137-138)**

**God's love for us ... dates back to a time before we were born, - aye, even to eternity past. It is a love which was fastened upon us although God knew the worst of us. It is unchanging, because founded upon his infinite and eternal love to Christ. (p433)**

**God is not only benevolent but holy, and holiness is his ruling attribute. The vindication of God's holiness is the primary and sufficient object of punishment. This constitutes a good which fully justifies the infliction (of hell - PF) ... Love for holiness involves hatred of unholiness ... holiness conditions love. (p597)**

**The benevolence of God, as concerned for the general good of the universe, requires the execution of the full penalty of the law upon all who reject Christ's salvation. (p598)**

*Systematic Theology*, A C Armstrong & Son, New York, 1899

### **John H Gerstner**

Is a contemporary American theologian of repute (recently deceased).

**We must also sadly admit that the majority of Reformed theologians today seriously err concerning the nature of the love of God for reprobates ... Most Reformed theologians also include, as a by-product of the atonement, the well meant offer of the gospel by which all men can be saved.**

*Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, Wolgemuth & Hyatt, Brentwood, Tennessee, 1991, p125.

### **David J Engelsma**

A contemporary American theologian. He is the Professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament at the Protestant Reformed Seminary in Grandville, Michigan. Prior to his appointment he was a pastor for 25 years.

**That which is objectionable in the 'free offer of the gospel,' or 'well meant gospel offer' ... and the reason why a Reformed man must repudiate it, is its teaching that the grace of God in Jesus Christ, grace that is saving in character, is directed to all men in the preaching of the gospel. Inherent in the offer of the gospel is the notion that God loves and desires to save all men; the notion that the preaching of the gospel is God's grace to all men, an expression of God's love to all men, and an attempt by God to save all men; and the notion that salvation is dependent upon man's acceptance of the offered salvation, that is, that salvation depends upon the free will of the sinner.**

*Hyper Calvinism & the Call of the Gospel*, The Reformed Free Pub. Assoc. Grand Rapids, Michigan (1994) p41-42.

**The scriptures know of only one grace of God and one love of God, His grace and love in Jesus Christ. This is the grace and this is the love revealed in the gospel.**

**The doctrine of the offer, therefore, teaches that the love of Christ is universal ... this is the denial of the Reformed, biblical doctrine of election and the sell-out of the Reformed faith to Arminianism. For the meaning of the doctrine of election is that the love of God in Christ is eternally directed towards some definite particular men, willing their salvation and efficaciously accomplishing it. Election is simply the choosing love of God (Deut 7:6-8; Rm 8:28-29). Universal love is universal election, and that was the position of the Arminians.**  
(p45)

**Reformed preaching will not approach the audience with the declaration: 'God loves all of you.' It will not say to every man: 'God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.' It will not proclaim to all hearers: 'God is gracious to all of you and sincerely desires your salvation.' This message is a lie. Not only are these statements false, but they are also the bane of effective missions. Never did the apostles take this approach or proclaim this message to the unconverted. Such a message is incipient universalism, which assures the sinner that all is well with him in his sin - God loves him, and Christ died for him! - so that there is really no need for him to repent and believe. Arminianism, which blusters of its concern to save the lost, peters out in universalism, which blesses all religions, as well as the irreligious ... Biblical preaching assures the sinner of**

**God's love for him personally only in the way of his faith in Christ crucified... a preacher does not call a man to believe some *thing*, but calls him to believe on *someone*. He presents Christ and calls the hearers to believe on that Christ.**

(p87-88)

### **The Helvetic Consensus Formula**

Composed by John Heidegger of Zurich in 1675 as a creed for the Swiss churches. (He was helped by Turretin.)

**Canon vi: we cannot give suffrage to the opinion of those who teach: (1) that God, moved by philanthropy, or a sort of special love for the fallen human race, to previous election, did, in a kind of conditioned willing (i.e. willingness) first moving of pity ... purpose the salvation of all and each, at least conditionally, i.e., if they would believe.**

See A A Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, Appendix.

### **Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823-1886)**

The son of the great theologian Charles Hodge. He was professor in Systematic Theology at Princeton Seminary. It was said by W G T Shedd that he had 'an uncommon ability to popularise scientific theology'.

**God's love for holiness and hatred of sin is represented in Scripture as essential and intrinsic. He loves holiness for its own sake. He hates sin and is determined to punish it because of its intrinsic ill desert. He hates the wicked every day - Ps 5:5; 7:11 (p156-7).**

**The facts prove that God's general benevolence is not inconsistent with allowing some to be damned for their sins. This is all that reprobation means. Gratuitous election, or the positive choice of some does not rest upon God's general benevolence, but upon his special love to its own. (p228-9)**

*Outlines of Theology*, Nelson, New York, 1883

## **Creeds and Confessions**

B B Warfield, in his 'Predestination in the Reformed Confessions', a part of his book: *Studies in Theology*, quotes a great many examples of a wide variety of standards which support the doctrine of election and reprobation. Many are germane to this study. I will quote from only one.

### **The Irish Articles (1615)**

**11. God from all eternity did, by his unchangeable counsel, ordain whatsoever in time should come to pass; yet so, as thereby no violence is offered to the wills of reasonable creatures ...**

**12. By the same eternal counsel God hath predestinated some unto life, and reprobated some unto death ...**

**14. The cause moving God to predestinate unto life, is not the foreseeing of faith or perseverance, or good works, or anything which is in the person predestinated, but only the good pleasure of God himself ... it seemed good to his heavenly wisdom to choose out a certain number toward whom he would extend his undeserved mercy.**

*Studies in Theology*, Baker, 1991, p204

### **Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (1851-1921)**

Extremely famous theologian. He was Professor of didactic and polemic Theology in the Theological Seminary of Princeton between 1887 and 1921 (succeeding A A Hodge). Prior to that he was an assistant pastor and Professor at Western Theological Seminary.

**The Biblical Writers are as far as possible from obscuring the doctrine of election because of any seemingly unpleasant corollaries that flow from it ... (in the election of some) others are passed by and left without the gift of salvation; the whole presentation of the doctrine is such as either to imply or openly assert ... the removal of the elect by the pure grace of God, not merely from a state of condemnation, but out of the company of the condemned ... the discrimination between men in the matter of eternal destiny is distinctly set forth as taking place in the interests of mercy and for the sake of salvation ... God is represented as in his infinite compassion rescuing those chosen to this end in his inscrutable counsels of mercy to the praise of the glory of his grace; while those who are left in their sins perish most deservedly, as the justice of**

## **God demands.**

*Biblical Doctrines*, Baker 1991, p64-5.

### **The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament Article on *agapao* by E. Stauffer**

This dictionary has been a standard scholarly work for many years and is held in high esteem for its technical merit.

**Paul ... makes three main points (in Romans on love PF): (1) God sent his Son even to the cross in love; (2) God calls the elect in love; (3) God sheds his love abroad in their hearts ... This love implies election, which includes both pretemporal ordination and temporal calling. The elect community is in fellowship with God, and he endows with the active compelling power of love (Rom 5:5) in fulfilment of his own primary purpose of love.**

*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Ed G Bromiley, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Abr. Version, 1985, p9.

### **Dictionary of New Testament Theology Article 'Love' by W Gunther, H-G Link**

Another standard work, more recent than the above, considered an indispensable resource to Bible scholars.

**At the beginning of the OT stands not only the God who loves, but also the God who elects ...**

**It was the prophets who first ventured to elaborate on the theme of the love of God as the main motif of his electing work ...**

**Essential for an understanding of the NT is the quite different structure of Qumran piety. The community believed that it had been chosen in God's love, But that this only had reference to the children of light. God loves the angel of light and hates all who belong to the company of Belial ... God's love is not conceived as having universal application ...**

**Paul stands entirely in the line of OT tradition when he speaks of the love of God. Agape is for him electing love, as is indicated by his use of *Agapetos*, 'the chosen one' ... As in the OT the motive for the election is God's love ... God in his electing love rescues those who believe ...**

**The continual oscillation between the subject and object of love in**

**John shows that the Father, the Son, and the believers are all united in the one reality of divine love: the alternative to which is death.**

*Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol 2, Ed. Colin Brown, Zondervan, Grand Rapids 1986, p540-546.

## **John L Girardeau**

Was Professor of Systematic Theology in Columbia Theological Seminary, South Carolina in the late 1800's. He was considered to be one of the greatest defenders of Calvinism.

**The love involved in election - a peculiar, free, inalienable, saving love of Complacency towards the elect ... (He then quotes in full the following texts which should be consulted: Ex 30:19; Rm 9:13-18; Mal 1:2-3; Deut 7:7-8, 10:15; Isa 43:4, 63:9, 16; Ps 89:19,20,28,30-35, 94:18; Isa 54:8-10, 49:15; Mic 7:20; Jer 31:3, Zeph 3:17; Jn 17:23, 26; Rm 5:5, 8, 9, 8:38-39; Eph 2:4-5; Tit 3:4-7, Heb 13:5; 1 Jn 4:9, 10, 19; 2 Thess 2:16-17) ... The testimonies from Scripture clearly reveal the nature of God's electing love. It is expressly declared to be eternal. It is peculiar: it is directed to the people of God. It is free, that is, sovereign and unconditioned upon any good quality or act in its objects ...**

**There are two distinct aspects of the divine love or goodness. One of these, in the form of benevolence, terminates on men indiscriminately, the just and the unjust, the evil and the good; and, when it is directed to them as ill-deserving and miserable, it assumes the special form of mercy. The other, the love of complacency, is a peculiar affection, supposing the existence in its sinful objects of a saving relation to Christ as mediator, Federal head and Redeemer. Now let it be supposed that the infinite benevolence of God, in the form of mercy contemplating the lost and wretched condition of man, into which he was conceived as having plunged himself by his sin and folly, suggested his salvation ... That suggestion was checked by the demands of infinite justice, ... For although the attributes of God are all infinite, and cohere in his essence in, perfect harmony with each other, the exercise of mercy ... was checked by wisdom and justice, ...**

**The Father ... elected some of mankind to be redeemed. This, while it was a sovereign act of his will, involved the exercise of infinite love and mercy ... those thus designated became the Father's elect ones, his sheep ... conceived as in Christ the elect became objects of a complacental love, measured only by the regard of the Father for his well-beloved Son ...**

**The love of complacency towards the elect is not to be confounded with God's love of benevolence towards all men. It includes the love of benevolence, but it is inconceivably more. It differs from it in important respects. In the first place, it supposes a peculiar relation of the elect to God's only-begotten Son, and is, according to scriptural representations, analogous to the love the Father bears to him. In the second place, the gift of Christ ... is infinitely more costly and precious than that of sunshine, rain and other mere providential blessings which benevolence indiscriminately confers upon the general mass of men. In the third place, the elect, although in themselves unlovely, are conceived as in Christ intrinsically possessed of the graces of the Holy Spirit, which render them appropriate objects of complacental regard. It is this love, this peculiar, intense, unutterable love, which the scriptures declare to be manifested towards the elect in the actual execution of God's eternal purpose of salvation. ...**

**In connection with this aspect of the subject of election, the Arminian doctrine is open to the charge of being entirely unscriptural ... the Arminian ... reduces the intense, inexpressible, unchangeable affection which God from eternity entertained for his own people to a general regard for all sinners of the human race - his love for his sheep to a love for goats.**

*Calvinism and Evangelical Arminianism*, Sprinkle Pub. Harrisonburg 1984, p54-66.

Girardeau clearly discriminates between God's love for his people and a 'love' expressed towards all in the continuance of life. It is unfortunate that he uses the term 'love' for this, even though it is distinguished as mere benevolence not complacence. Scripture does not use *Agape* (and related Hebrew words) for this. 'Providence' or even 'compassion' would have been a much better word to use to describe this general 'love' of God. However, Girardeau's arguments are very good and should be read in their entirety.

## **William G T Shedd (1820-1894)**

Is considered a definitive writer on the Christian faith. He was a Professor at various academies including Professor of Systematic Theology at Union Theological Seminary from 1874-1890. His Dogmatic Theology is a standard work for scholars.

**Sinful men are the objects of God's providential care, as well as renewed men. Even Satan and the fallen angels are treated with all the benevolence which their enmity to God will admit of ... God's benevolent interest in the sentient creature, and his care for its welfare, is proportioned and suited to the nature and circumstances to the creature. It extends to the animals: (Ps 145:16, 104:21, Job 38:41, Matt 6:26, Ps 36:6). It extends to man (Acts 14:17). It extends to sinful man (Matt 5:45, Acts 14:17, Neh 9:17).. Sinful man is deprived of a full manifestation of the Divine benevolence, only by reason of his sin. God manifests to the sinner all the benevolence that he is qualified to receive. He sends him physical and temporal good: rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons ... but he cannot bestow upon a sinful and hostile man his approving love ... Grace is an aspect of mercy. It differs from mercy, in that it has reference to sinful man as guilty, while mercy has respect to sinful man as miserable. The one refers to the culpability of sin, and the other to its wretchedness ... Both mercy and grace are exercised in a general manner, towards those who are not the objects of their special manifestation. All blessings bestowed upon the natural man are mercy, in so far as they succour his distress, and grace, so far as they are bestowed upon the undeserving. (Matt 5:45, Ps 145:9, 15, 16). This general manifestation of mercy and grace is in and by the works of creation and providence ... Special grace and mercy are exercised only in redemption.**

*Dogmatic Theology*, Vol 1, Nelson, Nashville, 1980, p386-391.

## **Arthur C. Custance**

Is a member of the Canadian Physiological Society, a Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute and a Member of the New York Academy of Sciences. He has written many books on theological issues, most notably the series of Doorway Papers.

**If God does not love everyone indiscriminately, what then is his**

**attitude towards those who are not the objects of his love? Does He hate them? ... we have a few passages of Scripture which seem to state in no uncertain terms that God does hate some of his creatures.**

**We are tending increasingly to ignore the other side of God's love towards his creatures. Sermons more and more emphasise the love of God to the exclusion of his justice, and to speak of God's hate is completely unacceptable to our sensitive ears.**

*The Sovereignty of Grace.* P & R Publishing, New Jersey (1979) p294, 297.

Lack of space prevents me from consideration of further support. One could go to the writings of the Puritans for a rich field of support for instance. I think that the point has been made well enough. This thesis is not novel. It is as old as Christianity itself. Lack of semantic clarity has sometimes confused the issue but it is clear that God's saving love, the love that 'has a wonderful plan for your life', is only applied to the elect and not indiscriminately to all.

## Appendix 4

# Jesus' dealings with evil people

## Introduction

Jesus is God. This is a straightforward and simple statement that all Christians believe. If 'God is love and Jesus shows it', as the popular saying goes (and there is truth in that), then we will see the attitude of God to different sorts of people in the life of Jesus. What do we see.

### **Attitude to the scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees**

Note that in Matthew 23 Jesus says that these people: do not enter heaven (v13), are children of hell (v15), have neglected justice, mercy and faith, and are full of extortion and rapacity (v25).

**He said to them, 'Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites ... you have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God'. (Mk 7:6)**

**'Beware of the scribes, who like to go about in long robes, and to have salutations in the market places and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at feasts, who devour widows' houses and for pretence make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.'** (Mk 12:38-40)

**And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart. (Mk 3:5)**

**'When you pray you must not be like the hypocrites.'** (Matt 6:5)

**'When you fast, do not do not look dismal, like the hypocrites.'** (Matt 6:16)

**'You blind fools.'** (Matt 23:17)

**'Woe to scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ... you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.'** Matt 23:13-15)

**'Woe to scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like**

**whitewashed tombs ... you serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?' (Matt 23:27ff)**

**Jesus said:**

**'You are of your father the Devil ... He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him .... You are not of God.'** (Jn 8:44-47)

### **False prophets**

**'Beware of false prophets, who ... are ravenous wolves.'** (Matt 7:15)

### **Religious hypocrites**

**'On that day many will say to me. 'Lord, Lord' ... then I will declare to them. 'I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.'** (Matt 7:22-23)

**'The sons of the kingdom (Israelites after the flesh without faith - PF) will be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.'** (Matt 8:12)

## **Conclusion**

It is inescapable. The picture of Jesus as a soft, sweet-natured teacher who never spoke harshly is not true. Just as God is love, but shows justice and wrath as part of his character, so also Jesus could speak with force and anger in the right setting. The evidence is in the Bible. Jesus called evil people: wolves, hypocrites, evildoers, children of hell, full of iniquity. He was angry to people's faces and warned others about them. He condemned people. He was critical even sarcastic.

Does all this show that he loved everyone? Remember Jesus does not love like men do, his love is pure and patient, it loves to the end, it is long suffering. It is not superficial or changeable. If Jesus loved the people mentioned above, he could not have maintained such a barrage of criticism against them.

Now some will say that later many of the religious leaders came to believe in

Jesus. That is true (Acts 6:7), but we don't know who they are or even what party they belonged to. We do not know whether Jesus met any of these people personally, still less if they were included in any of the situations mentioned above. Furthermore, we only need to show that Jesus was angry, not in love, with one person to prove the point. Also Peter calls the people that opposed Jesus (the religious leaders) *lawless men, a crooked generation*, (Acts 2:23, 40). While Stephen calls them *'You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit ... the righteous one, whom you have now betrayed and murdered.'* (Acts 7:51-53; remember that Jesus promised the apostles that when they were dragged before rulers for their faith, they would be given the words to speak. These words of Stephen are the words of Jesus.) The weight of evidence lies with the proposition, God, in the person of Jesus, does not love everyone! Opposers have a huge amount of evidence to overcome before they can even begin to make their point.

## **Addenda**

### **Testimony of John the Baptist**

**When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ... do not presume to say for yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father' ... every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.'**  
(Matt 3:7)