

“Why Is God So Consumed with Blood?”

Why is it that God seems to be so consumed with blood? It seems that from the beginning of scripture to the New Covenant under Christ's blood, that God was consumed with blood.

Thanks for your letter. You are certainly correct to notice the profound importance of blood in the Bible. The author of Hebrews wrote, “And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission” [of sins] (Hebrews 9:22). And Paul reminds us that Jesus made propitiation by His blood (Rom. 3:25) and that believers are justified (i.e. declared righteous) on the basis of the shed blood of Christ (Rom. 5:8-10). And elsewhere Paul tells us that Jesus reconciled the world to God, “having made peace through the blood of His cross” (Col. 1:20).

Because of the importance of this issue, and its prominence throughout the Bible, I would recommend reading the following article from bible.org. It's called, “The Preciousness of Blood” (Leviticus 17) and you can find it at http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=278.

The Lord bless you,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“What is the Value of the Old Testament for New Testament Christians?”

What exactly is the significance of the Old Testament for us Christians (other than to point towards Jesus Christ)? How does the Old Covenant apply to someone under the New Covenant (if at all) in daily life?

Thank you for writing Probe Ministries. You ask some very good questions!

As to your first question, “What exactly is the significance of the Old Testament for us Christians,” I would probably want to say the following. First, the OT teaches us a number of crucial doctrines which are essential for Christianity. These include creation (Gen. 1-2), the fall of man (Gen. 3), the promise of a Deliverer (Gen. 3:15, etc.), the holiness of God (Leviticus), the need for a substitutionary blood sacrifice (Leviticus), the essential requirement of faith in God and His promises (Gen. 15:6), and God’s discipline of His wayward people (seen throughout the OT). We also learn a great deal about God’s interactions with people in the past (see 1 Cor. 10:6 in context), as well as His plans for the future. The wisdom literature and poetry (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon) are, for the most part, timeless. They include wise advice on getting along successfully in the world, in relating to both God and our fellow man, as well as offering us examples of how to approach God in prayer and worship. Of course, as you said, its primary importance is to point us to Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah and Savior of the world. Finally, it’s interesting to

note that in passages like 2 Tim. 3:14-17 and 2 Peter 1:20-21, the "Scripture" which is in view is primarily the OT. This is so because the NT was still in the process of being written. And it wouldn't exist in its present form (i.e., 27 books bound together and recognized by the church as authoritative in matters of faith and practice) for a few centuries.

In your second question you ask, "How does the Old Covenant apply to someone under the New Covenant (if at all) in daily life?" First, let me point out that there are many moral commandments which are the same under both covenants. In fact, nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated and enjoined upon believers in the NT (all but the Sabbath day observance). Thus, there is clearly some continuity between the two covenants. However, there are also some important differences. For example, the dietary laws set forth in passages such as Leviticus 11:1-47 and Deuteronomy 14:1-21 were temporary laws given by God only to Israel. These laws are not applicable to Christians today under the terms of the New Covenant. This is not only made clear in Peter's vision, recorded in Acts 10:9-16, but it is stated explicitly by Christ Himself in Mark 7:14-23. Notice in particular what Jesus says in vv. 18-19. In part, this text reads, "Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him; because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" Then notice the parenthetical statement which concludes this verse: "Thus He declared all foods clean." In other words, the dietary restrictions given by God to Israel have been nullified. Christians today are not bound by such laws. Today, the Old Covenant under which Israel operated is obsolete (Hebrews 8:13). Thus, while some of the moral commandments of the Old Covenant are reiterated for us in the New Covenant, strictly speaking, I do not believe that Christians are obligated to any of the duties or requirements of the Old Covenant. After all, the Old Covenant has been done away with by God Himself. Thus, any obligations that apply to us are repeated for us under the terms of the New Covenant.

The New Covenant not only tells us how to live pleasing to God, etc., it also provides the means (through the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit) to live consistently with it (as we walk in faith relying on the power of God's Spirit).

In the New Testament, the book of Hebrews has a great deal to say about this New Covenant. In an article on "Covenant," Trent Butler describes some of the special features of the New Covenant as related in the book of Hebrews:

"The emphasis is on Jesus, the perfect High Priest, providing a new, better, superior covenant (Heb. 7:22; 8:6). Jesus represented the fulfillment of Jeremiah's new covenant promise (Heb. 8:8, 10; 10:16). Jesus was the perfect covenant Mediator (Heb. 9:15), providing an eternal inheritance in a way the old covenant could not (compare 12:24). Jesus' death on the cross satisfied the requirement that all covenants be established by blood (Heb. 9:18, 20) just as was the first covenant (Ex. 24:8). Christ's blood established an everlasting covenant (Heb. 13:20)." (*Holman Bible Dictionary*, gen. ed. Trent C. Butler [Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991], 312)

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“Seven Spirits of Revelation?”

I recently encountered a group that believes the seven spirits of Revelation are seven aspects of the Holy Spirit ... and the

Trinity is actually a “nine-ity” (for lack of a better word). I obviously do NOT believe this hogwash, but I was wondering if this belief has ever been promulgated in history. I personally believe it’s a new heresy, but I wanted to check.

The interpretation of the “seven Spirits” in the book of Revelation as a reference to the Holy Spirit is actually not new. A number of interpreters throughout church history have adopted this position as their preferred view. However, it is by no means the ONLY view that has been advanced throughout church history.

John refers to the “seven Spirits” in Revelation 1:4; 3:1; 4:5 and 5:6. William Barclay points out that the Jews “talked of the seven angels of the presence,” citing 1 Enoch 90:21. Of course John does refer to seven angels of the seven churches (1:20). What he means by “angels” is not entirely clear. He could be referring to the pastors of the churches, or he might be referring to guardian angels of the churches. Thus, some commentators believe the reference to the “seven Spirits” is a reference to seven holy angels before the throne of God.

Barclay mentions that another “explanation connects the idea of the seven Spirits with the fact of the seven churches.” Since seven is often used as a number of completion, or perfection, in the Bible (and in the book of Revelation in particular) it is thought that the “seven” churches are representative of all churches, each of which has a share in God’s Holy Spirit in order to carry out its ministry to the world.

A third view ties the reference to the “seven Spirits” to Isaiah 11:2. The Greek translation of this verse in the Septuagint reads: “The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and piety; by this spirit He shall be filled with the fear of God.” In this view, the “seven Spirits” of Revelation refer to this sevenfold ministry

of the Holy Spirit, particularly evidenced in the life of Jesus, the Messiah.

Which of these views is correct? I honestly don't know. Maybe the correct view is none of the above! It's important to point out, however, that those who see the "seven Spirits" as a reference to the Holy Spirit would not typically endorse any but a Trinitarian view of God. Barclay cites Beatus as having said, "The Spirit is one in name but sevenfold in virtues."

Thus, while I personally do not know what John intends by his reference to the "seven Spirits", those who interpret this as referring to the Holy Spirit are usually not heretics. They could be, of course; but one need not reach that conclusion from this particular interpretation. It is actually an old and well-accepted view.

Hope this helps. God bless you!

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

"Is There a Distinction Between the Law of Moses and the 10 Commandments?"

Is there a distinction between the Law of Moses and the 10 commandments? Does the Law of Moses include the 10 commandments in verses like Acts 13:39, Rom. 3:28 and Gal. 2:16? Does the book of the law contain the entire law found in the first five books of the bible including the 10 commandments? Which verses in the bible can I use to explain

that the entire Law of Moses includes the 10 commandments? There are some cultists out there who teach that there is a distinction between the law and the 10 commandments so that they can use the 10 commandments as a means of justification using verses like Matt. 19:17, 1 Cor. 7:19, 1 John 2:3-4, 1 John 5:2-3, Rev. 12:17, Rev. 14:12. They claim that the law was done away with (sacrifices and such) but insist that the 10 commandments are a binding means of justification. It sounds to me like a vain attempt to support a "works based" FALSE gospel!

The Law of Moses includes the Ten Commandments. All the laws of Moses are contained in Exodus through Deuteronomy and include over 600 laws. Of course, sometimes the first five books of the Bible are also referred to as the Law (e.g. Matt. 5:17).

Yes; the Law of Moses includes the 10 commandments in verses like Acts 13:39, Rom. 3:28 and Gal. 2:16.

Which verses in the bible can I use to explain that the entire Law of Moses includes the 10 commandments?

Matthew 5:17-48 is quite clear about the Law (v. 17) including the ten commandments (vv. 21 and 27 – compare with Exodus 20:13, 14). Romans 13:8-10 also make this clear.

The cults which try to make a distinction between the Law of Moses and the ten commandments are in error. The entire Old Covenant (including the ten commandments) has been done away and replaced with the New Covenant (see Hebrews 8:7-13; etc.). Verses like Galatians 2:16 make quite clear that we are not justified by any works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, it is important to realize that nine of the ten commandments (all but Sabbath keeping) are repeated in the New Testament. These commandments are not a means of justifying us before God. However, they do give us God's principles regarding how those who HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIED through

faith in Christ ought to live their lives. Good works are the proper fruit of justification. We are not justified by our works, but justification should produce good works. We are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8-9). But we are created in Christ Jesus for good works (Eph. 2:10).

The Lord bless you,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“How Do I Find Bibles in their Original Languages?”

I need help finding the New Testament in the classic Greek language, and also the Old Testament in the original language it was written in. I need a history lesson about these scriptures to inform me of the true origins of their creation.

You can get your own copies of the Greek New Testament and Hebrew Old Testament from any good Christian bookstore. If they don't have any in stock, they should at least be able to order them for you. Also, you can probably order these items from the web (e.g. Christian Book Distributors, etc.). However, in order to really profit from these resources, it's best to master both languages.

Probably the best one-volume work on the Bible that I'm aware of is Norman Geisler and William Nix's *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Revised and Expanded edition). But you can find plenty of profitable studies on the bible.org website. Indeed, they have an entire section on Bibliology at http://www.bible.org/topic.asp?topic_id=5. On their homepage,

you can even order a Greek/English NT. I would become very familiar with this site. They have lots of great information that can be of great use to you.

The Lord bless you,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“Is the Bible Wrong About the Cleansing of the Temple?”

In John 2:13-25 is the story of when Jesus cleansed the temple. It immediately follows Jesus turning the water into wine, and immediately precedes the conversation with Nicodemus. In Matthew 21:12-16 is the same story immediately precedes the cursing of the barren fig tree. In Mark 11:15-18 the cleansing of the temple takes place immediately after the cursing of the fig tree.

Now, as I see it, there are only three possibilities.

1. The text in either Matthew and Mark or in John is in error about the time of the cleansing of the temple. And either the text in Matthew or Mark is wrong about the time of the cursing of the fig tree.
2. The gospels were not written in chronological order.
3. The same incident happened more than once (highly unlikely).

What is your take on this? Did I overlook something?

Thanks for your question! You have raised an important (and relatively common) difficulty in interpreting the gospels. Let

me first say that the gospels were not necessarily written in chronological order. In fact, it is generally accepted that many of the incidents recorded in the gospels were NOT written in chronological order. As a general rule, the only exception to this is Luke's gospel, in which he specifically states his intention "to write it out...in consecutive order" (Luke 1:3).

A good book which you may want to consult about some of these issues of gospel interpretation and harmonization is Craig Blomberg's *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1987). Since this is not an area of personal expertise for me, I will simply give you Blomberg's observations on possible ways in which the difficulties you have noticed might be resolved.

Concerning the cursing of the fig tree, Blomberg believes that Matthew has simply telescoped the events of two days "into one uninterrupted paragraph which seems to refer only to the second day's events." He points out that Matthew's introduction, "Now in the morning," does "not specify which day is in view, and there is no reason to exclude an interval of time between verses 19 and 20." He continues by noting, "Mark does not deny that the fig tree withered immediately, only that the disciples did not see it until the next day." He concludes by pointing out that the gospels leave out a wealth of detail (indeed, John states this explicitly in 20:30), and such omissions simply become more evident when compared with a more detailed account in another gospel.

Blomberg offers a couple of solutions to the problem of the cleansing of the temple. The first solution holds that John has simply woven this incident into his gospel thematically, rather than chronologically. In other words, there is only one cleansing and John, for thematic considerations, has simply chosen to relay this incident in a manner unrelated to its actual chronological occurrence in the life of Christ. He offers a couple of reasons in support of this view. The second solution (which commends itself to my mind) actually

acknowledges two separate cleansings, one at the beginning and one near the end of Jesus' public ministry. He offers six arguments in support of this second position (172):

1. The details of the cleansing given in John's account are completely different from those given in the Synoptics (i.e. Matthew, Mark, Luke).

2. If Jesus felt strongly enough about the temple corruption to cleanse it once at the beginning of His ministry, it is not really too difficult to believe that He might do it again at the end of His ministry.

3. Since cleansing the temple was an overtly Messianic act, about which some of the Jews would have approved, it is not surprising that He could get away with doing this once at the outset of His ministry. However, when the Jews began to realize that Jesus was not really the sort of Messiah they were looking for, a second cleansing would have almost certainly sealed His fate (see Mark 11:18).

4. In the Synoptics, Jesus is accused of having said that He would destroy the temple and rebuild another in three days not made with human hands (Mark 14:58). But a similar comment by Jesus is only explicitly mentioned in John 2:19. Furthermore, since the witnesses in Mark's gospel get the statement slightly wrong, and cannot agree among themselves (Mark 14:59), it may be a confused memory of something Jesus said two or three years earlier, rather than just a few days earlier.

5. Jesus' statement in the Synoptics is more severe than that in John. Only in the Synoptics does He refer to the Gentiles need to pray at the temple, and only in the Synoptics does He refer to the Jews as "robbers."

6. In John 2:20 the Jews refer to the temple rebuilding project having begun 46 years earlier. This would mark the date of the cleansing at around AD 27 or 28. But Jesus was

almost certainly not crucified until at least AD 30. And it is most unlikely that John would have simply made up such a figure. Therefore, it is quite likely that John is describing a distinct (and earlier) cleansing from the one mentioned in the Synoptics.

When I approach the gospel narratives with the attitude that they are innocent until proven guilty, keeping in mind that they have been thoroughly demonstrated to be generally reliable historical sources, the six arguments listed above strongly incline me to the view that there were in fact two temple cleansings in the life of Christ—one at the beginning of His public ministry, the other at its conclusion. At any rate, that is my take on this particular issue.

Hope this helps!

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

Are the Essene Gospels Real?

Are the Essene gospels (Gospel of Peace) real? How can you witness to someone who believes these are truer than the Bible? I have a father who says he believes in Jesus, but not the Bible. He says a loving God will not condemn man as long as he does mostly good. He also rejects that Christ is the only way. I know we are saved by grace not works and that Jesus is the way, but how do I explain and share the truth without arguing? My referring to the Bible only aggravates him since he rejects it as one of religion and man's creation.

There are certainly many ancient "Gospels" that never made it

into the Bible.

You can find out more about these on sites like the following: wesley.nnu.edu/biblical_studies/noncanon/index.htm and www.gnosis.org/naghamm/nhl.html.

A search on the latter site for the “Gospel of Peace” produced no matches and I’ve actually never heard of this one. Regardless, however, the real questions we must ask are:

1. Who wrote these documents?
2. When were they written?
3. Are they historically reliable or trustworthy sources of information about Jesus and the early church?

Many of these documents were written by groups (like the Gnostics) who were later declared heretical by church councils and synods. They were written AFTER the time of the New Testament Gospels – sometimes by hundreds of years, sometimes by decades. And with the exception of certain portions of the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas, they’re generally regarded as late, legendary, and historically unreliable sources of information about Jesus and His early followers.

If your father doesn’t believe that the Bible is reliable, you might see if he’s willing to read some books which give evidence that it is. A very good general introduction is “A General Introduction to the Bible: Revised and Expanded” by Norman Geisler and William Nix. A book on the Old Testament is “The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable & Relevant?” by Walter Kaiser. And F.F. Bruce wrote, “The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?” Many other good books exist, but if your father would be willing to carefully read any of these, it would be a great start.

Regardless of whether he’s willing to read such books or not, however, the best thing you can do is pray for him and model Christlike love toward him. The Lord can work wonderfully to soften men’s hearts toward Christ and the Bible. Speak a good

word for the Lord as you have opportunity, but mainly just pray for him and show him God's love. It's a powerful combination.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“Is the Genesis Story of ‘The Sons of God’ True?”

Pertaining to the old days when the watchers went astray and married women and bore giants—are these stories of any truth?

In the days of Noah, when a man in years was nearing his death, say a just man, are there any hints as to what awaited them in the afterlife of that period?

Is there something, or has there ever been something, commented on in scripture which disturbs the dead in their rest?

Thank you for writing Probe Ministries. My own understanding of Genesis 6:1-4 leads me to believe that “the sons of God” mentioned here were indeed fallen angels. Whether or not the offspring of their union with the daughters of men were the giants referred to in v. 4 is difficult to say. The text may indicate that at least some of these giants existed prior to the sexual union of the sons of God with the daughters of men. For my part, I certainly believe these stories are true. It is quite possible that the sons of God in Genesis 6 are the angels referred to by both Jude (v. 6) and Peter (2 Pet. 2:4).

There is not a great deal of biblical revelation concerning the afterlife of the righteous in the days of Noah. But here is something to consider. In Genesis 5:21-24 we have the story of Enoch. Verse 24 states, "And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him." Although this verse does not give us much information, it certainly suggests an afterlife in the presence of God for the just and righteous who, like Enoch, walked with God. [Note: also see [Probe Answers Our E-Mail: Is There a Specific Reference to Heaven or Hell in the OT?](#)]

Finally, although I'm not entirely sure what you are asking about in your third question, there is an account in 1 Samuel 28 about King Saul and a medium, in which Saul asks the medium to call up the prophet Samuel from the dead. In this case, God allowed Samuel to return to deliver to Saul a message of judgment against both he and Israel. When Samuel appears, he asks Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" (v. 15). Thus, this may be the sort of example you were looking for. Of course, it's important to point out that this is an exceptional event. Normally, the dead are not permitted to return to the land of the living after death (see Luke 16:19-31). However, in particular cases the sovereign Lord may, for His own purposes, permit such a thing (as in the case of Samuel).

God bless you,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

"How Did John the Baptist Get

the Idea to Baptize People?"

Where did John the Baptist get the idea to dunk people in water and call it baptism? It can't be the same as our baptism today, depicting the death, burial, and resurrection; that hadn't happened yet. He preached baptism for the remittance of sin. But where did the idea come from?

Thanks for your question. D.S. Dockery has a good discussion of this issue in his article on "Baptism" in the *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* [eds. Joel Green and Scot McNight (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 55-58].

Although the Jews practiced a form of proselyte baptism, "there is no clear evidence prior to A.D. 70 that proselytes underwent baptism as a requirement of conversion" (Ibid., 56). Dockery presents the following arguments against the view that Jewish proselyte baptism served as the model for John's baptism (ibid., 56):

1. There is no clear reference to Jewish proselyte baptism in the OT, Philo, or Josephus.
2. Jewish proselyte baptism was self-administered; John's baptism was administered by John.
3. There are grammatical differences between how the term "baptism" is used in the NT and how it is used in texts mentioning Jewish proselyte baptism.
4. John baptized *Jews*, conditioned on their repentance; Jewish proselyte baptism was only for Gentiles.

But if John did not get this idea from Jewish proselyte baptism, where did he get it? Dockery thinks a more likely borrowing occurred from the Qumran community. He does not, however, commit John to having been an Essene. In support of his thesis, Dockery offers the following arguments (Ibid., 57):

1. Both the Qumran community and John stressed the

- importance of repentance in relation to baptism.
2. Both viewed their ministries in terms of Isaiah 40:3.
 3. Both baptized Jewish people.

However, there was one important distinction between the Qumran community and John regarding baptism: the Qumran rite was self-administered and practiced frequently, while John's baptism was administered by John and was a one-time rite of initiation.

Thus, Dockery believes John got his idea for water baptism from the Qumran community. Of course, it's important to note that if John originally received this idea from Qumran, he nonetheless revised and adapted it to fit his own unique purpose and calling as the one who was preparing the Jewish nation to receive her Messiah. Also, it's important to remember that this is simply one scholar's expert opinion. I happen to think it a good one, but as he himself observes, "...the background of John's baptism remains fiercely debated" (Ibid., 56).

God bless you,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“Does Calvinism Make People into Choiceless Puppets?”

When I look at the doctrine of predestination from the Calvinistic perspective I seem to come to the same final conclusion. It appears to me that in the Calvinistic approach, man is only an observer. Which would mean that my actions,

thoughts, hopes, dreams, relationships, etc., are all meaningless. I call man an observer because, according to Calvin, ALL is predetermined.

There is no "choice." There is double predestination. Life would end up being deterministic and fatalistic. I am merely a linear program executing my own destruction. What's the use in doing anything? To me love then becomes meaningless. More importantly, how do I know for sure that I am really one of the "chosen"? Since every part of my being is totally deprived, how do I know if I really believe what I need to believe since my intellect is deprived also? I have talked to some Calvinists about this. They seem to ignore the philosophical problems I pose and move on without ever answering my questions. I get the old "That's the way it is," answer. It appears to me that if you follow Calvin's view to its logical extreme, man becomes only an observer who can affect nothing. My problem arises when I conclude that if this is the case, then God sends a person to Hell for sins that God determined and orchestrated for the observer to "commit." Why would God hold me responsible for a sin that He "programmed" me to commit? Perhaps I am misunderstanding Calvinism but this is the way I see it. Please correct me if I am mistaken. Thank you for your time. Sorry about the length of my question. I am in search of knowledge. I have changed my mind many times on this issue. HELP!

You ask a very important question. Unfortunately, it cannot be adequately answered in an e-mail (not by me, at any rate). I will attempt to sketch out a few lines of thought for your consideration, but let me also recommend a couple books that might help you think through some of these issues in a little more detail. On the side of what might be called "theistic determinism" you may want to look at Jonathan Edwards' *Freedom of the Will*. On the other hand, Norman Geisler's *Chosen but Free* presents a position which some might call "moderate Calvinism," insofar as he does not embrace all five points of

Dortian Calvinism and argues for genuine, self-determining, human freedom and responsibility. There are also some good articles in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* on "Calvinism," "Predestination," and "Freedom, Free Will, and Determinism". In my response, I will simply try to set forth a few passages from the Bible which seem to shed some light on this difficult and controversial issue.

In the first place, there are certainly verses which teach that God "works all things after the counsel of His will" (Eph. 1:11). Without doubt, then, God is sovereign and is providentially guiding history to its predetermined end. But as W.S. Reid (himself a Calvinist) correctly observes in his article on "Predestination" in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, "At this point the question arises of the possibility of individual freedom and responsibility if God is absolutely sovereign. How can these things be? Yet the Scriptures repeatedly assert both. Joseph's remarks to his brothers and Peter's statement concerning Christ's crucifixion highlight this fact (Gen. 45:4ff.; Acts 2:23). Man, in carrying out God's plan, even unintentionally, does so responsibly and freely" (871). This statement makes it plain that at least some Calvinists do indeed make room for a degree of genuine human freedom and responsibility, while at the same time affirming the full and unmitigated sovereignty of God. Although it may certainly be a mystery (at least from man's perspective) how both of these things can be simultaneously true, I agree with Reid that the Bible does indeed "repeatedly assert both."

But doesn't the Fall of man affect human freedom? Indeed it does! Before the Fall, man's will was perfectly free both to obey and disobey God. However, after the Fall the freedom to obey was lost (whether partially or completely need not concern us here). Nevertheless, through His gift of salvation (including both regeneration and sanctification), God is restoring this original freedom in His people (2 Cor.

3:16-18). In addition, however, it must also be kept in mind that even unregenerate men are acting freely when they sin. They freely CHOOSE to sin because their nature is now depraved, fallen and sinful. But when someone becomes a new creature in Christ, the freedom to do good and obey God is, to some degree, restored. And through the process of sanctification, God is progressively restoring this freedom in His children more and more.

Again, as Norman Geisler points out in his article on "Freedom, Free Will, and Determinism" in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, even fallen man retains a degree of genuine human freedom. This is taught in many passages of Scripture (e.g. Matt. 23:37; John 7:17; 1 Cor. 9:17; 1 Pet. 5:2; Philem. 14). Thus, even if it is not fully explicable (for man at any rate), the Bible clearly teaches both Divine Sovereignty and a degree of genuine human freedom and responsibility. Indeed, in some passages, both ideas appear virtually side by side. For instance, in Prov. 16:9 we read, "The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps." Passages such as this may teach that man has a measure of self-determination, while at the same time indicating that what man freely chooses is also (on some level) directed by God.

Finally, the Scriptures clearly indicate that God is graciously working in His people "both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). I don't think that this work of God should be viewed as a coercion of our wills. Rather, it seems to me that it would be more properly understood as a persuading and empowering of our wills so that we freely choose to do what God wants us to do. We may not have chosen to do such things apart from this work of God in our lives, but it is nonetheless WE OURSELVES who choose them in response to this gracious work. In a similar way, Satan is described as "working in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2) with the result that fallen, unregenerate men "want to do the desires"

of the devil (John 8:44). But of course even here such men freely choose to follow Satan in his disobedience and rebellion against God (even if unconsciously). In addition, one must also keep in mind that even Satan's sin and rebellion against God is part of the plan and purposes of God (though freely chosen on Satan's part). And while Satan can only carry out his malicious intentions to the extent that God permits (see Job 1-2 and 2 Cor. 12:7-9), they are nonetheless Satan's (NOT God's) malicious intentions.

Thus, the biblical position (as I see it) affirms BOTH Divine Sovereignty AND some degree of genuine human freedom and responsibility. There is, I will certainly grant, a mystery here, but (at least in my opinion) no contradiction. Man is finite in his understanding and limited in his actions by time and space, but God is infinite in His understanding and not limited in His actions by time and space. It is therefore not unreasonable to think that what man may be incapable of comprehending (e.g. Divine Sovereignty and human freedom operating simultaneously and harmoniously) might nonetheless still be true. I therefore think that we are safest to stick closely to the express affirmations of Scripture, even if we cannot formulate a mathematically precise explanation of the relationship between Divine Sovereignty and human freedom. The Scriptures seem to affirm both and we must be content with this. This, at any rate, is my opinion on the matter.

Wishing you God's richest blessings!

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries