

The following is John Brown's (of Edinburgh) take on Romans 9:18 (specifically what he thinks it means for God to "harden" someone):

"It may be asked how can God harden men's hearts? There can be no doubt that it would be utterly inconsistent with the holiness and equity of the Divine nature, by direct influence to produce or excite depraved principle in the mind of man, and then punish him for it. This were to act like a demon rather than a divinity" (John Brown, Commentary on Romans).

Just as Paul's opponents in Acts 17:18 misrepresented his teaching concerning Jesus and the resurrection due to their pernicious presuppositions, so John Brown likewise misrepresents the teaching of God's Apostle due to his pernicious presupposition that pots are accountable to the Potter, only if they can make themselves. Romans 9:18-19 clearly demonstrates that the "how" of God's hardening involves the omnipotence of God. The objector objects because the "direct influence" of God to harden (i.e., to "excite [a] depraved principle in the mind of man") him unconditionally cannot be resisted (Romans 9:19). Paul's objector in verse 19 understands and does not misrepresent the apostle's doctrine. He understands that this "excitation" of a depraved principle is done by omnipotent power since he complains that it cannot be resisted by him or anyone else.

Brown shows himself to be the objector in verse 19 when he says that God acts like a "demon rather than a divinity," if this is the manner or the way in which He hardens. Brown suppresses the truth in unrighteousness by misrepresenting the Biblical doctrine of active hardening. Brown misconstrues the Apostle as teaching that for God to actively harden a person is akin to a demon tempting a man to sin by "exciting" a depraved principle in his mind. Now if a person insists on using the same phrase — "by direct influence to produce or excite depraved principle in the mind of man" — to describe the active hardening of God in Romans 9:18, as well as to describe the "tempting influence" that demons and the flesh can do (cf. James

1:13), it ought to be clear that to actively harden in Romans 9:18 is NOT to tempt in James 1:13.

“Far be it from God that He should do this injustice, and from the Almighty that He should commit this iniquity.”

In other words, far be it from God that He do the injustice of actively hardening whom He will, and by adding insult to injury by finding fault with those who could not resist His will to omnipotently harden them. For Brown, if God actively hardens men and still finds fault with them — even though they could not resist His omnipotent will — then that would be for God to, “commit...iniquity.” Brown boasts in his own falsely supposed autonomy by setting up a standard that the Almighty Potter must abide by. Brown is a wicked sympathizer of the apostolic critic.

“We know that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, and the Israelites are cautioned against hardening their hearts: and when God is said to do what men themselves do, and are responsible for doing, the meaning cannot be more than this, that God leaves men to the influence of their own corrupt mind, does not interfere to prevent lust from conceiving, or when it has conceived, from bringing forth sin ; or when it is perfected from bringing forth death; that instead of interposing by the agency of His Spirit to prevent their thus becoming obstinate. He places them in circumstances which, though naturally fitted to produce a very different effect, are perverted into the means of fostering their obstinacy” (Brown).

This is the Calvinistic consensus to be sure — that the Potter does NOT make the pots like this; they make themselves like this.

“And if this be the meaning of the word, the apostle’s assertion is, that God exercises His sovereignty equally in giving and withholding that Divine influence, which, in consequence of the depravity of man, is necessary to true repentance. And, however men may fret and quarrel, it will be difficult to show that there is anything unjust or unreasonable in all this. ‘May not,’ to use the language of a very sober-minded defender of this mode of explication, ‘the Judge of all the earth, when a rebellious creature, from enmity to Him and love of that which He abhors, has closed his own eyes and hardened his own heart, and deliberately preferred the delusions of the wicked one to the truth as it is in Jesus, say to such an one, ‘Take thine own choice and its consequences; may He not do this without being any more the author of sin than the sun is the cause of cold and frost and darkness, because these are the results of the withholding of its influence?’”¹

¹ Scott—Remarks on Tomline.

The analogy of the sun put forth is just that, an analogy. But it conveys well the truth that the Calvinistic view of Divine sovereignty as it is popularly taught is both semi-dualistic and semi-deistic.

Here are some instances of God's active controlling sovereignty in the book of Ezra:

“And in the first year of Cyrus King of Persia, so that the Word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, and he caused a voice to pass in all his kingdom, and also in writing, saying, So says Cyrus king of Persia, Jehovah God of Heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah...Then the chiefs of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, and everyone whose spirit God had awakened, rose up to go up to build the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:1-2, 5).

“And they performed the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy. For Jehovah had made them joyful, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, to make their hands strong in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel” (Ezra 6:22).

“And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God in your hand, you appoint judges and magistrates who may judge all the people who are Beyond the River; all who know the laws of your God; and those who do not know, you cause to know. And whoever will not do the Law of your God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed diligently on him, whether to death, or to exile, or to confiscation of goods, or imprisonment. Blessed be Jehovah, the God of our fathers, who has put this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of Jehovah in Jerusalem. And He has extended mercy to me before the king and his counselors, and before all the king's mighty leaders. And I was made strong, as the hand of Jehovah my God was on me. And I gathered out of Israel chief men to go up with me” (Ezra 7:25-28).

“And I sent them with command to Iddo, the chief of the place Casiphia, and I put in their mouth words to say to Iddo, to his brothers the temple-slaves, at the place Casiphia; that they should bring to us ministers for the house of our God. And by the good hand of our God

on us, they brought us a man of understanding from the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel, and Sherebiah, with his sons and his brothers, eighteen...Then I called a fast there at the river Ahava, so that we might humble ourselves before our God, in order to seek from Him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our goods. For I was ashamed to ask of the king troops and horsemen to help us against the enemy of the way, because we had spoken to the king, saying, The hand of our God is on all those who seek Him for good; but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him. So we fasted and prayed to our God for good. And He was pleased to hear us" (Ezra 8:17-18, 21-23).

"And we departed from the river Ahava on the twelfth of the first month, to go to Jerusalem. And the hand of our God was on us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and ambushers along the way. And we came to Jerusalem, and remained there three days" (Ezra 8:31-32).

“Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done [it]?” (Amos 3:6)

The following are John Gill’s (1697-1771) comments on Amos 3:6 (with my comments interspersed):

“...which is not to be understood of the evil of sin, of which God is not the author, it being contrary to his nature and will; and though he permits it to be done by others, yet he never does it himself, nor so much as tempts men to it, James 1:13” (Gill’s commentary on the whole Bible).

The prophet Amos poses the rhetorical question, “shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?” This rhetorical question asserts the awesome truth that when evil happens in a city it is the Lord who has done it. But what does it mean for God to “do the evil” in a city? Let us apply Gill’s comments on Amos 3:6 to the greatest of evils done by man in the crucifixion of the Son of God:

In the crucifixion of Jesus Christ the evil of murder was done in the city by the hands of lawless men. Therefore, Gill is right when he says that God did not “do” the evil of murder. Gill is also correct to cite James 1:13 as proof that God does not tempt anyone to commit murder. Thus, God is not the morally culpable author of the evil of doing the murder (evil) or tempting to do the murder (evil).

In making the statement that God “permits [evil] to be done by others,” Gill reveals his true allegiance is to the molten image he has formed in his own mind, and not to the LORD who dwells in His holy temple (cf. Habakkuk 2:18-20). Gill’s god is the god that he has made after his own image. The God of Amos 3:6 actively causes the evil in the city. The God of Amos 3:6 is true, living, and active. The god of John Gill sits still like a stone statue “decreeing to permit” certain things to be done. To “permissively decree” something is to NOT decree anything

at all in the Biblical sense of the term. Gill's vain idol would permit—or “decree to permit”—the axe to swing itself (Isaiah 10:5-15). Gill is the vaunting axe in verse 15! Gill is the axe who would boast against Him who chops with it!

“What does an image profit, for its maker has carved it; a molten image, and a teacher of falsehood? For does the maker trust in his work on it, to make mute idols? Woe to him who says to the wood, Awake! To a mute stone, Rise up, it shall teach! Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, but no breath is in its midst. But Jehovah is in His holy temple; let all the earth be silent before Him” (Habakkuk 2:18-20).

Additional quotes from the works (e.g., Body of Divinity) of John Gill that confirm his desire to fashion a partially-sovereign figment in his own vain imagination:

“Once more, though God may be said, in such senses, to will sin, yet he wills it in a different way than he wills that which is good; he does not will to do it himself, nor to do it by others; but permits it to be done; and which is not a bare permission, but a voluntary permission; and is expressed by God's “giving” up men to their own hearts' lusts, and by “suffering” them to walk in their own sinful ways, (Ps. 81:12; Acts 14:16) he wills it not by his effective will, but by his permissive will; and therefore cannot be chargeable with being the author of sin; since there is a wide difference between doing it himself, and doing it by others, or ordering it to be done, which only can make him the author of sin; and voluntarily permitting or suffering it to be done by others.”

“The holiness of God appears in his works of providence; which, though many of them are dark and intricate, not easily penetrated into, and to be accounted for; yet there is nothing criminal and sinful in them: the principal thing objected to the holiness of God in his providences, is his suffering sin to be in the world; but then, though it is by his voluntary permission, or permissive will, yet he is neither the author nor abettor of it; he neither commands it, nor approves of it, nor

persuades to it, nor tempts nor forces to it; but all the verse, forbids it, disapproves of it, dissuades from it, threatens to punish for it, yea, even chastises his own people for it; and, besides, overrules it for great good, and for his own glory; as the fall of Adam, the sin of Joseph's brethren, the Jews crucifixion of Christ; which have been instanced in, and observed under a former attribute: wherefore the dispensations of God, in his providence, are not to be charged with unholiness on this account."

"There is nothing but goodness in God, and nothing but goodness comes from him; there is no iniquity in him, nothing evil in his nature, no unrighteousness in any of his ways and works; he is "light" itself; all purity, holiness, truth, and goodness; "and in him is no darkness at all", of sin, error, and ignorance, (1 John 1:5) nor does anything that is evil come from him; he is not the author of sin, nor does he impel, nor persuade to it, nor tempt with it; but strongly forbids it, under pain of his displeasure, (James 1:13, 14) indeed, his decree is concerned about it; for it could not be, he not willing it by his permissive will; but then, though he suffers it to be, he overrules it for good; as in the case of the selling of Joseph, (Gen. 50:20) the evil of punishment of sin, or of affliction, is from God; in this sense "there is no evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it", (Amos 3:6) but then punishment of sin is a good, as it is a vindication of the honour of divine justice, and of the righteous law of God; and the affliction of the people of God is for their good; and all evil things of that kind work for their good, both here and hereafter."

"God hardens some mens' hearts, as he did Pharaoh's, and he wills to harden them, or he hardens them according to his decreeing will; "Whom he will he hardeneth", (Rom. 9:18) this he does not by any positive act, by infusing hardness and blindness into the hearts of men; which is contrary to his purity and holiness, and would make him the author of sin; but by leaving men to their natural blindness and hardness of heart; for the understanding is naturally darkened; and there is a natural blindness, hardness, and callousness of heart, through the corruption of nature, and which is increased by habits of

sinning; men are in darkness, and choose to walk in it; and therefore God, as he decreed, gives them up to their own wills and desires, and to Satan, the god of the world, they choose to follow, and to be led captive by, who blinds their minds yet more and more, lest light should break in unto them, (Eph. 4:18; Ps. 82:5; 2 Cor. 4:4) and also God may be said to harden and blind, by denying them that grace which can only cure them of their hardness and blindness, and which he, of his free favour, gives to his chosen ones, (Ezek. 36:26, 27) but is not obliged to give it to any; and because he gives it not, he is said to hide, as he determined to hide, the things of his grace from the wise and prudent, even because it so seemed good in his sight, (Matthew 11:25, 26).

Hence this blindness, hardness, insensibility, and stupidity, are represented as following upon non-election; not as the immediate effect of it, but as consequences of it; and such as neither judgments nor mercies can remove; and bring persons to a right sense of sin, and repentance for it (Rom. 11:7-10). The sin and fall of Adam having brought him into a state of infidelity, in which God has concluded him: and he does not think fit to give to every man that grace which can only cure him of his unbelief, and without which, and unless almighty power and grace go along with the means they have, they cannot believe; whereby the decrees, predictions, and declarations of God are fulfilled in them, (John 12:37-40) yea, as Christ is said to be set, or appointed, “for the fall of many in Israel”, (Luke 2:34) so many are appointed to stumble at the Word, at him, the Stone of stumbling, and Rock of offence, being children of disobedience, and left as such; when, to those who are a chosen generation, he is a precious cornerstone, and they believe in him, and are saved by him, (1 Peter 2:7-9) hence we read of some, who, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, to them are sent by God strong delusions, and they are given up to believe a lie, that they might be damned; not that God infuses any delusion or deceit into them, but because of their disbelief of, and disrespect to him and his Word, he suffers their corruptions to break forth and prevail, not giving restraining grace to them; so that they become a prey to them that lie

in wait to deceive; and being easy and credulous, they believe lies spoken in hypocrisy; which issue in their damnation; while others, beloved of the Lord, and chosen from the beginning to salvation, obtain the glory of Christ (2 Thess. 2:10-14). But though all this is a most certain truth, and is contained in the decree we are speaking of, yet condemnation, or everlasting punishment, seems to be meant in the passage quoted; or, however, this is what some men are foreordained unto.”

Here’s an edited exchange between myself and an opponent from the distant past. My opponent had written:

“I think you are limiting God’s power more than one who says he could save all of us.”

I am not limiting God’s power. I am proclaiming it by saying that God shows His power in showing mercy to whom He wills, and also in hardening whom He wills (see Romans 9:18).

Take a look at Romans 9:17. This passage of Scripture shows that one purpose (not the only purpose) for which God created Pharaoh, was to destroy him. God raised him up in order to demonstrate His power and wrath.

By the way, for those who use the tired argument regarding the so-called problem of evil: There is no problem. Why does evil exist?
Answer:

“But if God, desiring to demonstrate His wrath, and to make His power known, endured in much long-suffering vessels of wrath having been fitted out for destruction, and that He make known the riches of His glory on vessels of mercy which He before prepared for glory” (Romans 9:22-23).

Whoever believes in a god who wishes things would happen (like wishing that everyone without exception would be saved) but who does not and/or cannot do whatever he wishes, does not believe in the God of the Bible.

mertdawg wrote:

“You’ve got it backwards. God came first-then the bible. You apparently believe in some kind of heartless robot who is limited by the time and space of the universe to HAVE to have made up his mind (ALREADY) in time.”

Of course, God came first. For the Bible teaches, “In the beginning God...”

As for being limited by the time and space of the universe: Not at all. He created time and space. He is in control of ALL that He creates, unlike your idol, who CANNOT control at least some of what he creates, since he let’s his creatures thwart his desires. Your idol is divided against himself, for he gives his creatures the power and ability (i.e., free-will) to nullify his power and ability to save. The god whom you pray to cannot save, clearly evinced by the fact that those sinners whom he wants saved, perish in spite of this desire. You are one of the many idolaters who sets up the wood of a carved image, and prays to a god who cannot save; you know nothing (Isaiah 45:20).

If you say that your god wants to save everyone without exception, and yet some perish anyways; then maybe what you ought to do is cry out louder! For maybe he’s sleeping and that’s why he’s unable to accomplish his desires: Groggy from too much sleep. Look at what Elijah said to the prophets of Baal:

“And they took the bull that was given to them, and prepared, and called on the name of Baal from the morning even until noon, saying,

O Baal, answer us! And there was no sound, and no one was answering; and they leaped about the altar that one had made. And it happened at noon, that Elijah taunted them and said, Call with a loud voice, for he is a god; for he is meditating, or pursuing, or on a journey; it may be he is asleep and must be awakened” (1 Kings 18:26-27).

Just like Elijah mocked the prophets of Baal, so I mock those who pray and cry aloud to a god who cannot save.

J.C. Ryle writes:

“Of all the doctrines of the Bible none is so offensive to human nature as the doctrine of God’s sovereignty. To be told that God is great, and just, and holy, and pure, man can bear. But to be told that ‘He has mercy on whom He will have mercy’ — that He ‘gives no account of His matters,’ that it is ‘not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy’ — these are truths that natural man cannot stand. They often call forth all his enmity against God, and fill him with wrath. Nothing, in short, will make him submit to them but the humbling teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Let us settle it in our minds that, whether we like it or not, the sovereignty of God is a doctrine clearly revealed in the Bible, and a fact clearly to be seen in the world. Upon no other principle can we ever explain why some members of a family are converted, and others live and die in sin — why some quarters of the earth are enlightened by Christianity, and others remain buried in heathenism” (J. C. Ryle, Expository Thoughts on the Gospels).

Though an unbeliever, J.C. Ryle rightly says that the sovereignty of God in salvation is a truth “that natural man cannot stand” and that it “[calls] forth all his enmity against God, and [fills] him with wrath.”

Ryle states that the “natural man cannot stand” God’s sovereignty. In Scripture a natural man is an unregenerate man. Thus, Ryle ought to consider men like John Wesley to be unregenerate since Wesley clearly hated God and His sovereign dealings with mankind. But Ryle believed Wesley to be a true Christian, so I suppose Ryle’s words here don’t really mean much.

Ryle’s description here would accurately describe John Wesley and your typical garden-variety Arminian.[1] It also describes all Calvinist

or Reformed persons who believe they were saved while they, too, were venting their rage and shaking their fist at God. In other words, these Calvinists believe they were regenerate while their attitude was exactly like Paul's objector in Romans 9:19-20.

[1] An "Arminian" is my theological shorthand term for those who believe (among other things) the autosoteric LIE that Jesus Christ died for everyone without exception and that God is unjust in His sovereign dealings with sinners in salvation and damnation. Ryle said:

"Let us settle it in our minds that, whether we like it or not, the sovereignty of God is a doctrine clearly revealed in the Bible, and a fact clearly to be seen in the world."

The sovereignty of God is clearly revealed in the Bible. Ryle is correct. The reason this doctrine is disbelieved by the natural man is NOT because it is murkily revealed in Scripture or difficult to understand. Not at all. The reason it is disbelieved is because the natural man does NOT believe that such a God who sovereignly saves and damns, exists. But He DOES exist, and so they will shake their God-hating fists at Him for sovereignly loving and hating (Romans 9:11-14) and also for "[making them] like this" (Romans 9:18-20).

“I said to the boastful, Do not boast; and to the wicked, Do not lift up the horn. Do not lift up your horn on high; do [not] speak with a stiff neck. For exaltations [are] not from the east, nor from the west, nor from the desert; but God [is] the judge; [He] puts down this one and lifts up this [other]” (Psalm 75:4-7).

The king of Assyria was one such boastful beast who DID lift up his horn on high, and DID speak with the stiff neck of sedition (see Isaiah 10:5-15). Reformed Calvinist Loraine Boettner was shown to be in league with this king. Here now is A.W. Pink joining the two aforementioned potsherds in battle against the Mighty One of Jacob. Witness the fruit of Pink’s proud heart and the glory of his lofty eyes:

“The sinner’s will is enslaved because it is in bondage to and is the servant of a depraved heart. In what does the sinner’s freedom consist? This question is naturally suggested by what we have just said above. The sinner is ‘free’ in the sense of being unforced from without. God never forces the sinner to sin. But the sinner is not free to do either good or evil because an evil heart within is ever inclining him toward sin. Let us illustrate what we have in mind. I hold in my hand a book. I release it; what happens? It falls. In which direction? Downwards; always downwards. Why? Because, answering the law of gravity, its own weight sinks it. Suppose I desire that book to occupy a position three feet higher; then what? I must lift it; a power outside of that book must raise it. Such is the relationship which fallen man sustains toward God. Whilst Divine power upholds him he is preserved from plunging still deeper into sin; let that power be withdrawn and he falls — his own weight (of sin) drags him down. God does not push him down anymore than I did that book. Let all Divine restraint be removed and every man is capable of becoming, would become, a Cain, a Pharaoh, a Judas. How then is the sinner to move heavenward? By an act of his own will? Not so. A power outside of himself must grasp hold of him and lift him every inch of the way. The sinner is free, but free in one direction only—free to fall, free to sin. As

the Word expresses it: 'For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness' (Rom. 6:20). The sinner is free to do as he pleases, always as he pleases (except as he is restrained by God), but his pleasure is to sin" (A.W. Pink, The Sovereignty of God).

Does a person's denial that God actively causes and completely controls their sinful actions necessarily stem from pride? Or, rather, is it possible that this person is simply striving to emulate the Assyrian concern to protect God's holiness, honor, justice, and glory?

"So the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts shall send leanness among his fat ones. And under His glory will kindle a burning like the burning of fire. And the Light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame; and it shall burn and devour his thorns and briers in one day. And He shall consume the glory of his forest and his fruitful field, even from soul to flesh; and it shall be as a sick man melts away. And the rest of the trees of the forest shall be few, so that a boy might write them" (Isaiah 10:16-19).

A.W. Pink writes:

"Nowhere does Scripture speak of the freedom or moral ability of the sinner, on the contrary, it insists on his moral and spiritual inability. This is, admittedly, the most difficult branch of our subject. Those who have ever devoted much study to this theme have uniformly recognized that the harmonizing of God's Sovereignty with Man's Responsibility is the Gordian Knot of theology.

The main difficulty encountered is to define the relationship between God's Sovereignty and man's responsibility. Many have summarily disposed of the difficulty by denying its existence. A certain class of theologians, in their anxiety to maintain man's responsibility, have magnified it beyond all due proportions until God's Sovereignty has been lost sight of, and in not a few instances flatly denied" (A.W.

Pink, The Sovereignty of God).

This supposed “Gordian Knot of theology” is only a Gordian Knot to those who know not what it means to be God. The absolute sovereignty of God ties many Calvinists in knots because they wish to retain control over some aspects of their souls. God unconditionally and actively hardened Pharaoh so that Pharaoh COULD NOT obey. You will then say to me, Why does He yet find fault? For who has resisted His will? Paul’s objector (along with Pink and most Calvinists) ASSUME that responsibility presupposes freedom, so that a person must be free from God (in some sense) to make his own sinful decisions if he is to be held accountable for them. God through the apostle Paul REJECTS this assumption. A person is condemned and punished for his sins because he has transgressed God’s command (e.g., Pharaoh).

A fool once wrote:

“It matters not how strait the gate;
How charged with punishments the scroll;
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.”

Similar to the fool above, many Calvinists are Paul’s objector who entertain the delusion that they are the “compatibilistic captains” of their souls.

Another fool wrote (revealing his cavalier disdain for the straitness of the gate):

“Men are often better Christians than they are logicians. There is a vast chasm between maintaining, as I do, that semi-Pelagians (and Pelagians too, for that matter) can be saved, and maintaining, which I do not, that semi-Pelagianism saves” (Douglas Wilson).

The primary reason why Wilson and other tolerant Calvinists say things like this is “that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ” (Galatians 6:12). They wear their ashamedness of Christ’s cross like a proud badge on the sleeve.

“For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, For this very thing I raised you up, so that I might display My power in you, and so that My name might be publicized in all the earth. So, then, to whom He desires, He shows mercy. And to whom He desires, He hardens. You will then say to me, Why does He yet find fault? For who has resisted His will? Yes, rather, O man, who are you answering against God? Shall the thing formed say to the One forming it, Why did You make me like this? Or does not the potter have authority over the clay, out of the one lump to make

one vessel to honor, and one to dishonor? But if God, desiring to demonstrate His wrath, and to make His power known, endured in much long-suffering vessels of wrath having been fitted out for destruction, and that He make known the riches of His glory on vessels of mercy which He before prepared for glory, whom He also called, not only us, of Jews, but also out of nations” (Romans 9:17-24).

The relationship between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility is one of the most simple and clear doctrines taught in Scripture (see Romans 9:17-24). Man is responsible, not because he is free from God in some sense, but because God is absolutely sovereign. Forthrightness compels the Calvinist admission that the “main difficulty encountered is to define the relationship between God’s Sovereignty and man’s [sovereignty].” Lurking underneath the white hooded robe of supposed Calvinist piety are two beady little eyes that gleam intermittently in their writings, “I shall be like the Most High.” One glistening eye is named envy. The other is called rivalry.

A.W. Pink writes:

“In John 12:37-40 we read, ‘But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: that (in order that) the saying of Esaias (Isaiah) the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.’

It needs to be carefully noted here that these whose eyes God ‘blinded’ and whose heart He ‘hardened’ were men who had deliberately scorned the Light and rejected the testimony of God’s own Son” (A.W. Pink, The Sovereignty of God).

Pink’s palpable prejudice against God’s unconditional and active blinding and hardening is revealed in his pseudo-pious phrase “It needs to be carefully noted here...” But what actually needs to be carefully noted here is how Isaiah says the unbelief was a RESULT of God’s hardening and blinding, NOT the other way around (contra Pink). Certain men “had deliberately scorned the Light and rejected the testimony of God’s own Son,” WHY? BECAUSE “He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart.”

“God does not (as we have been slanderously reported to affirm) compel the wicked to sin, as the rider spurs on an unwilling horse. God only says in effect that awful word, ‘Let them alone’ (Matt. 15:14). He needs only to slacken the reins of providential restraint, and withhold the influence of saving grace, and apostate man will only too soon and too surely, of his own accord, fall by his iniquities. Thus the decree of reprobation neither interferes with the bent of man’s own fallen nature, nor serves to render him the less inexcusable” (A.W.

Pink, The Sovereignty of God).

This is not a Biblical articulation of the sovereignty of God, but a benighted boastful bubbling from Pink's blackened brain. Yet again, the analogies (e.g., horse and rider) that certain idolatrous Calvinists use are much too weak. When God actively causes a man to sin (e.g., Pharaoh; King of Assyria) the man certainly IS willing to sin. Peer through the lens of Isaiah 10:5-15 and consider how absurd Pink's "horse and rider" really is. Also, think about God's eternal decree to swing the axe coupled with the actual swinging of the axe in time. And then think about Pink's assertion that God's reprobating decree "neither interferes with the bent of man's own fallen nature." It appears that Pink is experiencing risible reveries of axes swinging themselves and of rods lifting themselves.

"Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger! And My fury is the staff in their hand. I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath. I will command him to plunder, and to strip off spoil, and to trample them like the mud of the streets. Yet he does not purpose this, nor does his heart think so. For it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off not a few nations. For he says, Are not my commanders all like kings? Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is Hamath not like Arpad? Is Samaria not like Damascus? As my hand has found the kingdoms of the idols (for their carved images excelled Jerusalem's and Samaria's); shall I not do to Jerusalem and her idols as I have done to Samaria and her idols? And it will be, when the Lord has broken off all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will visit on the fruit of the proud heart of the king of Assyria, and on the glory of his lofty eyes. For he says, I have worked by the strength of my hand and by my wisdom; for I am wise. And I take away the borders of peoples, and have robbed their treasures. And like a mighty one, I put down ones living in it. And my hand has found the riches of the people. Like a nest, I also have gathered all the earth, as forsaken eggs are gathered. And there was not one moving a wing, or opening

a mouth, or one chirping. Shall the axe glorify itself over him chopping with it? Or shall the saw magnify itself over him moving it? As if a rod could wave those who lift it. As if a staff could raise what is not wood!" (Isaiah 10:5-15).

In stark contrast to the stupefied, partially-sovereign-idol-worshipping Calvinists, we remain alert and sober (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:6). There are swarms of Calvinists who have given their nod to pseudo-sovereignty. But we refuse to follow this multitude to do evil. We will not be hood-Pinked.

The following is an excerpt from a correspondence between a true Christian and a non-Christian (this is the Christian's response to the non-Christian's denial of God's sovereignty) :

Hello –

You are saying that God did not unconditionally choose to damn certain people before the foundation of the world, that God does not actively harden people, and that man has a will that is independent of God's active causation.

There is no such thing as "free will" in any sense of the word. God actively directs and causes all actions and events, including the sins of men and angels. I am not typing this e-mail to you out of my own "free will"; I am typing it because God is causing me to type it. Men do not sin of their own "free will"; they sin because God causes them to sin. He does not merely "permit" sin; He actively causes men to sin. This is especially seen in the crucifixion. A man from our assembly and I were just discussing this this past Sunday. Pilate told the Jews that he could find no fault in Jesus Christ. If the Jews had the "free will" to choose to crucify Christ or not, it is possible that they could have been convinced by Pilate either to let Jesus Christ go or to inflict some lesser punishment. Of course, this did not happen, because God caused them to do what God had determined beforehand would be done (Acts 4:27-28). God turns the king's heart wherever He desires (Proverbs 21:1). God turns His people's enemies' hearts to hate His people and to deal craftily with His servants (Psalm 105:25). Everything is controlled by God. If there is even one action that is not controlled by God, then there is at least one will that is independent of God, and God is not God.

The Christian Confession of Faith states it like this (and take note of the Scripture proofs):

God absolutely controls all actions and events; nothing at all happens by chance or merely by His permission. All actions and events happen because of His sovereign decree, including the sins of men and angels. Contrary to the aspersions of the enemies of God, this doctrine does not attribute sin to God; instead, it provides great comfort for believers. [Gen 50:20; Exo 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; Deu 2:30; 32:39; Jos 11:20; 1Sa 2:6-8,25; 2Sa 17:14; 2Ch 10:15; 11:4; 25:20; 36:22; Job 12:14-25; 23:13-14; 26:7-12; Psa 105:25; 115:3; 135:5-7; Pro16:4,33; 21:1; Isa 40:23-26; 42:9; 43:13; 45:6-7; 46:9-11; Jer 18:6; 52:3; Eze 17:24; Hab 1:6,12; Joh 19:11; Act 2:23; 4:27-28; Eph 1:11; Rev 17:17]

Romans 9:19-21 refutes the lie that man's "free will" is how a sinner is held accountable for the acts of sin he performs. The sinner asks, "Why does He yet find fault? For who has resisted His will?" In other words, why does God hold me accountable, since God controls what I do? How does Paul answer this question? If he were a "free will" heretic, he would have said something like, "You know, you're right. God really wouldn't have a reason to find fault with you if He were the one controlling what you do. The only reason you're accountable for the acts of sin you perform is because God does not actively cause you to sin; you sin of your own free will."

But that's not how Paul answers it, because Paul is a believer. Instead of saying that man has a "free will," he says, "O man, WHO ARE YOU answering against God?" He says that man has absolutely no business shaking his fist at God for making him do certain things. And why does man have absolutely no business doing that? Is it because God didn't make him do certain things? Yes, say the heretics. NO, says the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul: "Shall the thing formed say to the former, Why did you make me like this? Or does not the potter have authority over the clay, out of the one lump to make one vessel to honor, and one to dishonor?" In other words, God is saying that He has the right to make certain people for SALVATION and

certain people for DAMNATION and to SHOW MERCY to whom He desires and to HARDEN whom He desires (v. 18). This clay is not “already dishonorable before God makes anyone,” as some heretics would like to say. This clay is unformed man. Some people are formed — created — for the purpose of hardening and damnation. Some people are formed — created — for the purpose of mercy and salvation.

If you do not believe this, then you might as well go back to your Arminian and tolerant Calvinist brothers and sisters, because you believe the same thing they do.

In the section called Of God's Eternal Decree (3.7), the Westminster Confession of Faith cites 2 Timothy 2:19-20 as a proof-text:

“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.”

The reprobates are those whom God has unconditionally determined to damn before the creation of the world. These vessels of dishonor do not ultimately choose for themselves what kind of vessel they will be; rather, by their reaction to the work of Jesus Christ as making the difference between salvation and damnation by demanding and ensuring the salvation of all whom He represented, it is revealed what kind of vessel God has chosen them to be.

An unwavering and steadfast adherence to the biblical doctrine of unconditional reprobation — which necessarily includes active hardening — is not some sort of twisted fascination. On the contrary, this doctrine preserves and protects the purity of the gospel of salvation conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone.

The framers of the WCF, under a pseudo-pious pretense of protecting God's holiness, have undermined and blasphemed His absolute sovereignty. For they have imposed their own man-made standard of righteousness upon Almighty God, to which He must conform in order for Him to remain righteous in their self-exalting eyes. They invent absurd and blasphemous fictions in order to retain a false sense of control (cf. Psalm 2:3; Psalm 12:4).

If you do not believe in the God who controls all actions and events, you do not believe the promise-keeping God of the Bible. You do not believe the gospel of salvation conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ alone. Bow to the Almighty Sovereign God, the Creator and Controller of the Universe.

My comments interspersed below.

John S. Feinberg, academician, theologian, and author
(Contemporary):

“...Scripture surely teaches human freedom, [but] it does not state what kind of freedom is in view. Thus, one must turn to the philosophical discussion for an explanation of the ways in which human freedom can be understood” (Feinberg).

Scripture certainly DOES state what kind of freedom is in view. The multitudinous passages that teach God’s sovereign control over man’s thoughts, words, and actions clearly show that God is actively turning, causing, and controlling His creatures. Thus, the “kind of freedom” in view is absolutely no human freedom whatsoever relative to God. As for the assertion that “Scripture surely teaches human freedom,” it depends on whether one is talking about human freedom relative to God or relative to something else. As Vincent Cheung has written:

“Note that freedom is relative – you are free from something. The compatibilist wants to affirm that we are not free from God, but at the same time he wants to make freedom applicable to our action in some sense, so he sets the standard by which freedom is measured down from God to man. That is, instead of measuring freedom by whether our thoughts and actions are free from God, now we are ‘free’ as long as we are free relative to other created things, and then we build moral responsibility on that. They just changed the reference point. But this is narrow and arbitrary. I can just as well change the standard or the reference point to whether we are free from a particular particle of dust on Neptune. If that particle of Neptune dust does not determine my thoughts and actions – if I am ‘free’ from it – then in this sense I have “free will,” and therefore I am morally responsible. Hooray!” (taken from his section on “Augustine and Compatibilism”

in The Author of Sin).

I am not blanket-endorsing Cheung as a true Christian, but what he says here is correct and very insightful.

Feinberg:

“[There are] two kinds of causes which influence and determine [human] actions. On the one hand, there are constraining causes which force an agent to act against his will.”

Feinberg is a self-proclaimed adherent to the incoherent doctrine of compatibilism. [1] The vast majority of Calvinists are compatibilists. A “compatibilist” wants to maintain that things like God’s freedom and man’s freedom are compatible. But of course, one needs to explain what exactly they mean here.

If I didn’t already know that Feinberg held to heterodox views of God’s sovereignty, I would think he was (at least on the surface) expressing orthodoxy here – here’s what I’m getting at by saying “on the surface”:

God’s unconditional and active hardening of Pharaoh did not force or constrain him to act against his will. Pharaoh was determined to not let the people go. As we know, to “force” implies that the forcer (i.e., the one doing the forcing) lacks complete control over the “forcee” (i.e., the one being forced). On a very superficial level I would agree with Feinberg that Pharaoh was “free” in the sense that he did what he wanted to do and thus was not forced or coerced. BUT the relevant point is whether or not Pharaoh is “free” from God’s omnipotence, and NOT whether Pharaoh is “free” from someone or some power that is less-than-omnipotent.

[1] A true Christian has articulated quite well, the incoherent and tortuous windings of the perniciously unbiblical philosophical construct of “compatibilism”:

“Like the Arminians, most Calvinists will say that God is IN control of everything, but not that He CONTROLS everything. And they concoct all kinds of theories to try to have a god who is IN control of everything while not CONTROLLING everything. Try figuring that one out – how God can be IN CONTROL without CONTROLLING. As we’ve seen so many times before, the lie is much more complicated than the truth.”

Another excerpt by the same believing fellow as above:

“But did you know that most who call themselves 'Calvinists' or 'Reformed' who say they believe in the absolute sovereignty of God do NOT believe this? They say that God is IN control of all things but does not actively CONTROL all things. Now how’s that possible? Well, to anyone with common sense, it’s NOT possible. It’s a contradiction. But we have Calvinist authors and seminarians who make up all kinds of theories in order to justify their view of their god who doesn’t cause everything while remaining sovereign, and none of these theories has any basis in the Bible. They just had to concoct these fables, these fictions, about God, in order to make all their preconceived notions fit into the Bible’s clear teaching of God’s sovereignty. And they really don’t do a very good job of it. They use a lot of seminary-type words and phrases to try to impress people and get people to think they have this special knowledge of God, so we’re supposed to just defer to them, because, after all, they’re smarter and more well-read and have gone to highly-esteemed seminaries. But if you look at what they’re really saying amidst all the rhetoric, you’ll see that their house is built on sand. They have no biblical basis for their fabrications.”

More from Feinberg:

“On the other hand, there are nonconstraining causes. These are sufficient to bring about an action, but they do not force a person to act against his will, desires or wishes. According to determinists such as myself, an action is free even if causally determined so long as the causes are nonconstraining.”

Romans 9 says that God raised up Pharaoh in order to display His power and wrath in him. It also teaches that God actively and unconditionally hardened him for destruction. This indeed was more than sufficient to bring about Pharaoh's rebellious action, and it was not a forcing or compelling of Pharaoh to act against his desires or wishes. Since God's causative power is a display of omnipotence, then it obviously is “nonconstraining.” But compatibilists like Feinberg wish to assert that God “causally determines” in some kind of “permissive” or “passive” way. Obviously, that goes contrary to the story of Pharaoh in Romans 9, which is said to be a display of power and wrath. Another quote from Cheung:

“The compatibilist may answer, 'The point is that the cause for an action is within me, so that I am not forced, and therefore I am free and responsible.' But this use of 'forced' and 'free' is misleading, since if God is the cause of the cause of this action (as I affirm, and as many Calvinists admit), if he completely determines every detail of our very thoughts, desires, motives, and willingness...or to use the expressions in our quotation, if God is the external cause of the internal cause of our actions, so that the internal cause itself is not free even in the compatibilist sense, then the action is more than forced. It is so determined, caused, and controlled that it cannot even be described as forced, since to be 'forced' at least leaves room for an internal conscious reluctance to perform the action that one is externally caused against his will to perform. But God has such a comprehensive control over all of our thoughts and actions that 'forced' would be too weak to describe it.

Thus, of course our actions are not 'forced,' because the word suggests that the one doing the forcing lacks complete control over the one being forced, so that there remains some resistance in the one being forced against the one doing the forcing, only that the one doing the forcing exerts greater power. Since “forced” implies such a scenario or relationship, it is far too weak to describe God’s control over us; therefore, our actions are not 'forced' even though we are not free. In fact, God’s control over us is so exhaustive that the compatibilist seems oblivious to it, so he thinks that he is free because he does not feel forced, when the truth is that he is much less free than if he were forced” (“Augustine and Compatibilism” in Cheung's The Author of Sin).

Again, Feinberg:

“...God is absolutely sovereign, and thus possesses absolute self-determination. This means that God’s will covers all things and that the basis for God’s sovereign choices is not what God foresees will happen nor anything else external to his will. Rather, God’s good pleasure and good purposes determine what he decrees. Since God’s decree covers all things, it must include both the ends God envisions as well as the means to such ends. God includes whatever means are necessary to accomplish his ends in a way that avoids constraining the agent to do what is decreed. Human actions are thus causally determined but free.”

Since Feinberg’s view of “sovereignty” is the Calvinistic consensus, then we know that by the phrase “causally determined” he does not mean the active efficiency of a woodsman swinging an Assyrian axe (Isaiah 10), but rather he means “causally determined” by means of a (so-called) “passive” or “permissive” decree. One last quote from

Feinberg:

“Unfortunately, some Calvinists, because of their [mis]understanding of God’s sovereignty, have denied that humans are free” (God Ordains All Things, PREDESTINATION & FREE WILL, p. 20).

Perhaps Feinberg is referring to professing Calvinists such as Vincent Cheung or the late Gordon H. Clark. I don’t know. Cheung says rightly that God is sovereign and man is not free.

“If a ram’s horn is blowing in a city, will the people not also tremble? If there is a calamity in a city, has Jehovah not even done [it]?” (Amos 3:6)

“... I [am] Jehovah, and there is none else; forming light, and creating darkness; making peace, and creating evil. I, Jehovah, do all these things. Drop down from above, O heavens; and let the clouds pour down righteousness. Let the earth open and let salvation bear fruit; and let righteousness spring up together. I, Jehovah have created it. Woe [to] him who fights with the One who formed him! A potsherd among the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to its former, What are you making? Or does your work say, He [has] no hands?” (Isaiah 45:6-9)

“Remember former things from forever, for I [am] God, and no one else [is] God, even none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from the past those things which were not done, saying, My counsel shall rise; and, I will do all My desire; calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of My counsel from a far off land. Yes, I have spoken; yes, I will cause it to come; I have formed; yes, I will do it” (Isaiah 46:9-11).

My interaction with Vincent Cheung’s writings about objections to the doctrine of God’s sovereignty. [This is not an endorsement of Vincent Cheung as a true Christian. He does, however, say some correct things here.]

From Cheung’s post on “Emotional Grenades”:

“One of the attempts against the doctrine takes this form: ‘If God ordains and causes all things, then this also applies to the rape of a

child.’ Whether this is stated as an observation or a rhetorical question, there is no argument here that compels an answer that is more than a simple ‘Yes.’ If God ordains and causes all things, then of course this applies to the rape of a child, or to five billion children. There is no refutation. This is an emotional grenade. Its power is in the popular sentiment that the welfare of children is one of the supreme principles under which all other things are subservient” (Cheung, Emotional Grenades).

Many God-haters of “theistic” variety (e.g., Arminians, Open-Theists, Process Theologians, etc.) spend much of their frenetic and hypocritical lives fighting with the One who formed them, saying, “What are You making?” Such fulminating and emotional grenades are being hypocritically lobbed since their “god” was in the room as the wickedness transpired. Other professing Christians who are bold and brazen enough to command the Potter (and yet do not precisely fit any of the aforementioned “theistic” labels), are admonished to quarrel with their fellow potsherds.

I agree that, generally speaking, the emotional power is nested inside the popular sentiment concerning “the welfare of children” (though some professing Christians actually support the decision to murder children in the womb for the welfare of reproductive control, Womens’ Rights, and obtaining that University degree).

Cheung used the plural, “supreme principles.” It seems that the principle higher than that of the welfare of children is the free will of the sinner. Thus, the God-hating hypocrites sacrifice the welfare of children on the Altar of Free Will.

Cheung continued:

“In this case, the grenade is thrown against the honor and power of God. Even so, it is one that has a considerable chance of success,

because even those who call themselves Christians would eagerly place the welfare of children far above their reverence for God. These are, of course, bad Christians. But there are many bad Christians. In fact, many people would put their pets above their religion. Thus one could expect success with:

‘If God ordains and causes all things, then this also applies to your dog’s indigestion.’

At this, it would not surprise me even a little if someone would either abandon the doctrine of divine sovereignty and retreat to a finite theism, or turn against God for hurting his innocent puppy” (Vincent Cheung, Emotional Grenades).

It, too, would not surprise me if an adherent of finite theism retreated to some mishmash of atheistic materialism. They must reject ALL FORMS of personal theism since they cannot stomach the idea that ANY GOD (no matter how well-meaning, small, finite, or helpless) could play ANY ROLE in their dog’s indigestion.

I do not believe it is hyperbole AT ALL to say that many “bad Christians” (i.e., God-hating potsherds) would play the mutinous mercenary and recant of their empty allegiance to the God of Scripture and retreat to something “less cruel” to canines.

Previously I interacted with some of Cheung's comments on God's sovereignty and some objections thereto. Here are the remainder of Cheung's comments (again, this is not an endorsement of Cheung as a true Christian). Cheung writes:

"We must not back away from the biblical doctrine, but we must advance and attack those who seek to undermine the glory of God, and make them regret their insolence. Instead of absorbing the opponent's blow, we ought to take the grenade and throw it back in his face" (Vincent Cheung, Emotional Grenades).

Apparently, these insolent ones show greater concern for the little children of Adam than for the even littler Child ordained to be for the Consolation of Israel.

"And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name [was] Simeon. And this man [was] righteous and devout, eagerly expecting [the] Consolation of Israel. And [the] Holy Spirit was upon him. And it happened to him, having been divinely instructed by the Holy Spirit, he was not to see death before he would see [the] Christ of [the] Lord. And by the Spirit he came into the temple. And [as] the parents [were] bringing in the child Jesus [for] them to do according to the custom of the Law concerning Him, even [Simeon] received Him into his arms. And [he] blessed God and said, Now, Master, You will let Your slave go in peace according to Your Word; because my eyes saw Your Salvation, which You prepared before [the] face of all the peoples; a Light for revelation [to the] nations, and [the] Glory of Your people Israel. And Joseph was marveling, also His mother, at the things being said concerning Him. And Simeon blessed them and said to His mother Mary, Behold, this One is set for [the] fall and rising up of many in Israel, and for a sign spoken against...so that [the] thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:25-35).

Would these hypocritical objectors ALSO say that
'If God ordains and causes all things, then this also applies to the
[crucifixion of the One set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and
for a sign spoken against so that the thoughts of many hearts may be
revealed]'?

Presumably they would say that, yes? But perhaps — to their carnal
minds — God's sovereign ordination and causation of the crucifixion
of the Lord of Glory does not carry with it the degree of emotional
weight that the welfare of the creature does. The "welfare" of the
creature is exchanged for the redemptive glory of God revealed in the
crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

"... who changed the truth of God into the lie, and worshiped and
served the created thing more than the Creator, who is blessed
forever. Amen" (Romans 1:25).

"For all things were created in Him, the things in the heavens, and the
things on the earth, the visible and the invisible; whether thrones, or
lordships, or rulers, or authorities, all things have been created
through Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16).

"Because of Him, and through Him, and to Him [are] all things. To Him
be the glory forever! Amen" (Romans 11:36).

"But now so says Jehovah who formed you, O Jacob; and He who
made you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I called [you]
by your name; you [are] Mine. When you pass through the waters, I
[will be] with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.
When you walk in the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame
kindle on you. For I [am] Jehovah your God, the Holy One of Israel,
your Savior. I gave Egypt [for] your atonement; Ethiopia and Seba

instead of you. Since you were precious in My eyes, you are honored, and I love you; and I give men instead of you; and peoples instead of your soul. Fear not, for I [am] with you; I will bring your seed from the east, and I will gather you from the west. I will say to the north, Give up! And to the south, Do not hold back! Bring My sons from afar, and bring My daughters from the ends of the earth; everyone who is called by My name, and I have created him for My glory; I have formed him; yea, [I have] made him” (Isaiah 43:1-7).

“Lord, You are worthy to receive the glory and the honor and the power, because You created all things, and through Your will they exist and were created” (Revelation 4:11).

Cheung writes:

“The Bible says that even Christ’s crucifixion was foreordained by God (Acts 2:23, 4:28), and that ‘it was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer’ (Isaiah 53:10). The rape of a child is indeed terrible. Anyone who commits such a crime should be executed. But even the rape of a child, or fifteen trillion children, is still insignificant compared to the shame and suffering that the divine Christ had to endure. Can you not see, that if you are offended at this, or even a little uncomfortable, it says something about you? It tells me that you treasure children more than God, and more than Jesus Christ. Your values are man-centered” (Vincent Cheung, Emotional Grenades).

The Judge of all the earth will do right (cf. Genesis 18:25). Those who engage in such vile wickedness will be judged. All who are predestined by God to remain in Adam — the non-elect or reprobate — will perish justly for their sins (Romans 3:1-20). All who are chosen from eternity in Christ will be saved in a way that is consistent with God’s holy law and justice (see Romans 3:20-26 and Isaiah 45:21). Creature-man IS RESPONSIBLE to God for his sins which God

ordains and causes (see Romans 3:5-8 and 9:13-24). Man is responsible, NOT because he is free from God's decretive control and active power, but because God is the Sovereign and Righteous Judge who holds man responsible. If creature-man were free, then he would not be responsible. God is Sovereign and man is not free.

Consider the wickedness perpetrated since the Fall in the Garden of Eden. Consider the extremely violent and wicked starvation of multitudes by Joseph Stalin. Consider the even more wicked murderer of the souls of multitudes, C.H. Spurgeon, the Prince of Preachers for the Prince of Darkness (cf. Matthew 11:20-24).

Cheung concludes:

“We are but dust, and should continuously give thanks that we are allowed to live. But the Most High ordained and caused his own Son, a person of infinite glory and value, to visit sinners and to receive insults, persecution, and even death from them. If the opponent is ignorant of this, it exposes him as incompetent. If he assumes that we would care more about the child, then he assumes that we are bad Christians. In many cases he would be on target, but not this time. And even if some stumble over this, it still does not refute the doctrine, but it means only that the opponent has discovered some bad Christians. And if the opponent claims to be a Christian, then he has exposed himself as a bad Christian. He cares more for a child than he does the Lord Jesus” (Vincent Cheung, Emotional Grenades).

Who are these “bad Christians”? Are they Cheung's regenerate (albeit, a bit muddled) brethren? Anyway, it is quite clear that certain professing Christians DO in fact, care more for a creature-child than for the redemptive glory of God seen in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:3-6). This is CERTAINLY NOT to make light of sinful sexual perverts who prey upon children. NO INDEED. True Christians

believe that the “fear of Jehovah [is] the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the Holy One [is] understanding” (Proverbs 9:10).

True Christians have been imbued with a knowledge of the Holy One. And thus they have understanding that it is a matter of, shall we say, infinite PROPORTION. Jesus Christ is the true believer’s Passover; He is the PROPITIATION for their sins (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2, 4:10).

“Who has meted out the Spirit of Jehovah, or a man His counsel taught Him? With whom did He take counsel, and [who] trained Him and taught Him in the path of justice; and taught Him knowledge, and made known to Him the way of discernment? Lo, nations [are] as a drop from a bucket, and are reckoned as dust of the scales. Lo, He takes up coasts as a little thing. And Lebanon [is] not enough to burn, nor are its beasts enough [for] a burnt offering. All the nations [are] as nothing before Him; to Him they are reckoned less than nothing and emptiness” (Isaiah 40:13-17).

Consider the COMPARATIVE MAGNITUDE of JESUS CHRIST in relation to, well, everything else. To quote Matthew 10:24-42 (paragraphing mine):

“A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above his lord. [It is] enough for the disciple [to] become as his teacher, and the slave as his lord. If they called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more those of his household? Therefore, you should not fear them, for nothing is covered which will not be uncovered; and hidden, which will not be made known. What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light. And what you hear in the ear, proclaim on the housetops. And you should not fear the [ones] killing the body, but not being able to kill the soul. But rather fear Him being able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.

Are not two sparrows sold for an assarion? Yet not one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Then do not fear; you are better than many sparrows.

Then everyone who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father in Heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I also will deny him before My Father in Heaven.

Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. I came to divide a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a bride against her mother-in-law. [Ones] hostile [to] the man [shall be] those of his [own] house. The [one] loving father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And the [one] loving son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And who does not take up his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

The [one] finding his life shall lose it. And the [one] losing his life on account of Me shall find it.

The [one] receiving you receives Me, and the [one] receiving Me receives Him who sent Me. The [one] receiving a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the [one] receiving a just [one] in the name of a just [one] will receive a just [one's] reward. And whoever gives only a cup of cold [water to] drink to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple, truly I say to you, In no way will he lose his reward" (Matthew 10:24-42).