

John Knox

Two Contrary Wills in God?

The “All” whom God wills to save.

being extracts from Knox’s treatise on
Predestination taken from Vol. 5 of the 1895 edition
published by David Laing of Edinburgh.

Introduced, with editorial comment, by Brian Harris and the Editor.

Introduction.

The following excerpts have been taken from pages 302-419 in John Knox’s Treatise ‘On Predestination’. (Laing Edition: Edinburgh 1895).

These parts, at least, of the Treatise “On Predestination” were written by Knox as an answer to “the cavillations of an adversary respecting the doctrine of predestination.” In this work Knox deals article by article with the work of an anonymous Anabaptist, and in so doing lays bare the entire Pelagian basis of this adversary’s assertions against the Reformed.

The first piece is taken from pages 302 ff. in the aforesaid treatise. Knox’s Anabaptist foe is denominated herein “the adversary”, and had tried to claim that the Reformed held theologically to a contradiction - i.e., “God by His revealed will, wills all men to be saved, yet, by His secret will, He wills many to be damned.” In the ensuing excerpts from his treatise, the reader will see how John Knox replies to his adversary by emphasizing that God’s will is one and there is no contradiction. This short section in itself is enough to manifest the gulf that exists, not only between Knox and his Pelagian adversary, but between Knox and modern evangelical Calvinism. That this is so is evident in that Knox’s “adversary” here was accusing Knox of holding to exactly the same theological position in this matter as is held by modern main-stream Evangelical Calvinism, and manifest in such works as those of John Murray, Van Til, Ned. Stonehouse, and Iain Murray. Instead of affirming this, and thereby manifesting that he was theologically at one with the modern Calvinists on this issue, Knox refutes it. In thus answering his “adversary”, Knox indubitably refutes also these modern Evangelical Calvinists.

As far as the universal gospel call is concerned, the word “offer” is used by Knox, but consider his understanding of Isaiah 55:1 *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, etc.....* Says Knox : “The prophets call not all indifferently to drink of these waters, but such as do thirst. And Christ restrains his generality (general call) to such as did travail and

were burdened with sin: such I say, he confesses himself to call to repentance; but to such as were just and whole he affirms that he was not sent." (Knox: Op. cit. herein, page 118).

The reader should consider well the implications of all this, and of what follows. To draw attention to the vital clauses in the following, we have printed them in bold type. Here and there we have had to smooth out archaic turns of phrase embedded in Knox's "Scots-English". Editorial comments are confined mainly to footnotes, where they are in the text they are printed in Helvetica bold script, thus: **Knox**.

I.

John Knox - Two contrary wills in God?

The adversary alleged that the Reformed taught:

"God hath two manners of will, one revealed and a secret will, which is only known to himself. By God's revealed will, men should come to nought; but they that do perish, do perish by his secret will, in respect of God's commandment. It was not God's will that Adam should perish, but in respect of God's secret will, God willed Adam to fall. The authors of this wicked opinion, when they could not sufficiently confirm their errors by the authority of God's secret will.... say though God by his revealed will, wills all men to be saved, yet by his secret will, he willeth many to be damned....."

What confirmation our doctrine has by the invincible and most evident testimonies of God's Holy Scriptures, I will not now dispute, only I must complain, that maliciously and most impudently you wrest our words and pervert our minds. And for the probation thereof, I say, that you are never able to show in any of our writing the words and sentences which in this you affirm us to say. **You will never be able to prove that we have written or taught: That God by his revealed will, wills all men to be saved, and yet by his secret will, he wills many to be damned:**¹ That by his revealed will, he wills no wickedness, but by his secret will, he wills Pharaoh to be hard hearted, Semei to curse David, the Patriarchs to sell their brother Joseph: That by his revealed will, he would not that Adam should fall, but by his secret will, he wills Adam to fall. **These (such) Propositions, I say, you be never able to show in our writings, neither yet to prove that our doctrine**

¹ In such succinct and indubitable words Knox herewith unmistakably denies ever holding to what is the position of post-Marrowist and modern evangelical Calvinism. Note that the "adversary" has accused Knox of holding to a contradiction in his theology. Instead of espousing the contradiction and justifying it under such terms as used by modern-day Calvinist "paradox" theology, Knox simply outright denies holding any such contradiction. The force of his denial is emphasised too in the second sentence we have placed in bold type, (running on to page 3 herewith) where he denies even that he (*and* his fellow-reformers - note the "we") held anything that so much as *tends* in such a direction.

did or does tend to that end. For we constantly affirm:

That God revealed unto us his most holy and most just will in his plain and Holy Scriptures, which do assure us that a separation shall be made betwixt the goats and the lambs, that the one shall receive the kingdom prepared unto them before all beginning, and that the other shall be adjudged to the fire which never shall be quenched: **That** God stirred and raised up Pharaoh, that his power might be declared in him: **That** these words God plainly spoke to Moses; “ I know that Pharaoh shall not permit the people to depart, therefore have I hardened his heart, that I may multiply my wonders upon him

John Knox’s reply goes on to involve the following proposition:

God’s secret will and revealed will are always one, which is a manifestation and declaration of his own glory.

This he further clarifies in the following statements:

1. His will with respect of himself from all beginning is simple² and one which is a declaration of his own glory. However because the instruments in which God’s glory must be made known are diverse, therefore has God’s will, which is one, diverse considerations, effects and ends in respect of the diverse instruments.

2. There is no contrary between the will revealed and unrevealed. **Indeed it is impossible that there should be contraries in God’s will.**³

Mat. 23: 27 was used by the adversary as a ‘proof text’ to prove his proposition that “God is goodness itself, his will is always good, yet man is apt to do and may do evil contrary to God’s will, notwithstanding God remains omnipotent, suffering man to do evil”

He goes on to say: “Christ, as he witnesses himself, would have gathered the Jerosolimitans (**people of Jerusalem**) together as the hen her chickens, yet would they not.”

To this Knox answers:

The words of our Master, spoken in the 23d chapter of Matthew’s Gospel, serve nothing for your purpose; for in that place our Saviour Christ Jesus speaks as he that

² Note Knox’s reference to the “simplicity” of God’s will, an emphasis which some modern “Calvinist” scholars would want to damn as “rationalism”, or “scholasticism”, and is allegedly, (according to them) a later Bezan and Puritan scholastic mutation of Calvinism. Here however, we have it right in Calvin’s own contemporary, friend, and colleague. Knox of course is rightly pointing out that God’s will must be “simple”, as opposed to “complex”, as unlike us, God is Omnipotent, and suffers no frustration from conflicting internal volitions and desires.

³ Again, an insistence on the “simplicity” of God. And as modern evangelical “Calvinism” clearly posits contrary wills in God, justifying such language under the aegis of “paradox”, Knox is again here manifest as being against the modern moderate, or Post-marrow, Evangelical “calvinists”.

s the messenger of his heavenly Father, and declares that the Jews obstinately, even from their original, had resisted God speaking by his Patriarchs, Prophets of old, and now last by his Son. He neither speaks nor means what will God had to save his elect, neither yet that will which he had to gather and separate them from the world, but only (as Moses and Elias had before spoken) declares what fidelity and diligence God had used in the general election and vocation of that people from time to time; and yet what had been their obstinate rebellion and unthankful defection from him, by the which they killed the Prophets, and should kill his Son, sent of God to call them from iniquity. What has this to do, I say, with that will, by the which God in his eternal counsel has made division betwixt the Elect and the reprobate? **If you dare say, that Christ in that place means, in that he would have gathered those murderers, and sons of murderers, as he does witness he does gather his chosen flock, himself will convict you of a lie.** For he affirms the same scribes and Pharisees, to whom principally he spoke in that place, that they were not of his sheep, and that therefore that they could not be gathered to his fold; that they were not of God, and therefore they could not hear his voice; that he did not pray for the world, and therefore they could never be united to God.⁴

II.

John Knox The "All" whom God wills to Save.

Extracted from "On Predestination" pp. 402-419 (vol. 5 Works of John Knox).

The adversary has alleged that:

He (God) is slow to wrath and ready to forgive;

1)*he will be entreated of all so that he bids all men everywhere to repent, and offers faith to all men.*

2)*He is omnipotent, and may do, and leave undone, whatsoever shall be his good pleasure:*

3)*neither is it his pleasure and will that either Pharaoh, Semei, or any other do sin and come to destruction, for :*

4)*he wills the death of no creature, but wills all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. He hath but one will, which ever is only good* ⁵

⁴ Knox's interpretation of this passage is of course utterly at loggerheads with that of a modern "moderate calvinist" like Dabney, and of Puritans of the "Amyraldian" or "Davenant" categories, like Howe, D. Williams, Baxter, et al. It should be evident to the reader from all this that modern "calvinism" is a serious departure from Knox.

⁵ The reader should consider carefully these words of Knox's adversary! The fact is that they sum up the position taken up on one side of their paradox by the modern "calvinists." By contrast, Knox would have none of it!!!!

Knox's Reply.

But now to your words: "*God is slow (you say) to wrath, and ready to forgive. He will be entreated of all, so that he bids all men everywhere to repent, and offers faith unto all men.*" I will not question with you at this time, why in this description of your true God you make no mention of the Son, which is the eternal Word and wisdom of the eternal Father, neither of the Holy Ghost, who, proceeding from the Father, is equal with the eternal Son. But this is the one thing of which I did wonder in reading this your description, that you omit these properties which God attributes to himself. You do continually repeat, that God is slow to wrath, ready to forgive, that he wills all men to be saved; that he will be entreated of all men; that he wills the death of no creature. Which properties in God we confess, and which sentences we acknowledge to be most true, **if they be rightly understood**. But why do you not likewise teach your scholars that God is jealous; that he is a consuming fire; that he punishes the iniquity of the fathers upon the sons, unto the third and fourth generation; and that his justice cannot suffer sin to escape punishment, no not even in his most dearest children.

You have accused us that we deceive the people, teaching them a careless and libertine life. And therefore here again, I require the indifferent reader to consider, which of our doctrines gives most liberty; whether you that affirm that your true God will be entreated of all, or we that constantly maintain that God hears no sinner, or that such as delight in iniquity are so odious in his presence, that although they cry and howl in their calamity, yet will he not hear them.

But now let me examine your Scripture apart. "*God is slow to wrath,*", you say: true it is, but yet he recompenses the slowness of punishment with the severity of his judgements, which has been, and shall be executed against such as heap to themselves God's wrath, by abusing his long sufferings. "*He is ready to forgive*" we acknowledge this to be the voice of our God; but we fear not to affirm, that the remission of sins is the free gift of God, given to his Church by Christ Jesus; like as are faith and life everlasting, which are not common to all men in general, but particularly do appertain to God's children. "*He will be entreated of all,*" you say, so that he bids all men everywhere repent, and offers faith to all men.

1) Your first proposition is utterly false, neither yet is there any such sentence contained in the whole Scriptures. True it is that God is merciful, gentle, liberal, Protector, Refuge, and Life to all. But to **which** "all"? To such as hate iniquity, love virtue, lament for their sins past, call upon his name in truth, and do unfeignedly seek for his help in the day of their trouble. Of all these, no doubt, he will be entreated, how wicked and unthankful so ever they have been before. But by the contrary, he will destroy all that speak lies, He hates all that work iniquity: neither will He show himself merciful to such as maliciously offend. But all the sinners of the earth shall drink the dregs of that cup which the Eternal holds in his hand. For he will destroy all those that traitorously decline from him. They shall cry, but he will not

hear: He shall answer unto them "Let your lovers, whom you have preferred to me, deliver you." Such as withdraw their cares from the cry of the poor, shall cry, but shall not be heard; yea, albeit the blood-thirsty will multiply prayers and stretch forth their hands, yet will not God hear them. For his countenance is bent against all that commit wickedness. And thus I say, you shall never be able to prove that God will be entreated of all, except you can confute the Holy Ghost, and make him to recant these and innumerable other places. As mercy is promised to his children, (for they only call in truth, they only hate sin, and follow virtue,) so is severe judgement pronounced against the wicked of the world.

None of these sentences: "*God bids all men every where to repent*," and offers faith to all men, are found in that sense and meaning that you do understand them, in the whole Scriptures. True it is that Isaiah the prophet, and Christ Jesus himself, with his Apostles, do call upon all to come to repentance. But that generality is restrained by their own words, to those that thirst, that hunger, that mourn, that are laden with sin, as before we have taught.⁶ That place in the book of Acts (Acts 17:

⁶ **Knox's** interpretation here is solidly scriptural. It is in line with **Calvin** who, in his commentary on Isaiah 55 v. 1 says: "We must therefore enquire what is the true preparation for receiving this grace. The Prophet describes it by the word 'thirsty'. Those who are puffed up with vain confidence and are satiated, or who, intoxicated by earthly appetites, do not feel thirst of soul, will not receive Christ; because they have no relish for spiritual grace. They resemble those persons who are in want of nourishment, but who, because they are filled and swollen with wind, loathe food, or who, being carried away by their own vain imaginations, feed on their own stupidity, as if they were in want of nothing. The consequence is, that they who are puffed up with pride or a false opinion of their own righteousness, or whom the allurements of the flesh have siezed with lethargy, despise or reject the grace of God. It is therefore necessary that we have 'thirst', that is, an ardent desire, in order that it may be possible for us to receive so great blessings." The "true preparation for receiving this grace" mentioned by Calvin here is of course to be understood in context, Calvin is not teaching that a man must of himself prepare himself for grace.....rather it is the Spirit's sovereign and irresistible inner working that generates this "thirst". On this text also, the same interpretation is given by **Turretin**: *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* viz.: "Hence they that are ordered to believe are not all men simply, but relatively (to wit, 'the weary' and heavy laden with the burden of sin (Matt.11:28); the "thirsty" and they who feel their need of drink; (Isaiah 55:1) i.e., who are penitent and feel their misery." [**Inst. 14: Quest. 14, para.XLV**]. See also **Turretin** again at **Inst. 15 :Quest. 2, para XII** where he says:"Salvation according to the intention of God is promised to none others than those having the prescribed condition: such as are weary and heavy laden (Matt. 11:28); thirsty (Isaiah 55:1), believing and penitent (Acts 2:38). Since this cannot be said of the reprobate, it cannot equally be said that they are called by God with the intention that they should be saved."

In shocking contrast to all this however, is the **post-Marrow "calvinism"** of the last 250 years, as espoused by most modern "calvinistic" publishing concerns, and leaders of Calvinist churches world wide. Their "calvinism" at this point can be summed in the words of the **arch-Marrowman, Thomas Boston** thus: "who are meant (by they that 'labour' and are 'heavy laden'....etc.) I cannot agree with those that restrain these expressions to those that are sensible of their sins and misery....but I think it includes all that are out of Christ....Consider the parallel text, Isaiah 55:1,.....whereby the thirsty is not so satisfaction....." [Sermon by Thomas Boston: "Come unto Me, All ye that Labour," reprinted by the Chapel Library, Pensacola USA].

Inescapably, therefore, the evidence exposes Boston and all his followers as being at loggerheads with Knox, Calvin, and Turretin, and therefore having departed true Reformed and Biblical Theology on this most vital issue. The effects have been to "Arminianize" the Reformed Faith.

30) you either understand not, or else willingly you abuse it. For Paul does not say that God offers faith to all, but says: "that he has performed to all that promise which he made to man, which was to send a Saviour, for man's redemption, by whom also he will judge the world." Consider the text, and you shall understand the meaning of the Apostle to be such.

2) You proceed, "*He is omnipotent, and may do, and leave undone, what so ever shall be his good pleasure;*"

The omnipotence of God, and freedom of his will, we most constantly maintain: but we cannot admit that our God be variable, unconstant, subject to ignorance; neither yet that his Godhood will depend upon the will and disposition of man. For that were not to leave God's will at freedom, but to bring it under the bondage of his creatures.

Further, these words, "*God may do, and leave undone, whatsoever shall be his pleasure,*" do smell somewhat of one of your articles offered unto us in this Church; wherein some of your sect do affirm, that God may be fully purposed this day to do one thing, and that tomorrow he may repent, and be purposed to do the contrary. Which cogitations of God are most blasphemous and wicked. For if his counsel be mutable and changeable, then ceases he to be the God, who neither is, nor can be changed. If you had said, "Because that God is omnipotent, therefore he may do, and leave undone, whatsoever his good pleasure is," you had said well, understanding that the purpose of God is infinite; that therefore of his good will he so mollifies the hearts of some men, that of most cruel and enraged enemies against his truth and poor servants, he makes them, and that suddenly, preachers of his gospel, and protectors to his Church. But when you aver, "He may do whatsoever is his good pleasure," you offer occasion to the captious to suspect that you would affirm, that God's good will and pleasure may change; and that is to deny his Godhead. But I will burden you no further than you shall plainly confess, I only put you in mind, that the Holy Ghost uses no such phrase.

3) You proceed, saying, "*Neither is it his pleasure and will that either Pharaoh, Semei, or any other should sin, and come to destruction.*" Before, we have confessed that iniquity and sin is so odious before God, that in it can his goodness never delight, neither yet can he have pleasure in the destruction of any creature, having respect to the punishment only. But seeing that God's glory must needs shine in all his creatures, yea, even in the perpetual damnation of Satan, and torment of the reprobate, why shall not he will, and take pleasure, that so it come to pass. Albeit your frenetic brains cannot comprehend the brightness thereof yet will He one day declare that all his works are wrought in justice, wisdom, and equity. I think you will not deny, but that Pharaoh, Semei, Judas, and others, came to destruction, like as in the end shall all reprobate do. Then do I ask, if God at no time, for no purpose,

respect, nor end, did so will, how then came their destruction to pass? By sin, you say; that we deny not: but yet the question is not answered. For continually we demand, if in God there was not power, either to have impeded their sin, or yet after their sin to have called them to repentance, if it had so pleased his eternal wisdom and goodness: Consider your folly, and give glory to God who does whatsoever he will in heaven and in earth.

4) But now to that which follows: *“For he wills the death of no creature, but wills all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”* How violently you wrest the words of the Prophet, and of the Apostle (1 Tim. 2:4), shall shortly appear, after I have reasoned a little with you, how these your propositions do agree with that which goes before. You have affirmed, that God is ready to mercy, and slow to wrath, in which words you show and confess, that in the Godhead there is readiness to show mercy, and also that there is a justice, which must execute wrath upon the disobedient. And so in the nature of the Godhead you confess mercy and justice. But here you say, that God wills the death of no creature, but that he wills all men to be saved; which last words being understood as you do urge them, must destroy the former nature of God, and take away his justice. For if he absolutely wills the death of no creature, then wills he no punishment to follow sin. And if he wills no punishment, then wills he his justice to cease, and so, consequently, must one of the properties of his godly nature cease.

Study for an answer, to make your former words and latter words better agree, or else you will be compelled to confess, that God, for some respect, wills both death and damnation to come upon some creatures. Further, if God wills all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth, and yet many do perish in ignorance, and shall be condemned as Christ Jesus does pronounce: then must it either follow, that God’s will is mutable, and so be unconstant, and not at all times like to himself, or else that he is not omnipotent. For if God, at the first creation of man, willed that all men should be saved, (as you allege,) then I want to know when this will was changed. “After that man had offended” you say, in which case then yet have I obtained your admission, that in God’s will there was mutability. For after sin he willed, and by his sentence pronounced, that Adam and his posterity should suffer the corporal death, yea, and that the seed of the serpent should have the head broken down; by the which is meant the spiritual death, which neither of both (as you affirm) did God will before. If, (however), you reply, “God’s will towards the salvation of all mankind did remain the same after sin which was before, for a general promise of deliverance was made, by the woman’s seed that was promised”, (then) I have before plainly proved, that a difference most manifest between the two seeds was made in that promise.

But (should we admit) that the promise had been general, and so that the will of God this day remains the same, (as) you allege it to be, to wit, that he wills the death

of no sinner, but that he wills all men to be saved; can you deny, but that a separation and division of the sheep from the goats, of the elect from the reprobate, shall be made at the glorious coming of the Lord Jesus? Shall not these most joyful words be said unto them that shall stand upon the right hand, “Come you the blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom which was prepared for you from the beginning,?” (Matt. 25: 34). And shall not this most fearful sentence be pronounced and executed against the other, “Depart you cursed, go to the fire prepared for the devil and for his angels?” (Matt. 25: 41). Shall the Son of God, in pronouncing sentence, do anything that day repugnant to the will of his heavenly father? I think you will not so affirm. Then if God’s will, in the day of judgement, shall be that many shall be adjudged to torment perpetual, and his will in the creation of man was, and this day yet remains, that all men shall be saved, then of necessity it does follow that God’s will shall change.

If you say, “that death and damnation comes not by God’s will, but by the sin and unbelief of man,” you have relieved yourself nothing: for if death be one thing, and life be another; damnation one thing, and salvation another; then if God this day wills all men to be saved, and so to have life, and yet that (Judgement) day he shall will many to be damned to torment perpetual, (what causes so ever you allege) I shall obtain (one of two admissions from you), to wit, that either God’s will is, and may be mutable, or else that there is a power superior to his majesty and godly will. For if *willingly* he shall damn those, whom before he would and had determined to save, then is his will and determination changed. And if he shall damn those *unwillingly*, whom willingly he would have saved, then is he not omnipotent. Consider now upon whom falls the snow, and who do cast themselves in greatest absurdities.⁷

Now it rests to declare how violently you wrest the words of the Prophet and of the Apostle. The prophet, speaking in the person of God, says, “I will not the death of a sinner, but rather that he convert, and live.” (Eze. 33 v 11). And the Apostle affirms, that God wills all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2 v 4). Hereupon you conclude, God wills the death of no creature: this is

⁷ It is evident from this paragraph that Knox would not allow the modern “calvinist” notion articulated by such as Rev. David Silversides, (Debate on “common grace”, 1995). Silversides holds that (1) God’s will changes vis a vis the elect, (viz., His damning wrath once was directed against them for their sins, but subsequent to their conversion God removes His wrathful intent, and substitutes a fatherly love), therefore: (2) logically and symmetrically, what is there to stop God changing His will re. the reprobate, and sincerely wanting to save them? This position is shot through with idiosyncracies. First, Silversides *assumes* symmetry of logic operative in both spheres of election and reprobation. This falls desperately short of proof. More importantly, biblically speaking; the damning wrath of God justly levelled at the elect is poured out in full on Christ, and His righteousness is imputed to us whilst our sin is imputed to Him, (Cf. II Cor. 5: 19 - 21; Gal. 3: 13 - 14), so that the ‘natural man’ is crucified with Christ, and the new ‘regenerate’ man is a new creature in Christ. (Gal. 3:20; II Cor. 5: 17). Thus God does *not* “change his mind” or “change his will” vis a vis the elect. He pours out His wrath against us upon our Saviour, effectuates ‘death’ of the ‘old man’, and loves us in Christ as new creatures. From eternity He had predestinated the elect to undergo this massive ontological shift, with Christ being the engine effectuating the shift. No such ontological shift is predicated in Scripture vis a vis the reprobate, for Christ was not given to effectuate it for any but the Elect. (Jn. 17). Hence, not only is Silversides’ assumption of logical symmetry unfounded, but worse, his basis for making the assumption is actually non-existent.

your first violence which you do to the text.

For the Prophet says not, "I will the death of *any creature*," but says, "I will not the death of a **sinner**." You are not ignorant, I suppose, what difference there is between an universal negative, and an indefinite, or particular negative. Where you say, God wills the death of no creature, you speak generally and universally, excepting none. But this the Prophet does not say, for he does not say: "I will the death of no creature," neither yet "I will the death of no sinner," - but simply says, "I will not the death of a sinner." I wonder that you consider not that there is difference between creatures and creature, so that also there is difference between sinners and sinner. Some creatures are appointed to death, for the use and sustenance of man. And dare you say, that this is done against God's will? We be taught the contrary by his own mouth. If you, correcting your generality, shall say, "that you mean only that God wills the death of no man," then I fear not yet to (oppose) you, and against you to affirm, that God **has** willed, **does** will, and **shall** will the death of some men. The Holy Ghost, speaking of the sons of Eli the High Priest, says: "But they did not hear the voice of their father, because the Lord would kill them" (1 Sam. 2 v 25) And Moses says, "Sihon king of Hesbon would not suffer us to pass through his country, for the Lord thy God did harden his mind, and strengthen his heart, that he should give him into thy hands" (Deut. 2 v 30) How often does Moses and Joshua declare unto the people, that God would kill, root out, and destroy, those wicked nations from before the face of his people! And were all those kings, whom Joshua did kill, killed against God's will? The Holy Ghost affirms the contrary. For it is written, "the Lord did trouble them before Israel, and he did strike them with a great slaughter. And while that they did flee before the Israelites, and were in the descends of Bethhoron, the Lord cast down upon them from heaven great stones; and many more perished by the hail stones than were slain with the sword of the children of Israel." (Josh. 10: 11). If the destruction, slaughter, and death, of these wicked men, and of the great host of Schenacherib (II Chron. 32: 21), was not the will of God, I cannot tell how man shall be assured of his will. For the plain word did before promise, that the Lord should destroy them; and the fact does witness the constancy and performance of his will. And the same thing does God this day, and shall do to the end of the world, when he shall judge the reprobate (as before is said) to the death perpetual; and that not against his will, but willingly, for the manifestation of his just judgements, and declaration of his own glory. And therefore, I say, that your proposition, saying, "God wills the death of no creature," is manifestly false, as it is repugnant to God's justice and to his evident Scriptures.

The mind of the Prophet was to stir such as had declined from God, to return unto him by true repentance. And because their iniquities were so many, and offences so great, that justly they might have despaired of remission, mercy, and grace, therefore does the Prophet, for the better assurance of those that should repent, affirm, "That God delights not, neither wills the death of the wicked." But of *which* wicked? Of him, no doubt, that truly should repent, in the death (of such an one) did

not, nor never shall, God delight. But he delights to be known as a God that shows mercy, grace, and favour to such, as unfeignedly call for the same, how grievous so ever their former offence have been. But such as continue obstinate in their impiety, have no portion of these promises. For them God will kill, them will he destroy, and them will he thrust, by the power of his word, into the fire which never shall be quenched.⁸

The Apostle in these words: "God wills all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth," speaks not of every man, and of every particular person, but of all men in general, that is to say, of men of all estates, all conditions, all realms, and all ages. For as in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither man nor woman, free man nor servant, but all are one in him, so can no estate, no condition of man, no realm, nor no age, be proved so wicked and so corrupt, but out of the like has God called some to the participation of his light, and to salvation and life by Christ Jesus; and that this is the very natural meaning of the Holy Ghost, the

⁸ This interpretation of Ezek. 33:11 is consonant with a thorough exegesis of the text *in its context*, and is found also to be consonant with the exegesis of Turretin [Inst. 4:Quest. 17: para. XXXIII.], so also Calvin, Inst. III:24:15, where he says that the passage "is violently twisted if the will of God, mentioned (here) by the prophet, is opposed to His eternal plan, by which He has distinguished the elect from the reprobate.Therefore, in so far as God wills the sinner's repentance, He does not will his death....God's mercy will always, accordingly, go to meet repentance, but all the prophets and all the apostles, as well as Ezekiel himself, clearly teach to whom repentance is given." One has to remember too, in all this, the closeness of Knox and Calvin, how they taught together for a time in Geneva....it is understandable that their thoughts should be similar. Claims by Silversides (debate op. cit.) for a different view manifest in the "most mature Calvin" just before his death, when he commented on Ezek 18:23, appear at first to contradict what we have said here. But careful perusal of the whole of Calvin's comment on Ezek. 18:23 indicates a certain degree of confusion in the Reformer's exegesis here....understandable remembering he was ailing seriously, close unto death from about 10 different diseases.... (somewhat different to the picture Silversides paints in the debate op cit. of "the most mature Calvin".) Also, serious questions are being raised today concerning the reliability and fidelity of the Calvin Translation Society's 19th Cent. translation of Calvin's commentaries. Researches at Rutherford House testify that whole chunks of Calvin's text are left untranslated, and whole chunks "massaged" in the process of translation. The fidelity of the English text of Calvin's commentary at Ezek. 18:23 needs checking, for it is known now that the 19th Cent translators were infested with "moderate" or post-Marrow "Calvinists", who on numerable occasions "made" Calvin say what *they thought* he ought to have said. Again, Calvin explained on numerous occasions that his commentaries were to be read in the light of his "Institutes", and not vice versa. This he affirms in the Epistle to the Reader prefixed to the 2nd edition of the Institutes, and in the prefix to the 1545 French edition, and again in another epistle prefixed to the last edition, where he says that in his commentaries he will not "enter into any long discussions of doctrinal points, but will compress them into narrow compass...." He says there that the commentaries are intended as a "mirror" to the Institutes. A confirmation of all this is found for instance in a back ref. to the Institutes as being the full authority, found in his comment on I Tim. 2: 6. The last word therefore, re. this matter raised in Ezek. 33:11 is to be found in Inst. III : 24: 15, and not indeed, in his commentary on the similar verse of Ezek. 18:23. Nevertheless, it is apposite to note that even in his commentary on Ezek. 18:23, (as of now) he states : "But the manner must be noticed in which God wishes all to be saved, namely **WHEN THEY TURN THEMSELVES FROM THEIR WICKED WAYS.** God thus does not so wish all men to be saved so as to renounce the difference between good and evil; but repentance, as we have said, must precede pardon." Such a statement is vastly different from saying that God wishes all men to repent. But Knox's exegetical and polemical work here on Ezek. 33:11 is far superior, however, to that of Calvin, and indeed to any other writers we have seen, taking, as it does, a thorough reference to the context and to the analogia fidei.

text itself does witness. For the Apostle immediately before wills prayers and supplications to be made for all men, for kings, and for all that were placed in authority.⁹

And because that the Church was chiefly oppressed by such, this doubt might have risen: "Are we then bound to pray for those that are expressed and conjured enemies against God?" "You are", (says the Apostle,) for that is good and acceptable before God our Saviour, who wills all men to be saved," that is, God wills you to pray for your persecutors, that their eyes may be opened, and they converted to the living God; who, no doubt, **will save some of all estate, of all conditions and vocations of men.** For the nations are given to Christ Jesus by inheritance; kings shall be the feeders of the church; queens shall be nurses; and in His holy temple shall all sing praise. If this interpretation (which we doubt not to be the true meaning of the Holy Ghost) cannot satisfy you, then will I ask of you, If God wills men otherwise to be saved than by Christ Jesus? or, as the Apostle speaks, by coming to the knowledge of the truth? Plain it is, that by the words of the Apostle you can conclude none otherwise. For as he says "God wills all men to be saved," so does he add, "and wills all men to come to the knowledge of the truth." Which word "wills," albeit it be not expressly repeated in the (Scripture with regard to the second phrase), yet of necessity it must be understood so to be, as those who are but novices in the Greek and Latin tongue do evidently see. Then, if I shall sufficiently prove, that God wills not all men to come to the knowledge of the truth, in such a sort as the apostle means, shall it not infallibly follow that God wills not all men to (be) saved, in such a sense as you understand?

That God wills not all men to come to the knowledge of that truth, by the which man is truly made free from the bondage of Satan, is evident, not only by those whom we do see walk in darkness and ignorance but also by the manifest scriptures of God, who called Abraham, making to him, and to his seed, the promise of salvation, saying "I will be a God to thee and thy seed after thee" (Gen. 17 v 7) which promise he kept secret many ages from the rest of the world. When he did notify his law unto Israel, and when Moses did repeat the same, he said, "Behold, I have laid before you this day life and death, blessing and curse; choose therefore life, that thou and thy seed may live." (Deut. 30: vv.15 -16) If God wills that all men and all nations indifferently should come to the same knowledge, why were not the laws, statutes, and judgements of God made manifest to other (nations) as they were to Israel? And if you answer that: "So they were," the Holy Ghost shall convict you of a lie. For he affirms, that God had not done so to all nations, and that his judge-

⁹ Knox here agrees with Calvin: **Sermon** on 1 Tim. 2:3-4, **Comm.** on 1 Tim.2: 3-4, **Comm.** on 1 Tim. 2:5; **Instit.** III :24 para 16, **treatises** against the Anabaptists and Libertines and on the Eternal Predestination of God. So also **Beza** and **Turretin**, **Owen** and the grand host of the Reformers. Note how the modern Banner of Truth position, as reflected by Iain Murray's book "Spurgeon v. Hypercalvinism" has parted company with Knox and the Reformers on this text, and actually agrees with Arminius and Amyraldus **against** the Reformers!

ments he had not revealed nor made known unto them.(Deut. 4:vv. 7 - 37). But if that plain division made by God himself betwixt Jew and Gentile, during the time of the law, does not fully satisfy you, hear yet the sentence of our Master Christ Jesus, who says to his Disciples, "To you it is given to understand the secrets of the kingdom, but unto others in parables, that having eyes they should not see." (Mark 4 :12). And that most plainly in that his solemn thanksgiving, he says, "I praise thee, O Father, for thou hast hidden these things from the prudent, and from the wise, but thou hast revealed them to little ones" (Matt. 11 v 25). If God would have had the true knowledge of himself, and of his Son Christ Jesus, common to all, why should Christ himself affirm, "That to some it was given, and to others it was not given; to some it was revealed, and from others it was hidden." And therefore, seeing it is plain that God will not give his true knowledge to all, yea, to some he does never offer it, you shall never be able to prove, that God wills all men to be saved. For the only means to attain salvation and to life, is to know and embrace God to be our merciful Father in Christ Jesus, to which knowledge whosoever does not attain, (I mean of those that come to the years and age of discretion,) can have no assurance to be saved. This were sufficient to convict you, even in your own conscience. For albeit malice will not suffer you to give place to the plain truth, yet shall the weight thereof so oppress your pride, that when you do open your mouth against it, yet shall you be witnesses even against yourselves.

But yet, for the cause of my simple brethren, I will add two things, **first**, How all such places, as either make a general promise of salvation to all, or yet that do pronounce God's wrath against all, must be understood. **Secondarily**, What sinners they are whose death God wills not.

For the first, I say, that whosoever denies, that from the beginning there has been, this day are, and to the end shall remain, two armies, bands, or companies of men, whom God in his eternal counsel has so devised, that betwixt them there continues a battle, which never shall be reconciled until the Lord Jesus put a final end to the misery of his Church; who does not understand the truth of this, (I say) does neither know God, neither his Son Christ Jesus; neither yet do such believe his Word, in which both the one sort and the other are most manifestly expressed. The one of these armies is called the Church of God; the elect spouse of Christ Jesus; the sheep appointed to slaughter; the kingly priesthood; the sons of God, and the people redeemed: by ancient writers it is termed the city of God. The other is called the synagogue of Satan; the church malignant; cruel, deceitful, and blood-thirsty wolves; progeny of vipers; sons of the Devil; workers of iniquity; and such as worship the beast and his image. And according to the diverse natures, condition, and ends of these two companies, does the Scripture pronounce general sentences and universal propositions, which not withstanding, must be restrained to those whom the Holy Ghost means. For neither justly may those sentences spoken of God's elect be referred to the reprobate; neither yet such as be spoken of as the reprobate sort

be rightly applied to the elect except for the terrifying of their conscience, and that for only for a season, as Christ Jesus called Peter Satan, and Nathan called David the son of death. I will adduce examples of the one sort and of the other, that the matter may be more evident.

The Prophet Isaiah (which place also our Master alleges), speaking of God's elect children, says, "They shall **all** be taught of God; and they shall know me from the least to the greatest" (Isa. 54 v 13, Jer. 31 v 34, Jn. 6 v 45) "I shall pour forth of my spirit on **all** flesh" (Joel 2 v 28) "**All** flesh shall see the salvation of God," (Lk. 3 v 6) "The Lord raises up **all** that fall," (Psa. 145 v 14) "**All** the inhabitants of the earth shall learn justice," (Isa. 26 v 9) "**All** men shall come out of Sheba," (Isa. 60 v 6) "**All** thy people shall be just," (Isa. 60. v 21) "I shall comfort **all** that mourn," (Isa. 61 v 2) "You be **all** the sons of God, ye be **all** the sons of light" (1 Thes. 5 v 5). These, and many more places which be universals spoken, must be restrained to God's children only who be elected in Christ Jesus.

For those that (are) without his body are neither taught of God neither yet know they God in such sort as the prophet there means. Into them is never poured the Spirit of sanctification. They give never unto God true honour and glory. They neither learn justice, neither yet are they just. They are not the sons of God by adoption, neither yet the sons of light, whose work shines before men to the praise of our heavenly Father; but remain ignorant, profane idolaters, filthy persons, replenished with darkness as the sons of the Devil; and therefore can not these former sentences, which appertain to God's children only, be rightly spoken or pronounced of the reprobate. Of the other sort, it is said, "**All** that see me have mocked me, they put fourth their tongues, they shake their heads:" (Psa. 22 v 7). These words spoke David in the person of Christ; and yet, God forbid, that we should think that **all** (without exception) did so mock and jest at Christ; no, not even in his greatest extremity. For some, we read, stood beside his cross with sorrowful hearts. Some returned, giving open confession that he was the Son of God. And the thief began to be a preacher, even when others did most despitefully rail. And therefore, where it is said, "**All** that saw me did mock me," that **generality** must be restrained to those enraged dogs, the Priests, Scribes, wicked soldiers, and most unthankful people, who of very malice did deny and crucify their Lord and Messiah that was promised. Isaiah and Jeremiah, speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the causes of the same, say, "I shall consume you **all** at once, and you shall **all** be ashamed by a people that shall not profit you." (Isa. 30 v 5) "They have **all** followed their own ways; **every man** gapeth for bribes." (Isa. 1 v 23) "Why will ye contend with me? ye have **all** declined from me." (Jer. 2 v 29) "From the least to the most **every one** is bent upon avarice; they are **all** traitors;" (Jer. 6 v 13) they are **all** (I say) traitors, every brother deceives another. "**All** men condemn me; **all** men hold me in execration." (Jer. 15 v 10) If these, and other like places, shall be understood so universally as they appear to be spoken, then must we be compelled to say, that no true fearer of God remains in Jerusalem when the Prophets did preach, but that all were

blood-thirsty, all avaricious, all idolaters, and all dumb dogs; the contrary whereof is evidently declared. For Isaiah had the children whom the Lord had given unto him, who albeit they were considered as monsters among men, yet did they patiently abide the Lord. Jeremiah had Baruch, his faithful scribe, notwithstanding his weakness and infirmity. Abedmelech feared the Lord, was favourable to the Prophet, and therefore saved he his soul for a pray, and was delivered from that day of vengeance. And therefore these universal sentences must also be restrained and kept within their own boundaries, like as these: "**All** have left me; **all** seek the things that appertain unto themselves, and not those things that be of God." (2 Tim. 4 v 16). Which sentences, except they be restrained, we shall condemn the dearest children of God, who, in Paul's days, did valiantly fight against the prince of this world. These examples of the one sort and of the other I have adduced, to let the simple understand, that such general sentences of necessity must be so restrained, that difference may be kept betwixt the elect and the reprobate; for else we shall do nothing in explaining scriptures but confound light with darkness. For if the words of our master Christ Jesus, saying, "**All** shall be taught of God," (Jn. 6 v 45), shall be so generally understood, that no exception be admitted, then of necessity it is, that all men, and every person, shall come to the true knowledge of Christ Jesus, for of that knowledge does he speak in that place. But the contrary thereof is most evident, even by Christ Jesus his own words, who puts a plain difference betwixt them that be given to him by his Father, and betwixt them that be not given.

But now, let us briefly consider **what** sinners they are they whose death God will not, but rather that they convert and live. Saint John, in his epistle says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to remit to us our sin, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," (1 Jn. 1 vv. 8-10). And after, "Whosoever commits sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law. And you know that he is revealed to take away our sins, and in him is no sin. As many as bide in him (that is, in Christ Jesus) sin not: whosoever sins has not seen him neither hath known him" etc., "He that committeth sin is of the Devil, for the Devil sinned from the beginning," &c. "Whosoever is born of God commits not sin, for his seed abides in him; neither can he sin, because he is born of God" (1 Jn. 3v 9).

Of which words **it is evident that there be two sorts of sinners**, the one being those who mourn, lament, bewail their own wretchedness and misery, unfeignedly before God, confessing not only that their whole nature is sinful and corrupt but also that daily they so offend the Majesty of their God that (they) most justly deserve the torments of hell if Christ's justice, and mediation (which by faith they embrace,) should not deliver them from the wrath to come. To these is not sin imputed, for the blood of Christ purges them from all sin, his advocating and intercession makes to them an entrance to the throne of their Father's grace. To them is given the Spirit of sanctification, which, from time to time, as it reveals their sins, so does it morti-

ly and purge the same. Not that ever in this life God's elect have been, are, or shall be so clean purged from sin, that the flesh lusteth not against the spirit; as sometimes affirmed the Pelagians, and those that then were called Cathari, that is, clean purged, and now also do the Anabaptists renew the same most pestilent error, by the which Christ Jesus, his justice, his office, and perpetual mediation, is utterly destroyed. In such sort, I say, are not God's children purged in this life, that neither they feel sin, neither yet the motions and enticements of the same. But they are so purged, that sin **reigns not** in their mortal bodies. For the seed of God, which is the virtue, power, efficacy, and operation of his Holy Spirit, suffers them not to delight in sin. But as they are first called from darkness to light, and from the bondage of Satan to the liberty of God's children, so when they sin, (as there is none that sins not,) they are called again by true repentance to their former society and fellowship with Christ Jesus. **The death of such sinners did God never will; neither yet can he will.** For from all eternity they were his elect children, whom he gave to his dear son to be His inheritance, whom the Son received into his protection and safeguard; to whom he has manifested, and to the end shall manifest himself, and the loving kindness of his heavenly Father; in whose hearts he writes the law of God, and makes them to walk in his commandments, ever thirsting to a further and more perfect justice than they find within themselves by reason of their corruption. The death, I say, of *these* sinners God wills not, but he wills that they repent and live. The Apostle Saint Peter says, "The Lord that has promised is not slow; but he is long suffering toward us, while that he wills none to perish, but will receive all to repentance." (2 Pt. 3 v 9). The Apostle here means not that all without exception shall be received to life by true repentance, but that the cause why God so long defers (as it were) the extreme judgement, is, that the elect number of God's children may be complete, (as answer was given to those that cried under the altar, to be revenged upon the tyrannies that dwell on the earth,) of these his elect children God wills none to perish, as before is said.¹⁰

But there is **another sort of sinner**, far different from these. For neither are they displeased with themselves neither hate their iniquity, but against God's express commandments furiously they run, with Cain to murder the innocent, with Pharaoh to oppress the people of God, with Judas to betray the known and professed Veritie; and, finally, so delight they in all filthiness and impiety, that they cannot repent. The eyes of such be blinded, their hearts are hardened, they are given over unto a reprobate mind. And for them does not Christ Jesus pray, (Jn. 17 : 9) and therefore they can nothing but headlong run from evil to worse, as the Devil (to whose tyranny

¹⁰ Knox interprets 2 Pet. 3:9 exactly contra. Rev. D. Silversides and the modern phalanx of moderate "calvinists". With Knox also is Abraham Kuyper, A. W. Pink, Turretin: Institutes 4: Quest.XVII:para. xxxix. ; Owen: Works VI p.262; p.451; Works X p.348; Works: XII p.559. Calvin is rather superficial in his commentary on this text, but in Inst. III: 24: 16 is certainly close to Knox, contra Silversides' use of Calvin here in the debate. Again, modern moderate marrowized "Calvinism" is seen to be compromised, penetrated and poisoned with Arminian-cum-Amyraldian tenets, distinct from and at loggerheads with true Biblical and Reformation Calvinism.

they are committed) does drive them, till finally they come to perdition; which end was appointed unto them, *not against* God's will, but **by His will immutable** in his eternal counsel. For no less wills he that the severity of his judgements be seen in the vessels of wrath, than that the riches of his grace be praised in the vessels of mercy. Storm and rage, spew fourth your venom and blaspheme, till ye provoke God's vengeance at once to be poured forth upon your own heads; this sentence will he never retract. He will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he makes hardhearted. **That God in himself hath but one will, which is holy, just, and permanent, that in him there is no contrary; that he is faithful, and does perform whatsoever he promises.** What we understand by God's secret will, and how he tempts no man, I have before sufficiently declared. And therefore I will not trouble the reader with the repetition of the same. Now, let us hear what is your judgement of us, and how you extol yourselves.

Christ's intention to die for all men and for the whole world, that is, for all sorts of sinners in the world, and so for sinners of *my* kind, may every poor sinner in particular think within himself. Here is an universal encouragement unto all from a true and real ground, and drawn from the will and intention, as well as from the power and all-sufficiency of Christ, which I shall make good from Scripture; for he hath died for all sorts of persons, there is no condition excluded. For this I take 1 Tim. ii. 6, "**Who gave himself a ransom for all,**" so, ver. 4, "**Who will have all men to be saved.**" The meaning must needs be of all *sorts*, not of all *persons*; for besides that the Apostle's *all* can be no more than Christ's *many*,—Matt. xx. 28, "**The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many,**"—this very text hath abundance of light to give itself, if we look to the context either before or behind: before, there is an exhortation to pray "**for all men,**" ver. 1; which, although the Arminians make an argument that all men is meant of all persons, and not only of all sorts, both in that verse and ver. 4, 6, because, say they, we ought to pray for all men universally *pro singulis generum*, and not only for all sorts; yet it is indeed an argument for the contrary. For to pray for all men, without exception of any person, is not commanded, but we find the contrary commanded. Jeremiah was forbidden to pray or make intercession for the obstinate, incorrigible Jews, Jer. vii. 16, xi. 14; xiv. 11. God would not have Samuel to mourn for Saul after he was rejected of the Lord, 1 Sam. xvi. 1; and we ought not to pray for such as sin unto death, i. e., the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, 1 John v. 16. Paul is so far from praying for Alexander the coppersmith, that he imprecates the vengeance of God upon him, 2 Tim. iv. 14. We may not pray for the Pope, who is the great antichrist and son of perdition; neither may we pray for, but against Babylon, especially after the people of God are out of her. We are bidden pray for *our* enemies, but *not* for the malicious, incorrigible enemies of Christ. Wherefore, when the Apostle bids us pray "**for all men,**" his meaning is, that we should exclude no degree nor kind of men, great or small, Jew or Gentile, bond or free, etc., and so he doth upon the matter explain himself in the very next words, "**For kings and for all in authority.**"

George Gillespie: Works Vol. 2. p.118