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Predestination: A Comparative Analysis of the Theology of A. W. Pink in Relation to the Westminster Confession of Faith

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PREDESTINATION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF
THE THEOLOGY OF A. W. PINK IN RELATION
TO THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Theology

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The subject matter of this dissertation concerns the doctrine of predestination in the theology of Arthur W. Pink. The study will include a comparison of his view to the Westminster Confession of Faith. Several areas of preliminary consideration must be presented before the primary subject can be approached.

Introducing Arthur W. Pink

Who was Arthur Walkington Pink? A full summary of his life will be given later. At this point a general introduction to the man would be helpful. Others have recorded the following concerning him:

. . . one of the most prolific Christian writers of this century . . .¹

The life of A. W. Pink inevitably reminds one of similar instances that are to be found in Church history of men whose work was passed over by their own generation only to be prized by those who followed.²

¹Publisher's Foreward to The Sovereignty of God by Arthur W. Pink, British rev. ed. (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), p. 1.

²Ibid.

The written ministry of A. W. Pink was one of the least noticed facts of major significance in the first half of the twentieth century.³

Mr. Pink is known throughout Christendom as one of the most devout Bible students and expositors since the days of Spurgeon and Meyer.⁴

The well-loved writings of Arthur W. Pink can easily be summarized by two words: simple and scriptural.⁵

Arthur W. Pink has become known as a masterful expositor of the Word of God.⁶

There are some men who are in the habit of keeping their light under a bushel. Some men ought to. However, there comes a time when some of these hidden lights ought to have their bushels ignited and consumed. Such a person is Arthur W. Pink. Mr. Pink has left us a wonderful written ministry on the Word of God. His works show hours of study; each line is filled with information and blessing. His books are not shallow. His studies fill the soul with "strong meat" which needs to be well digested.⁷

The reading of the works of Arthur W. Pink is a spiritual treat as well as an intellectual exercise. Small

³Publisher's Foreward to Profiting from the Word by Arthur W. Pink (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), p. 7.

⁴Comments from the front cover of The Atonement by Arthur W. Pink (Swengel, Pa.: Reiner Publications, n.d.).

⁵A special note in the front of The Application of Scriptures: A Biblical Refutation of Dispensationalism by Arthur W. Pink (Canton, Ga.: Word of Truth Publications, 1977).

⁶Introduction by the publishers to Practical Christianity by Arthur W. Pink (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), p. 7.

⁷Comments by Ralph L. Keiper on the inside back cover of The Doctrines of Election and Justification by Arthur W. Pink (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974).

wonder that the author has a large and faithful following among the general readers and Bible students alike.⁸

He was, in some ways, a Puritan born out of time.⁹

A. W. Pink, a master at making the Bible read like tomorrow's newspaper, . . .¹⁰

A summary of the above statements reveals the following concerning A. W. Pink. He was one of the most productive Christian writers of this century, yet his work was unknown or unappreciated by his own generation. Since his death, his works have been published and many today have come to value his expository and theological ability. He is even placed by some in the same category of the great preachers and expositors of the past, such as the Puritans, C. H. Spurgeon and F. B. Meyer.

The productivity of his pen can be seen by looking at the primary sources of the bibliography of this paper. He wrote expositively on the following Biblical books or portions of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, the Ten Commandments, the life of Elijah, the life of Elisha, the life of David, the Sermon on the Mount, the gospel of John, Romans 7, the prayers of

⁸Comments from the front cover of Spiritual Union and Communion by Arthur W. Pink (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971).

⁹Comments from the back cover of Gleanings in Exodus by Arthur W. Pink (Chicago: Moody Press, n.d.).

¹⁰Comments from the front cover of Gleanings from Elisha by Arthur W. Pink (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972).

Paul, and the book of Hebrews. Some of the theological subjects he explored include the doctrine of God, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of the Scriptures, the doctrine of salvation, regeneration, repentance, perseverance, the Law of God, practical Christian living, Bible prophecy, the atonement, election, justification and sanctification.

The fact that his work was unknown and unappreciated by his own generation will be seen in the survey of his life to be presented later in this chapter. A few of his books were published before his death, but most of those were from his early ministry. His later ministry (from the mid-thirties on) found him in isolation in England and later in Scotland. During this period he did not preach except a few times, nor did he publish anything of major import except his periodical titled Studies in the Scriptures. That publication hardly ever had a circulation of over a thousand persons throughout all the world. Pink was truly a man out of step with his times.

Mr. Pink's view of the Scriptures, of doctrine, and of Christian practice was not the view of the twentieth century, nor even of many of his contemporary evangelicals. Few men have traveled so widely and yet remained so uninfluenced by prevailing opinions and accepted customs. Independent Bible study convinced him that much of modern evangelism was defective at its very foundations; when Puritan and Reformed books were being thrown out, he advanced the majority of their principles with untiring zeal.¹¹

¹¹Comments from the back cover of Exodus.

The fact that he has a rather large following today can be seen from a few statistics concerning the sale of his books. Baker Book House has published twenty-two different titles by Pink with a combined total sales of almost 350,000 copies.¹² Banner of Truth Trust has printed thus far 92,000 copies of The Sovereignty of God, 65,000 copies of The Life of Elijah, and 54,000 copies of Profiting from the Word.¹³ Zondervan Publishing House has published several works of Pink, but only one is still in print, that is, the Exposition of the Gospel of John. Zondervan reports that book is selling even now between 1500 and 2000 copies a year.¹⁴ It is clear from these statistics that A. W. Pink is receiving considerable recognition in our day.

Whether he belongs in the same category as an expositor with the Puritans and other great writers of the past is a more subjective question. No attempt will be made to answer that query at this point. Judgment can be made by the reader at the end of this paper. Instead, attention now turns to a fuller presentation of his life.

¹²Letter from Richard Baker, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2 August 1979.

¹³Letter from Mervyn T. Barter, The Banner of Truth Trust Publishers, Edinburgh, 10 August 1979.

¹⁴Letter from James E. Ruark, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 30 July 1979.

The Life of A. W. Pink

To chronicle the life of Arthur W. Pink in detail is not an easy task for several reasons. First, he lived and died to a great extent in obscurity. Interest in his life and writings developed only several years after his death. This means that while he lived few persons showed any interest in obtaining the biographical details of his life. Second, there was a feature of his personality that makes a detailed account of his life difficult to produce. When asked by one correspondent for some biographical details he replied:

It would require more time than I have available to supply the information you desire, being a long story if it were to be intelligible; nor do I think the recounting of it would be of any real help to you. A sovereign God does not act uniformly, and he deals in very different ways with different ones.¹⁵

In the same letter he speaks of an opposition to preachers advertising themselves, and notes that he has never permitted a picture of himself to appear on any announcement of his ministry.¹⁶ He states in another context that he was reared in a home that taught him it was bad manners for one to speak of himself.¹⁷ In light of Pink's obscure life and his

¹⁵Arthur W. Pink, Letters of A. W. Pink, a letter to Lowell Green, 3 June 1934 (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1978), pp. 37-38.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁷Arthur W. Pink, "Our Annual Letter," Studies in the Scriptures 24 (December 1945):284.

self-effacing attitude, the details of his life, therefore are not easily available.

Several have attempted to piece together the details of Pink's life. A series of articles appeared in Reformation Today,¹⁸ but those were brief, and for the most part were gleaned from the personal notes and the annual letters of the periodical edited by Pink. Another more recent attempt is in production, but only half of it has appeared in print at the time of the writing of this paper.¹⁹

Other details of Pink's life can be gathered from his total writings. At various times he opens his heart and speaks of his own life to illustrate some point he is stressing in his exposition of Scripture. Sometimes these references can be placed chronologically into his life. At other times these references give information that is impossible to relate chronologically to his life.

This present work will not seek to present an exhaustive treatment of the life of A. W. Pink (though the author has gone through all the published works of Pink and most of the periodicals noting biographical references). Rather the presentation of the life of Pink in this section will be selective in light of the purpose of this paper.

¹⁸See the bibliography for notation of these five articles.

¹⁹Iain Murray, "Arthur W. Pink," The Banner of Truth 203-204 (1980).

The Early Life

Arthur W. Pink was born in England on April 1, 1886 in the city of Nottingham to Thomas and Agnes Pink.²⁰ His mother was a godly woman, who he says " . . . dedicated him to God's service before he was born."²¹ His father was also a godly man who sought to rear his children in the way of the Lord. Pink speaks of his father as a busy merchant (and so it seems a very successful one also) who strictly observed the Sabbath. Pink says of his father:

And today, the writer is unfeignedly thankful to God that he was brought up in a home where the holy Sabbath was so "strictly"--scripturally--kept. The day began by our father reading to us God's Word. In the morning the family attended preaching service. In the afternoon father and mother read to us out of spiritual books. Quite a little of the time was spent in the singing of hymns . . . And our father was not a preacher!²²

Pink says in the same context that no business letters were ever opened in his home as a child on the Sabbath, neither were Sunday newspapers ever allowed. Besides that, all toys were put away on Saturday night, and pictorial editions of Bunyon's Pilgrim's Progress and other spiritual books replaced

²⁰Iain Murray, The Banner of Truth, pp. 7-8.

²¹Arthur W. Pink, "Caring for Children," Studies in the Scriptures 10 (June 1931):138.

²²Ibid., p. 140.

them. The Pink family comprised three children in all, but not much is known of the other two.²³

In speaking of his family and early home training, Pink makes other references in various places. He says that he had many things to praise the Lord for, among which he lists, godly parents who cared for him in his infancy and trained him in the way he should go spiritually.²⁴ When speaking of the story of Joseph, he says that story was "indelibly impressed" on his memory from his mother's knee and from the lips of his Sunday School teacher.²⁵ In another context he refers to some lines of poetry taught to him by his mother, lines he says that stayed with him through the years.

I often say my prayers, but do I ever pray?
And do the wishes of my heart, go with the words I say?
I may as well kneel down, and worship gods of stone,
As offer to the living God, a prayer of words alone.²⁶

Pink's education as a growing child seems to have been extensive. In a letter to Lowell Green he shows displeasure for the choirs and song services of the churches of the day. He closes his sharp remarks on this subject by saying, "And

²³Ray Levick, "The Life of A. W. Pink, Part III" Reformation Today 38 (July-August 1977):33.

²⁴Arthur W. Pink, An Exposition of Hebrews (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1954), p. 1216.

²⁵Arthur W. Pink, Gleanings in Genesis, 2 vols. in one (Chicago: Moody Press, 1922), 2:141.

²⁶Arthur W. Pink, Profiting from the Word (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), p. 49.

I am not a music-hater, but a trained musician, both vocally and instrumentally!"²⁷ Not being one to boast or ever overstate a matter, this no doubt means his early childhood included musical instruction. One article says that one of his closest friends, who was an opera singer, urged Pink to train for the same profession.²⁸

In other statements throughout his writings, Pink evidences a wide knowledge of many subjects. He shows a knowledge of literature when he refers to Milton's view of Satan²⁹ and when he quotes the words which Goethe put into the mouth of Mephistopholes.³⁰ He evidences a knowledge of history when he mentions the horrors of Paris during the French Revolution and the afflictions in Russia when the Czars were overthrown³¹ and again when he speaks of the kind treatment of the Jews by the Anglo-Saxon race and their cruel treatment during the Middle Ages by Spain.³² He indicates he has studied the poets and philosophers of early Greece in one context, and further,

²⁷Pink, Letters, a letter to Lowell Green, 23 January 1935, p. 62.

²⁸Murray, Banner, pp. 10-11.

²⁹Arthur W. Pink, Satan and His Gospel (Swengel, Pa.: Reiner Publications, n.d.), p. 9.

³⁰Ibid., p. 1.

³¹Arthur W. Pink, Practical Christianity, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), p. 170.

³²Arthur W. Pink, "Life of Abraham," Studies in the Scriptures 8 (February 1929):38.

in the same place, that he possesses a knowledge of the religions of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Confucianism.³³ In another section he refers to philology, art, science, ethics, history and government in a manner that indicates some knowledge of these subjects.³⁴

The above statements (and there are many others) indicate a strong education as a child, especially in light of the fact that Pink had no college or seminary training. It is possible that he learned these matters after his conversion to Christianity, as it is known that in his ministerial days he was an avid reader. The only other possibility was that he used sources in his writing that made references to these matters, which he incorporated into his writings. This is a definite possibility, as will be seen later as his method of writing will be discussed.

The Conversion to Christianity

It is known from his own statements that A. W. Pink entered business at the age of sixteen and attained considerable success.³⁵ It is also known that at some point of his life about this time he became involved in spiritualism and

³³Arthur W. Pink, Gleanings from the Scriptures--Man's Total Depravity (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), p. 341.

³⁴Pink, Genesis, 1:50.

³⁵Pink, Letters, a letter to Lowell Green, 3 June 1934, p. 38.

theosophy.³⁶ He was such a rising star in the Theosophy Society, founded by Madame Blavatsky, that it had been decided to give him status as one of the chiefs of the movement. At an international gathering of the group in England in 1908, Pink spoke to the assembly at the first of the week and was scheduled to speak again on Friday evening. His involvement in the movement deeply troubled his father. When he returned home from his first message that week, his father quoted to him Prov. 14:12, which says, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." This portion of God's Word shook Pink deeply, sending him into seclusion for the remainder of the week. He stayed in his room without food until he came down on Friday with Bible in hand to go and preach the gospel to the Theosophy Society meeting. One can surely imagine the pandemonium his action brought to the society's meeting.

Pink's only public testimonies about his conversion to Christianity speak in general terms, but agree with the above. He says in one place:

This writer sought not the Lord, but hated, opposed, and endeavored to banish Him from his thoughts; but the Lord sought him, smote him to the ground (like Saul of Tarsus), subdued his vile rebellion, and made him willing in the day of His power. That is Grace indeed--sovereign, amazing, triumphant grace.³⁷

³⁶Murray, Banner, pp. 10-11.

³⁷Arthur W. Pink, The Doctrines of Election and Justification (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), p. 173.

He states in another place that he was apprehended by Christ when totally unconscious of his extreme need and when he had no desire for a Saviour.³⁸

Pink's reasons for never relating his conversion experience are seen in the following lucid statement:

We shall not then relate our own spiritual history. First, because we are not now writing to satisfy the unhealthy curiosity of a certain class of readers who delight in perusing such things. Second, because we regard the private experience of the Christian as being too sacred to expose to the public view. It has long seemed to us that there is such a thing as spiritual unchastity: the inner workings of the soul are not a fit subject to be laid bare before others--"The heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy" (Prov. 14:10). Third, because we are not so conceited as to imagine our own particular conversion and the ups and downs of our Christian life are of sufficient importance to narrate. Fourth, because there are probably some features about our conversion and some things in our subsequent spiritual history which have been duplicated in very few other cases, and therefore they would only be calculated to mislead others if they should look for a parallel in themselves. Finally, because as intimated above, we deem it more honoring to God and far more helpful to souls to confine ourselves to the teaching of His Word on this subject.³⁹

The Early Study and Ministry

Following his conversion, A. W. Pink plunged immediately into the ministry of the Word. His first sermon was shortly after his conversion.⁴⁰ It was from Rom. 1:16 and was to a

³⁸ Arthur W. Pink, Exposition of the Gospel of John, 3 vols. in one (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1968), 1:172.

³⁹ Arthur W. Pink, Spiritual Growth (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), p. 34.

⁴⁰ Pink, Letters, p. 124.

congregation of seven hundred persons in his hometown of Nottingham. Several other facts are clear concerning his first few years as a Christian. First, he was urged by his pastor and Christian friends to go to seminary.⁴¹ He refused this encouragement, though it was difficult to go against his pastor and friends, because the school they suggested was harboring some serious errors doctrinally, according to Pink. In 1910 he did enroll at Moody Bible Institute. He enrolled on June 1 of that year, but left before the completion of even the one summer term.⁴² His reason for leaving Moody is not known. However, as the story of his life unfolds, it will become clear that it could have been his strong individualistic spirit that made it difficult (if not impossible) for him to submit to any human authority. Another possibility is suggested by a writer who feels he was further advanced in Bible study (in both methods and discipline, as well as knowledge) than the rest of the students and the level of instruction given to the average student at the Bible institute.⁴³

There is abundant evidence that he was a dedicated student of the Bible and an avid reader of other books, especially the expositions of others on Bible subjects and books.

⁴¹Arthur W. Pink, Gleanings from Elisha (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), p. 24.

⁴²Letter from Roy Shervy, Director of Admissions, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, 23 January 1980.

⁴³Murray, Banner, p. 14.

He became a self-educated man theologically. Concerning his study of the Bible, he says that in his early years he read through the Bible three times a year, continuing this plan for ten years to thoroughly familiarize himself with the Word of God.⁴⁴ Concerning his other reading, especially theological books, he stated in 1935 (about twenty-seven years after his conversion) that he had read " . . . more than one million pages of religious literature, a goodly proportion of which was 'theological.'"⁴⁵

Even though he does evidence a wide range of theological knowledge and Biblical knowledge, Pink also evidences a lack in some areas which could have been corrected by schooling. Among other things he seeks to use the Greek and Hebrew in his exposition, but it is clear that he is not trained in these languages, but rather has to rely on others. He relies heavily on Bagster's Interlinear and strongly recommends it to those with a desire to get into the Word in depth.⁴⁶ He sees it as a literal, word-for-word translation, yes, even the best translation available.⁴⁷ He believes the word order in the Greek is authoritative, and therefore must be evidenced

⁴⁴Pink, Letters, a letter to Lowell Green, 18 December 1933, p. 23.

⁴⁵Ibid., a letter to John C. Blackburn, 11 November 1935, p. 74.

⁴⁶Pink, John, 1:385.

⁴⁷Pink, Hebrews, p. 197.

in the translation.⁴⁸ He felt lexicons were over-rated as an essential in interpreting Scripture.⁴⁹ No doubt lexicons contain information of great interest to etymologists, but it is more important in studying Scripture to see how the Holy Spirit uses a word in the Bible. He was convinced that textual criticism was not of great importance and somewhat fruitless. He said concerning John 8:

The one who is led and taught by the Spirit of God need not waste valuable time examining ancient manuscripts for the purpose of discovering whether or not this portion of the Bible is really a part of God's own Word.⁵⁰

Speaking of Romans he said:

So important did the apostle Paul under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, deem this doctrine, that the very first of his epistles in the New Testament is devoted to a full exposition thereof.⁵¹

This epistle may have been the first of Paul's epistles in the order of the canon, but it was not the first epistle written by Paul.

The above considerations make it clear that Pink was not a trained scholar. His writing would have been enhanced had he been, and would have carried greater respect and acceptance among scholars.

⁴⁸Arthur W. Pink, Gleanings from Paul--Prayers of Paul (Chicago: Moody Press, 1967), p. 173.

⁴⁹Arthur W. Pink, Interpretation of Scripture (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), p. 115.

⁵⁰Pink, John, 2:9.

⁵¹Pink, Election, p. 188.

The question follows rather naturally here concerning the method of writing that he followed. If he was not a trained scholar who knew the original languages, what was his method of Bible study and writing? First, he came to the English Authorized Version with the use of Young's concordance, the Greek Interlinear, and the American Revised Version for an exhaustive study of the passage on his own without the help of commentaries.⁵² He says in another place that his method consists of asking the text various questions.⁵³ Elsewhere he stresses his use of prayer as he says, "Prayer and study, study and prayer, are called for; and they demand the exercise of faith and patience . . . "⁵⁴ For the study of a word he used the concordance " . . . so as to find out how it is actually employed on the sacred page."⁵⁵ Having completed his own lengthy meditation on the passage, he then consulted the commentaries.⁵⁶

In some of his works he appears to have by-passed this method or at least to have altered it to some extent. In one of his earliest books he says:

⁵²Pink, Interpretation, p. 25.

⁵³Arthur W. Pink, "Great Peace," Studies in the Scriptures 7 (August 1928):181.

⁵⁴Pink, Paul, p. 47.

⁵⁵Pink, Hebrews, p. 948.

⁵⁶Pink, Elisha, p. 191 and Interpretation, p. 25.

We wish to be clearly understood that there is nothing in these pages except that which we have ourselves first received. We lay no claim at all to originality. We have read diligently many works on prophetic themes and have sought to "prove all things" and to "hold fast that which is good." It is impossible for us now to do more than make this general acknowledgment of our indebtedness to other students of the Word. We have gleaned in many fields, gathering a fragrant flower here and there, and all that we now attempt is to arrange these in simple form, leaving our readers to admire the products of the labors of others into which we have entered.⁵⁷

Commenting on his work on the gospel of John, he says that he prepared a chapter each month, reading over forty commentaries and expositions, considering each verse carefully to supplement his own findings.⁵⁸ In his commentary on Hebrews he acknowledges he read between thirty and forty commentaries on Hebrews, and that he would quote them and name them when possible.⁵⁹

To state Pink's method of writing very simply, he was a deep student of the Bible, one who knew his primary text very well. He was also a gleaner, a borrower, and a synthesizer of the works of others. He used the works of others at times to build the framework, and at other times to enforce the content, and still again at other times to do both. His writings abound with quotations from other authors. He recognizes the author but very seldom does he name the book from which the

⁵⁷ Arthur W. Pink, The Redeemer's Return (Ashland, Ky.: Calvary Baptist Book Store, n.d.), p. 8.

⁵⁸ Pink, John, 3:334.

⁵⁹ Pink, Hebrews, p. 9.

quotation comes. Very rarely does he give pagination. Obviously, footnotes in Pink's works are non-existent. In other places (and rather often) he notes that an article or even a whole series of articles is based on a book⁶⁰ or the sermon of another.⁶¹ This method might prompt someone to conclude that the writings of A. W. Pink were no better than the sources which he used, which though not fully accurate, does have a measure of truth to it. He did have strong personal convictions of his own which he would never have violated. However, these convictions were more capable of expression through a stronger vehicle, as he could and often did find it.

Returning to the consideration of his life, it can now be understood why he was a strong dispensational pre-millennialist in his early years in the ministry with a heavy emphasis on the preaching and teaching of prophecy. He admits this fact in his book titled Divine Covenants, admitting first that he was a very strong dispensationalist,⁶² and also that in the years of his spiritual infancy he heard and read nothing but the pre-millennial view of prophecy, readily accepting all his

⁶⁰Pink, Studies in the Scriptures 12 (December 1933): 281.

⁶¹Pink, Hebrews, pp. 1095, 1171; Practical, p. 136.

⁶²Arthur W. Pink, Divine Covenants (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), p. 78.

spiritual teachers said.⁶³ He says he was misled in this view for fifteen years until he found the Puritans.⁶⁴ This emphasis, coupled with Pink's ability as a communicator, appears to have opened many doors of ministry for him.

The First Trip to the United States

In 1910, just two years after his conversion, A. W. Pink came to the United States. It was at this point that he went to Moody Bible Institute, only to drop out before completing even a summer session. From Chicago he journeyed to Colorado and became pastor of a church in a mining camp.⁶⁵ This was his first pastorate. It was during this time that he wrote on the inside page of his Bible the words of Deut. 4:2: "Ye shall not add unto the Word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it."⁶⁶ He states in the same context that it was his practice to read this immediately before entering the pulpit for many years to follow.

From Colorado he went to Garden City, California, then to Albany, Kentucky, and then to Burkesville, Kentucky where

⁶³Ibid., p. 222.

⁶⁴Pink, Letters, a letter to Lowell Green, 7 July 1935, p. 65.

⁶⁵Pink, Hebrews, p. 1173.

⁶⁶Pink, "Our Annual Letter," Studies in the Scriptures 23 (December 1944):284.

he pastored two churches at the same time.⁶⁷ How long he stayed in these places is not certain, for the information concerning this period of his life is very skimpy. It is known that on November 16, 1916 he married a twenty-three year old girl in Kentucky named Vera E. Russell.⁶⁸

The years of 1917 through 1919 found the Pinks in Spartanburg, South Carolina as he served as pastor of the Northside Baptist Church.⁶⁹ Here he wrote what some consider to be his best work, and even a classic in Christian literature, The Sovereignty of God.⁷⁰ This work is a very strong Calvinistic presentation, so strong that the publisher had a difficult time disposing of the first edition.⁷¹ It was republished again in 1921, and Pink says in the foreward of that second edition:

It is now two years since the first edition of this work was presented to the Christian public. Its reception has been far more favorable than the author had expected. Many have notified him of the help and blessing received from a perusal of his attempts to expound what is admittedly a difficult subject. For every word of appreciation we return hearty thanks to Him in Whose light we alone "see light." A few have condemned the book in unqualified terms, and these we commend to God

⁶⁷Alan McKerrell, "The Early Life of A. W. Pink," Reformation Today 11 (August--October 1972):4.

⁶⁸Murray, Banner, p. 16.

⁶⁹McKerrell, Reformation, p. 5.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

and to the Word of His grace, remembering that it is written, "a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven" (John 3:27). Others have sent us friendly criticisms and these have been weighed carefully, and we trust that, in consequence, this revised edition will be unto those who are members of the household of faith more profitable than the former one.⁷²

In 1919 the Pinks moved to Swengel, Union County, Pennsylvania, but how long they spent there is not certain.⁷³ In the years that followed until 1925 they traveled the nation from one end to the other. Pink was up and down the Pacific coast for some months preaching, then back to Swengel, then to Los Angeles, and then back up the coast to the city of Seattle again.⁷⁴ According to one of his letters, he was back in Philadelphia once again on November 6, 1924.⁷⁵ He left for California again in early January of 1925 for a series of Bible conferences, only to leave to go to Australia on March 3 of the same year.⁷⁶

The Periodical

Before taking up in summary fashion the events of Pink's life in Australia, mention must be made of one of the most

⁷²Arthur W. Pink, The Sovereignty of God, with a foreword by the author (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 7.

⁷³McKerrell, Reformation, p. 4.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Pink, Letters, a letter to Will Talliaferro, 6 November 1924, p. 11.

⁷⁶McKerrell, Reformation, p. 5.

important events in his life recorded in 1922 as he was still in the United States. This was the year his periodical titled Studies in the Scriptures was born. Birth is probably a good word here, because the little publication was carefully nursed by both Mr. and Mrs. Pink for the next thirty years.

The periodical was begun at the suggestion of Pink's publisher, I. C. Herendeen, who agreed to do the clerical work.⁷⁷ In this same context Pink says the publication had just over a thousand subscriptions the first year. Near the end of the second year, the publisher resigned, leaving the Pinks with a decision to stop publication or to go on alone in the work. In the text just mentioned above, Pink says this was a time when preaching invitations were very few as his messages were meeting with little acceptance by professing Christians, which was quite a change from his earlier ministry. He had pastored twelve years, he says, and then had been engaged in Bible conference work all over the United States, preaching to one to two thousand people and at times speaking to over a hundred preachers. He had published at this point seven books and many booklets.

After much prayer the decision was made to continue the publication of the periodical. Many problems remained. He

⁷⁷Pink, "Our Semi-Jubilee Letter," Studies in the Scriptures 25 (December 1946):283.

had no board or group or individual to stand behind the work financially. The whole project was a labor of love, and neither Pink nor his wife took anything for their services.⁷⁸ His wife could not type (nor could Pink), but she soon learned, and was the typist for the work for all its remaining years.⁷⁹

After five years the subscription price was removed, and the publication was sent to anyone desiring it, provided they wrote once a year declaring that desire.⁸⁰ If no such request came, the name was dropped. Annually several hundred names were removed from the mailing list, and new names had to be sought to sustain publication. For this reason the paper almost folded several times, and Pink often urged the readers to pray for the circulation.

The purpose of the periodical was to feed God's people who hungered for the Word but could not find a faithful ministry in their area.⁸¹ As far as Pink was concerned, that was in almost every place. He was convinced (and that conviction increased as the years passed) that the preaching of

⁷⁸Pink, "Our Annual Letter," Studies in the Scriptures 12 (December 1933):286.

⁷⁹Pink, "Welcome Tidings," Studies in the Scriptures 16 (July 1937):221.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Pink, "Why the Magazine Is Published," Studies in the Scriptures 8 (July 1929):145.

the day was a failure, as was the literature. Pink was convinced that there were many preachers speaking topically, but few were preaching expositively. As a result God's people were starving for the Word of God. Therefore the magazine centered upon the exposition of Scripture, and for this Pink made no apologies. Along with exposition, he sought to make strong practical application to his readers' lives.⁸² He loathed the sensational and refused to deal with popular subjects, even though that would have increased the circulation. He says:

Out of the hundreds of names which we removed from our list at the end of last year (many of whom we fondly hoped to hear from) hardly any wrote requesting that the Studies be sent to them again this year. We know quite well that if we would devote an article each month to "the Signs of the Times," a page to "Questions (on the Bible) and Answers," and would introduce one or two other such things, our little magazine would be popular in a much wider circle than we now reach. But it is our aim not to tickle the ear, but to search the conscience; not to pander unto the sensational-monger, but to feed Christ's hungry sheep; not to please empty professors, but to make God's children more and more out of love with themselves.⁸³

As previously stated, the periodical began in 1922. It continued through the year of 1953, a year after Pink's death. Eventually, as will be seen, it became his whole life, his whole ministry, and his whole purpose of existence.

⁸²Pink, "Welcome Tidings," Studies in the Scriptures 10 (July 1931):163.

⁸³Pink, "Our Annual Letter," Studies in the Scriptures 12 (December 1933):285.

Ministry in Australia

Leaving the United States on March 3, 1925, the Pinks arrived in Australia on March 24 of the same year.⁸⁴ His ministry was an instant success and continued so for two years. He had more invitations than he could fill, and was booked several months in advance. Attendance swelled in every place he preached, and God granted liberty, according to Pink, to preach His Word. He preached five or six times a week even when it was a hundred degrees in the shade. Along with this demanding schedule, he also edited the magazine and kept up with a heavy load of correspondence.⁸⁵ The accomplishment of all this work made it necessary for him to stay up many nights until two o'clock in the morning.⁸⁶ He says in the context which describes this load of labor that these were three of the busiest and happiest years of his life.

In the passing of the days, the Pinks found that life was not always sweet in Australia.⁸⁷ On August 8, 1925 he was invited to read a paper on "Human Responsibility" at the Baptist Ministers' Fraternal. After reading the paper, he defended his position for over an hour. In the September 9

⁸⁴McKerrell, Reformation, p. 5.

⁸⁵Pink, Hebrews, p. 711.

⁸⁶Pink, "Our Jubilee Letter," Studies in the Scriptures 25 (December 1946):283.

⁸⁷McKerrell, Reformation, p. 7.

issue of The Australian Baptist it was reported that the Fraternal at its next meeting had censored Pink. The resolution read:

Having heard conflicting statements concerning the doctrinal position of Dr. A. W. Pink, at the invitation of the Baptist Ministers' Fraternal of N.S.W. he stated his views in a paper at a meeting held on Tuesday, September 8. As a result of this paper and the questions and discussion that followed, the Ministers' Fraternal unanimously resolved that they could not endorse Dr. Pink.⁸⁸

For a period of time he then pastored the Belvoir Street Particular Baptist Church in Sydney. Eventually he was forced to resign that church, as he was accused of holding to the doctrine of "free will". The Baptist Ministers' Fraternal had accused him of denying that man had a free will, while now the Belvoir Street Church accused him of believing in free will. The deacons of this church denied the universal offer of the gospel to the lost and the responsibility of the lost man to believe. Pink held to both.

On September 27, 1927 an Independent Church was formed at Summer Hill, a suburb of Sydney. Twenty-six members of the Belvoir Street Particular Baptist Church formed the new church with A. W. Pink as the pastor. In a very short time the membership doubled as people were converted and added to the church.

About this time also, the Reformation Today article reports, Pink renounced the title of "Doctor", having been

⁸⁸ Ibid.

given somewhere earlier an honorary doctorate. Pink's own testimony seems to differ from this report. He says he was offered an honorary doctorate, but after much prayer, felt he must refuse to accept it.⁸⁹ He states that many friends out of respect had called him "Doctor," but now he asks them to stop. He states that he prefers to be called simply "Brother."

The Return to England

Shortly after the organization of the new church, Pink became convinced that it had started incorrectly.⁹⁰ Therefore he resigned on March 25, 1928, and then sailed for England on July 20 of the same year. He was convinced that the Lord had brought him to Australia, but the work He had intended was now accomplished.⁹¹ In this same context he admits that he received no human call or invitation to go to England, and that there was no open door as far as he could see. He states that he knew very few of the Lord's people in London, having been absent from England for eighteen years. He further realized that anyone who knew him would probably be prejudiced against him because he is no longer affiliated with any denomination. Even so, Pink stated that he was not

⁸⁹Pink, Studies in the Scriptures 9 (April 1930):94.

⁹⁰McKerrell, Reformation, p. 9.

⁹¹Pink, "Get Thee Out," Studies in the Scriptures 7 (September 1928):215.

worried, but only saw this as an opportunity for God to show His faithfulness. Under these circumstances Pink sailed for England, leaving the small church and his last pastorate. The church continued for a year or so after Pink left, but then closed.⁹²

The Pinks arrived in London on August 30, 1928, and were graciously provided a home by one of the readers of the magazine.⁹³ He was very hopeful of opportunities for oral ministry. His expectations never materialized as he records the following words with some disappointment: "Since Oct. 7 we have had no preaching engagements. A number of doors could have been entered, were we prepared to compromise a little; but we dare not . . ." ⁹⁴ He notes again later: "Since Dec. 1 we have been in complete seclusion, and, from a spiritual viewpoint, in a 'desert place.'" ⁹⁵ During this stay in England, he had only two speaking engagements in all.⁹⁶ He devoted his time to study and writing for the periodical.

⁹²Ray Levick, "The Life of A. W. Pink--Part 2," Reformation Today 36 (March-April 1977):19.

⁹³Pink, "A Gracious Meeting," Studies in the Scriptures 7 (December 1928):287.

⁹⁴Pink, "A Personal Word," Studies in the Scriptures 8 (March 1929):71.

⁹⁵Pink, "A Personal Word," Studies in the Scriptures 8 (June 1929):143.

⁹⁶Pink, "A Personal Word," Studies in the Scriptures 8 (January 1929):23.

The Second Trip to the United States

The above and other circumstances convinced Pink that it was the Lord's will for him to return to the United States.

He wrote the following on April 11, 1929:

The Lord has now made it plain that He would have us return to the U.S.A. where, in the past, we laboured in the Gospel for upwards of twelve years. Quite unsought by us, several invitations have come to hand from America, asking the editor to conduct Bible conferences in different places. As all doors in England remain fast closed, we take it that the above requests are intimations of God's will concerning us . . .⁹⁷ God willing we sail from Southampton on May 2 . . .

The Pinks arrived in Morton's Gap, Kentucky on May 30, 1929.⁹⁸ They were met and lovingly welcomed by a group of believers they had ministered to several times in the past. However, that welcome did not last, neither did other churches receive him to minister as he had expected. He placed the blame on the steady advance of apostasy over the Christian scene.⁹⁹ He pictured believers as hollow, with few truly desiring the Word of God. He saw the Bible conferences lacking the true exposition of the Word. He was convinced that the only ones getting crowds were compromising and playing to the fleshly desires of man. He saw the churches as dead, with

⁹⁷Pink, "A Personal Word," Studies in the Scriptures 8 (May 1929):119.

⁹⁸Pink, "A Personal Word," Studies in the Scriptures 8 (July 1929):163-164.

⁹⁹Pink, "A Personal Word," Studies in the Scriptures 8 (December 1929):284.

the Spirit of God departed. He says in another place " . . . we found that those who had run well twelve years previously did so no longer, and instead of enjoying happy fellowship with them, we were a thorn in their side."¹⁰⁰ Even when he did receive an invitation to preach, he often refused it out of personal conviction. He explains why as he says:

When we receive an invitation to hold a meeting in a "church" (?) from which we are satisfied the Lord Himself has departed (Rev. 3:20), we decline it, for it is no place for the servant to be where his Master is not. If a "church" (?) is entirely or even mainly made up of worldlings, we dare not be a partaker of their evil deeds (2 John 2:11). We cannot fellowship the Christ-dishonouring mockery which now masquerades under the shelter of His holy name. We are therefore practically confined to the ministry of our pen.¹⁰¹

A move to California in the middle of 1939 proved to be no more encouraging. He said just before going, "We shall continue walking in separation from the apostate 'churches', for today the Lord is on the outside of practically everything that bears His name" (Rev. 3:20).¹⁰² In the next month of the same year he asks his readers to pray " . . . whether He would have us engage in oral ministry in and around Los Angeles; and that if so, He will direct and provide some place for us."¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰Pink, "Our Semi-Jubilee Letter," Studies in the Scriptures 25 (December 1946):284.

¹⁰¹Pink, "A Personal Word," Studies in the Scriptures 8 (December 1929):284.

¹⁰²Pink, "A Personal Word," Studies in the Scriptures 9 (June 1930):143.

¹⁰³Pink, Studies in the Scriptures 9 (July 1930):167.

In February of 1931 he was invited to speak at a local Baptist Church. Knowing nothing about the church, he concluded it was no better or worse than thousands of others, and therefore he declined the invitation.¹⁰⁴ His suspicion was confirmed by the bulletin left by the one who invited him to speak. He says:

Personally, if the writer were compelled (thank God he is not so) to chose between these two alternatives, conduct Bible conferences in such "churches" as the above, or, return to England and hire himself as a bar-tender at a beer and whiskey saloon, without the slightest hesitation he would select the latter. Why? Because, though a most pernicious thing, the saloon is not run under the holy name of the Lord Jesus, and these so-called churches, with their worldliness and holy hypocrisy are.¹⁰⁵

Pink finally decided to leave Los Angeles and to return to York, Pennsylvania. As he left he called Los Angeles the most wicked city in the world.¹⁰⁶ In the same text he states that he sees that his travels have not been fruitless. He has learned in a greater way that the house of God on earth is in ruin. He has become even more convinced that as a servant of God he must separate himself from all that dishonours God, which includes the corrupt ecclesiastical systems. Only then, he feels, will the Holy Spirit use him.

¹⁰⁴Pink, "Sound the Alarm," Studies in the Scriptures 10 (February 1931):44.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁰⁶Pink, "A Personal Word," Studies in the Scriptures 10 (June 1931):143.

He left California in March of 1931 being forty-five years of age. When back in the east, he continued to urge his readers to come out of the apostate churches. He said:

Our object in referring to the above case is to warn, admonish, and intreat others who are yet members of such "churches" to immediately sever all connection with them. We doubt not that many of the readers of this magazine are yet found in similar associations as the above mentioned Brother. To such we would faithfully and lovingly point out, you are dishonouring Christ, you are disobeying the plain commandments of God, you are endangering your own soul. There is no third alternative: to have fellowship with anything which does not honour Christ, must be to dishonour Him.¹⁰⁷

Seeking to clarify his attitude and statement, he says that he is not urging people to come out of imperfect churches. He admits there has never been a perfect church. Rather, he says, he is speaking of hypocritical and counterfeit churches.¹⁰⁸

Other statements of this kind are found throughout this period of Pink's life. Not only does he speak against the churches, but also refers to preachers and other periodicals. Here are a few of his comments:

Personally the writer very much doubts if two out of each thousand of the preachers, ministers, and missionaries, the world over, have been Divinely called! Many of them are self-appointed, some of them sent out by men, most of them raised up by Satan.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Pink, "Sound the Alarm," Studies in the Scriptures 11 (March 1932):69.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁰⁹ Pink, "Dangerous Dainties," Studies in the Scriptures 12 (September 1933):213.

The great majority of the "orthodox" and "sound" magazines being printed today, can only harm you, for they contain nothing to make you weep before God, nothing to increase the "fear of the Lord" in your soul, nothing that will lead to an increasing mortifying of your members which are upon the earth. If you have proven this to be the case, then from now on shun them as you would a plague.¹¹⁰

Christian reader, if you value the health of your soul, cease hearing and quit reading all that is lifeless, ununctionless, powerless, no matter what prominent or popular name be attached thereto. Life is too short to waste valuable time on that which profits not. Ninety-nine out of every hundred of the religious books, booklets, and magazines now being published are not worth the paper on which they are printed.¹¹¹

Alas, also, real servants of God, sound teachers have now almost disappeared from the earth. 2 Timothy 4:3 is now fulfilled before our eyes; men "will not endure sound doctrine". They will still tolerate what is called evangelism, they will listen eagerly to a talk on "the signs of the times" (made up of sensational items culled from newspapers with a little Scripture ingeniously fitted in to give respectability), they will listen to missionary addresses: but sound doctrine they will not endure! Hence we have in that divine declaration, an infallible test by which the poor child of God may measure things in the Babel of tongues now going on in Christendom! That test is this: anything which is endured today in the religious world cannot be sound doctrine; anything which is approved of, well attended, popular, is not "sound doctrine".¹¹²

The Second Return to England

It was with great heaviness of heart and deep sorrow (though it should not be surprising to the reader) that the

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 215.

¹¹¹Pink, "A Word of Warning," Studies in the Scriptures 13 (August 1934):190.

¹¹²Pink, Letters, a letter to Lowell Green 19 August 1934, pp. 40-41.

Pinks left the United States to return to England. He was a man of strong conviction and full commitment to his convictions, and he could not understand anyone else claiming to serve the Lord with anything less. His sorrow was evident as he penned the following letter:

O, my dear brother, my own soul is weighed down, almost overwhelmed, as I behold the lack of reality in almost all of those to whom I have sought to minister. This is the chief reason why I am leaving the States. God's blessing has been and now is upon my written ministry in a most unmistakable and gracious way; but my personal ministry through direct contact is almost a complete failure. But, as the closing of Ezekiel 33 solemnly declares, "And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them." And there I must leave it; in the hands of him whom I have earnestly sought--amid much personal weakness and failure--to faithfully serve.

I rather fear that this letter will be somewhat disappointing to you. But as I sat alone in my room this morning, reviewing the past few years, and then realizing how soon I shall have left the United States for ever, I hardly felt in the mood for writing a formal letter. As you had so opened your heart to me, I felt like uncovering mine a little to you. None but God knows the sorrow and anguish that my dear wife and I have experienced over some of our best, kindest and dearest friends; those who have freely, unselfishly, frequently ministered to us in many ways temporally, and to whom we so longed to be made a real and rich blessing spiritually, not in a merely ordinary and general way, but to see them actually enter into God's best for them.¹¹³

Little did Pink realize as he returned to England in the fall of 1934 that the doors for ministry would be closed there also. He expressed hope in early 1935 when he said, "Surely there are still left somewhere in these British Isles congregations or groups which would welcome an oral ministry along

¹¹³Ibid., pp. 44-45.

the lines of our articles; places where 'all the counsel of God' would be welcomed."¹¹⁴ He then asks for prayer that he might be brought in touch with such people and be given favor in their eyes.

The month of December in 1935 (over a year after his return to England) found him still searching for such people and churches. He spoke almost pleadingly when he said:

The days are evil, the need is great, many of Christ's sheep are being starved, very little real Gospel is now preached. Soon our race will be run: what little time is left us, we desire to be used wholly for the Lord, and to be made a blessing to His people. Many "churches" and places we could not enter because of their heterodoxy and worldliness. How are we to make contact with sound ones for a week's special meetings? Cannot you be of assistance here? If not, will you please definitely supplicate the throne of grace on our behalf?¹¹⁵

Through these years of the late thirties, Pink continued to pour his life into his monthly magazine, writing almost every article which it carried. In late 1936 he appears to have realized his public ministry was finished, and his future ministry must come through his pen. He says, "We do not expect to engage again in any oral ministry, but are devoting the energies of our remaining days to the Magazine and the correspondence it entails--we have no 'office' help."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴Pink, "Following the Cloud," Studies in the Scriptures 14 (February 1935):62.

¹¹⁵Pink, "Our Annual Letter," Studies in the Scriptures 14 (December 1935):382.

¹¹⁶Pink, "Our Annual Letter," Studies in the Scriptures 15 (December 1936):382.

In December of 1937 he reported that he did not open his mouth in public even once that year. He stated that this fact is a great sorrow for him, but he bows to God's sovereignty concerning the matter.¹¹⁷ In this same context he acknowledged that he had changed his view on the subject of Bible prophecy during the last few years. He asked his readers not to write him about the subject, but if they think he is in error to pray for him. The change he referred to is from a dispensational premillennial position to an amillennial view.¹¹⁸ Because he had been a strong dispensational premillennialist previously, and because this view was very popular, Pink's change of position did not help the circulation of the magazine at this time.

At least twice in the year of 1938 he seeks to inform his readers that he will not receive visitors who call at his home.¹¹⁹ He states that his time is now completely occupied with the study that is necessary for his ministry of writing. He asks people to write letters instead. He was very faithful to answer letters as it is reported that in one week he sent forty-six letters, and all of them written by his own

¹¹⁷Pink, "Our Annual Letter," Studies in the Scriptures 16 (December 1937):383.

¹¹⁸Pink, "Divine Covenants," Studies in the Scriptures 14 (December 1935):13-17.

¹¹⁹Pink, Studies in the Scriptures 17 (April 1938):125 and (December 1938):383.

hand.¹²⁰ He looked upon the letters as a type of pastoral ministry.

The Final Years in Scotland

In September of 1940 the Pinks moved once again, this time from England to Scotland.¹²¹ The new residence was on the Isle of Lewis, and proved to be a sanctuary for full commitment to the publication through its last years. Part of the reason for the move was the war with Germany. Pink said of their new location, "We are now situated on an island far removed from the scene of conflict, where we can quietly study and conduct the work of the magazine in peace . . . "¹²²

In his new residence Pink still maintained his independence, refusing to unite with any denomination. He felt this was necessary for the good of the magazine. He explained:

When we began publishing this magazine we were members of a Baptist church, and we still believe that according to their constitution and principles Baptists are nearer the N.T. pattern than any other body. But in the Providence of God we were soon obliged to sever our connection with that church, and it was not long before our Master made it plain why He led us to take that step: the written ministry to which He had called us was designed for a wider circle than any single ecclesiastical fold. By the grace of God it has been our privilege to feed numbers of His sheep who are dispersed in many denominations, and not a few who have no church home on earth. We have therefore been constrained to take up nothing in these pages of a sectarian nature, endeavoring

¹²⁰Pink, Letters, with a Preface by the publishers, p. 8.

¹²¹Pink, Letters, a letter to Lowell Green 6 October 1940, pp. 103-104.

¹²²Pink, "Our Annual Letter," Studies in the Scriptures 19 (December 1940):287.

to steer clear of whatever would give unnecessary offence, confining ourselves (with rare exceptions) to "those things which are most surely believed among" (Luke 1:1) God's people at large.¹²³

In this same annual letter he evidences an understanding that this decision has been part of the reason many doors have remained closed to him for ministry. The liberal churches did invite him to speak, but his own convictions about separation would not allow him to speak in these churches. On the other hand, the orthodox churches were closed to him because of what he saw as a "sectarian exclusiveness."¹²⁴ He stated that he could have preached in their churches had he been willing to join their denomination. This he refused to do. He realized this refusal offended many and had been the ground for false rumors. Some had accused him of being self-righteous. Others had said that he wasn't able to get along with any of the Lord's people. His path, therefore, had been very lonely, yet he was convinced this was the way chosen for him by His Master. He was also convinced more than ever that the days remaining for him had to be devoted to the faithful use of his pen.

Throughout the decade of the forties the Pinks were faithful to their task. He wrote the articles and she typed them to save cost at the printer's shop. He wrote in 1948

¹²³Pink, "Our Annual Letter," Studies in the Scriptures 20 (December 1941):284-285.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 285.

concerning his work:

If we are preserved in health such a programme, in addition to writing many letters every week, will keep us constantly busy--far busier than many realize. Our articles consist not of the first things which come to mind, but each one is the outcome of many hours' hard work. It is only by adhering strictly to a systematic schedule the editor is able (by grace) to produce so much month by month from his own pen. Such intense and prolonged application makes it impracticable for us to do any visiting or receive any visitors: the hour we might spend in conversing with a single person is spent in seeking to help a thousand by our pen; so friends will understand why we cannot see any callers. One reason why we remain in this secluded isle is that we can prosecute our labours in undisturbed privacy.¹²⁵

In the 1951 annual letter he reiterates again that he has no time for visiting friends or receiving callers.¹²⁶ It was not that he desired to be a hermit or unsociable. Rather his reason was that he is not his own. He was convinced that he had been given the trust to feed the people of God, and he must be faithful. He was jealous of anything that would threaten that trust. He urged no one else to follow his example, for each one must fill the place that God has given him, and no two are alike.

The greatest problem faced throughout this period, one noted again and again in the magazine, was the decreasing circulation. Because of the practice to drop the names of those not interested each year, there was the constant search

¹²⁵Pink, "Our Annual Letter," Studies in the Scriptures 27 (December 1948):262.

¹²⁶Pink, "Our Annual Letter," Studies in the Scriptures 30 (December 1951):285-286.

for new readers to add to the list with a hope they would appreciate this deep ministry of the Word. Below are some of Pink's remarks throughout this decade. They have been summarized for convenience and listed by the year.

December 1943 - A decreasing circulation is still the greatest trial of the magazine.¹²⁷

December 1944 - Pink's articles on "Profession Tested" in the last year cost him some readers. This he expected when he wrote them. He refuses to water down the truth, but also admits that they can hardly afford to drop any from their declining mailing list.¹²⁸

December 1944 - There is rejoicing because the 1944 mailing list has shown an increase. Still there is much lost ground to recover from the past years.¹²⁹

December 1945 - Circulation has registered a slight but steady increase. As usual, many names will be dropped this year. Pink acknowledges that through the last twenty years they have lost hundreds of readers because he has upheld the high standards of truth and holiness.¹³⁰

December 1946 - Pink is disturbed by an absence of letters and the tone of some which have come to him. Many who formerly enjoyed the magazine do not wish to receive it

¹²⁷Pink, "Our Annual Letter," Studies in the Scriptures 22 (December 1943):286.

¹²⁸Pink, Studies in the Scriptures 23 (February 1944): 47.

¹²⁹Pink, "Our Annual Letter," Studies in the Scriptures 23 (December 1944):286.

¹³⁰Pink, "Our Annual Letter," Studies in the Scriptures 24 (December 1945):285-287.

any longer. Others who previously devoured the magazine now only read an article here and there.¹³¹

December 1946 - Pink speaks of the difficulty of maintaining the mailing list. He has had to trust completely in the Lord to put him in touch with readers. He has prayed often that God would move the existing readers to introduce the magazine to others. God has been faithful, but the task has been difficult.¹³²

August 1947 - Pink says he has prayed for years for God to increase the circulation. All other requests for the magazine have been answered. He was puzzled all these years as to why his prayer concerning the circulation had not been answered. He has come to realize that request was answered also, but not in the way he had expected. He has become aware that preachers are using his material for their sermons. His labors have been multiplied. The circulation has been increased, for the magazine is received by over a hundred preachers.¹³³

December 1948 - Pink reports that they had to drop well over two hundred from the 1947 mailing list and will have to do the same this year. Some older readers have passed away this year. He has reason to believe that some readers who were church members have been saved. The smallness of the circulation is still the greatest problem.¹³⁴

¹³¹pink, "Welcome Tidings," Studies in the Scriptures 25 (August 1946):189.

¹³²pink, "Our Semi-Jubilee Letter," Studies in the Scriptures 25 (December 1946):285.

¹³³pink, "Welcome Tidings," Studies in the Scriptures 26 (August 1947):190.

¹³⁴pink, "Our Annual Letter," Studies in the Scriptures 27 (December 1948):286.

December 1950 - Pink says God has granted quite an increase in the small circulation. He also has received that year more than the usual number of letters.¹³⁵

December 1951 - In this his last annual letter Pink notes in the last ten years a fifty per cent increase in circulation. He states that this is surely the Lord's doing in light of the deterioration of the spiritual conditions among Christians.¹³⁶

The Final Days and Death

The monthly magazine titled Studies in the Scriptures which had begun in 1922 came to an end several months after the death of A. W. Pink. Pink died on July 15, 1952. His wife continued to publish the magazine, using material her husband had prepared, through December 1953. A few details of his death are worthy of notation here.¹³⁷

His wife stated that she saw that he was failing several months before he died. He tired easily, and many times was extremely weary and totally exhausted from his work. During the month of May of 1952 he had a seizure one night which signalled to him that his end was nearing. After that night he labored as if he were preparing for a long journey. He

¹³⁵Pink, "Our Annual Letter," Studies in the Scriptures 29 (December 1950):285-286.

¹³⁶Pink, "Our Annual Letter," Studies in the Scriptures 30 (December 1951):286.

¹³⁷Vera Pink, "The Late Editor's Last Days," Studies in the Scriptures 31 (September 1952):214-216.

wanted to be sure all was ready for his departure. He even applied himself with greater effort to his work so he could complete as much as possible. On the Wednesday before he died on Tuesday, he sat in his chair most of the day and dictated an article for his wife to record. It was a great effort, but he pressed on, until he finally put down his paper and glasses and asked his wife to put him to bed. With great effort she finally got him into bed. He asked her to get paper and pencil so he could finish the article. Four more sentences finished the article. He then said, "My work is finished. My race is run. I am ready to go. I cannot go soon enough." He never rose from his bed after that. He died the following Tuesday. His last words were, "The Scriptures explain themselves."

There is no record available of any funeral service. If his wife was true to his conviction, there was none. He had written when speaking of the death of Elisha:

It is to be noted that nothing is said here of any burial service. Nor is there anywhere in the Scriptures, either in the Old Testament or the New Testament. Elaborate, mournful ceremonies are of pagan origin and are neither authorized nor warranted by the Word of God.¹³⁸

The place of his burial was never recorded in the magazine, probably in respect to his desire that God would be glorified and not man (including himself).

Numerous letters of sympathy and comfort were received by Mrs. Pink when word of her husband's death reached his flock

¹³⁸Pink, Elisha, p. 254.

scattered throughout the world. A few quotations from these letters will close this section of the paper which has covered the life of Pink:¹³⁹

Though his pen is stilled by his home-going, yet his articles will ever go on as a testimony unto his and our blessed Lord.

It would seem his ministry was too much needed to be able to spare him.

Truly a "great man in Israel has fallen."

We have lost a father in Israel.

It is the loss of a friend whom having not seen we loved . . . his work will live long in those whose appetites for the deep spiritual things of the Word were made keener . . .

The Church of God on earth lost a great witness--one of the greatest in this day of apostasy . . .

The Christian Church has lost one of its finest Bible expositors and hundreds of young men like myself have lost the benefit of his wise and deeply spiritual exegesis.

We feel like orphans with our spiritual father and best earthly friend taken from us.

The Purpose, Procedure, and Sources of This Work

It has been shown that A. W. Pink was an unusual man. First, he was a widely-traveled, much-used preacher in his early years. Second, he was a man of deep conviction who stood for his convictions regardless of the cost. Third, he was a prolific writer throughout all his life, but particularly

¹³⁹Vera Pink, "Extracts from Letters," Studies in the Scriptures 32 (February 1953):45-46.

after his public ministry ceased. Fourth, he was very independent in spirit, refusing in his later years to unite with any denomination. Fifth, he died in obscurity, and his writings were elevated to prominence only after his death. Sixth, his writings have soared in popularity in the last several decades. Seventh, he is heralded as a representative of the Reformed faith.

The purpose of this paper is to consider A. W. Pink's relation to the Reformed faith. Could such a man have been a true representative of Reformed theology? Consider the following facts, and it must be admitted that the pursuit of this question is proper.

First, Pink was never trained at any school that held the Reformed view of theological thought. This is not to say that such training is a necessary prerequisite for being Reformed in one's theology. It is to note that if one is trained at a school that holds a particular theological viewpoint, he will receive a correct presentation of that theological viewpoint. He will have opportunity to ask questions of authorities, clarify points of confusion, and verify the relation of various points of thought to the whole theological system.

Second, Pink was a self-educated man. It has been shown that he was an avid reader of the Bible and theological books throughout his life following his conversion to Christianity. Could he have read all these works on his own, weighed them

against Scripture in their minute detail, and assimilated the whole, and arrived at the Reformed viewpoint?

Third, Pink was very independent in spirit. Even if he read proper presentations of the Reformed faith, would he be open to hear what they or even the Scripture had to say on the subject? If he did so in most areas, did he do so in all areas? Were there some places in his theological structure that he reserved for earlier convictions which were inconsistent with the Reformed faith? Would a man who cared not to be aligned with any denomination really care if he was or wasn't faithful to Reformed theology? Would a man who refused in his later years to be submitted to the authority of a local church be concerned to be faithful to any historic viewpoint or confession of faith? Pink does not hesitate at times to take issue with some of the great divines of the past nor with the confessions of faith.¹⁴⁰ It is true that he does quote the confessions at times, but usually either to give light to his discussion or to show that what he is teaching is not heretical. He does not see any confession as his final authority

¹⁴⁰See Arthur W. Pink, The Doctrine of Sanctification (Grand Rapids: Guardian Press, 1975), pp. 111-119 where Pink disagrees with the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Philadelphia Confession of Faith, and the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. See also A. W. Pink, An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount (Grand Rapids: Guardian Press, 1950), pp. 127-129 where he takes issue with the interpretations of Matthew Henry, Thomas Scott, Andrew Fuller, and John Gill. He says John Gill's view of the passage (Matt. 5:43-48) is the worst interpretation of all.

or as the infallible representation of the teaching of Scripture.¹⁴¹

The conclusion at this point is that the question of Pink's relation and faithfulness to the Reformed faith is a proper one. Could such an independent, self-educated man be a proper representative of Reformed theology? It would not be impossible, but the matter should not be taken for granted without careful research and documentation. Such investigation is the primary purpose of this paper.

Before progress can begin towards the stated objective, a procedure must be determined. Two questions must be answered. First, which area of Pink's theology should be the center of research in order to determine Pink's faithfulness or lack of faithfulness to Reformed theology? Second, what standard of authority should be used to test Pink's faithfulness to the Reformed position?

The area of theology to be investigated is the doctrine of predestination. Two reasons can be stated for this choice. First, the doctrine of predestination is the unique feature of Reformed theology. There are various differences between Reformed theology and other systems of theology, but the unique and foundational difference is the doctrine of predestination. Second, the doctrine of predestination is a central doctrine (if not the central doctrine) of A. W. Pink.

¹⁴¹See Pink, Divine Covenants, p. 38 and Election and Justification, pp. 46-47, 192, 233, and 235.

That doctrine is foundational to his whole theology also. It permeates every section of his theology. Thus it is logical to pursue the doctrine of predestination in Pink's theology in order to test his faithfulness to Reformed theology.

The standard of authority of the Reformed faith that will be used in the test will be the Westminster Confession of Faith. If it is asked why the standard is not a Baptist Confession, since Pink was a Baptist by affiliation and still by conviction even after he became an independent in practice, the answer is simple. The Baptist confessions, such as the Philadelphia Confession or the Second London Confession, were for the most part restatements of the Westminster Confession of Faith.¹⁴² Therefore it is fair and proper to test A. W. Pink against that standard of the Reformed faith which has been the standard through the years, and the one mirrored and copied in the Reformed Baptist confessions both in England and America.

The sources of study for the present work will be the works of Arthur W. Pink. These include the periodicals which he edited for over thirty years titled Studies in the Scriptures and his many books. It is acknowledged that these sources do duplicate one another since the material for Pink's books were taken from the periodicals. There are, however,

¹⁴²William L. Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions of Faith (Valley Forge: The Judson Press, 1969), pp. 235-295 and 348-353 and Clifton E. Olmstead, History of Religion in the United States (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), p. 109.

some articles in the periodicals that have not been published to this date. There are no secondary sources except the few already noted in the presentation of his life. These deal only with his life and do not contain any analysis of his theology. There are no published works that have dealt with any aspect of his theology or even with his theology as a whole.

As can be seen in the outline, this paper has two main sections. The first part of the paper will set forth Pink's doctrine of predestination in general, while the second section will present his doctrine of predestination in the areas of election and reprobation. Throughout the paper the points stated by Pink will be weighed against the Westminster Confession of Faith and also against the teaching of the Scripture. In the conclusion a judgment will be set forth concerning the reliability of A. W. Pink as a guide and representative of the Reformed faith.

CHAPTER II

A. W. PINK'S DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION IN GENERAL

Preliminary Considerations

This section of the paper, after these preliminary considerations, will consist of three parts. First, it will be shown that for A. W. Pink the decree of God in predestination concerns all things. Emphasis will be placed upon the total inclusiveness of the word "all" in the decree of God according to Pink. The second part will set forth some positive clarifications concerning God's predestinating decree. It will be shown that God's decree was free, immutable, and by the wise and holy counsel of His will. The third part will set forth some negative clarifications, that is, what the doctrine of God's predestinating decree does not mean nor imply in its definition. Before moving into these three main parts some further words are necessary.

The word "predestinate" is defined by Pink to mean that ". . . God from all eternity sovereignly ordained and immutably determined the history and destiny of each and all

of His creatures."¹ This act of predestination is also referred to as the decree of God.² He uses the singular word "decree" instead of the plural "decrees" because he sees God's work of predestination as " . . . only one act of His infinite mind about future things."³ We, as human beings, use the plural "decrees" because we can only conceive of the many successive events involving the many objects of His decree. God, who possesses an infinite understanding, does not look at matters in this way as we do. He sees all things as one whole, though this is not to say that He is incapable of distinguishing the individual parts.

The result of God's predestination for Pink is the secret will of God.⁴ God's secret will concerns all things and is being accomplished by agencies and means which He also has ordained. The fulfillment of God's secret will is certain, as Pink says that it " . . . can no more be hindered by men or devils than they can prevent the sun from shining."⁵ The secret will of God is referred to in Deut. 29:29, and is to

¹Arthur W. Pink, The Doctrines of Election and Justification (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), p. 15.

²Arthur W. Pink, Gleanings in the Godhead (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), p. 15.

³Ibid.

⁴Arthur W. Pink, Interpretation of Scripture (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), p. 83.

⁵Ibid.

be distinguished from God's revealed will.⁶ The revealed will of God is made known in His Word, and it is the standard of man's responsibility. Pink says that the secret will of God is also referred to as His counsel (Isa. 46:10), the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11), His purpose (Rom. 8:28), and His good pleasure (Eph. 1:9).⁷

By His secret will God is governing this world and the universe sovereignly.⁸ The Most High God is ruling His world influenced by and subject to no one. He is absolutely independent, doing always and only as He pleases. No one can change, stop, or thwart His will and purpose in any way. For Pink this concept means that God is God. Anything less would rob Him of that right to be called God since it would remove Him from the throne of the universe and make Him subject to His creation and creatures.

With these words of introduction, it is now possible to show the total inclusiveness of the word "all" for A. W. Pink in the matter of God's predestination or secret will.

God's Decree Concerns All Things: He Has Ordained
Whatsoever Comes to Pass

When it is said that A. W. Pink believes that God has predestinated all things, the word "all" is being used in its

⁶ Arthur W. Pink, An Exposition of Hebrews (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1954), p. 92 and Interpretation, p. 83.

⁷ Pink, Hebrews, p. 92.

⁸ Pink, Godhead, p. 31.

most expansive and all-inclusive sense. Nothing happens by accident or chance. All comes to pass by God's predestination or secret will. Pink asks and answers several questions concerning God's decree of all things as he says:

Has God fore-ordained everything that comes to pass? Has He decreed that what is, was to have been? In the final analysis this is only one way of asking, Is God now governing the world and everyone and everything in it? If God is governing the world, then is He governing it according to a definite purpose, or aimlessly and at random? If He is governing it according to some purpose, then when was that purpose made? Is God continually changing His purpose and making a new one every day, or was His purpose formed from the beginning? Are God's actions, like ours, regulated by change of circumstances, or are they the outcome of His eternal purpose? If God formed a purpose before man was created, then is that purpose going to be executed according to His original designs and is He now working toward that end? What saith the Scriptures? They speak of God as the One "who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1:11).⁹

Other statements to the same effect abound throughout the writings of Pink. Here are some samples which should be sufficient to establish beyond doubt that his view of predestination includes all things without reservation or limitation.

God has foreordained all that comes to pass in this world . . . ¹⁰

What God has decreed must come to pass . . . ¹¹

⁹ Arthur W. Pink, The Sovereignty of God, British rev. ed. (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), p. 74.

¹⁰ Arthur W. Pink, The Life of David, 2 vols. in one (Swengel, Pa.: Reiner Publications, 1977), 2:141.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 322.

. . . God has foreordained everything that comes to pass . . . ¹²

As a builder draws his plans before he begins to build, so the great Architect predestinated everything before a single creature was called into existence.¹³

. . . nothing occurs in this world but what God has ordained . . . ¹⁴

. . . whatsoever happens in time is but the outworking of God's eternal decrees . . . ¹⁵

Everything was infallibly determined and immutably fixed by God from the beginning, and all that happens in time is but the accomplishment of what was ordained in eternity.¹⁶

All that He has designed, He does. All that He has decreed, he perfects. All that He has promised, He performs.¹⁷

In nature there is no such thing as a vacuum, neither is there a creature of God that fails to serve its designed purpose. Nothing is idle. Everything is energized by God to fulfill its intended mission. All things are laboring toward the grand end of their Creator's pleasure; all are moved at His imperative bidding.¹⁸

The other side of the coin is that there are no chance happenings or unplanned events in this world or universe. God

¹²Arthur W. Pink, Gleanings from the Scriptures--Man's Total Depravity (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), p. 207.

¹³Pink, Election, p. 9.

¹⁴Arthur W. Pink, Gleanings from Elisha (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), p. 169.

¹⁵Arthur W. Pink, Gleanings in Exodus (Chicago: Moody Press, n.d.), p. 18.

¹⁶Pink, Election, p. 9. ¹⁷Pink, Godhead, p. 29.

¹⁸Arthur W. Pink, Comfort For Christians, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Guardian Press, 1976), p. 13.

is in such control that nothing unexpected takes place, nothing surprising comes to pass, or nothing undetermined unfolds. Again, such statements in Pink's writings abound, but the selection of a few will present the case.

No; we repeat, there cannot be any chance-happenings in a world that is governed by God, still less can there be any accidents in the lives of those He is constantly "with." My reader, there are no chance-happenings, no chance-meetings, no chance delays, no chance losses, no chance anythings in our lives. All is of Divine appointment.¹⁹

Nothing happens by chance in this world: all is controlled and directed from on High (John 9:11).²⁰

None but an infidel believes in things happening by chance, though there are many infidels now wearing the name of "Christian." There are no accidents in a world which is governed by the living God, for "of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen" (Rom. 11:36)²¹

Throughout Pink's writings he not only states in a general way that all happens according to God's predestination, but he constantly particularizes this truth. Several areas of this particularization will now be considered.

God's Decree Extends to All Events and Creatures

First, God's predestination extends to all events and creatures in the universe. This includes the elements and heavenly bodies.²² This includes all worlds that revolve, all

¹⁹Arthur W. Pink, Gleanings in Genesis, 2 vols. in one (Chicago: Moody Press, 1922), 2:53.

²⁰Pink, David, 1:33.

²¹Ibid., p. 113.

²²Pink, David, 2:152.

stars that shine, all storms that come, all movements of every creature, all actions of men, all errands of both good and evil angels, and even all the deeds of the Devil.²³ Pink says in another place, "All the great movements of the universe are regulated by God's will,--But if the great movements, then the small movements for the great depend upon the small."²⁴ God's government, Pink asserts in another context, extends to inanimate matter,²⁵ irrational creatures (the animal kingdom),²⁶ mankind,²⁷ and good and evil angels.²⁸

God's Decree Extends to the Nations and History

Second, it is clear to Pink that God rules history and all the nations and all events therein. He decreed the beginning of history by His decree of the time of creation, and likewise He has decreed unchangeably the time of the termination of all things.²⁹ The individual nations are the result of his predestination. The beginning of each nation, its end,

²³Pink, Sovereignty, Banner of Truth ed., p. 43.

²⁴Arthur W. Pink, Exposition of the Gospel of John, 3 vols. in one (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1968), 1:160-161.

²⁵Pink, Sovereignty, Banner of Truth ed., pp. 33-36.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 36-38.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 38-42.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 42-43.

²⁹Arthur W. Pink, Spiritual Growth (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), p. 69.

its progress, its height, and its whole accomplishment or failure has been ordained by God.³⁰ Pink says that God is the one who " . . . controls the courses of empires and determines the lives of dynasties . . ." ³¹ He has also predestined the exact portions and limits of the earth that each nation shall fill.³² By Him kings reign, princes decree justice, senates deliberate, armies battle, and history is shaped.³³ He governs the houses of legislature and the secret conferences of rulers and diplomats.³⁴ Neither despot nor dictator can surpass His bounds of government.³⁵ Whether it be a Charlemagnes, a Napoleon, a Nero or a Hitler, Pink says these men are but puppets in His hand to accomplish His purpose.³⁶ He says, "Jehovah rules in the councils of the ungodly equally as in the prayerful counsels of a church assembly."³⁷ Conquerors may regard themselves as gods, but

³⁰Ibid. See also Pink, Exodus, p. 18.

³¹Arthur W. Pink, Gleanings in Joshua (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), p. 337.

³²Ibid.

³³Arthur W. Pink, Gleanings from Paul--Prayers of Paul (Chicago: Moody Press, 1967), p. 153.

³⁴Pink, David, 2:152.

³⁵Arthur W. Pink, "A Very Present Help," Studies in the Scriptures 17 (November 1938):351.

³⁶Pink, Paul, p. 153.

³⁷Arthur W. Pink, The Doctrine of Revelation (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), p. 49.

they are only doing what God predetermined to be done by their hands.³⁸ Pink says, "The worst tyrants, when inflicting the greatest outrages, are the instruments of God, accomplishing His will."³⁹ Clearly God rules all of history and all of the events of history, according to the conviction of A. W. Pink. God rules history and all its events because of His predestination of all things.

God's Decree Extends to All Events

Third, all events are predestinated by God. What has just been stated above includes this division, but further elaboration will be given here to cover other areas mentioned more explicitly by Pink. Pink says that "God's decree . . . extends to all creatures and events."⁴⁰ He says again that the decrees of God include all future things with no exception.⁴¹ God is the "immediate regulator" of all events not just in some general way but in all the particulars.⁴² Pink says that God " . . . controls all circumstances, commands all events, rules every creature, makes all their energies and actions fulfill His will . . . "⁴³ He is the one who " . . . orders all events and controls all creatures . . . "⁴⁴ Pink states that a fly cannot settle upon us without God's

³⁸ Pink, Joshua, p. 318.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 317.

⁴⁰ Pink, Godhead, p. 15.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Pink, Revelation, p. 49.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 60.

⁴⁴ Pink, David, 1:108.

bidding, anymore than the demons are free to enter the swine until they had permission from Christ.⁴⁵ God has not predestined the end, while leaving the means and secondary causes to man. Rather He has predestined both, according to Pink. He says concerning causes, that " . . . God does not leave secondary causes to their work as an idle spectator, but interposes and orders all the affairs of our lives."⁴⁶

God's Decree Extends to All Men and
Every Aspect of Their Lives

Fourth, all men in every aspect of their lives are included in the decree of God. It is not that God decreed to make man, only to leave him upon the earth to his own ways and purposes. Rather God fixed all the circumstances of every individual.⁴⁷ He fixed the place of each man's birth, the very city, town, and even the house where each man shall live, as well as the length of time he would remain in each place.⁴⁸ The amount of material wealth a man has, whether it comes by birth, inheritance, as a gift or through work is according to God's sovereign disposal.⁴⁹ The imperfections of a man's body, or even the perfections are according to his divine sovereignty.⁵⁰ The ownership of land is also by God's predestination, for Pink says, "No man has a foot of land more

⁴⁵Pink, Exodus, p. 78.

⁴⁷Pink, Godhead, p. 16.

⁴⁹Pink, Godhead, p. 112.

⁴⁶Pink, Joshua, p. 340.

⁴⁸Pink, Joshua, p. 338.

⁵⁰Pink, Exodus, p. 38.

than God has laid out for him in His all-wise providence . . . ⁵¹ All of a man's travels are marked out by God's foreordination. Pink says in one place, "You shall not tread a step which is not mapped on the grand chart of God's foreordination."⁵² He says in another place, "The strongest-willed and most resolute person on this earth cannot take a journey of so much as a hundred yards unless God wills and enables him."⁵³ Even man's smallest actions are controlled by, directed by, and over-ruled by God.⁵⁴ Even man's death is under the control of God's decree. Pink makes several statements concerning this area of God's rule over man.

The length of our sojourn on this earth is not determined by the care we take of our health (though human responsibility requires that we abstain from all intemperance and recklessness), nor upon the skill of our physicians (though all lawful means should be employed), but upon the the sovereign decree of God . . . No, when the divinely-ordained limit is reached, all the doctors in the world cannot prolong our life a single moment.⁵⁵

None can die a moment before the time his Maker has appointed.⁵⁶

And blessed be God, it is our privilege to be assured that the hand of death cannot strike us down before God's predestined "hour" arrives for us to go hence. The enemy may war against us, and he may be permitted to strike our bodies; but shorten our lives he cannot, anymore than he

⁵¹Pink, Joshua, p. 338.

⁵²Arthur W. Pink, "New Year's Comfort," Studies in the Scriptures 22 (January 1943):1.

⁵³Pink, Paul, p. 264.

⁵⁴Pink, Genesis, 2:68 and John, 1:173.

⁵⁵Pink, David, 2:381. ⁵⁶Pink, David, 1:119.

could Job's. A frightful epidemic of disease may visit the neighborhood in which I live, but I am immune till God suffers me to be affected. Unless it is His will for me to be sick or to die, no matter how the epidemic may rage, nor how many of those around me may fall victims to it, it cannot harm me.⁵⁷

Not only is the hour of death Divinely decreed, but the form in which it comes.⁵⁸

God's Decree Extends to the Lives of His People

From what has been stated above concerning the relation of God's decrees to all the actions of all men, it is obvious that God rules the lives of His people as well. His predestination is the reason they are His people, an area of discussion that will be taken up in the second major division of this paper. Besides their predestination to salvation, He also rules in every area of their lives. In the unregenerate days of the elect, God preserves them even as He did Moses in his infant life.⁵⁹ Furthermore, God has decreed that the general state of His people on earth be that of hardship, opposition, and persecution.⁶⁰ The outward conditions of His people on earth, whether it be prosperity or adversity, are ordained by God.⁶¹ Even the saints who have been martyred throughout the different ages of church history have come to that end by God's decree.⁶² Therefore, according to

⁵⁷Pink, John, 1:394.

⁵⁸Pink, Joshua, p. 376.

⁵⁹Pink, Exodus, p. 18.

⁶⁰Pink, Hebrews, p. 799.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 868.

⁶²Ibid., p. 919.

A. W. Pink, both the good and the bad which arrives in the believer's life comes by the decree of God.

God's Decree Extends to the
Lives of the Wicked

Not only has God predestined the events of the believer's life, but as equally also the actions of the wicked.⁶³ Pink says concerning the first entrance of sin into the world, "Clearly it was the divine will that sin should enter this world, or it would not have done so. God had the power to prevent it. Nothing ever comes to pass except what He has decreed."⁶⁴ For Pink any other view is impossible and heretical. He says:

To declare that the Creator's original plan has been frustrated by sin, is to dethrone God. To suggest that God was taken by surprise in Eden and that He is now attempting to remedy an unforeseen calamity, is to degrade the Most High to the level of a finite, erring mortal. To argue that man is the sole determiner of his own destiny, and that therefore he has the power to checkmate his Maker, is to strip God of the attribute of Omnipotence. To say that the creature has burst the bounds assigned by his Creator, and that God is now practically a helpless Spectator of the sin and suffering entailed by Adam's fall, is to repudiate the express declaration of the Holy Writ, namely, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain" (Ps. 76:10).⁶⁵

⁶³Pink, David, 1:281 and Joshua, p. 222.

⁶⁴Pink, Depravity, p. 206.

⁶⁵Pink, Sovereignty, Banner of Truth ed., pp. 21-22.

The entrance of sin into the world was not only something anticipated by God, therefore, but by God's will.⁶⁶ Whatever the actions of man in this life, even the actions of the most wicked and rebellious, they are the accomplishment of God's purpose and will.⁶⁷ In this same context Pink quotes an Ed. Dennett who says, "Even the wrath of man is yoked to the chariot wheel of God's decrees."⁶⁸ Again, concerning the evil deeds of man, Pink declares:

God's decrees are being executed. What He has ordained is being accomplished. Man's wickedness is bounded. The limits of evil-doing and of evil-doers have been Divinely defined and cannot be exceeded. Though many are in ignorance of it, all men, good and bad, are under the jurisdiction of and are absolutely subject to the administration of, the Supreme Sovereign--"Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" (Rev. 19:6)--reigneth over all!⁶⁹

The greatest testimony for Pink of God's predestination of the actions of the wicked is the life and death of Jesus Christ. In commenting on John 7:45, when the Pharisees and chief priests asked the officers why they had not taken Christ, Pink says, ". . . they might as well have ordered them to stop the sun from shining. Not all the hosts of earth and hell could have arrested Him one moment before God's predestined hour had arrived."⁷⁰ In his discussion of

⁶⁶Arthur W. Pink, The Atonement (Swengel, Pa.: Reiner Publications, n.d.), p. 40.

⁶⁷Pink, Exodus, p. 11.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Pink, Sovereignty, Banner of Truth ed., p. 91.

⁷⁰Pink, John, 1:408.

John 8:20, which states that no man laid hands upon Christ because his hour was not yet come, Pink says that this makes it clear that evil men were not able to work out their evil designs against Christ until God permitted them to do so.⁷¹ This demonstrates to Pink that God is the absolute master of all things. In his exposition of the statement of Caiphas in John 11:51, Pink states, ". . . the teaching of Scripture is very clear upon the point: all things, in the final analysis, are of God. Nowhere is this more evident than in connection with the treatment which the Lord Jesus received at the hands of wicked men."⁷² He then refers to Acts 4:26-28, quoting it as evidence of his claim. That verse says, as quoted by Pink with his emphasis:

The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against the holy servant Jesus, whom thou has anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.⁷³

Pink continues in this same exposition to note that Christ's death had been decreed in the eternal counsels of the Godhead, and that Caiphas' proposal was just a link in the chain which brought God's decree to pass.

In another context, Pink discusses the death of Christ and the place of God's predestination in that event. He says:

⁷¹Pink, John, 2:31-32.

⁷²Ibid., p. 218.

⁷³Ibid.

The supreme example of the controlling, directing influence which God exerts upon the wicked, is the Cross of Christ with all its attendant circumstances. If ever the superintending providence of God was witnessed, it was there. From all eternity God had predestined every detail of that event of all events. Nothing was left to chance or the caprice of man. God had decreed when and where and how His blessed Son was to die . . . Not a thing occurred except as God had ordained, and all that He had ordained took place exactly as He purposed.⁷⁴

The proofs of the above statement, as Pink continues to argue in the same context, are the numerous prophecies which were fulfilled in the death of Christ. He says God had decreed and made known the following in Scripture concerning Christ's death:⁷⁵

That Christ would be betrayed by one of His disciples.
Ps. 41:9

That there would be false witnesses against Christ.
Ps. 35:11

That Christ would be spit upon and scourged.
Is. 50:6

That not a bone of Him should be broken.
Ex. 12:46, Num. 9:12

That these, and many other such prophecies, came to pass as clearly stated in the Old Testament, is proof abundant for Pink that the death of Christ in all its details was according to the decree of God.

In a lengthy discussion concerning the dilemma of Pilate as Christ stood before him, Pink sees again certain and sure evidence of the fulfillment of the determined counsels of God.

⁷⁴Pink, Sovereignty, Banner of Truth ed., pp. 87-88.

⁷⁵Ibid.

He says in this regard:

Nowhere in Scripture, perhaps, is there a more striking and vivid demonstration of the sovereignty of God than Pilate's treatment of the Lord Jesus. First, Pilate was assured of His innocency, acknowledging no less than seven times, "I find no fault in him." Second, Pilate desired to release Him: "Pilate therefore willing to release Jesus" (Luke 23:20); "I will let him go" (Luke 23:22); "Pilate sought to release him" (John 19:12); "Pilate was determined to let him go" (Acts 3:13), all prove that unmistakably. Third, Pilate was urged, most earnestly by none other than his own wife, not to sentence Him (Matt. 27:19). Fourth, he actually endeavored to bring about His acquittal: he bade the Jews themselves judge Christ (18:31); he sent Him to Herod, only for Christ to be returned (Luke 23:7); he sought to induce the Jews to have him convict Barabbas in His stead (19:39). Yet in spite of all, Pilate did give sentence that Christ should be crucified!

What does man's will amount to when it runs counter to the will of God? Absolutely nothing. Here was Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, determined to release the Saviour, yet prevented from doing so. From all eternity God had decreed that Pilate should sentence His Son to death, and all earth and hell combined could not thwart the purpose of the Almighty--He would not be all-mighty if they could! Christ was "delivered up (Greek) by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23).⁷⁶

Pink then cites Acts 4:27-28 and declares that what he is arguing is not simply "Calvinism," but the clear statement of the Word of God, and woe to anyone who denies it! "Christ had to be sentenced by Pilate because the eternal counsel of Deity had foreordained it."⁷⁷

On the basis of the above statements, it is beyond dispute that Pink believed God's decrees extended to the deeds of the wicked. The most forceful evidence was the death of

⁷⁶Pink, John, 3:205-206.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 206.

Christ. In every detail of the crucifixion, ". . . God Himself was master of this whole situation, directing every detail of it to the outworking of His eternal counsels."⁷⁸

Summary

It has been shown thus far that the view of A. W. Pink concerning the decree of God includes the following:

1. God's decree concerns all things that come to pass.
2. God's decree does not allow any accidents or chance-happenings.
3. God's decree extends to all events and creatures in the universe.
4. God's decree extends to all history of the nations and all the events therein.
5. God's decree extends to every aspect of every man's life.
6. God's decree includes the life and actions of every believer.
7. God's decree includes the life and actions of every lost man and every wicked act and deed.

The above statements, which comprise an outline of what has been presented thus far in this section, do not make up an outline as followed by Pink in any of his writings. Rather these are the points of this writer as he seeks to present Pink's view for consideration and analysis. Several questions now must be faced in light of the viewpoint of Pink. First, is this view a valid representation of the Westminster Confession of Faith? Second, is this a viewpoint that is in

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 233.

agreement with Scripture? These two questions will now be considered separately in the order stated.

A Comparison to the Westminster
Confession of Faith

Is the view which has just been presented by A. W. Pink a valid representation of the Westminster Confession of Faith? The confession speaks in several places concerning the subject of consideration:

There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will, for His own glory; . . . ⁷⁹

. . . he is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom, are all things; and hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever himself pleaseth.⁸⁰

God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: . . . ⁸¹

God, the great Creator of all things, doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.⁸²

The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in his providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall,

⁷⁹The Publications Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, The Confession of Faith (Inverness: John G. Eccles Printers, Ltd., 1976), pp. 24-25.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 26. ⁸¹Ibid., p. 28. ⁸²Ibid., pp. 33-34.

and all other sins of angels and men, and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends; . . . ⁸³

As the providence of God doth, in general, reach to all creatures; so, after a most special manner, it taketh care of his Church, and disposeth all things to the good thereof.⁸⁴

Though Pink does not claim to be presenting the view of the Westminster Confession (he does not disclaim the confession either), it is clear that having presented his view, and now also having presented these statements from the confession, that there is a very strong general agreement between the two. God is working all things according to the counsel of His own will--that is agreeable to both Pink and the confession. God has sovereign dominion over all beings to do by them, for them, and upon them whatever He pleases--that is agreed upon by Pink and the confession. God has from all eternity ordained whatever comes to pass--that is agreed upon by both Pink and the confession. God governs all things, creatures, and actions by the immutable counsel of His own will--that is a point of agreement between Pink and the confession. God's providence extends to the first fall and all other sins of angels and men, not just by permission, but by an ordering and governing of them--that also is a point of solid agreement between Pink and the confession. God's rule reaches in a special way to the Church--that also is agreed

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 35-36.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 38.

upon between Pink and the confession. These items substantiate the judgment at the beginning of this paragraph that there is a very strong general agreement in this area between Pink and the confession.

This is not to say that the confession would agree with Pink in all his expansion of the general points of agreement, or more particularly with Pink's attitude at times nor his mode of expression. His implication that one is only an infidel wearing the name of Christian if he believes events take place in the world by chance (see page 56) is a generalization and not in the spirit of the Westminster Confession. As a generalization the statement gives one no idea of whom he is speaking. Is this a total denial of the sovereignty of God, and a total submission to the sovereignty of chance, or is he speaking of anyone who disagrees with his view?

Again, Pink's discussion of Pilate has a sentence that seems to be unguarded and misleading (see page 67). He states that the will of man amounts to absolutely nothing when it runs counter to the will of God. The question will be faced later in the paper if Pink's view violates the will of the creature or makes God the author of sin. For now, it must be stated that this statement is harsh and extreme. Obviously, Pink means that the will of man cannot thwart the will of God as one considers the context. But in a day and age when men seek to show that Calvinists deny the responsibility of man,

Pink could have said the same thing in a clearer and more guarded manner.

These two statements are illustrations of an attitude and manner of expression found at times in Pink's writings. To repeat--there is a very strong agreement between Pink and the Westminster Confession in content, but Pink does not always state the subject in the spirit and with the carefulness of language that is found in the confession.

A Comparison with the Scriptures

The question of Pink's faithfulness to the Scriptures in the previous statements concerning God's decree will now be answered. In the presentation of Pink's viewpoint there was a concentration on his theological statements rather than on any Biblical grounding. That approach was taken for several reasons. First, the subject of the paper is concerned primarily with his theological position and not with his faithfulness to Scripture. Second, in Pink's theological writings he does not usually present an exposition of a passage, but gives verses in support of a theological position. Even in his exposition of Biblical books, he can be more theological and subject oriented than expositionally oriented.

Regardless of those facts, the question must still be asked concerning the Biblical basis for his position. The method will be to list most of the categories considered above with verses that Pink listed or quoted as proof-texts of his viewpoint.

God's decree includes all things that come to pass

. . . who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

Eph. 1:11

The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

Ps. 33:11

The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all.

Ps. 103:19

But our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.

Ps. 115:3

There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord.

Prov. 21:30

I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.

Is. 46:9-10

. . . he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

Dan. 4:35

For of him, and through him and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Rom. 11:36

God's decree extends to all history of the nations and all therein

By me kings reign, and princes decree justice.

Prov. 8:15

The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; he turneth it withersoever he will.

Prov. 21:1

For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?

Is. 14:26

God's decree extends to every aspect of every man's life

And the Lord hath blessed my master greatly: and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses. (wealth and possessions)
Gen. 24:35

Is there not an appointed time to man upon the earth?
(time of life)

Job 7:1

Seeing his days are determined. The number of his months are with thee, thou has appointed his bounds that he cannot pass. (time of life)

Job 14:5, see also verse 14

A man's heart deviseth his way, but he Lord directeth his steps.

Prov. 16:9

There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.

Prov. 19:21

O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

Jer. 10:23

My times are in thy hand. (time of life)

Ps. 31:15

Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. (the wicked)

Ps. 76:10

Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. (the wicked)

Acts 2:23

For of a truth against thy holy child, Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the nations, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. (the wicked)

Acts 4:27-28

Though all the questions that arise from Pink's view have not been answered, and though this writer would not

necessarily wish to put his approval upon Pink's usage of all the above Scriptures as proof of his position, still the conclusion must come that Pink's position is in agreement with Scripture. God has decreed all things: He has ordained whatsoever comes to pass. Clarification of this statement is now in order.

Positive Clarifications

All has not been spoken on the subject of predestination when one declares that God's decree concerns all things. This is an important statement, but many questions remain which need to be answered. This part of the paper will seek to set forth some points of positive clarification from the view of A. W. Pink to amplify his assertion that God's decree concerns all things.

God's Decree Is by the Most Wise and Holy Counsel of His Will

A. W. Pink would believe that God's decree is by the most wise and holy counsel of His will. That statement is actually stressing several points. These will be dealt with one by one before moving to a second positive clarification.

First, the above statement stresses that God's decree has behind it God's great and incomprehensible wisdom. Pink speaks of this in several places. In a chapter on the decrees of God, Pink argues that the use of the word "counsel" in Eph. 1:11 to signify the decree of God includes His wisdom.

They are inseparable. He says, ". . . wisdom is always associated with will in the divine proceedings, and accordingly, God's decrees are said to be 'the counsel of his own will' (Eph. 1:11)."⁸⁵ In writing upon the murder of Amasa in his exposition of the life of David, Pink asserts that God has a reason for all that happens in the lives of individuals or nations. He says, ". . . the most appalling events in history--whether involving individuals only or nations--have a satisfactory explanation, that God has sufficient reason for all that He does or permits."⁸⁶ Again, in discussion of the necessity of the atonement, Pink sets forth the presence of God's reason in all His works. He says, "Infinite wisdom never acts aimlessly. God, who is perfect in knowledge, does nothing without good reason. All His works are proportioned according to His unerring designs."⁸⁷ In this same connection he quotes Is. 28:29: "The Lord of hosts is excellent in counsel and excellent in working." Commenting on John 11:4, more especially the sickness of Lazarus, he says again, "Let us learn from this that God has a purpose in connection with every detail of our lives."⁸⁸

Second, the sub-heading of this part stresses that God's decree has also good for its end and purpose. Good must be defined, not from the standpoint of man or humanistic purposes, but from the standpoint of God's holiness and eternal

⁸⁵Pink, Godhead, p. 15.

⁸⁶Pink, David, 2:223.

⁸⁷Pink, Atonement, p. 31.

⁸⁸Pink, John, 2:162.

purpose. Pink leaves no doubt about God's end or purpose in this universe. God's end is His glory and His glory alone. In a discussion of the source of election, Pink says that "The end or design of every divine decree is God's own glory, for nothing less than this could be worthy of Himself."⁸⁹ He contends in another place that the end of creation was the manifestation of the glory of God.⁹⁰ He quotes in this discussion Prov. 16:4, which says, "The Lord hath made all things for Himself" (Pink's emphasis), and Rev. 4:11, which says, "Thou has created all things and for Thy pleasure they are and were created" (Pink's emphasis again). An infinitely wise and all-powerful God is working all things for His glory, and therefore all that He does must be good.

The problem is that man is not able to see God's reasons because God's wisdom is infinite and man's knowledge is finite. In the discussion mentioned above by Pink on the murder of Amasa, Pink goes on to assert, ". . . we do not wish to imply that any of us are capable of ascertaining the reason or reasons which lie behind any calamity that may overtake either ourselves or any of our fellows. On the contrary, it lies entirely outside of our province to explain the mysteries of divine providence . . ." ⁹¹ In another context Pink comments on Ps. 97:2, which reads, "Clouds and darkness

⁸⁹Pink, Election, p. 16.

⁹⁰Pink, Sovereignty, Banner of Truth ed., p. 76.

⁹¹Pink, David, 2:223.

are round about him." He says this verse refers to the fact that God's purposes and reasons are hidden from us. He says, "We are incapable of perceiving how He acts, much less of understanding why. His providences are a great deep; His counsels are inscrutable to the human mind."⁹²

Man would be helped, when facing God's works and ways, if he would look at the whole and not just at the part. Pink argues in the same Amasa context, "When incidents are contemplated singly they naturally appear distorted, for they are viewed out of their proper perspective; but when we are able to examine them in relation to their antecedents and consequents, usually their significance is much more evident. The detached fragments of life are meaningless, bewildering, staggering; but put them together, and they manifest a design and purpose."⁹³ However, not everything will be understood even then. There is much that must be accepted by faith, which assures us that ". . . Omniscience makes no mistakes . . ." ⁹⁴ Pink says again concerning man's response when facing the infinity of God's ways and his own limitations, "When we reach the bounds of the finite and gaze toward the mysterious realm of the infinite, let us exclaim, 'O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!' (Rom. 11:33)."⁹⁵

⁹²Pink, Paul, p. 346.

⁹⁴Pink, David, 1:102.

⁹³Pink, David, 2:222.

⁹⁵Pink, Godhead, p. 17.

The conviction of Pink that God's decree issues from the wise and holy counsel of God's will must be tested against the Westminster Confession of Faith. The confession upholds this view in several places. The section on God and the Trinity says that God is " . . . working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory; . . . "96 The section on God's decree states, "God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass . . . "97

Pink's proof for his position again does not consist of strong exegesis, but of the quoting of verses or sermonizing from a passage. His statement that the word "counsel" signifies wisdom is never supported by any reference to the original languages or even to a scholar who knows the languages. His conclusion that God has a purpose in every detail of our lives may be correct, but not from the ground that he asserts it. The fact that the Scripture says Lazarus' sickness was for the glory of God does not allow the conclusion that every detail in our lives has a purpose. His use of Scripture concerning God's end or purpose being His own glory is accurate, though it is not in any form of exegesis. His use of Ps. 97:2 ("Clouds and darkness are round about him . . . ") is questionable. Pink says it refers to God's counsels being beyond

⁹⁶Publications Committee, Confessions, p. 25.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 28.

man's understanding. He tries to tie it in with 1 Tim. 6:16, which speaks of God dwelling in the light which no man can approach. These do not appear to be parallel. One speaks of darkness, while the other speaks of light. Furthermore, Pink's treatment of the verse in Psalms again is a proof-text use without solid exegesis. He seems to ignore any consideration of the context. Finally, his use of Rom. 11:33 is acceptable, though again it is not to be looked upon as handled exegetically.

God's Decree Is Free from Any Cause or Influence Outside of Himself

A. W. Pink would again believe that God's decree is free from any cause or influence outside of Himself. Several quotes will establish this as the conviction of Pink:

God was alone when He made His decrees, and His determinations were influenced by no external cause. He was free to decree or not to decree, and to decree one thing and not another. This liberty we must ascribe to Him who is supreme, independent, and sovereign in all His doings.⁹⁸

The beginning of the decree is the will of God. It originates solely in His own sovereign determinations. Whilst determining the estate of His creatures God's own will is the alone and absolute cause thereof. As there is nothing above God to rule Him, so there is nothing outside of Himself which can be in any wise an impulsive cause unto Him; to say otherwise is to make the will of God no will at all. Herein He is infinitely exalted above us, for not only are we subject to One above us, but our wills are being constantly moved and disposed by external causes. The will of God could have no cause outside of itself, or otherwise there would be something prior to itself (for a cause ever precedes the effect)

⁹⁸Pink, Godhead, p. 17.

and something more excellent (for the cause is ever superior to the effect), and thus God would not be the independent Being which He is.⁹⁹

The will of God is absolutely free, uninfluenced and uncontrolled by anything outside of itself.¹⁰⁰

We affirm that He is under no rule or law outside of His own will and nature, that God is a law unto Himself, and that He is under no obligation to give an account of His matters to any.¹⁰¹

God does as He pleases and gives no account of His matters. He asks counsel of none and explains His actions to none. Every page of Holy Writ registers some illustration and exemplification of the exercise of His high sovereignty.¹⁰²

If God was free in all that He decreed, then He was free to create or not to create, as He pleased.¹⁰³ Pink says this and then elaborates further. There was no force or compulsion upon God to bring creatures into being. There was no force inwardly or outwardly. He was free not only to create or not to create, but also to create any kind of creatures He desired. He could decree to allow sin or not to allow sin. He could decree to destroy sinners immediately or allow them to live. He was free to decree whether to pardon or punish. He says in another place that God was free to create all creatures alike or different, a small or large world, and completely as He willed in the heavens, on the earth, giving

⁹⁹Pink, Election, p. 16. ¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁰¹Pink, Sovereignty, Banner of Truth ed., p. 22.

¹⁰²Pink, Elisha, p. 248.

¹⁰³Pink, "The Justice of God., " Studies in the Scriptures 19 (November 1940):257.

varying health, talents, length of days, intellect, and so forth.¹⁰⁴

In no way was there any compulsion from or need of man involved in the formation of the decrees of God. God was not in need of a man to worship Him. Pink puts it in this manner: "God is no gainer even from our worship. He was in no need of that external glory of His grace which arises from His redeemed, for He is glorious enough in Himself without that."¹⁰⁵ He states further in the same discussion a paragraph or two later that God " . . . might have continued alone for all eternity, without making known His glory unto creatures. Whether He should do so or not He determined solely by His own will. He was perfectly blessed in Himself before the first creature was called into being."¹⁰⁶

There is one aspect of Pink's concept of God's freedom that needs further analysis. First, several quotations will be presented, followed by a summary of those quotations. Then comments on the summary will be made.

There is no conflict between the Divine will and the Divine nature, yet it needs to be insisted upon that God is a law unto Himself. God does what He does, not simply because righteousness requires Him so to act, but what God does is righteous simply because He does it. All the Divine works issue from mere sovereignty.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴Pink, Sovereignty, Banner of Truth ed., pp. 27-30.

¹⁰⁵Pink, Godhead, p. 12. ¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Pink, Atonement, p. 20.

Yet, let it be pointed out, on the other hand, that God is sovereign, high above all law, and by no means tied by the restrictions which He has placed on His creatures.¹⁰⁸

True, but though His creatures are bound by the laws He has prescribed them, God Himself is not.¹⁰⁹

God is under no law, but is absolute Sovereign . . . God possesses supreme authority, and when He pleases sets aside His own laws, or issues new ones contrary to those given previously. By His own imperial fiat, Jehovah now, by special and extraordinary command, constituted it a duty for Abraham to do what before had been a sin. (Pink is referring here to the offering of Isaac) In similar manner, He who gave commandment "thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness" (Ex. 20:4), ordered Moses to make a brazen serpent (Num. 21:8)! Learn, then, that God is bound by no law, being above all law.¹¹⁰

None was before Him, none is above Him: nay, He hath no equal to direct Him, and therefore there is none unto whom He must render an account of His matters. What God ordains for us and what He orders from us is just and right simply because He so wills it. Hence it was that Abraham looked upon it as a righteous act to slay his innocent son. But why did he so esteem it? because the written law of God authorised murder? No, for on the contrary, both the law of God and the law of nature peremptorily forbade it; but the holy patriarch well knew that the will of God is the only rule of justice and that whatever He is pleased to command is on that very account righteous.¹¹¹

To summarize Pink in the above statements, we would note the following:

1. God is the absolute, free sovereign in the universe.
2. God is, therefore, free to act in any way He chooses.
3. God has given man a law to govern him, and man is obligated to obey God through that law.

¹⁰⁸Pink, Covenants, p. 176.

¹⁰⁹Pink, Hebrews, p. 737.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Pink, "The Justice of God," Studies in the Scriptures 19 (October 1940):233-234.

4. God, because He is the free sovereign, has the right to change, set aside His laws, or to issue new laws as He pleases.
5. God has changed or set aside His laws or given new laws in the history of the human race as evidenced in the life of Abraham and the experience of the children of Israel in the wilderness in the account of the serpent of brass.
6. This concept is necessary if God's freedom and justice are to be maintained.

Pink's view that God's decree was free with no outside cause or influence is in agreement with the Westminster Confession of Faith. That document says: "God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely . . . ordain whatsoever comes to pass: . . ." ¹¹² However, there is no allowance by the confession for the view that God's law has been or can be set aside by God, or even changed, because of a need to maintain His justice and/or freedom. The confession does not deny this position, but neither does it state or allow it. The mistake that Pink makes at this point is to deny that the law of God is the expression of His nature. God is the free and absolute sovereign, but He will never in the expression of that freedom violate His nature. To assert that God has used His freedom to change or set aside His law in the history of the human race (as in the case of Abraham and Isaac) is to open the door for God to do that again in the ages which followed. One can only imagine what wicked deeds could be justified

¹¹²Publications Committee, Confession, p. 28.

today on that basis. Therefore, this concept of Pink's concerning the freedom of God is not only in disagreement with the confession, but also with Scripture.

The remainder of Pink's view concerning the freedom of God in the formation of His decrees is again in very strong agreement with the confession, as stated above. It is also in agreement with Scripture, but again as in his other discussions, he only quotes Scripture without any in-depth exegesis. To support the concept of God's freedom, Pink quotes Is. 40:13-14, which says, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counselor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding."¹¹³ In his discussion that we quoted from his Gleanings from Elisha, he states that God acts freely doing only as He pleases and giving account to no one.¹¹⁴ He developed that thought from 2 Kings 13:4, which says Elisha became sick and died. Pink notes that the fact that Elisha dies and is not carried to heaven on a fiery chariot as was Elijah shows that God acts freely and is not obligated to act the same in every situation. He then notes the difference between Moses, who died at one hundred and twenty years with all the strength of his natural powers, and Joshua, who died ten years younger, but was stricken in age.

¹¹³Pink, Godhead, p. 17.

¹¹⁴Pink, Elisha, p. 248.

This is more of a sermonizing from a text, based on what Pink has concluded from other passages in his general theology, than a clear statement of the text. In the other contexts used above, as Pink spoke of God's freedom in general, he used no Scripture, and appears to philosophize in places rather than the proper practice of theology.

In his argumentation on God's freedom to create, Pink, for the most part, quotes supportive Scripture of a general nature which refers to God's sovereignty (Ps. 135:6, Ps. 115:3, Eph. 1:11, Eph. 1:5, and so forth). He also quotes Rev. 4:11, which states that God has created all things for His pleasure,¹¹⁵ and Prov. 16:4, which states that God has made all things for himself.¹¹⁶ The conclusion is that there is again a lack of exegesis in the presentation, and that support for his position is the method of proof-texting. This does not mean that his viewpoint is wrong, but that his method is weak.

God's Decree Is Unchangeable

To state a final positive clarification from the view of Pink, it would be correct to say that God's decree is unchangeable. This means that the decree is immutable and also certain to come to pass. Both of these ideas will be shown as set forth by Pink.

¹¹⁵Pink, Sovereignty, Banner of Truth ed., p. 27.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 30.

In several places Pink sets forth the fact of the immutability of God's decree. In one place he says, "They (the Scriptures) affirm that God is the 'Almighty,' that His will is irreversible . . . "¹¹⁷ However, Pink does not give any Scripture in this setting to support the claim. In a whole chapter devoted to the attribute of God's immutability, Pink has a long section on the immutability of God's will.¹¹⁸ To support his contention he quotes in his discussion such passages as Rom. 11:29, Job 23:13, Ps. 33:11, Heb. 6:17, and so forth. These verses declare the gifts and calling of God are without repentance (Rom. 11:29), that no one can turn God (Job 23:13), that His counsel stands forever (Ps. 33:11), and that His counsel is immutable (Heb. 6:17). In explaining why the purpose of God can never be altered, Pink says there are two things that cause a man to change his mind. There is either a lack of foresight or a lack of power to execute. Since God is omniscient and omnipotent, there is never any need for Him to change His plans or revise His decrees.¹¹⁹

In another discussion he uses James 1:17 to show that God's will is immutable.¹²⁰ In another place as he discusses the phrase "immutability of His counsel" from Heb. 6:17, he distinguishes between the revealed will of God and the secret,

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 15.

¹¹⁸Pink, Godhead, pp. 36-37.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 36.

¹²⁰Pink, Election, p. 17.

invincible will of God.¹²¹ The revealed will of God is what the Scripture sets forth as man's responsibility to God, and is never done perfectly by any man. The secret and invincible will of God is accomplished through every man. An example of a Scriptural reference to the revealed will of God is Luke 7:30, where it is stated that the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God. An example of the secret and invincible will of God is Acts 4:27-28, where it is said that those who crucified Christ did what the counsel of God determined previously to be done. Pink's conclusion is that the use of the word immutability in Heb. 6:17 makes it clear that the secret and invincible will of God is referred to here.

In at least two places Pink seeks to answer the question of God repenting in relation to the claim of the immutability of His decree. He gives two different answers, but one was written in the early 1930's and the other in the late 1940's. The earlier answer says that these statements in the Bible which attribute repentance to God are anthropomorphisms, that is, the accomodation of God's language to our limited understanding.¹²² The later discussion says that to call these a condescension of God to our language explains nothing. They can only be understood as we see them as references to God's governmental ways.¹²³ That is to say, the Bible refers to

¹²¹Pink, Hebrews, p. 348. ¹²²Pink, Godhead, p. 36.

¹²³Arthur W. Pink, Practical Christianity (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), p. 193.

God's immutable counsel, but also to His governmental ways. The governmental statements speak of man repenting and God changing His dealings with man because of that repentance. But this does not mean that God changes His immutable counsel. If one confuses the two, then he will be open to deny the immutability of God's counsel. If one keeps the two separate, he will not make that mistake, for he will see that the two are not exclusive one of another.

Related to God's immutability in His decree is the certainty of that decree. That is to say, the decree of God is certain to come to pass as He formed it. Pink says in this matter:

The wisdom and power of God being alike infinite, the accomplishment of whatever He hath purposed is absolutely guaranteed. It is no more possible for the divine counsels to fail in their execution than it would be for the thrice-holy God to lie.¹²⁴

The certainty of the Divine decrees: "The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations" (Psalm xxxiii, 11). There is no if or but, peradventure or perhaps, about them: all the Divine counsels are inviolable and infallibly sure. At the close of time it will be clearly demonstrated before an assembled universe that the whole of God's will was fully accomplished. "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand" (Prov. xix, 21). Man's purposes are like himself --fallible and fickle: but God's are firmer than a rock, for they are formed by infinite and immutable wisdom. It cannot be otherwise, for "He is one mind and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth, even that he doeth" (Job xxiii, 13). With him there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James i, 17). None can bribe or induce Him to alter one detail of His eternal plan.

¹²⁴Pink, Godhead, p. 21.

No unforeseen contingency can arise, for "known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Acts xv, 18). His power is invincible, and therefore it is impossible for any to thwart Him. He "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. i, 11), so that none of the devices of His enemies can prevent Him--if they could he would not be the supreme and universal Lord of all.¹²⁵

That lengthy quotation not only sets forth Pink's view of the immutability and certainty of God's decree, but it also illustrates his writing method and style. In his theological writing, Scripture verses are used, and sometimes in abundance, but they are not always exegeted.

It is clear from these statements by Pink that man cannot change or thwart the decree of God. This fact is illustrated many times in Scripture according to Pink. The Egyptians afflicted the children of Israel in Egypt, but the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied. Pink says this proves how vain it is for man to fight against the purpose of God--a worm could stand against the tread of an elephant more easily than any creature could stand against the will of God.¹²⁶ In commenting on Ex. 15:16, Pink interprets this verse to state that God's people, though they would face enemies and opposition, would be victorious, for the enemies would find it impossible to resist the fulfillment of God's eternal counsels.¹²⁷

¹²⁵Pink, "Forever," Studies in the Scriptures 29 (June 1950):121 and 144.

¹²⁶Pink, Exodus, p. 14.

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 117.

When the gospel writer says in John 7:30 that Christ's enemies sought to take him but could not, Pink says " . . . this evidences the invincibility of God's eternal decrees."¹²⁸ He gives here as further support Prov. 21:30, which states that there is no counsel against the Lord. He goes on to say that God decreed the various details of Christ's arrest and death. God's will and decree could not be changed, therefore, they could not take him anymore than they could stop the sun from shining. He then quotes Prov. 19:21, which says the counsel of the Lord shall stand even though there are many devices in the heart of man.

Pink states in another context:

Because He is the Most High, God's secret will cannot be thwarted. Because He is supreme, God's counsel must stand. Because He is Almighty, God's purpose cannot be overthrown. Again and again the Scriptures insist upon the irresistibility of the pleasure of the Lord God.¹²⁹

He then quotes seven passages to support what he has just said. They are Job 22:13, Job 42:2, Ps. 115:3, Prov. 21:31, Is. 14:27, Is. 46:9-10, and Dan. 4:35. All of this is part of Pink's exposition of Christ's statement from the cross, "It is finished."

There is no question that Pink's view concerning the immutability of God's decree is in agreement with the Westminster Confession of Faith. It states, "God from all eternity

¹²⁸Pink, John, 1:393.

¹²⁹Arthur W. Pink, The Seven Sayings of the Saviour on the Cross (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), p. 111.

did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: . . . "130 Another section says that God is " . . . working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will . . . "131 Still another section says that God is the Creator of all things and He " . . . doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy providence, according to his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will . . . "132

Negative Clarifications

It has been shown that A. W. Pink taught that the decree of God is free, unchangeable, and by the most wise and holy counsel of His will. This is also the view of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Still all the questions concerning the subject of the decree of God have not been answered. There remain several negative clarifications which must now be stated, discussed and verified.

God's Decree Does Not Make God the Author of Sin

A. W. Pink would argue that God's predestination of all things does not make God the author of sin. This is one of

¹³⁰Publications Committee, Confession, p. 28.

¹³¹Ibid., p. 25.

¹³²Ibid., pp. 33-34.

the first objections to the view that God's predestination includes all things, even the actions of the wicked. That Pink believed God's decree included the actions of sinful men has already been shown. Now it will be shown that Pink denied that this made God the author of sin.

In one lengthy section, where he discusses the entrance of sin into the world, he admits that such entrance is a very deep mystery. However, he is convinced that we can have a proper understanding because Scripture, though it does not reveal everything, does reveal enough to keep us from error on the subject.¹³³ Neither the fall of Satan nor the fall of Adam caught God unaware, for God had planned from all eternity past that He would display His perfections on this earth. Therefore, the events taking place on this earth are foreordained according to His plan and for the manifestation of His glory. He is not far removed from the earth and only keeping an eye on the events here, but rather He is in full control of His creation. Sin entered the world by His decree, and not simply by bare permission. God had actually decreed that Adam should disobey Him and eat of the forbidden fruit. Pink says that this is certain from 1 Peter 1:19-20, which states that the death of Christ was foreordained from the foundation of the world.

Pink continues in the same context to argue that God could have prevented the fall, had He desired, without forcing

¹³³ Pink, Depravity, p. 205.

or violating man's will. He argues that it is possible for God to manifest His power in a man's life without destroying his responsibility. He gives as evidence the example of God's restraint of Abimelech from sinning against God in the case of Sarah. He also cites the example of Balaam (Num. 22:38, 23:3, 20), and of the kingdoms God prevented from making war on Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 17:10). Pink then asks, if God prevented men from sinning in these instances, why did He not prevent the fall? If these instances did not violate man's freedom, then neither would the prevention of the fall. Pink argues that God allowed the fall to serve His purpose and will.

Pink then asks if this makes God the author of sin. God decreed that Adam should eat of the forbidden fruit. God could have prevented the fall without violating man's responsibility or freedom. Does this make God the author of sin? If one answers no to that question, how can there be any explanation of the matter? The answer is that even though God's decree made Adam's fall a certainty and necessity, there was no force or compulsion on Adam's will to sin. Neither did Adam's sin find any ground of excuse in the fact it came as by the decree of God, for he himself was fully accountable and guilty for his action of refusing to remain in subjection to the will of God.

Pink then appears to summarize the whole discussion when he says:

These two things we must believe if the truth is not to be repudiated: that God has foreordained everything

that comes to pass; that He is in no way blamable for any of man's wickedness, the criminality thereof being wholly his. The decree of God in no way infringes on man's moral agency, for it neither forces nor hinders man's will, though it orders and bounds its actions.¹³⁴

To summarize Pink, notice these points:

1. God has decreed everything that comes to pass.
2. God is not the author of sin.
3. The blame and guilt of sin rests upon man.
4. God's decree of all of man's actions does not force man's will, for man acts responsibly and freely.

There is no question again that Pink's view on this matter is in agreement with the Westminster Confession of Faith. The confession states that even though God ordained from eternity all that comes to pass, that does not make Him the author of sin.¹³⁵ Further, concerning the fall of man the confession says:

Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit. This their sin, God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory.¹³⁶

The confession, like Pink, speaks of God ordering the fall, and does not speak of just a permission alone, though the word permit is used in the confession. Therefore the confession agrees with Pink on both of those accounts, that is, that God decreed the entrance of sin into the world, but that does not make Him the author of sin.

¹³⁴Ibid., p. 207.

¹³⁵Publications Committee, Confession, pp. 28 and 35-36.

¹³⁶Ibid., p. 38.

As far as the use of Scripture, there is not a strong grounding of Pink's discussion in Scripture. In at least one instance, Pink draws a conclusion from a passage that is not warranted by the passage itself. This is the case when he uses 1 Peter 1:19-20, which says Christ's death was foreordained from the foundation of the world. Pink concludes that this passage teaches that God had decreed that Adam should disobey Him and eat of the forbidden fruit.

The passages concerning God's ability to prevent men from sinning without violating their freedom seem to be more to the point of the discussion, though these verses only state that God restrained men from sinning. They do not state directly that there was no violation of freedom. Finally, there are no passages given for the whole point of discussion--the question of God being the author of sin. The conclusion grows out of what was previously argued from the Scriptural base noted above. This again is not to say that Pink's view or the view of the Westminster Confession is in error, but to note the weakness of Pink's argumentation as far as Scripture is concerned.

God's Decree Does Not Cause the Will of the Creature in Its Action

To state a second negative clarification, Pink would also believe that God's decree of all things is not the cause of the will of the creature to act, especially referring to man at this point. This conviction has already been seen in

the above quotations, but further consideration of this point as a main thrust of thought is now in order.

In a long discussion on man in his original state, his fall, and the results, Pink addresses the question of man's freedom in his original state before the fall.¹³⁷ He says man's liability to fall lay in the fact he was a mutable creature who possessed a free will. He says:

Third, Adam's liability to falling lay in the freedom of his will. He was not only a rational creature, but also a moral one. Freedom of will is a property which belongs to man as a rational and responsible being. As we cannot separate understanding from the mind, neither can we part liberty from the will, especially in connection with things within its own sphere, especially when considering that all the faculties of man's soul were in a state of perfection before the fall. With Adam and Eve the freedom of their will consisted in a power of choosing or embracing what appeared agreeable and good to the dictates of their understandings, or in refusing and avoiding what was evil. There was no constraint or force laid upon them to act contrary to the dictates of their own wills. Such freedom also infers a power to act pursuant to what the will chooses, otherwise it could not obtain the good desired or avoid the evil detested; and in such a case its liberty would be little more than a name. Freedom of action is opposed to that which is involuntary or compelled, and the will is both self-inclining and self-determining in the acting, both internally and externally; for then only can it be said to be free.¹³⁸

To summarize the main points of this quotation for further emphasis, note the following:

1. Adam and Eve possessed a free will before the fall.
2. Their free will consisted in the power to choose good or evil.
3. There was no constraint or force laid upon them to cause them to act in violation of their own will.
4. There was the possession of the power to act in accordance with the choice of the will.

¹³⁷Pink, Depravity, pp. 14-37. ¹³⁸Ibid., p. 21.

It is clear, then, from the above discussion that, as far as Adam and Eve were concerned, Adam and Eve possessed a free will before the fall, and there was no restraint or force laid upon them to sin, even though God had decreed the entrance of sin into the world. At this point Pink does not mention the decree of God concerning the entrance of sin into the world. That conviction has already been shown to be the view of A. W. Pink. In his writings he recognized the reality of both--that God has decreed that sin was to enter the world, but also the first man was free in his action as sin did enter the world. He does not seek to harmonize them to the satisfaction of the human mind, but rather lets them stand in tension. In this context he discusses man's freedom.

Another question arises here. Is the same true of man after the fall? Is man still acting within a context of freedom? Pink would answer that man's will is still free, but not in the same sense it was before the fall. Even more important to the present discussion, he would argue that the will of man is still acting in accordance with the decree of God, but not from any force from God.

Pink was strongly opposed to some Calvinists who denied man's freedom. He says:

Far too many Calvinists, in their zeal to repudiate the free-willism of Arminians, have at the same time repudiated man's moral agency; anxious to enforce the utter helplessness of fallen men in spiritual matters, they have virtually reduced him to an irresponsible machine.¹³⁹

¹³⁹Pink, Practical, p. 83.

To further define his view of freedom to see how it differs from these Calvinists he just mentioned, consideration of another context is needed. He says that even though man retained his freedom in the fall, this does not mean it was the same freedom he possessed before the fall. Man's will must be seen in relation to his other faculties. The will never stands alone as an independent, self-determining force. The will acts in response to the desires of the heart or the direction of the mind. It does not reverse their judgements. He says, "Thus the freedom of the will is also limited by the bounds of human capabilities."¹⁴⁰

Therefore, Pink is saying that though the will is still free in man in one sense (free from any force or restraint from God), it is bound in another sense (in the sense of man's fall into sin and its results in man's nature). Even so, in his free actions man accomplishes the decree of God. Pink does not attempt to harmonize these two ideas, but says in another context:

The influences of providence, the manner in which they operate on the creature, are profoundly mysterious; on the one hand, they are not destructive of our rational nature, reducing us to irresponsible automotons; on the other hand, they are all made completely subservient to the divine purpose.¹⁴¹

The above discussion has established that Pink believes God's predestination of all things does not cause or force the

¹⁴⁰Pink, Depravity, p. 84.

¹⁴¹Arthur W. Pink, The Doctrine of Salvation (Grand Rapids: Guardian Press, 1975), p. 39.

will of the creature in its actions. In this conviction he is in agreement with the Westminster Confession of Faith once again. The confession states that even though God has ordained whatsoever comes to pass, no violence is offered to the will of the creatures.¹⁴²

There is a lack of Scripture in Pink's discussion of the subject. Perhaps some justification for this could be made on the ground that in some of these minute details of theology the Scripture does not speak with the greatest clarity that we would desire. To set forth some of these truths an abundance of material would have to be covered and in a very detailed manner. A man like Pink, who admits he wrote for the lay person and his practical benefit, might feel that deeper discussions, proofs, and long portions of exegesis might discourage the reader rather than help him. This is not to excuse Pink for his failure, but to recognize some of the possible reasons for his method.

God's Decree Does Not Destroy
the Contingency of Causes

To state another negative clarification, it is correct to say that Pink would believe that God's predestination of all things does not destroy the contingency of causes. Or to state the matter in another way, Pink would believe that the causes of events and actions are also free, and yet the final

¹⁴²Publications Committee, Confession, p. 28.

result is surely dependent upon other preceding events. It has already been shown that he believed that all the actions of men are free actions, even though men in those actions fulfill the decree of God. Causal actions and resulting actions are all free actions that fulfill the decree of God. Yet all of these actions and events are dependent upon one another, and without the prior the former would not come to pass.

This point works out practically in the area of the use of means, and this is the area of Pink's thought that will be used to show his agreement with the contingency of causes. If the end is predestined, why should man concern himself with the means? If some are elect, will they not be saved regardless of the means or events which precede? If the elect are guaranteed perseverance, does there need to be a concern for means between their salvation and final consumation? Pink defends the necessity of the use of proper means when he says:

The appointed means must never be separated from the appointed end. Strength for the body is obtained through the mouth, and health is not maintained without observing the rules of hygiene. Crops will not be produced unless the ground be prepared and sown.¹⁴³

In his exposition of John 17:11, he notes that some have found a difficulty in Christ's praying for His disciples' continuance. Why should He pray for them when He stated previously that not one of them would perish. Pink says this is evidence of the futility of the human mind to reason about spiritual and divine matters. He says that the Scriptures

¹⁴³Pink, Joshua, p. 150.

throughout teach us " . . . that God's decrees do not render void the use of means . . . "144

Again as he expounds the warnings of Hebrews 10, he says:

To say that real Christians need no such warning because they cannot possibly commit that sin, is, we repeat, to lose sight of the connection which God Himself has established between His predestined ends and the means whereby they are reached. The end unto which God has predestined His people is their eternal bliss in Heaven, and one of the means by which that end is reached, is through their taking heed to the solemn warning He has given against that which would prevent their reaching Heaven. It is not wisdom, but madness, to scoff at these warnings.¹⁴⁵

He says in another place that we cannot lie upon a bed of ease. Rather man is fully responsible as a Christian to use all the means God has provided for his spiritual growth and development.¹⁴⁶

Note, in summary, that Pink has stated the following in these quotations:

1. Man will not have a strong body simply because God has ordained it apart from his eating of food.
2. Man will not have a healthy body only because God has ordained it apart from his following the proper rules of hygiene.
3. Man will not have food and crops just by the decree of God apart from the preparation of the soil and sowing of the seed.
4. Believers will not persevere in the Christian life merely because they are the elect apart from the proper use of God's provided means of grace.
5. Causal actions and events are established in the accomplishments of God's final end and purpose.

It must be remembered that the above noted items cannot mean that man can thwart the final will and purpose of God,

¹⁴⁴Pink, John, 3:120.

¹⁴⁵Pink, Hebrews, p. 616.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p. 1282.

for even in the performance or lack of performance of the above, man acts freely, yet according to God's decree. This may not be capable of full understanding by human reason, but nonetheless it is the conviction of A. W. Pink and the Westminster Confession of Faith. The confession clearly states that the liberty or contingency of second causes is not taken away by God's ordination of all that comes to pass, but rather these are established.¹⁴⁷

Pink's use of Scripture in this area is in a better manner. It is not that he practices strong and in-depth exegesis, but that the passages he refers to do speak clearly of the points of discussion. Christ did state in John 10 that none of His disciples would perish. Yet He did also pray for them in John 17. These two passages present both the end of the divine decree and the necessity of the use of means in the accomplishment of the end. The section in Hebrews is also noteworthy and to the point. Here are warnings given forcefully to believers concerning their responsibility to persevere in the way of grace.

God's Decree Does Not Deny Human Responsibility

Another negative clarification that can be attributed to the thought of Pink would be that God's predestination of all things does not deny human responsibility. This idea has already been intimated in the above discussions, but is now

¹⁴⁷Publications Committee, Confession, p. 28.

stated clearly for consideration. Evidence for this point abounds in Pink's writings, for there are few issues that he stresses as much as the responsibility of man before God both in his lost condition and in his life as a believer. The problem is not to find statements on the subject in his writings, but to select representative ones.

In his book that discusses principles for interpreting Scripture, Pink sets forth a hermeneutical principle and then applies it in the area of God's sovereignty and human responsibility.¹⁴⁸ He says that we have a tendency to seek for unity of thought as we handle the doctrines of the Bible. Therefore, when we come to some area that is difficult for our limited minds to understand, we force a unity by going to one extreme and denying the other. Actually, both sides of the tension are necessary for the balance of the truth. He says that we may become clear and logical, but at the expense of becoming superficial and half-orbed in doctrine. He gives an example of the Jews of the Old Testament as they dwelled upon the prophecies concerning the glories of the Messiah, while denying the prophecies of His sufferings. It is at this point of the discussion that he indicates we can do the same today concerning the matter of God's sovereignty and human responsibility. He says:

Thus, we must never allow the grand truth of God's sovereignty to crowd out the fact of human responsibility.

¹⁴⁸Pink, Interpretation, p. 53.

The will of the Almighty is indeed invincible, but that does not mean that we are nothing better than inanimate puppets. No, we are moral agents as well as rational creatures, and throughout are dealt with by God as such.¹⁴⁹

In another context he argues that the truth of God is a narrow path which makes its way through or between two gulfs of error.¹⁵⁰ It is easy for us to drift from the path into either gulf, and not so much as to deny the truth, but to pervert the truth by pitting one element of it against another. Pink continues to argue that the history of theology illustrates this clearly. He says one generation contends properly for that part of the truth that has been overlooked or denied in its day. The next generation, instead of keeping a balance, elevates that part of the truth which the past generation championed so well to the distinguishing mark of their party. Because of this overbalance, another group in the present generation contends for the neglected portion, only to have their followers in the next generation overbalance and make that emphasis the mark of their theology. So goes the history of theology. Pink then comments on the matter of sovereignty and human responsibility as one of those areas of tension in theology. He says:

. . . certain it is that men, left to themselves, have ever found it impossible to keep the even line of truth between what appear to be conflicting doctrines: such as the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man;

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰Arthur W. Pink, Profiting from the Word (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), p. 57.

. . . Only too often, where the absolute sovereignty of God has been insisted upon, it has been to the ignoring of man's accountability . . . On the other hand, where human accountability has been upheld and an evangelical ministry has been sustained, the sovereignty of God and the truth of election have generally been whittled down or completely ignored.¹⁵¹

In a chapter on the decrees of God, after a discussion on that theological theme, Pink hastens to emphasize man's responsibility. He says:

Side by side with the immutability and invincibility of God's decrees, Scripture plainly teaches that man is a responsible creature and answerable for his actions. If our thoughts are formed from God's Word, the maintenance of the one will not lead to the denial of the other. That there is a real difficulty in defining where the one ends and the other begins is freely granted. This is always the case where there is a conjunction of the divine and the human.¹⁵²

Two other quotations will further establish Pink's view of the necessity to balance God's sovereignty and human responsibility:

It is so easy for us to mar the fair proportions of Truth and destroy its perfect symmetry. In our zeal, there is ever the tendency to take one aspect of Truth and press it so far as to cancel out another. Not only so in causing God's sovereignty to oust human responsibility, but to make the merits of Christ bar God from exercising His perfections in the present government of this world.¹⁵³

Every attempt to negative human responsibility and undermine the sinner's accountability, no matter by whom made, must be steadfastly resisted by us.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁵²Pink, Godhead, p. 17.

¹⁵³Pink, "Enjoying God's Best," Studies in the Scriptures 27 (June 1948):135.

¹⁵⁴Pink, Practical, p. 81.

The Scriptural proof that Pink presents for his position again abounds. In one place he notes that Abraham and his descendants had to fight long and hard to possess Canaan, even though it had been given to them as a divine gift. The Lord fought for them, and the victories were ascribed to Him, but that did not change the fact that they had to fight and conquer their foes. This proves that, "Both the Divine and the human sides are to be recognized and owned by us."¹⁵⁵ In the discussion of Joshua 6 concerning the taking of Jericho, Pink asks why such elaborate preparations were made to take the city if God had given the city to Joshua. He then answers his own question as he also states the importance of this lesson for us:

In reality, those verses exemplify and illustrate a principle which it is most important for us to apprehend. That principle may be stated thus: the disclosure of God's gracious purpose and the absolute certainty of its accomplishment in no wise renders needless the discharge of our responsibilities. God's assuring us of the sureness of the end does not set aside the indispensibility of the use of means. Thus, here again, as everywhere, we see preserved the balance of Truth.¹⁵⁶

Commenting again on the eighteenth chapter of Joshua, where the people were indolent in fully possessing the land, Pink notes Joshua's rebuke and action (18:2-3) as evidence that God's sovereignty and human responsibility go hand in hand. He also uses this context to scold any hyper-Calvinists who would over-balance in the direction of sovereignty. He says:

¹⁵⁵Pink, Joshua, p. 326.

¹⁵⁶Ibid., p. 149.

This detail also serves to illustrate, and in a clear definite manner, the important truth that the fact of God's sovereignty . . . does not set aside the exercise of human responsibility; they were required to discharge their moral agency and act intelligently. Alas, how many hyper-Calvinists have sought to excuse their apathy by perverting and sheltering behind the Divine decrees! How fearfully deceitful is the human heart in persuading not a few that they are displaying a commendable spirit of humility and meekness in "waiting God's time" before they act, when instead they are guilty of shirking their duty.¹⁵⁷

In discussing the Shunamite woman's flight to the land of the Philistines upon Elisha's announcement of a famine and his command to leave the land, Pink says of the woman's action:

Nor did she yield to a fatalistic inertia and say, If God has called for a famine, I must bow to it; and if I perish, I perish. Instead she acted as a rational creature, discharged her responsibility, forsook the place of danger, and took refuge in a temporary haven of shelter.¹⁵⁸

When she returned seven years later to find her house and land taken by another, Pink says:

. . . she did not shrink her duty, but actively discharged her responsibility. She was neither a believer in passive resistance nor in looking to God to undertake for her while she shelved her duty--which would have been highly presumptuous.¹⁵⁹

Further statements could be given concerning the life of David,¹⁶⁰ the life of Christ,¹⁶¹ and even others that would establish Pink's strong concern to properly relate and balance God's sovereignty and human responsibility. Those given

¹⁵⁷Ibid., p. 367. ¹⁵⁸Pink, Elisha, p. 226.

¹⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 227-228.

¹⁶⁰Pink, David, 1:100 and 2:321 and 377.

¹⁶¹Pink, John, 1:342-43, 358 and 3:42.

should be sufficient for the present purpose of the paper. The question which must now be considered is the view of the Westminster Confession concerning the matter of human responsibility.

The confession does not speak in any language of the need to balance sovereignty and human responsibility. Nonetheless, it does along with its statements on God's decree of all things, clearly establish man's duty and responsibility before God to walk in obedience to Him. In some statements the fact of man's duty is clearly stated, while in others it is undeniably implied.

Chapter II states man's duty by the following words: "To him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience, he is pleased to require of them."¹⁶² Chapter VII says reasonable creatures owe to God obedience as their Creator.¹⁶³ The section on repentance stresses that it is the duty of every man to endeavour to repent of his particular sins.¹⁶⁴ That chapter says again that ". . . every man is bound to make private confession of his sins to God . . ." ¹⁶⁵ In the chapter on good works the confession states, ". . . there is required an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit to work in them to will and to do of his good pleasure: yet are they not hereupon to grow negligent, as if they were not bound to perform

¹⁶²Publications Committee, Confession, p. 27.

¹⁶³Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁶⁵Ibid.

any duty unless upon a special motion of the Spirit; but they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them."¹⁶⁶ Finally, the chapter on the Law of God stresses that God gave Adam a law to which he and all his posterity was bound to obey in a personal, entire, exact, and perpetual manner.¹⁶⁷ These statements from the confession should be sufficient to establish the responsibility of man before God as in agreement with the conviction of A. W. Pink. Therefore, neither Pink nor the confession allowed their view that God predestined all things to overbalance and destroy man's responsibility.

Concerning Pink's use of Scripture to establish the fact of man's responsibility, no major objection or critique is in order. Only a few of the many references throughout his writings concerning man's responsibility before God were able to be noted. In those already cited and others he constantly uses the Scriptures in his usual manner (as references and prooftexts or as the ground for sermonizing) to set forth human responsibility, and to wage war with the hyper-Calvinistic tendencies of some to deny human responsibility. Man is responsible to keep God's law. Man is responsible to repent of his sins. Man is responsible to live the Christian life and to persevere in holiness. Man is responsible to carry the gospel to all the world in the work of evangelism and missions.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., p. 69-70.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., p. 79.

These are certain convictions of A. W. Pink and he does use Scripture adequately to support them through his writings.

God's Decree Is Not Based on the Prescience
of Future Events

To add a fifth and final negative clarification, note that Pink would agree that God's predestination of all things is not based on the prescience of future events. That is to say that God did not take a long look through the corridors of time and ordain what was to come to pass on the basis of His ability to know the future. Rather the events of the future come to pass because He has ordained them. Pink's statement of this conviction is very clear:

Few who read this book are likely to call into question the statement that God knows and foreknows all things, but perhaps many would hesitate to go further than this. Yet is it not self-evident that if God foreknows all things, He has also fore-ordained all things? Is it not clear that God foreknows what will be because He has decreed what shall be? God's foreknowledge is not the cause of events, rather are events the effects of His eternal purpose. When God has decreed a thing shall be, He knows it will be. In the nature of things there cannot be anything known as what shall be, unless it is certain to be, and there is nothing certain to be unless God has ordained it shall be.¹⁶⁸

Pink then presents the crucifixion as an illustration of his argument. Christ was foreordained to shed His blood before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20). Because it was ordained, God knew it was to come to pass, and therefore revealed it through the prophet Isaiah. Pink argues further that Christ was not delivered up by God's foreknowledge of the

¹⁶⁸ Pink, Sovereignty, Banner of Truth ed., p. 74.

event before it took place, but by God's determined counsel and foreordination (Acts 2:23).¹⁶⁹ He continues:

Foreknowledge of future events then is founded upon God's decrees, hence if God foreknows everything that is to be, it is because He has determined in Himself from all eternity everything which will be--"Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18), which shows that God has a plan, that God did not begin His work at random or without a knowledge of how His plan would succeed.¹⁷⁰

In a chapter devoted entirely to the subject of God's knowledge, Pink speaks again to this question and with the same conviction. He says that God's knowledge of the future, by itself, is not causative. Nothing ever happens simply because God knew it. Rather, the cause of all things is the will of God. He gives the example of a man who knows that all the seasons of the earth will continue regularly to the end of history because he knows the teaching of Gen. 8:22. However, his knowledge of this fact is not the cause of the seasons continuing. Rather, he knows because of the ordained fact. He then concludes, "So God's knowledge does not arise from things because they are or will be, but because He has ordained them to be."¹⁷¹

To summarize Pink on this point, note the following:

1. God foreknows all things.
2. God foreknows all things because He has foreordained all things.
3. God has not foreordained all things because He foreknows all things.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 74-75.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁷¹ Pink, Godhead, p. 21.

Pink's conviction at this point is again in agreement with the Westminster Confession of Faith. It states, "Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet hath he not decreed any thing because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions."¹⁷²

As far as Pink's use of Scripture in the two sections of his writings which have been used in the above discussion, it must be admitted it is weak. His use of 1 Peter 1:20 (Christ was foreordained to shed His blood before the foundation of the world) says nothing of the relation of God's knowledge and His foreordination. This verse simply says that Christ was foreordained to shed His blood before the foundation of the world. His use of Acts 2:23 is no better, for he takes a word that is translated in some versions as "foreknowledge" and translates it as "foreordination" with no explanation either from the original language or from any other scholar. Neither does he give his reasons for taking the word in the sense of foreordination.

Even if he does take the word to mean foreordination, the verse still says nothing about the relation between God's foreordination and His foreknowledge. It simply states that Christ was delivered up on the basis of God's fixed counsel and foreordination. It does indicate that the event came to

¹⁷²Publications Committee, Confession, p. 28.

pass because of God's decree rather than because of His fore-knowledge.

Conclusion

To summarize this entire second chapter of the paper, note the following main ideas that have been stressed as the view of A. W. Pink concerning God's decree:

1. God's decree concerns all things: He has ordained whatsoever comes to pass.
 - a. God's decree does not allow any accidents.
 - b. God's decree extends to all events and creatures.
 - c. God's decree extends to the history of all the nations and all the events therein.
 - d. God's decree extends to every aspect of man's life.
 - e. God's decree includes the life and actions of every believer.
 - f. God's decree includes the life and actions of every lost man in every wicked deed and act.

2. Positive clarifications
 - a. God's decree is by the most wise and holy counsel of His will.
 - b. God's decree was free with no cause or influence outside of Himself.
 - c. God's decree is unchangeable.

3. Negative clarifications
 - a. God's decree of all things does not make Him the author of sin.
 - b. God's decree of all things does not cause the will of the creature in its actions.
 - c. God's decree does not deny that the causes of events and actions in men's lives are free, nor does it deny that the final result is dependent upon other preceding events.
 - d. God's decree of all things does not deny human responsibility.
 - e. God's decree of all things is not based on His prescience of future events.

The conclusion has been also that Pink is in strong agreement with the Westminster Confession of Faith in the above summary statements. The only major distinction that existed in the investigation was Pink's idea that God is free to change, by-pass, or ignore His law at any time. God's law for Pink does not seem to be the expression of His nature, but rather the free choice of His will in various areas of man's responsibility. Though the confession does not speak directly concerning this area of God's freedom, the confession does state clearly that all men are under obligation to obey God's law. No exceptions are made in the confession for the abrogation or relaxation of God's law at any point. This disagreement between Pink and the confession does not involve any of the above major statements.

To summarize Pink's use of and agreement with Scriptures is not an easy task. The reason for this is the way he makes use of Scripture. It has been stated that his writings do not contain proper and in-depth exegesis. Rather, his theological portions use the Scriptures in a proof-text manner, while his expositions, for the most part, draw practical and sermonic ideas for the reader's edification. It has been stressed that this is not to say that the view of Pink in the major points was in error, nor that the Westminster Confession of Faith is in error. It is to recognize a weakness in the writings of Pink--a failure to practice solid exegesis and to build his theology from that foundation.

Remembering Pink's lack of training, and realizing that he was a self-taught man, and recalling his method of study and writing as it depended heavily on the writings of others, one can understand why Pink's writings are as described above. This is not to excuse his method, but to recognize his method and its results. It still must be the conclusion of this writer that Pink and the Westminster Confession of Faith are in agreement with the Scriptures on the above summarized major points.

CHAPTER III

A. W. PINK'S DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION IN PARTICULAR

It has been shown in the last chapter that A. W. Pink believed that God had foreordained all things that come to pass. This includes all actions and all events of all creatures in the universe. This foreordination of all actions and events extends to the lives of both believers and unbelievers. This foreordination includes the wicked and evil deeds of men, as well as the good deeds. God has predestinated all things freely and immutably by the most wise and holy counsel of His will. This does not make God the author of sin. This is not to say that God forces the will of the creature. This does not destroy the contingency of causes. This does not deny man's responsibility before God. Neither is God's predestination based on His knowledge of future conditions or events. Future events come to pass because of God's decree and not because of the action of the creature which was only foreseen by God. This is a summary statement of Pink's view of the doctrine of predestination.

Nothing was said in the last chapter about the relation of predestination to God's work in the saving of a people.

Does God's decree extend into the realm of salvation, or does it include every area of men's lives except the matter of eternal destiny? It will be shown in this chapter that for Pink the doctrine of God's decree extends to all areas, even the matter of man's eternal destiny. God's decree does include election and reprobation. These terms and some related ideas will be discussed first in a general way, and then each will be considered separately in a more particular manner.

Election and Reprobation in General

Definitions

According to A. W. Pink election and reprobation result from the decree of God and determine the eternal destiny of both men and angels. Concerning men, election has to do with the saved, who will spend the after-life in eternal bliss in the presence of God. Reprobation has to do with the lost, who will spend the after-life in eternal damnation in separation from the presence of a holy God. The determining cause of each is the decree of God based on His will and purpose.

In seeking to define predestination in this area, Pink states:

Accurately speaking, election is a branch of predestination, the latter being a more comprehensive term than the former. Predestination relates to all creatures, things, and events; but election is restricted to rational beings--angels and humans. As the word predestinate signifies, God from all eternity sovereignly ordained and immutably determined the history and destiny

of each and all of His creatures. But in this study we shall confine ourselves to predestination as it relates to or concerns rational creatures. And here too a further distinction must be noticed. There cannot be an election without a rejection, a taking without a passing by, a choice without a refusal. As Psalm 78 expresses it, "He refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim; but chose the tribe of Judah" (vv. 67, 68). Thus predestination includes both reprobation (the preterition or passing by of the non-elect, and then the foreordaining of them to condemnation--Jude 4 --because of their sins) and election unto eternal life, the former of which we shall not now discuss.¹

Note several things Pink says in the above paragraph.

He says that election is a branch of predestination. Predestination relates to all events and creatures, but election is that branch of predestination which is more particularized in that it has to do only with rational creatures, that is, angels and men. He says there cannot be an election without a reprobation. Therefore God's decree includes both election and reprobation.

In the same context Pink defines his view of election.² He says that it is the act of God in His mind. This act consists of choosing certain ones from among angels and men. Those He singled out in this manner He ordained to eternal life and blessedness. God was like a builder who draws his plans and determines each part of the building before he gathers the material to carry out his plan. Pink then says, to summarize his above comments and definition:

¹Arthur W. Pink, The Doctrines of Election and Justification (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), p. 15.

²Ibid.

Election may thus be defined: it is that part of the counsel of God whereby He did from all eternity purpose in Himself to display His grace upon certain of His creatures. This was made effectual by a definite decree concerning them.³

Pink speaks about election in many places in his writings. In a later part of this chapter his Scriptural argumentation for election and reprobation will be given. For now a few other references that relate to the general definition of election will be given.

What does the word "Election" mean? It signifies to single out, to select, to choose, to take one and leave another. Election means that God has singled out certain ones to be the objects of His saving grace, while others⁴ are left to suffer the just punishment of their sins.

Not only has God the right to do as He wills with the creatures of His own hands, but He exercises this right, and nowhere is that seen more plainly than in His predestinating grace. Before the foundation of the world God made a choice, a selection, an election. Before His omniscient eye stood the whole of Adam's race, and from it He singled out a people and predestinated them "unto the adoption of children," predestinated them "to be conformed to the image of His Son," "ordained" them unto eternal life.⁵

In his book titled The Sovereignty of God, Pink has a whole chapter on the subject of reprobation.⁶ Though he often speaks of reprobation in other contexts in terms of

³Ibid.

⁴Arthur W. Pink, The Doctrine of Election (Venice, Fla.: Chapel Library, n.d.), p. 4.

⁵Arthur W. Pink, The Sovereignty of God, British rev. ed. (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), p. 48.

⁶Arthur W. Pink, The Sovereignty of God, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), pp. 81-108. The Banner of Truth edition omits this chapter.

"passing by," here he goes beyond that language to be more specific of his concept of reprobation. He says:

The thoughtful reader will naturally ask, And what of those who were not "ordained to eternal life?" The answer which is usually returned to this question, even by those who profess to believe what the Scriptures teach concerning God's sovereignty, is that God passes by the non-elect, leaves them alone to go their own way, and in the end casts them into the Lake of Fire because they refused His way, and rejected the Saviour of His providing. But this is only a part of the truth; the other part--that which is most offensive to the carnal mind--is either ignored or denied.⁷

What is this "other part of the truth" which Pink refers to in the above statement? Before he explains it he attempts to prepare his reader by noting that this portion is so awfully solemn that almost all (even those who claim to be Calvinists) reject it. He then acknowledges the controversial nature of the doctrine, and also states that it is deeply mysterious and difficult to understand. He says the reason so many reject the doctrine is because in the present day most will receive only what they can understand and explain with their minds. He then gets to the "other part of the truth" as he says:

Stating it in its baldest form the point now to be considered is, Has God fore-ordained certain ones to damnation? That many will be eternally damned is clear from Scripture, that each one will be judged according to his works and reap as he has sown, and that in consequence his "damnation is just" (Rom. 3:8), is equally sure, and that God decreed that the non-elect should choose the course they follow we now undertake to prove.⁸

⁷ Ibid., p. 81.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 81-82.

The proof Pink speaks of here, in favor of reprobation, will be presented later in this chapter. At this point two more references will be given to note that reprobation is as great a reality for Pink as is the doctrine of election.

Speaking of Rom. 9:21-23 he says:

These verses represent fallen mankind as inert and as impotent as a lump of lifeless clay. This scripture evidences that there is "no difference," in themselves, between the elect and non-elect: they are clay of "the same lump," which agrees with Eph. 2:3, where we are told, that all are by nature "children of wrath." It teaches us that the ultimate destiny of every individual is decided by the will of God, and blessed it is that such be the case; if it were left to our wills, the ultimate destination of us all would be the Lake of Fire. It declares that God Himself does make a difference in the respective destinations to which He assigns His creatures, for one vessel is made "unto honour and another unto dishonour;" some are "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," others are "vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory."⁹

In speaking of some areas of truth which some men find difficult to relate to God's justice, Pink says:

Take another most extreme example of all: God choosing one unto eternal life and another unto eternal death. Yet none who, by grace, bow to the authority of Holy Writ find any stumbling block therein. Though they do not profess to understand the reason for God so acting, yet they unhesitatingly acknowledge his right to do so. Distrusting their conceptions of justice and injustice, they submit to the high sovereignty of Him who is Lord over all.¹⁰

To compare Pink's view of election and reprobation with the Westminster Confession of Faith is not difficult. Though

⁹Pink, Sovereignty, Banner of Truth ed., pp. 47-48.

¹⁰Arthur W. Pink, "The Justice of God," Studies in the Scriptures 19 (October 1940):236.

certainly the confession does not speak as extensively as Pink does on the subject, there can be no denial of the agreement of the two on the general fact that God's decree extends to the eternal destiny of both men and angels. The confession states pointedly, "By the decree of God, . . . some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death."¹¹

The Order of the Decrees

A more difficult question which needs to be faced at this juncture concerns the view of A. W. Pink and the Westminster Confession of Faith on the order of God's decrees. Did the decree to elect and reprobate precede the decree to allow the fall, or was the decree of election and reprobation in light of the fact of man's fall into sin? The former view is known as the Supralapsarian view, and the latter is the Infralapsarian or the Sublapsarian view. To ascertain Pink's view of this doctrine is not easy. The answer may be that in his early ministry he was an Infralapsarian and then moved to a Supralapsarian position in the decade of the thirties. But even in this decade there seemed to be a statement of both viewpoints. The following quotations, along with a date of publication in the periodical, will confirm what has just been stated.

¹¹The Publications Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, The Confession of Faith (Inverness: John G. Eccles Printers, Ltd., 1976), p. 29.

In referring to Jude 1 in the year 1924 he says:

The order of the verbs here is most significant. The "sanctification" by the Father manifestly speaks of our eternal election, when before the foundation of the world God, in His counsels, separated us from the mass of our fallen race, and appointed us to salvation.¹²

Writing on Heb. 5:8-10 in the year 1929 he says:

But God has designs of grace unto men, not unto all men, but unto a remnant of them chosen out of a fallen race.¹³

In a letter dated October 14, 1934 he comments on a book by a man named Thornwell (the first name is not given):

. . . his last sentence of first paragraph on page 24 exhibits the weakness of his system--a purpose to glorify himself rather than "a purpose to save" was the starting point of God's decrees! The supralapsarian system makes God the beginning, centre and end thereof; whereas sublapsarianism makes Man the centre and circumference.¹⁴

Writing in a periodical in October of 1935 he says:

Let it be fully noted that Adam was joined to Eve in marriage before the fall, and not after it. How this exposes the makeshift compromise of sublapsarians!¹⁵

In the periodical of August of 1938 Pink seems to make an Infralapsarian statement again. He says:

If there was no injustice in God's making a choice of some unto special favor and eternal blessing as He

¹²Arthur W. Pink, Gleanings in Exodus (Chicago: Moody Press, n.d.), p. 18.

¹³Arthur W. Pink, An Exposition of Hebrews (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1954), p. 248.

¹⁴Arthur W. Pink, Letters of A. W. Pink, a letter to Wallace Nicholson, 14 October 1934 (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1978), p. 55.

¹⁵Arthur W. Pink, Spiritual Union and Communion (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), p. 60.

reviewed His creatures in the glass of His purpose to create, then certainly there could be no injustice in His determining to show them mercy as He foreviewed them among the mass of Adam's ruined race.¹⁶

Speaking again of election one month later in the September issue of the periodical, he clearly states a Supralapsarian position. He says:

Third, this act of God was irrespective of and anterior to any foresight of the entrance of sin . . . The particular point which we are now to ponder is, as to whether His people were viewed by God, in His act of election, as fallen or unfallen; as in the corrupt mass through their defection in Adam, or in the pure mass of creaturehood, as to be created. Those who took the former view are known as Sublapsarians; those who took the latter as Supralapsarians, and in the past this question was debated considerably between high and low Calvinists. This writer unhesitatingly (after prolonged study) takes the Supralapsarian position, though he is well aware that few indeed will be ready to follow him.¹⁷

From the quotations given it seems to be a valid conclusion that Pink was Infralapsarian early in his ministry, but then did become convinced of the Supralapsarian position in the passing of the years. By September of 1938 he is firmly committed to the Supralapsarian view. The August 1938 statement given above, which seems to be an Infralapsarian statement, may actually be a Supralapsarian statement in light of the distinction he makes between "the corrupt mass" and the "pure mass of creaturehood" in the September 1938 statement.

Concerning the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith on the Infralapsarian or Supralapsarian position, it is

¹⁶Pink, Election, p. 56.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 65-66.

the conviction of this writer that the confession is not explicit in its view. Charles Hodge says concerning this question:

Twiss, the Prolocutor of that venerable body (the Westminster Assembly), was a zealous supralapsarian; the great majority of its members, however, were on the other side. The symbols of that Assembly, while they clearly imply the infralapsarian view, were yet so framed as to avoid offence to those who adopted the supralapsarian theory.¹⁸

The clearest statement of the confession on this subject reads as follows:

The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.¹⁹

If one were to ask which part of this statement from the confession implies an Infralapsarian view, Hodge would answer:

It is here taught that those whom God passes by are "the rest of mankind;" not the rest of ideal or possible men, but the rest of those human beings who constitute mankind, or the human race. In the second place, the passage quoted teaches that the non-elect are passed by and ordained to wrath "for their sin." This implies that they were contemplated as sinful before this foreordination to judgment.²⁰

Regardless of Hodge's argument, this writer would still conclude that the confession is not clear on this subject.

¹⁸Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 2:317.

¹⁹Publications Committee, Confession, p. 30.

²⁰Hodge, Systematic, p. 317.

The phrase "the rest of mankind" does not contain a clear statement of the condition of those referred to by that phrase as the mind of God acted. The phrase "for their sin" carries greater weight, but even this is not conclusive. It would also be the opinion of the present writer that neither is Scripture explicit on the subject under discussion.

The Goal of Election and Reprobation

Having defined the doctrine of election and reprobation, the question of the goal of both is now in order. What is the purpose or goal of God's predestination of some men and angels to everlasting life and others to everlasting death? It is not difficult to learn Pink's view, for the goal of every divine decree in his thinking is the glory of God.²¹ This must be so, he argues, because He can swear by none greater, and therefore could not find a greater end than His own glory. He is the God who has made all things for Himself (Prov. 16:4), which means for His own glory. As He is the first cause of all things, so He is also the final end of all things (Rom. 11:36). Pink is convinced that most men have made the mistake of seeing the good of the creature as the center and final end of God's decree. Not so, says Pink. The good of the creature is but the secondary end. God's glory is supreme--the supreme end--and everything else is subordinate to that purpose and goal. In election it is

²¹Pink, Election, p. 16.

God's grace that is magnified, while in reprobation it is the justice of God that is glorified.

To summarize Pink, note the following:

1. The goal of God's decree in all things is His own glory and not the good of the creature.
2. All things must be seen as subordinate to this one supreme purpose and goal of God.
3. The glory of God is seen in reprobation as it shows the justice of God.

Pink has further comments on point three of the summary in a section in his book The Sovereignty of God.²² In discussing 1 Cor. 1:26-29, he notes that reference is made to God's choice in this passage three times. He says this speaks of a selection, that is, the taking of some and the leaving of others. The one choosing is God, while the ones chosen are the weak, the base, and the despised. He then asks the question why these were chosen. It was to show and to magnify God's grace. How different this is from man's ways, says Pink. If man were choosing, he would have chosen from the rich, the influential, the cultured, and so forth. It has always been God's way to choose the base things. He did so in the Old Testament times when He chose Israel. He did so again in the New Testament when His Son called forth unlearned fishermen to be His disciples. He has continued to do so throughout the history of Christianity. The reason is easy to see--there is absolutely nothing in the objects of His

²²Pink, Sovereignty, Banner of Truth ed., pp. 50-51.

choice which could cause Him to choose them, therefore all the praise must be given to the glory of His grace.

Pink does not discuss the subject of reprobation as often nor as extensively as he does election. In point four of the above summary it was pointed out that reprobation shows the justice of God. How the loss of man for eternity can be explained as just is discussed in a section in another place.²³ He says that the sinner lies completely in God's hands as to his eternal destiny. If God sees fit to leave him (reprobation) in his sins, then there is no hope for him forever. Furthermore, God had a perfect right to leave all men in their sins. Had He done so it would not have been an act of cruelty or severity. Did He not leave the angels that fell in that state? All mankind deserves eternal damnation, therefore, it would have been an act of justice had God left all men in their sins. It seems clear from this discussion that God chose to save a people to magnify His sovereign grace, and to by-pass the remaining to magnify His justice.

Again, there is no problem with Pink in relation to the Westminster Confession of Faith. That confession states that God is " . . . working all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory; . . . "²⁴ That this "all things" includes election and

²³Arthur W. Pink, Gleanings from the Scriptures--Man's Total Depravity (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), p. 173.

²⁴Publications Committee, Confession, p. 25.

reprobation is clear from another statement in the confession that says, "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death."²⁵ As the confession continues, it speaks of the details of election, and then adds, ". . . and all to the praise of His glorious grace."²⁶ Several lines later the confession spells out some of the details of reprobation, and adds, ". . . and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice."²⁷

The Number of the Elect and Reprobate Certain

To deal with another question relating to both reprobation and election is now in order. How certain is the number of the elect and reprobate? Could one of the elect ever fail to be converted? Could one of the reprobate ever become one of the elect by repentance and faith in Christ? Is God's decree fulfilled some of the time in this area of salvation, most of the time, or all of the time? That the number of the elect is certain, and that each of the elect will be redeemed is a fact for Pink as the following quotations will show:

. . . God chose out of the mass of our fallen humanity a certain number and predestined them to be conformed to the image of His Son.²⁸

²⁵Ibid., p. 29. ²⁶Ibid. ²⁷Ibid., p. 30.

²⁸Pink, The Doctrine of Election, p. 4.

In the eternal counsels of the holy Trinity, a certain definite number were singled out from among their fellow-sinners, and "predestinated to the adoption of children."²⁹

Such a one [the blind beggar of John 9] must be illumined for the eternal counsels of Deity so determined --compare the "must" in Acts 4:12.³⁰

The eternal purpose of the Almighty cannot fail; the sovereign will of the Lord Most High cannot be frustrated. All, every one, that the Father gave to the Son before the foundation of the world "shall come to him." The Devil himself cannot keep one of them away . . . The realization of the invincibility of the eternal counsels of God will give you a calmness, a poise, a courage, a perseverance which nothing else can.³¹

If the above is true, that is, the counsel of God is invincible and all the elect will be saved, then equally true for Pink is the certainty of the future estate of the reprobate. He confirms this as his conviction also in a discussion of the reprobate and the matter of salvation.³² He says it is not that the reprobate seek salvation and God refuses them because His decree from eternity excludes them. Rather the reprobate do not seek salvation--only the elect do. The elect can only come as God enables them, and therefore none of the reprobate will ever seek for or desire Christ. Therefore,

²⁹Pink, "The Family of God," Studies in the Scriptures 7 (June 1928):138.

³⁰Arthur W. Pink, Exposition of the Gospel of John, 3 vols. in one (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1968), 2:67.

³¹Ibid., 1:329-330.

³²Pink, Sovereignty, Baker ed., pp. 100-101.

the number of the reprobate is as certain and as set as is the number of the elect. The elect will certainly be drawn because of God's invincible decree to save them, while the reprobate will certainly not be drawn to God because of God's invincible decree to pass them by or to reprobate them to their just reward. According to Pink the number of the elect cannot be increased or decreased, nor can the number of the reprobate.

This is again in agreement with the Westminster Confession of Faith. The confession states concerning the elect and reprobate:

These angels and men, thus predestinated, and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.³³

Summary

To summarize this section of the present chapter concerning election and reprobation in general, note that the following main points have been stressed:

1. Election and reprobation are those areas of predestination that have to do with rational creatures, that is, angels and men.
2. Election is that act of God within His decree whereby He chose certain ones from among angels and men and ordained them to eternal life and blessedness.
3. Reprobation is that act of God within His decree whereby He foreordained certain ones from among angels and men to eternal damnation.

³³Publications Committee, Confession, p. 29.

4. The goal of election is the manifestation of God's glory--that is, the glory of His grace.
5. The goal of reprobation is the manifestation of God's glory--that is, the glory of His justice.
6. Since the glory of God is the center of His purpose, and not man, the order of God's decrees would place the decree of election and reprobation before the decree to permit the fall (it was shown that this was Pink's final view, though earlier in his life he stated the matter in the reverse).
7. The number of the elect and reprobate is fixed and certain and unchangeable, and that number in each category will receive their ordained end. There is no possibility of the number of the elect being increased or decreased, nor is there such a possibility for the reprobate.

All of the above summary statements are in agreement with the Westminster Confession of Faith, except perhaps number six. The view of the confession at this point is neither clear nor agreed upon by all. Men of varying views were on the Westminster Assembly, and men of both views today hold to the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Election in Particular

In the first part of this chapter, election and reprobation have been dealt with in a general manner. The words have been defined, the goal of both has been stated, and the certainty of each has been declared, all according to the writings and beliefs of A. W. Pink. In the present section, the doctrine of election will be further considered in a more particular way. Several aspects of the doctrine will be discussed.

The Time of Election: Eternity Past

The time of election according to the conviction of A. W. Pink was clearly eternity past. It was before the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, even before their creation, and even before the creation of the world.³⁴ Pink is referring to Eph. 1:3-5 in this discussion. In referring to 2 Tim. 1:9, he argues that this passage shows us the grace of God was given to the elect not only before they saw the light, and not only before the fall of Adam, but even before the beginning of Gen. 1:1 in the far-distant past.³⁵ In another discussion he states that the act of God's election was not just before the beginning of the world, but before the beginning of all things.³⁶

Other statements and phrases are found in great number which indicate that God's decree of salvation is eternal. He speaks of "the everlasting counsels of His grace."³⁷ He says that God's decree " . . . was ordained in eternity."³⁸ He calls the covenant wherein God elected a people "the everlasting covenant."³⁹ He speaks of God's "eternal election."⁴⁰ He defines election as what God did "from all eternity."⁴¹

³⁴Pink, Sovereignty, Banner of Truth ed., pp. 51-52.

³⁵Ibid., p. 53.

³⁶Pink, Election, p. 10.

³⁷Ibid., p. 9.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., p. 10.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 10-11.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 15.

He says in a following text that " . . . the will of God is eternal . . . "42 He declares clearly that election and reprobation " . . . took place in eternity past, . . . "43 He states the same conviction later when he records, "Election is a divine secret, an act in the will of God in eternity past."44

These phrases and statements should be sufficient evidence to convince one that the time of election in the thought of Pink was eternity past. How God's decree or decrees could be eternal and yet there also be an order in them, he never seeks to explain. He does say that he uses the singular number (decree) as Scripture does (Rom. 8:28; Eph. 3:11) because there was just one act of God's infinite mind about future events.⁴⁵ He says that for our discussion we speak in the plural " . . . because our minds are only capable of thinking of successive revolutions, as thoughts and occasions arise, or in reference to the various objects of His decree, being many, they seem to us to require a distinct purpose for each."⁴⁶

Pink's conviction that election took place before the world began finds agreement in the Westminster Confession of

⁴²Ibid., p. 17.

⁴³Ibid., p. 25.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 38.

⁴⁵Arthur W. Pink, Gleanings in the Godhead (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), p. 15.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 15.

Faith. The confession also says that God has ordained all that comes to pass from all eternity.⁴⁷ There is also the statement that those of mankind who were predestinated to life were so dealt with before the foundation of the world was laid.⁴⁸ The confession again stresses the time of election as it too, like Pink, refers to "eternal election."⁴⁹

Pink's Scriptural support for his position concerning the time of election as before the world was created is adequate, though again the verses are only cited or quoted. In several places he quotes in this regard Eph. 1:4 and 2 Tim. 1:9.⁵⁰ The following two quotations show again his method of argumentation and his method of using the Scriptures in his theological writings.

To suppose any of them to be made in time, is to suppose that some new occasion has occurred, some unforeseen event or combination of circumstances has arisen, which has induced the Most High to form a new resolution. This would argue that the knowledge of the Deity is limited, and that He grows wiser in the progress of time--which would be horrible blasphemy. No man who believes that the divine understanding is infinite, comprehending the past, the present, and the future, will ever assent to the erroneous doctrine of temporal decrees. God is not ignorant of future events which will be executed by human volitions: He has foretold them in innumerable instances, and prophecy is but the manifestation of His eternal prescience. Scripture affirms that believers

⁴⁷Publications Committee, Confession, p. 28.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 29.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 31.

⁵⁰Pink, Godhead, p. 16, and Sovereignty, Banner of Truth ed., pp. 51 and 53.

were chosen in Christ before the world began (Eph. 1:4) yes, that grace was "given" to them then (2 Tim. 1:19).⁵¹

Let it also be pointed out that the will of God is not a thing apart from God, nor is it to be considered only as a part of God: the will of God is God Himself willing: it is, if we may so speak, His very nature in activity, for His will is His very essence. Nor is God's will subject to any fluctuation or change: when we affirm that God's will is immutable, we are only saying that God Himself is, "without variableness or shadow or turning" (James 1:17). Therefore the will of God is eternal, for since God Himself had no beginning, and since His will is His very nature, then His will must be from everlasting.⁵²

The Ground of Election: God's Purpose and Will

To make a second observation concerning the view of Pink concerning election, it must be stated that he believed the ground of election was God's purpose and will and nothing else. This statement indicates positively the one and only ground for election, and negatively that all other supposed ground is excluded. In this discussion several supposed grounds will be shown as rejected by Pink, followed by the evidence and argumentation he gives for the ground of God's purpose and will.

Pink was convinced that nothing in man himself was the ground of election. He says that the perverters of the truth of the doctrine of election and sovereign grace always look to find something outside of God's will as the ground of election, that is, something within the creature which would

⁵¹Pink, Godhead, p. 16.

⁵²Pink, Election, p. 17.

entitle him to God's mercy.⁵³ One of the areas that men often choose is man's good works. Pink says this cannot be because the act of election in God's mind was in eternity, a long while before men even had any existence.⁵⁴ For proof of this contention in this context, Pink quotes Rom. 9:11 as follows, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not for works, but of him that calleth."⁵⁵ He also quotes Eph. 2:10 as support for this conviction: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."⁵⁶ The force of the use of this verse seems to be that the elect were created unto good works and not elected because of good works. Since we were elected before our creation or existence, good works could not have been the cause of our election. Rather good works are the fruit or effects of our election.⁵⁷

Pink next rules out the holiness of men as the cause of election. He quotes as proof Eph. 1:4, which says: "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him."⁵⁸ He argues

⁵³Pink, Sovereignty, Banner of Truth ed., p. 55.

⁵⁴Pink, Election, p. 19.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 19-20.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 20.

that this statement does not say that God chose the elect because they were holy, but so they might be holy. Election is the means to holiness, not holiness the ground of election. Here he also quotes 2 Thess. 2:13, which says, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit."⁵⁹ He concludes from the quotation of this verse that the sanctification of a people for God was the design of election, therefore it could not be the cause of it.

Next Pink rejects the faith of man as the possible ground of election.⁶⁰ He argues that man in his state of unbelief and hopelessness could not possibly have faith. Faith comes only as a gift from God (Eph. 2:9), and as a work of the Holy Spirit by God's grace (Col.2:12). He also quotes Acts 13:48 at this point. He says that the verse teaches that the ordination of God is the ground of belief. It does not say that as many as believed were ordained to eternal life. Thus for these reasons, Pink rules out the faith of man as the ground of election.

Pink then sets aside any possibility of God's foreview of any of the above factors in man or anything else in man as the possible cause of election. He says that according to Rom. 8:28-29, the divine order is the divine decree, the divine foreknowledge, and the divine predestination.⁶¹ The divine decree is expressed by the phrase "who are called

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

according to his purpose." The divine foreknowledge is stated by the phrase "for whom he did foreknow." The divine predestination is found in the phrase "he also did predestinate." He also uses Acts 2:23 as evidence that the decree of God precedes foreknowledge. That verse says, as quoted by Pink, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Pink says further in this context that God foreknows everything that shall come to pass because He has ordained everything that will come to pass. To reverse the order is to put the cart before the horse.⁶²

In numerous other contexts Pink states the same thought --nothing in man was nor could have been the cause of God's election. Note the following variety of works and ways of expression in which his thoughts on this subject are found:

The basis upon which God elected this "remnant" was not faith foreseen in them, because a choice founded upon the foresight of good works is just as truly made on the grounds of works as any choice can be, and in such a case, it would not be "of grace"; for, says the apostle, "if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace"; which means that grace and works are opposites, they have nothing in common, and will no more mingle than will oil and water. Thus the idea of inherent good foreseen in those chosen, or of anything meritorious performed by them, is rigidly excluded. "A remnant according to the election of grace," signifies an unconditional choice resulting from the sovereign favour of God; in a word, it is absolutely a gratuitous election.⁶³

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Pink, Sovereignty, Banner of Truth ed., p. 50.

When God picked up Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and made them the fathers of His chosen people, it was not because of any excellence in them, seen or foreseen; rather was it His pure sovereign benignity.⁶⁴

The Christian is not accepted because of his "graces," for the very graces (as their name connotes) are bestowed upon him by Divine bounty, and are not attained by any efforts of his. And so far from these graces being the reason why God accepts him, they are the fruits of his being "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world . . ." ⁶⁵

When the blessed subject of divine foreordination is expounded, when God's eternal choice of certain ones to be conformed to the image of His Son is set forth, the enemy sends along someone to argue that election is based upon the foreknowledge of God. This foreknowledge is interpreted to mean that God foresaw certain ones who would be more pliable than others and they would respond more readily to the strivings of the Spirit. So, because God knew they would believe, He predestinated them unto salvation. But such logic is radically wrong. It repudiates the truth of total depravity, for it argues that there is something good in some men. It takes away the independency of God, for it makes His decrees rest upon what He discovers in the creature . . .

False theology makes God's foreknowledge of our believing the cause of His election to salvation.⁶⁶

God did not elect any sinner because He foresaw that he would believe, for the simple but sufficient reason that no sinner ever believes until God gives him faith; just as no man sees until God gives him sight . . . If it were true that God had elected certain ones to be saved because in due time they would believe, then that would make believing a meritorious act. In that event the saved sinner would have ground for "boasting," which Scripture emphatically denies (Eph. 2:9).⁶⁷

⁶⁴Pink, Exodus, p. 25.

⁶⁵Arthur W. Pink, Spiritual Growth (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), p. 21.

⁶⁶Pink, Godhead, pp. 23-24.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 26.

Divine grace is the sovereign and saving favour of God exercised in bestowing blessings upon those who have no merit in them and for which no compensation is demanded. Nay, more; it is the favor of God to those who not only have no positive deserts of their own, but also who are thoroughly ill-deserving and hell-deserving. It is completely unmerited and unsought, and is altogether unattracted by anything in or from or by the objects upon which it is bestowed.⁶⁸

It is true that false prophets hate the very word "election," but if they are pressed into a corner they will try and wriggle out of it by saying that those whom God elected unto salvation are the ones whom He foreknew would be willing to accept Christ, and that explanation satisfies ninety-nine percent of their hearers.⁶⁹

Most assuredly the elect have nothing to do with their election, for God chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world, and there is not a line in His Word to show that His choice was determined by anything praiseworthy which He foresaw in them.⁷⁰

Turning to the positive side to consider what for Pink is the ground of election, he would argue that it is the will of God and the will of God alone.⁷¹ Furthermore, as the will of God acted in election, it was free, absolutely free, that is, uncontrolled and uninfluenced by anything outside of Himself.⁷² Pink argues in this context that the creation of the world proves this. Whether to create or not to create was determined by God alone. The time of creation was determined by God alone. The time of the history of the creation, that

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 63.

⁶⁹Arthur W. Pink, An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount (Grand Rapids: Guardian Press, 1950), p. 367.

⁷⁰Arthur W. Pink, Gleanings in Joshua (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), pp. 325-326.

⁷¹pink, Election, p. 16.

⁷²Ibid., p. 17.

is, whether sin would enter the creation, was determined by God alone. Had God desired, He could have created the earth ages earlier; or He could have created all things in an instant rather than in six days. He could have limited the human family or have expanded it according to His will.

As in creation God's will is also free in the matter of election.⁷³ Nothing outside of God caused Him to elect at all. Nothing outside of God caused Him to chose those He elected. That God chose in accordance with His will alone is clear for Pink from Rom. 9:15 which indicates that God will have mercy on whom He wills to have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He wills to have compassion. Pink says language could not be plainer in stating the absoluteness of God's sovereignty as in Rom. 9:15. He quotes also in this context Eph. 1:5, which states that the elect were predestinated to adoption according to the good pleasure of God's will. Pink says this verse states that all depends on the pleasure of God. He blesses or withholds His blessings as He pleases.

It is at this point of his discussion that Pink rejects the love of God as the cause of election.⁷⁴ He notes that many expositors have used Eph. 1:5 in error as they have stated that God's love is the ground of election. That verse has the phrase "in love having predestinated us." He argues

⁷³Ibid., p. 17.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 18.

that the words "in love" actually go with verse five, and that this verse does not speak of our original election, but of the believer's predestination to the adoption to sonship. Original election and predestination to adoption are two different matters and must not be confused. The people of God were originally elected and then in love predestinated to sonship. According to verse four, it was the second act of God whereby His love went forth to give the greatest blessing His love could bestow--adoption. That means that He made the elect His own by His sovereign choice (the choice of His will alone), and then set His heart upon them as His special people. This means further, as Pink elaborates in another place, that God's love is reserved for the elect.⁷⁵ He says in this context that we know from Scripture that the Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are characteristic of all His works (Ps. 145:9). It is true also that He is kind even to the wicked (Luke 6:35). His providence ministers both to the just and unjust (Matt. 5:45). But, says Pink even further, the Bible knows nothing of the love of God outside of Christ, and that love is reserved for the elect. Therefore, in summary of this paragraph, Pink says the love of God is not the basis of election, but of predestination to become children of God.

This is quite opposite of what he wrote in another place:

⁷⁵Pink, Godhead, p. 120.

There is an infallible connection between God's love and His selection of those who are to be saved. That election is the consequence of His love is clear again from Deuteronomy: "The Lord did not (1) set His love upon you, nor (2) chose you, because ye were more in number than any people" (7:7). So again in Ephesians: "In love: having predestinated us unto adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will" (1:4-5).⁷⁶

The answer to the contradiction is that this latter quotation probably reflects Pink's earlier thinking. The former viewpoint appears in the 1938 periodical, a portion of the years that represented Pink's more mature and settled thoughts. The latter is uncertain as to its date and this writer has not been able to locate it in the copies of the periodical available to him, that is, the years of 1928-1953.

The later Pink also rules out God's grace as the basis of election.⁷⁷ Pink acknowledges that some have sought to make God's grace the basis of election with the use of Rom. 11:5, which speaks of a remnant according to the election of grace. Those who do this, Pink says, have failed to distinguish between the beginning of a decree of God and its content or substance. It is true that the elect are the special recipients of God's grace, but that is very different from saying that it was the grace of God that originated election. Pink then refers to Eph. 1:4-6 and gives the following order:

1. There was the initial act in the divine mind whereby God chose the elect in Christ before the foundation of the world (verse 4).

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 122.

⁷⁷Pink, Election, pp. 18-19.

2. There was the enriching act upon those He had chosen, and that enriching act consisted of the predestination in love to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself (verse 5).
3. There was the design of God's decree which was the manifestation and magnification of His grace (verse 6).

The phrase "the election of grace" found in Rom. 11:5 then cannot contradict Ephesians 1 and teach that the cause of election is grace. The mistake that has been made, says Pink, is to take this phrase (the election of grace) as a genitive of origin, when actually it is a genitive of object or character. He seems to be saying that it is not an election that finds its origin in grace as the cause, but an election that has the characteristic of grace--a gracious election. Thus it is a gracious election that finds its origin in the will of God alone.

To summarize Pink's discussion concerning the ground of election for the purpose of critique, note the following:

1. Nothing in man was the ground of election.
 not man's good works
 not man's holiness
 not man's faith
 not God's foreknowledge of anything in man
2. The free and uninfluenced will of God alone was the ground of election.
 the love of God was not the ground of election
 the grace of God was not the ground of election
 the absolute will of God without any influence was
 was the ground of election

The first point quoted obviously agrees with the Westminster Confession of Faith. The confession, as it speaks of God's decree of all things, says that God decreed nothing

because He saw it as future.⁷⁸ It says again, when speaking of election, that God chose the elect " . . . without any foresight or faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto; . . . "⁷⁹

The second point is in disagreement with the confession. It says that God chose the elect " . . . out of His mere free grace and love . . . "⁸⁰ The confession allows nothing outside of God to be an influence in the choice of His people, but the confession does not agree with the attempt of Pink to isolate the will of God from His attributes of grace and love in the work of election. Pink argues elsewhere that the will of man cannot be isolated from the total man.⁸¹ That is, the will cannot be free from man's nature and condition. Here he turns around and argues that the will of God can be separated from His nature. He isolates God's will from His attributes and claims it acts independently from God's nature and attributes.

Concerning Pink's use of Scripture in this area concerning the ground of election, some positives and negatives must be noted. His use of Rom. 9:11, Eph. 2:10, Eph. 1:4 and several other passages as evidence that nothing outside of

⁷⁸Publications Committee, Confession, p. 28.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 29.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Pink, Depravity, pp. 84 and 152.

God's will influenced God in the act of election, especially the exclusion of anything in man himself, is acceptable. As usual, in the use of these passages he only quotes them. His division of Rom. 8:28-29 into the divine order of the decree of God, the divine foreknowledge, and the divine predestination is artificial and incorrect. The phrase which supposedly supports the divine decree (who are called according to his purpose) cannot be substantiated from Scripture as speaking of election. Calling in Scripture is that work of the Holy Spirit whereby the elect are called out of sin, not the election itself. It is true that the elect are called during this life into fellowship with Christ according to God's purpose, but this speaks of the calling, not the election.

His definition of foreknowledge in this discussion is questionable also. The words for foreknowledge in Rom. 8:29 and Acts 2:23 (προγνώσκω and πρόγνωςις) carry a sense of determination and appointment.⁸² To use them in relation to prescience alone, as Pink does in these passages, would bring him great difficulty in the interpretation of 1 Peter 1:1-2 where the same word is used. Such a use in the Peter passage would refute his entire argument in this passage--that is, that election is not based on anything foreseen by God in man. It is to say that he uses Rom. 8:29 and Acts 2:23 wrongly.

⁸²Gerhard Kittel, ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols., 9th ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 1:715.

His use of Eph. 1:5 to seek to deny the love of God being involved in election is no better. The question is not in which verse the phrase "in love" belongs. The question is, how can one separate the choosing of God in verse four from the predestination of verse five? If two verbs were connected with a conjunction, one could argue in that direction. What is present in this passage is a verb with a participle. In the Greek language the participle has no individual stance of its own, but must be related to a verb in some manner under normal circumstances. It seems impossible to relate it to the main verb in any way whereby one could have two separate and independent acts with the action of the participle following the action of the main verb. Pink says our original election is in the main verb, while the predestination to sonship or adoption is in the participle. He sees them as two separate acts, the election coming before the predestination. The Greek verb and participle does not allow this. The election and predestination could be simultaneous, or the predestination could precede the election, but the election could not precede the predestination.

Furthermore, Pink's use of his conclusions from Eph. 1:4-6 as a hermeneutical guide for the interpretation of Rom. 11:5 is in error also because of the error of the interpretation of the Ephesians passage. He says the election of grace spoken of in Rom. 11:5 could not mean grace is a ground of election because of his conclusions from Ephesians 1. He

therefore takes the genitive in Rom. 11:5 as a descriptive genitive rather than an ablative of source or origin. But this argument cannot stand close scrutiny, because even if one claims this is a descriptive genitive which speaks of a gracious election, he still must explain how it could be a gracious election apart from the grace of God being involved in the work of election.

To summarize what has been stated about Pink's view of the ground of election, the following points must be stated. He is in agreement with the Westminster Confession of Faith and with Scripture when he argues that nothing in man was the ground of election, but that election was based on the will and purpose of God. He is in disagreement with the confession and Scripture when he seeks to separate the will of God in election from God's attributes of love and grace. The will of God did elect a people apart from any outside influence, but it would be impossible for the will of God to act apart from His nature, His attributes--His total person.

The Union in Election: with Jesus Christ

In order to discuss another aspect of A. W. Pink's view of election, let it be stated that he saw the election of men in relation to Jesus Christ--men are elected "in Christ." Pink's view is rather long and complicated, but an attempt will be made to present his understanding of the subject and then to analyze it from the Westminster Confession of Faith and Scripture.

Pink argues that all of God's decrees have a definite relation to Christ.⁸³ The phrase "chosen in him" in Eph. 1:4 means two things. First, it means that the elect were chosen out of themselves. Second, it means that Christ was chosen before the elect were chosen. God chose Christ to grace and union with Himself, and predestinated Him by free grace. In that transaction God made a covenant with Christ, and in that covenant God became Christ's God. On the basis of that covenant the elect were chosen with Christ as the head of the elect. More will be said about the election of God's people later, but first some further discussion of the election of Jesus Christ.

When Pink speaks of Christ Jesus being elected, he is not speaking of the second person of the Godhead, but of the humanity of "the man Christ Jesus" as he terms him. Because of the confusion and difficulty here, quotations will be given from Pink himself, rather than attempted summaries. Concerning the election of the man Christ Jesus and concerning the identification of the man Christ Jesus, he says:

When God determined to create, among all the myriad creatures, both angelic and human, which rose up in the divine mind, to be brought into being by Him, the man Christ Jesus was singled out of them, and appointed to union with the second person in the blessed trinity, and was accordingly sanctified and set up. This original and highest act of election was one of pure sovereignty and amazing grace. The celestial hosts were passed by, and the seed of the woman was determined upon. Out of the innumerable seeds which were to be created in Adam,

⁸³Pink, Election, pp. 22-23.

the line of Abraham was selected, then of Isaac, and then of Jacob. Of the twelve tribes which were to issue from Jacob, that of Judah was chosen, God elected not an angel to the high union with His Son, but "one chosen out of the people" (Ps. 89:19). What shall those say who so much dislike the truth that the heirs of heaven are elected, when they learn that Jesus Christ Himself is the subject of eternal election!⁸⁴

. . . by the union of the man Christ Jesus with the everlasting Son of God, the whole fulness of the Godhead was to dwell personally in Him, He being "the Image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15, 19).⁸⁵

The Man Christ Jesus, then, was chosen unto the highest union and communion with God Himself. In Him the love and grace of Jehovah shine forth in their superlative glory. The Son of God gave subsistence and personality to His human nature, so that the Son of God and His human nature are not merely one flesh as man and wife (which is the closest union with us), nor one spirit only (as is the case between Christ and the Church: I Cor. 6:17), but one person, and hence this creature nature is advanced to a fellowship in the society of the blessed Trinity, and therefore to Him God communicates Himself without measure (John 3:34). Descending now to a lower plane, the Man Christ Jesus was also chosen to be an Head to an elect seed, who were chosen in Him, given a super-creation subsistence, and blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings.⁸⁶

The Man Christ Jesus was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world (I Peter 1:20) unto union with the second Person in the Godhead, and therefore the Divine grace shown unto Him in His predestination was greater far than that shown unto us, by how much more the privileges ordained were greater. Marvelous grace indeed is it that we should be elevated to a place in the family of God and "brought nigh" (Eph. 2:13) unto Him; but that falls far, far short of the Man Christ Jesus being actually united to the immediate person of the Son of God . . . ⁸⁷

The language Pink uses here would almost cause one to think he was propagating heretical views in the area of

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 23-24.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 25.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 26.

⁸⁷Pink, Spiritual Union, p. 45.

Christology. When he speaks of Christ Jesus the man or the Man Christ Jesus being united with the Son of God or the second person of the Godhead, it appears he might be guilty of promoting dual persons in the subsistence of Christ rather than two natures in one person. Actually it is only a poor choice of language, because in the same context he states very clearly that he is not teaching a dual personality in Christ. He says:

. . . for though He assumed human nature, He did not take a human person into union with Himself. Thus we may correctly refer to the complex person of Christ, but we must not speak of His dual personality.⁸⁸

Christ is not now two persons combined together, but one Person having two natures.⁸⁹

To summarize Pink, the Man Christ Jesus was elected to be united with the second person of the Trinity. For Pink this does not mean a dual personality, but two natures in one person. To take Pink's thought a step further, consider what appears to be another unique idea. This point has to do with the time of the union of the Man Christ Jesus with the Son of God. Again, Pink will be quoted at several places for certainty of representation of thought:

That the God-man subsisted in heaven before the world was is a blessed truth which has been lost to the last few generations.⁹⁰

Yes, the Man Christ Jesus, taken into union with Himself by the second person of the Trinity, subsisted before

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 38.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 42.

⁹⁰Pink, Godhead, p. 154.

the Father from all eternity, and was the object of the Old Testament saints' faith.⁹¹

But more; it was not only purposed by God that the Mediator (the Man Christ Jesus wedded to the eternal Word, Jn 1:1, 14) should have an historical existence when the "fullness of time" (Gal 4:4) had arrived, but He had an actual subsistence before Him long before that.⁹²

The question which arises here is, was this a real subsistence or something only in the mind of God? From the above statements it seems to be a real subsistence. Yet other of Pink's statements appear to understand it as only something in the mind of God. He says again:

If faith possesses the power to add reality to what as yet has no historical actuality; if faith can enjoy in the present that whose existence is yet future, how much more was God able to give the Mediator a covenant subsistence endless ages before He was born. In consequence, Christ was the Son of Man in heaven, secretly before God, before He became the Son of Man openly in this world.⁹³

Yet how could He be set up as the God-man Mediator? By mediatorial settlement, by covenant-constitution, by divine subsistence before the mind of God.⁹⁴

To summarize again so that another step may be taken in the understanding of Pink's thought, note the following:

1. The Man Christ Jesus was elected to be united with the Son of God, that is, the second Person of the Trinity. This is not speaking of two persons in union, but of two natures in union in one person.
2. The union of the Man Christ Jesus with the second Person of the Trinity subsisted before the Father from all eternity in a real sense even if only in the mind of God.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid., p. 155.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 156.

In other discussions Pink states this union in more usual and acceptable language, viewing the incarnation as the second person of the Godhead becoming the God-man. He says:

It was the will of the eternal three to elect and predestinate the second person into creature being and existence . . . ⁹⁵

The Son of God being, before all time, predestinated to be God-man . . . ⁹⁶

First God decreed that His own dear Son should be made visibly glorious in a human nature, through a union with it to His own person . . . ⁹⁷

The choice of Christ Jesus the man or the Man Christ Jesus to be united with the Son of God in eternal union was an act of election and grace. Pink says grace is not to be equated only with God's dealing with fallen creatures, because the highest example of God's bestowment of grace was " . . . upon One who had no sin and was incapable of it. Grace is favor shown to the undeserving, for the human nature in the God-man merited not the distinction conferred upon it."⁹⁸

Though the Man Christ Jesus was elected and predestinated for the saving of a people (of which more shall be said soon), still God had higher ends for this election than simply the saving of a people. Pink gives three other "higher ends" of God in this act of election of the Man Christ Jesus:

⁹⁵Pink, Election, p. 23.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 26.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 89.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 72.

First, He was chosen for God Himself to delight in, far more so and infinitely above all other creatures. Being united to the second person, the man Christ Jesus was exalted to a closer union and communion with God . . . Second, Christ was chosen that God might behold the image of Himself and all His perfections in a creature, so that His excellences are seen in Christ as in no other . . . Third, by the union of the man Christ Jesus with the everlasting Son of God, the whole fulness of the Godhead was to dwell personally in Him, He being "the Image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15, 19).⁹⁹

Though chosen to higher ends, still undeniably for Pink, one of the ends of the election of the Man Christ Jesus was for the saving of a people. He says Christ's name was the first one written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and His name is at the head of the book.¹⁰⁰ The names of the elect from among men, of course, follow.

It is at this point that another unique idea of Pink's must be confronted. He argues that the elect had a relationship with God before the fall. Again, part of the difficulty is in seeking to understand just exactly what he means. Pink will be allowed to speak concerning the subject once again:

Nevertheless, if we adhere closely to the Holy Scriptures, it is evident (to the writer, at least) that God's people had a super-creation and spiritual union with Christ before ever they had a creature and natural union with Adam; that they were blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ (Eph. 1:3), before they fell in Adam and became subject to all the evils of the curse.¹⁰¹

We have pointed out that the everlasting love of the Triune God is the origin of the Church's union to Christ, and that election was the first and fundamental act of that love toward its members, that election giving

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., pp. 33-34.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 66.

them a super-creation subsistence in their glorious Head. In God's eternal thoughts and foreviews, the elect were conceived and contemplated in the Divine mind as real entities in a state of pure creaturehood, above and beyond any consideration of the Fall. Even then they were "blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ" and "graced in the beloved" (Eph. 1:3, 6) . . . A glorious relationship was established between Christ and the Church in eternity past, which neither sin, Satan, nor death could sever.¹⁰²

The election of a people, according to Pink then, was related to the election of Christ Jesus the man. The elect were chosen in Him. Included in that election was the establishment of a super-creation relation and the union with their Head, the God-man, Jesus Christ. It is not that they were elected to be related to Him someday after their salvation or at their regeneration. Rather the relation of the elect to Christ was from eternity past as the divine mind contemplated them as real entities. In eternity past the elect had all the spiritual blessings in Christ, and a relation that nothing could break.

One might properly ask at this juncture, what happened at the fall? Did not the fall break that relationship that Pink speaks of as prior to the fall? The answer of Pink is negative. The fall did not break this super-creation relation and spiritual union of the elect with their Head. Again, Pink will be allowed to speak on this delicate issue:

There is, then, a relation to God prior to regeneration. Now a relation to God previous to regeneration necessarily presupposes a relation to Christ previous to

¹⁰²Pink, Spiritual Union, p. 61.

regeneration, for we have no spiritual relation to God Himself apart from the Mediator . . . There was a mystical and eternal union subsisting between Christ and the Church, which formed the basis of that vital union which is effected by the Holy Spirit during a time state, the latter making manifest the former, the former being the ground upon which the latter is effected.¹⁰³

The elect were "children" from all eternity and decreed to be so unto all eternity. They did not lose their sonship by the fall, neither by any corruption derived from that fall in their nature. "Children" they continued, though sinful children, and as such justly exposed to wrath. Nevertheless, this relationship could not be revoked by any after-acts in time: united to Christ from all eternity, they were always one with Him.¹⁰⁴

The fall of the Church in Adam did not and could not alienate the Church from Christ, but it gave occasion for redemption, thereby affording the means and opportunity for the honor of Christ, by His work, death and resurrection bringing a greater revenue of glory to the Almighty Author of salvation than had the fall of man never taken place.¹⁰⁵

Estranged as the Church became in her affections and obedience to her Lord by reason of her sunken and degraded condition through the Fall, yet the union existing between her and her celestial Husband remained the same. The very fall of the whole human race in Adam by virtue of the mutability of the creature, only made more evident the absolute necessity of Christ's Headship, to the end that by Him the elect were so united to God by everlasting bonds as to be beyond the possibility of hazard or miscarriage or of finally falling from Him; having been blessed with super-creation grace, and that, that Christ might be the more honored and magnified.¹⁰⁶

When God permitted the fall of all mankind in Adam, the elect fell in him; yet they fell not from the heart and arms of Christ. They lost in Adam the creature blessings of purity, holiness and righteousness, which as their natural head he should have conveyed to them, and received from him instead an impure and sinful nature, the

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., pp. 55-56.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 65.

fruits of which are as justly deserving of Divine wrath as are the sins of the non-elect. In that state they are, in themselves, without hope and help. This it is which made way for their need of redemption, to be delivered out of it, and which provided an occasion for their Husband to become their Redeemer, which He engaged to be before the foundation of the world.¹⁰⁷

By His electing act God took the Church into a definite and personal relation to Himself, so that He reckons and regards its members as His own dear children and people. Consequently, even while they are in a state of nature, before their regeneration, He views and owns them as such . . . It is now commonly assumed that we only become the children of God when we are born again, that we have no relation to Christ until we have embraced Him with the arms of faith. But with the Scriptures in our hands there is no excuse for such ignorance, and woe be unto those who deliberately repudiate their plain testimony: to their divine Author will they yet have to answer for such wickedness.¹⁰⁸

If one were to ask what Scripture Pink refers to in the last quotation, Scripture so clear on the subject of the elect being in relation to Christ even though fallen that he can speak with such confidence as to censure others who disagree, he would give the following arguments and passages.¹⁰⁹ First, they are called the children of God even before their regeneration. Does not Isaiah say that all of God's children shall be taught of the Lord (Is. 54:13), Pink would ask? The calling of these as children is before they are taught. Or again, John records the statement that the children of God that are scattered abroad are to be gathered together in one (John 11:52). Pink says they are called children before the gathering.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 66.

¹⁰⁸Pink, Election, p. 91.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 92.

Second, the elect are not only called God's children before their regeneration, but are also called God's people before their actual salvation. The Psalmist says God's people will be willing in the day of His power (Ps. 110:3). They are His people before they are willing, Pink would note again. The book of Acts, to mention another passage, records that when God sent Paul to Corinth He told him that He had many people in that city (Acts 18:10). They are called His people before their conversion.

Third, Christ calls the elect His sheep before they are even brought into the fold. Jesus said He had other sheep which are not of this fold, and He must bring them (John 10:16). Pink says these other sheep are the elect among the Gentiles.

Before the development of a critique, a summary is needed so the view of Pink will be objectively before the reader.

Note the following ideas in way of summary:

1. The man Christ Jesus was the first recipient of the act of election. He was chosen to be united with the second person of the Trinity. This results in His union with the Trinity and the glory of God being manifested in Him. The time of this union was eternity past.
2. The elect were also chosen by God in Christ Jesus, their Head. As a result they entered into a spiritual union and a super-creation relation with Christ and God. This also was from eternity past.
3. The fall did not break the relation with Christ or God, but rather gave occasion for redemption which brought greater honor to Christ and greater glory to God. The elect or the Church was estranged, corrupted, and suffered great loss in the fall, but the

union with Christ and the relation to God was never broken. God views the elect as His children and people even before their restoration.

4. Finally in time Christ became incarnate and is now redeeming the elect chosen with and in Him.

The above is a summary of the meaning for Pink of the Biblical phrase "chosen in Him" (Eph. 1:4). This is the means of the election of the Church. The question to be faced now is, how much of the above agrees with the Westminster Confession of Faith? Realizing that there may be different interpretations of the confession, reference will be made only to the confession and not to anyone's particular interpretation. The four points of the summary will be taken separately for the purpose of critique.

Though the confession says that God has chosen us in Christ, it says nothing in any way to imply that this means the election of Christ as the first recipient of election.¹¹⁰ Clearly there is no reference to "the Man Christ Jesus" as any recipient of the act of election as Pink describes the matter. Nor is there reference in the confession to any other point made by Pink in the first summary statement.

Neither is there any concept in the confession of Pink's teaching as summarized in the second summary statement above. The confession, as it is noted again, does say the elect are chosen in Christ (as documented above), but there is no word

¹¹⁰Publications Committee, Confession, p. 29.

or idea about a spiritual union or super-creation relation with Christ and God from eternity past.

The lack of confessional evidence again must be noted for the main ideas of summary point three. There is no mention about the fall not breaking some spiritual union and super-creation relation. The confession does mention the fall and man's great loss, but in that section there is nothing of a continued relation.¹¹¹

Finally, the confession does mention that in time Christ became incarnate and is now redeeming the elect, but not from the basis of the first three points of the summary of Pink as has been stated.¹¹²

To clarify the distinction between Pink and the confession, note the following summary statements of the confession in the related areas of the matter now under discussion:

1. The section on God's eternal decree does state that the elect are chosen in Christ into everlasting glory, but it gives no hint of any possible interpretation of the "in Christ" as found in Pink.¹¹³
2. The section on the fall of man, sin, and the punishment of sin says nothing that could be interpreted as Pink does concerning the condition of man prior to the fall (the spiritual union) or following the fall (a continuing spiritual union).¹¹⁴
3. The section on Christ the Mediator says that God chose and ordained the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man. This certainly is not the language or the meaning of Pink

¹¹¹Ibid., pp. 38-41.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 46.

¹¹³Ibid., pp. 28-31.

¹¹⁴Ibid., pp. 38-41.

concerning the election of the Man Christ Jesus. This section also says that God from eternity gave Christ a people to be His seed and in time to be redeemed, but again this is not the thought nor language of Pink on the subject of eternal and continual spiritual union. This section mentions the union of the Son of God with man's nature, but only in a time setting, and not as from any eternal past.¹¹⁵

The conclusion must be that Pink is not in agreement with the Westminster Confession of Faith concerning the means of election. Both do see the means as "in Christ," but the understanding of the meaning of the phrase in the two is quite different. Pink spells the matter out in details that are not found in the confession.

It would take far too long to analyze in detail the Scriptural basis for the above views of Pink, nor would the effort be worth the reward. It should be enough for the purpose of this paper to note his method of presentation in giving his supposed Scriptural support, and to give an example of such.

The method of Pink in his use of Scripture to establish his view is the same as has been noted several times previously. He states a conviction and then either lists a Scriptural phrase, verse, or reference. In presenting this whole matter in the books referred to there is no in-depth exegesis of the passages or of even a verse. Seldom is any reference made to the context of the verse or phrase quoted. Seldom are the possible meanings of the words used discussed.

¹¹⁵Ibid., pp. 45-51.

By this method of the use of Scripture, one could "prove" many things. The following example will confirm the present contention as well as illustrate his method:

Christ was predestinated for higher ends than the saving of His people from the effects of their fall in Adam. First, He was chosen for God Himself to delight in, far more so and infinitely above all other creatures. Being united to the second person, the man Christ Jesus was exalted to a closer union and communion with God. The Lord of hosts speaks of Him as "the man that is my fellow" (Zech. 13:7), "mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth" (Isa. 42:1). Second, Christ was chosen that God might behold the image of Himself and all His perfections in a creature, so that His excellences are seen in Christ as in no other: "Who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person" (Heb. 1:3), which is spoken of the person of Christ as God-man. Third, by the union of the man Christ Jesus with the everlasting Son of God, the whole fullness of the Godhead was to dwell personally in Him, He being "the Image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15, 19).¹¹⁶

Obviously the above is not in-depth exegesis. It is not the setting forth of what Scripture says, but the use of Scripture as a proof-text for what has already been stated. The verses do not support some of the main points. Pink has not shown from Scripture that Christ was predestinated for higher ends than for the saving of a people. He has not demonstrated from Scripture that Christ was chosen so that God could behold His image and perfections in a creature. From this basis and by this method, it is understandable how Pink arrives at some of his discussed ideas as to what the phrase "in Christ" means.

¹¹⁶Pink, Election, p. 25.

The Goal of Election: God's Glory

Moving to a fourth factor in A. W. Pink's view of election, let it be stated that he believed that the glory of God was the goal of God's act of election. This area of Pink's conviction has already been mentioned in this chapter, but a few more thoughts on the subject will be presented. Pink is convinced that his view and his view alone is able to give God the glory in election and salvation.¹¹⁷

First, there is the need for a very brief summary of Pink's view. He would agree that election is the act of God whereby from eternity past He chose a people to be His own. His choice was the free choice of His own will without any influence from the nature or condition or need of the creature. God was under no necessity to save anyone. There was no necessity from His own nature or from anything outside Himself. Neither was God under any necessity to send His own Son to be the Saviour. He was absolutely free and could have used any means He chose to save the elect. The historical incarnation of His Son was not a result of His nature, but an act of His will. Therefore, had He chosen He could have refused to save any of the human race, or had He chosen He could have saved them some other way besides the death of His Son. But by His own will He elected a people. By His will He determined to

¹¹⁷Pink, Hebrews, pp. 562-563. The discussion which follows is all from this section.

recover them out of lost mankind. By His will He chose to remove their sins and bring them to everlasting privileges in His presence. By His will He designed salvation as He did, that is through the death of His Son, to remove all ground for the elect to boast in themselves and to assure that His glory alone would be the end of election and salvation.

To expand Pink's thoughts, note the following points that can be drawn from the above summary. Had man been involved in the decision to save a people, the glory of God's grace would have been marred. Had man or any other creature been involved in the choice of a people, the glory of God's grace would have been stained. Had anything in man been the cause of God's election, then the glory of God's grace would have been tainted. Had some other plan of salvation other than God's Son paying the price for sin and sinners been instituted, God's glory and grace would have been slighted. However, as one puts it all together and understands that salvation is of the Lord from start to finish, including the decision to save, the choice of whom to save, the choice of a means to save, then one can only stand and marvel at the glory of God's grace in saving anyone. One will not then stand and complain because God did not save all men, but will truly marvel over the grace of God that saved anyone.

For A. W. Pink the matter is clear and incontestable. The end of all of God's decrees is His own glory,¹¹⁸ and the

¹¹⁸Pink, Election, p. 16.

end of the decree of election is the manifestation of God's glory also.¹¹⁹ That this conviction is also in agreement with the confession can easily be shown. The confession says:

Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace.¹²⁰

By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life . . .¹²¹

The Goal of Election for the Elect:
Everlasting Glory

To state a final point in this division, understand that for Pink the goal of election for the elect themselves is everlasting glory. This everlasting glory consists of several elements. Primarily there is the glory of an everlasting holiness for the elect.¹²² Pink quotes Eph. 1:4, which says that God has chosen us that we should be holy and without blame before Him. Pink says that this speaks primarily of the perfect holiness in heaven which will be the privilege of the elect. It will be such a holiness that no one, not even God, will be able to find a flaw in it. This does not mean

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 20.

¹²⁰Publications Committee, Confession, p. 29.

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Pink, Election, pp. 77-78.

that the elect in this life can neglect holiness, but that the perfection of holiness will only be in eternity, and that it will be part of the saints' everlasting glory. Pink summarizes his discussion with the following paragraph:

God, then, has decreed that His people shall be perfectly holy before Him, that they shall be in His presence forever, there to enjoy Him everlastingly, and delight themselves in that enjoyment, for as the Psalmist tell us "in thy presence is fulness of joy." Therein is revealed to us of what consists the ineffable bliss of our eternal inheritance: it is perfect holiness, perfect love to God; this is the essence of celestial glory. If the entire apostolate had spent the whole of their remaining lifetime in an attempt to depict and describe what heaven is, they could have done no more than enlarge upon these words: perfect holiness in God's presence, perfect love to Him, perfect enjoyment of Him, even as we are beloved by Him. This is heaven, and this is what God has decreed to bring His people unto. This is His first design in our election: to bring us into an unblemished holiness before Him.¹²³

There is no disagreement at this point between Pink and the Westminster Confession of Faith. Though the confession does not spell out in detail, as Pink does, that the everlasting glory is our perfect holiness before God, the confession does speak in the general terms that the goal of election for the elect is their everlasting glory.¹²⁴

Summary and Conclusion

To summarize and conclude this division of the paper on election in particular, the following must be recognized as

¹²³Ibid., p. 78.

¹²⁴Publications Committee, Confession, p. 29.

agreed upon by A. W. Pink and the Westminster Confession of Faith:

1. The time of election was eternity past.
2. The ground of election was the will of God alone, not anything outside of God or anything within man.
3. The means of election is the grace and love of God in Christ.
4. The goal of election is to bring praise to the glory of God's grace.
5. The goal of election for the elect themselves is everlasting glory.

To say that there is agreement on the above general principles is not to say that the confession agrees with Pink in all his thinking as he spells out in detail the meaning of the above principles. In some cases he goes beyond what is stated in the confession, and in others he appears to be in disagreement with the confession. Those points of question or disagreement would include the following:

1. Pink is in disagreement with the confession when he seeks to isolate the will of God from His other attributes, especially His attributes of love and grace, in the work of election.
2. Pink appears to be in disagreement with the confession in his definition of the phrase "in Christ," as he states the elect were chosen in Christ in a manner not echoed by the confession. The confession makes no reference, as Pink does, to the Man Christ Jesus being the first recipient of election. The confession makes no statement regarding an eternal union of the Man Christ Jesus with the Son of God, the second person of the Godhead. The confession makes no statement about any spiritual union or super-creation relation of the elect with God or Christ from eternity past. The confession makes no reference to the elect remaining in union with Christ and God after the fall.

Reprobation in Particular

The third part of this chapter will deal in greater detail with the doctrine of reprobation. That doctrine was discussed in some general manner previously, but now it is to be considered in detail according to the convictions of A. W. Pink.

Though Pink mentions reprobation in several places in his writings, the most comprehensive and enlightening discussion is in his book titled The Sovereignty of God.¹²⁵ A good portion of the chapter on reprobation from this book will be summarized now. From that summary there will be pointed out several major thoughts for comparison with the Westminster Confession of Faith.

A Definition of Reprobation

Pink begins his extensive discussion on reprobation by attempting to define the doctrine in several paragraphs.¹²⁶ He argues that from what he has shown in his previous chapter on the doctrine of election that it should be clear to all that there must follow (even if Scripture said nothing about it) a rejection of others. If God has elected some unto salvation, as 2 Thess. 2:13 teaches, then there must be some that God has not elected to salvation. If the Father gave some to

¹²⁵Pink, Sovereignty (Baker edition only), pp. 81-108.

¹²⁶Ibid., pp. 81-82.

Christ, as John 6:37 states, then there must be some others who were not given by the Father to Christ. If some names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, as recorded in Rev. 21:27, then there are others whose names are not written in that book.

Furthermore, Pink argues, all will agree that God knew who would and who would not receive Christ as their Saviour from all eternity. If with this knowledge He gave both being and birth to these He knew would reject Christ, then He created them unto damnation. If one replies that God knew beforehand these would reject Christ, but that He did not decree it, that is a begging of the question. Pink argues that if God knew beforehand one would reject Christ, but nevertheless brought that one into existence, it is clear that He designed and ordained that person to be eternally lost, because He is the One who brought that one into existence with full knowledge of that one's eternal end. Finally, since faith is the gift of God, then the purpose to give faith only to some involves the purpose not to give it to others.

Pink then calls attention to the multitudes of history past, and even of the present, who have not been the recipients of salvation in Christ.¹²⁷ Some were favored with no external means of grace. Some received no light from the truth of God. Some were reared in gross darkness and unbelief, and even in damning error. Some were reared with

¹²⁷Ibid., pp.82-84.

churches all around them, and yet died in their sins. Some were from an early age prejudiced against Christ, preachers, and the church. Pink then says:

Now if God had willed their salvation, would He not have vouchsafed them the means of salvation? Would He not have given them all things necessary to that end? But it is an undeniable matter of fact that He did not. If, then, Deity can, consistently, with His justice, mercy, and benevolence, deny to some the means of grace, and shut them up in gross darkness and unbelief (because of the sins of their forefathers, generations before), why should it be deemed incompatible with His perfections to exclude some persons, many, from grace itself, and from that eternal life which is connected with it? seeing that He is Lord and sovereign Disposer both of the end to which the means lead, and the means which lead to that end.¹²⁸

Now, are we not obliged to conclude that it was not God's will to communicate grace to them? Had His will been otherwise, would He not have actually communicated His grace to them? If, then, it was the will of God, in time, to refuse to them His grace, it must have been His will from all eternity, since His will is, as Himself, the same yesterday, and today and forever. Let it not be forgotten that God's providences are but the manifestations of His decrees: what God does in time is only what He purposed in eternity--His own will being the alone cause of all His acts and works. Therefore from His actually leaving some men in final impenitency and unbelief we assuredly gather it was His everlasting determination so to do; and consequently that He reprobated some from before the foundation of the world.¹²⁹

Pink at this point in the discussion quotes from the Westminster Confession of Faith. He uses the statement that declares that God did from all eternity foreordain whatsoever comes to pass.¹³⁰ He then argues as follows:

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 83.

¹²⁹Ibid., p. 84.

¹³⁰Publications Committee, Confession, p. 28.

Now if these statements are true, is not the doctrine of Reprobation established by them? What, in human history, is the one thing which does come to pass every day? What, but that men and women die, pass out of this world into a hopeless eternity, an eternity of suffering and woe. If then God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass then He must have decreed that vast numbers of human beings should pass out of this world unsaved to suffer eternally in the Lake of Fire. Admitting the general premise, is not the specific conclusion inevitable?¹³¹

In way of summary, it is clear from the above discussion and quotations that Pink held to a doctrine of reprobation. His definition would deny that God simply passed by some as He chose a people in the act of election. Rather He decreed those who are not of the elect to live and die outside of His grace and salvation, and then to pass on to suffer eternally in the Lake of Fire. This act of reprobation is not during man's history as he drifts in a godless direction, but it was from the foundation of the world as was election. Had God willed their salvation, He would have also willed the means. The fact they do not receive the means is evidence, for Pink, that God neither willed the means or the salvation.

The three basic arguments that Pink presents for reprobation in the above discussion could be summarized as follows:

1. The doctrine of election necessitates a doctrine of reprobation.
2. The doctrine of God's prescience necessitates the doctrine of reprobation.

¹³¹Pink, Sovereignty, Baker ed., p. 84.

3. The doctrine of God's sovereignty over all things as clearly defined in the Westminster Confession of Faith necessitates the doctrine of reprobation.

Biblical Support for the Doctrine
of Reprobation

Pink admits in the above discussion that some will accuse him of presenting a case on the basis of reasoning and logic alone, or even from mere inferences from other Bible doctrines. For this reason, he next turns to present several Biblical passages as the ground for his doctrine of reprobation. The most extensive discussion focuses on Rom. 9: 17-23, one of the most impressive works of exegesis to be found in any of Pink's theological works. Before speaking of Pink's handling of that passage, several other passages that he uses to present his case will be mentioned.

Joshua 11:18-20

The first passage Pink uses to support his doctrine of reprobation is Josh. 11:18-20.¹³² That passage states that only the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon, made peace with the children of Israel. It states further that the Lord hardened the hearts of the others of the land that He might completely destroy them. Pink says that the statement could be no plainer--a large number of the hearts of the Canaanites were hardened by the Lord as He had purposed to destroy them. Pink indicates that if one wants to argue that these were

¹³²Ibid., p. 85.

wicked, immoral and idolatrous people, he would ask if they were any more heathen and immoral than the cannibals of the South Sea Islands, as well as many other places, to whom God has given the gospel and saved men from their ranks? Pink asks why did not God command Joshua and the children of Israel to teach these people of Canaan the Law of God and the way to God? For Pink the answer must be because these were marked out by God for destruction from all eternity.

Proverbs 16:4

The second passage Pink presents as evidence for his doctrine of reprobation is Prov. 16:4.¹³³ That verse states that God made all things for Himself, even the wicked for the day of evil. This verse, for Pink at least, makes it clear that God did not make each man for each man's sake, but for God Himself; not for man's own happiness, but for God's glory. This verse not only speaks of all things being made for the Lord, but it spells out specifically that the wicked were made for the day of evil. That is to say, the design of God in making the wicked was for the day of evil. One might ask how this could bring any glory to God. Pink would answer that God's power is glorified as at the end He will demonstrate that power through all the earth, showing it is a very easy thing for Him to defeat the most ardent and determined rebel.

¹³³Ibid.

Matthew 7:23

Pink next presents Matt. 7:23 as part of his argumentation for the doctrine of reprobation.¹³⁴ This verse says that the wicked are told to depart from the presence of God in the day of judgment because He never knew them. He says that this passage teaches reprobation as one realizes that the word "know" does not refer to God's prescience, but rather to a regarding or favoring beforehand. He quotes Amos 3:2 ("You only have I known of all the families of the earth"), and Rom. 11:2 ("God hath not cast away His people whom He foreknew") as support for the meaning of "know" in Matt. 7:23 as favorable regard. Pink suggests that one contrast this verse with John 10:14, which says, "I know my sheep, and am known of Mine."

Romans 9:17-23

It is in his exegesis of Rom. 9:17-23 that Pink makes his best defense of reprobation as well as presents one of his most impressive works of exegesis in any of his theological works.¹³⁵ The totality of Pink's exegesis cannot be presented here. Rather, three basis facts of reprobation which are set forth in his discussion will be considered. He does not separate his discussion into these three areas, but for the purpose of this paper, it will be shown (1) that the

¹³⁴Ibid., pp. 85-86.

¹³⁵Ibid., pp. 86-98.

doctrine of reprobation is a reality for Pink; (2) that the ground of reprobation is the will of God; and (3) that the purpose of reprobation is to bring glory to God's sovereign power and glorious justice.

The reality of reprobation

For Pink God's dealing with Pharaoh is the supreme example of the doctrine of reprobation. He says:

The case of Pharaoh establishes the principle and illustrates the doctrine of Reprobation. If God actually reprobated Pharaoh, we may justly conclude that He reprobates all others whom He did not predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son. This inference the apostle Paul manifestly draws from the fate of Pharaoh, for in Romans 9, after referring to God's purpose in raising up Pharaoh, he continues, "therefore." The case of Pharaoh is introduced to prove the doctrine of Reprobation as the counterpart of the doctrine of Election.¹³⁶

The statement of verse seventeen of Romans 9, which states that God raised Pharaoh for the specific purpose that He might show His power and that God's name might be declared throughout all the earth, for Pink, undeniably sets forth reprobation. He notes that it is a quotation of Ex. 9:16, and that the Hebrew is actually, "I have appointed."¹³⁷ He argues in the same context that Paul departs significantly from the Septuagint at this point in order to clearly state the fact of God's predestination in the matter, as the Septuagint does not state that fact with clarity. Therefore, verse seventeen says that God raised Pharaoh for a purpose--a definite purpose. To

¹³⁶Ibid., p. 90.

¹³⁷Ibid., p. 87.

fulfill that purpose Pharaoh was cut off by God in the very midst of his wickedness, having been hardened by God.

Verse eighteen continues as a general conclusion which Paul draws from the preceding verses, including verse seventeen. He has in those previous verses denied that God was unrighteous in loving Jacob and hating Esau, and he has also set forth the case of Pharaoh. Thus, when Paul begins verse eighteen with a "therefore," it is clear that he is drawing a general conclusion from what has been previously stated. That general conclusion is that God will have mercy or harden as He wills and as He wills alone. Pink says that this hardening does not have reference to judicial hardening, that is, that God hardens a man's heart because he has hardened his heart first against God. He says there is no reference at all to God hardening all who have rejected His truth, but rather the ground is the will of God. It is "whom He wills."

Verse nineteen is the anticipation by Paul of an objection to his doctrine of reprobation. The force of the objection is that--if what Paul has stated in verse eighteen is true (God has mercy on men or hardens men as He pleases), then you have destroyed human responsibility. You have made man no better than the puppets. Therefore, it would be unjust for God to find fault with His helpless creatures who have been appointed to their action and final end. In fact, the creature has not by his sin resisted the will of God, but he has fulfilled it. How can God fault a man for that?

In verse twenty Paul does not give an answer to the objection, but rather rebukes the objector for his impiety that would be so bold as to raise such an objection against God. He reminds the objector that he is only a creature, and it is highly impertinent for him to argue against the will and purpose of God. The creature has no right to say to the Creator, "Why has thou made me thus?" Pink says that the "thus," in light of the context, must refer to men such as Esau and Pharaoh, who were created for reprobation. Clearly, according to Pink's interpretation, the creature that has been created by the Creator for hardening has no right to ask the Creator why He has made him for hardening.

In verses twenty-one to twenty-three there is the statement that the potter has power over the clay to make one vessel unto honor and another to dishonor. Then reference is made to God as having fitted some vessels for destruction and other vessels of mercy for glory. Pink says that in these verses Paul deals with the objections of verse nineteen in a full manner. Paul states emphatically here that the potter has power over the clay. Pink says the word for power in verse twenty-one is a different word than the one used for power in verse twenty-two. Verse twenty-two speaks of God's might, while the word for power in verse twenty-one means the Creator's rights or sovereign prerogatives. Pink supports this definition by citing John 1:12 where the same word is used. The verse in John states that God gave those who believed the power (right) to become the sons of God.

There is no question in Pink's mind that the potter of verse twenty-one is God. This is a necessity in light of the context of verse twenty. Furthermore, it is not that God makes some vessels unto honor and some unto less honor, but all with a useful place. Rather, it is that some are vessels of honor and some of dishonor. Verse twenty-two declares that these vessels of dishonor are vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. They are fitted for destruction by God in His fore-ordinating decree. Verse twenty-three states that the vessels of mercy are afore prepared to glory. It is not that they fit themselves in time, but rather it is God who ordained them for glory from all eternity.

Pink summarizes verses nineteen through twenty-three in the following manner:¹³⁸

1. Verse 19 contains two questions

If God has mercy on whom He wills and hardens whom He wills:

Why does He find fault with anyone?
Who has resisted His will?

2. Verses 20 through 23 contain a two-fold answer

The creature has no right to sit in judgment on the ways of the Creator (verse 20).

The Creator has the right to dispose of His creatures as He sees fit (verse 21).

The Creator deals differently with His various creatures in accordance with His different purposes (verses 22-23).

¹³⁸Ibid., p. 95.

The ground of reprobation

Not only does this section in Romans show the fact of reprobation, but it also shows for Pink the ground of reprobation. The ground of reprobation is the will of God and the will of God alone. Note the following quotations that are found in this section of Pink's discussion:

In conclusion, we would say that in forming Pharaoh God displayed neither justice nor injustice, but only His bare sovereignty. As the potter is sovereign in forming vessels, so God is sovereign in forming moral agents.¹³⁹

The "therefore" announces the general conclusion which the apostle draws from all he had said in the three preceding verses in denying that God was unrighteous in loving Jacob and hating Esau, and specifically it applies the principle exemplified in God's dealings with Pharaoh. It traces everything back to the sovereign will of the Creator. He loves one and hates another, He exercises mercy toward some and hardens others, without reference to anything save His own sovereign will.¹⁴⁰

The end of reprobation

Last, this section on Romans gives Pink's view of the end of reprobation. It is to display God's glory by displaying His power and justice. Sometimes Pink states these ends together, while at other times he states them separately. Sometimes he states the end also to be the wrath of God, which is certainly related to His justice. In reference to God raising up Pharaoh, Pink quotes Calvin in agreement when he says that God's purpose in this action was to exhibit His

¹³⁹Ibid., p. 90.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 90-91.

power.¹⁴¹ As Pink then reviews the history of Israel in relation to the destruction of Pharaoh, he says:

Was Moses moved by a vindictive spirit as he saw Israel's arch-enemy "cut off" by the waters of the Red Sea? Surely not. But to remove forever all doubt upon this score, it remains to be pointed out how that saints in heaven, after they have witnessed the sore judgements of God, join in singing "the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb saying, Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Nations" (Rev. 15:3).¹⁴²

The point is that the song of Moses and the song of the saints in heaven is a song of praise of the justice of God for His judgment on the workers of evil. These workers of evil are the reprobate, which means reprobation brings glory to God's justice. Pink states again several pages later " . . . the destruction of the reprobate will promote His glory . . . "¹⁴³ Two other quotations from Pink verify his view of the end of reprobation:

Two reasons are given why God makes some "vessels unto dishonour:" first to "shew His wrath," and secondly "to make His power known"--both of which were exemplified in the case of Pharaoh.¹⁴⁴

Should it be asked why God does this [fits some vessels to wrath], the answer must be, To promote His own glory, i.e., the glory of His justice, power and wrath.¹⁴⁵

Summary

To summarize the three main points that have been stressed concerning Pink's view of reprobation, note the following:

141 Ibid., p. 87. 142 Ibid., p. 90. 143 Ibid., p. 95.

144 Ibid., p. 96. 145 Ibid., pp. 96-97.

1. Reprobation is the companion doctrine of election which states that God before the foundation of the world by His own will alone and for His own glory decreed and ordained that some men would be denied the blessing of His grace and die to suffer eternally in the Lake of Fire.
2. Reprobation is grounded upon nothing else than the will of God whereby He extends or withholds mercy as He pleases.
3. Reprobation has for its end or purpose the manifestation of the glory of God's sovereign power and justice.

Further Clarification

Before comparing these three points with the Westminster Confession of Faith, it would be helpful to note several further points of clarification and caution that Pink makes concerning his doctrine of reprobation.¹⁴⁶

First, the doctrine of reprobation does not state that God took innocent creatures, decreed to make them wicked, and then decreed to doom them to eternal wrath. The responsibility of sin is man's and not God's, even though Pink has previously been shown to believe that God decreed the acts of the wicked--all of their acts.

Second, the doctrine of reprobation does not mean that God refuses to save some, as they would seek Him, because they are not of the elect but of the reprobate. The reprobate have no desire for Christ or salvation, therefore they will not seek Him.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 100-102.

Third, the doctrine of reprobation does not conflict with God's goodness. The reprobate are not the recipients of the goodness of God as are the elect, but nevertheless, they still are not completely excluded from participation in the goodness of God. They enjoy many temporal blessings, even though they do not appreciate them as they should, nor do these blessings lead them to repentance.

Finally, it is absolutely impossible for anyone in this life to know who are among the reprobate. This is a matter known only to God, and it will be revealed only in the future life.

A Comparison to the Westminster Confession of Faith

There is no question that the Westminster Confession of Faith is in agreement with the three summary statements that have been given above concerning the view of A. W. Pink on the doctrine of reprobation. The fact of reprobation is clearly stated in the confession:

By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.¹⁴⁷

The ground and end are clearly stated in the following quotation from the confession and are also in agreement with Pink:

The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as he pleaseth, for the

¹⁴⁷Publications Committee, Confession, p. 29.

glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by; and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.¹⁴⁸

Therefore, it is clear that the confession and Pink agree on the fact of reprobation, the ground of reprobation as the will of God, and the end of reprobation to be the glory of God's power and justice.

The Agreement with Scripture

In analyzing Pink's use and agreement with Scripture, it has already been stated that this is his best work in exegesis, referring primarily to the Romans passage. He does not deal with the place of the passage in the overall context of the book of Romans, which would have been helpful and really necessary for the best practice of exegesis. He does seek constantly to use the immediate context for interpretive light. He makes some reference to word meanings, but it is clear again that he is not approaching the original language for himself, but rather depends on others as commentators to supply him with definitions in most cases. He gives no evidence of any knowledge of the Greek verb system in its tense, mood, or voice. The lack of definition of some key words from the original languages (mercy, compassion, fitted to destruction, prepared for glory, and so forth) was a major weakness in his exegetical work. Nonetheless, it is the

¹⁴⁸Ibid., p. 30.

conviction of this writer that Pink, in spite of his limitations as cited, and using his method as previously described (gleaning from others), has set forth the truth of Rom. 9: 17-23.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

It cannot be denied that A. W. Pink was a very unique and unusual man. Even though he was untrained by any theological institution or group, he still was a devout student of the Bible and the writings of the theologians of the past. His schedule of work, which called for twelve hour days six days a week, speaks of discipline and fortitude of character and purpose. His faithful reproduction of a periodical which was read by only a few, speaks of faith in a sovereign God and His call to the servant to be faithful also regardless of the task given. His strength of convictions in a day when he was out of step with most others, speaks of strength of resolution whatever the cost. His use of his pen when his public ministry was an apparent failure, speaks of a stewardship of life and a commitment to use his God-given gifts as God directed, rather than as he would choose.

However, as all of God's servants, he was not without faults and weaknesses. His strengths often led to weakness in their overbalance at the other end of the scale. Though a man of deep convictions, he also appears at times to be a man of impatience and intolerance in dealing with others.

Though a dedicated student of the Bible and other theological literature, his work and writings would have been improved by formal training. Though he worked a very heavy and strenuous schedule, it is difficult to justify his refusal to see people who came some distance to see him in his later years. Equally difficult to justify was his neglect of public worship in those same later days of his life.

Regardless of what one might conclude about A. W. Pink, the man, the purpose of this paper is to test his writings to determine if he is a trustworthy guide in the study of the Reformed faith. The conclusion must be that he is a safe guide as he is in strong agreement with the Westminster Confession of Faith in the area of predestination. His later works, generally speaking, are more trustworthy for the Reformed student than some of his earlier works due to his movement from a strong dispensational viewpoint to a covenantal viewpoint in the passing of the years. There are times, even in his later years, but especially in his early days, when his hermeneutics leaves something to be desired. Much of his exposition is made up of a synthesis of other writers. His theological works do not contain in many instances solid exegesis, but a proof-text use of the Scriptures.

But again, regardless of these weaknesses, his doctrines of predestination, election, and reprobation are in strong agreement with the Westminster Confession of Faith. Both

would agree on the following concepts under the noted headings:

1. In the area of predestination both agree:

that God from all eternity has ordained whatsoever comes to pass.

that God's predestination of all things is free and unchangeable.

that God's predestination of all things is by the wise and holy counsel of His will.

that God's predestination of all things does not make God the author of sin.

that God's predestination of all things does not destroy the contingency of causes.

that God's predestination of all things does not deny man's responsibility before God.

that God's predestination of all things is not based on God's knowledge of the future or future certain conditions.

that God's predestination of all things includes both election and reprobation.

2. In the area of election and reprobation both agree:

that God has predestinated some men and angels to everlasting life and others to everlasting death.

that the goal of both is the manifestation of the glory of God.

that the certainty of both is so set that the number of neither can be increased nor diminished.

3. In the area of election both would agree:

that the time of election was before the foundation of the world.

that the ground of election was the purpose and will of God.

that the means of election is God's free grace and love in Christ.

that the goal of election is the praise of the glory of God's grace.

that the goal for the elect is everlasting glory.

4. In the area of reprobation both would agree:

that the ground of reprobation is the unsearchable counsel of God's will.

that the goal of reprobation is the glory of God's sovereign power over His creatures and the praise of His glorious justice.

When it is said that Pink is in strong agreement with the Westminster Confession of Faith in the area of predestination, it is not to be assumed that there are no areas of disagreement. Those areas arise because of Pink's overstatement of some items, or the further implications of some of the areas of agreement. The areas of disagreement would be the following:

1. Pink believed that God can change, by-pass, or ignore His law because He is free and not bound by anything or anyone. Evidently for Pink, the law is not the expression of God's nature.
2. Pink isolated the will of God from the attributes of love and grace in the work of election. That is, he believed the free and uninfluenced will of God, and that will alone, was the ground of election. Neither the love or the grace of God is to be seen as included in this act.
3. Pink believed that the Man Christ Jesus was the first recipient of the act of election, as he was chosen to be united with the second person of the Trinity from eternity past. Pink would deny that he is teaching here the union of two persons, but argues he speaks only of the union of two natures in one person. It appears to the writer of this dissertation that he is confusing in his statements at this point.

4. Pink believed that the elect were chosen by God in Christ Jesus as their Head, and that they entered into a spiritual union and super-creation relation with Christ from eternity past.
5. Pink believed that the fall did not break this relation of the elect with Christ and God. They were estranged, corrupted, and suffered great loss in the fall, but their relation to God was never broken.
6. Pink believed that the love of God extended only to the elect.

Some of the above do appear to be very serious, but they should be weighed against the previous stated points of agreement with the confession. This is not to say the present writer encourages anyone to follow Pink in the above stated disagreements, but that the disagreements are minimized by knowledge of strong agreement between Pink and the confession in the foundational principles of predestination, election, and reprobation. One should read Pink understanding his limitations both in scholarship, personality, and method of study and writing. These stated limitations and peripheral points of disagreement, with the Westminster Confession of Faith, should not disqualify him as a capable guide for the one who wishes to pursue Reformed theology. Pink, himself, would have wanted all who read his works to weigh his doctrines and writings against the one supreme authority--the Word of God.

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