Dr. Shellrude Proposals/ Barclay: The Power of Grace

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Imputation In Pauline Theology

The argument or the question that is being addressed here is, 'what exactly is imputed to us? Justification or moral righteousness? The process of Justification was first mentioned by Martin Luther, and then was expanded by Melanchton and John Calvin. This has become dominant in protestant theology. Basically, what it teaches us is that all believers are both forgiven and accepted, not because of anything a person has done, but for the sake of the finished work of Christ suffering on the cross. Those who are supporters of the imputation construct tend to reference a few of Pauline texts such as 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9, and Romans 4:3-8. What these texts have in common is that of *dikaiaiosune* which is defined as a gift by having faith in Jesus. The contemporary scholars argue that Paul uses the term in two different ways. That of, moral righteousness (e.g., Rom. 6:13, 18-20; 14:7), and soteriological status (e.g., Gal. 2:21; 3:21; 5:5). Soteriological status could relate to a right relationship, as well as a right standing and that of justified acquitted.

Piper contends that the imputation construct is implied based on Romans 5;12-19 that of the first Adam and Christ. Piper argues that Adam's sin is imputed to all heirs (believers) based on Christ Righteousness for believers' justification. Dr. Shellrude pushes back on this argument because there is nothing linguistically or exegetical that supports this argument. First, Paul does not exactly say Adam sin is imputed to humanity as a ground of condemnation. Second, as one examines the paragraph it is clearly seen how both the first Adam and Christ had impacted humanity in two different ways, it was not based on the mechanics of how it was communicated. Dr. Shellrude points out that many believe if one was to leave out the concept of Christ's

righteousness it would weaken the gospel. However, the bottom line is that such a concept lacks exegetical support. Christ chooses to forgive us of our sins.

All Are Elect, Few Are Elect: Understanding New Testament Election Language

There have always been oppositions concerning the understanding of the New Testament language and its arguments on election. The Arminian-Wesleyan tradition sees elections as God's selection for personal salvation based on foreknowledge of those individuals who will believe. However, modern Arminian-Wesleyan will describe it as individuals become elected and are incorporated into the people of God. Dr. Shellrude pushes back this approach because interpreting elections established by *foreknowledge* is kind of like speaking still about elections. From his perspective it removes the grace part of election language by reducing to God's approval of human decisions which he foresees. Meanwhile, none of this has any exegetical support, and much of it is eisegesis. This paper contends that the New Testament language mainly focuses on the concept of selection but on the thought of gracious initiative as the basis for the status as believers according to Shellrude. There are four arguments that maintain the gracious initiative of God as the grounds for believers' status. First, the election language by Jesus and the early church has been formed by the election language of the Old Testament. This was a corporate concept which did not speak to the issue of the salvation of the individual Jew. Second, election language is part of a

broader vocabulary that speaks of God's special love concerning the relationship with his people and his initiative in the process of salvation. Third, the soteriological phrasing in the New Testament applies to those who are already believers. In other words, it is open to every person, reconciliation, as well as justification and life, the bottom line is of God's mercy. Fourth, Dr.

Shellrude speaks of the metaphorical and analogical character of language that comes from the context of human experience that is used to express theological concepts. Dr. Shellrude contends that God calls and invites all people into a relationship with himself; in other words all are elected. The New Testament does not describe unbelievers as elect in rule because the language of election is part of the vocabulary language that is used to describe as believers, and therefore the theological perspective in principle would mean all are elect, and God invites all to embrace this status.

The freedom of God in Mercy and Judgment: a libertarian reading of Romans 9:6-29

The most common approach to interpretation of Romans 9:6-29 is reviewed in deterministic and predestination terms. This view argues that Israel's disbelief is not a mistake or a failure of God because it has already been predetermined by God to harden the hearts of Israel as a whole and making it impossible for them to believe. It is also God's intention to create a new community that consists of Jews and Gentiles that are predestined to salvation. Dr. Shellrude argues how Paul explains how Israel was "*broken off*" due to unbelief (10:20), yet then continues say they can be easily restored if they do not intentionally continue in unbelief (10:23), and the Gentiles can be cut off if they do not preserve in faith (10:20-22). If this is the case according to Dr. Shellrude, Paul would be guilty of over-simplification by saying the problem is Israel unbelief. Dr. Shellrude believes that this would be an odd suggestion to say that God's unconditional election of some Gentiles to salvation can simply be undone, an arrogance that leads to being cut off from their salvation. Paul explores Jewish unbelief that does not seem compatible with a deterministic, nor a predestinarian theology. Shellrude states only in Romans

9, that Paul is responding to a specific challenge where the language that is being used can be clearly interpreted as an expression of theological determination.

Dr. Shellrude shares four main points that Paul establishes from scripture, as well as the implied intended response concerning that God has failed Israel. First, God is free to choose or determine who will be his people. He is not obligated to safeguard Israel and responds to the gospel but is free to determine his people of those who would respond to the grace manifest in Jesus. Second, God is free to judge therefore he hardens whose heart he wants to harden. He does not have to give off his irresistible grace. Third, God is free to use those he has hardened to further his purpose according to his will. Fourth, God is free to show his mercy to whomever he chooses. Therefore, he is free to show mercies to the Gentiles, those who were not the primary recipients of God's covenant promises. The bottom line is that God's word has not failed!

My problem with Calvinism (Summary)

In this summary Dr. Shellrude gives a number of issues he has with Calvinism. Throughout this summary he stresses how there is no adequate exegetical basis for Calvinism. And the main concern here is determination that suggests human decisions are inevitable. Dr. Shellrude argues that determinism is based on only a few texts that are read in isolation of their historical context and is used to prove text a theological construct which is foreign to the scriptures.

The importance of Biblical material in all genres assumes: a) that God has created people with a degree of free will. b) God's grace can be resisted. c) that God's desires salvation for all people. d) the atonement is universal in scope. e) that the apostasy (falling away) is a genuine possibility. Shellrude argues that Calvinist have developed interpretive strategies to blend these texts with determinism. These interpretive strategies are seen as counterintuitive, logically

flawed, and historically unattested. Shellrude believes that Calvinism has destroyed the foundation for any type of actual hope of real knowledge. Throughout human history people have believed as well as acted on a host of ideas, which many now see and understand them to be preposterous and destructive. He goes on to say if God has ordained all of one's thoughts, no matter how erroneous, or evil and destructive they may be, one can never be certain that any moment we are aligning ourselves with God ordained truth or God ordained nonsense? The Calvinism perspective affirms that God holds all people accountable for one's sins and unbelief's from which he has ordained and scripted for them. In other words, God is condemning people to eternal conscious torment for choices that he has predetermined and approved of. Shellrude argues that if that is the case, God could just have easily written a script of human history with little to no sin and evil, and all human beings are saved at the end. However, with this suggestion that was just made by Dr. Shellrude, it almost suggests that God's freedom is used incorrectly.

Dr. Shellrude argues that Calvinism renders meaningless the scriptural proclamation that God is good and that he is love based on point five (condemning people for choices that God has determined and rendered inevitable). Shellrude argues the God of Calvinism does not demonstrate the same love for the non-elect as he does for the elect. However, Shellrude brings to readers attention that God holds people to a higher moral standard than he embodies, and individuals are called to love everyone with the same quality of love. The scriptures provide plenty of evidence of what God has chosen to do. However, it is extremely problematic that Calvinist ignore the evidence of scripture and instead construct a theistic version of atheistic determinism. Meanwhile, Dr. Shellrude has recognized that not all Calvinist affirm all of these positions, yet they all confirm.

Calvinism And Problematic Reading of New Testament Texts

Even though Augustine introduced the concept of determinism into the Christian theology it is mainly widespread by that of John Calvin and the tradition of reformed theology. Many lay Calvinists often say that God permits evil rather than ordains it. On the other hand, there are mainstream Calvinist theologians that do not support that view. Both Calvinist Theologians, as well as New Testament scholars have developed their theology in reference to the text that speaks of issues concerning salvation and perseverance. It is not likely they would discuss the involvement of a deterministic theological framework for the interpretation of other kinds of New Testament text. Text in the New Testament expresses a wealth of moral exhortations that instructs how God's people are to live; like for instance: in marriage, one should be committed to their marriage (e.g.Matt 5:31-32). In Matthew 6:14-15, it speaks of forgiving those who wrong them. In other words, the moral exhortation is complete on the assumption that God has gifted humanity with the libertarian freedom and has extended the grace that empowers God to people to obey. This means that God's people are challenged to God's grace by simply striving to live obediently. Shellrude contends if these exhortations are read within the framework of theological determinism, then what would be implied here is that the believers' obedience is determined by what God has already ordained. Meanwhile, the positive purpose of moral exhortation is to manifest to believers what obedience will look like when God ordains their obedience. The purpose and goal for all believers in the New Testament is to always bring God glory (Eph. 1:12); to do good works (Eph. 2:9); do what pleases God (Phil. 2:13), and so on. God is forever at work to empower believers to break free of our broken condition of our sinful flesh. So that one may have the ability to desire what is right and then proceed to do it. According to shellrude, there would have Christians in the early centuries that would have been also familiar

with deterministic worldview due to the impact of Stoic philosophy. However, there has been no theologian, pastor, nor scholar in the early church prior to Augustine found theological determinism in the New Testament scriptures. Shellrude contends that Christians should celebrate and exercise their free will from a scriptural perspective. Our triune God is the perfect model of embodiment of liberation freedom, that has chosen to create people in his own divine image, who has been endowed with grace and freedom, so that one may live out their life in union with their creator.

Paul and the Power of Grace/ John M. G. Barclay

Grace as Gift.

The Greek term for "grace" that is usually translated is (*charis)* a word that is used as benefit, favor, or gift. Paul often diversified these ordinary gift terms. Like in (2 Cor 8:9) he celebrates the *(charis)* of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then in (2 Cor 9:15) he gives thanks to God for his inexpressible gifts. *Charis* has three classes of meaning that reflect gift giving. First, it means something that is charming or attractive. Second, it can mean a gift, favor, as well as benefit, or the attitude of benevolence that accompanies a gift. Third, it can mean the return of gratitude. Paul's theology of Grace must be carefully examined based on their context as well as their social meaning. Gifts from all different cultures will always express a personal connection between both the giver and recipient. As many will know, payments for goods and services are basically the end of a transaction, yet a gift is not the end of a relationship, nor is the return. Anthropologists for a long period of time have studied the functions and social meaning of gifts, encouraged by a well-known essay by Marcel Mauss. He examined how gifts knit societies together and how they have changed over time in the changing cultures and economic

conditions. He identified three main obligations in societies structured: the commitment to give, the commitment to receive, and the commitment to return the gift (often in a different form). It is important to be open to the possibility that gifts can be both "voluntary" and "obligated", and both "disinterested" and "interested", and even "generous" and "contained." Generosity towards others was considered the best form of insurance in the Greco-Roman context. You give something and you get something. Jews gave to each other, and to God with the expectation of a return. The communities were knit together by mutual service that included wealthier people, who were also benefactors to the temple as well as the local synagogues, anticipating and receiving honor in return. The vulnerable and poor, had nothing to give back. According to the book of Deuteronomy those poor recipients of gifts will "bless you", invoking God's blessing on the donor. Jews were more likely than the non-Jews to give to those who were truly destitute, they knew their return would come not from the destitute but from God himself.

Perfection of Gift and Grace

Paul would often use antitheses, and sometimes speaks of "grace" in opposing terms: "if it is by grace, it is not by works, otherwise grace would not be grace (Rom 11:6). A construction like this has encouraged Paul's interpreters to see grace as a concept that should be perfected, to best seek the genuine or "pure' understanding of Grace. In Christian theology Barclay shares six possible "perfections" of gift/grace, especially that of giving of God. First, superabundant a gift that is no doubt perfected in scale, significance, and duration. Countless ancient philosophers (Jewish and non- Jewish) took God's gift of being superabundant, giving from God's limitless resources. This gives one a better understanding of Paul's "perfect" in (2 Cor 9: 8, 14; Rom 5:15-20).

Second, singularity. This deals with the singular devotion of the giver to do nothing other than what is beneficial. Greek philosophers were observant to accredit this perfection to God. Plato insisted that God is the highest form of being. God does only what is beautiful and beneficial. Third, priority concerns the timing of the gift, that goes before any initiative received by the recipient. According to Barclay, the greater the emphasis on priority, the greater the superiority of the giver as the initiator of the gift relationship between others. Fourth, Incongruity of the relationship between the giver and the recipient boosts the mismatch between the gift and the worth of the merit of its recipient. However, Barclay states that this may not be received as a perfect gift and can be problematic because if the bad gets the same as the good, that would be simply unfair. He goes on to say Cosmic justice may require that God's gifts are not incongruous but are given to those who deserve them. Meanwhile for certain purposes or certain conditions may make it possible to perfect incongruous gifts. Fifth, Efficacy, are gifts that achieve something for the better. This can be seen as the gift of life, giving of childbirth, or saving someone's life. God's grace could create the capacity to receive that of virtue, or the development of virtue thereby instruction, and encouragement. Sixth, Non-Circularity, meaning nothing may be given in return. The modern era has been persistent practice to perfect gifts as non-circular and non-reciprocal. This six-part taxonomy has helped one to understand the different directions when it comes to interpreters' concept of divine gift of grace. Different interpreters of this concept have operated with different collections of perfection, and all have regarded their interpretation as the correct interpretation of Grace, and all others are considered wrong. Nevertheless, we know that God is the ultimate giver. Barclay points out that Christ came to call not the righteous but sinners (Mark 2:17). Grace does not leave us as we were (broken and

lost). It is saturated into the human soul that does not destroy us but shapes, modes, and elevates the human nature of a believer to be made righteous and rendered worthy of salvation.

Paul, Grace, and Second Temple Judaism

It is no doubt that grace was at the heart of Paul's theology. Paul's exhortation on justification by faith, not the works of the law (Gal 2:15-16), this is taken to represent the contrast between grace of the gospel and the "works of righteousness", the characteristic of Judaism in Paul's era. Based on E. P. Sanders, God's election of Israel was by grace, and the covenant was accepted before any requirement of Torah-observance. In other words, whatever the requirements that were made concerning obedience and works were already established on and framed by the grace of God. Sanders contends, "getting in" was always and only by grace, concerning the election of the patriarchs and in the gift of the covenant. Though the torah-observance was important for staying in, the covenant was not the means of "getting in." Sanders highlights priority: God's grace comes before human obedience. According to Sanders, Paul's soteriology was based on taking part in Christ, rather than covenantal nomism, however, there was no difference concerning grace and works.

The key issue for Paul was not about the structure of salvation but its scope or spread of the gospel for the sake of his mission to the Gentiles. The Gentiles did not need to adopt Torah-observance (works of the Law), but to God's people by faith. The doctrine of justification by faith was strongly expressed by Paul for defending the rights of the Gentile converts to be complete and genuine heirs to the promises of God to Israel. The dialogue between Ezra and the angel Uriel we see Uriel trying to transmit the perspective of God. Ezra tried to comprehend why sinful nations had demonstrated more success than the nation of Israel; especially if the world

was made for Israel, why has it been given to the hands of the wicked (3:28-36; 6:55-59). We see the angel leads Ezra to understand God's plan in the form of two worlds. First, the world is hopelessly corrupt. Second, God's final judgment has already been planned, and evil will be destroyed, and justice of truth will be prevailed. Uriel explains how God gave everyone the chance to observe the law and receive the reward that God has promised, yet the majority have chosen to disobey God, therefore they will receive the punishment they deserve. God is definitely "merciful" in having mercy on sinners. It is possible that God's goodness would be evident in incongruous grace. Righteous people of God are referred to as gold dust being raised together in common clay that is rare, but all the more precious.