

**THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE WRITINGS
OF G. C. BERKOUWER AND E. G. WHITE:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY AND
ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS**

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While compatibilists claim that divine sovereignty either elects individuals to salvation or inevitably consigns them to damnation without the involvement of human response, non-compatibilism claims that divine love requires both human choice along with a behavioral response. This dissertation examines these respective dilemmas in the context of the sin against the Holy Spirit with the purpose of ascertaining how these views impact the sovereignty and character of God and the resulting ethical implications. Compatibilism is examined through the writings and theology of G. C. Berkouwer, while non-compatibilism is appraised through the writings and thought of Ellen G. White.

This dissertation embraces the idea that God imposes self-limitations on His sovereignty in respect of the integrity and sanctity of human free will. It also recognizes that neither compatibilism nor non-compatibilism is free of theological difficulties; yet arrives at a solution to both systems in Ellen G. White's understanding of perfection in the context of God's call for mankind's return to the image (character) of God. This occurs, as by beholding, man can become changed. By beholding, compatibilism's dilemma of non-human response and non-compatibilism's undercurrent problem of works-based religion are resolved: for the solution is discovered in the empowerment of Christ as we behold and become changed. Therefore, man's personal accountability for damnation is maintained without man being credited with salvation by works.

The first chapter provides an historical survey of the unpardonable sin as it is described in the synoptic texts (Matt 12:31, 32; Mark 3:28-30; and Luke 12:10). This includes an overview of Calvin and Arminius, the recognized founding fathers of compatibilism and non-compatibilism. The second chapter examines the most immediate antecedents to G. C. Berkouwer and Ellen G. White as they address the sin against the Holy Spirit.

The third chapter looks at G. C. Berkouwer's theological presuppositions that inform his understanding of the unpardonable sin, his understanding of the doctrine of sin, and his explanation of the sin itself. In turn, chapter 4 surveys the writings of Ellen G. White by dealing with her corresponding theological presuppositions and perspectives regarding the sin against the Holy Spirit. Much of White's positions appear in narrative form.

The fifth chapter of the dissertation highlights and then contrasts the theological presuppositions and doctrines of the unpardonable sins of G. C. Berkouwer and Ellen G. White. In so doing it is demonstrated that both

are consistent within their respective theologies. Yet both are confronted by a certain weakness. Berkouwer's weakness is found in God's total sovereignty and mankind's absence of response, while White's weakness is discovered present in that many who embrace her teachings find an opening for a works-oriented salvation.

The last chapter provides a final summary and conclusions and looks at the ethical implications of both systems of thought. The chapter also discusses the sovereignty dilemma of compatibilism and the works orientation of non-compatibilism. The chapter then provides a possible solution in White's theme of the restoration of the character of God, as by beholding individuals become changed. The dissertation then concludes by affirming that God voluntarily places Himself under limitations of sovereignty in His choice to win our free-will devotion through Calvary.