

# **A Matter of Concern**

## **Doctrinal Orthodoxy and the Writings of John MacArthur**

### **Critically Reviewed**

**by**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

It is with considerable sadness that I have been forced to draw up this paper. I am aware that John MacArthur is on the vanguard of the conservative, Protestant, platform in the USA. His tapes and writings have been a considerable blessing and sell in their millions across the world. He has stood up to contend for the faith in areas where some have been silent, and is seen, by many, to be following the steps of Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Some of his books have greatly encouraged me and his tapes have been used by my friends. I am also aware of his considerable practical support in the ministry of a friend who distributes the *Grace to You* materials in the UK. For these reasons I have held back, for some time, from analysing his teaching in any detail; the occasional error which crept in was treated as a glitch which could be forgiven. However, with what I now know to be his clear position, especially since the publication of his study Bible, it behoves me to draw up my concerns which I will send to him requesting his comments. His errors in certain areas are not occasional blips, which could be put down to poor editing from spoken sermons, but are positions which represent his clear stand on certain doctrines. It is my contention that these doctrines are aberrations from the historical development of mainline Protestantism. Nevertheless, it is with a heavy heart that I do this all the same.

The scope of this study will cover the following subjects:

- 1 A universal view of the doctrines of grace as opposed to particularism.
- 2 Dispensationalism.
- 3 Erroneous Christology.

Some may feel that items 1 and 2 are widely held and hardly constitute heresy. Their popularity may be true but they are still diversions from historic, Biblical faith, and must be considered here. Item 3 is very serious. What is more, there seems to have been some obfuscation regarding John MacArthur's views on this from time to time. We are commanded to withdraw from those who hold a false Christology (2 John 9-10). If MacArthur's views are unbiblical, the results are significant. If we take all the items together, we have a very serious situation here.

An introductory point is a question, to whom is MacArthur accountable to for his teaching? I ask this out of genuine interest. I know that he has a very able editor as a co-worker, whom I'm informed is very theologically aware. If he spots a theological error in



MacArthur's teaching, does this get discussed and dealt with? The evidence would suggest that it doesn't, or that the editor agrees. Does the leadership of MacArthur's church have input into this? Does MacArthur allow discipline by other national colleagues? My experience with large churches/organisations, who have a charismatic powerful teacher at the helm, is that there is no one who can bring correction, even if there is someone able to see the need. Is this the case for John MacArthur I wonder?

### 1. A Universal view of the Doctrines of Grace

The main source material for this section will be John MacArthur's (hereinafter JMcA) book, *The Love of God*.<sup>1</sup> Page numbers given thus: (p.18).

The question of God's love for everyone is a subject of current controversy. Certain areas of the Reformed church have been in conflict over this for some time. There are two issues flowing from one concept.

The root question is:

- (i) is the grace of God universal or particular?

This opens up to:

- (i)a Did Jesus die for all men or just the elect?
- (i)b Does God love everyone equally?

A further question is:

- (ii) What is the historical Reformed position on this?

Now there just is not space here to open this up extensively.<sup>2</sup> Taking the last question first, there is no doubt that the overwhelming historic position is that the atonement is limited to the elect, it is 'particular' not universal. It is not possible to deny this historically. One can argue that Calvin was not as extreme as later Calvinists, as some have tried, but even that is an impossible argument in the face of Calvin's *Treatise on Predestination*. If his *Institutes* were not emphatic on this point, this cannot be said of his *Treatise on Predestination*.

The Synod of Dordt makes this absolutely clear, but even the Westminster Confession, the foundation of English and American Presbyterianism (and hence Reformed theology) is unequivocal, as this sample shows:

*All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and **those only**, He is pleased, in His appointed and accepted time, effectually to call... (10.1)*

*This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, **not from anything at all foreseen in man; who is altogether passive therein**, [i.e. it does not result from man's faith] until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit... (10.2)*

*Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the Word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come unto Christ and therefore cannot be saved. (10.4)*

*God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect [and them alone]. (11.4)*

*The Lord Jesus ... purchased, not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance*

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<sup>1</sup> Published by WordBooks, USA 1996.

<sup>2</sup> If any reader is interested, I have a small booklet on the subject. Contact via editor of BRJ.



*in the kingdom of heaven, for all those **whom the Father hath given unto Him.** (8.5)  
By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are  
predestined unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. (3.3).*

So, the historical question is solved, Reformed theology states categorically that God's grace is particular. That this is the case in the Bible need not be proved here, a consultation of the supporting texts in the Westminster Confession or the Canons of Dordt will show that this is true. Some are vessels of wrath made for destruction (Rm. 9:22; Prov. 16:4), others are chosen for life according to God's good pleasure (Eph. 1:11-12).

If God's grace is only for some, then his love must be particular as well. If God cannot change, then he cannot put his love upon people who will not know that love in Hell. Condemned sinners in Hell do not have the love of God upon them. If God loves, he loves to the uttermost because God can only do things perfectly. Those he loves, he will love forever. Any textual difficulty must be understood in the light of the analogy of the faith. Texts like Jn. 3:16, 1 Tim. 2:4 etc. cannot be interpreted in a way that denies what scripture elsewhere shows is a clear doctrine (i.e. they cannot be interpreted universalistically). In any case, a universalistic interpretation of these passages goes too far. To say that God loves every man because he loves the whole world leads to outright universalism since Jn. 3:17 says that the world will be saved and 1 Tim. 2:6 says that Jesus is a ransom for all. Such an interpretation destroys Christianity and empties Hell.

Also there is the question of how God can love any sinner at all. Sinners can only be loved because they are in Christ. God loves his Son, and only what is in his Son. The elect were placed into Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). It is because the elect are in Christ that they can be loved. Now the wicked (reprobate) are never placed in Christ, and therefore, cannot be loved. To make this distinction clear, God determined that twice the inspired word would state categorically that God hates specific people (not nations). Romans 9:13 is a quote from Malachi 1:2-3. Such repetitions are to emphasise an important theological point. Apart from this there are multiple references to God hating the wicked throughout the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms. There is not one text which states that God loves every man.

God loves the elect and hates the wicked. We can have it no other way. This arises from God's particular grace in the Gospel. Jesus died for a specific number that he definitely saves, not everyone whom he only potentially saves, if they believe. Such a view puts salvation in the hands of man which scripture contradicts and condemns (Rm. 9:16; Jn. 1:13; Eph. 2:8).

Historically, some Calvinists have tried to mitigate the apparent harshness of God's decree (who are we to think God's stated purpose is harsh?). Men like Moses Amyraut tried to demonstrate a median position but such systems go hopelessly astray (many of his followers completely apostacised). Others, apparently influ-



enced by Amyraut (hence Amyraldianism),<sup>3</sup> also tried to develop an offer of the Gospel based upon a sincere love of God for the reprobate. Men like Andrew Fuller have become a model for 20th century four point Calvinists. The problem is that, apart from being unbiblical, you cannot take part of the doctrines of grace away without falling into confusion. Four point Calvinists (i.e. those who do not believe in Limited Atonement) are inconsistent. The proof of the pudding is the history of the last 80 years or so. An Arminianised Calvinism (if such a thing is possible, i.e. "God is sovereign, but he loves everyone, just respond to the Gospel and you will be saved"), has led to appalling circumstances in the churches. Easy believism, based on God's love, has poured countless numbers of superficial converts into Evangelical churches and we are now reaping the whirlwind.

In light of this what does JMcA have to say?

Unfortunately, as in other areas, JMcA's teaching is confused and contradictory. First he agrees with Pink that God's sovereignty in applying his love must be stated (p.13) calling it a "*crucial point*" and "*certainly valid*". He admits that "*It is folly to think that God loves all alike, or that He is compelled to ... love everyone equally*". Then he dismisses Pink's argument stating that God loves sinners with "*sincere love*" (p.14). He adds that many who are recipients of God's love spurn it and store up wrath, quoting Rm. 2:5, yet Paul does not even mention the word 'love' in this passage. Paul's argument is that God providentially provides for man's needs on the earth, even evil men. Those who ignore God's provision add to their sins. There is no 'sincere love' here.

JMcA acknowledges that scripture contains references to God hating some people. He also recognises that the suggestion that God hates the sin while loving the sinner is a falsehood (p.14). Instead, JMcA takes the position that God can love and hate sinners at the same time, drawing from human experience of this. Here he misses the whole point. God is not like us; if he loves, he loves perfectly to the end; if he hates, he hates perfectly and finally. Man loves one minute and hates the next because he is ruled by passion and cannot do anything righteously. JMcA gives no text to support his position (p.15) and his footnote (footnote 15, p.228) is pure confusion: "*Contradictory volitions cannot exist in His mind. What I am saying is this: God in a real and sincere sense hates the wicked because of their sin; yet in a real and sincere sense He also has compassion, pity, patience, and true affection for them because of His own loving nature*". He says that God has no contradictions then states that he has contradictory affections, gives no explanation of this position and no scriptural proof for it. Is this good teaching? The Bible teaches that God has simplicity, he does not do complicated, contradictory things at the same time.

The root of JMcA's confusion is that he neither understands, nor believes in limited atonement. He pictures God as loving sinners by: promising to forgive, offer-

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<sup>3</sup> In Amyraldianism, grace is made universal in the provision of salvation and only particular in it's application. There is a 'hypothetical' universal predestination. God hypothetically loves everyone, (all men could be saved, Christ died for all) but only gives grace to the elect. Amyraut tried to avoid the idea of God predestinating reprobates. JMcA appears to adopt much of this Amyraldian position.



ing Jesus as saviour and pleading with sinners, yet these people still go to Hell (p.15 para. 3). His arguments (that God's mercy in provision of rain etc. prove God's love) are unfounded. They prove God's mercy in provision. Sinners get the benefit of the earth's bounty which God overrules for the elect. Or again his argument that God's love is shown by his desire for repentance shows a misunderstanding of God's decretive and preceptive will.<sup>4</sup> None of the passages quoted to support these arguments (p.16) contain the word 'love'. He also takes passages which are directed to the elect and applies them to the reprobate.

He bases another argument on the difference in human love between love for our neighbour and love for one's wife. Where in scripture do we see God's love defined in this variegated way? This argument breaks down because he is forced to admit reality and state that God's love for the elect is: "*infinite, eternal, saving love*", while God's love for the reprobate is none of those things (p.17). What love is it then? JMcA thinks that whatever it is it is not hatred. But then why does God say that he hates the wicked? What does this mean if actually he does love them, but not that much, not enough to save them? When does he hate them (as scripture says repeatedly) and at what point does he love them (as scripture does not say, but JMcA does)? This love is pretty poor isn't it? It hates, yet it loves. It loves, but it doesn't love as much as it loves the elect. It doesn't love to the uttermost and does not save, is not eternal and is not infinite. If God is doing something which is not infinite, eternal and effective, then one has to ask: "Just what 'God' is doing this?" Not the sovereign God of the Bible. These arguments of JMcA are confused and contradictory.

But things get worse. Quoting Calvin out of context (and not properly sourcing the quote), he misunderstands the difference Calvin makes between the call of the Gospel and irresistible grace (p.18). From this he draws the conclusion that Calvin teaches that God loves sinners, but has a special saving love for the elect. Yet at no point does Calvin say that God loves all men. The universal call is not predicated on a universal love, but a universal command to repent (Acts 17:30).

After this JMcA cites a number of theologians who are supposed to agree with his position. He gives no evidence for this (the footnote reference he gives is a mistake). Although some are Amyraldians and would support him, others were not and I could supply quotes from them which disagree with his position.

JMcA then proceeds to contradict himself again. He rightly says that we must understand God's love is not in opposition to his hate, both are "*constant, perfect, without ebb or flow. God himself is immutable - unchanging. He is not loving one moment and wrathful the next*" (p.18). But that is exactly what he has just stated is the case, first he loves a sinner, then he condemns him, in hate, to Hell. Consistency can only be maintained if one holds that God loves the elect always and hates the reprobate always. To get out of the jam he got himself in he says, "*we can never*

<sup>4</sup> God commands men to repent (preceptive will) but only decrees that the elect are given the grace of repentance (decretive will).



*begin to comprehend these things"*. No, not if we hold his position, everything is as clear as mud.

Then he again states truth that, God's wrath and his love result in God's glory. The expression of both are necessary and constitute parts of his eternal plan. God is glorified in the condemnation of the wicked (p.19). So how can he have loved them? And if this was planned from eternity, if God isolated those who would receive his condemnation from eternity, why would he express love to them? This would mean God did something which was ineffective, purposeless and contradicted his eternal plan. Is there one text which suggests God does this pointless act? - no, not one. Are there any texts which fit in with this scheme of God - yes, multitudes, God hates the wicked which he has determined for destruction (see scripture refs. p.32 above).

JMcA's first chapter is a hopeless confusion of contradictions. It points out great divine truths and then mingles them with arguments based on human emotions finally becoming hopelessly shipwrecked on the rock of irrationality.

It is unfortunate that JMcA complicates the confusion by contradicting his own earlier arguments as the book goes on. In chapter two he states that, "*love, according to Scripture, is not a helpless sensation of desire. Rather, it is a **purposeful act of self-giving. The one who genuinely loves is deliberately devoted to the one loved.** This arises from the will - not from blind emotion.*" (Emphasis mine, p..26.) If this is so, how can he argue that God loves sinners, yet they go to Hell? This love of God cannot be a "*purposeful act of self-giving*", and cannot be "*genuine*" or "*devoted to the one loved*". It cannot be from the will and must be blind emotion. JMcA condemns himself with his own words. This love he describes he says can be expressed by men (Christians). So the situation we have before us is that men can love each other, or God, in a better way than God loves certain people (sinners). God's love to the wicked is poverty stricken.

JMcA then emphasises this by stating that such pure love must give of itself, must lay down it's life. So if God's love is pure, it results in self-giving for those he loves. This is true. God loves the elect and we know this love because Jesus laid down his life for us. But for JMcA, this destroys his earlier argument because God's supposed love for the wicked does not lay down it's life for them, they go to Hell. In other words JMcA has a choice here: either God does love sinners, but this love is poor, ineffective and not as good as our love; or, God does not love the reprobate at all. There is no other outcome. JMcA is hoisted by his own petard.

One further point, JMcA notes that God is a consuming fire and a righteous judge who has indignation every day. To whom is this indignation directed if the sinners in the world are the objects of God's love? How can God turn a blind eye to that which incites his wrath in order to love them at the same time? God does this to the elect because they are seen as in Christ from eternity, believers are hidden in Christ (Col. 3:3). The reprobate are not, so how can they be loved and God's wrath (which Jesus said is over them now - Jn. 3:36) be hidden?

JMcA continues his book with some very good chapters on God's attributes



which warm the heart. Yet even here he departs from orthodox theology, "*He [God in Christ] made a once for all, infinite atonement*", (emph. mine). JMcA is a four point (i.e. inconsistent<sup>5</sup>) Calvinist.

He suggests that those who only apply God's love only to the elect, restrict God's love to a minority which overwhelms God's love with his hatred (p.85). Such a position JMcA says is inconsistent with scripture; it does not seem consistent with statements about God's graciousness and mercy. But what about also being consistent with statements about God's justice and wrath, which get an equal mention? Who are we to evaluate how much expression of one attribute over another is sufficient? We can only accept what scripture says. JMcA can only fall back upon, "*It doesn't seem befitting ... it doesn't seem consistent*". That is his evaluation, nothing more. I would say that his position has an inadequate view of God's holiness, justice, righteousness, perfection and wrath. JMcA is defending only one attribute, for him love must overwhelm all the other attributes. But also what of Deut. 7:6-8 which clearly shows that God's elective purpose is with a minority people? God does not need a majority of human-kind to experience his real love for it to be a sufficient testimony to his glory. JMcA's argument goes against scriptural precedent. Furthermore, this line of argument, yet again, contradicts his line of argument elsewhere (p.133).

The contradictions in this book are everywhere. On p.86, the author's exposition of Jn.3:16 attempts to defend the view that God loves all humanity, the word 'world' (for him) means the human race. Forced by v.17 (see earlier) to restrict the scope of salvation, JMcA says that not every individual is redeemed, only humanity as a race. Therefore, the love spoken of in v.16 must have the same restriction, it is not applied to every individual, but God showed love to some, as well as redemption to some, in order to rescue the human race as an entity. JMcA's argumentation proves my case not his. Immediately after making this restriction (God saves only some not all) he states, without any evidence, that, therefore, "*in a broad sense God's love is set on the whole human race, not just a remnant of elect individuals*". What is worrying is that JMcA and the editors have missed this glaring and obvious contradiction.

JMcA tries to mitigate the strength of Rm. 9:13 by referring to Mal. 1:2-3 (p.87). He argues that because Edom as a nation was debauched and abhorrent, God thus hated Esau.<sup>6</sup> By doing this he takes a clear text with more information and interprets

<sup>5</sup> Four point Calvinists are inconsistent because the Doctrines of Grace hang together as a unified, complete system. They are like a stone arch, if you take away one of the stones, the whole structure crumbles. Election (choice of who is saved) inevitably leads to a limited or definite atonement. Why would Christ die for those who have been selected to destruction? Christ died for the people given him by God (Jn. 17), no one else. Why is there need for irresistible grace, a further selective process? It is to ensure that those who are elected are actually converted, because not all are chosen and not all have a sacrifice available for them. If you remove limited atonement, you destroy election and introduce an Arminian Gospel, the distinction in mankind is then determined by those who obey the Gospel. The idea that God applies the sacrifice of his son universally, then only utilises a part of its efficacy is monstrous. The majority of the value of Christ's blood would, therefore, be wasted.

<sup>6</sup> By the way, JMcA contradicts himself again by saying the opposite on p.127, in fact he uses my argument on this page!



it by using the OT reference with less information, then interprets the clear by the obscure. This is the opposite of good hermeneutical process. Paul explains that Esau was not chosen and hated **before he was born** (Rm. 9:11). Paul uses Jacob and Esau as illustrations of election, God's sovereign choice. The whole point is that God did not hate Esau for what he would do in later life, or what the nation which sprang from him would do, but because he chose to in his sovereign good pleasure. That is anathema to modern man. It seems cold, fatalistic, unloving, unfair and so on. **BUT IT IS WHAT THE SCRIPTURE SAYS!** JMcA even tries to strengthen his case by implying that Deut. 2:5 even shows God's love and compassion upon Edom, yet the words do not appear in this verse. Israel was to keep away from Edom whose end would come in God's appointed time. Where is the love of God in this?

At one point (p.89), JMcA says that we cannot know why God does not redeem everyone, why he sends people to Hell. In fact he calls people 'foolish' who suggest they understand the answer to these questions. Scripture does not tell us why, he states emphatically. Well, in fact, the answers are long established facts written up many times in theology historically. The reason is God's glory. The creation, especially of man, is to be a reflection and expression of the inner, invisible character of God. Because God is perfect, the purpose for creation is a wider expression of God in the material realm. This expression must be of all God's character, every attribute. His mercy, love and positive holiness is seen in the redemption he provided for a people who did not deserve it. His wrath, justice and a negative expression of holiness is visible in the condemnation of sinners. Both are necessary for a full expression of God. Hell is an eternal testimony to God's wrath against sin, anger at unrighteousness and judgment upon evil. The redeemed community is a witness to God's compassion, love, provision and desire for relationship. There is no secret about this. The fact that JMcA claims to not understand this explains why he cannot provide a Biblical answer for God hating certain people, why he has to presume God loves them. In short, JMcA does not understand God.

He does however, raise an argument, used by others recently, which does require some consideration. The law commands universal love, if Jesus was a man who perfectly fulfilled the law, he must have loved everyone (p.103). Does this prove JMcA's case?

The law commanded that the righteous man should love his neighbour, it did not command a universal love. Many times the law tells us that hatred is righteous (Ps 139:21-22). It would have been a breach of the law to love someone God hated. Israel's racial neighbours were not loved but were to be hated and killed (Lev. 18:21-26). Holiness overrides love; love cannot contradict holiness.

God is the law-giver and the law represents the mind of God for ethical behaviour. God does not compromise the law, yet he hates every day. David laid up God's law in his heart, yet he also hated and was a man of war. Jesus fulfilled the law beyond human achievement. He fulfilled it perfectly and beyond what Moses wrote so that the standard of the law of Christ includes inner motivations as well as exter-



nal actions. That law (Christ's standard) is now our basis for ethics, as such it requires the work of the Holy Spirit in us to perform it. However, Jesus expressed hate, even as a man. He called people 'vipers' (Matt. 23:27ff), 'hypocrites' (Mk. 7:6), murdering sons of the Devil (Jn. 8:44-47), 'ravenous wolves' (Matt. 7:15). He spoke to men with anger (Mk. 3:5), with sarcasm (Mk. 12:38-40); and even declared the condemnation of some to Hell (Mk. 12:40; Matt. 23:27ff). Even in this, Jesus perfectly fulfilled the law, but it was not showing loving compassion. So a perfect expression of lawful behaviour can include hate, in the right circumstances.

We should also bear in mind that Jesus could see into men's hearts, we cannot, so we have to love all indiscriminately.

JMcA states that the end result of God's love is the Gospel message (p.106), which he thinks is a free, well-meant, sincere offer of grace by God to everyone. If that is true then God could not put any stumbling blocks in people's way. If he loves all, everyone must have the same access to the word preached and equal grace to believe. Firstly, this denies election, JMcA can't have it any other way. He later realises this (p.110). If all have a loving, free access to the same Gospel, then the only difference in men is that some believe and some don't. If God only gives grace to some, then the offer is not well-meant, it is not sincere. The difference in men, therefore, is that some exercise their faith and take hold of the offer. JMcA clearly says of God's love that, "*It may be resisted. It may be rejected. It may be spurned*" (p.128). Is it sound theology to suggest that God can extend loving grace<sup>7</sup> to mankind which can be overthrown by mere men? This is Arminianism, which JMcA purports to condemn.

Secondly, does scripture say that everyone has an equal chance at understanding and responding to the Gospel? No, it does not! The Old and New Testament repeatedly states that the reprobate have their eyes closed by God to seeing the truth of the Gospel (Isa. 6:9-10, 44:18; Jer. 5:21; Ezek. 12:2; Ps. 69:23; Matt. 13:10-16; Lk. 19:42; Jn. 12:40-41) and that the elect have their eyes enlightened (Eph. 1:18; Jn. 3:3; Acts 26:17-18; Rm. 11:7-10; Acts 28:25-28; Isa. 42:6-7).

Avoiding the implications of these two arguments, JMcA seeks support from Erroll Hulse, who also avoids the question. Both mention the problem and then ignore it by stating the certainty of God's universal love for all and that this love must be the motivating factor for evangelism. Hulse goes so far as to state that, "*We are left in no doubt that the desire and will of God is for man's highest good, that is his eternal salvation through heeding the gospel of Christ*" (p.112). This idea, leaves God doing everything possible to help man but then left sad and defeated by man's stubborn will. JMcA adds, "*We cannot escape the conclusion that God's benevolent, merciful love is unlimited in extent. He loves the whole world of humanity*" [emphasis original]. The problem of election is left hanging, unexplained, and no proof texts are given which state that God's love is universal, only that God wants people to repent not die. This is more clearly and powerfully stated in the

<sup>7</sup> The love of God to humanity is called grace by JMcA on p.117.



JMcA's Theology

Gospel command that every man must repent (Acts 17:30). There is no love here, only a command to repent.

JMcA is forced to resort to hypothesis, having run out of any sort of 'helpful' texts for his case. He tells us the rich young ruler was a reprobate, who was loved by Christ. In fact, it is far more honouring to God, in the light of revealed truth, to interpret this as Christ loving an elect person who later repented, loved because Christ saw into his heart. Even if that interpretation is rejected, due to the silence of scripture, this silence also condemns JMcA's conclusion that, "*Jesus loved an overt, open, non-repentant, non-submissive Christ rejector*" (p.114). JMcA's further example (Isa. 63:7-9) of God loving reprobates is referring to the elect remnant. In yet another contradiction, JMcA later argues against himself, declaring that God's love to Israel indeed refers to the remnant (pp.132-3).

### Interim Conclusion

As we'll see further elsewhere, JMcA's theology is confused and contradictory. His methods are not, in my view, honest either. One minute he condemns an approach, e.g. thinking of God in human terms (p.90), when he has just spent time doing exactly that (pp.87-88). Another false method is to state a proposition and then give a text reference which does not support it; on p.128 he says that God's love ought to lead sinners to repentance citing Rm. 2:4 which mentions kindness and forbearance, but not love. Some of his arguments are hopelessly invalid, and his teaching on the love of God, despite some otherwise excellent observations here and there, is completely unsatisfactory. It will confuse people, especially those unable to see through his errors. His key thesis is: [There are] "*two aspects of God's love - His universal love for all humanity, and his particular love for the elect*" (p.95, see also pp.128-9). Yet JMcA gives not one scripture which supports this, clearly and unequivocally, neither does he sustain a logical argument proving the case. He also fails to see the importance of positing an attribute of God which ends in failure.

JMcA is confused on election as well as limited atonement. While realising the connection of God's love to election, he does not see the scriptural basis of:

love        for the elect from eternity

hate        for the reprobate from eternity.

For JMcA, election involves a 'special love' (an unbiblical phrase) to the elect:

love        for everyone universally

special love    for the elect

hate        for the reprobate at some undefined and unexplained point.

This confusion is heightened when he says things like:

- **On the one hand, all love from God is genuine, everlasting and saves** - "*God loves whom he chooses to love. He makes a covenant with those people, and that covenant is an everlasting covenant made in eternity past*" (p.142). God's love is sacrificially devoted to the object of love - "*love ... is a purposeful act of self-giving. The one who genuinely loves is deliberately devoted to the one loved*" (p.26).
- **Sinners have such a sincere, genuine love** - "*The fact that sinners are not elected to salvation is no proof that God's attitude toward them is utterly devoid of sincere*



*love.*" (Emphasis mine, p.14.) "When God invites sinners to repent ... His pleading is from a sincere heart of genuine love" (Emphasis mine, p.16).

- **Despite this there is a distinction in the quality of God's love, a) to the elect.** "No one ought to conclude that because God's love is universally extended to all that God therefore loves everyone equally ... that He loves all alike. Clearly He does not" (p.127). There is: "the particular love of God for the elect. It is not the general love that extends to all humanity" (p.131). "Special love is reserved for believers alone" (p.16).
- **b) the reprobate have a love, from God, which turns to hate, at some point, despite being elected to destruction** - "the general love that extends to all humanity ... can give way to hatred" (p.131). "God does hate the reprobate sinner in a very real and terrifying sense" (p.128). "The fact that God will send to eternal hell all sinners who persist in sin and unbelief proves His hatred toward them" (p.15).
- **Despite this, God's love never changes, because God is immutable** - "Nor are His love and wrath in opposition to each other ... both attributes are constant, perfect, without ebb or flow. God Himself is immutable - unchanging. He is not loving one moment and wrathful the next" (p.18).

Surely the contradictions of these quotes are obvious to all? If God loves, he loves *sincerely, genuinely*, from a *devoted heart* which is *self-giving*. Yet this love does not save and turns to hate for some reason. In one place we are told that the hate and love co-exist on a person (p.15), elsewhere, a change occurs in time (p.131). This confused argument gives not one scripture proof that God has a variety of loves, or that his loves change to hate. All God's dealings are eternal and unchangeable. Those he loves he has always loved and will love everlastingly (Jn. 13:1). Those he will hate in Hell, he has always hated because they were predestined to Hell from eternity (Rm. 9:18, 22).

This teaching will also lead to problems in the preaching of the Gospel in JMcA's church. If members base their evangelism upon a foundation of God's love for the sinner, they will tend towards an Arminian based Gospel message. That is supposing there is a response. The teaching that God loves everyone leads most people to suppose an invalid security; "If God loves me, then I must be safe". This is never modelled for us in the New Testament. Gospel preaching in Acts never does this and the word 'love' is never mentioned there at all.

This also shows the problem of making sermons into books, making a chapter out of one and tacking it on to another sermon which contradicts it. This leads one to be suspicious of his spoken teaching. It appears that JMcA can speak one week and then contradict himself the next without reaction or correction. His ministry is not only erroneous in certain areas, it is also inconsistent with itself. He seems to be uncertain about his system; his overarching theological structure appears to be inconsistent. This is not surprising as he tries to weld universalism on to Reformation theology, and Calvinism on to Dispensationalism as we shall now see.

*Parts 2 & 3: JMcA's Dispensationalism/Christology .....to be continued (DV).*