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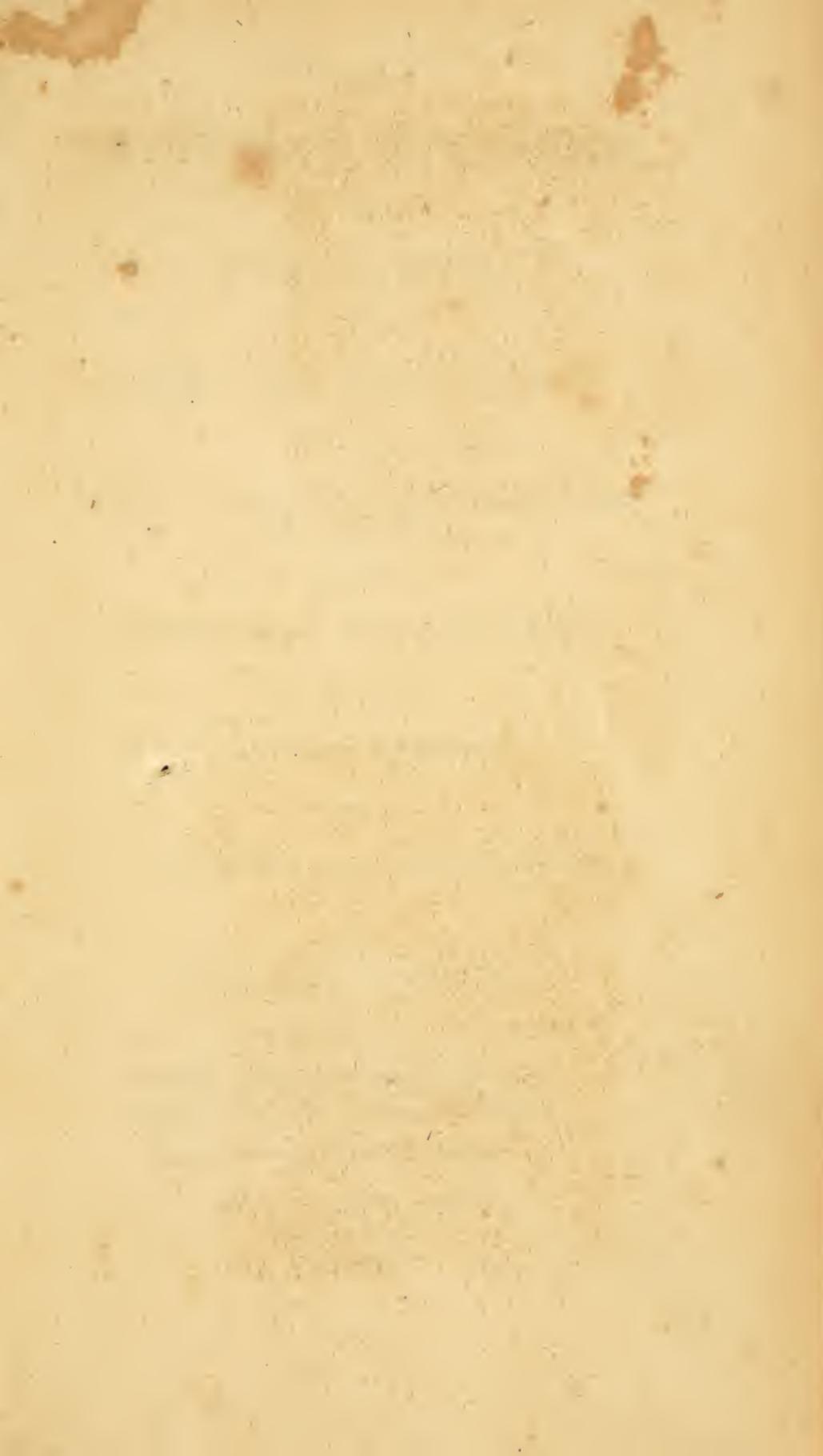
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THE
CHRISTIAN PREACHER,

INTENDED

TO DETECT ERROR,

AND TO

EXHIBIT AND DEFEND TRUTH,

ON THE

Difficult and disputed doctrines, connected with
the controversy

BETWEEN

ARMINIANISM AND CALVINISM;

AND IN WHICH

The Two Systems

ARE

RECTIFIED AND RECONCILED

BY

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL,

POPLARTOWN, WORCESTER COUNTY, MD.

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PREFACE.

The centre of Calvinism is the absolute Sovereignty of God; and that of Arminianism the love of the Creator to all mankind. These principles appear equally sustained by the authority of the Bible. That God rules in the armies of heaven, and worketh all things after the counsel of his own will; and that he loves the world, and is not willing that any should perish, appear to be doctrines, equally Scriptural and therefore, equally entitled to belief. Convinced of this, and fully believing, that the testimony of the Spirit of truth, must be always consistent with itself, the writer of these sheets, has been induced to pursue the enquiry, whether these propositions are not the different pillars of the same temple and therefore, perfectly, and demonstrably, reconcilable with each other. The result of this enquiry is given in the following discourses. None of them were ever delivered in the pulpit as they are here exhibited; and with one or two exceptions, nothing resembling them. A thorough discussion of these subjects, naturally requiring a chain of speculations too abstract for the edification of the generality of hearers, these same principles, when preached, have appeared in less argumentative, but in more popular and practical forms. The remarks appended to some of these sermons, may to many, and especially, to those unacquainted with the facts from which they arose, appear to be unduly severe. If it be so however, the writer, after a calm retrospection of several months, with all the circumstances of the case before him, is still in an error. The attack, which they are intended to repel, was *personal*, and consisted in *odious abuse*, and the most *unqualified falsehood*, and was made, not on the responsibility of an individual, but was supported by the authority of the whole conference of Philadelphia.

It was also circulated in the most public manner, and with an evident intention as far as possible to prostrate the religious influence of an individual, located in the heart of a community, where the authority of the Conference could obtain an extensive credence, for any

thing which they might choose to publish. No evidence has as yet appeared to prove, that any thing *untrue*, or *mistaken*, has been introduced into the remarks. If such circumstances did not require, that the sword of truth, should be wielded for the full execution of its piercing and cutting powers, it is difficult to say when there could be such a demand. After having repelled the foe, and defended the citadel, the writer wishes to obey the command, *Love your enemies*. He never wished them any thing worse, than that they should be better men. And his sincere prayer now, is, that the ignorance and depravity so manifest in the movers and the conductors of that attack, may be healed by divine grace, and forgiven by divine mercy.

Almost from the commencement of this work the Editor has resided at a distance from the press. Sometimes he could give the proof sheet a slight inspection, and at other times none. Typographical errors are more numerous than could be wished. It is however hoped, that by the assistance of the errata; the meaning will in no case be mistaken.

At some future time the subjects of this volume may be pursued further.

That the time may soon come, when the watchmen on Zion's walls, shall see eye to eye; the truth as it is in Jesus shine over the whole earth like the sun; and all flesh see the salvation of God, is the sincere prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

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✂ The copies of the Christian Preacher now on hand, will be immediately bound in boards and placed for sale in the hands of E. Littell, Esq. No. 88 Chesnut-street, Philadelphia. Any wishing to obtain the work will hereafter apply to him.

CALVIN AND ARMINIUS

RECTIFIED AND RECONCILED.

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good—I Thess. V. 21.

Man is endowed with reason and formed for immortality. And as the proper application of the one, prepares for the enjoyment of the other; the Benificent Creator, ever mindful of our best and most enduring interests, exhorts us, in the text, to the legitimate exercise of our rational powers. God has not made us in vain, nor for less than admirable ends. Man may not innocently bury his rationality under a bushel or in the earth; lie down on the couch of indolence, permit himself to be cast forth upon the stream of popular opinion, and to be borne heedlessly along by the current: but is enjoined, in the authoritative language of the text, to prove all things,—to search for good and to hold it fast.

The “all things” which it is the design of this discourse to prove, are the two great systems of theology—Calvinism and Arminianism—and the good to be sought and held fast, a more reasonable and scriptural system. In this order the subjects lie before us—

I. The Calvinian and Arminian systems, are to be proved. In the days of the Apostles and their immediate followers, the Saviour’s humble and unlettered disciples, believing the Gospel to be the gift of God, implicitly adopted its principles and its precepts as true and reasonable, without any curious or scrupulous enquiries about the systematical agreement of its doctrines. If one of these primitive fathers discoursed on one class of texts, he would appear Arminian, and, if on another, Calvinistic, and thus to modern systematizers, his preaching would have exhibited all the apparent contradictions, imagined by some to be found in the literal interpretation of the Scriptures, whence it was taken. But soon heretics arose—subtle minded men, who employed all their ingenuity to undermine and prostrate the truth; and who having adopted systems formed ac-

ording to the preconceptions of philosophy, "falsely so called," would balance their flimsy fabrics upon the letter of a single text; and wrest and torture every scripture, which their narrow-minded theology could not reach. Then it became necessary for the advocates of truth to study system, to war against the enemy with his own weapons, and upon his own ground; to oppose reason to reason and philosophy to philosophy. Nothing special appears, with regard to the two leading systems, that now divide the christian church, until the fifth century, when Pelagius arose and taught, that the doctrine of the original depravity of human nature and the necessity of divine grace to enlighten the understanding, and purify the heart, was prejudicial to the progress of holiness and virtue and tended to lull mankind into a mischievous and fatal security. This earth born fire kindled in the self righteousnes of presumptuous man, finding every unrenewed heart a magazine and all its corruptions powder, so soon as proposed, shot forth with all the rapidity of the electric blaze and threatened fearful desolation to the whole heritage of God. The alarm aroused the energies of Augustine, pastor of the church at Hippo in Africa, who pouted upon the world such torrents of reasoning and eloquence as soon extinguished the spreading conflagration. Augustine was probably the first that reduced the doctrines now called Calvinistic into a system. A monk by the name of Cassian with several others, endeavoured to blend together the doctrines of Augustine and Pelagius, and formed a system called Semipelagianism, the leading features of which nearly resembled the doctrines afterwards adopted by James Arminius. Soon after this, the cloud of popery began to deepen its shades and hung for a succession of ages over the church; and during this long lapse of superstitious night, these doctrines were variously agitated, until Luther, in the sixteenth century, commenced the Reformation, and distinctly taught the doctrines of Augustine. And by Calvin, his distinguished contemporary, these doctrines were more fully explained and systematized. The sum of the belief of these great men,

on the subject of Election, may be comprised in the following words—Before the foundation of the world, God chose a certain number of the fallen race of Adam to eternal glory, without any foresight of faith, good works or any other conditions, performed by the Creature: and the rest of mankind, he was pleased to pass by and ordain to dishonor and wrath for their sins, and to the praise of his vindictive justice.

In the year 1591, James Arminius, who had been educated in the Calvinian tenets, and then professor of divinity in the university of Leyden, becoming dissatisfied with the rigid doctrines of Calvin, dissented by teaching “That God from all eternity determined to bestow salvation on those who he foresaw would persevere unto the end, and to inflict everlasting punishment on those who should continue in their unbelief and resist the divine succours; so that election was conditional. and reprobation, in like manner, the result of foreseen infidelity and persevering wickedness.”*

Such are the primary articles of the Calvinistic and Arminian creeds; and, as these give rise to most of the minor differences, their other peculiar tenets need not be introduced into this discourse.

Let us compare these leading doctrines, and see wherein they agree and wherein they differ. They are alike in supposing, that the Bible teaches, that God chose some and passed by and did not choose others; and as the Arminian admits God’s eternal foreknowledge, and maintains, that from eternity, he determined to save *just* the number which he foresaw as believing, and to punish *just* the number which he foresaw as persisting in unbelief; according to his creed the number saved and the number lost are just as certain, as can be upon Calvinistic principles. Thus far Calvin, and Arminius agree; both admit the eternity of the divine foreknowledge, and the eternity of the divine choice. Now, wherein do they differ?—In this; Calvin supposes that God “foresees future events, only in consequence of his decree, that they

*See Buck’s Theological Dictionary and Mosheim’s Ecclesiastical History,

shall happen," † and Arminius, that God from eternity determined some future events as a consequence of his foreknowledge of the choosings of his moral creatures not determined at all, and, consequently, while Calvin held, that God determined *all things*, Arminius believed, that the *choice* of his moral creatures, *was left undetermined*. But not to pursue minor differences, the first dividing point is, Calvin places the determinations of God, before his foreknowledge, and Arminius, his foreknowledge before his determinations, and, though this appears a difference, occasioned by the splitting of a hair, yet it has filled the camp of the Lord's host with the shout of war and the religious Heavens with blackness and tempest.

Both systems have scriptural truths, scriptural contradictions, and philosophical difficulties. Calvinism gives a rational and scriptural display of Jehovah's absolute supremacy, wisdom, and power; but by a bold, anti-scriptural philosophy, it makes the decree of God, which elects some men to salvation, the only medium, through which the heavenly mercy moves, and rears the decree of reprobation, as a dark mountain to intercept the sunshine of love and to cast the cold and deep shades of night and winter over the non-elect world. And it appears inconsistent with such passages of scripture as represent God as willing to act otherwise, if the conduct of men had been different; as when Christ declares his willingness to gather the children of Jerusalem together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if they would have been gathered.* Now if the divine predestination is understood to be the cause of their choice, then the thing supposed—their willingness to be gathered—was an absolute impossibility—just as much so, as to reverse the decision of Jehovah's immutable wisdom; and if the Calvinist say, that predestination had no influence in dictating the choice; yet if their destruction associated with this choice, was eternally decreed, still a question naturally arises, would a different

† Calvin's Institutes book III, chapter XXIII. sec. 6. *Matt. XXII, 37.

choice have altered God's eternal decision in regard to their future state? If you say it would not, then you literally contradict the language of the text which declares, "I would" but "ye would not," and if you say it would, you then surrender the philosophical position of Calvin, that God's predestination is the cause of his foreknowledge. And the same reasoning applies to all that class of texts to which this belongs. Such are the difficulties to which the grand principle of Calvin, that God foreknows because he first predestinates, naturally and unavoidably leads. And the most plausible solution found among its ablest and most ingenious advocates, is, that "it is an incomprehensible subject, the facts are to be believed but not to be explained—a subject on which it is presumptuous to reason, because it is an attempt to be wise above what is written." With my reason bewildered, and my Bible contradicted, I go to the Arminian for relief—he points me to a system, which indeed appears to exhibit the mercy and goodness, and even the justice of God in a grand and affecting manner; but one which presents his empire as a "mighty maze" and, at least in part "without a plan"—one which, by making all Jehovah's decisions, in his moral universe, rest on the character and conduct, which he foresees his subjects will choose, exalts the capricious free will of the Creature above thrones and principalities and powers and "all that is called God," or, that at best, supposes the Almighty placed on his throne like the vane upon the house top, liable to be turned to any point, which the uncertain choice of his moral subjects may chance to influence—He exhibits to me as an alternative for Calvinism, a system which affirms that God from eternity predestined or elected some men to everlasting life on the previous knowledge of their faith and holiness—because he saw them "*conformed to the image of his Son*" and "*holy and without blame before him in love,*" whilst the Bible declares, that God predestinated men not because he foresaw them already "*conformed to the image of his Son,*" but "*to be conformed to the image of his Son*.*" and that he chose men before the foundation of the world,

*Rom, VIII, 29.

not because he foresaw them previously "*holy and without blame before him in love,*" but that they "*should be holy and without blame before him in love,*"* such are the philosophical difficulties and scriptural contradictions of this alternate scheme. And if I press upon its advocate the objections, that it divests God of his wisdom and makes him the slave of his creature's choosings, he will follow the rigid Calvinist and inform me, that the subjects, relating to the divine foreknowledge and determinations are awful mysteries, which he professes not to explain. And if I ask him what those scriptures mean that so literally contradict his system? his answer amounts to this "They mean just the contrary to the letter of the sacred text.—In the Bible there are many things hard to be understood." The notorious fact is, you may reason on either system to the entire satisfaction of its advocates, until you come to the defective and unreasonable parts, and then they will warn you to stand at a distance, they will throw around it a mist of mystery, and inform you that the ground is too sacred to be trodden by the feet of unhallowed reason. Now is this exhibiting a system of divine truth, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners?" When men, to accommodate their favorite systems, make mysteries where God has intended there should be none, they create a thousand infidels for every mystery.

These two great systems may be viewed as two stately structures, built with stones dug out of the quarry of heaven, and each fitted by the divine hand for a particular place in the temple of God, but in putting together these precious and heaven-wrought materials, the builders not comprehending the complicatedness of the whole fabric, frequently take a stone fitted by infinite wisdom for the rear, and place it in the front—a stone finished for the corner, and lay it in the centre, and one designed for the foundation, and elevate it to the top of the corner, and when you point then to an unclosed joint or a part deformed by a mislaid stone, they fill up the vacuum with the untempered mortar of human invention, spread over it the varnish of mystery and sup-

*Eph. I. 4.

pose, that contrary to all the appearances addressed to the human eye, there are still existing, a fitness and a beauty in some incomprehensible manner, which they can not understand. Calvinism is an edifice, with its rear and its ends, wrought with a workmanship, that needeth not to be ashamed; but with some unfitting stones and an unsightly portico in front, that present a forbidding aspect to the transient multitude. On the contrary, the Arminian system, is like an edifice with a well garnished and imposing front, and all its defects and deformities, thrown into the rear, entirely out of sight of mere superficial observers; but the man who enters and surveys all the apartments in the light of reason and revelation, will find, that it has at least as many difficulties and as great deformities as Calvinism. If Calvinism stands in stubborn contradiction to some plain and positive declarations of the Great God, Arminianism is no less guilty of the same offence. If Calvinism by the decree of reprobation, fails to exhibit the impartial infinitude of God's love, Arminianism by proclaiming a moral universe without a plan, and a Supreme Creator, governed on his throne by the caprice of his erring creatures—a caprice as blind as chance and yet as irrevocable as fate—equally fails to display the independence of him who made all things for himself and the fulness of the wisdom of the only wise God. If Calvinism makes God *a tyrant** Arminianism makes him *a slave*. In short, in the manner in which these systems are usually preached and explained, whilst they both exhibit much precious and saving truth, they are ever deficient in unfolding certain parts of the perfections of the Most High in those beauteous proportions and in all that unsullied glory and transcendant grandeur in which they are displayed in the Bible; and some parts of each defy all the ingenuity of man to reconcile them with others of the same scheme and with any thing less than a forced interpretation of many texts of sacred writ. Weighed in the balance, all must admit, much in both is found wanting. Let us now—

*I have somewhere seen a remark to that amount made by Mr. John Wesley.

II. Proceed, in quest of the good proposed to be sought—a more reasonable and scriptural system. The admission of the two following propositions:

1. *The co-eternity of the divine foreknowledge, and divine determinations, and,*
2. *That God has adopted the best possible moral system, will redeem christianity from all her Arminian and Calvinian difficulties.*

1. The co-eternity of the divine foreknowledge and the divine determination. They are equally eternal according to the scriptures—"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world"*—Here we have his eternal foreknowledge. Again, "As he hath chosen us before the foundation of the world"†—Here we have his eternal determination or choice. So that, the scriptures do not teach us, that God from all eternity determined to save men, because he first foresaw their faith and good works, as Arminius believed, nor yet, that from all eternity, he foresaw their salvation, because he had first determined to save them, as Calvin taught. And this truth is demonstrable from reason as well as revelation. If from eternity God *foreknew* all things, then it follows by logical consequence, that from eternity he determined all things. Suppose the sufferings of Christ to be the thing foreknown. If he foreknew these sufferings, then according to our ideas of relations, he previously, had determined to send his Son into the world and, that he should be invested with humanity; or how could he have foreseen him circumstanced or qualified to suffer? He had determined to create such men as the Jews, the High Priest, Pontius Pilate, and the Soldiers; or how could he have foreseen accusers, judges and executioners by whom his sufferings would be inflicted? And moreover, he had also determined to accept his sufferings in lieu of the punishment due to guilty men; or it would seem difficult to reconcile the permission of these sufferings with the wisdom and clemency of a wise and merciful father—And, above all, the foreknowledge of the event, proved its determination certain: because these sufferings were the voluntary act of the Being who foreknew them.

*Acts XV, 18. †Eph, I, 4.

And again, if from eternity God *determined* all things, from eternity, he also foreknew them. For if the sufferings of the Saviour be the event determined, then according to human apprehension, he foresaw, that Christ would come into the world and be invested with humanity; or otherwise he would have determined his sufferings without knowing, that he would certainly be circumstanced or qualified to suffer. He likewise foreknew, that there would be such men as the Jews, the High Priest, Pontius Pilate, and the Soldiers, and, at that particular time, they would be disposed to accuse, condemn, and crucify him; or otherwise he would have determined his sufferings without knowing that there would be instruments disposed and qualified to be actors in the mournful tragedy. He also foreknew, that his sufferings would be a sacrifice proper to be substituted for the punishment of sinful men; or the determination, that he must suffer, would have been an impeachment of his wisdom and goodness. And last of all, he foreknew them as *possible*; or he would not have determined them as certain. So that if we imagine the parts of God's universal plan, to have been formed progressively in his mind, according to the succession of human operations, we find, that agreeably to our conceptions, his foreknowledge and his determinations, must have accompanied each other and have been interwoven together from beginning to end in the whole series of events; and therefore, must have been eternally coexistent; and if eternally coexistent, there can be no such relation between them as cause and effect or as antecedent and consequent. And as we cannot conceive the one to exist, at least in any succession of acts, without the other, there must be a necessary relation between them; but as it has been proved that there can be between them no such relation as cause and effect, or antecedent and consequent, the relation between them must be that of agreement and coincidence only, because connected with the subject now under consideration, no other is possible.

And again, although when actually contemplating the operations of the divine mind, the narrowness of our understandings, forbids us to view them in any other manner, than as consecutive acts, just as we would separately and in succession, the parts of a vast and complicated engine; yet, when we have done contemplating these acts consecutively, we ought to conceive them all performed at *once*, by one simple operation of the divine intellect, just as we would imagine the whole plan of a vast and complicated machine, to be formed by some master mind, without any reasoning, by a simple intuitive effort.* Now, if at *once* by a simple prescience, without beginning or succession, God from eternity knew all things, if at once by a similar determination, he decreed all things, and if his determinations and his foreknowledge, as has been proved, are coeval and co-eternal, then, in our apprehension, there can be no other relation between them but that of agreement and coincidence. And then by reason, as well as by revelation, we are conducted to the conclusion, that Arminius was mistaken, when he taught, that God from eternity determined to save, or to punish according to belief or infidelity previously foreseen; and Calvin, when he supposed, that God foresaw the salvation of the elect and the perdition of the reprobate, only because, he had previously determined their respective destinies.

Now, if God's eternal determinations are not the causes nor even the antecedents of his foreknowledge, and, if the relation between his prescience and his purpose, be only that of agreement and coincidence, then he may have created, and may now govern the universe according to an eternal and determinate plan, and yet, his determinations in this plan, not be the cause of any of the sinful choosings of his creatures. It may however be imagined, that this view of the subject, places the volitions of creatures beyond the control of the King of the universe, as much as the Arminian theory, and, if not quite so inconsistent with any plan; yet presents

* See note A.

us only a plan of coincidence with the free agency of the creature, which is surrendering at once the truth that ought to lie at the foundation of every theological theory, "That the Heavens do rule"*—"The Lord reigneth"† and "doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth."‡ But this objection will appear entirely imaginary if it may be true, that this coincidence be such that the choosings of the creatures, make a part of this plan. And, that it may be true, will appear from a scriptural survey of God's moral system.

To constitute a moral agent, four things are requisite—*first*, a law by which to be regulated. But to be moved onwards in the path prescribed by this law without any personal choice, or to be torn from it by some extraneous power, would involve no more morality or immorality, than the revolutions, or the aberrations of a planet, or the orderly or disorderly movements of a mill; and hence, *secondly*, to constitute a moral being—since morality implies accountability—he must be endued with a natural liberty, that in the language of our Confession of Faith, "is neither forced nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to good or evil."|| And, *thirdly*, since moral agency involves the idea of activity in reference to good or evil, the threatened penalties of transgression and the promised rewards of obedience, must be addressed to him as motives to influence him to act in conformity to the law suited to his nature and given for his guide. But as these motives would be entirely ineffectual, if met by no corresponding principle in the breast of the being to whom they are addressed; it is, *fourthly*, necessary, that in every accountable being, there should be a moral sense—a principle producing as a consequence of obedience the feeling of approbation, and as a consequence of disobedience the sting of remorse, to give power to law and efficiency to motives. Hence we see, that natural liber-

* Dan. IV, 26. †Ps. XCVI, 10. ‡Dan. IV, 35.

||Confession of Faith, chap. IX, sec. 1.

ty constitutes an essential part in a moral system, and, consequently, any system in which there is no natural liberty, cannot be a moral system. But a system in which there is no plan, is but a system of confusion—of mishaps and contradictions—and if so, any moral system under an all knowing, wise, powerful, and good God, must be one in which there are both natural liberty and a definite and well ordered plan. It must therefore be possible for natural liberty to exist in a well ordered plan. And as natural liberty consists in choosing and acting according to choice, it is possible that choosing and acting according to choice should exist in a system all the events of which happen according to order and certainty. Both must be true, because the Scriptures declare, that God “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will”* and yet they permit no man to say, “I am tempted of God.”† But to aid our conceptions; suppose all the different orders of moral beings throughout the whole empire of God, as so many branches of one tree—a tree that spreads its boughs to the most distant worlds and rears its top to the summit of creation; and say, every limb is free to choose and act; and in agreement with this choice and conduct, is its interminable destiny. Now imagine, that God before he formed this tree knew how every branch would use or abuse that natural liberty, which has just been shown to be essential to a moral being—how many and what ones would choose death and wither for amputation and burning, and how many and what ones would choose life and bloom for glory and immortality; and how he, as the most wise and powerful husbandman, must treat each limb and leaf in correspondence with the choice which he views as certain if he should determine to raise this tree into existence. Here the whole tree, with all its branches and their choosings, and his own righteous treatment of every shoot, would be contemplated in his plan. Also imagine, that after mature deliberation, he determines to rear this tree, and thus to

*Eph, I, 11. †James I, 13.

adopt this plan. And last of all, contemplate God's survey of the moral universe, represented in this tree, before we suppose it adopted—his foreknowledge of the choice of every branch, his permission of the natural liberty of that choice, and every other determination in the whole plan, as coexistent, and coeternal; and, as one simple intuitive act; and you have my views of the liberty and the plan of God's moral empire—how “the Lord reigneth,” and “doeth his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.” and yet, leaves men and angels free. Now this illustration, if properly apprehended, brings all the free acts of the creature within the range of God's government; so far as it is possible for such acts to be the subjects of government beyond the agents that produce them. They have been viewed as contemplated in his plan; and as dependant on his sovereign will for the agents and the natural liberty from which they derived their existence. It was his Supreme determination, all consequences wisely considered, to permit their occurrence. And if with the whole system before him—all its tendencies and events surveyed—the choosings of every agent and his own coincidental determinations—with power to reject if he wisely thought it best, it was his pleasure to adopt it as he saw it was, and as he foresaw it would be, to say, that this is not working all things after the counsel of his own will, is to suppose, that it cannot be the counsel of his will, that his creatures should in any case enjoy the liberty of choice; and as this liberty is essential to a moral system, it is to suppose that Deity can not reign consistently with the existence of a moral system. And this is deemed sufficient to obviate any objection, that may be urged against the theory exhibited in this discourse, as militating, in whole or in part, against any scriptural display of God's sovereignty.

Thus in perfect consistency with the absolute supremacy of Jehovah, we see how it may be true of all the guilty sons and daughters of Adam, as of Israel of old, they destroy themselves. But we may again be met by

an objector, who will probably say, "True your description of the moral system illustrates the manner in which God may have predestinated all things and yet man be free; but, if man's making this fatal choice and incurring the woful destiny, make, as you teach, a part of this plan, how can it be true, that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked? And if from eternity he foresaw, that a certain number of his creatures would choose the road to death, and if at the same time he decreed to them the natural liberty of making this choice—thus permitting their destruction to make part of his plan, how can he desire, that all men should be saved? And how could he weep over unbelieving Jerusalem, if he permitted their sin and destruction to make a part of his purpose? And since it makes a part of his plan to let some men be lost, how does he wisely and sincerely offer the Gospel to all men?" Though these are objections frequently, and loudly urged by Arminians against Calvinists, yet they may, in a little different shape, be just as forcibly urged against themselves. For if from eternity God foreknew all things, as Arminius supposes—before he made man, what man would certainly do—who among his fallen generations would neglect his calls; and, on his foresight of their disobedience, determined from all eternity to sink them to the deeps of woe; it may be plausibly objected, that God must delight in the misery of the wicked; or, in full view of their disobedience and death, he would never have made them any part of the divine workmanship. How can it be true, that God will have all men to be saved, since on the foresight of their iniquity he determined to destruction a part of the human kind before they were born? And since he knows, that some men will not obey the Gospel; and as a consequence of this foreseen disobedience, he had determined, before he gave them existence to punish them forever; how can he sincerely, and wisely, offer the Gospel to all men? And in short, if from eternal ages he foresaw, that if he did create some men, they would die impenitent, and be lost, why, unless he had

pleasure in their sins or in their miseries, did he give them being? These are difficulties that the Arminian ought to remove from his own system, before he pronounces Calvinism cruel. They are consequences, that apparently cling to both systems. The principal difference is, that in Calvinism, they appear in front; but in Arminianism in the rear, thrown out of the sight of mere passers by and superficial observers; but glaringly visible to the eye that surveys the whole scheme, and follows out its consequences. The Arminian, standing at the front of Calvia's temple, surveying the doctrine of reprobation, hung over the door, exclaims "horrible! horrible!"—whilst the Calvinist, admitting its apparently frowning and forbidding features; but believing its existence scriptural and its origin divine, responds "mystery! mystery!". But if you take the Arminian by the hand and conduct him to the rear of his own temple, and ask him how much softer are the features of his own doctrine, which supposes, that God from all eternity determined to doom unborn millions to eternal chains and eternal burnings; for the sins of which he foresaw they would certainly be guilty, if he gave them being?—and how much milder does it appear in the Almighty, to create them, determining to damn them for their sins foreseen, as a certain consequence of their creation, as his creed supposes;* or to create them, determining to damn them for their sins permissively decreed, as the Calvinist believes? He will answer, "that though this *appears* to be the consequence of his doctrine; yet he disavows it; and, that the subject of the divine prescience is surrounded with mystery"—That is, in other words, it *appears* logically to be so; but in some *mysterious manner*, which he cannot explain, it *cannot* be so! And thus, whilst the Calvinist admits the doctrine of reprobation to *appear* awfully severe; but because he receives it as the truth of God, supposes that in some mysterious manner it must be like its author, mild and merciful;—The Arminian acknowledges, that almost the

*See note B.

same kind of reprobation *appears* to arise out of his doctrine; but because it seems harsh and contrary to his views of the mercy of God, he imagines, that in some *mysterious* manner it *only appears* to be, but cannot be really true: and thus each places the mystery where it seems best in his own eyes. These are difficulties, which candid and intelligent men, honestly attached to both theories, must see and must feel: for it is generally found, that a man of mind and reflection sufficient to examine and compare both systems, is an Arminian or a Calvinist not because he sees no difficulties in the scheme which he chooses; but because, he imagines fewer in that than in the other. Such, of both systems, as have eyes to see and hearts to feel these difficulties just urged, are respectfully invited to the consideration of our

2. Proposition; “*that God has adopted one of the best possible moral systems.*”* We may safely admit, that an infinite number of plans, equally good with the one which Jehovah has actually chosen, is possible; but to say, that from the mighty range of possibilities, a better might have been selected, is to reflect at once on all his natural and moral perfections. He had a knowledge of all possibilities; and infinite wisdom, so as, out of all these possibilities, to make the very best selection, and to construct them into the very best possible plan; infinite goodness to influence him to its adoption; and infinite power to secure its execution. And though, in this plan of moral being, and moral government, some evil be found; yet this does not prove, that this is not the best possible created system. With God, we are indeed informed, all things are possible; but these, “all things,” must be understood of things not inconsistent with the combined infinity of all his perfections; because in the same book, we are taught, that God cannot deny himself. And if so, it may be inconsistent with his perfections, to create another being as absolutely perfect as himself: and judging from the lapse of men, and of the angels who kept not their first estate, it appears altoget-

*See note C.

ther probable, that any moral being not absolutely perfect, if in particular circumstances left to himself, is liable to fall into moral evil. The morning stars that encircled the Maker's throne, and he who led their hosts, forfeited their first abode, and were cast down from the heavens and consigned to the blackness of darkness forever. And if no one moral creature is in himself exempt from such a liability, surely, it is not to be expected, that a system, which may embrace the inhabitants of millions of distant worlds, should be any more exempt from the same liability. So that, without making a system of moral agents, as absolutely perfect as himself—without communicating to every agent in the system, the immensity of his power, wisdom, goodness and immutability—which would be nothing less than to create another God—an absurdity even in idea—it may have been impossible for the all wise and omnipotent Jehovah, to construct a system in which there would be less evil, than in the one which he has chosen. As soon as he had given creation the last touch of his plastic hand, he pronounced his benediction on the new-born existence, and proclaimed all “very good.” In the original, the phrase “very good,” is the intensity of the superlative, “the best.” And if “the best,” it must not only have been the most perfect, as it then was, before sin had made its intrusions into the fair garden of God; but also, “*the best*” guarded against its entrance and its desolations.

And if this moral system, all things wisely considered, be the best, God's choice was not between a moral system in which there would be no evil, and one like the present, in which there is some evil; but between one like the present in which there is some evil, and others in which there would be more evil. To create a system in which there would be no liability to evil, may be just as impossible, as to create a free and immutable creature—or, as that there should be a creature God, and a Creator God. And hence, God's choosing a universe in which there is some moral evil, is not because

he prefers evil to good; but because he prefers a less evil to a greater; and because he preferred the present system with all its evils, to the non-existence of any system; just as a man might prefer a house, not so superbly finished as Nebuchadnezzar's palace, to the entire want of a place of residence.

The very idea of natural liberty conveys the possibility of acting in more ways than one; and such the fact in the case of men and angels demonstrates—they were free to obey, and for a time they did obey—they were free to fall, and they eventually did fall. The idea of mutability, is a liability to change: men and angels did change, and were therefore created mutable; and thus they are proved by the mournful history of sin to have been both *free* and *mutable*. Now, as natural liberty and mutability, imply, that the being or beings on whom they are delegated, whilst in an unconfirmed state, may change from better to worse, as well as from good to better, it is a contradiction in idea to suppose a free, mutable, unconfirmed being or system of beings, so perfect, that it *may* not change for the worse. And if so, the total exclusion of all evil, forever, from the moral universe, on any plan, consistent with the combined perfections of Deity, may be just as unavoidable on the part of the Creator, as some degree of imperfection in every created being. If therefore, God suffers evil *into* his plan, because, with the existence of the best one possible, it cannot be avoided, its existence as a part of his plan, is no more a proof that he delights in sin, or that sin is right or useful, than the existence of natural imperfection in the creature, is a proof, that he delights in natural imperfection, or that it is good and useful. If every species of vines is more or less liable to produce sapless limbs, and a husbandman should choose the kind, liable to produce the fewest possible, his choice would be so far from proving his delight in fruitless branches, that it would demonstrate the contrary—that they were the objects of his aversion; yet that he would suffer their existence, rather than cultivate no vine. So

God's choosing the system which has the *least possible* moral evil, proves, that such evil is not his delight, but his aversion; yet, that he will suffer its existence rather than there should be no system. Again, I have chosen a watch, though I foresaw, that it would need repairing more than once a year, and that sometimes I would be compelled to throw away some of its wheels, wrought with the most exquisite workmanship, and composed of the most precious materials. Now, I chose this watch, not because I delight in its imperfections, the costs and trouble of its repairs, and the loss of some of its wheels—on the contrary, I dislike the expence and trouble of repairs and am grieved at the loss of any of its parts; but I chose it because I could obtain no better; and rather than loose the use of the watch entirely, I submit to the expence and trouble of repairs, and to the grief of throwing away the faulty parts; although I prize their materials and their workmanship. Even so, God has chosen the present system, not because he delighted in the evils which he foresaw as its certain concomitants:—on the contrary he hates sin, and is grieved when he casts out any of his rebellious creatures to destruction;—yet rather than there should be no moral universe, he suffers the existence of sin; and rather than permit sin to destroy the whole system, he submits to the grief of chastising transgressors, although he loves the impress they bear of his own workmanship, and the grandeur of those immortal powers that resemble the image of himself.

Thus, though the Great God excludes *blind* chance, as well as *blind* fate, from his universe, and moves on his vast affairs according to a most wise plan; and whilst he suffers sin and misery to fall within the range of that plan; yet we may see how it is still true, and literally true, that he loves even his erring creatures: has no pleasure in the death of the wicked: is not willing, that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance: will have all men to be saved: and how the Saviour in the most unqualified sense, would have gath-

ered the children of Jerusalem together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings.

Perhaps some will grant, that this view of the subject gives a plausible and perhaps a true explanation of these texts; but they will say "If this be true, you must yield your doctrine, that God chooses men, not because of their faith, or good works, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereunto; and that men are made willing in the day of God's power:*—if this all be true, it cannot be, that Christ was willing to gather the children of Jerusalem, or he would have exerted his power to make them willing." But if the willingness produced in the day of God's power, mean the willingness of a new creature; and the willingness alluded to, in Christ's complaint of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the willingness of sinners not regenerated, but so convicted by the common operations of the Spirit, as to feel the absolute necessity of a Saviour and as to ensure regeneration; and if, while we hold the faith and good works here specified, not to be the causes, but the effect of regeneration, or of what is the same thing, *of God's choice*: and, that neither these, nor any other qualities in the creature, influence his choosings, so as to destroy the certainty, or give conditionality to his present plan; we also hold, that there is an eternal coincidence between the manner in which the sinner, before regeneration, treats the common operations of that Spirit, who convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and God's purpose to regenerate the soul; and, that, though it was unconditionally Christ's purpose not to regenerate these Jews—the things that belonged to their peace, being forever hid from their eyes;† yet that had they been willing in the sense above described, this willingness, as the free act of the creature, God would have foreknown coeternally with the determination of his plan; and it would have been made a part of that plan; and, as there is an eternal agreement between his foreknowledge of the free acts

*Ps. CX. 5. †Luke XIX. 42.

of creatures and his determinations, in agreement with their willingness, it would have been his unconditional plan to regenerate them; and thus to make them a willing people in the day of his power—*then* where is the discrepance between God's absolute and unconditional purpose, and his unqualified willingness to save these unrelenting sinners? And if this be a correct exhibition of the subject; then, though from eternity the unwillingness of these Jews was unconditionally decreed; yet if instead of this, their willingness from all eternity had been certain and it was their choice and therefore, their sin that it was not so, their willingness would, from eternity, have been just as unconditionally decreed; for the relation between the evil choosings of God's creatures and his decree is not that of cause and effect or antecedent and consequent; but that of coincidence. And hence we may say, that if any wicked choice of the creature were different, without any conditionality, God's decree in relation to that choice would be different.

As all these immediately preceding remarks tend to illustrate and demonstrate God's love to all men, and his desire that all should be saved; nothing more need be said, to vindicate his sincerity in the universal offer of the Gospel. But it is asked, how can he *wisely* offer it to all, if he know that some will not accept?

The Gospel offer contains a command. And if so, why may he not as *wisely* command men to obey the Gospel, although he knows, that his commands will be ineffectual; as command Adam not to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree, and, Pharoah to let his people go, when he knew, they would render no obedience to his mandates? Also as the moral governor of the Universe; it is *wise* to offer the Gospel to men who, he knows, will not receive it with an obedient faith; because, in thus displaying his love, his mercy, and his goodness he addresses the strongest motives to produce obedience, and motives, which frequently, when not obeyed to a saving extent, nevertheless lay restraints on the wicked, and produce a salutary effect upon human society.

And it is also *wise*, that in the day of judgment, in the sight of the universe, every mouth may be stopt and all the world become guilty before God. We hasten to an application:—

If the positions, vindicated under the second head of this discourse, be true the Calvinist is enabled to retain all his truths, and explain all his peculiar difficulties. If God's foreknowledge of the sinful choosings of his creatures, does not arise out of his decrees; and if the relation between his foreknowledge of these choosings, and his determinations in relation to them, be only that of agreement or coincidence; we have seen, that in perfect consistency with the belief of God's eternal and unchangeable determinations, it may be true, that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked—that Christ, in the most *literal* sense was willing to have gathered the unbelieving children of Jerusalem together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if they would have been gathered—and that so it is true in every other case, that if any more would come to Christ, than will come, his eternal decree, always coeval and coincident with his eternal foreknowledge, would have been to save them; and that if the sinner is not elected it is entirely his own fault—like the Jews he would not. Thus the Calvinist, whilst he holds the wisdom and supremacy of his God, directing all things, from the movements of an infinity of worlds, to the number of every hair, and the fall of every sparrow; with all the latitude of an Arminian; can assure sinners, and prove to them from the arguments of reason, and the authority of the Bible, that if any more would come to the Saviour, his unconditional decree would have been, their salvation; and, that by their sins they have literally compelled God, either to cast down his wisdom from his throne, and leave the world lawless, or to pass upon them the decree of reprobation.

Also if all the parts of God's universal plan were performed by one simple intuitive glance of the infinite mind, without beginning or succession; the cause of dis-

pute, between the Sublapsarian and the Supralapsarian disappears and they are left reconciled.

Again, these views may serve to lighten the shades, that misapprehension frequently hangs around the third chapter of our Confession of Faith.

“God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin; nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away but rather established.”

In this discourse, it has been shown, that God made the volitions of his creatures, a part of the plan which he ordained; and that these volitions coincide with the other parts of his plan, and the other parts of his plan with these volitions: and also that as God does all, that can be done consistently with that natural liberty, which is essential to a moral creature, to prevent sin, he cannot be its author.

“II. 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.”

The doctrine that God foreknows and decrees all events, coevally and without beginning or succession, removes from his plan every idea of conditionality.

“III. 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.”

These men and angels foreordained to everlasting death, were doomed to their endless condemnation for their sins—for the abuse of that natural liberty essential to moral beings—an abuse, which a holy God decreed to suffer, as a part of his plan; not because he had pleasure in sin or in the death of the wicked; but because, consistently with the nature of a moral system, which

always implies, in beings not confirmed by moral means, a natural liberty of doing wrong as well as right—as a moral Governor he could not prevent it. Men and angels *would sin*, in spite of every *moral* means of prevention—as a moral Governor he could use no other but moral means, and hence not by a mere arbitrary, but by a most wise, just, and merciful sovereignty, in pursuance of the best possible plan, and in the righteous execution of the law, “The soul that sinneth it shall die,” he foreordained these men and angels to everlasting death—*reluctantly*, just as a man would cast away some of the wheels of a watch, valuable and prized for their materials and workmanship, because as parts of the watch they become disorderly and injurious.

“IV. *These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite, that it can not be either increased or diminished.*”

God from eternity foresaw the “certain number,” which by any moral means, would not be prevented from destruction; and coevally and coincidentally with this foreknowledge of their sins, he decreed their destruction. And if their number be so certain, that it can not be diminished; it is because, by moral means no more can be induced to change their course. If a greater number could be influenced to choose to act differently, their choice would have been eternally, and unconditionally foreknown; and, in agreement with this, it, together with all its consequences, would have been coeternally and unconditionally decreed. So, that, if their number is certain, their sins make it such. So much for the certainty of the number of the reprobate; of the others it is unnecessary here to speak.

“V. *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."

Foresight of faith or good works, to influence God's choice, there could be none; for until his eternally determined election is accomplished in the work of the Spirit, who changes the heart; there is no justifying faith or works scripturally good. In this change from death unto life, men unholy before, are chosen that they "should be holy."* Nor was he moved to this by any other thing foreseen in the creature, as a condition or a cause. As the *mighty* Sovereign of the universe, he prescribes his own laws for the bestowment of his own mercies. And whilst loving the workmanship of his own hands, he will have all men to be saved; still he will save none, but upon his own terms; and his terms are, to give the special influences of the Holy Spirit to regenerate all such as so regard his common operations, as to be thoroughly convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment—as to feel, that they must receive aid from on high, or perish—as to perseveringly determine, that they *will seek* the Lord until they find him. For "to this man will I look," says God, "even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."† It is because he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy; and not from any goodness in their unholy endeavours, that he saves them in this way.

"VI. *As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called* [regenerated] *unto faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified and kept by his power through faith unto Salvation.*" This part needs no comment. All christians admit, that they who are saved, are saved through Christ by the sanctifying influence of his Spirit."

* Eph. I. 4. † Isa., LXVI. 2.

“Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

VII. *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 ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sins, to the praise of his glorious justice.”*

God from eternity foresaw, that a certain number of the human family, would not be influenced by any moral means to seek his grace, so as to become new creatures in Christ Jesus. Coeternally with this foreknowledge; in adopting a plan, in which, as the only wise God, he would not be deceived, for their impenitence, he left them out of the number, which he determined to save by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Just as it sometimes is the reluctant pleasure of a kind and merciful father, out of a regard for the reputation and the interest of his family; and for the wise and just exercise of that authority with which, as a parent, he is invested, and by which he has a natural right, to extend or withhold his property as he pleases, in his will, to pass by, and thus to ordain to dishonor and want, a disobedient and profligate son; so, in eternal agreement with their purpose, foreseen to resist his Spirit, and neglect his grace, it was his pleasure, “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 determine, that Christ’s blood, should never redeem them from the condemnation due their iniquities; and thus “to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sins, to the praise of his glorious justice,” and in this sense, Christ is said to lay down his life for his sheep only:* and though, this now is his plan, not to be changed by any conditionality; yet, as there is an eternal coincidence between the free actions of his creatures foreseen, and his

* John X, 15.

determinations coeternal with this foreknowledge; if their choice were different, (and that it is not, is their crime) it would have been foreseen as different; the eternal determinations of God would have coincided with it as such; and God's unconditional plan then would have been, that these men should be redeemed by Christ. It is their own sins, foreknown indeed, but uninfluenced by that foreknowledge; and decreed indeed, but so as to be uncaused by any decree—it is their own sins, that have separated them from the saving efficacy of the Saviour's blood. But as the Lamb of God "taketh away the sins of the world,"* his sufferings were sufficient to satisfy the demands of justice for all; and as God loved the world, and will have all men to be saved; his desire is that all should be redeemed by his death; and thus it is literally true, that Christ, in every sense consistent with a wisdom, which can never be deceived, and a plan which can never be broken, "*by the grace of God, tasted death for every man;*" and if none resisted the holy Spirit, *all* would have been redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved. And, that their neglect of God's gifts, and their resistance of the common operations of his Spirit, are the occasion of their reprobation, is the true sense of our Confession of Faith, we may learn from the answer in our larger catechism, which declares; "All the elect, and they only, are effectually called;" [regenerated;] "although others may be, and often are, outwardly called by the ministry of the word, and have some common operations of the Spirit; who for their wilful neglect and contempt of the grace offered to them, being justly left in their unbelief, do never truly come to Jesus Christ."†

Again, if these positions are true, they enable the Arminian, whilst he preaches his grand and Scriptural doctrine, that grace is free to all, also to escape from the necessities of a system, which drives him to a contradiction of such texts as teach, that God predestinates men to be "*conformed to the image of his Son,*"‡ and that

*John I. 29. †Large Catechism, ques. 68. ‡Rom. VIII. 29.

he chooses them before the foundation of the world, that they "should be holy and without blame before him in love."* If these principles be true, whilst he maintains his favourite theme; "*No man is eternally lost because he has been borne to hell by an eternal decree,*" he may consistently proclaim an all wise, supreme, and Sovereign God; who after an eternal, unchangeable, and stupendous plan, well ordered in all things and sure, doth his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. If these things be true, we have a system of Christianity that rests not on a single text as on a pivot; but one, which touches the Bible as a foundation at every side, end, and corner. And, that they are true, is just as reasonable, as that God should be at once wise and merciful. What are the Calvinian texts, but expressions of his immutable wisdom?—and what the Arminian, but the declarations of his loving kindness and tender mercy?—If these principles be carried out into their consequences, as has been proved, they explain the cardinal difficulties of Biblical theology; and whilst they lay the axe at the root of philosophical Calvinism and philosophical Arminianism, they secure us that Bible Calvinism, which gives a God "declaring the end from the beginning,"† and whose system reaches to the movement of every thought, and the wandering of every atom, in the fullest harmony with a Bible Arminianism, which extends his benevolence as wide as the circumference of creation; they will dissipate many of the mysteries that hang around the temple of Christianity, disgrace its form, and darken its glory; and present us a reasonable system, and what is best of all, one, which accords with the letter of the Bible, and which reconciles, without wresting the Scriptures; and last of all, if the words of truth and soberness, they will harmonize and tranquilize the church of God; heal the divisions, that rend the body of the Saviour; bind the people of God together in the bonds of love; and pre-

*Eph. I, 4. †Isa. XLVI, 10.

pare them for that millennial effort, which will pour the light of heaven into every mind; and the love of God into every heart; and that will fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.—
Amen.

NOTES.

A

The mode of speaking very much in use among divines on this subject, is that there is in the operations of the Supreme mind, no order of *time*; but the order of *reason*. With regard to there being no order of time, or perhaps more accurately, no order of duration, the idea well comports with the absolute perfection of that Infinite Being, who is “the same, yesterday, to-day and forever” But why speak of *the order of reason*, and of the *operations* of the divine intellect, just as if Deity were like ourselves, under the necessity of reasoning; and just as if in the contemplation and adoption of his moral system, there were consecutive operations? Does not this idea make God too much like the creature? Is it not the perfection of knowledge to know all things and of wisdom to plan all things, without any succession in reason, any more than in duration? Is it not more consistent with the idea of infinite perfection, in knowledge and wisdom, to suppose, that God knows and determines not without reason (that is, not without that which is analogous to the result of our reasoning;) but without the beginning or the succession of reasoning; just as it is to suppose, that he knows and determines without any beginning or succession in duration? But we are told, that we can not conceive, how there can be knowledge, and determinations without beginning or succession in reason. Granted. So neither can we conceive, how there can be knowledge, and determinations, without a beginning or succession in duration. In each we are equally overwhelmed in the divine infinity. Why then deny the one, and admit the other? They stand or fall together. We can not conceive, how there can be succession in reason, without a corresponding succession in duration. Let any man contemplate God, as viewing all possibilities, selecting and combining these possibilities, and determining them into a certain system, as he would say “according to the order of reason,” and see if he can separate from them, the idea of an antecedent and consequent duration, apportioned to each. You may suppose, the succession of reason ten thousand times more rapid than the lightening, that glances in the twinkling of an eye, from one end of heaven to the other; but still you do not separate from it the idea of a corresponding succession in duration. The analogy between the creature and the Creator is *knowledge*, not the *acquisition of knowledge*. God knows by an eternal intuition; man by a process of ratiocination. To speak of the order or succession of *reason* without *reasoning*, is to me incomprehensible. Man employs his reasoning powers to lead him to knowledge (I mean that knowledge which is not intuitive) just as he employs his locomotive organs to arrive at a desired place. In forming an idea of his transit, we must conceive in the order of locality and duration, that his first step was *from* the place of departure, and his last *to* the place of his arrival; but as God is Omnipresent, no such ideas

either of locality or duration, ought for a moment to be entertained of him. He performs no such operation; he takes no such order; with him it is unnecessary; he already is present in every place. So if, as is admitted, God knows all things by an eternal intuition—if all causes and effects and antecedents and consequents, are alike the subjects of his immense survey—he performs no reasoning process: he takes no order of reason; with him it is superfluous; by his infinite intuition, without reasoning, he occupies every point of knowledge, to which reason could conduct, just as by his Omnipresence, without locomotion, he occupies every point of space to which locomotion could lead.

In this order of reason, supposed to exist in the divine mind, originate the Arminian and Calvinian differences. The high Calvinist, or Supralapsarian, supposes the order of reason in the divine mind to be this—God determined to glorify himself; this he foresaw could be done by the glorification of some creatures and the destruction of others; he therefore determined, that some creatures should be destroyed; and others glorified: he foresaw, that he would be the most glorified by saving from destruction some fallen beings; and by leaving others to perish in their sins; he therefore determined to save some and let others perish; but there could none perish or be saved without falling into sin; he therefore decreed to suffer them to fall into sin: and as none could fall into sin or abide in obedience without existence, he determined to make such creatures as would fall into sin or remain in obedience. Thus according to the Supralapsarian, that which is *last* in the order of reason, was *first* in the order of execution. The moderate Calvinist, or the Sublapsarian supposes the order of reason to be, that God determined to glorify himself by creating intelligent beings; he then foresaw, that some, by abuse of liberty, would fall into sin; he then decreed to save some men and leave others, together with the angels who kept not their first estate, to perish in their sins, and so on, just the reverse of the Supralapsarian.

Arminian writers, so far as I have consulted them, exhibit no very clear statements on this subject: yet as Arminius supposed, that God determined the salvation of some men, on a foresight of their faith, and determined to damn others on account of their foreseen unbelief, his philosophy appears to follow that of the Sublapsarian in this supposed order of reason; but to deny, that the sin of men or angels, made any part of God's plan. Arminians appear generally to suppose, that if this were the case, God would be the Author of sin. Their order of reason would probably be this: God determined to make man; then he foresaw, but did not decree, even permissively, his fall: on the foresight of his fall he determined to send Christ to save all; but foreseeing all would not believe he determined lastly to save all who he foresaw would believe; but to damn all that he foresaw would not.—Some Arminians perceiving, that to create man foreseeing that he would certainly fall, is tantamount to permissively decreeing his fall, have denied God's foreknowledge of his creature's sins! (See note B.) Thus all these different systems of philosophy which give the *sectarian tinge* to Biblical exposition, find their fortifications in this *supposed order of reason*. Now if it be found that no such order exists in the divine mind, the strong hold of contention is demolished.

B

If this consequence be logical—and that it is not, is yet to be proved—Arminianism after wresting and torturing, that class of texts, which teach that God “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,” falls short of its avowed object—extending the love of

God to all the human race. It only appears to do this, for to create man knowing, that he would certainly sin and be lost, is just about the same as to decree his sin and destruction.

In this age of invention, a salvo from these pressing consequences, which as strongly, as the most severe Calvinism appear to exhibit God as the author of sin, is imagined to be found in supposing, that the Supreme Being chooses not to foreknow all things, and in many cases prefers ignorance to knowledge. I deny, that creating a free and intelligent being, knowing that he will certainly sin, constitutes the Creator the author of the creature's sin, any more, than knowing from the analogy of nature, that every child, born into the world, if preserved to years of accountability, will sin, constitutes the parent the author of the sins committed by his child. But admitting it did; this imaginary doctrine affords no relief.—Suppose some supernatural agent from the invisible world, should appear, and with the breath of inspiration, endow me with power to create any kind of moral being I might choose; and also impart to me the attribute of prescience; so that, if I chose, I might, before creating him, foreknow all the events that would certainly attend his whole existence; and I would determine to create the being; but would resolve not to know his character, his conduct or his end; and imagine that as soon as he obtained existence, he should snatch a sword, enter a church, murder the whole congregation, and be apprehended, condemned, and gibbeted; and that some wretched widow, whom his bloody hand had bereaved, should come to me and remonstrate—Saying, “Sir, why did you create such a cruel, murderous, and unfortunate being?”—and I should answer—“But I did not know what the events of his existence would be,” and she would ask, Sir, might you not have known if you would?”—and if so; for not knowing, when you might, what would be the consequence of his creation; are you not chargeable with folly; and what is worse—a recklessness of the lives of your fellow men and the welfare of your own workmanship?” Now, how could I deny the charge? Would I be less reprehensible, because I did not know, when I might have known, and when my ignorance was a matter of design? So that, if creating this bloody agent, knowing what he would do, constitutes me the author of his sins, then designedly not knowing, when I might have known, makes me equally the author of his crimes. And in the same manner, if creating moral beings—men and Angels—knowing that they would certainly sin, involves the Great God in the authorship of their iniquity; the blackness of the picture is rather deepened than otherwise, by supposing him when creating them, *wilfully* ignorant of the sins of which they afterwards would be guilty.

Nor does this hypothesis render man any more accountable for his sins; for, if the thing formed should say to him that formed it, “Thou formedst me at first indeed very good—but liable to mutation from good to evil; Author, of my mutable nature, why didst thou make me thus!” And the Creator should say, by way of excuse, “I knew not

the consequences of these liabilities, or my goodness would never have permitted me to have made thee thus;" then the thing formed might reply; "But, my Maker, do not blame me for thy ignorance, and least of all, for thy wilful ignorance; it was thy will to be ignorant and who hath resisted thy will? Why dost thou yet find fault? Why didst thou determine, *ignorantly* to form me thus?" It therefore removes no difficulty; and is an outrage on all reasonable ideas of infinite wisdom; because wisdom, according to our habits of thinking, can no more exist without knowledge, than a house without the materials of which it is composed—knowledge furnishes the materials on which wisdom operates. And worst of all, it contradicts the Bible. In this divine Book we are taught that God foretells the particular sins of particular men before they are in being—as the sins of the Egyptians, in oppressing the Israelites; and the deeds of the accusers, betrayer, and crucifiers of our Lord. It is literally opposed to the text which declares "*Known unto God are all his works, from the foundation of the world.*"—Acts xv, 18. In short, it is a doctrine hard to be believed, and good for nothing if it should find credence—It is without the support of a single text in the Bible; and it has been shown to remove no difficulty. As these remarks are all made, on the supposition that the distinction, between the attribute and the act of foreknowledge, discovered by the fanciful teachers of this whimsical doctrine, is true; and on that supposition, prove the hypothesis unscriptural and useless, any examination of that super-refined discovery is superfluous.

C

Some perhaps will consider this doctrine, as limiting the Creator's power. But if you say he might have made a more perfect system—one not only sinless as it fell from his hand; but that would remain so for ever—and, that he yet chose the present with all its foreseen sins and miseries, you elevate his power at the expence of his goodness. We do not set bounds to his power. He may have power, which from a regard to his other perfections he will never exercise. He may have power to deny himself; but the exercise of that power is forbidden by his truth. So also he may have power to create a more perfect system; but the exercise of that power may be forbidden by his other perfections.

This view of the subject is not advocating the opinion of The Great Moral Poet that "Whatever is, is right," but proving that in the best possible system, there may be, unavoidably on the part of the Creator, some things wrong.

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COMING TO CHRIST.

Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life—John V, 40.

The image of God in the soul, lost by the fall, is the spiritual life of which man is now naturally destitute. The recovery of this is the object contemplated in the text. It made no part of our original constitution; but was produced by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and directed all the human powers to the service, and the glory of the Creator. But when offended by transgression, this sacred inhabitant departed from his terrestrial tenement, all these powers became deranged from their proper order, and perverted from their proper ends; and thus, not because man by his fall lost any of his constitutional powers, or propensities; but because of their derangement and perversion, his whole head is said to be sick, and his whole heart faint. Consequently, the restoration of this image, is not the implanting of any new faculty or passion, but is such a work, effected by the Holy Spirit, as recovers the soul from its derangement and perversion, and places every original principle of the man in its proper subordination and directs it to its proper object.

The text supposes life not given, that men may come; but their coming required to obtain life. The topics proposed for consideration, are *the act of coming to Christ*, and *the reason why men do not come*. Each of them will furnish matter for a separate discourse.

I. The act of coming to Christ. Imagine a fine ship, well manned and equipped, and under the direction of one, who is at once a wise and good commander, and an experienced and skilful navigator—one who would employ the best means to maintain the most harmonious discipline among the crew, and who could traverse the Ocean with the most perfect safety. Such was man in

Eden, when his soul was consecrated by the inhabitation of the Holy Ghost, whose divine influence governed his powers and guided his way. Imagine the crew to mutiny and their captain, righteously, to desert them for their rebellion, and to leave them to all the disorders of their faction and to the wild mercy of the winds and the waves, without a compass and without a guide; until the ship is dashed and injured, and the crew wearied and wounded by the distractions of mutiny, and weakened by hunger and disease, and all very far gone from the right course; and just ready to be thrown and lost on rocks and quicksands. Such is fallen man, his native powers not lost, but weakened and impaired by perversion and abuse; himself far estranged from the right way, and exposed to the shipwreck of remediless ruin. And suppose the commander, moved by the spirit of compassion and forgiveness, and embarked in the ark of mercy, should linger around and elevate his trumpet, long and loud, now, to warn them of their danger, and again, to address them in the tones of expostulation and entreaty, to permit him again on board, and again, to submit to his guidance, that he might rectify their disorders and effect their escape from the wide yawn of near approaching destruction. Such is the Saviour in the calls of his providence, his word, and his Spirit, to apostate man. His language, is "to you, O men, I call and my voice is to the sons of men." Now imagine that convinced of the truth of the warning, that proclaims their danger, and alarmed at the view of its near approach—out of no love for their commander or for order or virtue—but entirely from a love of life and a sense of danger, they should prostrate themselves before him, and implore his return, and his government, and guidance, to rescue them from death. Such is the act of the sinner, when convicted of his sins, and fearing his danger, he comes to Christ, that he may have life. He trembles, he weeps, and he prays, not because the Saviour, against whom his sins have been committed, appears to him altogether lovely, or his law holy,

just, and good, or his yoke easy, and his burden light; but he trembles, because he believes that "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," are proclaimed against every soul of man that doeth evil; he weeps, because "the pains of hell" have "gat hold on him;" and he prays, because he would be saved from devouring flames, and escape from everlasting burnings.

And finally, suppose the commander, at the selfish and undeserving entreaties of the guilty crew, should re-enter the distracted ship, restore all to peace and order, and by an influence more than human, win the hearts of the formerly rebellious, and change their hatred against himself and each other into love, and regain their course and conduct them to their desired shore. So at the prayer of the convicted and awakened sinner—though it is not a prayer which rises to the standard of the divine law—not the prayer of a faith which works by love and purifies the heart—though it arise from a mere conviction, that without aid from on high, to repent and believe aright, he must perish forever; the Saviour according to his eternal purpose in the merciful dispensation of the Gospel; by the operations of the Holy Spirit, creates a new heart and renews a right spirit and thus, brings all the native powers and propensities of the man, into a willing subjection to the love of God, and guides him in the way that leads to glory and immortality. Thus a sinner comes to Christ, when convicted of sin, by the outward means of grace, and the common operations of the Spirit, and alarmed at his danger, *he importunately and perseveringly desires, and prays God, to enable him, by working in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure, to escape from the wrath to come.*

But as many suppose, that men never come to Christ, until spiritual life is given, the doctrine just asserted and illustrated demands the confirmation of the following arguments:

The text intimates, that obtaining life is a certain consequence of coming to Christ, and undoubtedly the

Saviour elsewhere proclaims, that "him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."*

The outward means of grace, and the common operations of the Spirit, undeniably produce on the minds of thousands, who were become new creatures in Christ Jesus, convictions of sin and fears of punishment. Now if God has constituted no connexion between that desire to be saved, which often results from the convictions and the fears naturally produced by these means and operations on the minds of the unregenerate, then so far as obtaining spiritual life and eternal salvation is concerned, they must be perfectly nugatory, nay worse; because, by awful forebodings, they frequently enkindle in men's minds, the fires of future woe, without being at all suited to effect their escape.

So that except designed as the mere ministers of time, to throw restraints on men, and thus to subserve the interests of the present world, they not only appear *useless* but *merciless*; because, this *disciplinary*, becomes then a *vindictory* world, and from a theatre of *preparation* for a future state, it is changed into a place of *retribution* for crimes. But unless adapted to promote the design of redemption by bringing sinful men near their God, why employed by infinite wisdom? Shall the meanest insect not live in vain, and showers not fall useless on barren deserts, unadorned by the meanest shrubs, and shall God's word return to him void, and his Spirit operate without a purpose?

Again, the Scriptures continually describe God's dealings with men in this world as disciplinary, and as counterparts of his system of salvation—Are the inhabitants of the old world overwhelmed by a flood, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah consumed in fire? It is for an ensample for them that after should live ungodly. † Are God's judgments abroad in the earth? It is, that the inhabitants of the world may learn righteousness? (a) Is the earth filled with the goodness of the Lord? It is,

* John VI. 37. † 2 Pet. II. 6. a. Isaiah XXVI. 9.

because the goodness of God should lead to repentance. (b) Are prophets, and wise men and scribes, from age to age sent to plead the cause of God with the disobedient inhabitants of Jerusalem? It is because the Redeemer would gather them as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings. (c)

Now, if there be an established connexion between that desire of escaping from wrath, which these dispensations of God, by convictions and alarms often produce on the minds of natural men, and their obtaining that spiritual change by which they are released from condemnation, and begin to live for Heaven, then the significancy of these representations, are awfully obvious; but if not, their relevancy is obscure and their force and their meaning dwindle.

And moreover, why in lands unblest by the showers and the sunshine of these common means of Christianity—instead as in christian countries—of fields waving with Gospel fruits, and the light of the Sun of righteousness reflected from mount Zion by a thousand domes that rest upon her summit, do we see such wide spreading, fruitless and dreary wastes, and the night of death resting on every mountain top, and lengthening and thickening its shades over every valley and every plain, presenting a horrible scenery with scarce a light to relieve the eye, but the fires kindled by superstition to roast her infants and to burn her widows? If there be no connexion [between the importunate, and the persevering seeking prompted by the terrors of God, often thrown over the minds of the impenitent by these common means accompanied by the Spirit; why did the apostles in obedience to the mandate of their risen Lord. ‘Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,’ at the expense of toil and blood, and at the peril of life itself, traverse the then known three quarters of the globe? And why did the Master give them the imperious commission? And why, in heathen lands, among the worshippers of

b. Rom. II. 4. c. Matt, XXIII. 37.

the Nile and the Ganges—among the devotees that surround Juggernaut or that bow at the feet of the Grand Lama, do we not witness the outpourings of the Holy Spirit and abundant conversions from the worship of idols to the service of the living God?

It however will probably be said, that God indeed more frequently regenerates the souls of such as are made anxious in the use of these means, and with restless and continued importunity, call on him for grace, with the same kind of natural desire as that which the ravens cry for food; yet there is no certainty that such seekers shall all ultimately find him. Is this all? Is the anxious sinner to be encouraged by a mere paradvventure? How agrees this with facts?—The Gospel is sent to heathen lands, its nature and its designs are explained to the understanding, and its requirements urged home to the heart; some of the savage hearers are impressed, and tears roll from their eyes; they go away and think of these things, and the feelings of guilt strengthen their hold, and the fears of hereafter haunt their daily walks and their nightly slumbers. They determine to hear more of this word—they become more and more importunate, and they persevere; and *all* that persevere find pardon and peace. Most surely then, there must be some certainty between the awakened savage's desire to escape from misery, and his attainment of the end; or why do we not read of forests, vocal with the mourning of those, who have sought the Saviour, but cannot find him? And we may add, why are not our churches filled with the wailings, and flooded with the tears of awakened and anxious sinners, who for scores of years, have importunately, and perseveringly, implored God for assistance to become pious; but have received no answer to their entreaties? such a convicted, importunate, and perseveringly seeking sinner treads not the footstool of God. Such is the wonderful coincidence between the seeking of the unrenewed man and his obtaining mercy.

But above all it is certain that God has regarded the

importunate and persevering entreaties of unrenewed men, who were so affected by his providence, or his word, as to desire his interposition. He answered the prayer of Manasseh, (a) and the Ninivites, (b) and Cornelius, (c) and with light and life, met the inquiries of the anxious jailor, (d) and also of the Jews, who on the day of Pentecost, pricked to the hearts by the preaching of St. Peter, solemnly inquired, what shall we do? (e) And if the prayer of Manasseh and the Ninivites are supposed to have been confined to temporal mercies, which were however undeniably granted, the argument is only strengthened, for much more would they have been answered, if they had been made for spiritual things.

On this subject, the testimony of the Saviour is, "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you." (f) And if it be supposed, that this relates to none, but such as are already re-animated with the divine life, the refutation is found in our Lord's own words: "*Every one that asketh receiveth.*" (g)

And finally, this doctrine corresponds with the economy of the Gospel, not only as it relates to man's condition; but also to the principles of his nature. Though depraved, he still possesses a conscience; by the means of grace before regeneration, this conscience is addressed on the subjects of guilt and danger; and if these addresses are permitted to have their proper effect, it is stung with a sense of guilt and alarmed by the apprehension of danger. And the whole Gospel epitomised — "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved and he that believeth not shall be damned," (h) is addressed to the strongest principle of fallen man: the supreme love of self. And through the power of this principle, when aroused by the threatenings of Jehovah, the unrenewed man bends to the cross of the Redeemer, and calls for mercy, not because he hates God less; but because he hates eternal torments more. And surely,

a. 2 Chron. XXXIII. 13. b. Jonah III. 10. c. Acts X. 4. d. Acts XVI. 30. e. Acts II. 37. f. Matt. VII. 7. g. Matt. VII. 8. h. Mark XVI. 16.

surely, it appears at least, as consistent with the Divine character, to bestow mercy on the sinner, when by the means of supreme appointment, he has been made to feel his need of mercy; as to obtrude it on him when he neglects those means, and despises that mercy.

And the declaration of Christ, that, "no man *can* come unto me except the Father who hath sent me draw him," (a) is no objection to the position here maintained. It is held that the word, providence, and Spirit of God, by addressing the principles of the natural man, and creating the feelings of guilt and terror, lead the sinner to call for mercy; and it is averred, that these are the drawings of the Father, without which no man *can* come to Christ.

Nor is the case of Lydia, (b) whose heart the Lord opened, to attend to the things spoken by Paul, or that of Paul. (c) himself, who was struck down by a light from Heaven, when so far from seeking mercy, he was breathing out threatening and slaughter against the Christians, and in the pursuit of a high-handed and bloody persecution, any argument against the theory here defended—Granting all that an adversary in this argument could ask—That Lydia, when one of the most thoughtless beings within the range of God's rational creation, by a direct act of the Omnipotent Spirit, was arrested and made a new creature, and that the renovating energy from on high touched Saul's heart; as soon as the divine voice reached his ears, or the celestial radiance his eyes; and that the old man crucified with his affections and lusts, fell with the persecutor to the ground; and we only admit too actual cases, with the possibility of some others as exceptions to a general law.

To admit any thing more, would be as perfectly gratuitous, as to grant, that because the sun *once* stood still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, (d) there is no law to guide them in their courses, or to regulate their settings or their risings. Deity always acts

a. John VI. 37. b. Acts XVI 14. c. Acts IX. 3, 4, 5, 6. d Josh. X, 12.

in consistency with his own perfections—he cannot deny himself. In both the natural and the moral world, it may be agreeable to his perfections, occasionally, to depart from the usual course of his operations; but facts prove, that in agreeableness to his nature, he for the most part,

“Acts not by partial, but by general laws.”

But there is nothing related of Paul or Lydia, that requires the case either of the one or the other to be classed under the head of exceptions. There is no proof that Saul became a new man, when by a voice and a light from heaven, he was struck to the ground. Here was indeed irresistible evidence addressed to his mind, that in persecuting the saints, he was opposing the King of heaven, and subjecting himself to his ire. As a consequence of this evidence, he may have felt, and acted as a sinner, absolutely dependant on the mercy of God in Christ; and thus have been met with “*the effectual working of his mighty power,*” by which the scales fell from his eyes. And as to Lydia, when Paul began to preach, the common operations of the Holy Spirit may have attended his word to her heart, and she may have yielded to the convictions, and the fears produced on her mind by these means; and in the course of the sermon, acted upon them, by coming to Christ as a lost sinner; and thus obtained life; and thus have had her heart opened by the Lord to attend to the things spoken by Paul.

Nor is there any valid argument in the objection, that such a coming to Christ, is but the act of an unregenerate, and consequently of a wicked man, whose very thoughts,^(a) sacrifices,^(b) and prayers,^(c) are an abomination to the Lord—of a man who regards iniquity in his heart,^(d) and therefore of one, whose prayer the Lord will not hear.

These texts here alluded to, probably, describe those, who allowedly live in a course of sin, whose thoughts

^aProv. xv, 26. ^bProv. xv, 8. ^cProv. xxviii. 9. ^dPs. lxvi, 18.

are allowedly wicked, and whose sacrifices and prayers, are therefore hypocritical. If they prove, that God will not hear the prayers of the anxious sinner, who desires to be saved from the wrath to come, they also prove, that he will not bend an ear to any prayer, but that of him, who is absolutely sinless—every other may strictly be said, in a greater or less degree, to regard iniquity in his heart. But this whole objection is founded on a mistake—that God regards the prayers of men, because they are holy: but the truth is, he hears no man's supplications, because they are accounted pure in his holy estimation; for if judgment be laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, in his sight, no flesh living can be justified. He meets no individual of Adam's children, but as a sinner, and on the ground of mercy through a Mediator. The Redeemer's obedience in the sinner's stead, alone, squares with the line of judgment and the plummet of righteousness. And if mercy be the only ground of transaction between God and man, surely, a sinner's want of a new heart, and his feeling that want, is no disqualification to his becoming a suppliant party on that ground. The belief that God performs this work, when the sinner, seized by the terror of future wrath, desires this change, is opposed, because, his desires and his prayers are said to be an abomination to God. Then to give this objection full sweep, we ought to suppose, that he performs this operation, when the sinner is the most indifferent, or the most opposed to such a change. Strange!—is his indifference, or his opposition to salvation, any less an abomination to God, than a desire to be saved?

Also the manner in which this subject has just been exhibited, if carefully surveyed, will be found perfectly to accord with that passage of our Confession of Faith, which affirms, that in this change, man is "*altogether passive.*"^(a) Our representation of the case is, that the sinner must first come to Christ, and then the Spirit of God effects on his soul that transformation,

^aConfession of Faith chap. x, sec. 2.

which produces spiritual life. Now as a man diseased by a cancer, may be active in going to a physician, and yet be perfectly passive in the operation, which removes the disease, so a sinner may be active in going to Christ, that he may have life, and yet be, "altogether passive" in the spiritual change by which it is produced.

To some, no doubt, this will appear to give the saved sinner somewhat of which to boast. But what can be the ground of his boasting? That he has obeyed the divine law and is therefore saved for his own merit? No, verily—the law requires love to God with all the heart, soul, and mind; but the doctrine represents the sinner as desiring to be born again—not because he loves God at all; but because he loves himself and hates eternal misery. Suppose that in heaven, he should begin an anthem to himself for his salvation; what would be his language? "Praise to *me*, that out of pure love to myself, and in perfect disobedience to God's holy law, which righteously demands my supreme affection—praise—praise to *me*, that out of mere love to myself, and in a state of absolute hatred to my Maker, Preserver and Redeemer, when convinced by the means of his mercy, that if I continued my rebellions against him, I must eventually sink under the wrathful arm of his power; like a warrior, who asks quarters from his enemy, when he sees resistance would eventuate in his own ruin, I laid down my weapons from fear and begged the God whom I basely hated, to have mercy upon me—praise to myself, that God had mercy upon me a sinner!!" The most that such a sinner could say in praise of his own merit, is that his *sinful* desire of mercy, was not so guilty as another's *sinful* rejection of mercy. So that, according to this doctrine, the former achieves no merit and deserves no reward; but the latter, by his rejection incurs great guilt and deserves deep condemnation.

Nor is there any disagreement between this explanation of the doctrine of coming to Christ, and ano-

ther portion of our Confession of Faith which teaches, that "God chooses men not from any foresight of faith, or good works, or any other thing, foreseen in the creature, as a condition or a cause moving him thereto."(a) It has already been shown, in this discourse, that the coming of an unregenerate man to Christ, in the sense here explained, falls short of the standard of the divine law, and therefore, if compared with it, cannot be a good work, and that the belief upon which the man acts, in this coming—is not the faith demanded by the scriptures—is not a faith which works by love; and hence the theory here advocated, supposes that God gives life to the sinner; not on account of faith, or good works, previously possessed. And as it is humbly believed to have been demonstrated, in a former discourse,* that, between God's foreknowledge of the free acts of the creature, and his determinations in regard to those acts, there are no such relations as antecedent and consequent, either in the order of duration or of reason; according to this theory, nothing in the creature could have operated on the mind of Deity as a cause or condition, to influence him when in his eternal plan he determined to bestow life upon the anxious, seeking sinner; for a condition or cause must, both in the order of reason and duration, precede that, of which it is a condition or a cause.

And so far from *opposing*, our doctrine *demand*s a literal interpretation of the scriptures, that says "He *will* have mercy on whom he *will* have mercy."(b) In the usual course of his saving operations, he *will* have mercy on all those, and those only on whom he *may* have mercy, consistently with all his moral perfections—on such as improve the instructions of his Gospel, and the threatenings of his law, and the application of these instructions and threatenings, made by the Holy Ghost in his common operations, to their consciences—in a

aConfession of Faith, chap. iii, sec. 5.

*See No. 1, page 8, and note A. at the end of the sermon.

bRom. ix, 15.

way perfectly within the unregenerated powers of the natural man—so as to throw aside the outward immoralities or a wicked life—so as to feel the workings of a sin-smitten conscience shuddering with the forebodings of a judgment to come—and so as with all the importunity of a sinking Peter, to cry out, “Help Lord or I perish,” or of the sightless Bartimeus, “Jesus thou son of David have mercy on me.”

From this exposition of our text, we are able to reconcile the scriptures which say, “*It is God, which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure,*” (a) “*you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins,*” (b) “*Jesus which hath delivered us from the wrath to come,*” (c) “*a new heart also will I give you and a new Spirit will I put within you,*” (d) with others whose language is, “*Work out your own salvation;*” (e) “*arise from the dead;*” (f) “*flee from the wrath to come;*” (g) “*make you a new heart and a new Spirit.*” (h) And this apparently discrepant language, is just as literally reconciled, as the saying “that a farmer raises a crop of corn,” is with the proposition that “in the growth, and the formation of the grain, the farmer is altogether passive, and the production wholly a work of divine power.” The farmer indeed supported by God’s providence, ploughs the ground and plants the seed; but in the plan of Jehovah this is only an antecedent to the production. Then the same unseen, Almighty hand that first formed grass and herbs, continues his creation, and without the farmer’s assistance, the blade shoots, the stalk rises, and the corn matures; so the unregenerate sinner, convicted by the law and awed by the terrors of God, unceasingly calls for mercy; but this is only an antecedent to regeneration. Then in the merciful dispensation of grace, the same Spirit, that moved in the night of Chaos, and brooded on the face of the waters, and produced light and order among the

aPhil. ii, 12. bEph. ii, 1 cI. Thes. i, 10 dEzekiel xxxvi, 26.
ePhil. ii, 12. fMatt. iii, 7, gEph. v, 14. hEzekiel xviii, 31.

dark and crude materials, without any co-operation of the sinner, corrects the disorders and dispels the darkness of this moral chaos, and creates him a new creature. Thus in the language of common life, an unrenewed man may be just as literally exhorted to make him a new heart as a farmer to rear a crop. In either case the man but performs an antecedent, which God is pleased to follow with an operation, exclusively his own. In the popular language of the Bible, the man who follows the course, which God has appointed to obtain this spiritual change; as literally makes him a new heart; as he rears a harvest, who performs that process, which is usually crowned with the productions of the field; whilst in the strict language of the Bible, as well as in the accurate language of Christian philosophy, it is literally true, that *God* gives a new heart, and that *God* loads the fields with the bounties of the year.

And if these things be so, the minds of anxious sinners ought not to be distracted with theological subtleties and paradoxes—such as whether, if they are not elected, they may not be lost though they feel their need of a Saviour never so deeply, and never so earnestly and incessantly knock at the door of mercy—whether they may pray before they have repented and believed—whether they may not have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost and therefore not obtain life though they should come to Christ—and whether they ought to attempt to believe or repent or to make to themselves a new heart lest they presumptuously intrude upon the province of a jealous God; but they should be taught that it makes a part of God's eternal purpose to elect the very sinners that convicted of their iniquities and convinced, that if the Redeemer saves not, they are lost, and that acting upon this conviction, gives him no rest, but day and night beseech his deliverance from the wrath to come; that *in prayer* and every other religious exercise in which they engage, they ought immediately to believe and repent—that no sin can condemn the soul that comes to Him whose blood cleanseth from all sin—and that it

is theirs to *endeavour* in dependence on divine grace, to believe, repent, and obtain a new heart; but God's to give efficacy to these endeavours; just as it was for the man with the withered hand to *attempt* to stretch it forth; but for Christ to give *success* to the attempt.

What encouragement for anxious souls! That he who inhabits the highest heaven; occupies a throne to which no created dignity can climb; is clothed with the mysterious, the awful, and the infinite majesty of the King of kings; and whose ears are greeted with the hallelujahs of angelic and cherubic choirs—that *He* should bow the heavens to hear the cries of a worm, whose very prayer is but the forced tribute of a selfish and a slavish fear; the very accents of which are formed by an unhallowed tongue, and borne from his lips by polluted breath, may well stagger the belief of a trembling sinner. It is *too much* for him to ask so infinite a thing, and *too much* to expect, had not the Almighty's own voice proclaimed "*The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious.*"

But has he said, that him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out, and shall he not perform?

O turn not away from the voice that warns though it utters terrible things. On the mount whence roll the thunders of condemnation and wrath, I see one, like the Son of man, standing half veiled in clouds; in his hands he holds the lightnings that flash to devour; and I hear him say in a still small voice, to which all nature pauses to listen, and which angels stoop to hear—a voice that silences the thunders: "*Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.*" But do you respond "*We see him not—where shall we find him?*"

Keep your face fixed* to the mount whence your ear

*If so soon as the face of the anxious sinner is kept fixed, he is met by Spiritual life, this language intimates no *delay* in regard to faith and repentance. If a sinner be ignorant, he ought to be instructed; if careless, alarmed; and if anxious, exhorted to come to Christ *immediately*, by endeavouring in *his* strength, to exercise an evangelical repentance and a saving faith. It is then the *cry* of the sin-smitten sinner becomes the *prayer* of faith, just as in the miracle of the Saviour, the *attempt* of the *withered*, became the *act* of a *sound* hand. If God has joined seeking and finding together, to exhort a sinner to come to Christ *immediately*, is to exhort him to *repent and believe immediately*.

caught the alarm, that now agitates your frame, and though now surrounded by dark clouds of the sky, which no unaided mortal eye can penetrate; yet soon shall the day spring from on high gild the edges of the horizon, the clouds break, and the shadows flee away, and every *star* that now garnishes the hidden canopy, shall become a *sun* to reveal to your astonished eyes a gracious Saviour—O turn not away—he has not said to the seed of Jacob seek ye my face in vain—Amen.

The opposition of some excellent brethren is so strong to even the name of the best possible moral system, that they have actually refused to read the part of our first number classed under that head. For the information of such, it is now stated, that in this work, the best possible moral system is used to denote that system in which there is "*the least possible moral evil*," an idea almost the reverse of the theory usually known by that name—inasmuch as the latter supposes that the present system *is made good, is made the best*, by the introduction of moral evil.

At the following words in note C of our first number some of our readers have taken offence "*in the best possible system there may be, unavoidably, on the part of the Creator, some things wrong*." This is it supposed, to say the least, is speaking very disrespectfully of Almighty power. As it is found that this objection is made by *almost none*, but those who have turned to the note but have not read the sermon, the attention of our readers is respectfully invited to the pages, 16, 17, 18 and 19 of "The Christian Preacher" No 1. It is intended in the course of this work to treat the subject more fully.

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No. 4.

The cause and the design of God's giving his Son.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life—John iii, 16.

Redemption is a glorious theme. Originating in the bosom of divine love, planned in the depths of infinite wisdom, executed by the hand of omnipotence, fulfilling the predictions of truth, meeting the demands of justice, and encircled on its throne with all the lustre of the divine mercy, it appears to call into requisition every infinite perfection, and to concentrate and to present in one view, all that is important for man in this world to know of Deity.

Viewed by finite minds, God's perfections might seem unharmonious and unauspicious—omnipotence, tyranny; justice, severity; and mercy, weakness; but now blended together as the diversicoloured rays, and harmonized in the plan of the "great salvation", they constitute the glory of the Supreme Majesty, the light of the upper heaven, the Sun of the moral universe, which not only kindles the blaze of heavenly noon in the moral midnight of this earth, but probably rolls the tides of celestial day to illumine and bless the remotest regions of moral existence. The same host of heavenly heralds, that hailed the night of the Saviour's nativity with the song of peace on earth and good will to men, may have sung the same anthem to the inhabitants of other spheres, and the twelve angelic legions, who stood ready to vindicate the honour of their insulted Lord, may have been commissioned to take their flight from world to world, to publish the agonies of the garden and the tragedy of the cross; and to explain to the astonished universe, why nature darkened, paused, and shook.

But however elevating the thought, that our God and his Christ, are known and adored by numberless other beings throughout the intelligent armies of the universe, who rise higher in the scale of existence than ourselves; it is ours, to contemplate Deity and Redemption mainly in reference to our own world.

Folly convinced of this truth, let us examine the two leading ideas communicated to us in the letter of the text—

I. The cause, and

II. The design of God's giving his Son.

I. The cause—He “loved the world.” It is not taught in this text, or in any other part of the Bible, that God loves every human being in the same degree. Indeed as a holy God, who hates sin and loves righteousness, this would be impossible. It would be a denial of his perfect nature, to suppose, that he cherished the same degree of affection for Judas as for John, or for Pilate as for Paul, or, that he who changes not and who views *things that are not as though they were*, should love a man, whom he eternally views as an enemy, never reconciled, as much as one, whom he eternally views as an enemy reconciled. So, that while it is believed, that God in the donation of his Son loved those whom he foresaw as redeemed, sanctified, and saved, more than those whom he foresaw as crucifying him, and *putting him to an open shame*, and retaining against him an eternal enmity; still it is susceptible of moral demonstration, that He loved the world.

All the human family stand alike related to him as an universal parent. All are alike the parts of the divine workmanship, *fearfully and wonderfully made*. And though now the bright gold has become dim, still it is gold; although the gem is cast into the mire, still it is a gem; and although the moral workmanship is despoiled, yet the materials are precious. And the Maker's own testimony is, that he has *no pleasure in the death of the wicked*: and that it is *good and acceptable in the eyes of God our Saviour, that supplications and prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men*. That

the Saviour loved the wicked whom he contemplated as his own certain persecutors, murderers, and eternally irreconcilable enemies is pathetically proclaimed in his apostrophe to Jerusalem—*If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!*

And not only by the verbal expressions of his benevolence and the effusion of his tears; but more by the sorrows of Gethsemane, the blood of Calvary, and the humiliation of the sepulchre, he demonstrated a love for the whole world, stronger than death—*He gave himself a ransom for all.* As every word of God is a stone, shaped for some place in Zion's bulwarks, towers, or palaces to support, strengthen, or adorn them, it is indispensable that every builder in God's house, who would not have his works burned as wood, hay, and stubble, and who would be a workman, that needeth not to be ashamed, should prayerfully and as seeing him who is invisible, endeavour to appropriate each to its own divinely appointed location. And especially it is indispensable, in regard to words such as *ransom, propitiation, atonement, and redemption*, which relate immediately to the Redeemer's meditation, and thus become pillars upon which the fair edifice of revealed truth rests its foundations—The word *ransom* literally signifies the price of redemption for captives, whether it be appropriated and accepted so as to become efficient for their liberation or not. *He will not regard any ransom. Then a great ransom cannot deliver them.* In these texts a ransom, and a great ransom, is described as not accepted, and therefore, not appropriated to the redemption of the captive. The idea is well illustrated in the description, which Homer gives of the price of liberation, brought to Agamemnon by Chryses, the priest of Apollo to redeem his captive daughter. The ransom offered by her father, for her redemption, is represented

by the poet, as infinite in value, and yet it was rejected by the wrathful Agamemnon, 'This however did not alter its value, or its meaning in the wishes of the parent; in amount it was all sufficient for redemption, and it was consecrated to the purpose by a parent's fondest affections; and in the song of the poet as well after Agamemnon's refusal to accept it for the redemption of the captive, as before, it is called the *infinite ransom*. 'Though a thing may be properly denominated a *ransom*, whether it be formally appropriated and accepted as the price for the liberation of a captive or not; yet it never properly becomes such, until set apart for the purpose, by the wishes of him, who would redeem; or until offered by him in the place of the captive. 'This is but a plain inference from the texts just cited, as well as from the passage in Homer's *Illiad*. just alluded to. In the one text, it is asserted, that a *ransom will not be regarded*, and in the other, that a *great ransom cannot deliver*, and the conditions of both suppose an actual offer; and in the case of Homer's priest of Apollo, there was an actual tender. Money in the treasury of a nation, is but mere silver and gold; but when offered to an enemy in the place of captured citizens, *then* it becomes a ransom. So also the humiliation and suffering of Jesus Christ, in themselves considered, are but degradation and misery, but when offered in the place of man, they then take the character of a *ransom*. And if it be supposed that the word *ransom* implies not only the price of redemption offered in the place of the captive, but also appropriated by the offerer in purpose and in fact, and accepted by the holder of the captive, in so far as to procure some privileges, if not an actual liberation: whilst we would still contend, that all this is not expressed by the term *ransom*; and from conviction confine our view to the ideas of the word just given; yet we freely grant, that Christ in giving himself a *ransom* became more to all than is literally comprehended in the *term*—He became a propitiation *for the sins of the whole world*. 'The word *propitiation*, simply means, something that propitiates. Offended Deity is so far appeased by the mediation of the Saviour, as to scatter

his blessings over the whole face of this terrestrial creation—as to cause his sun to shine and his showers to fall upon the just and upon the unjust—as to open all the facilities and treasures of air, earth, and ocean, alike to the pious and the impious, and to the grateful and the thankless—and above all, as not only to be unwilling, *that any should perish*, but so as to stand in readiness to be eternally reconciled to every one, however wicked and however vile, who will come unto him that he may have life.

If on account of man's sins, justice would require, that the heavens over his head should become brass, and under his feet the earth iron, the sea bear frowns and terrors on every wave; the air, the sound of woe and the pang of torment on every breath; the clouds shower curses, and the sun dart forked lightnings and devouring fires over the world; and above all, that the transgressor should be punished *with everlasting destruction from the presence of God and from the glory of his power*—how can justice be maintained, and, yet the heavens spread over him the lofty and azure canopy; earth place her soft and verdant carpet under his feet; the ocean roll his surges but to waft him to other shores; the air continue the easy and salubrious element of life, the clouds scatter Heaven's blessings, and the sun pour Heaven's glories to enrich and adorn his habitation, and more wonderful than all, God announcing his willingness to save from the justly threatened desolation, proclaim to the inhabitants of the world—*Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth*—how, unless in man's stead, some mediator has interposed, and so far sustained the penalties which he incurred by disobedience, as to render offended Deity, if not reconciled—yet propitious—ready to be reconciled to the whole family of man? Here the scripture always its own best interpreter, whilst it pronounces sin the abominable thing which God hates, and its wages to be death, casts such a light over the whole face of the moral creation, as reveals the consistency of his ways of clemency to the whole human race, by teaching us that *Jesus Christ the righteous is the propitiation for*

the sins of the whole world, that he died for all, and, that he by the grace of God tasted death for every man.

Placed within the sphere of this illumination, we can discover how mercy and truth may meet together—God be just and yet propitious to all Adam's rebellious children.

It is no objection, that in common language, a life laid down in the place of another, always implies the liberation of the one at first subject to death, since Christ by his mediation has liberated all mankind from the immediate endurance of many of the sufferings to which by their apostacy they are legally exposed, and procured for them a day of grace; and therefore they *are liberated* in every sense in which he died for their liberation. And as his death is not only *sufficient* to procure this day of respite for all; but also to satisfy the demands of justice for their sins, mercy improves the day, by making overtures of reconciliation, putting it to their choice, whether justice shall place the sufferings of Christ to their account, and thus pronounce them *redeemed* and *acquitted*, or whether they will stand responsible to their own penalties. And the only reason, given in the word of God, why any perish, is that they *will not come* to Christ, that he may become their surety, and that his death may be placed to their account for justification; and thus it is literally true, that the *world* through him *might*—because salvation is left as fairly to their choice as any other offer—the *world* through him *might* be saved—Imagine, that a whole province of a large empire should revolt from a powerful king and that by the laws of the realm, all the revolutionists for their disloyalty, should be subject to endure a public execution to-morrow. But the king's son interferes and says, "Father, I will agree to be executed to-morrow in their stead, if you will spare them all ten days, and in the mean time, send heralds among them to proclaim, that my death shall be accepted by you, instead of the death of every one, who within that time, shall return to his allegiance." Suppose the proposal accepted, and the death is then *vicarious* and the condemned are *liberated* to the extent of the

stipulation. So in the case of Christ's propitiatory ransom for all mankind—they are actually liberated from the immediate execution of *many* of the curses due to them for their disloyalty to God, and Christ's death offered to be imputed to them for redemption and reconciliation.

It is not intimated however, that in the plan of the moral system, Christ died in no higher sense, than this, for those, who were eternally viewed as eventually coming to him, receiving spiritual life, and being actually saved through his death; but this view is given, as the most obvious and literal sense of such scriptures as represent him, dying for all. For *all* the scriptures describe not his death as an *atonement* or *redemption*, but a *propitiation*: through it Deity is so propitiated, that he offers to be reconciled to *all*, and to make the Saviour's sufferings a redemption for *all*.

Thus we have given the Arminian, all the latitude of his own interpretation to his own favorite scriptures, as may be seen from the following quotation in Arminius' own language, as given by Witsius—"Let us add to all these things by way of conclusion, the proper and immediate effect of the death and passion of Christ. Now, it is not an actual removal of sin, from this or that particular person, nor actual remission of sins, nor justification, nor the actual redemption of this or that person, which none can have without faith and the spirit of Christ; but the reconciliation of God; the impetration of remission, justification, and redemption before God."*

Now this amounts to nothing more, than the propitiation which we have described, with the single exception, that Arminius, very improperly says—"the reconciliation of God." For this there is no scriptural warrant—God is never reconciled to the sinner until he believes in Christ. It is however evident from the whole passage that Arminius meant nothing more by "the reconciliation of God," than we, by "the propitiating of God."

These unnumbered blessings, that flow to the whole race of man as consequences, from God's unspeakable

*Examine Predestine, p. 75.

gift, at once demonstrate his love to the whole world, and also, that his love was the moving cause in giving his Son.

According to the order of the text, the

II topic of consideration, is the design of God in giving his Son. It is concisely stated in the text, *that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.* However his propitiatory ransom for the sins of the whole world, was contemplated in this donation; and however many less ends may have been revolved in the plan; yet so far at least, as it relates to this world, the salvation of those viewed as believing, loomed highest in the prospect, and was the grand end in the august transaction.

When Deity formed the great plan of moral government, as the Omniscient he had before him all actual and all possible beings and events. In the important part which related to the gift of his Son, he foresaw with unerring precision, who of the human family would come to him, and thus obtain power to believe and become the sons of God, and who would not come. He therefore foreknew, that a portion of mankind notwithstanding the universality of the propitiatory sacrifice, and all other moral means; that his infinite wisdom and beneficence, might provide, would nevertheless, eventually choose the road to death and sink to the abodes of endless desolation. Had this been foreknown as the certain choice, and the certain end of all Adam's fallen generations, it would appear unreasonable to conceive, that Infinite wisdom would still have given his Son to endure the sufferings of death and the inhabitation of the tomb, to provide a propitiatory ransom for such a race. What then, but the redemption of those who actually believe could have been the great object of the Redeemer's mission?

To suppose, that there ever was a period in infinite duration, in which Deity had no plan, by which he intended to create and govern the moral universe; or in which he had not before him every item of this plan, ap-

pears like suspecting infinite wisdom of infinite folly—it is folly's own essence to be planless; and to imagine this plan to be made, and the events comprehended in it to happen differently, impugns his Omniscience, and is an accusation of ignorance—it is a privilege peculiar to ignorance to be deceived. The All Wise and the Omniscient therefore, has a plan, eternal as his existence, and as infallible as his wisdom, and if so, *whom he did infallibly, and eternally, foreknow, as coming to Christ, he also did, infallibly and eternally, predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.* And if after our reasoning, there still should remain a doubt, whether this predestination was made in time or eternity, the question is decided by the revelation, that God has chosen believers in Christ, *before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love.* And this choice made in eternity, in purpose, is in time actually fulfilled, in the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth. If therefore they who believe were predestinated from eternity, and chosen *before the foundation of the world, to be conformed to the image of God's Son, and to be holy and without blame before him in love;* and as a consequence of this holy transformation, to be *glorified;* and if the Saviour never would have entered this region of ruin, had he foreseen the dreadful certainty, that none would be saved by his death, the conclusion is irresistible, that in the purpose of the infinite mind, Christ's principal object in descending to the pilgrimage of earth, was to save them whom he foresaw as coming to him, and as certainly to be made, by his choosing them, evangelical believers.

Again believers *only* are recognised as actually redeemed by Christ. His death has indeed propitiated Deity in behalf of all the human kind; and he is ready to make it *redemption* to every one that comes to the

Saviour; yet as *redemption* properly signifies a release purchased by a ransom, in Jehovah's eternal and infallible plan, none can be ranked as redeemed, but such as are foreseen actually coming to Christ, that they may obtain the spiritual life, by which they are enabled to exercise a scriptural faith; because none but such can be released from the penalties incurred by transgression. We indeed read of wicked men who deny *the Lord, that BOUGHT them*. But to *buy* is not to *redeem*.—The original word here accurately translated *bought* is *Agorazo* which literally signifies to purchase articles in the market, and must undoubtedly apply to those *bought* in the sense, in which it has been already shown, Christ died for the whole world. It is sometimes metaphorically used in the sense of *redeem*, and then it is always applied to believers only. *For thou wast slain and hast redeemed US to God by thy blood*. And so also its cognate *Exagorazo*, as in the text—*Christ has redeemed US from the curse of the law*; but literally, it can only mean to *buy*; and in this sense alone, can it be applied to those that are eventually lost. Wicked men bought by Christ's propitiatory ransom, still remain in the hands of vindicatory justice, just as an article paid for, may still remain in the hands of the seller. But the literal meaning of the Greek word *Lutroo* properly translated *redeem*, signifies to release a captive by paying the price of redemption; and hence its derivatives *Lutrosis* and *Apolutrosis* denote a release from captivity by a price paid, and are rightly translated redemption. According to the sense of *Agorazo*, *buy*, an article may be purchased and yet remain in the hands of the seller; but in the original sense of *Lutroo*, *redeem*, a prisoner must not only be *purchased* but *actually released*. But the unbelievers who descend to the pit, is never released; and the idea conveyed in a scriptural redemption, is only applicable to those released from condemnation and ruin. And hence the language of inspiration is, *The Lord redeemeth the soul of his SERVANTS. YE were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold—but with the precious blood of Christ.*

Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem US from all iniquity. Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all that BELIEVE—being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Jesus Christ, who of God is made unto US—redemption. In whom WE have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.* Having obtained eternal redemption for US. In whom WE have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.† Thus the Greek words *Lutroo*, *Lutrosis*, and *Apolutrosis*, translated by the English words redeem and redemption, when employed in relation to the death of the Saviour, are throughout the New Testament invariably applied to believers only; and if so, we see, that our Confession of Faith exhibits the true meaning of the Bible, when it declares, that “Neither are any other redeemed by Christ.‡

And the same is true of the Atonement. The primitive meaning of this English word, is to bring to agreement those that formerly were at variance—to put *at one* those formerly separated by disagreement, as may be seen from the composition of the word *at-one-ment*. The original meanings of the Greek words *Katallasso* and *Katallage* of which our *atone* and *atonement* are translations, are *to change, a change*. When God and the sinner, make peace, a change is effected—they that were once at variance, are now become friends; and this change is very properly denominated a *reconciliation* or an *atonement*. From the very nature of a reconciliation between parties once at variance, their mutual hostilities must be followed by mutual good will. Now if the *carnal mind is enmity against God*, however propitious he may be towards the transgressor and ready to be reconciled to him; yet in the nature of the case, there can be no *atonement* between them until this enmity is slain—until the man renewed in the spirit of his mind, believes the Gospel with a faith that works by love. And thus we find, that while the Scrip-

*Eph. i. 7. †Col. i 14. ‡Chap. iii. sec. 6.

tures teach us, that it pleased the Father by him to reconcile all things unto himself, whether they be things in earth. or things in heaven, and whilst they inform us, that this plan was in the progress of fulfilment—that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, they also instruct us, that none, but ‘saints’* and ‘faithful brethren’,† are actually reconciled, declaring that—“YOU, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works; yet now hath he reconciled.” “If when enemies, WE were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” “Who hath reconciled US to himself by Jesus Christ.” “And not only so but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom WE have now received the atonement.” As it was the design of God, that made the sufferings of Christ a propitiatory ransom for the sins of the whole world, as was argued in the former part of this discourse, so also it is his purpose, that makes them redemption and an atonement to them that in coming to Christ receive spiritual life to repent and believe. And here a few extracts from some well written letters on the atonement, lately published, may be appropriately introduced: “It was the purpose of God, that made the death of his Son an atonement; consequently, if you view his death apart from this purpose, you can see no atonement. In the cross of Christ thus contemplated, you may behold suffering and ignominy; you may behold a display of fortitude and patience, but you can see no atonement. To discover this, you must ask why on Calvary was exhibited that amazing spectacle?

“In Strictness of speech, we ought to distinguish between the death of Christ and the *atonement*; just as we distinguish between a cause and its effect. The death of Christ is one thing, and the atonement another thing; the former being the *cause* and the latter the *effect*. In human language, it is not unusual for the *cause* and the

*See Romans i. 7. II Cor. i. 1. †Col. i. 2.

effect to receive the same denomination. Thus the *sensation* produced and the *fire* which produces it, are both, though very different things, denominated heat. So also *cold* signifies the *cause* of a certain sensation in the human frame, and the *sensation* itself.

Here then we see the reason why the death of Christ has been called atonement; it is so denominated, because it produces atonement or reconciliation between God and sinful man; and as it has produced this glorious effect in millions of instances; it is justly entitled to this appellation. So it may be called in reference to all who have been, or shall be, atoned for, reconciled to God; but with what propriety, can it be so denominated in reference to individuals who never will be reconciled to an offended God by its influence? In truth the death of Christ is an atonement to no man, before it has been applied, and produced its effect; then, and not till then, is it an atonement to him."

"We have admitted the merits of Christ's death" "to be infinite and that if applied," they "would save millions more than shall ever be saved, but it will not follow, that the atonement was made for those who will never be saved. The earth is large enough to have many millions of inhabitants more than have ever lived on it, and probably to sustain millions more than will ever descend from Adam; but on this account, it cannot with any propriety be said, that it was made for human beings, who shall never be created. The Sun is large and luminous enough to send his beams to more planets than exist in the solar system and to enlighten and warm their inhabitants; but on account of his greatness and grandeur, it could not be said with any propriety that he was formed to enlighten and warm inhabitants of planets, that shall never be created."*

And we not only argue the design of Christ's advent from facts, that in the purpose of God, his death is made redemption and atonement to those only, that believe but from the language of the scriptures which proclaim

*Janeway's letters on the Atonement.

that design: "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem US from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring US to God." "For him who knew no sin, he hath made to be sin for us, that WE might be made the righteousness of God in him." "But when the fulness of time was come, God sent his Son—that he might redeem them that are under the law, that WE might receive the adoption of sons" "Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep WE should live together with him." "Who his own self bare our sins—that WE being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness." "Christ also loved the CHURCH, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify it; and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church not having spot, nor wrinkle; nor any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Thus the purpose of God, in relation to the Saviour's mediation, is definitely stated in the language of inspiration, to be the salvation of them that believe, from sin and of course from its consequent miseries.

Then if the process of investigation, pursued in this discourse, exhibit the true sense of inspiration, we are divinely taught, that God loved the whole world, and consequently, desired all men to be saved; yet in design gave his Son to make redemption, and atonement, and to procure salvation for none but those who eventually believe. The former are views peculiarly Arminian, and the latter peculiarly Calvinistic. Here the strenuous Arminian and the hightoned Calvinist rush in on each side from their opposite poles, and declare these views irreconcilable with each other. Our reply is, that a literal course of Biblical exposition, has produced these results, and if you pronounce them irreconcilable with each other, you openly declare, that the Bible on these topics literally contradicts itself, and you both tacitly acknowledge, that your systems can not be defended, but by a figurative interpretation of sacred

writ; and one of you says, that one set of Scriptures must be converted into figure, and the other a class just the opposite. Before however adopting the advice of either, let us examine whether these Scriptures are indeed literally contradictory. On the one hand we are taught, that God loved the whole world; and on the other, that his design was to send his only begotten Son to save them only that believe. Wherein is the discrepancy? God's benevolence is as boundless as his infinite nature, and therefore he *will have all men to be saved*. But with all the means which a gracious God employs, a great portion of men, *will not come to Christ*, that they might have spiritual life to become scriptural believers; it is inconsistent with his justice and other perfections to grant them spiritual life and salvation without such coming. In forming his eternal plan of moral government, as the Omniscient he had before him all, that *would*, and all that *would not* come to obtain life, so as to be made true believers. Then as a Wise and Omniscient God, who would not be planless, nor yet form a false plan, he would frame a purpose, not as extensive as his benevolence, but according to the known certainties of that natural liberty, which is an essential to a moral system—a purpose coincident with the certainty of the number of those who would come to Christ.* Had he formed a purpose to send Christ to save those who, he knew *would not* be saved, he would have exhibited the absurdity of choosing his own deception, and then in contradiction to his own word he would have displayed in fact to the universe, that "*the purpose of God shall*" NOT "*stand, and that he will*" NOT "*perform all his pleasure.*" So that on the one side, we are taught his infinite good will, and on the other, his infinite wisdom; and who but an atheist should pronounce these perfections irreconcilable with each other?

Nor is there any discrepancy between the views which the Arminian and Calvinistic texts exhibit in relation to the death of Christ. Why might not Deity, in

*See No. III, pp. 55, 56, 57, 58, 59; &c. Also No. I, pp. 11, 12, &c.

his eternal purpose, determine, that Christ's death should at once be a *propitiation* for the sins of the whole world, and also a *redemption* and an *atonement* for them only, that eventually believe; as well as decree, that the moon should at once be a reflector to cast her pale rays over the darkness of this world, and also, be an abode of life and happiness to numerous intellectual inhabitants, or, that the sun by his *heat* and his *light* should be the occasion, at once, of both *sunshine* and *showers*? In the nature of the case there is nothing unreasonable in supposing, that the Saviour's death should be appointed for one purpose to *all* and for another to *those who believe*. And the Scriptures which teach a *propitiation* for *all* and an *atonement* and *redemption* for *those only who believe*, are crowned with all the evidence of actual facts. Is it not true, that none but believers, are actually *redeemed*—released from the tyranny of sin and punishment, and actually *reconciled* to God? And is it not true, that the whole world is under a dispensation of God's clemency, or why is not every fallen descendant of Adam consigned to the fiery pit as soon as he commits his first sin? Without some propitiation to appease offended Deity, this, stern justice would inevitably demand.

Some Calvinists will probably ask, for what purpose did Christ become a propitiatory ransom for the whole world? Since all will not be saved what necessity for such a ransom?—In the economy of God, the wicked and the righteous must in this world, stand together, like the wheat and the tares.

The servants were not permitted to gather the tares, lest they should root up the wheat also; so, as the wicked and the righteous are connected together in all brotherhoods of life; and as progenitors and posterity; and as many *now* wicked are *yet* to become righteous; the swift ministers of justice, must not immediately descend to gather the impenitent for their burnings; lest with the wicked, the righteous also be rooted from the earth. But the claims of justice are inexorable and demand immediate satisfaction; and hence, that God may

gather a church from the ruins of the fall, and support the justice of his throne, results the necessity of a Mediator and a propitiation for *all*. A just Jehovah must be propitiated, that every transgressor be not sunk instantly to hell.

Besides it is agreeable to Him who delights not in iniquity, that the moral universe should be governed in the way, best adapted to prevent sin, and promote righteousness; and this in moral beings—beings endowed with natural liberty, is effected by presenting to them the strongest possible motives to obedience. But what motives so strong, can be presented to such beings, as the proof of God's love given in Christ's becoming for them a propitiation; his willingness, that his sufferings should be an atonement and redemption to all who *will* come to him; and his desire, that all should come?—Here are,

“Amazing pity, grace unknown,
And love beyond degree”—

These motives having been presented, in the day of judgment not only shall all the world become *guilty* before God, but every mouth shall be *stopt* and every tongue become *speechless*; and sullen silence, shall acknowledge, that the only reason why all were not saved, is because they *would* not.—The Saviour *would have gathered* them, but they *would not*.

If the Arminian object, that God's determining Christ's death to be redemption and an atonement for those only whom coeternally with his determination, he foreknew as coming to the Saviour, would be *unjust*, inasmuch as it would be leaving others out of the plan of salvation, not for any thing, which they had actually done, but for something which he foresaw they would do, we reply, that an objection of precisely the same form, may be urged with as much cogency against his own system. He supposes, that God from eternity, foreknew the particular individuals of the human race, that in the neglect of his mercies, would die in unbelief,

and, that for this unbelief foreseen, he from eternity determined to inflict on them, everlasting punishment. Now here he admits an eternal determination to inflict endless misery, not for sins actually committed, but for sins foreseen to be committed. If then, our system make Deity unjust, as he imagines, because it supposes that for their sins foreseen, but not yet committed, in his plan he left them out of the number of those for whom he determined Christ's death to be redemption and an atonement; as much at least does the Arminian system make him unjust, since it supposes, that for sins foreseen, but not yet perpetrated, he determined from eternity, to consign the unbelieving to the deeps of a fiery and an endless desolation. Every sensible Arminian will immediately perceive, that in making this objection, he furnishes a sword which will as readily decapitate himself, as wound his antagonist. And if in the scriptural idea of a propitiation, we comprehend all that he, without any warrant from the Bible, denominates "an atonement or redemption," then we in reality admit, that Christ did as much for the salvation of *all men* as *he* supposes--He became a propitiation for the sins of the whole world; on the basis this propitiation, his death is offered to be made *to all* the ground of redemption and of an atonement; God sincerely desires that *all* should come, that it thus might be made to them, reconciliation and redemption: nothing prevents their coming, but an excuseless "*will not*;" and to overcome even this, he employs every means consistent with a moral Governor: but we contend also, that as his purposes descend to all the particular events of his moral kingdom, he eternally decreed, that the Saviour's sufferings should procure an actual redemption, and an actual atonement, for all such, as he coeternally foresaw, would, in the scriptural sense of the word, come to him; and, that he did not determine it to be such for any others. But it is asked, "what if others should come?" As this is a supposition contrary to certainty and fact, it is fair to answer it with another supposition of the same character. We suppose, that if this were the case, God would have

foreknown the event; and as there is an agreement between his foreknowledge and his decrees, he would have determined the application of Christ's death as an atonement, to be commensurate with this supposed greater number. The Arminian imagines however, that if God's determinations reach every event in the universe, then he becomes the author of sin. But if it be true, that his foreknowledge of the choosings of his moral creation, be coeval with his plan, the inference is illegitimate, because in relation to his prescience his decrees can not be *causal*. A *cause* must always precede the *effect* in the order of duration. But his *decrees* are *coeval* with his *prescience*; they cannot therefore be the *cause* of the divine foreknowledge; and if not of that foreknowledge, not of the things foreknown. The agency that produces events, is the *cause* of those events. But the determination of an event is one thing, and the agent that produces it, another; the decree therefore, of which an event is the fulfilment, cannot be the *cause* of that event. The event therefore, may be produced by an agent entirely different from the one who decrees. God's decrees therefore may be fulfilled by the agency of others as well as by his own, and either his own agency, or this agency of others, and not his decrees, is the *cause* of the events decreed—God determined to create the world; in fulfilment of this determination he created it—*himself* and not his *decree*, was the *cause* of the production; God determined to give up the heathen world to *vile affections*,* to idolatry, and to all the wickedness which he knew they would choose, and thus determined to *suffer* all these enormous sins—*themselves* however and not God's decree to *suffer* them, was the cause of these enormities. So, that the coeternity of the divine foreknowledge and of the divine decrees, levels the imaginary mountain at a single stroke; and casts to the winds the old Arminian objection, that the doctrine of predestination destroys man's natural liberty.

In this subject we have the goodness and the wisdom of

*Rom. i. 26.

God equally displayed. In his goodness so strong are his well wishes for the happiness even of the wicked, that he loved the world: in infinite wisdom, he adopted a covenant of mercy, ordered in all things and sure, and gave his Son to become a propitiation for all, and an atoning and redeeming sacrifice for them that believe. Let saints adore and obey, and let sinners believe and shed tears of penitence at the love and the humiliation proclaimed by the cross.

And if these things be so, let no messenger of Jesus, fear, that he is transcending the limits of scriptural orthodoxy, or any article of the Presbyterian church, when he informs dying men, however thoughtless, or however wretched, that with the love of benevolence God loves *them*, and Christ died for *them*, and that if they are not saved it is because they *will not*.

REMARKS.

We beg leave of our readers, to introduce a few remarks on some strictures, on our first number, over the signature "Arminian", which recently appeared in the "Religious Messenger of the Philadelphia Conference," a Methodist weekly paper, published in Philadelphia. In our remarks we intend no attack upon the society to which the writer probably belongs.—We recognise many among them, both clergy and laity, as friends and christian brethren, with whom we have held communion, and taken sweet counsel together, and whom, whilst we wish them better reconciled to pure Bible orthodoxy, we love, and from whom, we would not wish, our difference of theological opinions, to alienate our affections. But our duty to the great Shepherd, sometimes requires us to *mark* a black sheep in whatever fold he may be found.

We think, the literary, theological, and moral qualifications of the writer not such as prepare him, either for Biblical criticism or theological animadversions. As we have neither the name, nor any personal knowledgs

of the author, our decision is made entirely from his Strictures. We examine first his literary abilities:

We make no remarks on typographical errors, to which every publisher is exposed; nor are we offended, because he tells us that "he has completely failed in his main design as, I think, every attempt of the kind must do;" [Stric. No. 1] or because he says "all things else as is" [are] "casual;" [Stric. No. 4] or because with some considerable degree of bad taste, he makes the Greenlander quake and fear like a man, and at the same time howl like a dog [Stric. No. 2]. These are trifles, on account of which we would not be disposed to condemn the performance in *toto*, as destitute of claims to literary tolerance, if not to literary approbation. But when a man places himself before the world in the attitude of a public expounder of divine truth, and as a theological censor, and then, in addition to these minor blemishes of composition, proves himself not only utterly ignorant of Biblical criticism; but to be so uncultivated in his vernacular tongue, as to write and publish language, which conveys ideas altogether different from those intended to be exhibited, we then think, that the dignity, and honor of religion, demand, that such a man, should be at least, informed of his deficiencies:

In strictures [No. 4] we are gravely informed by our censor, that, "*From the foundation of the world*" does not literally mean from all eternity. Now if he had been so fortunate, as to have turned to his Greek Testament; or if he does not read Greek, as it would rather seem, if he had opened R. Watson's book, which he has several times very unappositely introduced into his strictures, at the beginning of his chapter on the Omniscience of Deity, he would there have found it rightly translated "*From all eternity*;" and if this would not have done, if he had gone to Aristotle, [De Cælo Lib. I, Cap. 9] whose authority, as a Greek scholar, is still better, he would have seen the decision confirmed; and the good *sense* of the theological community would then

probably, not have been offended with the *illiterate babbling*, that the text does not mean *from all eternity*.

In strictures No. 3, we meet with a similar instance of *ipse dixit* exposition. There our censor, very confidently, as if well acquainted with the whole matter, declares "I am happy in having the authority of the Apostle Paul, to bear me out in this view of the subject. His words are, *God hath from the beginning chosen you to Salvation THROUGH the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth.*" and then with an air of supreme confidence, he draws the conclusion, that the sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth, are in the text, anterior to the choice of God. Had he here consulted the very words of the Holy Ghost, he would have found, that the apostle Paul, who is not generally suspected of Arminianism, is in this text, peculiarly adverse to the system; that the *through* so confidently dwelt upon, is the Greek *en* [most strictly and literally *in*]; and, that consequently, the Saints here addressed, were chosen, *in* the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth. Thus God carries into effect his eternally designed choice, *beginning in* the sanctification of the Spirit, by which the moral power to exercise faith is given; and *ending in* the believing operation of that power. The original language of this text is most decisive against the Arminian notion, that God chooses men *to be* saints after he sees they *are* saints.

But in stricture 4, he proves himself inadequate to the appropriate application of even English words. We are there informed, that the determinations of Deity, are *casual*. In first glancing the eye over the sentence it was supposed to be a typographical error, and of course, its place was supplied with *causal*. But to our surprise, we found the word repeated, and repeated, sometimes very much to the annoyance of R. Watson's good sense. This proved at once, that our confident critic, had never rooted up all the classic soil of Greece and Rome, nor yet swallowed Johnson's Dictionary whole. In the annals of theological lore we know of no better parallel, than the following anecdote, communicated by

a gentleman of respectability as a fact: A certain preacher chose for his text, the reply of the slothful servant to his Lord; "I feared, because thou art an *austere* man," and not thoroughly versed in Dictionary distinctions, he read "thou art an *oyster man*." He then proceeded to show, how God resembled an oyster man; he described the various ways of raking oysters; traced the analogy between them and the methods, in which God rakes for sinners; and eventually, as might be expected, succeeded in convincing the more intelligent part of his audience, that he was better qualified for raking oysters, than for preaching the Gospel. When such men are paraded before the public, as teachers of religion and the defenders of theological systems, we have a picture so ludicrous, as warrants us in adopting the language of the poet—

Spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici?

and yet, when viewed in another aspect, it is such as ought to make every lover of Zion's health and prosperity mourn.

We secondly consider his acquaintance with theological opinions incompetent. We pass over any particular exposure of the want of that mental training, by which a man is enabled to direct all his words to a point—a want, however, very loudly proclaimed in these strictures, by a frequent wandering from the subject at first proposed, and by the unappropriate expressions, and the irrelevant matter often introduced.

In stricture No. 1, he proves the narrowness of his Theological reading when he charges the Christian Preacher, with a misrepresentation, because it is stated that Calvin places the determinations of God before his foreknowledge.—In proof of this, see the quotation from Calvin's Institutes, at the end of the third page of Christian Preacher No. 1, and also the following quotation from his Institutes—Book III. Chap. XXIII. Sec. 1—"The cause of hardening is the secret counsel of God;" and if the cause of hardening, then antecedent to the foreknowledge of hardening; because an event, according to the reasoning of Calvinists, can not be known, as certain, until its certainty is secured. To

this we add the following authorities of Calvinistic writers:

“All the foreknowledge of future things, is founded on the decree of God.”—*Witsius on Cov. vol. ii, p. 9.*

“Prescience follows—predestination” *Buck's Theo. Dic. under the word Prescience.*

“Præscientia Dei sequitur ejus decretum. The prescience of God follows his decree.—*Francis Turretin Vol. i, p. 331.*

The latter author was one of the successors, that occupied Calvin's chair at Geneva. It would be well if certain preachers and writers, who are frequently refuting and abusing Calvin, would first, be at the trouble of learning what Calvinism is. It would no doubt save them a great amount of labour. We think the above quotations sufficient to render palpable the ignorance of our censor.

We thirdly consider his regard to candour, and truth as much deficient as either his literary or theological attainments. In stricture No. 5, the Christian Preacher is represented in the most unqualified manner, as teaching, that Christ did not die for all mankind. This statement is not only *false*, but, if the writer read the 17th page of the No. he professed to review he must have known it to be *false*. It appears like a downright intentional misrepresentation—See Christian Preacher No. i. p. 27, and No. iv. throughout. At the end of stricture No. i. we are informed, that it will be, as difficult to gain submission to Calvinism in any form, among the Arminian part of the population of Delaware as it “would to persuade them, that Judas died for the world instead of Jesus Christ; or that the Babalonish captivity was before the flood”—This may all be true. But in this sentence a piece of scandal shows as much of its face as it dare.

(*The remarks will be concluded in the next number.*)

THE CHRISTIAN PREACHER.

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No. 5.

THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof—Ps. xcvi. 1.

All nature is silent, yet in distinct and harmonious language, acknowledges the necessity of a supreme governing power. When we see the earth moved with convulsions; seas rolling their waves over the abodes of men; and volcanos burying in ruins the cities, scattered on the surrounding plains. and, above all, when we see lawless multitudes, raising the voice of anarchy, like the roaring of many waters; and unruly nations, rushing like planets hurled headlong from their orbits, thwarting each others paths, and dashing each other in pieces—we *feel* that a power Omnipotent, to balance the rocking world, to bound the raging sea, to stay the fury of the burning sepulchres, to allay the whirlwind of clashing anarchy, and quell the storm of angry nations, is not only requisite, but indispensable to the order of the world. Without the assurance of such a power, what a sad spectacle would creation often present! Such a power the text reveals. In this discourse we shall,

I. Consider the Government of God; and

II. Why it should be the cause of joy.

I. The Government of God—

1. *He rules in the natural world.* He directs the wanderings of every atom, and guides the revolutions of every planet. Without his direction, not a sparrow falls to the ground; every hair is numbered; the heaven is the work of his fingers, and he ordained the moon and the stars.

One part of the work of creation, was the arrangement of matter into forms. In creating the world, God made the waters retire, and the dry land appear. He organized matter into herbs, and trees and beasts, and men. A similar translation of matter, and organization

of it into forms, have ever since been in process up to the present moment. Vegetable substances are converted into animal bodies, and animal into vegetable.—The corn eaten by the ox, is converted into a part of his body; he dies; his flesh is dissolved on the field, and is again transmuted into corn. Again the matter that composes a man's body at sixty years of age, is not the same, that constitutes it at twenty. The original particles have been expelled and new ones introduced. As soon as this flux of matter ceases, the man dies. The process then, that preserves life, is a constant work of creation. The same is demonstrably true of the vegetable generations.

In the work of creation, the waters were separated from the waters—the waters above the firmament from those below—and formed into clouds above, and into seas below. This creation of watery forms, we still constantly witness. Water is taken up into the atmosphere and converted into vapours and clouds, and again, in the form of rains, dews, frosts, or snows, it descends and is conveyed by a thousand channels into the Ocean whence it was taken. Thus the deep is made the store house to receive the watery atoms, and to give forth others to undergo the same varied transformations.

And if we descend to the bowels of the earth, in the mineral kingdom, we find the same evidence of a constant creative process—rocks dissolving to dust, and dust changing to rocks.

Thus the same operations, that in the Bible, are ascribed to God at first, as a work of creation, have been moving onwards, through all successive years. And if this process at first required the exercise of Almighty power, why should not the same process still demand the exertion of the same energies? And if so, God rules matter in all the variety of its kingdom, in its minutest particles. But if in its minute atoms, shall we say, that he does not in its congregated and more magnified forms? Shall we say, that he rules the particles of vegetable matter, until he forms a plant, and then lets loose

his grasp?—That he conducts the movements of atoms, until he forms rocks and mountains, beasts and men, clouds and oceans, and then surrenders their magnificence to the wild vagaries of chance? Shall we say, that he conducts atoms, but lets worlds fall from his hand as if too ponderous for his omnipotence?

But it is thought by some, that to suppose, when Deity first created matter, he impressed upon it certain laws, by which it produces its mutations, and propagates its own forms, without the superintendence of any Sovereign power, presents more exalted notions of his efficiency and his wisdom. In answer to this, it ought to be sufficient to repeat the argument, that all these transformations of matter, in the first instance, are by the Scriptures, attributed to the immediate agency of Deity; and if so, atoms at first had received none of those laws of transformation of which philosophers now so frequently speak; because, the divine interposition described, would then have been unnecessary. And if no such laws existed *then*, what evidence of their existence *now*? What proof, that these laws which regulate the movements of the universe, are any other, but the varied operations of the same power, revealed as at first, creating the *heavens and the earth*? If these laws were at all impressed on matter, it must have received this impression, after it had been, first by the direct agency of Deity, organized into forms. But if this exhibit sublimer views of his character, than to suppose his direct operations to be still continued, then on the same mode of reasoning, to maintain, that these laws were imparted to atoms, as soon as they were created, and that by their guidance, matter was first organized into forms, would display ideas of Deity still more sublime; and to imagine, that he laid such laws on empty space, as without his attention, would produce atoms, convert them into forms, and impart to them all those powers of transformation, whose unremitting operations we constantly witness, would develope ideas the *most sublime*. And thus, we should prove, that we could support a *most sublime philosophy* by a total rejection of the account

that God, *in the beginning created the heavens and the earth!* This system which snatches the universe from the hand of God's providence, is founded on the hypothesis, that the theory harmonizes best with the perfections of the Supreme, which leaves him the most free from care and activity, in the management of the world. It considers a plan unworthy of Infinite wisdom, which requires his constant exertion. And thus it would make *him* the *Wisest* God who *could* or who *would* so form his plan as *to enjoy*, or perhaps we ought to say *to endure* the most indolence. If that system be true, then, Jehovah after starting the machine of the universe, might fall asleep, or be annihilated, and, yet nature as at present, preserve her course throughout eternity. Such would be an Epicurean divinity—a God of ease and indolence—a God contrary to the analogy of nature, which moves onward with an untiring course; and contrary to all the ideas of the great Governor, communicated in the lives of good and useful men, bearing his image, whose years abound with activity; but above all; such a God is opposed to the God of the Bible, who is described as the *Keeper of Israel who slumbers not nor sleeps*; as *he who upholds all things by the word of his power*. He stills the winds, he calms the seas; at his command the wheels of nature pause; and the sun and moon stand still—Therefore God reigns in the natural world. But,

2. *He rules in the moral world.* To entertain just conceptions of God's moral government, we must first learn his perfections, and keep our eyes steadily fixed on his moral character. If we leave this totally behind, or carry with us only some one attribute, whilst the others are forgotten, the moral universe appears a trackless confusion, a maze of contradiction, and perhaps to some minds, even a theatre of injustice and merciless partiality—in which no cause is seen—

“Why unassuming worth, in secret lived,
And died neglected: Why the good man's share
In life was gall and bitterness of soul:
Why the lone widow and her orphans pin'd

In starving solitude: While Luxury
 In palaces, lay straining her low thoughts
 To form unreal wants: Why heaven born Truth,
 And Moderation fair, wore the red marks
 Of Superstition's scourge: Why licensed pain,
 That cruel spoiler, that embosom'd foe,
 Imbittered all our bliss."

And whatever may be the conceited orthodoxy of those
 whose saint is the infidel philosopher—

"Slow to no act—who takes no private road,
 But looks through nature, up to nature's God:"

The experience of ages, teaches man the humiliating truth, that though the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work;—though reason may climb the ladder of nature, until inference looks into the heavens, and hears the voice of a power above us; yet, that, *He makes darkness his secret place; and the pavilion round about him are dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.* Reason when sobered by piety has ever descended from her giddy elevation, exclaiming in despair, "Who by searching can find out God? Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?" and thus acknowledging that nature, can only teach reason, that there is a God, but informs us not what he is—that eagle-eyed philosophy sees not up half way to Deity, and thus confirms the Scriptural testimony, that *the world by wisdom knew not God.* Infidelity has often proudly climbed the ladder of creation, and looked upon the clouds of night, that surround the divine habitation, until dizzy with speculation, she sometimes imagines, that she sees the shape and dimensions of Deity; just as superstition staring on the gloom of thick midnight, sometimes imagines that she beholds spectres and fairies; and hence to one infidel, he has appeared to be the God of chance, and to another the God of fate, whilst others less credulous; but no less philosophical, have candidly confessed, that in gazing upon the vast expanse, they have seen **NO GOD.**

It is for a mind that can expand itself over all the immeasurable space of the Almighty's universe; and dart its intelligence swifter than the lightning through the pathless duration of a past and a future eternity, and witness the evolutions of his eternal plans and operations—In short it is only for a mind that is Deity himself, to learn the perfections and character of Deity from his works—Creation is too vast for comprehension—*It is higher than heaven what can we do? It is deeper than hell, what can we know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth; it is broader than the sea.* How then can man whose space is but a point; whose duration is but a moment; and who in extent and duration, can see a part ten thousand times less, in comparison with the whole creation, than the ten thousandth part of a grain of sand to the dimensions of our globe—how can *he* look *through nature!* how preposterous!—look *through nature*, up to nature's God! *No man therefore can know the Father but the Son and he, to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.* The Son has revealed God in the scriptures; and to them we go for his attributes, and his character. Here reason finds her firmest rock, her purest light, and her loftiest elevation. Here are truths given, on which she may lawfully exercise her noblest powers—things that *are revealed*, and we may modestly presume, all their deducible relations, and legitimate consequences are for us.

The scriptures exhibit God as the *only Wise*. Wisdom is the power of judging rightly. This power is then one of his perfections. It is not an eternally dormant power, because all his works are made *in wisdom*. Works to be made in wisdom must be made so, that they can rightly be judged subservient to some end; and if so, they must be made according to some plan, and this plan must not only comprehend things themselves as they are made, but must extend to their remotest consequences: And as God is the same yesterday, to day, and forever, his knowledge and intentions must have been forever the same, his plan must be eternal. The *wisdom* and *immutability* of God therefore secure him

an eternal plan—a doctrine which all the providences, and Prophecies contained in the Bible amply confirm.

God has also revealed himself to be the *Almighty* and also that he *worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*: so that his whole plan is sure to be accomplished.

In his own volume he is also described, as a God who hates sin and who has no delight in the death of the wicked. From this we may rationally conclude, that in forming a plan, in which he would be most delighted, he chose one of those possible systems, in which there would be the *most* piety and happiness, and the *least* sin and misery. And if the question be agitated, why was a system chosen in which any sin and misery were suffered to enter?—we think a reasonable answer deducible from his revealed perfections. It was agreeable to his infinite benevolence, that the greatest possible amount of happiness, should be enjoyed in the created universe. In order to this, it was agreeable to his wisdom—which it is but modest to suppose always chooses that which, all things considered, is the *best*, that there should be a moral system; a moral system always implies natural liberty: it is essential to natural liberty, not to be controlled by the compulsion of philosophical Omnipotence, and thus to produce the greatest amount of happiness, and to exhibit the Maker's greatest glory, moral creatures must be governed only by placing before them the wisest and most powerful motives. And thus he chose a moral system in which sin and misery were foreseen, as certainly finding a place, not because he delighted either in the one or the other; but because in one of the best systems of natural liberty, that could be chosen—one best adapted to produce the greatest happiness to creatures, and to reflect the greatest glory on the Creator—some amount of sin, and some degree of misery, would be the *certain* though not the *necessary* result. But as he *hates* sin and misery he chose that system of moral beings, in which there would certainly be as little of either as in any other, that could have been chosen. Thus he suffers sin and

wo into the universe; because in any system of natural liberty so extensive as the present, some beings *will* sin, and it is but reasonable to infer, that he has chosen the present because in it there is as *much* piety and happiness, and as *little* sin and suffering, as in any other that could have been chosen.

To understand how the actions of moral beings can be decreed, and yet free, just imagine, that when God who is *of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, determined to place before them the proper moral means to deter from transgression, and invite to obedience, he also determined, to leave them, in the exercise of natural liberty to act, as coeternally with the choice of his plan, he foresaw they certainly *would*. Now is any contradiction involved in the idea? When he framed the system of moral being, he determined to place before Adam the tree of knowledge of good and evil; to inform him, that it was his requirement, that of it he should not eat; to announce with the law the penalty, *the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*—and thus to exhibit before him all the motives to obedience, which the holy goodness of the Lawgiver demanded to prevent the thing which he hated; and then determined to leave him, in the use of natural liberty to choose as coeternally with the adoption of his moral system he foresaw he would. He determined to command Pharaoh to let his people go; to threaten him with plagues as a consequence of his refusing; and then to suffer him, in the exercise of that natural liberty essential to a moral being, to act according to his choice certainly foreknown. And such were his determinations with regard to the Israelites to whom he pronounced his law and proclaimed the penalty, that in case of transgression, their land should fall into the hands of their enemies, and they should be carried away captive; and after all this, to let them, in the exercise of that natural liberty essential to accountable beings, take the course which he eternally knew they certainly would choose. And in his eternal plan, such are his dealings with the heathen world. He eternally determined to unfold before their eyes the pages of nature—

the things that are made—to reveal for their instruction his eternal power and Godhead, whence to infer his law and the penalty; and, then to let them make their choice of obedience or of disobedience, to him eternally foreknown as the certain result of their existence and circumstances. This it is believed is the only way in which He decrees the existence of sin. He decrees not, that it *shall be*, but merely as the *certain* result of a moral system, that its existence *shall be suffered*: and it is *suffered*, because all things wisely considered, it is better that it should be *suffered*, than that there should be no moral existences. Thus if God's moral subjects in his plan are suffered to sin, it is, because in the best plan of moral government they *will* sin. Now, it is difficult to see, how decreeing to let creatures exercise their natural liberty, can be the destruction of that liberty, and yet many assert, that if a creature's actions be decreed, they cannot be free! Divested of all ambiguities, it is nothing less, than asserting, that the God of Heaven and earth, *cannot* decree natural liberty to his moral subjects!—An assertion that certainly ought not to be admitted without proof; especially since we find it opposed by a number of Scriptures, such as—*Who worketh All things after the counsel of his own will. Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain*, which can not be evaded but by being converted into figures. Thus even sin falls within his plan; yet he hates it as an *abominable thing*; tempts no man to evil; and does all that can be done by a moral governor, to prevent its very existence. And thus we see, that the ingress of sin into the universe, is no argument, that the plan of Him, who ruleth over *all*, does not extend to every event—evil as well as good.

Though, through his great goodness and holiness, opposed to sin in its very existence; yet, since through the abuse of the creature's natural liberty it *will* find place, he exercises not over it the Providence of "bare permission, but such as hath joined with it, a most wise

and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering, and governing" to "his own ends; yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature and not from God"* If the sins of a haughty and a cruel monarch, would not be prevented, God would choose, that they should be committed, in the chastisement of the children of Israel for their sins; and, that they should not happen in any other way, he would bar up other avenues with his own interposing providence—And hence his language by the prophet is—*I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down as the mire of the streets. Howbeit, he meaneth not so; neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations, not a few.*† If Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, would not forsake their sins in some form, God presents before them the Saviour and all the circumstances by which he knew, they would be gathered together against his holy child Jesus. to do *what his hand and his counsel before determined to be done*; because, though they meant not so, neither did their hearts think so; yet their sins in this form better than in any other, could be overruled, so as to display the brightest glory, that ever shone on the immensity of the intelligent universe. And since the ambition of an Alexander and a Cæsar, would not be restrained in its risings by the moral instructions conveyed by the light, that shone in *the things that are made*, he gave success to their armed legions, to break down the strong holds of iniquity, to scourge guilty nations, and to carry with their conquests, the letters of Greece and Rome, and their best heathen civilization from eastern Asia to western Europe, and from the parched coast of southern Africa, to the icy shores of the northern sea; that by the former the literature of Greece soon to be eternalized by the Evangelists and the Apostles as the vehicle of inspiration to carry the written Gospel

* Confession of Faith, chap. v. sec. 4. † Isai x. 6, 7.

to the nations, might be conveyed as far and as wide, as his conquests, and, that by the other the known world might be united in one great empire around the banner of the Roman eagle, and thus the Apostles under the protection of its wings, might traverse the globe and preach the Gospel to every creature. Thus if as a moral governor, he suffers to find place in his universe the least possible amount of sin, and controls and governs that least possible amount, so as to effect the least evil, and to become subservient to the greatest amount of good, which its nature permits, its existence in his accountable creation, and his governing that existence, so as to prevent it in one form of disobedience and to permit in another, is entirely consistent with his infinite benevolence which desires the greatest amount of good, with his infinite wisdom, which directs to the best possible ends, and with his omnipotence, which effects all that his goodness directed by his wisdom dictates to be done.

A difficulty arises in the minds of many, because by the Scriptures we are taught, that God withheld from Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom, the privileges which, had they been afforded, would have proved effectual for their reformation, and granted them to Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, on whose inhabitants they were unproductive of any good—*Wo unto the Chorazin! Wo unto the Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable, for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou Capernaum; which art exalted to heaven, shalt be brought down to hell, for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee.* Why, it is asked, were those great works fruitlessly done in Chorazin, and Bethsaida, which if performed in Tyre and Sidon, would have produced repentance?—And why were the

inhabitants of Capernaum, by mighty miracles and heavenly doctrines unavailingly addressed, and Sodom left without the miracles and the instructions of an incarnate Saviour, to be consumed by fire, when the same means, which by the former were unimproved, in the latter would have produced a lasting reformation? To say, that the governor of the world, in this acted without design, or, that his design was regulated by a mere capricious choice, regardless of consequences or of the consistency of his own character, is not such a solution as affords any relief to an enquiring mind. In teaching that God affords the means of repentance *to some* which he denies *to others*, these texts directly contradict the doctrine violently advocated by many, who are regulated in their theological opinions, more by caprice or by the prejudices of a mistaken education, than by the good word of life, erroneously suppose, that God dispenses his means of salvation, equally to all; and in informing us, that these extraordinary means were withheld from Sodom, on account of which withholding its guilty inhabitants were then enduring *the vengeance of eternal fire*,* they would frown into silence another class of objectors, nearly allied to these, who suppose that on account of no means denied to men in this life; will their condition be any worse in a world to come, but they do not teach us, that, because Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, had witnessed mighty works, that would have saved Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom, had they been displayed in those wicked cities, the latter were left destitute of so much of the teachings of nature and Providence, as leaves them without excuse. From the will of God to give in the one case and to deny in the other, we ought to infer, that the dispensation was like himself, wise, just, and good, and a little attention to hints given in the Scriptures, will confirm the conclusion. In the economy of a wise and a good God, it appears reasonable to infer, that the time and the place, best suited to produce the widest extent of good, would

*Jude 7.

be selected for his operations. But because, by the advent, miracles, and doctrines of Jesus Christ, Sodom might have been *saved*, there is no argument that the days of Sodom was the *time* in which his appearance on earth would have produced so much happiness to the universe, or so great a revenue of glory to the divine character, or even so much good to the inhabitants of this world, as was produced by his appearing in the fulness of God's own time. It would be no argument, that a general should march a mighty army on a certain day, because he might then save from burning a few tents, spread along the shores of a fishery, when by waiting to march at a future time, he might save an empire from desolation. In the days of Sodom, the world was not yet prepared for the Saviour's appearance in the flesh. Thus it is fair to conclude, that Christ did not perform his mighty works in Sodom, because that devoted city existed not at the *best time* for the display of his incarnation, and of his wonderworking power; and, that he did perform them in Capernaum, because the fulness of time had come for God to reveal his Son, make a Gospel display of his grace, and to demonstrate by miracles before unseen, and by doctrines before untaught the divinity of his mission, and this not merely for producing faith in unbelieving Capernaum, but for performing deeds and imparting precepts to be preached by his ministers from age to age for the recovery of a lost world.

And as the age of Sodom was not the time, so Tyre and Sidon, were not the places, in which to display the testimonials of his mission. Though the repentance of the inhabitants of these cities, would have caused *joy* in heaven; yet to produce, no doubt, *a greater joy*, the Saviour in his bodily presence was not sent, but to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*. *To them pertained the adoption and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving the law and the promises, whose were the fathers; and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came.*—

To effect the greatest good to the human family—to sanction the living oracles of a dispensation then draw-

ing to a close, but to which the Gospel was a counterpart, to place on Calvary, and gather around the cross, a blaze of evidence, that would throw its radiance over the habitable earth, and convey its convictions to the latest ages; and to exhibit to the eyes of an intelligent universe a spectacle of humiliation, obedience, and suffering to the most exalted minds, before unknown; and not merely to consecrate, by the august transaction, the earth, which was made its theatre, or the *inhabitants*, who became its witnesses, was the great object of the Saviour's pilgrimage. These grand designs could be best accomplished by confining his operations, principally to the holy land, and not by exhibiting them to the Gentile inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, or the population of any other, then uncovenanted lands. The time in which to throw to the ground the partition wall, that separated the Jew from the Gentile, was not yet fully come. In the best chosen system of redeeming mercy, salvation was of the Jews. And a link of that golden chain which was to lift millions to heaven must not be broken merely to atchieve the penitence of the few inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon.

The moral dispensations of God in relation to these cities, communicated by the Saviour, affords a light to conduct us through the shades of mystery that encompass his Providence towards the heathen world. Eighteen centuries have gone through their revolutions since the command passed the lips of the ascending Redeemer "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." And yet after all the preaching, prayers, and martyrdoms of heaven-born christianity, at the present hour, three-fourths of this world's population have never heard *the joyful sound*. The cloud of idolatry as deep as midnight stretches itself over the whole expanse of tawny Asia and sable Africa, and spreading its wings darkens the skies of a large portion of southern and western America and continental Europe, save here and there a spot where the sun of righteousness forces his rays and mingles a twilight with the solitude of the gloom.

When from the wide spreading empire of moral ruin the christian philanthropist hears the cry of millions as they sink from a dark to a darker doom, his soul melts with compassion and his faith staggers at the protracted march of that providence sufficiently omnipotent to level every wall and sink every mountain of opposition, to demolish every temple and citadel of idolatry, to cast to the ground every Dagon, Baal, and Moloch, and to bear the light of christianity, through all the length and the breadth of *the region and the shadow of death*; but which in the steady march of eighteen hundred years has traversed only one quarter of the globe. He asks why in the government of a God whose tender mercies are over all his works—why does the Sun of righteousness pour his life-giving light over so small a portion of the inhabitants of this world and leave such a four-fold majority of millions to the shades and the shiverings of a cheerless midnight of moral winter? How is he to resolve the doubt and be prepared to vindicate the ways of God to man? If he say that heathenism equals christianity in this life, a survey of the abominable tyranny of the stronger sex over the weaker, of the adulteries and idolatries, and of the parricides, infanticides, and suicides of unchristianized nations, refutes the affirmation and proves it as contrary to fact as it is to the spirit of the Bible. If he ask the heathen oracles for immortality, they are dumb, and thus silently acknowledge that christianity only brings *life and immortality to light*. If he imagine that without revelation the light of nature will conduct the subjects of heathenism to heaven, God meeting him with a contradiction declares that *where there is no vision, the people perish*. If in a multitude of doubts he suppose that the long reign of heathenism over so large a portion of this world's population was an appointment of God in preference to the universal dominion of Christianity, the revealed language of refutation is, that he *will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth*.

Thus borne on the wing of conjecture from one mountain-top of theory to another, he at last dismounts and descending to the valley of pious submission, rests on the truth that *the Lord reigneth*, and, that the judge of *all the earth will do right*. On such a truth as on a rock, he may securely rest—God is just, and will do right; he is good and the earth is full of his goodness; he is infinite as well as good, and his tender mercies are over all his works; he is omnipotent, and doth his pleasure. The conclusion, is reasonable that his dispensations towards the heathen, are consistent with himself; and if so, they are under the influence of infinite goodness, directed by a wise and a just Omnipotence; but they ought ever to be regarded in reference, not to a partial, but a general good—God is over all; *his kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and to his dominion there is no end*. The system to whose general good, the operations of his government tend, is bounded only by infinite space, and is in progress *from everlasting to everlasting*. Now if evil be the object of his holy aversion, and is suffered into the universe at all, only because, in the best possible system, some moral agents *will sin*, it is impossible that he should delight in the abominations of heathen lands; and it appears agreeable to the divine nature, and to the analogy of his known dispensations, that he should employ all the moral means, consistent with the greatest good of the whole system, to prevent these evils; and this inference, we find, accords with the holy records of facts, *For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse*. Thus, however little, creation may teach us of what God is, it clearly reveals his existence and his power, and though this knowledge is not of itself sufficient to acquaint us with the only name *given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved*; and though *where there is no vision the people perish*; yet if when men without God's written word, know there is a power above them, they would yield to the conviction naturally produced by the knowledge of his existence,

that his character, and his will, ought to be sought and known, and would they act on that conviction, by him who spake to Noah, Abraham, Job, and other holy men of the old dispensation, *In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, things might be secretly brought to them*, which would reveal a Saviour and the way of obtaining salvation through his name. So that with all the deep shades of abomination and misery, that engloom the picture of the heathen and without adopting the belief, as contrary to fact as it is to the word of God, that the temporal and eternal interests of men, are as well secured by heathenism as Christianity, it is entirely possible, that out of his more ordinary course of revealing himself to the world by the canon of his written will, he may speak mercy and redemption in the ear of the serious and seeking son of the forest, whose eye has never been enlightened by a written page. This is a work of goodness and mercy, which God has done under the Old Testament economy, and which he *can* and *may* still do; but after all these possibilities and probabilities the christian who in any considerable degree, partakes of the purity and the benevolence of his Master, can not survey the abodes of the heathen without horror at their crimes, and compassion at their miseries, or without raising the voice of supplication, *O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?*

As nations, almost all the inhabitants of the globe have rejected the Gospel. But if God has *no pleasure in the death of the wicked*, it is asked, “why does he not employ his omnipotence to prostrate all opposition to his truth, and to scatter every cloud, that casts it deathly shade over the surface of this earth?—Here is the burden under which the faith of many a good man totters. This difficulty arises wholly from that system of theological philosophy, which forgetting, that the moral creation is a system of natural liberty, not to be guided by

coercion, but by moral causes, strangely supposes, physical and moral effects equally the objects of the divine omnipotence. Whereas the Scriptures constantly represent God, *except in the agency by which he recreates the sinner after his own image lost by the fall*, as employing his omnipotence in the government of the moral world, only in presenting motives to influence the subjects of natural liberty to obedience, by addressing their hopes, their fears, or their love by objects of desire, terror, or affection. Thus by his *mighty works* the Saviour presented motives, to Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum ineffectual, which on the hopes and the fears of Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom would so have operated that their guilty inhabitants would have sought and found that regeneratiag Spirit, who in them would have produced a happy repentance. So that the subjection of the heathen world to the easy and peaceful dominion of the Gospel, is only indirectly the object of physical omnipotence, and there is no discrepance between the omnipotence of Jehovah and his will, that all men be saved.

So far as the exertion of mere omnipotence is concerned, for any thing we can say, God might regenerate the savage without employing any outward means, addressed either to his hopes or his fears, to influence him to a willingness for such a change; but as the fact is otherwise—as the whole history of his dispensations proves, that as it was by man's choice influenced by motives presented by the tempter, he lost his Maker's image, so also, by man's choice influenced by motives addressed by the Spirit of mercy* this image is restored, and as it is presumed, that God's actual mode of dealing with man is as consistent with infinite perfection, as any other possible; the conclusion is unavoidable, that it is not consistent with all the attributes of the divine character to re-create a fallen intelligent being without first addressing that natural liberty essential to his moral nature.

By our Saviour, we are taught, that the motives presented by the light of nature, or by the example of

*See note A.

righteous Lot, to the inhabitants of Sodom, were not such as prevented them from being *sinner*s exceedingly; but that his own mighty works, had they been done among that people, would have been instrumental in changing their character. Thus in other circumstances, motives sufficiently powerful might have been presented, to have secured their salvation. On a parity of reasoning in other circumstances motives might have been addressed to the men of Capernaum so powerful, as to have secured their repentance. And pursuing the thought suggested by our Saviour, we naturally infer, that in certain circumstances motives might be employed sufficiently mighty to overcome the obstinacy of the most hardened and the most embruted of the humankind. But the days of Sodom were not the best time, nor Tyre and Sidon the choicest places for these strong motives exhibited to Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, to be presented. And as in the progress of the Gospel dispensation, the evidence of the divine origin of Christianity, has been increasing from the days of our Saviour until the present hour, as light from the morning dawn to the strength of the full risen sun, perhaps, had the evidence now before us been presented to them, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes. And perhaps should the Gospel march forward accumulating evidence in its progress, until it rises to the meridian of the millennial day, motives then so irresistible may be exhibited, as to command the submission of the world, and heavenly truth rise in a blaze so strong, as to dispel from the whole earth every shade of moral night. And thus, as was the case with Sodom, we may see, the time has not yet come for Deity, consistently with the best plan of his moral operations, to place before the heathen world those irresistible motives by the instrumentality of which the nations will all be given to the Son for his inheritance.

If then to every human being, that walks the globe, a light is afforded which renders him excuseless, and in the improvement of which a merciful God may impart more light, and if the means best adapted to man's

moral nature, and the most consistent with Infinite Perfection, and the general good of the universe, have ever been in progress for the final redemption of the world, then God's ways toward the heathen, may be vindicated before all the hissing legions of impious scoffers, and faith discover how every *mouth shall be stopt and all the world become guilty before God.*

Besides, for any thing we can tell, God may foresee, that in many places, if the Gospel be sent, it will not be received, but only be so abused, as to deepen the condemnation of their wretched inhabitants; and since he foreknows they *will* force their way to ruin, whether the Gospel be sent to them or not, his goodness and mercy may permit them to sink to their place with only the guilt incurred by the light of nature rather than to increase their guilt by sending them a brighter revelation.

By some, this view of God's dispensations towards the unchristianized nations, will be supposed to give too prominent a place in the picture, to the will of the creature, and to leave omnipotence too much in the shade. But if the objection suppose the direct agency of omnipotence without the instrumentality of any moral means, prepares the minds of the heathen for the reception of the Gospel, and the theory here defended, that the divine wisdom and power were at first employed in constructing and forming that moral machinery of man's nature, whose natural liberty being addressed by motives, equally secures the same results, it is difficult to discover, how the objection presents any advantage in the exhibition of Omnipotence; but easy to perceive, that it fails in displaying the wisdom of God in his original plan and in reconciling his goodness and mercy with his ways in the government of men.

Thus God not only overrules even the wickedness of transgressors. in this world, so as out of evil to produce good; but he holds them as the subjects of his justice and his power in the world to come. When his long suffering has permitted them to fill up the measure of their iniquity in this life, he commissions death his mes-

senger to cut them down, and bring them prisoners to judgment. Here his invitation, *come unto me* is converted into a terrible command, *Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels;* and his expostulations of mercy, *Why will ye die?* into vindictory displays of omnipotence—to create the worm that never dies, and to enkindle the fire that is never quenched. *Here* he is seated on a throne of grace; *there* he ascends a throne of burning justice. *Here* he holds a sceptre of mercy, *there* he wields a rod of iron to dash his enemies in pieces. The power and the wisdom, that *here* work wonders suited to turn them from iniquity and to convert them to righteousness, are *there* employed to inflict eternal pains and enkindle everlasting burnings on all them who will not *now* know God and obey the Gospel.

If God rule the wicked, much more his saints. He not unfrequently leads them in strange ways and through deep waters; but ever defending them through floods and fires, he keeps them by his own power through faith unto salvation. On earth he not unfrequently rules them with fatherly chastisements, but in heaven always with pure love. But we are,

II. *To consider why the Government of God should be the cause of joy.* On this we must be brief.

It ought to be the cause of joy, that the whole universe is governed by Deity, according to a plan the most consistent with his wisdom, justice, and goodness, every part of which will certainly be fulfilled. From the minutest atom to the loftiest seraph; every creature, in his government is subservient to some good and wise end. If our comfort and safety in life, be intimately connected with the regular succession of things by the relations usually denominated cause and effect, it ought to be the matter of joy to know, that his agency is employed to produce this regular succession, and that the course of his operations will not be suspended but for ends the wisest and the best. To know that when we take food it shall not become poison, or drink, that it shall not become fire, or, that when we are conveyed in a

chaise or in a ship, that the vehicle shall not dissolve to atoms, or the earth lose its solidity, or the Ocean its bouyant power, except for purposes the most wise and merciful, demands the ejaculations of a thankful and a pious joy.

But as the natural world is subservient to the moral, his government in the latter, ought to be still more the cause of joy. God identifies his people with himself. And as he hath made *all things for himself*, so all things, whether prosperous, or calamitous, whether life or death—things present or things to come *shall work together for good to them that love God*. Even the light afflictions of this life, that are but for a moment, shall work out for them *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*.

The earth and all the abundance of the isles should rejoice, that the *Lord* and not blind fate, or vagrant chance reigneth, because his purpose is, that all their heathen inhabitants shall be given to the Son for his inheritance, and he will overturn, and overturn the nations, until all his pleasure be accomplished—Joy to the earth; God reigns.—Amen.

Remarks concluded from page 96.

In a written sermon, on religious ignorance, preached last January, the Editor addressed the following language to his audience—“I fear, that if *some of you* were interrogated on the history of the Bible, you could scarcely tell who lived first, Paul or Nebuchadnezzar; whether the Jewish captivity was before or after the flood; or whether Adam or Jesus Christ died to save sinners.” This as we are variously informed, was garbled from hearsay by a certain clerical individual, then in this region, and so altered in the carrying as to substitute *Arminian* or *Methodist* for “*some of you*.” In this counterfeit form, it was circulated far and wide; carried into the pulpit; and there no doubt soundly refuted. And is it not enough to prostitute the ministry, and degrade the pulpit, the vile slander has so

far found its way into the good graces of our censor as to obtain a kind of half covered currency in his crude animadversions. Even charity itself, except stone blind, must see, that the spirit which can thus catch such a slander as it flies away and hold it a prisoner to grace the trophies of the pulpit and the press, is nothing higher than a base bigotry, regardless of truth, and only intent on exciting sectarian prejudices. If such a spirit enters heaven, it must be because it is too ignorant to know the turpitude of the sin of lying. We now dismiss the whole odious subject and only add a few remarks tending to develope some of the features of Arminianism:

In No. 1, the strictures represent the assertion, made in Christian Preacher No. I, that Arminians and Calvinists, agree in supposing, that God chose some and passed by, and did not choose others—as contrary to fact, and denies, that Arminians hold any such doctrine; or, admit any such affinity to Calvinism. That Arminians and Calvinists agree in supposing, that God chose, and passed by for the same reasons, or in the same manner, is indeed not true, nor is any such intimation given in the Discourse. But Arminianism does teach, in reality, if not in so many words, that God passes by, and does not choose those to the blessings of eternal life, who die in unbelief.—See definition of Arminianism, No. I, p. 3.

The manner in which our Arminian has disposed of the texts—“Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate”—Rom. viii, 29. “According as he hath chosen us before the foundation of the world”—Ep. i, 4, deserves a remark, not for its originality, but because we may thus catch the genius of Arminian exposition. By the assistance of Benson’s Commentary, he informs us, that the Greek word translated *predestinate*, may be converted into Latin by *prius definitio*. This is not objectionable. And then we are told, that *prius definitio* means to *define* or *describe beforehand*.

To this we object. The first meaning of the Latin word *definitio* is to *bound* or *limit*; and our English word

define is only a metaphorical signification of *definitio* [see any Latin Dictionary]. Thus the text is evaded by changing it into a metaphor. In stricture number 5, we are taught, that "before the foundation of the world," means the Jewish state—before the Gospel was preached!! We scarcely know what kind of figure to denominate this. Such a figuring and distorting of Scripture, ought to make even a Socinian blush. This is sufficient to prove, that Arminianism, like the theory of Socinius, shrinks from a *strict* interpretation of Scripture, and supports itself only by figurative evasions. Arminianism must be *rectified* before it can be *reconciled* to a close exposition of the Bible.

Though we think it is demonstrated in Christian Preacher No. I, pp. 10-13, that human actions may be scripturally predestinated, and, yet free, the writer in Strictures No. 4 and 5, without offering an argument to refute our reasonings, then before him, gives us the old Arminian cant, that if God decreed human actions, they *can not* be free, and he *must* be the author of sin. See Christian Preacher, No. III, pp. 55-58, and also the latter part of No. IV. We can regard such assertions no more than the rattling of an old bell, except we see them supported with argument. If it be truth, that is asserted, it must be attended with evidence, and therefore ought to furnish arguments.

If we must have *more* strictures, let us also have *more* intelligence and *more* candor. Ignorance and falsehood can never be subservient to the Christian religion. She scorns such aids.

NOTE A

In opposition to this doctrine, this text will no doubt occur to the minds of some, "Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, Jno. 1. 13—This text indeed proves, that *regeneration* is exclusively the work of God, but proves nothing about its antecedents. It most literally agrees with the doctrine stated in Christian Preacher No. 2, pp. 42, 43

Errata in this No.

- Page 97, 1st line in the sermon, for "is silent" read "in silent"
- 101, 10th line from top, for "Slow to no act," read "Slave to no sect."
- 103, 17th line from bottom, for "philosophical" read "physical."

Errata in the last No.

- Page 75, 14th line from bottom, for "meditation" read "mediation."
- 96, 13th line from bottom, for "17" read "27."

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N^o. 6.

THE FALL OF MAN.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.—Gen. iii. 6.

What a sad page in the history of man! Here is recorded the first breach of moral obligation ever practised in our world. Here the mound of obedience was overleaped, and innocence forsook the earth. This first disobedience of our first parents, it is the design of the present discourse, and of the one following to consider.

To regulate our contemplations on this momentous subject, it is proposed to pursue the following questions:

I. How did man as a perfect being fall into transgression?

II. Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?

III. Did God foreknow and decree the fall of man?

—and

IV. How is the fall of man consistent with the idea of the best possible system?

I. How did man as a perfect being fall into transgression?

As in physics, so in theology, no theories ought to be admitted, but such as are founded on facts. To answer this question theoretically, the following facts are to be considered,

1. *The particulars in which man's original perfection consisted;*

2. *The law given him as suited to this perfection; and*

3. *The scriptural narrative of his temptation and fall.* We consider,

1. *The particulars in which man's original perfection consisted.*

Perfection in creatures is only a relative term. Absolute perfection is exclusively the prerogative of Deity.

The perfection of a creature consists in an exact adaptation to that place in the universe, in which Infinite wisdom has located him, and to that end for which Almighty power created him.

The perfection of our first parents, consisted in the entire fitness of their moral and physical natures to that sphere in the system of universal being, in which they moved whilst the unsexed inhabitants of Paradise.

Man appears to be the link, which unites the harmonies of the material and the spiritual worlds. As Adam was a compound of the spiritual and the animal creations, and as the Benificent Creator constituted him for the enjoyment of happiness drawn from objects in both kingdoms, he had principles of nature precisely adapted to those particular kinds of enjoyment. As in the cup of creation God mingled almost an infinite variety of flavours—rancids, sweets, and tarts,—man was endowed with powers and appetites to relish their tastes, and enjoy their fragrance. As he projected the landscape, and spread the lawn, and painted the firmament, man was so formed, as to derive pleasure from the objects of beauty and grandeur. And as he opened before him the immense, varied, and magnificent volume of creation, so he endowed him, not only with the power of becoming wise, but also with the desire of wisdom. And so also, as he was designed by his Creator to be a rational and immortal being, and subject to law, he was endued with the principles of moral existence. As relations really exist which involve the distinctions of moral right and wrong, a moral discernment to apprehend these relations, and recognize these distinctions, was given him as one of the indispensable qualifications for obedience. But as a mere uninterested perception of moral distinction, would not be sufficient to ensure obedience, man was formed with a moral sense to feel the pleasures of approbation when he obeyed, and the stings of remorse when he transgressed. And finally, as in the economy of the moral system, man was to have obedience and life, and disobedience and death, placed before him as the objects of his election, he was endued with the power of volition for the purposes of choice.

These were the constitutional principles of human nature, and of course essential to man as such. But to regulate these principles, and direct them to their proper end, a conformity to the image of God as adventitious principle inhabited the soul. For the existence and inhabitation of this principle in the souls of our first parents, we have the express testimony of God's word: *God created man in his own IMAGE, in the IMAGE of God created he him, male and female created he them.* And that it was an adventitious, and not an essential principle of human nature, is demonstrated by the declaration of the Holy Ghost: *The new man—is RENEWED in knowledge after the IMAGE of him that created him.** Here the man is reported as *renewed* after the *image* of God: and if so, he must have fallen from that image; and conformity to it must therefore have been an adventitious principle, and not essential to human nature as such.

To avoid mistakes on this very important subject, it is proper to enquire, in what this conformity to the image of God consisted. The testimony of the Spirit is, that, *the new man—is renewed in KNOWLEDGE after the IMAGE of him that created him,** and *after GOD is created in RIGHTEOUSNESS and true HOLINESS.†* This renewal of fallen man, can be neither more nor less, than a reinstatement of that conformity to the image of God, lost by our *first* parents in the fall. Then according to these Scriptures this conformity to the image of God consisted partly in knowledge.—Truth, and nothing but truth, was the object of man's contemplation whilst, in rectitude, he inhabited his terrestrial heaven. And truth placed constantly before him the perfections of God. The changeful seasons in the year proclaimed to him but the varied Deity. In the diversity of flavours, that in food, delighted his taste; in the fragrance wafted by the winds from the flowers of Eden; in the flocks that covered the verdant plains; in the hymns of the winged songsters of the grove; in the gran-

*Colossians iii. 18. †Eph. iv. 24.

deur of the firmament, now illuminated by the sun, and again spangled by the stars;—in the whole surrounding visible creation; but above all, in the inhabitation of the Holy Ghost in his soul, and in the audible and visible manifestations of the divine presence, his senses, and every power of his mind, were exercised on the truth of his Creator's perfections. And these truths conveyed to his mind through the appropriate avenues, and like so many rays of light converged to a common point, enkindled that fire of celestial love, which becoming the ruling principle imparted light, heat, and motion to the physical and moral powers of the whole man. God is love, and where his perfections are distinctly seen and felt, they produce a reaction of love. Our first parents viewed God in every object that addressed their understanding, and hence their supreme affection conveyed through the objects of creation, as through a channel, terminated on the Creator. And as man is so constituted, that all the principles of his nature, are subordinate to the ruling passion, all the natural and moral powers of our first parents, operated under the immediate controul of Supreme affection to the Author of their being. And as this employment of the human principles, is just that for which man is made, under this guidance, they operated each one in its proper sphere, without any jarring in their interests, or any clashing in their movements. As the wheels of a well regulated machine, one more and another less important as a part, yet the less equally essential with the greater to the complete whole, all turning around in harmonious subordination, the one to the other, and the whole to the power that communicates motion; so all the principles of human nature, in our first parents, while innocent, acting in subordination, the lower to the higher, harmoniously moved onwards in the course of obedience to supreme love of God, which operated as a power imparting motion to the whole: Or, to use another simile, as the less streams in the wide valley of Western America, all, with one consent, flow into the Great Mississippi, and permit their waters to be borne in his majestic channel towards the Ocean, with-

out one seeking a private course for itself, so every principle of human nature in unfallen man, as if attracted with the greater principle of love to the Creator, flowed into its channel, and was borne onwards by its living current towards that Ocean of love, that moves in the bosom of God. And thus, love is the fulfilling of the law. And hence, as whatever man knew, was an emanation of God's perfections, and was surveyed by him as such, and was therefore truth, the very essence of real knowledge producing love in the heart to God, such as to sway every appetite, passion, and power, in the most harmonious obedience to the Maker's law, his original conformity to the image of God, is said to consist in *knowledge*. As in this state, man was obedient to his God; was under the condemnation of no law; and was therefore accounted legally righteous, this conformity to the divine Image may be said to have consisted in *righteousness*. So also, as in the innocence of Paradise, the human powers were devoted to the very purpose to which they were appropriated by their Maker; were undefiled by any perversion from their proper employment; and were therefore, morally pure, man's original correspondence to the divine likeness, is said to be in *true holiness*. Thus man was originally created after the image of God in *knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness*. From this survey of the particulars in which man's perfection consisted, we proceed to examine,

2. *The law given him as suited to this perfection.*

God is the first Cause, and his perfect nature is the foundation of all created beings, and of all the relations, that arise out of the existence of created beings. While moral beings abide in the rectitude, in which they are originally placed by the Infinite Creator, their character and relations correspond with the perfection, or the image of his nature, just as the figure made on the pliant wax with the seal with which it is impressed. As man's original perfection consisted in a correspondence with the moral attributes of Deity, so the law adapted to his primeval perfection, and given him for a guide, is an image or a picture of those attributes so far as they

relate to man. As God is a Sovereign, law must be given to his creature man as an image of that Sovereignty: as he is a *just* Sovereign, his law given to the creature as a picture of his justice, must be a *just* law: and as he is a *good* Sovereign, his law given to Adam as a transcript of his goodness, must be a *good* law. To have given no law would have been a denial of his Sovereignty; to have given any but a just and good law, would have been a relinquishment of his justice and his goodness. And hence, while all the points of obedience to which man's nature extended, and which it covered, were almost as numerous as the motions of his body, and the operations of his mind, God as a just, and a good Lawgiver, made that command which was *ordained* to life, and which therefore, had it been kept, would have confirmed him in a state of spiritual life, consist in one single point of obedience. While he kept that one precept, the Holy Spirit dwelt in his heart, and illuminated his mind to behold his every duty, and by teaching him that he experienced the goodness of God in every object of both sense and reason, he caused his affections to centre on his Creator and his King. But the conditions of his probationary state, were such, that in case of disobedience of the command: *of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat*, this holy inhabitant would forsake his soul, remove from his mind all the divine illumination, which enkindled in his bosom that love to God that subjected all his active powers to the service of the Maker, and would leave all the principles of the man to moral darkness, except so far as the perfections of God, and the relations existing between the creature and the Creator, and the duties arising out of those relations glimmered upon the eye of his understanding through the deep glooms of spiritual death. This is considered to be the commencement of the penalty contained in the threatening: *in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*.

Thus by the law of Paradise, which may be taken as the whole moral law epitomized, that obedience which secured man's title to life, or plunged him in death, was reduced to a single prohibiting precept, forbidding only

one single act: *of every tree of the garden thou mayst freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil* thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* This single prohibition however, laid restrictions on three principles of human nature: the desire of appetite for that which is good for food; the desire of taste for whatever is pleasant to the eyes; and the desire of wisdom, which delights in whatever is supposed to make one wise. None of these were permitted to be indulged by any interference with the fruit of the forbidden tree. And so long as our first parents were firm in the belief, that the threatened death would certainly be the penalty of transgression, they remained in obedience; but eventually, we find the history of their temptation and disobedience, and it is proposed to consider

3. *The scriptural narrative of their temptation and fall.*

It is comprised in the following words: *And he [the serpent] said unto the woman, Yea hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, ye shall not surely die. For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as Gods knowing good and evil.*

From this narrative we learn, that the Tempter made his first attack upon the *understanding* of our first parents. Contradicting the threatening of the Sovereign Lawgiver, he said, *ye shall not surely die*, and represents the divine prohibition as an invidious injunction to prevent them from participating in the divine Wisdom: *For God doth know*, said the Tempter, *that in the day that ye eat thereof your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil.* Our first

*See the note at the end of the sermon.

another gave credence to the falsehood; she surveyed the fruit, viewed it as good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and to be desired to make one wise. Thus her understanding led astray from contemplating the truth of her Maker, and filled with falsehood instead of truth—with darkness instead of light—could no longer converge the rays of divine knowledge so as to enkindle in her bosom that heavenly love, which only can give life, direction, and harmonious motion to all the principles of her nature, in the course of holy obedience. The Holy Ghost ceased to inhabit her soul, as soon as the lie eclipsed the light of her understanding; the love of God forsook her heart; and the inferior principles of animal appetite and passion, now deserted by the higher—the light of truth and the love of God—and left in a state of darkness and anarchy, acting no longer either in subordination or in concert, arose, each to assert its individual claims, and separate gratifications. We find, that after the mind became blinded by falsehood, the appetite for food, the desire of that which is pleasant to the eyes, and the principle that aspires to wisdom, no longer, as before, operated in obedience to the knowledge and the love of God in seeking their object in subordination to higher objects; but sought their individual enjoyment as the supreme end of their action. For when the woman saw that the tree was good for FOOD, and that it was PLEASANT to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one WISE, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave to her husband with her, and he did eat. Her understanding that before, had constantly contemplated the divine perfections, either directly, in immediate revelation, or indirectly, in the beamings of their glory through the medium of the Creator's works, and the affections, that before centred on Infinite excellence, now all went astray; the understanding first, and the inferior principles in the train. No sooner had truth forsaken the mind, than the passions and appetites rushed to seek their own individual enjoyment, regardless of any higher end, and employed the understanding, only to obtain the objects of their gratification.

With these facts before us, we can account for the fall of man without supposing, that God implanted in him any wicked principles, or loaded him with the chains of a fatal necessity. The simple conclusion from these facts is, that though the knowledge of our first parents even in Paradise, was finite, yet what they had, being divine truth, and therefore, real knowledge, so affected their minds, as to direct the current of their affections towards the Creator, and thus to bring all the inferior principles of the man into his service; but that in the temptation the understanding, the governing power, blinded by falsehood, ceased to be a guide in the way of duty, the moral sense, the volitions, and all the inferior principles, went astray from God, and the Holy Ghost, offended by man's transgression, forsook his soul, and *thus conformity to the image of the Maker was lost.*

And if this conclusion be sustained by the facts as legitimate, then *man's liability to transgression resulted from the finite nature of his intellect as a creature, and his natural liberty as a moral agent.*

The facts and principles employed in explaining the first human transgression, if adopted will conduct us to, at least, a plausible solution of the apostacy of the angels who kept not their first estate. It cannot be denied, that Satan's understanding is finite. And it appears equally plain, that when committing his first sin, he was not fully convinced, that all the consequences probably threatened as the penalty of disobedience, would on his transgression, be inevitably executed; because no rational mind can conceive how a holy being can possibly sin, knowing at the same time, that endless ruin will inevitably, and immediately follow.

It must also be conceded, that in his original and un-fallen state, he possessed like man, constitutional desires which, while under the controul of an understanding, properly regulated and employed, were subservient to the end of his creation. As pride is represented by the Apostle as *the condemnation of the Devil*, it is reasonable to infer, that among his original desires was the love

of rank, a principle necessary when properly regulated, as a chain to bind every creature to his appropriate sphere in the order of creation. Only imagine, that with his finite intellect, Satan should erroneously judge, that by violating some command of his Sovereign, he might elevate himself to a higher grade in existence, than that which he then occupied, or even to the Supremacy of the universe; and then, this supposed possibility, viewed by his mind as a matter of fact, would prove as much a temptation to him, as did the forbidden fruit to Adam in Paradise. Now only suppose, that the understanding, when thus perverted from truth and rectitude, would cease to confine the love of rank to the proper sphere; and this desire should rush unrestrained by any governing principle to seek its gratification; and that the understanding, which was formerly employed in controuling it, should now become only the minister of its lawless indulgence; and thus we can account for the descent of Lucifer with all his host of morning stars from their high abodes. If this theory be correct, the fact, that the most exalted created intellect is liable to err in judgment, is sufficient to explain the introduction of sin into the universe.

It may however be asked by way of objection to this theory, how is a creature accountable for an error in judgment? Theologians who make this objection, appear to suppose, that they have fully explained accountability, when they have traced sin to the exercise of volition whence it immediately arises. But unfortunately, they can give no more reason why a man is accountable for an error in *volition*, than for an error in *understanding*. To answer such an objection it is sufficient to retort the question, and ask, how is a creature more culpable for erring in choice, than in understanding? To place the contrast in a clear light: the amount of our theory is, some finite beings are liable to judge wrong: the amount of his is, some finite beings are liable to choose wrong. As a being infinite and absolutely perfect, is exempt from both these liabilities, on either supposition the liability must result from the imperfection of a crea-

ted and finite nature. But as such a nature creates its own liabilities no more in the one case, than in the other, how is the creature accountable for sin, the result of that liability in the one case, any more than in the other? This query ought to be resolved, before the objection is urged against our theory. The soul is an indivisible unit, and is not separated into the different compartments of will and understanding. The whole soul *wills*, and the whole soul *understands*; and in cases of moral agency, it believes what it chooses, and chooses what it believes. It is admitted that no act is culpable but that which is voluntary; but it is apprehended that it was fairly put to the choice of our first parents, whether to believe God or the Tempter; and to the fallen angels while in a state of obedience and glory, whether to believe the declaration of their Maker, or the deductions of their own finite and fallible intellects.

Though obedience, and disobedience, were presented to unfallen man, and unfallen angels, as objects of choice; yet had there been no error in intellect, there could have been, so far as we can see, no inducement to a holy being to choose disobedience. Whilst our first parents believed, that if they ate the forbidden fruit, they should certainly die, in the meaning of the threatening, they appear not to have indulged the least inclination to disobey; but so soon as doubts began to scatter mists over their minds, then inducements to disobedience, began to operate successfully upon their powers of choice. *Then*, but not till *then*, did they begin to survey the guarded tree as *good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise*. So that if we should admit, that the essence of accountability consists in error of choice only, still it is true, that a liability to err in judgment, is sufficient to explain the introduction of sin into the moral universe. Without a mistake in the understanding, there could be no inducement to error in choice. But since it is admitted by all that liability to error, whether in understanding, or volition is morally impossible in an infinite, and absolutely perfect being, it must result from the imperfection of a created and finite

intellect. And if so, how is such a being justly held accountable for the results of liabilities, which he had no choice in identifying with his nature? He does not create his own liabilities either to choose wrong or to judge wrong. Why then is he to blame, either for error in judgment, or for error in choice?

The principal difficulty attending this query, arises from the common opinion in theological philosophy, which supposes that Deity, had he chosen, might have created all the subjects of his moral kingdom so perfect, as to be above all liabilities to sin; that he chose however not to create all of them exempt from these woful liabilities; but to form some of them with such imperfections as would certainly be the antecedents to all the sin, ever perpetrated within the space and duration of the moral universe; which is only saying in other words, that God actually preferred that some men and angels should eventually be sinners, and not always remain holy. Now since it is universally acknowledged, that a perfect God *will* and *can not* prefer wrong to right, on this hypothesis, it is indeed a hopeless task to arrive at any thing but confusion and contradiction.— And hence to preach on the subject, is in many places a thankless and odious performance. But if we dismiss this philosophy, and suppose, that the foundation of all righteousness is the nature of Deity, and the rule of all righteousness his will; and believe his word when he declares sin to be the abominable thing which he hates; and that though he has chosen a system of moral being in which he has decreed to suffer a certain amount of sin as its foreknown imperfection as a creature; yet, that he has selected that system in which there is the least possible evil, and that his nature and his will, secret and revealed, nothing other but the expression of his nature, absolutely prefers righteousness to sin in all his moral subjects, and then we can rationally explain the accountability of men and angels.

The infinitely just and good nature of God requires, that there should be obedience to his will, and that those who depart from it should be unhappy. This require-

ment is as unchangeable as the divine existence. Disobedience therefore is in itself wrong, because contrary to the righteous nature of God, expressed in his will; and is attended with misery, because according to the perfections of Deity the former involves the latter.

God's nature is in itself righteous and good; and in the creature conformity to that nature is in itself righteousness and happiness; and the contrary unrighteousness and misery. This it is apprehended is the origin of all moral distinctions.

Adam then was to blame because he believed and chose that which was forbidden by the divine nature, as expressed by the divine will in the law of Paradise, and the same principle is applicable to all other transgressors. Having thus endeavoured to account for man's first transgression it is proposed to enquire,

II. *Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?*

In considering this question, it will be enquired *first Into what estate did the fall bring Adam?* and *secondly, Into what estate did the fall bring his posterity?*

1. *Into what estate did the fall bring Adam?*

Since the veracity of God was pledged by the conditions of the law of Paradise to inflict death on our first parents, on the very day in which they would violate the great probationary mandate, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat," it is reasonable to infer, that when violating the command they took and ate, the God of truth executed the penalty upon the transgressors, precisely in the sense in which it was threatened. To ascertain the penalty of this first human transgression, contained in the threatening, *thou shalt surely die*, it is requisite to examine the scriptural import of the word death.

Death is in Scripture sometimes employed to denote a separation of soul and body from God's favour in this life. In allusion to this state it is said, "you hath he quickened that were DEAD in trespasses and in sins." It also signifies the separation of the soul from the body. In reference to this meaning it is written, *to DIE is gain*. And finally it means a perpetual sepa-

ration of the whole man from God's heavenly presence and glory to be tormented forever with the Devil and his angels. This is the signification where it is recorded, *He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second DEATH.*

Thus threefold death, *spiritual, temporal, and eternal*, is considered as involved in the threatening, and in principle all resolvable into death spiritual, commenced in our first parents as soon as they sinned.

When they sinned, the Holy Spirit relinquished their souls as his earthly habitation. This influence, the power which regulated the machinery of the human constitution, fled from the soul, and all the principles of the man, like the different parts of a complicated engine, when deserted by the force which regulates and controuls them, clashed with each others movements, and dashing one against another, became a confused mass of warring principles with no rule of action, but the blind impetus of appetite and passion. The spiritual knowledge, which once like the light of heaven shone upon the mind, and melted the soul, until it flowed like a river towards the Infinite Ocean of Love, and moving onwards in its course drew every principle of human nature to its channel as a tributary stream, was withdrawn; the mind left in a state of dark and dreary winter; the current of heavenly affection congealed; and the passions and appetites, all the inferior principles, deprived of the natural outlet for their flowings, rising over their banks, thwarted each others way, and inundated the fair world of humanity with disorder and ruin. This is conceived to be the nature of spiritual death, into which man was brought by the fall, and which carried natural death as a consequence in its bosom.

Some indeed suppose, that natural death is not at all one of the consequences of sin. but that according to the analogy of creation around us, man in his original constitution, even while an inhabitant of Paradise, was subject to death; and that natural death may be considered as a blessing. It is admitted, that for the saint who is ripe for heaven, *to die is gain*; but this gain is

believed not to result from the nature of death; but from the conquest which the believer through the Author of his salvation, obtains over this stern devourer. But if death be in itself a blessing, why is it employed in the Scriptures as a figure to represent disagreeable scenes? *Yea*, says the Psalmist, *though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, and thy rod and staff, they comfort me.* Here the valley of the shadow of death, is generally understood to mean afflictions and sorrows. If death be in itself really a good, why should it be employed in the Scriptures, to paint the gloomy climax of the most disastrous scenery? Why do they constantly allude to our dissolution as a most painful and mournful event? Why is death the king of terrors? It is said, that the event of death, which to innocent man would have been, but a delightful repose, is made terrific, because man has become a sinner, and sin has given it a sting?—But why then—since it conducts us beyond a boundary whence no traveller returns to render an account of its pains or its pleasures—why do not the Scriptures somewhere drop us some intimation, that death was designed as one of the blessings that should attend man in his original purity? The opinion is perfectly gratuitous, without a shadow of countenance from the Bible, which however represents without any qualification *the wages of sin* to be *death*. It is most reasonable, that spiritual death should be attended with death temporal as a consequence. The power that controuled and harmonized the principles of human nature having abandoned his once wonted abode, unrestrained they encroach on each other's boundaries. And not rivers overleaping their native banks, and forcing their way through fertile plains and populous cities; not Ocean rolling his mountainous floods over the continents that encircle his shores, or tossing his inhabitants from the deeps of his bosom to dwell on parched plains and burning mountains; nor earth plunging her children to become the tenants of the cold and dark caves of the great deep, exhibit a scene of greater confusion, than that produced by spi-

ritual death on man's constitution.—Now if the native tendency of disorder is dissolution, it is nothing marvellous, that spiritual death produces the dissolution of the body. Although the effects of our *moral* over our *physical* nature, are not always obvious, yet the inordinate operations of lawless principles are often perceived by the dimmest eye, to be the ministers of death to our physical constitution. How frequently is an excess of love, or joy, or grief, or food, or drink, made the swift messengers of our dissolution! And how much more frequent still, do the operations of avarice, envy, hate, and frequent rage, by slow degrees, prematurely bow the human frame, plant the grey hair in the youthful head; draw deep furrows on the almost beardless face; and place the green sods over him that has scarcely lived out half his days! But how different had man remained the sinless inhabitant of Eden, with all his powers divinely controuled, so that each would glide along smoothly, and peacefully in its own appropriate channel, without any impediments or excesses! Then under the sunshine of his Maker's beatific presence, his soul was filled with light, and love; then no war of principles, no tumults of conflicting passions, and no encroachment of jarring propensities, embroiled his blood, swelled his veins, or distorted his frame. And who can prove, that all the health of blooming youth, and of vigorous manhood, might not be as eternal as the soul, if the man were completely free from sins, disruptions and disorders? Thus in the moment when our first parents, by the fall became alienated from God, they began to die temporally. Their bodies then began that tendency to dissolution, which continued its progress until the sentence was accomplished: *Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return.*

And as *the wages of sin is death* without any limitation, exposure to the second death, to everlasting destruction from the presence of God and from the glory of his power, was one of the consequences which Adam incurred by his first sin, and one which he had endured, as certainly as he did the dissolution of the body, had not

the Saviour been revealed in the promise, *the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.*

This may not however be considered a kind of death entirely distinct from spiritual. It is rather spiritual death continued and enlarged. No doubt an essential, if not the greater part of the torments of the inhabitants of woe, arises from a total surrender to their depravity, which inanced by their sins on earth, is still aggravated more and more, by all the successive acts of rebellion throughout the interminable years of their miserable duration. If it be the nature of transgression to produce depravity of heart, and of that depravity by a kind of reaction to multiply transgressions; and if men are miserable in proportion to the malignity of their dispositions, this is sufficient to account for much of the fire that shall never be quenched, and of the worm that shall never die.

Such is believed to be the state into which the fall brought Adam. It is proposed to enquire,

2. *Into what estate did the fall bring his posterity?*

Into precisely the same as that in which Adam was introduced by his violation of the probationary prohibition of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As Adam for his first sin, was banished from Eden, so all his descendants are born out of its sacred pales. *The wages of sin is death; death has passed upon all men; therefore, all have sinned.* Even infants that have not been guilty of any actual transgression die; but as *death is the wages of sin*, they must be viewed as guilty of some sin, and as there is no other to whose penalty and consequences they can be liable, they must be affected with that sin, which exists, not in personal commission, but in nature, usually denominated *original sin*. Adam in his fallen condition, begat a son, not in the image and after the likeness of God; but in his own image, and after his own likeness. As all men inherit their nature from their first father, so also, they inherit the infection, and the guilt of his first sin: Or in other words, they are introduced into the world, with the same destitution of

conformity to God's image; with the same moral darkness of mind; and with the same derangement and perversion of the principles of human nature, with which Adam's whole moral man was despoiled as a consequence of the fall, and are all therefore, like him disconformed to the likeness of God; and like him subject to the ravages of natural death. They enter the world, with all the principles essential to human nature as such; but destitute of that moral conformity to the likeness of God, which our whole nature lost in man's first transgression—that *adventitious* principle, indispensable to subordinate every merely human power to its proper sphere, and direct it to its proper object. They possess still the original power of loving; but are destitute of that knowledge, which can discern spiritual things, and illumine the pathway of affection to God, who ought to be made the Supreme object of human love. And hence, they love the creature, more than the Creator. Their love is now exclusively devoted to that which delights the eye, charms the ear, regales the taste, pampers pride, feeds avarice, gratifies ambition, or that, in any way ministers to their appetites and passions; and especially to that, which is the strongest, and the ruling principle in their respective constitutions. They love no object, because in it, they see, hear, feel, or taste, the goodness and the glory of their Maker; but wholly, because it is subservient to the enjoyment of some inferior principle. And as in the principle of love there is a perversion, so also in the principle of hate. They hate that which is opposed to the lawless indulgence of that passion, or appetite, which predominates in the constitution of each; and especially do they hate God, whose righteous nature, expressed in his holy will, erects the standard which *makes* such a perversion of principles *lawless*. And hence all are gone astray; they love that which they should hate, and hate that which they should love. They call evil good and good evil; and put darkness for light and light for darkness; and bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Thus they are like Adam after the fall, spiritually dead; the certain can-

didates of death temporal; and except saved by faith in the only Mediator between God and man, they are also certainly devoted to death eternal.

Natural death prevailing over infants who never sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, is deemed irrefragable proof of the doctrine which supposes all Adam's posterity representatively involved in the consequences of his apostacy; confirms the testimony of the Psalmist: *behold I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me;* and accounts for the fact that all men *go astray as soon as they are born speaking lies.*

It is however asserted by some, that the wages of sin is not natural death. It is submitted to the decision of the intelligent, and the candid, whether it has not already been made sufficiently obvious, that the Bible gives not the least countenance to such an opinion. If any doubt, however should remain, the following text appears to be sufficiently conclusive to remove it, if it be at all reasonable: *For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* Here death is said to come by man, and by *Adam*, upon all men. And it can not possibly mean any other, but natural death. It appears from the context to be precisely the same kind of death as that from which Christ arose, when he became the first fruits of them that slept.

In this connexion the words *slept, dead, and death,* are undeniably employed in reference to the dissolution of the body. The mortality of man's body, is therefore the result of our connexion with the first man. But how die in Adam? In Adam as he came out of the hands of his Maker, or in Adam after he had lost his original conformity to his Maker's Image?—Undoubtedly in Adam in his lapsed state. In the contrast Christ is exhibited, as overcoming this death, which all die in Adam, by making them alive in the morning of the resurrection. Now as Christ is no where represented as undoing any blessing which belonged to man in a sinless state; but on the contrary as destroying *the works of the*

Devil; any other conclusion, but that he counteracts the consequences of man's apostacy by Adam in the production of death, by raising the dead from their natural graves, is absolutely impossible. And if so death natural as well as moral is the wages of sin; and if natural death be the wages of sin, death wherever found, whether in adults or infants betokens the existence of sin.

The principle of this doctrine is confirmed by obvious facts. From daily observation we learn, that the condition of children, is often involved in the conduct of parents. If parents through their own folly or neglect, are cast upon an inhospitable and dreary island, their children born there become partakers in their solitude and their sufferings. If a parent through his vices or his indolence squander his paternal inheritance, his children with himself, share the inconveniences of poverty.

Again the conduct of parents often entail on their children physical evils. The vices of a parent produce disease in his own constitution. The contamination is conveyed from father to son for successive generations. How often do we find families afflicted with hereditary diseases! The descendants of some families are the subjects of early blindness; others of consumption; and others again of mental derangement.

The conduct of parents often involve their offspring in moral evils. All see, and admit, the deleterious influence produced by the example of a wicked parent. Children nurtured and reared in idleness and irreligion, *generally* live and die as they were educated.

These are facts, which demonstrate the representative influence of the conduct of parents over the condition of children.

But it is objected, that this doctrine impugns the justice of God. If however it be taught in the Scriptures, and supported by undeniable facts, it is folly for mortals who know almost nothing, to pronounce it unjust. It is supposed to be unjust, that God should constitute Adam a representative, in whose choice and conduct the moral and physical destiny of all the unborn millions of his pos-

terity, should be involved, without our knowledge and without our choice.

From the positions implied in this objection, it can be fairly demonstrated, that the great principle of representation, the performance of the will of the represented, is maintained.

In denying that all men were represented by Adam, this objection virtually denies, that their condition is in the least affected by his fall. The first proposition implies the second. If the condition of mankind be in the least degree affected by the first human transgression, Adam must have been constituted our representative to the extent, in which our condition is affected; be that more or less. Call it what you please, *Constitution* or *Representation* the principle is the same. And if in the extent for which we contend, it be unjust, narrow down its application as much as you can, still whatever remains of it will remain unjust. You lessen its magnitude, but do not alter its nature. If therefore, it be unjust in God as the objection supposes, to constitute Adam our representative, so far, that his violation of the command, *thou shalt not eat*, should involve us in both the *guilt* and the *suffering* of his sin, it was surely no less unjust, to constitute such a connexion between us and him, that his disobedience, should involve us in the suffering of his sin without any guilt; which, if the supposition, that we are not representatively guilty, contained in the objection, be true, is the fact with every actless infant that agonizes in disease, and wriths in death. Hence if God did not place Adam as a representative, so that our innocence or our guilt, as well as our happiness, or our misery, should be involved in his obedience, or his transgression, then God's constituted connexion between the deed of Adam and the condition of his children, was such, that his first sin entailed *misery* on the *innocent*; a monstrous conclusion! and is at least as unjust, as to make his conduct represent our *guilt* as well as our *misery*. Consequently, all mankind by the representative transgression of Adam, became guilty as well as miserable—the principle for which we contend—or, the condition of Adam's

children, is not in the least injured by this fall. There is no principle for middle ground. Of course an objector argues upon no principle, or he assumes the position, that all mankind are born into the world as *sinless* as was Adam when he fell from the hands of his Maker. Now if every son and daughter of Adam, that has ever come into the world, and lived to years of moral agency, has sinned, as is proved to be the fact from such texts as declare, that he that saith he hath no sin, is a liar and, the truth is not in him; then every son and daughter of Adam, who arrives at years of moral agency, performs in person the deed of the first father, *in disobeying God*. Then if all the posterity of Adam, had been present when he took the fruit, they would all have followed his example; and then his taking the fruit, was just the thing which they would have approved; and is just the thing that by their present conduct, they actually *do approve*. Consequently, if they had appointed Adam as their representative, and instructed him how to act in that capacity, they would have directed him to the very choice which he made. Where then is the injustice of constituting Adam a representative for his posterity, if he have actually made the very choice which they all ratify?

If a minister plenipotentiary sent by our government to Great Britain, represent in a treaty the wishes of a majority of the citizens of the United States, there could be no reasonable complaint of the injustice of his legation; much less, if he represented every individual so well, that if all had been present, they would ratify the treaty. Thus if all the children of Adam enter life as pure as angels—the position assumed by the objection—their own choice proves that the doctrine which supposes Adam as a representative, involves nothing that can be legitimately construed, to impugn the justice of such a constitution. But the objection comprehends in itself, the materials of its own destruction. It supposes men to be born sinless; it can not but admit that infants who have by no deed violated their Maker's law, endure sickness, pain, and death; and thus by implication, it charges God with the cruelty of inflicting pain

and death upon the innocent, and opposes the revealed truth, that he does *not afflict willingly or grieve the children of men.*

But the constitution which made Adam the representative of his posterity, so far from being unjust and unmerciful as the objection supposes, may be shown to be directly the contrary.

Facts prove, that God designed to bring the human race into the world in a state of infancy and weakness, in their corporal, mental, and moral powers. Now if each one of these had been permitted to stand for himself so that his first act should involve his future moral condition, there would have been more probability that every one would fall if standing thus for himself, than if he were represented by Adam. He would be exposed to temptation in the years of childhood and weakness, when he might be most easily overcome, whilst on the contrary, Adam was introduced into the world, in the bloom of bodily, mental, and moral vigor, and therefore, better qualified to resist temptation and maintain his moral standing, than any of his infant and youthful children could ever be. Besides, being the representative of all his posterity, he had all the inducements, that could be drawn from the happiness, or the misery, of unborn millions to influence him to stand to his rectitude.

Perhaps to this however it may be objected, that men in childhood and early youth, are not moral agents; and not accountable; and that the conduct, which affects their moral condition, belongs to a period of life, in which every individual is as mature in all the powers, both of mind and body, as Adam was when he was created. This supposition is not admitted as a fact. But suppose it to be so: and still every individual of Adam's children, during the season of minority, is now under the influence of surrounding example, so that habits are formed in childhood and youth, which exert a most mischievous influence over the morals of more advanced life; so that make the years of accountability when you please, still his circumstances for standing in rectitude are far

inferior to those of Adam, who was exempt from the contamination of pernicious example, and all the bias of early contracted evil habits. There was therefore more probability, that the whole family of mankind would be established in a state of felicity by making Adam a representative by whose conduct they would either stand or fall, than if every man's moral destiny had been suspended on his own personal probation. This dispensation therefore instead of being unjust and cruel is the most equitable, and the most merciful.

It is imagined by some, that this doctrine makes God the author of sin. If the human race are all introduced into existence as sinners, say the objectors, does not this doctrine suppose that God made them such as they are?

In answer to this objection, it may be remarked in the *first* place, that the argument bears equally against all denominations of Christians, who believe that men are born sinners, whether they suppose them to be represented by Adam or not: and in the *second* place we are not to consider original sin to exist in the implanting of some wicked principle by the hand of God. The Creator now, and ever since the fall, brings man into the world possessing as Adam before his first sin, all the essential principles of human nature, which he himself at first pronounced *very good*. Man's body and soul, the principles of his animality, his intellectual powers, his moral sense, his love and his hate, all the passions of his mind, are in themselves essential principles of the human constitution; and are therefore, in themselves still *very good*. It is only the misapplication of them, the perversion of them to forbidden objects, that is wrong. If therefore, these principles are in themselves good, the creation of them can not be justly denominated the production of evil, and God their Maker can not be charged in this work with the Authorship of evil. The perversion of these good things is the creature's *act* and not God's. All that in man, is wanting is the inhabitation and the illuminating, and controuling influences of the Holy Spirit, producing that *adventitious* principle, conformity to God's image, which man lost by the fall.

Original sin therefore, consists not in any corrupt principles implanted, nor in the withholding of any principle, which originally made any essential part of man's constitution; but simply in the absence of that conformity to God's image, which was borne away on the wings of the Holy Spirit when for man's first sin he forsook Paradise. According to the laws which God has instituted for regulating the arrangement of the particles which successively enter into the composition of the human body, where an incision is made in the flesh; it is followed by a scar. And as these laws are but the varied operations of Deity, it is his power that arranges the particles so that the scar appears as a consequence of the incision. Suppose God should command a man to abstain from wounding his own flesh, and should on the one hand, promise him if he obeyed, that his body should remain free from scars, and on the other, warn him that if he did not, they should be inflicted on him as a penalty for his disobedience; but the man should however in direct violation of his Maker's prohibition, inflict on his own body a deep and dreadful wound, so that he should become much deformed, and injured by a scar; would not the *man himself* and not *God*, be the author of his deformity? So Adam representing human nature, in disinheriting the Holy Spirit from his soul, by his abominable sin, inflicted on human nature a wound which is followed by the scar of original sin; and is not human *nature* represented by Adam then the proper author of this scar?

And thus in the language of our Confession of Faith, "The covenant being made with Adam not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression."

The moral turpitude of this lapsed condition of human nature, consists in disconformity to that state to which the nature of Deity expressed by his law, requires conformity; and not in the principles by which it was produced, or in other, and fewer words: *in the nature of*

the thing itself, and not in its cause. Not in the principles employed in its production; for they are good; but in the misapplication of those principles. This misapplication takes its rise in the *finite* understanding, and natural liberty of man; or as it would be impossible for a holy being of infinite knowledge to err in choice, it would be more accurate to say, *it results wholly from the finite nature of a creature's understanding.*

But although man is shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin, it is not a legitimate consequence, that those who die in a state of infancy are lost. The Saviour's blood which when applied by the Holy Spirit to the soul of an adult cleanses from all sin, will also when applied by the same power to the heart of an infant, be attended with the same purifying efficacy.

Sinner, dost thou complain of thy representation by Adam?—Behold Christ a better representative! Come to him, and whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out. He is ready to send his regenerating Spirit to dissolve, by his heavenly influence, thy connexion with the first man, and to unite thee by a living faith to the second, the Lord from heaven. It is now as fairly put to thy choice, whether thou wilt break off thy relation to Adam, and obtain a restoration of the conformity to the divine image, which he lost by the fall, as it was put to his, whether or not, he would eat the forbidden fruit, and forfeit that conformity by his disobedience. Murmur not at his representative act, when thou in thine own person, confirmest his transgression by thine own choice. Complain not at his folly in losing his original conformity to the Maker's image, when thou thyself refusest its restoration.

NOTE.

For, its being called the tree of *knowledge of good*, intimated, that man, if from a principle of love, he obeyed this probationary precept, should come to the knowledge, sense, and fruition of that good which is truly, and excellently so, and the full knowledge of which,

is only obtainable by sense and enjoyment. On the other hand when called the tree of *knowledge of evil*, thereby it signified that man, if found disobedient, should be doomed to the greatest calamity, the exceeding evil, and wretchedness he should at last know by experience — *Witsius on the Covenants*.

The most probable opinion of the *tree of life*, is that it was given to man to enjoy as a symbol of that eternal life which should be his, on his continued obedience to the probationary precept; and that he was permitted to eat of it so long as he remained innocent; for it was among the trees of the garden over which he at the first had full privilege. But so soon as man had violated the condition, he forfeited life, and was no longer permitted to partake of this symbol. If God then had permitted Adam to use it as a symbol of eternal life, it would have been an acknowledgement of his right to that which he had forfeited, the acknowledgement of a falsehood for a truth. And hence says God, *And now lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever* (according to the condition of this symbol); *therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden.*

APPENDIX.

To Joseph Lybrand, Samuel Merwin, Samuel Doughty, John Lednum, Elisha Andrews, Manning Force, Thomas F. Sargent, Thomas Miller, W. W. Wallace, and Thomas Dunn, committee of publication; and John Clarke Editor of the Religious Messenger.

From your "Religious Messenger of the Philadelphia Conference" of the 15th inst. it appears, that the story of the oysterman related in the appendix of Christian Preacher No. 4, p. 95, has given mortal offence. You recognize him as a Methodist preacher, call him *an able minister*!!!!!!—and say, that he was instrumental in bringing many from sin to holiness; and to cap the climax, admit the anecdote to be materially true!!! If we could only be convinced that all these contradictions

are facts, we should be prepared to believe, that the age of miracles has not yet passed away. But no specimen of your theological *acumen*, or of your *veracity*, given in the strictures on the Christian Preacher, is believed to impose any obligation to suppose, either, that you are qualified to judge of the true character of Scriptural holiness, or, that if you were, your assertions are to be accredited without great qualifications. It is not indeed to the honor of Methodism, that an Editorial faculty representing the Conference of Philadelphia, should stand before the public in such a predicament; but for the facts, your own strictures, and the Appendixes of Christian Preacher Nos. 4 and 5, are referred to as proof. From the specimens there given of your veracity, we consider ourselves perfectly at liberty to believe as few of your assertions as we please. The Apostle Paul informs us, that a Christian minister ought to be "apt to teach" [didaktikon]; "one capable of teaching," says Dr. Adam Clarke. Is a public bawler, who makes God an *oysterman*, *apt* to teach any thing but nonsense? Where has God promised to set the seal of the Spirit to any thing but the truth? If such a declaimer make converts at all, it must be only from *men* to *oyster-men*, and not from *sin* to *holiness*. Yet under the authority of the Philadelphia Conference, you pronounce such a man, *an able preacher*!! If such be an *able* Methodist preacher, it might be a matter of curiosity to know the dimensions of a *moderate one*.

At a time, when it was fashionable to wear the hair collected in an elevation on the summit of the head, a certain minister is said to have selected from the following passage: *Let him who is on the house top not come down*, these words: *Top not come down*; and deduced from them a doctrine levelled against *top knots*, the then fashionable mode of wearing the hair. This man according to your standard may have been an able minister!!

A gentleman descending one of our Western rivers, was detained several days in a neighbourhood where he spent the Sabbath. Being told, that a celebrated orator was expected to preach that day, he determined to go, though the distance was considerable, to become one

of his hearers. He however was so unfortunate, as not to arrive at the place of meeting until after the service had sometime commenced. He found the congregation collected in a barn, and all in a state of uproar. Some were lying down, some jumping, and others shouting; and although he heard the preacher's voice, elevated above all the other noise, he was unable on entering the door, to understand the subject on which he appeared to speak with great fluency and pathos. He drew nearer and nearer the stand on which the Reverend gentleman was located; but was unable to catch the thread of his discourse, until he came almost within an arm's reach of the orator; and then by a close application of his auditory powers, he found, that it consisted in a constant repetition of these words, now in a higher, and again in a lower tone of voice, varying as he supposed the state of his congregation required: "*The Devil's a liar! The Devil's a liar! The Devil's a liar!* Although the words are true in themselves, and the performance was less harmful, than an attempt to *refute doctrines not understood by a speaker, and than those wretched attacks which we frequently witness, made in the pulpit on other denominations;* yet the gentlemen soon became weary in hearing so tedious repetition of words, which he always believed were true. All on a sudden some of the hearers began to climb up the sides of the barn, and cried out, that they would go up to meet the Saviour, and *get religion*. The speaker then elevated his key of vociferation, and immediately, a black man, who had been sitting on a long pole, placed over head, locking his legs around it, suspended himself over the congregation with his head downwards, and clapping his hands, began to vociferate, "glory! glory! glory!" The gentlemen's conscience beginning to accuse him of breaking the Sabbath by wasting its sacred hours in such unmeaning tumult, he withdrew with all possible expedition to his lodgings.

When his landlord returned, he enquired concerning the results of the exercises, and was told, that *a great many were converted to day; and, that this minister converted people wherever he went!!!*

How much this landlord's ideas of an able ministry, and the conversion of multitudes from sin to holiness, differ from yours it is unnecessary to enquire. But certainly, this man's claims to ability, are at least equal to those of the *oysterman*; and there is sufficient reason to believe, that the converts made by the one, are as enlightened and as pious, as those made by the other. If the Conference of Philadelphia are to be taken as a true representative of your society generally, in the United States; and if, in their estimation, such be able ministers; and such be conversions from sin to holiness; then there is *obviously* a distinction between an *able Methodist minister*, and an *able Christian minister*, and between *conversions to Methodism* and *conversions to the Lord Jesus Christ*. If this be the standard of Methodist conversions, and ministerial ability; then the fact that at least, one million of the inhabitants of the United States are included in the audiences of your ministry on every Sabbath day, can be regarded as little less, than a calamity to the spiritual interests of the church.

It entered not into the original design of the Christian Preacher to make attacks on any denominations of Christians; but to be confined exclusively to the discussion of principles; the work is in its nature and tendency pacific: it was not imagined that the representatives of any ecclesiastical body, would assail it with the weapons of *ignorance*, *disingenuity*, and *falsehood*. In this however there was a mistake, which the attacks in your Religious Messenger have demonstrated. Assailants of such a character, have certainly no claim to forbearance, when the cause of truth is concerned. Indeed so far otherwise is the fact, that from a mere love of peace, to permit the fair empire of truth to be over run, and trampled under foot by such *ruthless*, and *savage* invaders, when by a proper resistance they might be repelled, would be disloyalty to the King of Kings.

The story of the oysterman was introduced not to assail any *intelligent* and *pious* Methodist; but as a stroke at the principle, wherever found, which surrenders the pulpit and the press into the hands of theological *ignorance* and *illiteracy*. It is true the operations of the principle had not only been seen, but felt, in the attack made in your scriptures, not only upon the Christian Preacher, but also on the *person* of the Editor—An attack of such a character, as would never have been made by *gentlemen* of intelligence and learning; much less by *Christian* gentlemen of that description. Under these circumstances, the Committee and the Conference which they represented, were allowed, it is true, to come in for a full share of the oysterman. For a stroke at such a principle no apology need be made. It is below argument; and is therefore, fair game for any other lawful mode of attack.

In your paper you give what you call a *Roland* for an *Oliver*. Of this we utter not a word of complaint. In our defence we attacked the principle of placing the ministry of reconciliation, and the defence of sound doctrine, in the hands of ignorance. Now if there be any principle in the Presbyterian church prejudicial to the interests of spiritual, and intelligent Christianity, which is below argument, satirize it in welcome. Down with it if you can. But do yourselves and us, the justice of understanding our principles, and practices, before you commence; and then, you will save yourselves the *sin* and the *shame* of publishing falsehood, and us the trouble of exposing it.

The amount of your *Roland* is this; Two ministers, a Mr. C. a Methodist and a Mr. B. a Presbyterian, met with a view of bringing to the test, each others preaching talents. According to the conditions of this theological duel, the combatants were to rise, and preach *in promptu* on whatever text each would give the other. The Presbyterian gave the Methodist the following: *And Balaam rose up in the morning and saddled his Ass.* Mr. C. the Methodist arose in the pulpit, and after a few introductory remarks, divided his subjects as follows: I. Balaam; II. The saddle; III. The Ass.

In the course of the sermon, Balaam was made to represent certain priests (Presbyterian ministers of course), who hunt after riches and honors; the saddle their salaries; and the Ass. their people. The preacher after having finished his discourse, sat down and as the story is, gave the Presbyterian a text on which he was unable to speak at all, and ever after deserted the pulpit.

Whether the story be true or false, no time will be spent to enquire. As docile Presbyterians we will just examine whether this sermon be more applicable to ourselves than to Methodists.

I With regard to Balaams, who divine for money. Are there more inducements in the Presbyterian church, than in the Methodist Society, to divine for money? Here are two young mechanics; one professes to be a Presbyterian and the other a Methodist. They become weary of their trades,

and desirous of some other employment; have equal and respectable natural talents; both having a standing in the visible church—the form of godliness, but equally destitute of its power. They would be preachers because they dislike labour and covet the distinction.

The Methodist without any expense, and with almost no study, can be a public speaker in a few weeks, and a preacher in a few months.

But the Presbyterian must spend, from five to eight years in preparation for the work; and in his support during this long interval of study and preparation, he must spend his own money if he have any; and if he have none, he must receive assistance from the liberal and the pious, or finally, he must borrow money if he can find any one to loan him, and enter the ministry after the expiration of five or eight years several hundred dollars in debt. Now if the salary, the *saddle*, be as good in the Methodist Society as in the Presbyterian church, there is a probability of ten to one, that the Methodist enters and that the Presbyterian does not.

II *The saddle* The stated salary of a Methodist preacher is one hundred dollars a year; his wife, if he have one, has the same. A house, heavy furniture, firewood, table provisions, and in some cases servants, are furnished, or are required to be furnished by the circuit or the church where he labours. On a moderate calculation these provisions for a preacher and his wife will on an average amount to two hundred dollars more. Necessaries are also furnished for keeping his horse, equal probably to sixty dollars a year; and to this sum must be added other contingent expenses, such as supplying a horse in case of one being lost, travelling fare, horse shoeing, and such like, amounting probably to forty dollars more.

The estimate of a Methodist preacher's salary, is something like this:

In money for himself and wife	200
House and provisions, &c. &c. &c.	200
Horsekeeping	60
Contingencies	40

Total \$500*

If some of the preachers have no wives, others having children receive an additional allowance for them; so that \$500 a year may be reckoned the medium salary for each minister.

If one-fiftieth of the Presbyterian ministers residing in cities, receive a salary of \$1800 or \$2000, one half of the whole number in country congregations, do not receive \$400; so that any number of Methodist ministers receive annually as much salary as the same number of Presbyterian ministers,

But in addition to this, the Methodist preacher has his salary, and the allowance for his family continued, in case he becomes superannuated, or from any other cause, unable to preach. If he die, and leave a widow and children, their salary is still paid. On the other hand, if a Presbyterian minister, through age or infirmity, become unable to perform the duties of a pastor, he receives nothing from the church to support and cheer him in the years of infirmity and age; and if he die and leave a widow, and orphans they have no claims on the church for their support. Thus it appears, that the *saddle* in the Methodist Society, is if any thing, the better of the two. But can a Balaam who would divine for money find an *Ass* in the Methodist Society as readily as in the Presbyterian Church?

III *The Ass is to be considered.* We beg the people's pardon for introducing them under so unseemly a figure; but the subject is divided off for us by the Philadelphia Conference.

In the Presbyterian church no minister has a right to enter the pulpit in any congregation, but by the choice of the people. If he become the pastor of a congregation, it must be because the people choose him as such. If he receive a salary, be it great or small, it is because the people *choose* to make it *just* what it is.

*See the note at the end.

But in the Methodist Society, the people enjoy no such privileges. The Methodist Itinerancy are a complete Aristocracy. *They choose* the saddle themselves. They stipulate their own salaries. From a book entitled "The doctrines and discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America," we learn that as late as Anno Domini 1812, the salary of each minister was only \$80; but now we find it one hundred. And on the same principle as the Society gains strength and influence, we may expect to see them enlarge their own salaries by acts of conference. By the principles upon which the Society is constituted the universal sway of Methodism, would terminate in universal clerical domination and tyranny. The power, by the very constitution of the Society, resides *totally* in the hands of the clergy; the universal sway of Methodism, would afford an opportunity, and present a temptation for the exercise of that power; and we *can not* say, that we have discovered any thing in the Methodist clergy more, than in others, that would elevate them above the influence of such a temptation. Methodist laymen have no more to say in acts of ecclesiastical legislation, than the dead in the grave. We know not whether they may enter the door of a conference house, without a special act of grace. A Methodist congregation, or circuit, possess no ecclesiastical right to say, who shall be their minister. The mighty hand of the Bishop, mounts on them whomsoever he will, and *pleased or displeas'd* they must be his *Ass* for one year; and when that year has terminated, he chooses for them another rider with whom they may be just as little pleased as with the first. If any people in this free country be priest ridden, the Methodists most of all

Thus whilst a young Presbyterian Balaam would encounter great difficulties in preparing for the ministry, with nothing before him better, than a *perhaps* to buoy up his hopes of finding a people, that will *choose* to give him a saddle and a pleasant ride, the young Methodist Balaam, with the *same shoes* in which he walked from his shop, can walk into the Conference, and the next day, be mounted by the Bishop on a circuit. We are now willing that the public should judge, where there are *probably* the *most Balaams*; and also, what congregations, whether Presbyterian or Methodist, are most like Balaam's beast.

From the signs of the times about Baltimore, it would seem that the animal, that has for many years jogged on very quietly under the saddle and the rider, has at last become restif; and will probably soon kick up under the spur; and if so, there is some apprehension that the Bishops, the Balaams, and the oystermen, as well as the *top knots*, must all come down.

If the people should rise, assert their rights, and claim the reasonable privilege of choosing their own pastors, there would probably be a great accession to the secular professions and among others possibly to the *oyster* trade.

If this view of the matter be just, you attempt at a *Roland*, very much resembles the attempt of a certain well meaning gentleman to give a salutation of civility in Latin. Some wag of a school boy told him, that *stultus sum* [I am a fool] in Latin, meant "good morning." Some time afterwards, on meeting a professional man, who had the reputation of possessing high classical attainments, he thus accosted him: *stultus sum, Doctor.* "Nothing new," replied the Doctor "I always supposed you to be a fool." Your Roland in plain English, is but a further development of *ignorance*.

NOTE.

Where a minister's salary is made out in a kind of *bidden way*, in house rent, table fare, horse feed, fuel, &c &c. &c articles whose qualities and prices vary so much in different places and at different times, it is difficult for one unacquainted with the *secret rules* of the Society, to arrive at a literally exact estimate of the amount. We aim at nothing but truth. There is in the calculation no intentional error. If however any mistake be detected on being authentickly informed we will cheerfully correct it.

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THE FALL OF MAN.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.—Gen. iii. 6.

In the examination of this subject it was proposed, to consider the following question as the

III. Did God foreknow and decree the fall of man?

Without passing any censure on those who doubt, or deny this doctrine, let us appeal to the law and the testimony.

1. Did God foreknow the fall of man?

Now if we can prove that the First Cause has created a single individual foreknowing, that his existence would be attended with sin, then he may create a greater number, and may have created our first parents foreknowing the event of their fall. A single instance therefore demolishes the principle which we oppose.

By the prophet Daniel, God foretells, that *after three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off*. It is generally admitted, that this prophecy refers to the crucifixion of the Saviour, and that it predicts the precise time of its accomplishment. This crucifixion, and the time of its occurrence, God must have foreknown, or he *could not*, and *would not* have uttered such a prophecy. This public murder of him who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, is by all acknowledged to be a sin; God therefore, foreknew the very hour on which an exceedingly great sin would be committed. But as this could not be done without agents, he foreknew that particular men would at this very time be disposed to combine in its perpetration. When he proclaimed this prophecy, he foreknew, that Judas would betray him, Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, would take counsel against the Lord of glory, the soldiers part his raiment, cast lots

for his vesture, and pierce his side with a spear; and finally, that all would unite for the commission of a deed so atrocious, that at its perpetration the guilty earth should tremble, and the insulted heavens veil their glories in the mantle of night. The conduct of Judas, is foretold in the forty-first Psalm; *Yea mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.* Is its application to Judas doubted? Hear its design in the language of him who spoke as never man spake: *I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen; but that the scripture may be fulfilled: He that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me.* The actions of the people, and of Pilate were also predicted in the second Psalm: *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed.* If it should be argued, that this language does not apply to the crucifixion of our Lord, the refutation is found in the fourth chapter of the acts of the Apostles, in the inspired language of Peter and John: “Who by the mouth of thy servant David, hast said, Why did the heathen rage and the people imagine vain things? 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 thy holy child Jesus whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.”

The division of Christ's raiment by lot among the soldiery, as also the wound inflicted on his body by the spear, are distinctly foretold. In the twenty-second Psalm it is said, *They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture:* and in the twelfth chapter of Zechariah, *they shall look on me whom they have pierced.* If the reference of these predictions to the Saviour's sufferings be disputed the fact will be placed beyond all doubt by an appeal to the testimony of the Apostle John: “They said among themselves let us

not rend it; but cast lots for it whose it shall be, that the scripture might be fulfilled which saith: They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture did they cast lots"—“And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.” Now all these deeds were foretold before Judas, Pilate, the people of Israel, and the soldiers concerned in the crucifixion, were born. Therefore, when God created Judas, he foreknew that he would betray the Saviour, when he formed Pilate that he would deliver him to be scourged and crucified, and when he made the people of Israel and the soldiers, that they would rage around, part his raiment by lots, and pierce his side with a spear. And if he created these men foreknowing, that the event of their existence would be attended with the commission of so horrible a sin, he may also have created our first parents foreknowing, that eating the forbidden fruit would be the certain consequence of their creation.

Again it is taught in the Scriptures, that, *known unto God are all his works from the beginning* of the world.* This text implies not only his foreknowledge of the existence of the creatures comprehended in his works, but also of all their actions. There are certain of God’s works connected with the works of his creatures as antecedents and consequences and the reverse. If from eternity he foreknew that he would create the human body of the Saviour as a *consequence*; he must also coeternally have foreknown, that as an *antecedent*, man would fall, and that an incarnate divine Redeemer would be needed for his recovery. To suppose that God would determine the incarnation of his only begotten and well beloved Son without foreknowing some end to be accomplished by this act of humiliation, is an implied denial of his Infinite Wisdom. How could he foreknow that he would act wisely without coevally foreknowing, that he would act in reference to some end? And how could he foreknow, that in creating the human body of the Saviour, he would act in reference to

*The original is *ap’ aionos* literally from eternity.

some end, unless he foreknew, that man would fall, and an incarnate Saviour be needed? Eating the forbidden fruit, the *creature's work*, as well as the creation of the Saviour's human body, *his own work*, God therefore eternally foreknew.

And finally, if it be conceded, that God eternally foreknew all his works, as the text literally teaches, then among other things he foreknew that he would pronounce upon our first parents the sentence, *Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return*; and if so, he also foreknew, that our first parents would sin so as to deserve such a curse. To determine to curse them without foreknowing a just cause for the execration, would have been to exercise cruelty as well as folly.

But suppose, it should be granted that when God made Adam, he was totally ignorant of his future transgression; what is gained? Is God any *less* the author of sin, or man any *more* accountable?

It is denied that God's foreknowledge of Adam's sin, can by any logical inference imply, either the one or the other; but if the contrary were true, no difficulty is removed by a denial of the divine prescience. If we suppose that Deity when he made Adam, was ignorant of the event of his transgression, still he was as much Adam's Maker as he would have been, had he foreknown that event; and he was as much the author of his liabilities in the one case as he would have been in the other; and as sin was the result of human liabilities, he was as much the author of Adam's sin in the one case as he would have been in the other.

And if on either supposition, he *must* be considered the Author of sin, the only difference is, that in the one case, he is made the *intelligent* author of sin, and in the other, the *ignorant* Author of sin. And what is worst of all, according to the opinion of those who say, that God *might* have foreknown, but *would* not foreknow, the fall, he is the *wilfully ignorant* Author of sin. So that the advocates of this theory by endeavouring to avoid a merely supposed difficulty, run so far to the other side as to fall into one fearfully real.

Nor does a denial of the divine prescience, increase Adam's accountability. The theory upon which this objection is made, supposes that man's accountability arises not from the state of his mind, and the character of his actions in themselves; but from the agents, or the causes, which either directly, or indirectly, produce them. Upon this principle it matters not whether we say, God foreknew, or did not foreknow, the fall of Adam. On either supposition he was equally the author of Adam's liabilities; and as of these his sin was the result, he is by inevitable inference, the Author of the first human transgression. For if moral turpitude exist not in the nature of dispositions and actions themselves, but in the causes or agents from which they either directly, or indirectly, arise, whether we admit, or deny, the prescience of Deity we release the creature from all guilt and leave it resting on the Maker.

If guilt exist not in the nature of disposition, and the action, which is the expression of that disposition; but in their cause, the moral turpitude of Adam's coveting and taking the forbidden fruit, consisted not in the covetous disposition, which desired an unlawful object, nor in the act, which carried that covetous disposition into execution; but in their cause. Adam in believing the serpent, and surveying the tree as good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, enlisted his appetite for food, and his desires of beauty, and wisdom, all principles good in themselves and useful when properly directed, around the banner of an unlawful object; and thus created in himself this covetous disposition, developed in the forbidden act. But if, according to the supposition, moral turpitude consists not in the nature of the disposition, or state of mind developed by unlawful operations; but in the agents, or causes which produce it, then Adam *while producing* in himself this covetous disposition by believing the serpent, and surveying the forbidden fruit, was guilty as the *cause* and not *afterwards* as the *subject* of transgression.

But Adam, until he produced in himself this covetous disposition, was as he came from the hands of his Maker; therefore Adam as the cause of his first transgression, was more guilty as he came from the hands of his Maker, than when indulging a covetous disposition, and performing an act of disobedience!!!

Again, Adam however the cause of his own covetous disposition, and his disobedient action, was not the cause of his own existence, or of any original state or liability, connected with his existence. The Maker was the cause of all these. And if guilt exist in the cause, and not in the nature of the effect, the guilt of Adam's first sin must be chargeable on God as the cause of Adam's existence and liabilities. Whether he became *intelligently* or *ignorantly* guilty, is a matter of very little moment; if the guilt rest on God, the creature is not accountable. So that, while it is admitted as true, that moral turpitude exists not in the nature of that state of mind which is developed by forbidden operations; but in its cause, nothing is gained in exculpating God, or in fixing guilt on Adam as a sinner by denying the divine prescience; whilst on the contrary, if that mischievous principle be surrendered, and the guilt of such a state of mind be supposed to arise solely from its disconformity to the nature of Deity as revealed in his will, we are relieved from all difficulty in vindicating the ways of God, and in justly charging the blame of disobedience on Adam, at once its subject and its author, and need seek no relief by impugning this essential attribute of Jehovah. The objection, that the divine foreknowledge of man's first disobedience would destroy or lessen Adam's accountability is therefore groundless.

If God did not foreknow, when he made man what would be the result of his existence, it is difficult to reconcile the act either with his wisdom, or his goodness.

Wisdom is the power of judging rightly. A man who would make any piece of mechanism without knowing whether or not it is adapted to any purpose, could not rightly judge, that his operations tended to any end: and so, if God when creating man was ignorant of the events

that would accompany his existence, he could not so far as we can see, judge rightly, whether to create him or not: and he must therefore have made him without judging rightly of his creation, and thus have acted unwisely.

The object of goodness is to promote happiness. But if when God created man, he foreknew not, whether he would remain holy and happy, or sin and become miserable, then the promotion of happiness, the proper object of goodness, must have been in the view of the Creator, a mere peradventure, and no more probable than the most exquisite misery. Not therefore the one, or the other, but the bare uncertainty of the one or the other, could have been the object of his creating so important a being. Where then the goodness displayed in that creation, over which *the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*

And especially, was the act of Deity in creating man, destitute of both wisdom and goodness, if he chose to be ignorant of the consequences of his existence, when merely by preferring knowledge to ignorance, he might have foreknown all the events which would certainly attend him in any state in which he might be created; and if by this knowledge, he might have chosen to create him in that state in which his existence would be attended with less sin and misery than it now actually is.

2. *Did God decree the fall of man?*

That he had decreed it in any manner, which implies his approbation of its existence as sin, is at once denied by the holiness of his character, as well as by such parts of his sacred word as declare sin to be the abominable thing which he hates; but that he did decree it in such a sense as to determine to suffer its occurrence in his eternal plan of the moral universe, as the certain imperfection of the best possible system, is as certain as the wisdom and the immutability of his nature.

His eternal foreknowledge of his own actions, is a proof of his having eternally determined those actions. If he eternally foreknew them as certainly to eventuate, there must have been an eternal certainty of their occurrence; otherwise it is absurd to suppose that they

could have been eternally foreknown as certain. To speak of foreknowing an event as certain, which is in its nature uncertain, is little, if any thing better, than a contradiction in terms. But if there eternally existed a certainty of all the divine actions, as the eternity of the divine prescience demonstrates, there must have eternally been a cause of this certainty; but this cause could have eternally existed no where but in the nature of God. Nothing but he is absolutely eternal. And as in his nature all his actions are regulated by his will, so, as his will changes not, the certainties eternally foreknown, must have eternally resided in his will, or in other words, in his volitions, determinations, or decrees. He therefore, certainly eternally determined all his own actions.

This conclusion is perfectly analogous to our own experience. However we may foreknow the actions of others simply as objects of knowledge, without making them at all the subjects of our determinations, or giving them in any way a place in our plans; yet we cannot foreknow our own actions without also predetermining their performance. Those however who support the contrary doctrine, suppose that although *we can not*; yet that *God can*. Their opinion is however unsupported by any one fact, or any one text in the Bible, and is contradicted by all the experience of our foreknowledge as connected with our own agency. We invariably foreknow our own deeds only when we also predetermine their execution.

If then the Saviour, who is also God, as well as man, eternally decreed all his own actions, among others the deed of suffering the pains of his crucifixion, he must also have eternally determined to perform. It has just been proved, that he eternally foreknew that Judas would betray him, Pilate deliver him to be scourged and crucified, the people rave around in tumultuous accusation, the soldiers part his raiment by lots, and cruelly pierce his side; and if so, he must also have eternally *determined* to suffer them to execute these nefarious deeds, which he eternally foresaw, if left to the exercise of their natural liberty and natural power, they would inevitably perform.

It is a mere verbal evasion of this conclusion to say, that, he simply foreknew that these deeds of darkness and death would certainly be executed, but made no determinations with regard to their occurrence and controul. A determination to suffer them implies that their occurrence found a place in the divine plan.

If then, God created Judas, the High priest, Pilate, the Jews, and the soldiers, determining to suffer their sinful agency in the crucifixion of the Redeemer, he may also have created Adam with all his disobedience full before him; and with a fixed purpose of enduring its event; and if he may have formed such a decree the instant before he created him; he may have done the same at any imaginable period of past eternity. The withholding of his creating power, would have prevented the sin of our first parents, as well as all the unnumbered sins committed by their degenerate children. His determination not to desist from that creating act, involves in itself a determination to endure the commission of that sin, which he foresaw would inevitably follow as a consequence. This doctrine is in the most perfect harmony with the Scripture, which teaches us, that he *worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*

IV. How is the fall of man consistent with the idea of the best possible system?

In the solution of this question, it is important to discover, whether in a created moral universe, sin is avoidable on the part of the Creator. If the subjects of the moral kingdom, might have been so created, and governed, as to have remained forever sinless, and happy, then we are inevitably conducted to the conclusion, either, that the accountable universe is benefitted by sin, so as to become the *best* by its introduction or that the Holy Deity has chosen its ingress, not because it makes creation *best*, or *better*, or even *so good*; but solely because, he prefers, that a portion of his creatures, should be sinful and miserable, and not otherwise. On either supposition, he must be viewed as preferring an universe, attended with a certain portion of sin, misery, and

death, to one entirely exempt from their intrusions and their ravages. This opinion appears to be directly opposed to such Scriptures, as declare sin to be the abominable thing which God hates.

According to the conditions of either of these hypotheses, the Supreme Being is made to choose the very thing, which he awfully proclaims to be the object of his hatred. If such be the legitimate results of the theory, which supposes a sinless moral creation to be properly within the dominion of Omnipotence, there is reason to question its truth, and more, than doubt the solidity of its foundations. There is no evidence to support the fabrick, except the doctrine of the divine omnipotence. But who knows, that to give direction to the choice of intelligent and voluntary beings, is the legitimate object of physical omnipotence? Is it said, that "omnipotence effects in the sinner's soul, that moral change, which restores conformity to the divine image? And might not that same energy have retained that conformity in our first parents, or have restored it as soon as it was lost?" So far as this may be considered an act of physical omnipotence on man's moral powers, an answer in the affirmative is undoubtedly just; but, it is apprehended, that while in the act of regeneration, God thus operates on man's moral nature, by direct acts of his physical energies, it is essential, that in governing him as a moral agent, he should address his powers as those of an intelligent and voluntary being, by means in their nature entirely moral. He might indeed by his power, have sustained Adam above all temptations, strengthened him to resist and repel them, or have re-created him as soon as he lost his pristine conformity to his Maker; but he would not then have governed him as a moral subject. It appears essential to a moral agent that made the subject of law, and having the best motives to obedience presented, he should be sustained in existence, and in the natural exercise of his faculties, and that he should be left to employ his understanding and choice, without any foreign constraint or restraint. Adam was created, and a law given him, just suited to his nature and condi-

tion; *of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat; and the penalty annexed: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* Satan informed him that eating he would not die. The falsehood was believed, and as a consequence, the act of disobedience performed. By an act of his power, God might have convinced Adam, that the assertion of the Devil was a falsehood. He might at once have enlarged the capacity of his intellect, or infixed on his mind an impression, that the suggestion was untrue; but this would not have been leaving man to the natural exercise of his understanding, and choice, without any foreign constraint; and therefore, would not have been governing him as a moral being.

To have secured him from transgression, by elevating his intellect, would have been nothing less, than to make him the possessor of infinite knowledge. Any thing less than omniscience, except confirmed by moral means, is liable to err. Angels that excel in strength, mistook their best interest. This then would have been to change man's nature, and rank, and to give the glory of God's omniscience to another, which is as impossible, as that there should be more Gods than one.

And in every case of temptation, to have made on his mind an impression of the falsehood proposed, would have been to govern him not as a rational agent, by addressing his reason, but as an irrational animal, by something like the power of instinct.

Although therefore, it is the sole operation of divine power, that renews man, dead and trespasses and in sins, and rectifies the derangement produced by the fall; yet God's dispensations towards him as antecedents to regeneration—the admonitions of judgment, and mercy, presented in his providence, the warnings, and exhortations of his word, and the strivings of his Spirit, in his common operations, all demonstrate, that the renewal of the man, is but a part of God's moral economy. If it be one part of his economy to do this deed of mercy, it is also a corresponding, but another distinct part, to be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them. If one part be to give

the Holy Spirit, another part is that it be to them that ask it; and if men ask, it must be because they are operated upon by moral means so as to feel their guilt and to see their danger. And thus men's willingness to implore the divine mercy, presented in the Gospel, produced in their souls by the convictions and alarms of these antecedent dealings of God, make an essential part in the economy of the moral system. So also it is apprehended as man's hopes and fears are now addressed to induce him to bow to the sovereign mandates of the Gospel, and thus to obtain the restoration of his Maker's image; Adam's hopes were addressed by the promises of life and his fears by the threatening of death, to persuade him to abstain from the forbidden fruit and thus to preserve in his soul the image of his Maker. In both instances, man is addressed by moral means and as an intelligent and voluntary being; in the one to retain, and in the other to recover, the Maker's image. And who can prove that such an economy is not indispensable to the very nature of a moral system? And if it be, then since liability to err in moral judgment is an inevitable imperfection of created minds when not confirmed, and since they can be confirmed only by moral convictions, produced by examples of punishment for disobedience; and since no such examples could have been exhibited to Adam before he fell; the introduction of sin into the universe was unavoidable on the part of the Creator: Or in other words, sin is the *certain* though not the necessary result of the best possible moral universe. And if so, the option of Deity was not between a system in which there would be no sin and one like the present in which there is some, but between that now existing and others in which there would have been more evil.

If then God foreknew that on any plan of moral creation and of moral government sin and misery would certainly arise, and if he foreknew that with all these certain imperfections of a created moral system, there would still be more happiness enjoyed and more glory displayed, than without it would be possible, then cer-

tainly to determine the existence of such an universe upon the very best plan would be a determination gloriously consistent with infinite benevolence.

Suppose that Virgil's hero, Æneas, after Troy was laid in ashes by the victorious Greeks, knew that if he remained in his country, he and his companions must die an inglorious death, but that if they adventurously cast themselves with their navy upon the waves, they would find an Italy, and enjoy in it long life, with freedom and happiness. But suppose, he foreknew, that while by this adventure they would as a company redeem their lives, and enjoy happiness and honor, and that the reverse would be their fate if they remained hovering around the ashes of Troy, yet that some individuals, known to him by name, would on the very best plan of government, mutiny and make capital punishment necessary as a means of preventing all the others from insurrection; but, that by suffering these few to disobey, and by punishing them for their disobedience, he would ultimately secure order, harmony, and happiness among all the remainder of his company.

One of these two things he must have chosen; either to remain where he was, and undergo a disgraceful death, or encounter the difficulties that would certainly attend his migration. He would understand, that with all the evils certainly to attend the latter, it was almost infinitely preferable to the former.

Then he might wisely, and benevolently, have planned, determined, or decreed, to prefer the latter and to suffer the resistance of the rebellious to eventuate; and to punish them for an example to others.

So also if Deity foresaw, that on the best plan of moral government, Adam and some of the Angels would certainly sin, but yet, that a good almost infinitely greater, would arise from the existence of a moral creation, than would otherwise be possible, it must be admitted to have been wisdom and benevolence in Deity, to decree the adoption of such a system in preference to none.

Is it objected, that Æneas ought to have left those whom he foresaw to be certainly rebellious, and to de-

mand capital punishment for their crimes, and to have taken none but such as could have been foreseen to be orderly and obedient, and that so, if Deity made any plan of moral being, it ought to have been one, in which no being should be introduced foreknown certainly to become the subjects of sin and the objects of endless woe? This objection takes for granted what the supposition denies. As it is believed to have been already proved, that on the best plan of moral being, sin will find an introduction; so in the illustration it has been supposed, that Æneas could not have selected a company so virtuous, but the general good would eventually demand, that some of them should be capitally punished. It is also supposed, that he foreknew that subordination was to be maintained among his men only by suffering the disobedience of the offenders to eventuate, and by punishing them for their crimes, and that, therefore, if he should leave behind him those whom he foresaw if taken would become justly the objects of capital retribution, others without the impression produced by a survey of their disloyalty and its penalty, would mutiny, and that, if these should be left, others would; and others, and others; so that the result must be, he could have no obedient companions, unless he determined to suffer the wickedness of some to occur, and to be punished for an example to others. As according to the supposition, the choice of a band of immaculate companions was impossible, his choice would have been, between the death of himself and all his companions, and his admitting certain ones of them in the service of his expedition, who would certainly prove disobedient. All must acknowledge that the latter would be far preferable. And if in such circumstances, it would have been good and wise in the Trojan chief to determine to introduce into the circle of his companions, some, who he foreknew would become disobedient and require the infliction of capital punishment: so also it was wisdom and goodness in Deity, to introduce into being Adam as a part of the best possible system, although he foreknew, that he would certainly become a transgressor of the law, and the subject of its woful and ever-enduring penalties.

Also, since on the supposition, that in the best mode of government, crime could not be excluded from the circle of Æneas' best chosen companions, it was better, that he should not only know all the events of his expedition, but, that he should also, determine every particular, even the crimes that would attend it, according to the best possible plan. So also if on any system of moral being, and moral government, some sin will certainly obtain a place; it is most certainly better, that Deity should not only foreknow, but also predetermine, every event, even Adam's sin itself; so that it should eventuate in the least evil, and in the greatest good. From the consideration of this subject a few reflections naturally arise.

1. *God is not the author of Adam's sin.* He created him in the state, and governed him in the manner, best adapted to prevent his aberration. His determining to suffer its introduction as the certain imperfection of the best possible system, no more involves him in the authorship of it, than does his foreknowledge. His merely determining, by any act of his physical omnipotence not to hinder its occurrence, could surely, no more produce the act, than could his bare foreknowledge, that it would certainly happen if not prevented.

2. *Man is accountable for his sin.* Demerit resides in the *nature* of sin, and not in any cause immediate or remote. In nature, it is the violation of the righteous law of heaven, and therefore, is in itself the very essence of demerit. It is in itself the abominable thing which God hates, and is not so because it arose from this or that particular cause, whether more or less direct. And man is justly guilty, because sin in itself really demeritorious, becomes a part of his very constitution. He is guilty, because he is the agent, who commits it; and not because he was led to commit it from this or that cause; or when existing in a state of sin he is guilty, because he is the subject of a state forbidden by the law of God, and not on account of his having been introduced into this state by this or by that means. And because sin is in its nature opposed to God, and ill deserving, and because in its effects, it is deleterious, God has associated its com-

mission with the feelings of remorse in the conscience of man.

Thus the authorship and the guilt is man's; and God is *justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges*. If God decreed the best possible plan to prevent man's first sin, and decreed to suffer its existence only as that abominable thing, that *would not be prevented* by the best moral means, surely then, it is all Adam's and his, justly all the guilt and all the penalty.

3. *No man has any reason of complaint on account of his representation by Adam*. It has been shown in the discourse immediately preceding this, that the chance of all mankind for standing, was by the representation of Adam, better than it could have been, had all have been left to stand for themselves on the ground of probationary obedience. But especially, should every mouth be stopt from murmurs, and be employed in praises, since infinite mercy has provided a Mediator, who having already become a *propitiation*, and thus thrown all Adam's children upon the arms of mercy, as fairly offers himself to become *an atonement and redemption*; and as fairly offers his Holy Spirit to sanctify and restore the lost conformity to the Maker's image, as he offered life to Adam as the consequence of his abstaining from the forbidden tree. *Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?* Instead of uttering murmurs against the constitution of the infinite Jehovah, and instead of cavilling at those most sacred truths of his word, which reveal thy present moral wretchedness, and thine exposure to unending ruin, look upon the remedy, the redeeming Jesus. Instead of complaining, that the world should become involved in sin, by the one act of Adam, *Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world*. Instead of murmuring at your condition, and perishing in your ruin, look to him and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.—Amen.

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THE BEST POSSIBLE SYSTEM.

My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. Isaiah xlv. 10.

For thou art not a God, that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither can evil dwell with thee. Ps. v. 4.

To proclaim the immutability, the eternity, and the holiness of the divine counsels, the raptured prophet wrote, and *the sweet psalmist of Israel* sung. In recording by the hand of the prophet, the first part of our text, God proclaims his plan, as unchangeable, *My counsel shall stand; and* as the one of his choice, *I will do all my PLEASURE*. And since, according to the inspired psalmist's sacred song, the Holy One has *no pleasure in wickedness, and evil cannot dwell with him*; the doctrine most obviously, and naturally, drawn from these texts, taken together, is, that in the creation and government of his rational and accountable subjects, God has a plan, embracing all the parts, and descending to all the particulars in the universe, and, that this plan is one of the best possible, to encourage holiness and to prevent sin.

The design of this and the following discourse, is to explain, and prove this doctrine, and to consider its practical consequences.

In the explanation, it is proper to premise, that God's glory—the exercise and exhibition of his natural and moral perfections—is the ultimate end of all the divine plans and operations. For, *the Lord hath made all things for himself; yea the wicked for the day of evil. Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*. And as this is true now; so it is presumed ever to have been true through eternity past; and ever to continue the same throughout eternity to come.

Now, as the ultimate end is eternally one, so God's system of operations for the attainment of this end, is eter-

nally one. He did not foresee certain conditions, and on this foresight choose his system, nor yet choose his system, and from this choice foreknew all its consequences; but with a never-beginning and a never-ending choice, and with a never-beginning and a never ending knowledge,* coexisting in the eternal state of the unchangeable Mind, he knows all things possible and impossible, and chooses that system of possible things, which has ever existed, and will forever exist.

Thus the divine purpose is supposed to be adopted without any reasoning or comparison between this and other systems, which might have been possible, had they been made the objects of the supreme choice. Such a process it would be a kind of blasphemy to impute to him, whose intuitive omniscience supersedes the necessity of reasoning. For since a process of ratiocination implies changes, as the mind passes over the successive steps of comparison, such a supposition would rob God of his immutability.† Yet it is maintained, that the system actually chosen, is one of the very best, that possibly could have been selected to promote righteousness and to oppose sin. That no process of comparison preceded its adoption, is no proof, that it is not one of the very best. The perfection of God's nature intuitively directs him to the best, and therefore, there can be no possible motive to suspend his preference or to direct his mind to any other as an object of choice.

As natural liberty enters into the very essence of a moral creature, and as in finite beings unconfirmed, this implies in its very terms, a liability to transgression‡ as well as to continued obedience, it remains yet to be proved, that in any system of finite and created moral beings under any form of government, consistent with their nature, there will not *certainly*, though not *necessarily*, be a greater or a less degree of moral evil. In any such a system, some beings *will* sin. And thus, some degree of evil, is believed to be a certain imperfection, which will accompany any such system of beings—an

*See Christian Preacher No. 1. pp. 8, 10. †See Christian Preacher No. 1. Note B p. 30 ‡No. 1. pp. 11, 12.

imperfection, however, which results not from the *necessity*, but from the *liberty* of their nature.

According to this view of the moral system, it is constituted upon the condition, that the volitions of the creature, are to be left uncoerced by any direct operations of Omnipotence. This perfection of Deity is employed in sustaining the creature in existence, and in the exercise of that liberty essential to his moral nature; in performing wonders of judgment and mercy, as motives to address the hopes and the fears of his accountable subjects, thus to encourage them to holiness and to restrain them from sin;* and also *in reinstating his own image, lost by the fall*† in such of the human family, as in the exercise of their natural powers, so regard the teachings and admonitions of his works, providence, word, and common operations of his spirit, as importunately, and perseveringly to seek his grace and mercy;‡ but never by direct and compulsive operations to regulate volition, as when exercised in the transformation and translation of matter. And therefore, it is supposed, the utter exclusion of sin from the moral universe, falls not properly within the province of omnipotence; and also, that since Deity creates and governs all things in the best possible manner to promote righteousness and resist sin, and after all this, creatures will sin, every degree of evil in such a system, will not be excluded by any thing, that can be done by him consistently with his character as the Supreme Creator and moral Governor. And if all be done by him, that can, consistently with his sustaining such a character, and yet transgression and suffering find place, through the abused agency of the creature, there is no departure, either from truth or reverence, in maintaining, that in a moral system, some degree of both are *unavoidable* on the part of the Creator—*On his part*, he creates and governs in the best possible manner to exclude them from his works; *on the part* of the delegated freedom of the creature, however, they enter, reign, and desolate. With this natural liberty, the relation which he himself has

*See No. 3. pp. 52, 53. †See No. 5. p. 114. ‡See No. 2. p. 35.

constituted, forbids him as Creator and moral Governor, to interfere; therefore, they are unavoidable, so far as he is concerned, unless he had wholly dispensed with a moral creation.* And since on the best plan of moral being, sin will not be wholly excluded, the Holy one has only endured its existence, as the certain imperfection of the best intelligent and accountable system. And since it will find an introduction into his moral kingdom, as the Most Wise, Holy, and Merciful Creator and Ruler, he exercises his pleasure in wisely choosing, and powerfully controuling the mode of its existence; so as to make it the unwilling means of promoting good.† Thus as the certain imperfection of the best created moral system he chooses to suffer its intrusion; because by the existence of an universe of which it is the *certain* though not the *necessary* concomitant, a greater amount of happiness, will be enjoyed by creatures and a more glorious display of the Creator's perfections be made, than would otherwise be possible. And hence rather than there should be no moral creation, God determines and chooses to endure the *grief* and *displeasure* occasioned by the fall of man and angels, by the sins of the old world, of Pharaoh in not letting the children of Israel go, and of the Jews in crucifying the Lord of glory; and in fine, by all the sin and misery, which the natural liberty of men and angels has ever produced.

This view of the best moral system, it may be seen, differs essentially from that advocated by Leibnitz, Wolf, President Edwards, and their followers. *Theirs* supposes, that the omnipotence of Deity, might have forever prevented the introduction of sin into the moral universe; but, that the divine glory, and the good of the whole intelligent creation, required its existence; and therefore, he so constructed and governed the system as to procure the amount of evil which actually obtains. *This* on the contrary asserts that sin is a positive evil to the universe, and unnecessary as a means to promote the divine glory,

*No. 1. p. 18. also p. 32. Note C. No. 2. p. 48. No. 3 54, 55. †No. 3. pp 59, 61. No. 5. pp. 105, 107.

and, that it has obtained an introduction, neither through the choice nor the power of God; but entirely by the abuse of the natural liberty of the creature.

It now remains to prove, that God has a plan, reaching to every being and event, within the compass of eternity; and finally, that this plan is *the best possible*.

A part of this subject, will be deferred to another discourse. At present it is only proposed to consider the *existence*, the *immutability*, and the *eternity* of this plan.

1. God has a plan according to which, he creates and governs the universe. This is not only reasonable; but it is asserted in the Scriptures. *Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.* If however, it be imagined, that this predestinating and choosing some men to holiness or conformity to the image of Christ, is no positive proof, that God predestinates and chooses every being, and event, the answer is, that to this scripture proof of the divine determinations in ordaining men to holiness, or in other words, to conformity to God, is also added the inspired declaration, that he *worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.* And again, *he doeth his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand or say unto him, what doest thou?* And besides this, we have the testimony of the four and twenty elders, who falling down before him, that sitteth on the throne in the heavens, and say, *Thou art worthy O Lord to receive glory, and honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy PLEASURE, they are and were created.* Now if language can be taken as the symbol of thought, all things exist in exact accordance with the *pleasure* of God.

2. *This plan is immutable.* In God there is no variableness neither shadow of turning, and he is the same, yesterday, to day and forever. Nor is there any cause, either in scripture or reason, why these texts should not

be understood in their most obvious signification. Some passages in the Bible appear indeed to stand literally opposed to these: we sometimes read, that God repents. The form of the word in the Hebrew Testament of which our word repent is a translation, used in relation to this subject, signifies both to console and to repent. When used in the latter sense it either signifies a *change* of mind or *displeasure* of mind and is translated in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament by different Greek words, corresponding to both these significations. The text in which it is said, that *it repented the Lord, that he had made man upon the earth, and it grieved him at the heart*, would be more literally rendered, *the Lord was caused to be displeased,* by means of his having made man upon the earth, and he grieved himself at the heart*. As a consequence of having made man upon the earth, sin was introduced into the world, and being so much opposed to his holy nature, it always occasions him displeasure and grief. Yet since no moral creation *will* exist without some evil, and such a creation, with all its imperfections and consequent evils, affords more happiness and displays more glory, than without it would be possible, God determines to endure the displeasure and grief, occasioned by the *comparatively little* evil, for the sake of the *positively greater* good. The text taken most literally, says not, that God changed his mind in relation to his workmanship; but simply, that this workmanship *occasioned him displeasure and grief*, without intimating the least interruption of his general plan. Though his present plan occasioned him some grief; yet he did not wish to alter it; because, any other would occasion him as much; and most others perhaps more; and no intelligent universe to enjoy his goodness and reflect his glory, would probably grieve and displease him more, than all the sin and misery, which human and angelic agency in the abuse of liberty has ever produced.

There are however other texts in which this Hebrew word usually rendered into English by the term *repent*, is

*The Greek word in the Septuagint is Enethumethē from Enthumeo, I provoke to anger or displeasure.

translated in the Septuagint by the Greek *metanoeo*, signifying properly a change of mind; as in this text—*If that nation against whom I have pronounced; turn from their evil, I will repent (change my mind) from the evil, that I thought to do unto them.** Here an absolute change of mind in God, is not asserted; but only a change towards this people. He repents of the evil threatened to them. His holy nature opposed to sin, always directs evil against the wicked. But here the wicked are supposed to change; they no longer occupy the place towards which a holy God directs the shafts of his displeasure; but now tread the court over which waves the banner of peace. They leave the vales darkened by the clouds of his justice, and stand upon the mountains enlightened by the sunshine of his mercy. And thus though *his* mind absolutely changes not; yet it varies its relations towards them, just as the mountain, standing by the river side, to the passenger borne along by the stream, appears at first before him; then opposite; and at last, it withdraws in his rear. The mountain stands firm on his moveless base; the traveller *only* has varied his situation; and yet, the local relations of the mountain towards the man, have materially changed. And the same is true of other texts of this class. Such modes of speech, therefore denote no changes in the divine intentions—For any thing that they teach, it may have been the everlasting design of the King Eternal, at certain times and in agreement with certain changes in the character of his creatures, to vary his relations and conduct towards them; not because he changes; but because they change. Now since the intentions of Jehovah, exist in the state of his infinite mind; if he change not, the state of his mind changes not; and so neither can his intentions alter, and therefore, in truth his *counsel shall stand*.

3. *God's plan is eternal.* If it be conceded, that he *now* has a plan, this plan is eternal. Because, its adoption implies determination, and every new determination a new state of mind, and every new state of mental

* Jeremiah xviii 8.

condition a change in God; and if so, he could not say with truth, *I change not.*

Again an eternal plan is argued from God's eternal prescience. *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world* (more literally from eternity). Now an event foreknown as *certainly* to happen, must have its future existence infallibly secured; because, otherwise it is, *in truth*, an uncertainty, and *in truth*, it can only be foreknown as such. To foreknow an uncertainty to be a certainty is as manifestly a contradiction as to know a falsehood to be a truth, or a thing *to be* and *not to be* at the same time. If therefore God foreknew from all eternity, that he would send his Son into the world, it must have been, because, coeternally with this foreknowledge, he had determined to send him, or at least, because, he had *determined to determine* to send him: For if his mission was undetermined, it was, while it remained thus, uncertain and therefore could only be foreknown as such. To say, that whilst it was undetermined and, therefore an uncertainty, God foreknew it as a certainty, is just asserting in other words, that he foreknew that which he knew *might* be a *falsehood*, to be *certainly* a *truth*.

Nor is this difficulty surmounted, as it is sometimes supposed to be, by saying, that the future existence of an event, may have been eternally certain, although God had not determined it from all eternity. For although the Supreme determinations of themselves, are not the agents or causes of future events; yet in these determinations, *God* causes the *certainly* of these future events.

The supposition contained in the argument is that events may be eternally *certain*, though not eternally decreed. Now if this certainty existed from all eternity, it must have had a cause from all eternity; and this cause must have existed either in the intentions of God, the events themselves, or the creatures that produced them.

But neither the events themselves, nor yet the creatures that produced them, are eternal; so that from eternity it existed not in them. If therefore, it existed not in the state of the Eternal mind from all eternity, it had no existence from all eternity; and from all eternity, must have been causeless, or have been the cause of itself, which is plainly impossible.

To avoid misapprehensions, it is proper to add, that when speaking of God's *causing* in his determinations, the certainty of future events, language is employed only in accommodation to popular usage. Strictly speaking, an eternal certainty exists *in*, and coexists *with*, his eternal determinations; these determinations exist *in*, and coexist *with*, the state of his eternal mind; and the state of his eternal mind coexists *with*, himself; and therefore a certainty involved in the state of his eternal and uncaused Being, is itself *eternal and uncaused*; yet, since that certainty could not eternally exist, *apart from God*, in a kind of figurative sense, God may be said to *cause* that certainty. But the argument divested of all figure is simply this: Since the certainty of a future event, *apart* from the eternal and unchangeable state of the divine existence, can not be eternal, it can not be known from all eternity. But the scriptures teach, that every being and event, and therefore, the *certainty* of every being and event, *are known* from all eternity; and consequently since this certainty could not possibly exist from all eternity, in any other way, it *must* have existed in the intentions of the divine mind, and these intentions *must* have been eternal.

But Arminians, who admit the doctrine of the divine prescience, say, that by some power, beyond our comprehension, which can dart through all uncertainties and descry things afar off as *certain*, although they are *uncertain*, God foreknows all possible things. This is just asserting, that he has the power of knowing a thing to be *certain*, which is admitted to be *uncertain*; that a thing *will certainly* be, which *certainly may never be*; and that a thing *will certainly be true* which *may cer-*

tainly be false. But perhaps some good reasoning can be advanced, which will demonstrate this proposition, strange as it appears, nevertheless to be true. This we have a right to expect. Our common sense, which dictates, that a thing can not be foreknown as *certain*, until it is *certain*, ought not to be contradicted without clear demonstration. Now what is the process by which our common sense is shown to be in an error? Has God in the Scriptures revealed himself as possessing this *apparently* absurd power?—No. Revelation on this subject is silent. What then is this demonstration? Simply this: All things are not eternally decreed or eternally made *certain*. He however eternally foreknows all things thus *uncertain* as *certain*; and therefore, possesses the power of eternally foreknowing things *uncertain* as *certain*.

It is a first axiom in Logick, that one of the premises must contain the conclusion, and the other must show, that the conclusion is contained in it; in this demonstration however, both the major proposition, asserting, that all things are not eternally decreed, or eternally made certain; and the minor announcing, that Deity eternally foreknows uncertainties as certain, are taken for granted; and what is this, but assuming the conclusion to be true? If the premises which contain the conclusion be assumed, the conclusion itself is assumed. And if so, this professed demonstration turns out to be but a *begging* the very question, that ought to have been proved.* If then inspiration be not mistaken in proclaiming, *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world*, the plan of God is eternal.

Arminians however frequently admit, that so far as consequences can be legitimately drawn from metaphysical reasoning, the doctrine of an eternal and divine plan in creating and governing the universe, would appear

*If it should be said, that although God did not from all eternity foreknow the certainty of future events as *eternally* existing; yet, he eternally foreknew, that this certainty would *ultimately* exist; nothing is gained. Because this is only asserting, that from eternity, he foreknew the *certainty* of the *certainty* of these events: and the question again arises, Whence the cause of the *eternal certainty of their certainty*? It must have eternally existed in the state of the divine mind, or had some cause without God.

to be true; but affirm, that when they submit their reason to the guidance of the divine word, they are irresistibly conducted to the contrary conclusion. But on examining their ideas on this subject, it is found, they suppose, this doctrine necessarily denies the liberty of man and makes God the author of sin; and is therefore opposed to the Bible, which teaches, that God has *no pleasure in the death of the wicked*, and, that the only reason, why the wicked are not gathered, is because they *will not*. But since the doctrine here advocated, is that so far from interfering with the liberty of the moral creation, it is a part of God's plan, that accountable *creatures shall be free*; and that so far from making God the author of sin, one of the very best possible plans has been eternally chosen by him to prevent sin, it most obviously follows, that in the present case, these *hackneyed* objections fall lifeless to the ground, and will be recognized as wholly inapplicable by all, but such, as are either too *weak* or too *prejudiced* to reason. Except these however, argument professed to be scriptural, against this doctrine there is none. There being thus no arguments, either from reason or revelation, legitimately opposed to this doctrine, the only question now is, whether by interpreting language in its most literal and obvious signification, can it be deduced from the Bible?—We say by interpreting language most literally, and obviously; because, if any other course be adopted, the Scriptures, or any other book, may be tortured so as to affirm, or deny, any thing, that the imagination, the weakness, the wickedness, or prejudices of men may invent; and thus cease to be guides to those, who would be conducted by them, to the temple of truth. The literal meaning of a word always stands first; and in the interpretation of language, can never be departed from, until such reasons be found, as say, that it *must* be understood figuratively; and when such reasons are perceived to exist, as decide, that it *must* be understood figuratively; then all things equal, the meaning nearest the letter, or least figurative, is to be preferred to one farther from the letter, or more figurative; consequently, when a word can not be understood strictly literal, we are to interpret it as nearly so as we can.

Regulated by this principle, which must be to all, obviously just, let us examine what proof our doctrine finds in the Bible:

Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world, or from eternity. Now his foreknowledge, and his predestination, are so coupled together by the apostle Paul, as to intimate, that they are coexistent—*Whom he did foreknow, he ALSO (not afterwards) did predestinate.* For, if they be not coexistent, then there must have been a period when he foreknew some, whom he did not predestinate.

Again, *As he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.* This text is literally rendered from the original. It is admitted, that taken by itself, it does not say certainly, that this choice was made *from all eternity*, but it does say *before* the foundation of the world—*before* time began, and therefore, *from* at least a *part* of eternity; and as it is not said *how long* before the foundation of the world, it no more literally means a *part*, than the *whole* of the duration before the foundation of the world. It will be admitted even by an opponent, that this choosing was included in the determination, *that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body with the holy apostles and prophets; and the partakers of God's promise in Christ by the Gospel, called a mystery; which from the beginning of the world [or ap'ton aionon, most literally from eternities] hath been hid in God;** and this, *according to the eternal purpose [or kata prothesin ton aionon, literally according to the purpose of eternities, †] which he purposed in Christ Jesus Our Lord. ‡* Here this mystery—the calling of the Gentiles as well as the Jews—accor-

*Eph. iii. 5, 6.

†It is an objection among the weakest of the weak, to say, that because this mystery is reported in the fifth verse of this chapter to have been hid from *ages*, we must understand *eternities* here to signify *ages* or *generations*—If it was hid from *eternities*, by the axiom that *a whole* includes all *the parts*, it must have been hid from *ages*.

‡Eph. iii. 11.

ing to the eternal purpose of him that worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, existed from all eternity, and consequently this *choosing** to holiness included in this mystery must also have existed from eternity according to his eternal purpose. Now, if the Greek word *aionon* in these passages properly signifies eternity, the proof is complete. Dr. Adam Clarke, although he wishes to limit the word in these places to the ages of the Jewish dispensation, yet frankly acknowledges, that “the grammatical meaning of the word is *everduring* or *endless duration*”—a candid confession on his part, that the theological system, which he advocates does not strictly agree with “the proper grammatical meaning” of the Bible. This “grammatical” decision of Dr. Clarke, is worthy of a scholar, whatever he may be as a divine. It is confirmed by authorities unbiased by our theological controversies and whose classical knowledge of the Greek language nothing but ignorance can dispute. Philo† says, that in *aion* nothing is past or future; but in its very nature, it is one.” By Aristotle‡ *aion* is described as “embracing a duration beyond which there is nothing;” and “the interminable duration and infinitude of all;” and also, as derived from *aei*, ever, and *einai*, to be; and thus as signifying everbeing.

With this authorized application of *aion* before us, other texts may be introduced to prove the eternity of God’s plan. *Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my Gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began* [*kronois aioniois*, during eternal times]. Whether this mystery be understood to mean the whole Gospel plan, or only that part of it, which relates to the Gentiles; yet it is conceded to be a plan which the apostle declares to have been hid during the eternal times. As the word *aionios*, has been proved and admitted properly and grammatically to mean *eternal*, the only question now to be decided, is whether it is here to be understood literally or figuratively.

*Eph, i. 4, †In Libero de illundo. ‡De Corlo lib 9.

The word is here indeed in connexion with *KRONOS*, usually translated *time*; and on account of this association, it may be supposed, that it is not to be literally interpreted. Since *time* properly must have both a beginning and an end, *eternal times* may be imagined to be a contradiction. But this difficulty vanishes into empty space when on approaching it we find, that such an authority as Aristotle employs *Kronos* as synonymous with *duration*. He teaches us, that *aion* [eternity] embraces *Kronon apeiron* [endless duration] on this authority we may venture to give as a legitimate rendering of the words *eternal durations* instead of *eternal times*. If it should be objected, that the words are here found in the plural, and, that a plurality of endless duration, is a plurality of absurdity, the answer is, that among the ancient classic writers *generally*, and *especially* among the writers of the Scriptures, nothing is more customary, than to substitute the plural number for the singular. That the plural is sometimes used, when no meaning different from the singular is intended, may be seen from the following texts: “But Israel shall be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation; ye shall not be ashamed, nor confounded, world without end.* And they that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as stars for ever and ever.”† The word *everlasting* and the phrase *world without end* in the first text, are expressed in the Hebrew by the plural of *olam* [eternities]; but are rendered in the Septuagint by *aion*, singular [eternity]. The phrase “for ever” in the second text, is in the Hebrew *olam*, singular [eternity]; but is rendered in the septuagint, *eis tous aionas*, plural [to eternities]. These cases are indisputable proof, that the plural and the singular, are sometimes interchangeably used, when no difference of signification is designed.

Again, God is said to save us—“not according to our works; but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world

*Isaiah xiv. 17. †Dan. xii. 3

began.* *Before the world began*, is in the original *pro kronon aionion*. [literally before eternal duration]. Some critics say that this phrase ought to be rendered, *the time before the ages of the Jewish dispensation*, because, *before* eternal duration involves a contradiction. But however anomalous it may appear, precisely the same kind of language, is employed by the Septuagint in the eighth chapter of Proverbs, where the wisdom of God, which all agree was from eternity, is personified. The phrase from everlasting in the twenty-third verse, in the Hebrew *ma-olam* [from eternity], is by the seventy translated *pro aionon* [before eternities], which renders it entirely certain, that in their estimation, *pro aionon*, is one way of expressing eternity. Now as *aion* and *kronos aionios*, have been shown to convey the same extent of idea, so also must *pro aionon* and *pro kronon aionion*. If then the former, in Prov. viii. 23, be properly translated *From everlasting*, as none can dispute; why should not the latter, in 11. Timothy i. 9, be admitted to the same latitude of signification?

Although it be admitted, that the word *aion* is frequently used to denote the age of man, a dispensation, the duration of the world, and perhaps other finite periods; yet from the authorities already quoted, it is clear, that its literal meaning, is eternity; and this signification, or the nearest to it allowed by the connexion of the word and the scope of the passage in which it is found, is the sense in which it ought always to be understood; otherwise language ceases to be the vehicle of thought.

Though *aion* naturally, is the symbol of eternity; yet when it is said; *As he spake by his prophets since the world began* [ap' aionos], it is plain, that the word can not here be understood in its native sense; because the prophets have spoken only since the creation of the world.

Again, when our Saviour speaking of the sin against the Holy Ghost, declares, that the man guilty of this sin, shall not be forgiven, neither *in this world* [en touto aioni], *neither in the world to come* [en to mellonti], *aion* is found associated with committing sins, and enduring

*11 Tim, 1. 9,

punishment; facts which the scriptures invariably represent as belonging, the former to sinners in the present life, and the latter to them in the life to come; and therefore, to understand it here to mean any thing, but the *present* and the *future* state of man, would be totally to disregard the scope of the passage, and the most obvious signification of almost every other word in the text.

But in the texts, which we have quoted to prove the eternity of God's plan of the universe what in the scope, or connexion, or letter to forbid, that *aion* should not be taken in all the extent of its native latitude?—Nothing. The only imaginable reason, that can be rendered for the unwearied labour of certain critics and theologians, in these texts to narrow down the unlimited meaning of the term, is because, in the expanse of its native signification, it is death to the peculiarities of the Arminian system. A fact however, that rises to all the power and dignity of a demonstration, that the peculiarities of this system are at variance with the most obvious interpretation of some parts of the Bible.

All this inveterate opposition to the doctrine of the eternity of the divine plan, arises, no doubt in many cases, from an honest, although we can not say an enlightened conviction, that it makes man a mere machine and God the author of sin; and from a strong desire of obviating these difficulties. But these difficulties are only imaginary. They arise from entertaining unscriptural as well as unreasonable notions with regard to the nature of the divine determinations. Already it is believed to be proved in the course of this work, that Deity may have an eternal plan, and yet not be the author of sin, or in the least interfere with the freedom of the creature. And this for the very simple reason, that his plan is, that the creature *shall be free* and the best possible means *shall* be employed to prevent sin. Now the demonstration, that this doctrine impugns, by any legitimate consequence, either the holiness of God or the natural liberty of the creature remains yet to be exhibited; and it may be added that no stronger proof, than bold vociferous assertion is anticipated.

But suppose these objections were real instead of imaginary, still the Arminian system annihilates no difficulty, which adheres to the most ultra Calvinism. He indeed conceals the difficulty from the unobserving and the superficial; yet he whose careful feet tread, and whose scrutinizing eye penetrates, every apartment of this edifice, whose front is so carefully swept and garnished, will ultimately find the unclean spirit, sometimes associated with seven others worse than itself.

Suppose it to be a doctrine of ultra Calvinism, that God created a certain portion of the human and angelic hosts with an eternal purpose of their being sinners; and of making them throughout eternity, the miserable objects of his vindicatory justice; and therefore formed them after such a manner, placed them in such a state, and employed upon their minds such a coercive influence, as to secure the exact amount of sin and consequent misery, which he desired, what is gained by adopting the Arminian system?

The Arminian says "strictly speaking there is no foreknowledge" any "more than afterknowledge with God; but all things are known to him as present from eternity to eternity."

Now according to this representation, he eternally views all things and events, either as certainly, or conditionally, to exist and happen.

In the first place, suppose, that he eternally views them as certain. Then, seated on the throne of eternity high and lifted up, he beholds the lake burning with fire and brimstone, filled with human souls and angelic spirits bound in the chains of darkness; and the smoke of their torments ascending with the voice of their wailing forever and ever, as the *certain consequence* of sin; and sin as *the certain consequence* of men and angels formed in a particular manner and placed in a particular State; and finally, these men and angels thus formed and thus placed, as the *certain consequence* of *his own choosing* to form and place them thus. So that he views all this sin and suffering, as arising from the certainty, that *he himself will choose* to form creatures with the very liabilities, and

to place them in the very conditions, which will certainly produce the full amount of sin and suffering committed and endured. Now what difference whether this choice be made from all eternity or only immediately before the formation of the creature, since the liabilities and circumstances foreseen as productive of sin and destruction, were selected by the Creator himself, before the creature had existence? If God had no pleasure in the death of the wicked, why *at the moment of creation*, any more than *from all eternity*, did he choose to create men and angels with liabilities, so as *certainly* to become sinners, and the *certain* subjects of eternal suffering?

But suppose, from all eternity God beheld all things conditionally. Here he saw the burning lake with all the unnumbered myriads of impenitent men and sinning angels eternally before him, griped with their chains and writhing in their fires, for ever and ever, *to be certain, upon the condition*, that there should be men and angels that *would sin*; men and angels that would sin, *upon the condition*, that they should be formed with certain liabilities, and be placed in certain circumstances; and finally, men and angels thus formed, and thus placed, *upon condition*, that *he himself would choose* to form and place them thus. Suppose all this foreknowledge to have remained *conditional* in the eternal mind, until that period in duration arrived, when he created men and angels; and *then*, in choosing to create them *with* the particular liabilities, and *in* the particular circumstances, which he viewed as *certainly* the antecedents to their sins and miseries, he chose the very condition on which all the others depended. Now what though all these things through a great part of eternity, were uncertain; since by the *choice* of the Creator himself, they were rendered *certain*, soon enough to produce all this imagined mischief, which he is supposed to have foreseen, to be the *certain*, though the *conditional* consequence of his choice? And what though they were *conditional*, since God selected the very *condition* on which he foresaw all the rest would *certainly* turn?—So that, in this matter, the principal difference between the *ultra Calvinist* and the

conditional Arminian, appears to be simply this: the former supposes, that God chose his *whole* system from all eternity, and the latter, that he chose the *condition* on which he foresaw *all* the other conditions would certainly turn, at some advanced period in eternity; perhaps just before the creation of the world. But if God had no pleasure in the death of the wicked, why, either from eternity or from the foundation of the world, did he choose either the *whole* system, or the *condition* on which he foresaw the *whole* system would turn?—As the Arminian supposes, that he eternally knew *all things*; and consequently all things within the compass of his own power, why, unless he have delight in the iniquities, the burnings, the groans, and the wailings of the guilty and the miserable, did he not choose that condition, which he knew would not be followed with such wicked and woful consequences? In fine, how is he any less the author of sin by *choosing a condition*, on which he foreknew all the other conditions—some wicked and woful—would certainly turn, than by choosing the whole system at once, without any conditions?—And how is he any less the author of sin by *choosing this conditional system of certain sin and misery* at the creation of the world, and not from all eternity? Why choose it *at all*, either *conditionally*, or *unconditionally*, in *time or eternity*?

It is however alledged, that Arminianism supposes, that God in creating his moral subjects foresaw that they would sin freely; but ultra Calvinism, that he coerces them to sin, and that thus the former recognizes the liberty of man; but the latter denies that liberty.

Then the difference is only this: the former supposes, that God chose to create moral beings in that state of natural freedom, which he eternally saw to be the certain condition on which would turn all the sin and suffering ever to be perpetuated and endured on earth and in hell; and the latter, that God chose to create moral beings in such a state and govern them in such a way as infallibly to secure the same guilty and miserable consequences. Or more concisely, ultra Calvinism supposes, that God has chosen to create and govern his moral subjects so that

they *shall* sin; and Arminianism, that he has chosen to create and govern them so that they will sin. Or perhaps, as there is no Calvinism *so ultra* as to deny human liberty in every sense, it would be more proper to say, that the one supposes, that God has chosen to create and govern his accountable creatures so that they *shall* sin freely; and the other, that he has chosen so to create and govern them that they infallibly *will* sin freely.

The partition between ultra Calvinism and Arminianism, so far as regards making God the author of sin, is as thin as the diameter of a hair. In the one case he is supposed to choose *a certainly will sin*; and in the other, *a certainly shall sin*. But if he be a God, that has no pleasure in wickedness, why not chuse to create and govern the universe in adopting such a condition as could be foreseen neither with a certainly *shall* sin, nor with a certainly *will* sin; but with a certainly *no sin*?

And if it be imagined, that God created the moral universe, knowing that creating it as he did, it would be the condition on which so much rebellion and misery would be decided, but without determining or choosing to create it; this is supposing, the act of God, by which he created all the intelligent armies of the heavens and the earth, to have been like the movements of the brute matter, without intelligence or design; and thus to have been as unmeaning and as merciless as the reach of the fiery arms of the god Moloch to receive the devoted infants; and as the grasp by which he embraced them to his burning bosom.

Again, if it should be alleged that when God created men and angels, he chose to render all future events concerning them contingent; and not to know what would be the certain results; this is adopting a position in itself incapable of any proof; and yet, directly denied by such scriptures as teach, that *known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world*; and that he has made all his works in wisdom; and as fully as the sternest Calvinism, it implicates the Holy one with the authorship of sin.*

The last argument for the eternity of the plan of God's moral system, is the consequences to which the contrary

*See No 1 note B pp 31 32

hypothesis legitimately conducts us. It is intuitively obvious, that where no determinations are made, there is no plan adapted, if therefore God has not determined every being and event in the universe, every being and event is not embraced in his plan, and then he has an universe stupendous indeed, but in part without a plan.

The universe is one and will continue in progress throughout eternity to come; if there be any thing therefore, now undetermined, which will however happen or exist in future, the universe is now in part without a plan. If the actions of men are not all determined, they are not all embraced in God's plan, and then the universe is in part without a plan. If there ever was a period since creation began in which there was a future being or event undetermined, then the universe was in part without a plan.

Now to suppose there is a single appendage viewed by the eye of omniscience as belonging to his own universe, to which his determinations have given no appropriation, or assigned no meaning, appears like more than indirectly implicating the only Wise God with the possibility of folly. Shall the writer, who would deface his own well written page with unappropriated characters, or the orator who would intersperse his speech with unmeaning sounds, be justly charged with folly, and yet, shall we say, that God strews the expanse of his harmonious universe with unintended events and unmeant beings and still not impugn his infinite wisdom?

If from eternity, the Divine being has had no plan, which reaches every event in the universe; and if all his determinations are conditional, he must either have had no designs at first, or found them constantly thwarted. To suppose, that he created the moral universe without any design, appears too preposterous to be for a moment admitted. And if there be any intention admitted to have existed in the infinite mind on the subject of creation, next to his own glory, must have been their happiness. He then designed to create moral beings, that they might be happy; behold! after he had designed them for happiness, man and numbers of the angels fell,

and a great link in the chain is broken. On the foresight of this disaster he determines to let a portion of the fallen angels lie in the pit into which by transgression they had fallen, there to endure unspeakable and untermineable woe; but resolves to give his only begotten and well beloved Son with the full purpose of saving the whole human race. But here again his design is thwarted. He discovers, that all will not believe. On the foresight of the faith of one part of the human race, and of the infidelity of the other, he lastly determines to save the former, and to consign the latter to unending wretchedness. Thus his designs must have been constantly broken.

Besides, upon the Arminian hypothesis, that God's plan is not eternal, and that all his determinations are conditional, he becomes a changeable Being. He determines to create men and angels. In this determination the state of his mind becomes different from what it was before he had formed such a design. Because he saw man lost, he decrees to send a Saviour. Here again he passes into another state of mind. He foresees, that some will not believe and forms the design of surrendering them to interminable misery. Here he undergoes a third transmutation. Now if this be so, how can God say I change not?

Again, Arminianism makes the creature so far as the moral universe—the most important part of God's works—is concerned, rule the Creator. If God's choosings in relation to the creature be conditional, then the choice of men and angels to sin moved God to plan destruction for the rebellious angels and a Saviour for rebellious man. By the choice of some men to believe the Gospel he is influenced to decree their salvation; but by the free will of others to refuse the messages of mercy he is induced to ordain them to destruction and thus he is operated upon in all the infinite variety of his creature's choosings. So that by consequences drawn from this doctrine apparently legitimate, the unchangeable Jehovah is made to float in theory like a feather in the air liable to be carried North or South, East or West or whithersoever the capricious breath of creature volition may move.

APPENDIX.

To Joseph Lybrand, Samuel Merwin, Samuel Doughty, John Lednum, Elisha Andrews, Manning Force, Thomas F. Sargent, Thomas Miller, W. W. Wallace, and Thomas Dunn, Committee of publication; and John Clarke, editor of the late Religious Messenger.

As the Religious Messenger professed to be edited, and published for the Philadelphia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church; and as you have given your names to the world as its Conductors and Editors; it is presumable and presumed, that you owed your elevation to the appointment of that body; and, that you appeared before the public, as its regularly constituted organs.

This elevation entitles you to a notice, which from motives of a proper self respect, of the official dignity of a minister of Jesus Christ, and of the peace of the church by avoiding to condescend to a certain class of men and matters, might otherwise be reasonably withheld.

In addressing you, it is believed, that no vindictive feelings are indulged. It is devoutly wished, that you all were more enlightened in the doctrines of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, than from some of your publications

you appear to be: and, that you were so deeply imbued with that spirit of charity, which gives these doctrines power over the heart, as to prevent you from descending to the low walks of bigotry, to pander for circulation, reports of things, that *may* be discoloured by prejudice, perverted by depravity, or distorted through the obscure medium of mental imbecility.

But for the individual interest of any of us, the general interest of truth and religion ought not to suffer. Better that the personal character of any of us, or of all of us together, should be sunk a thousand degrees below the centre of the world, than that one pin in the temple of truth should lie buried in the rubbish of our ignorance, prejudice, or sectarian bigotry.

When the Remarks published in the Christian Preacher were written, it was supposed that a faculty, that could send forth strictures, such as those on which the remarks were made, would become fractious on seeing their falsehoods unmasked and their ignorance ridiculed. In this there was no disappointment—To sustain the *mean* personal attack made in your strictures, upon the Editor in the slanderous misrepresentation of his sermon on religious ignorance, and in the Christian Preacher, No. 4, p 96, and No. 5. pp 118, 119, challenged as a falsehood, you have introduced an anonymous letter. In this letter probably written by some *blackguard*, as certain approbrious language which it contains would rather indicate, it is reported, that the offensive part of the sermon was taken down by one of the audience, and is as follows: "You do not know, whether St. Paul or Nebuchadnezzar lived first; whether Jesus Christ or Judas Iscariot was crucified to save sinners; or whether the Jewish captivity was before or after the flood:—In fine your religious atmosphere is as dark as the smoke which ascends from the bottomless pit." This letter also informs us, that this language being reported to a clerical individual*, he carried it into the pulpit, and quoting it to the people, informed them, "that were he to apply such language to them he should tell an *untruth*, or in other words *a lie*"—This anonymous letter writer also says "we maintain, that we do not mistake, or do violence to his warning, when we state, that his (the Editor's) remarks were *levelled at Methodism*."

The language of the sermon as given by this reporter *is a falsehood*, for which you are held before the public accountable as the panders and publishers until you surrender your authority. Now it is certain, that even intelligent and skilful stenographers, who come prepared for reporting sermons and speeches, frequently misapprehend the speaker, and commit great errors, the public should have been informed, and that too by better authority than that of some vulgar anonymous letter writer, whether this professed reporter is not some *weak, prejudiced, gossiping bigot, unacquainted* with stenography and *destitute* of every other qualification requisite in a reporter.

But even supposing the reporter to have been competent and the words, to have been delivered as reported, and the speaker to have known that, as the anonymous letter states, one half of the congregation were Methodists, by what kind of logick could the language be construed as *levelled at them*? Of the remaining half of the congregation present some were Presbyterians and some were Episcopalians; why might not *they* as well say, that it was levelled at them? Why nobody take offence but Methodists? And why scarcely any of them?† Why did not the Episcopalians, on the first opportunity, charge their minister to quote the offensive language to their congregation, and give it the *lie* of the church? Upon the principle here assumed, even in our own houses of worship, we must not say "*Religious ignorance*," or *Methodist preachers* will thunder the *lie* at our heads from the pulpit, and the Philadelphia Conference will rise upon us in *masse*, and rend us in more pieces than Sampson did the

*It is but justice, that the public should know, that the performer of this gallant exploit is said to be, The Rev. Solomon Higgins.

†In justice to the Methodists of Smyrna it is believed that all this mischief making business was confined to a very small number of their society.

lion. If we may be allowed to compare mean things together, this resembles the story of Portuguese Joe. He was fond of intruding himself into the company of gentlemen. In such attempts he was sometimes ridiculed; and being of rather a swarthy complexion, he was frequently, humorously called *black Joe*, and told, that he was better suited for the company of mulattoes than that of gentlemen. Joe did not perfectly understand English, but he began to find, that there was something not very dignified associated with the term *black*, and this he was determined henceforth to resent. Soon afterwards Joe happened to be standing near two men in conversation, and in the course of their colloquy, one of them chanced to repeat the word *black*. Immediately, almost burning with rage and drawing his hand from his pocket, Joe squares himself before the gentleman, and exclaims, with vengeance in his eye, "you call me *mlack! me rompe you my knife.*" And so it seems we must not say to our hearers, *ignorance*, or the Philadelphia Conference will rompe us in the Religious Messenger. Perhaps we ought to make for them very much the same kind of allowance, that we would for poor Joe.

In your Messenger of Dec. 13, you represent the Editor of the Christian Preacher, when called to converse with a person, who was the subject of a-wakening grace, and who was under apprehensions that his day of mercy was past—as soothing him by telling him "that God had begun a good work in him, and that, as he had begun, so he would complete it in his own good time, to the glory of his grace, that the Holy Spirit was at work and would sustain him through the merits of Christ." You also report the distressed person as taking comfort from the conversation and returning peaceably to his sins: This representation, or rather, this misrepresentation is a *falsehood*.

You are arraigned before the bar of the public as its procurers and publishers. The publication of this anecdote, has in it, more of certain *other qualities* of the dove, than its *harmlessness*; and more of certain *other qualities* of the serpent, than its *cunning*.

The *malignity* of this story is only equalled by *the ignorance* which it proclaims. This anecdote you adduce as a practical comment on spending years in studious preparation for the work of the ministry. No stronger proof however, can be adduced in one thing, than this, for the *necessity* of such preparation. If you have represented in this fabrication, as a doctrine of the Presbyterian church, that, which is probably the *doctrine of no church*, Who believes, that every convicted, and alarmed person will assuredly become a *christian*? If you had spent a few years in diligent study, you would probably have known better, than to have imputed any such a doctrine to a Presbyterian minister. The man who framed this story may have had a *heart bad enough*; but not a *head good enough* to contrive even a *feasible lie*. And none but a *pack of blockheads*, could have given it publication, because any others would have known, that it would proclaim their own ignorance. Even Satan himself, much as he delights in falsehood, no doubt blushes to behold such *devil-like wickedness*, beleaguered by the dove-like weakness that enters into the composition of this lie; and if its inventor and publishers do not blush, it is because they have *all the Devil's impudence* without *any of his good sense*.

The pages of the Christian Preacher are intended to be devoted to the doctrinal and practical exhibitions of divine truth; and it is very much regretted by the Editor, that the Publishing Committee and Editor of the Philadelphia Conference, should have mixed with their animadversions on doctrinal subjects, *mean falsehoods of a personal character*, and thus have rendered it necessary, that some of our pages should be devoted to mere personal vindication.

Henceforth refute our doctrines if you dislike them and the refutations shall be treated as the Editor thinks they deserve, *respectfully*, if they be intelligent and temperate; *with severity and ridicule*, if they be of a different character; but confine yourselves to his *works*. The course you have pursued will no longer be endured, without recording your names in a document different from the Christian Preacher.

(To be continued.)

THE CHRISTIAN PREACHER.

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N^o. 9.

THE BEST POSSIBLE SYSTEM.

My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. Isaiah xvi. 10.

For thou art not a God, that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither can evil dwell with thee. Ps. v. 4.

Having established the existence, the immutability, and the eternity of God's universal plan, the design of this discourse, is,

4. To prove, that it is one of the best possible, to promote righteousness and to prevent sin.

There are three distinct classes of opponents to the theory advocated in this discourse:

First, Those who deny the doctrine of God's eternal decrees, and who of course, say, that he has no eternal plan, reaching every being and event in his moral empire.

Secondly, Those who hold, that God has an eternal plan, and, that he might have created and governed a moral universe so, as to preserve it forever, totally exempt from transgression and suffering; but that all things wisely considered, it would not be so good as one like the present, in which iniquity and misery abound and, that therefore, since the moral creation would be made *better*, and *best*, by sin, he wisely made provision for its introduction. According to these, Deity chose sin, because, all things considered, it was wisely pronounced *good*.

Thirdly, Those who also finally advocate the immutability, the eternity, and the universality of the divine purpose; and believe that God might have chosen a moral system, in which sin would never have spread its pollutions and its miseries; but, that he chose this system of disobedience and death, not because it was viewed either as *better*, or *best* or even so *good*, but simply because it was his *pleasure* so to choose. According to these, he *would* because he *would*.

In the preceding discourse, it was distinctly shown, that the Arminian who denies the eternity of the divine plan, or who, at most, makes it an eternal plan of conditions, by adopting a theory which necessarily supposes, that God *chooses the very condition, upon which all the sin and death in the universe depended and turned*, as really implicates the Holy One with the authorship of sin, as the Calvinist, who supposes, that God chose the same universe without any conditions. And if so, it appears, that however much these three classes of opponents, in other matters, differ among themselves, they all agree, either by acknowledgment, or by inevitable inference, that God actually chose a moral universe, shaded by sin and ravaged by death, when either conditionally, or unconditionally, he might have selected another, in which disobedience, woe, and dissolution, would be utterly unknown.

From these preliminary observations, we pass to the consideration of our arguments.

The constitution of moral beings, so far as we are capable of judging, appear to be adapted in the best possible manner, to be influenced to holiness by moral motives.

As it was essential to man's moral existence, that he should be the subject of law, and be influenced to obedience through the instrumentality of motives, he was created with an intellect, and a moral sense, to *understand* and *feel* existence and the obligation of law, as well as the presentation and the power of motives.

Without an understanding to discriminate the distinction, between right and wrong, man could no more be the subject of moral law, than could a clod or a stone. To require him to perform that, of which he had, and of which he possibly could have, no knowledge, would be visibly unreasonable. It was sufficient however, that every grade of moral beings, had understanding competent to apprehend laws given to their respective natures. It would have been as *unreasonable* to enjoin on man, laws suited to the capacity of angels, as to make a worm subject to laws, suited to the capacity of man. And it

was as *unnecessary* to the moral condition of man, that, to keep the laws adapted to his nature, he should possess the intellect of an angel, as to the irresponsible condition of the worm, that, to fulfil the design of being, he should possess the understanding of a man.

And thus no excuse for disobedience, can be made by beings of a lower order and less intellect, any more than by beings of a higher order and a greater intellect; because the understanding of both, were adapted to their respective circumstances. Here are two men: one of them possesses strength sufficient to lift and carry four hundred weight; the other, but power competent to raise and bear away two hundred. If it be the duty of both to lift and carry these different hundreds, the obligation of the weaker, is as great, and his failure as reprehensible, as the obligation and failure of the stronger; because they are equally competent for their respective duties: So man in his original estate, was as competent in intelligence for his law, as the angels were for theirs. Had God given Adam angelic powers, there is no reason to believe, that he would have been any better qualified for obeying the law of Paradise. It therefore can not be imagined, how it would have been possible to create an intellect better adapted to a sphere of obedience, than man's was to his; and the same is presumed to be true of the angels. It is however certain, that finite intellects of every grade, from the loftiest, down to the meanest order, are all liable to be deceived, and therefore, not exempt from error. And no remedy for this appears possible, except to change them from finite to infinite minds; and this is impossible; because infinite knowledge is the exclusive prerogative of Deity. It is then no impeachment of his omnipotence to say, that he *can not* create a mind so perfect, that in itself, without any supernatural aid or influence, it is, while unconfirmed by moral means, above all liability to error. He *can not*, because he *can not* create another God. He *cannot* but himself be the Supreme. He *cannot*, because he *cannot* deny himself. To suppose, that he *can*, is to suppose a departure from

the harmony of his perfections and from the rectitude of his being.

If this survey of finite moral intellect, be sustained, it is not for us to say, how the understanding either of men or angels, could be better adapted to the obedience of their respective spheres.

But a *moral* sense also enters into the composition of an accountable being.

Man is so constituted, that he not only *sees*, but *feels*. He not only apprehends an object of pleasure, but he also feels a pleasurable emotion. He not only beholds an object of terror, but he also feels himself terrified; and so, when he wanders from the rectitude of the divine law, he not only perceives, that he has erred, but feels, that he is guilty. This feeling, acknowledged even now to operate upon the minds of all the variety of lapsed man, their thoughts always, either *accusing or else excusing one another*, may be recognized in its effects upon our first parents, when they hid themselves from the divine presence, among the trees of the garden; and may reasonably be supposed to have existed in their bosoms in all its purity and vigor before they had, by transgression, lost their Maker's image. So long as their understanding viewed their moral movements to be within the limits of the holy law, the feeling of approbation gladdened their steps, and, when to induce to aberration, any suggestion was offered which the understanding recognized as false, this moral sense met the falsehood with a frown, and filled the mind with the forebodings of future guilt and of future wrath as the inevitable consequences of transgression.

As there neither is, nor can be, any doubt of the existence and the action of a moral sense in the constitution of man, the principal question to be decided in relation to our general proposition, is, whether in *kind* and *degree*, it was in our first parents, the best possible, to guide them in the path of holiness, and to warn them from the wanderings of sin.

In kind, it involves the compound feeling of guilt and fear—guilt which recognizes the law as holy, just, and

good; and a fear which bows to a power omnipotent to enforce its sanctions; and thus it was a sense embracing all the considerations of both duty and interest, the strongest principles, that can possibly be conceived to exist in the bosom of a finite intelligent being.

As to the *degree*, the history of our first parents warrants us in the assurance, that so long as the dictates of the understanding remained unsubdued by deception, and reported as truth the sanction of the Lawgiver, *in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*, so long the moral sense approved obedience, and frowned at transgression; and approved and frowned in *such a degree*, as to pursue the one, and to avoid the other. As this susceptibility of mind, from the nature of the case, was, in its province confined to the decisions of the understanding, and constituted solely for the purpose of giving them efficiency; so any degree of feeling more than that necessary to give these decisions effect, would have been no more subservient to the purpose of obedience, and might, from its extreme acuteness, have produced much unnecessary unhappiness.

Now if these representations be correct, as they are certainly believed to be, there is no possible way conceivable, in which the moral sense could have been better adapted to promote the beauties of holiness, and to repel the invasions of sin. And as the same has been proved to be true of man's understanding, and as natural liberty is allowed him on all hands, it is not imaginable, without indeed leaving the regions of possibility and wandering over the wilds of perfect absurdity, how man *could* have been better formed as the subject of a moral empire; and the same is reasonably presumed of all the higher orders of the intelligent universe. But was man *governed*, as well as *created* in the best possible manner to promote the happy dominion of righteousness, and to prevent the desolating intrusions of sin?

When God had created him, he spread before him all the luxuriance of Paradise, and elevated him to the domination of the world. All the inhabitants of ocean, earth, and air, bowed at his feet, and owned the Sub-sovereign-

ty of their divinely appointed lord. All on this earth, that could delight the eye, charm the ear, or regale the taste, were his without restriction, with the exception of the fruit of a solitary tree. Only by maintaining an exclusive right, to a single tree, did God assert his own Supreme Sovereignty over the world. If he had placed man over this ample inheritance without any law, he would have disowned his own Supremacy and thus have denied himself; and since according to the infinite rectitude of his own perfect nature, he *must* have no creature without a law, what more reasonable, more easily understood, or more easily obeyed, than the Sovereign mandate which encircled, and guarded, the forbidden tree?—It was most reasonable; its obedience implied no protracted, difficult, or painful exertions, either of body or mind; it was simply to withhold the hand. It was most easily understood: it involved no complicateness either of thought or language: *of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat*, is a proposition so simple in thought, and so plain in language, that it can be as perfectly comprehended by a man as by an angel. It was finally most easily obeyed; because the beneficence of the Creator, in giving him all the abundance of the world as his empire, elevated him above all the temptations of want.

And to induce him to continued obedience no stronger motives could be annexed than the sanctions of life and death, contained in the threatening and the promise.

And as if to make the inducement still stronger, Adam stood as the representative of his posterity.

If he obeyed, they came into the world holy, harmless, and undefiled; but if he sinned, they would enter life, the subjects of depravity, and the candidates of death. Now here were the best possible law, and the strongest possible motives.

But notwithstanding all this, *by one man sin entered into the world*. The serpent said ye shall not surely die: the falsehood was accredited; and as the error was not *perceived* by the understanding, so it *could not be felt* by the moral sense. Man's understanding was finite,

and, therefore, was not above all the wiles of deception, that a wise Devil and a cunning serpent might invent. Here was the unavoidable inlet for the *possibility* of sin in the best possible system.

Our first parents ought to have believed God, and not the serpent; but still to a different result there was a natural liability, in their finite minds. To have removed them from this liability was impossible, so far as we can judge, except by endowing them with the attribute of omniscience, so as to render them exempt from all error in understanding; or by some supernatural agency counteracting the natural perfections and volitions of the soul; or finally, by exhibiting to their view, other beings, their enduring punishment for similar transgression; and thus convincing them, that the threatened penalties would inevitably follow transgression, and, that if they sinned, they would assuredly die. But in rendering them omniscient God would have given his glory to another. In counteracting, by a supernatural influence, the natural operations of their minds, he would have interfered with that personal agency, essential to intelligent, voluntary, and probationary beings. There could not possibly be any trial, where God by his own agency would sustain them above all error. Nor, was it possible, without a supernatural influence upon their minds, by the way of vision or otherwise, to cause them to behold fallen beings, suffering death as the wages of sin. No bodily beings, whose sufferings only could be exhibited to human eyes, had yet sinned; and to have revealed to them the fall of the angels and their sufferings already commenced, would only have been, to tell them, that he had done to others, for their disobedience, what he threatened to do to them, if they disobeyed. But this fall, and these sufferings, of angels revealed to man by the voice of God, would not so far as we can see, have been any additional evidence of the infallible connexion between the sin and the penalty; because this history of the angels as much as the threatening denounced against eating the forbidden fruit, would have entirely depended, for credence, on the veracity of God; and since, in the

hour of temptation, man disbelieved the threatening, no reason can probably be assigned, why he could not have also disbelieved the declaration. If he doubted when God said "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," and believed the serpent who said "ye shall not surely die;" would he not as certainly, have doubted; if in vision, God had said to him, "for disobedience angelic spirits now endure total banishment from heaven, and in the chains of darkness are held as the prisoners of justice, until the judgment of the great day, there to be adjudged to deeper and more woful penalties," and have believed the tempter who would have said, "angelic spirits indeed have disobeyed, but *do* not and *will* not surely suffer."

Thus so far as our minds are capable of judging of the fitness of the divine dispensations, it appears, that in a moral system, where probationary obedience is essential as an antecedent to the more perfect state of confirmed obedience, no better means for displaying the divine holiness, and for counteracting the ingress, and the ravages of sin, existed within the whole range of moral possibilities, than those which God actually employed with man, whilst he remained a probationer under the blissful bowers of Paradise.

Here, however this question may meet us: "If the best system of moral discipline, was pursued by the Creator, in relation to man in Eden, why did he provide a tempter?" Man was not the only, nor yet the most important being in the universe. All things therefore in the moral system were not made for Adam. The tempter was once a glorious angel of light. He with all his fallen associates once stood unconfirmed as probationers for a confirmed state of holy and happy existence. Like man in Paradise, they enjoyed natural liberty and were the subjects of moral motives; but exalted as were their spheres, and mighty as were their intellects, their understanding, was still finite, and like his, liable to error; and their moral condition being thus mutable, like man in his primeval inheritance, they were liable, in case of transgression, to be hurled from their spheres. And

though their powers of intellect were vastly superior to man's and they commanded vastly more strength to resist temptation; yet as a man, on the summit of a mountain, comprehends in his view a wider circumference, and surveys a greater number objects, than can the little emmet from the top of his mole hill, so with their semi-infinite powers, seated on their elevated thrones, these angelic spirits, might behold within the almost measureless circle of their vision, innumerable objects of temptation, utterly unknown to the humble tenant of the garden. They no doubt like man were forewarned of the direful consequences of disobedience, and then were like him left in all the liberty of choice, either to believe or disbelieve. Had they fully accredited, that the wages of sin was death, it is impossible to think, that they would have transgressed; because no sentient being can love pure misery. Finite in their intellects, they may have conceived, that God would not carry his threatening into execution, and, that by rebellion they might usurp a supreme pre-eminence in the universe. And this is not mere conjecture since we are informed by the apostle, that pride is *the condemnation of the Devil*. And thus they may have sinned and have been cast forth under the curse of a just Sovereign to wander like Cain as the vagabonds of creation.

To have planted heaven's artillery, and have set legions of cherubim with flaming swords all around the bowers of Eden to guard every avenue, at which the tempter could have entered this Sacred abode of terrestrial bliss, and thus to have prevented him from the seductive act, by which sin entered into our world, must be admitted to have been perfectly within the compass of omnipotence; but for any thing we know to the contrary, it may not have been consistent with the best plan of moral government, to confine the angels who kept not their first estate so *closely* in the chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day, as to hinder them from traversing to and fro the earth, or as to restrain them from the exercise of that natural liberty with

which they were created, and by which they fell. And if this be admitted, then, since evil became their proper element of action, and since in despite of all moral motives, sin they would pursue, God may have suffered the temptation of man as a means of restraining the adversary from some greater injury to the moral creation, as he permitted the selling of Joseph to the Ishmaelites in lieu of permitting the destruction of his useful life. So that the permission of the tempter is not inconsistent with rational ideas of the best possible moral system, and therefore can not be urged, with any cogency, as an objection. And moreover since armies of angels entered the lists of rebellion against their Maker, without the influence of a Tempter, so man, surely not more powerful or less peaceable than they, might ultimately have sinned, had Satan never been permitted to tread the walks of Paradise, or to whisper in his ear *ye shall not surely die*.

And as before the fall, so since, the best possible plan, for the prevention of sin, is pursued in the dispensations of God.

To be understood, it is necessary to remark, that in judging of the fitness of the divine dispensations with regard to man, since the fall, it will be all along supposed, that the principle elsewhere contended for in this work is true. It is briefly this: Man still is, as he then was, a free agent and a subject to be governed by motives; with this difference however; he *then* possessed his Maker's image, and his natural liberty was *then* addressed by the awful motives of life and death to pursue the obedience by which this image would be retained: But *now* as a fallen being he is destitute of that image, and his natural liberty is *now* addressed, by infinite and eternal motives, to seek, in the regeneration of the Spirit, the restoration of that lost likeness offered to him in the mercy of the Gospel, without money and without price.

Although this position is argued in another part of this work,* yet as it lies at the foundation of some observa-

*No. 2, throughout.

tions now intended to be made it may tend to satisfy the mind of the reader merely to state the following considerations in its support:

1. If this position be not admitted, then, there is no constituted connexion between any means pursued by an unconverted man, and his obtaining the grace without which faith and repentance are absolutely impossible; and therefore, it matters very little, what course of life he pursues, because, according to the supposition, God has revealed to him as a sinner, no certain way by the pursuit of which, he may infallibly obtain the grace indispensable to change him from a sinner to a saint. And as there is thus no certain connexion between any improvement, which he can make of God's providential dispensations, and obtaining that grace which is unto salvation, so all these dispensations must be utterly useless as motives employed in preparing him for accepting that gift, which only can make him a new creature in Christ Jesus; and of course, they cannot be considered adapted at all, as means for the restoration of men; nor viewed as any displays of wisdom in relation to this subject. All this is obviously at variance with, both the letter and the spirit of the Bible, and with the general aspect of the whole economy of salvation.

2. In Chorazin and Bethsaida, mighty works were unavailingly performed, which in Tyre and Sidon, would have been followed with repentance in sackcloth and ashes. These however were not works of regeneration, because Chorazin and Bethsaida were upbraided for their unbelief; and yet, the Saviour himself, who spake as never man spake, declares, that had they been done in other circumstances, an evangelical repentance, and of course, a saving faith, would have been the certain consequences. Here is taught, a certain connexion between the manner in which unregenerated men treat the dispensations of God and their experiencing the spirit of regeneration; as also the adaptation of the common means of grace in addressing the natural liberty of man, to prepare the mind for realizing the necessity of the regenerating operations of the Holy Ghost.

With these preliminary observations in view, we proceed to consider the providences of God towards man after the fall.

On the day of his ruin a Saviour was revealed. Mercy fell from the lips of God in the promise, *the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.*

As all certainties existed *in*, and coexisted *with*, the eternal state of the infinite mind, there could be no uncertainty of the exact number of the human family, that would be so operated upon in their lost estate, by the means and the motives of the Gospel as in the exercise of their natural liberty to come to Christ, and to ask for the spirit of regeneration; and therefore in the divine plan, the advent of the Son of God was justly viewed as the greatest possible moral means of counteracting the deleterious effects of human apostacy.

In the economy of the Gospel, offended justice was appeased by the Saviour's propitiation, and the Spirit engaged to recreate the soul, and transform it to the lost image of its Maker.

Had the Saviour appeared in the flesh, as soon as human apostacy required a Mediator, the necessity of his taking upon him the form of a servant, and humbling himself to the accursed death of the cross, would not have been so plainly seen, or so universally felt, as it was by waiting, until four thousand years should pass through their revolutions, and human nature unaided by the divine light of revelation, should also appear, in all the phases of its waxings and wanings, in its own wisdom and its own folly. His appearance on earth was deferred, until the experiment was fully made, that *the world by wisdom knew not God*; whilst during all this dreary interval of long and dark centuries, the blood, streaming from ten thousand victims, and the fire blazing upon ten thousand altars appeared as lights and landmarks, to guide the pilgrim to a Saviour to come. And whilst the day spring from on high, that glimmered in the first promise, was spreading broader and broader towards the dawn of the Gospel morn, the judgments of heaven pursued the guilty footsteps of all, that closed their eyes against the light,

and turned their faces from the brightness of its rising. When all flesh had corrupted its way, the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep broken up, and all the earth's living inhabitants with the exception of the tenants of the ark were entombed in a watry grave. When the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah became sinners exceedingly before God, the fires of heaven flashed, and consumed the devoted cities. When the iniquity of the Amorites was full, God commissioned the tribes of Jacob, to exterminate the guilty race. And Tyre, Sidon, Ninevah, Egypt, Babylon, and Jerusalem, were in their turn, each desolated, by the judgments of an offended Heaven. And why all this? Was it because, his eyes were delighted with the floods and the fires of desolation, or because, the weeping and wailing of the distressed, and the shrieks of the dying, were music to his ears?—No. It was that they might be *an ensample to those that after should live ungodly.** At last the light of the Saviour's advent gilds the tops of the distant mountains, and angels ushering in the day, sing, *On earth peace and good will to men.* He appears a babe in the manger, endures all the indignities, toils, and pains of a lowly, earthly pilgrimage, expires a victim on the cross, and descends from the cross to the sepulchre; and thus drinks the cup of humiliation, and misery, to the very dregs, until *it is finished.* *In all this he bare our sins, he carried our sorrows; he magnified the law and made it honourable, and suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.* But he also has arisen from the dead, and the opening heavens, with the greeting of angels, have received him until the restitution of all things. In these most august and solemn transactions, God gives man not only an opportunity of returning from his rebellion, and his ruin, but also the strongest motives to return. On the one hand he sees exhibited as the strongest pledge of his Maker's benevolence, his love and mercy, sealed by the blood of the Saviour. On the other, he may survey the

*2 Pet. ii. 6.

stern justice, and the inflexible truth of his Sovereign, who spared not his only begotten Son, when for man he took the place of a vicarious sufferer. Oh! what a lesson of justice and truth is taught on Calvary! If God spared not his own Son, though, himself, holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, when only for others he bowed his head to the stroke of justice, how much less, will he spare the impenitent, who in the neglect of offered mercy, and in despite of the Spirit, tramples under foot the blood of the covenant, and thus voluntarily assumes the responsibility of his own sins! Life and death are now set before man, not in the mere voice of an abstract threatening and promise, as to Adam in Paradise; but drawn on the banner of the cross, with all the deep crimson of the Saviour's blood, in the infinite magnitude of eternity. Here are motives for obedience presented, which in the nature of the case, could not have been exhibited to our first parents. They indeed heard the threatening pronounced: we not only hear it pronounced, but also see it fulfilled.

They beheld, in Paradise, no being suffer in human nature for human transgressions; but we see the earth *now* deluged with water, and *now* with blood; and above all, the Son of God humbled, suffering, and expiring, on the cross, in the punishment of human disobedience.

Perhaps had Adam seen the woful penalties of sin thus exemplified, and the justice, truth, and mercy of God thus magnified, he had never eaten the forbidden fruit of Paradise. And perhaps these demonstrations of God's truth and justice, and these melting exemplifications of infinite love and mercy, may be motives ever before the eyes of the redeemed, in the realms of bliss, to confirm them in their restored obedience throughout all the revolutions of measureless years, and all the ceaseless progress of their ever-enlarging joys and their ever-increasing glory.

Thus in the infinitude of the divine mercy, apparently, the best possible system of moral means, has, ever since the fall, been in progress, for the recovery of erring and ruined man, and for confirming him in a state of immor-

tal rectitude and immortal felicity. And this stupendous system of moral operations, will move onward through its cycles, from conquering to conquer, subjecting new armies to its power, adding new empires to its triumphs, and accumulating brighter and brighter glories, until the rays of conviction shall be reflected from its banners on every human eye, and the sound of the Gospel trumpet fall pathetic on every human ear, and all the rebellious nations, convinced, awed, and melted, will, in the exercise of their natural liberty, bend before their offended Maker, and invoke his regenerating and pardoning mercy. And then,

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun,
Does his successive journies run:
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.—*Watts.*

But we may venture a step further, and say, that the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in all probability, presents the infinite motives of terror, and mercy, which make all the heavenly armies, burn with love and fall with awe, when they catch the sound of their Maker's mandates. As soon as Satan and all the revolting hosts of angels sinned, omnipotent justice dislodged them from their celestial seats, and flung them down from their glorious dignities. The angels that still stood guiltless, when they saw these clusters of morning stars fall from the firmament, and sink in endless night, from the fatal catastrophe, must have learned, that not in vain was it written by the hand of justice, on every gate of the holy city, and in the statute book of every world, *the soul that sinneth it shall die*. Here they saw it verified; when they beheld Adam driven from Eden, they saw it confirmed; but when they surveyed the Redeemer, suspended, for the sins of men, upon the cross, and heard him pronounce *it finished*, they viewed it sealed, by the blood of the Son of God, and ratified by the same voice, that said *let there be light and there was light*.

And if there should be any orders of heavenly beings above those angels, that for their sins were cast down from their principalities, lest *they* should say, “though men and the inferior angels are punished forever for their first disobedience, yet should *we*, the inhabitants of thrones, and powers, and more august principalities, transgress our legal boundaries, perhaps in consideration of our nobler natures, and loftier elevations, God would not with the same hand of just omnipotence, desolate our habitations, and consign us to the deep of death and night, to be reserved for the judgment of the great day”—lest there should be any doubts in the ranks of moral beings, high or low, “whether or not, the result of sin is inevitably death,” God sent him, who is above all thrones, powers, and principalities—above all armies of cherubim, and seraphim—him, *who being in the form of God*, thought it not robbery to be *equal with God*—him, to assume a human body, and take the place of human transgressors—and him, who is his only begotten Son, when he stands in the sinner’s stead, he spares not. Thus moral beings all, in a spectacle of the most awful, and august exemplification, behold the threatened penalty of disobedience sealed, and ratified on the cross; and all are taught, that suffering and death, God hath inseparably joined with sin. And thus the sufferings of impenitent men, and sinning angels, and above all, the sufferings of the redeemer, are most probably made the moral means of confirming all the holy armies of the universe in perpetual obedience. Stronger motives of love and terror, are now presented, than before the introduction of sin, were possible, and thus, the most Wise and Beneficent Sovereign, overrules the *imperfection* of the moral universe, to confirm the *obedient part* of the moral universe in allegiance and felicity.

It is entirely *probable*, nay, we may say, morally *certain*, that with such exemplifications of God’s truth and justice before their eyes, Satan and his satellites; had never rebelled, and sinless man had never sinned.

From this survey of the subject, it is evident, that the fact, that God maintains the holy angels and the saints in

heaven in a state of confirmed obedience, is no argument, that a sinless moral creation is possible. Before there were sinners to punish, either in their own persons or in the person of their surety, the penalty of sin, could only be *threatened* in the ears of the moral universe, but could not be exhibited in *fact* before their eyes. But now, it is not only *proclaimed*, but *exemplified*, not only *heard*, but *seen* and *felt*.

From a careful attention to the facts in the economy of God's moral kingdom, my mind can conceive of no system of government possible, better adapted to restrain from transgression and induce to obedience.

It is, however admitted, that our inability to conceive a better mode of creating and governing, is of itself no complete and conclusive proof, that the best possible mode of creation and government, has actually been adopted and pursued; yet it serves to bear the mind onwards towards such a conclusion, and prepares it well for other kinds of proof.

It is a mode of reasoning universally employed and from this fact, appears to rise out of the principles of the human mind, that a man's system of action, will be like himself. And upon this principle, we judge and act every day of our lives. We will have confidence in one man, because he is esteemed a person of integrity, and we suppose, that if relied on, he will not deceive us. We will not trust another, because he is generally considered dishonest, and we conclude, that if depended on, he will probably prove faithless to us. In adopting this common sense mode of judging, we take nothing for granted in the principle, however much we may be deceived in the facts, with which it may be occasionally associated. If we open the newly-grown husks on a stalk of corn, we find the ear in miniature, and probably were our vision sufficiently penetrating to examine the seed, we should there find, in a still smaller miniature, the whole stalk with all the ears. Because the grain really contains the same stalk, and ears, which time and opportunity exhibit to us in such magnified forms. In the

same manner the principles of action contain the germes of action. Power comprehends the germe of action. Power united with wisdom, the germe of wise actions. Power associated with wisdom and goodness, the germe of wise and good actions. And where these principles of action are found, time and opportunity only, are wanting to the exhibition, or full developement of corresponding actions.

Hence an efficient, wise and good man, involves all the miniature of good and wise actions, and time and opportunity only, are the additional requisites to the actual occurrence of those actions.

And this scale of Judging is not only sanctioned by the principles and feelings of the human constitution, but is also recognized by the authority of revelation itself. In allusion to this very subject, the Saviour declares, that a *good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit; and also, that a good man out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil, for of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*

Now only suppose a good and wise man who is efficient according to his goodness and wisdom, to become immutable, and then we would expect, that his system of action would invariably be good and wise, to the whole extent of his goodness and wisdom; but conceive his wisdom and goodness together with his power to become infinite, and we should judge his whole system of operations to be unchangeably and infinitely good and wise—*the best possible.* Such a being is God; unchangeable, and infinitely powerful, good, and wise. Now if we allow him these attributes and yet deny that his system of operations is the best possible, we desert the feelings and principles of the human constitution, and above all, the scale of judging which the Saviour himself has graduated, and give more credit to the power, wisdom, and goodness of the creature, according to the degree in which they are

found to exist in him, than to the same qualities in the Creator himself.

But God has taught us to reason in the same manner in regard to himself. If he reveal himself to be the Judge of all the earth, the mode of our reasoning is to be, *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* If a God of *might and wisdom*, we are to infer that, *he changeth the times and the seasons; he removeth kings and setteth up kings; he giveth wisdom unto the wise and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and dark things.* If he proclaim, *Return thou backsliding Israel, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon thee, it is because he is MERCIFUL.* If that, *the Lord your God will not turn away his face from you if ye return unto him, it is because, he is MERCIFUL.* Thus when he reveals himself to be a wise, omnipotent, just and merciful being, he teaches us to suppose, that his operations will never be inconsistent with these perfections.

This theory is sometimes opposed, because by some men of speculation it is imagined to take away the liberty of Deity and bind him in the chains of a fatal necessity.

But surely, a liberty to deny himself and become a false, inconsistent, and subordinate being, is a kind of liberty which it is apprehended a holy God requires not at our hands. It is believed, that the Scriptures nowhere teaches us, that he wills *so and so, merely because he wills so and so*; and that what he wills is right, just because it is a Sovereign that wills. If this system be true, he might by a sovereign act of his will convert his own holiness into pure sin, and all the iniquity of the Devil into perfect righteousness.

We rejoice that God is a Sovereign, but it is because, he is a wise, just, good, and true Sovereign. We rejoice, that his Sovereign will is done in the armies of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of the earth; but it is because, we believe, that his Sovereign will most perfectly accords with the most perfect wisdom, justice, goodness, and truth. We rejoice, that the Lord reigneth;

but it is because we most firmly believe, that this glorious Sovereign wills all things in the very best possible manner.

But in the nature of the case, this objection is without any reasonable foundation. *Necessity* is a word which ought to be exploded, from the vocabulary, employed in discoursing on the voluntary operations of intelligent beings. It is a kind of Proteus, which by one man is taken to mean one thing, and by another another. In disquisitions on the voluntary operations, of mind, substitute "certainty" in its place, and misapprehension vanishes.

The certain harmony of God's choice, with all his infinite perfections, is no proof of any infringement of liberty. To suppose the contrary, is to desert our manner of reasoning in regard to men. Who acquainted with language, supposes, that a prudent and benevolent man acts, not freely, because his choice of action strictly harmonizes with the qualities of prudence and benevolence? To attribute to God a latitude of choice, which may select for its object, things at variance with any one of his perfections, is to suppose, that his *will* may be unharmonious with his attributes, and is to make his choosings, acts of mere caprice, and not of rational choice. If in acts of choice, he have no regard to mercy, he may become cruel; if none to his justice, unjust; if none to his truth, false; if none to his immutability, changeful. Or if his choosings may have only a partial harmony with these attributes, then his acts may become partially cruel, unjust, false, and changeful. But it is believed, that there is no medium between the *entire harmony* of the divine choice, and the divine perfections, and *no harmony* at all. But if no harmony at all, then we see, that the divine Being may change himself into a monster of falsehood, cruelty, and injustice, the thought of which is impious; but if there be a *perfect harmony*, he has *certainly*, but *freely* adopted one of the best possible systems.

Some imagine, that the best possible system supposes God, under a kind of necessity to exercise mercy to sinners; and to be thus opposed to the Scriptures, which al-

ways represent mercy, a free act. It has just been shown, that the theory as here advocated supposes a *necessary* choice to be *no* choice at all, and, that the certain harmony of God's choice with any of his perfections, and consequently with his mercy, is no infringement of rational liberty, and, that any other kind of liberty is mere caprice. The objection only hides its weakness under the ambiguous term *necessity*; remove the term, and the fallacy is visible to every observing eye.

This theory is sometimes supposed to annihilate all distinctions between right and wrong, between sin and righteousness.

It is confessed, that the theory heretofore denominated *optimism*, lays ample foundation for the objection. Its advocates suppose, that God might have created and governed the moral universe, so as forever to exclude sin, but, that all things considered, it was more *useful* and therefore better, that sin should be introduced into the system, and for this cause, in the creation and government of the universe, he made provision for its introduction and controul. And thus according to this hypothesis, any possible moral system without sin, would not be the *best*; and the present is *made* the *best* by the sin and misery with which it is attended. To exhibit in one view the positions, expressed and implied in this doctrine, in connexion with their legitimate consequences, the statement is briefly this:—

Utility is the foundation of virtue; therefore whatever is *useful* is virtuous; But in the moral universe taken as a whole, sin is useful; Therefore sin is virtue!!!

Again, As utility is the foundation of virtue, a useful being is virtuous. But if sin be useful, Satan the author and promoter of sin must be a useful being; Therefore Satan is virtuous!!!

It is with regret admitted, that this doctrine so appalling in its positions, and so monstrous in its inevitable consequences, is advocated in the writings of very great and good men in our own country, as the best possible system. But the very terms in which the doctrine of

this discourse is announced, ought to redeem it from the imputation contained in the objection.

Again, God professes to have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and not to afflict willingly, or grieve the children of men. Now since in all things possible, *to will* and *to do*, with him are the same, to select a moral system with any amount of sin, whilst another which would be perfectly sinless, might equally well have been chosen. the existence of any degree of transgression, is a matter, *solely* of the divine choice. And as suffering and death are so inseparably joined with disobedience, as to be identified with it, they must also obtain being, as matters, *solely* of the divine choice; and therefore, either he chooses to afflict *unwillingly*, and chooses that in which he has no pleasure, when consistently with all his perfections, he might have chosen that in which he would have had entire pleasure; or he does afflict willingly and grieve the children of men, and has pleasure in the death of the wicked; or, finally, he has chosen the best possible system; and the moral evil found in it, arises not either, from the divine choice, or the divine power; but wholly from the imperfections of the best formed, and best governed plan of moral being. But as the first supposition contradicts common sense, and the second, the word of God, of consequence, the third and last only, can be the doctrine of Scripture and of reason.

One part of our text affirms, that God does all his pleasure. Of course the plan which he has eternally adopted, taken as a whole, is the one of his pleasure; but if it have not in it the least possible aggregate of sin, it has in it, some sin, which the Creator and Sovereign might have avoided, and this avoidable sin was introduced *solely* by his Sovereign will; and therefore, he either chose that which he was not pleased to choose, or he had pleasure in wickedness. But the former is a contradiction in terms; and the latter is confronted by the other part of our text, which declares, *thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness.*

This text is confirmed by such other Scriptures as these:—“Let none of you imagine evil in your hearts a-

gainst his neighbour, and love no false oath; for all these are things that I hate saith the Lord."* "These six things doth the Lord hate; yea seven are an abomination unto him; a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands, that shed innocent blood; an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations; feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and him that soweth discord among brethren."† And others might be added indefinitely which variously denounce sin as the abominable thing which God hates.

If he might equally well have chosen a moral system, that would have remained forever untarnished by these abominations, then he chose them not, as on his part, the unavoidable imperfections of a moral creation, but simply as *imperfection its very abstract self*. According to this theory the moral universe might have been entirely sinless, had God willed it to be so, and he might have willed it to be so, in consistency with all his perfections, yet without acting in harmony with all his attributes, he chose, that it should not be sinless, and to accomplish this choice, he so constructed and governed his accountable creation as to introduce iniquity, and thus, the theory opposite to ours, impliedly teaches us, that the Divine Being chooses the very things which he solemnly declares that he hates.

The Bible also testifies, that *The just Lord will not do iniquity*,‡ and that, *God can not be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man*.§

Since to govern the moral empire in the best possible manner to resist sin, and not in the best possible manner, are equally in subjection to the pleasure of God, if he will not do iniquity, nor tempt any man to evil, it is reasonable to infer, that he would not create moral beings with any liabilities to sin, but such as unavoidably arise out of the constitution of finite intelligent and free agents, and, that he would not expose them to any inducements to disobedience, but such as would unavoidably attend their circumstances and relations in the scale of being.

*Zechariah viii. 17. †Prov. vi. 16, 19. ‡Zephaniah iii, 5, §James i 5.

If he did not create them with the fewest *liabilities* to sin, and govern them with the fewest *inducements* to sin, that in their nature, circumstances, and relations, were possible, it must have been according to the supposition, because, he *would* not, and not because he *could* not. These texts imply, that it would be wrong in God to *do iniquity* himself or to *tempt* men to its commission. But, designedly, to communicate to others any liabilities to do evil, or to influence individuals to tempt others to crime, is in the eye of common sense and in the estimation of our moral judgment equally criminal with actually perpetrating the crime, and with personally tempting others to its perpetration. Suppose, that judging, that if a certain man should become intoxicated and should in this situation be operated upon by the conversation of others, he would commit murder, I should urge upon him the intoxicating draught, and should employ persons as my agents, to inflame his passions and incite his mind, until he commits the fatal deed, would it avail me to plead, that I neither committed the murder nor tempted him to the commission?

And so, if it would be inconsistent with the character of God, either himself to do iniquity or to tempt men to evil, for any thing we can see, it would be equally incongruous with the holiness of his being, either to create his moral subjects with any avoidable liabilities to sin, or to cast in their way any avoidable inducements to transgression and to consequent misery. In either case, he inevitably becomes the author of sin, and the elector of misery.

Finally, all certainties eternally exist in the state of the Infinite Mind, and eternally coexist in the divine, choice, and in agreement with all the perfections of the divine nature; of course the certainty of this supposed avoidable amount of sin, must have eternally existed in the state of the Infinite Mind, and coexisted in the divine choice and in agreement with all the divine perfections, and therefore avoidable sin,—sin purely as sin—is eternally the object of the divine choice, and eternally agrees with the perfections of the divine nature.

But this agreement or harmony of the divine perfections, emanating in the divine choice, constitutes Supreme holiness, therefore sin enters into the very essence of perfect holiness, and as God delights in holiness, he must be *pleased* with the *wicked* every day.

The only, or at most the principal objection to the doctrine of this discourse, is that there is something sounding like an impious audacity in affirming, that the Omnipotent *can not* create a better moral universe.

To meet this objection, it ought to be sufficient, to ask the objector, how *much less* of impious audacity, sounds in the proposition which contains his creed: "God chose, that some men and some angels *should not* remain holy and happy, but *should* sin, and weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth amidst devouring flames and everlasting burnings, when simply, by his willing differently, they might all have remained holy and happy forever?"—There is no neutral ground between these propositions. Either God has chosen the universe in which there is the least possible sin and misery, and which is therefore, the best, or in selecting one *worse* than the best, he has actually preferred, that some of his creatures should be *sinful and miserable*. And this is not only implied in the creed of the Calvinist, who rejects the best possible system, but also in that of the Arminian. It has already been shown, that by unavoidable inference, Arminianism supposes, that God actually chose the *very condition* on which all the sin and suffering of the universe depended and turned—on which turned the first sin of the Archfiend with all his apostate armies, and the sin of man in Paradise; and also, all the adulteries, idolatries, rapines, and murders, that ever have defiled, enslaved, desolated, and stained the world, and all that ever will; and on which turned, all the agonies, felt by the unnumbered millions, both of infants and adults, that have ever writhed in death since the destroyer began his desolations; and all that ever will endure the pains of dissolution; as well as all the unending torments, that shall be endured in the burning lake by the hapless armies of lost

men and sinning angels. Thus Arminianism supposes, that God chose the condition on which depended this universe with all its interminable disobedience, and all this everduring misery. But why did he choose the conditions—the *certain* conditions of such an universe? Was it because, in his infinite and eternal survey, he viewed it as the very best possible plan so to choose? No. Arminianism denies, that God has ever adopted any eternal plan, that reaches to every being and event. Why then did he choose *this condition* on which turned such a vast amount of sin and suffering?—The only answer possible, on this hypothesis, is, that he *chose* it just because *he willed* to choose it—*He would*, just because, *he would*. Here the Arminian and the Calvinian theories of philosophical divinity, after pursuing different routs, meet at the same point, and equally implicate a holy and merciful God with the authorship of sin, and the electorship of misery. Either conditionally or unconditionally, according to these theories, God chose disobedience and death as the lot of a part of his creatures, not because they were the certain results of the best formed, and the best governed moral creation; but simply, because he preferred their existence to their non-existence.

It awkwardly becomes the patrons of such creeds to complain of harsh sounding propositions. What can more grate* horror on the ear of Bible piety, than the anti-scriptural dogma, that represents a holy and merciful God as the author of sin and the elector of misery?

It has however been already shown, that when we say, that God can not create a moral system every part of which will certainly never sin, we only say, that he can not deny himself by creating beings as absolutely perfect as himself—he can not, because he can not but act as God. If he create, he creates *creatures*, and the most exalted *creature* unconfirmed, is fallible.

A few practical consequences will conclude this discourse.

*See note at the end of the sermon.

If in the creation and government of the moral universe, it be true, that God has eternally adopted the best plan possible, to counteract the existence of sin; if sin was produced neither by the choice nor the power of God, but wholly by the abused free agency of the creature; and if God decreed sin only in determining to suffer the creature to act in the exercise of his natural liberty as he eternally knew that in the best possible plan of moral government he certainly would act, then the vortex of Arminian and Calvinian philosophy, which whirls us into the deep presumption of inferentially charging a holy God with the authorship of sin, is completely avoided; and the Presbyterian can understandingly adopt the Sriptural language of his Confession of Faith and say "God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin; nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."

The adoption of this doctrine furnishes us with a key by which we are enabled to unlock the ark of mystery that to the minds of many, shuts up the meaning of such texts as these: *Thou wilt say then unto me. Why doth he yet find fault? for who has resisted his will?*

As God has decreed to suffer your sin only as the certain result of your own abuse of natural liberty, from which you will not be restrained by the best possible course of moral means, he decreed it only as an imperfection which your abuse of liberty makes certain in the best possible moral system. And hence he merely determined to suffer it in preference to no moral system. He wills it not as a thing in itself desirable, but as a real evil to be *endured* however, rather than to *endure* the non-existence of an universe in which, although as a creature imperfect, there is almost infinitely more good than evil. Therefore to say, that he decrees, determines, wills, or chooses, to endure it as the certain imperfection of the best universe, is not saying, that he decrees, determines, chooses, or wills it *as sin*. A benevolent physician may

hate the travel of a dark and stormy night, or the performance of a difficult and dangerous surgical operation; and yet, in his endeavours to save the life of a patient, he may determine to endure either one, or both of these things which he hates. Thus, while God determines to endure your iniquities as the certain imperfections resulting from the best universe, *he hates them as sins.* You however love them as sins. Here you and God are at variance. And by doing the thing which he hates, though he wills to suffer your disobedience, you have resisted his will, and are therefore amenable at his high tribunal. The perfections of the Most High, afford us ground for the strongest assurance, that his system of operations, is the very best. Then, *O man, who art thou, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed (as if the Maker could possibly do wrong) say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel to honour and another to dishonour?*

God has a right to pursue the best possible system of operations, even though he knows, that while a great portion of his works, will be confirmed in honour, a small portion of them, by the abuse of their own liberty, and his goodness, will bring themselves to dishonour. Especially, since by punishing the small portion of disobedient, he confirms in allegiance the great portion of the obedient; and since, if these disobedient had not been created, had not fallen, and suffered, and thus become, as ensamples of terror or mercy, the means of preventing others from disobedience, some of those others, now confirmed, could not, in that case, have had before them this means of prevention, and would therefore, have fallen, and have become sinful and miserable, and thus, sin would not still have been prevented; and the amount of happiness in the universe would have been less than at present. If you should ask, "how could God mercifully create us, intending to suffer us to sin, and to endure everlasting woe as a means of confirming others in happiness?" this is the answer: The mercy of God is but a modification of his goodness. His goodness is best displayed, in pursuing

that course of operations by which, he can communicate the greatest amount of happiness. It has just been proved, that if God had not created you, as much happiness as there is, could not now be in the universe; and thus, it was more merciful in Deity to create you, although he knew, that you would rebelliously choose for yourselves disobedience and wrath; and although, he determined to suffer your wretched choice; than to have omitted your creation.

But let us pursue this objection out to its consequences: You say that the Supreme Being could not mercifully create you, knowing that you would certainly sin and become eternally wretched, even though your disobedience and misery, should be the effects of your own choice, and be made the means of confirming unnumbered other beings in endless obedience and happiness. Then suppose your objection to be valid, and that you had not been created: Others now confirmed would then have been without those means of confirmation which your transgression and misery have afforded them, and without these means some of them would have fallen; and their sin and ruin would have been held up as motives to prevent others from rebellion and wretchedness. But they might, on equal ground with yourselves, make the same objection. And if admitted to you, so equally to them, and if to them, to others, and to others, indefinitely, until the result would be, God could not, mercifully, create any beings liable to sin and suffering; and as all moral beings unconfirmed, are in their very constitution thus liable; and as in consistency with the freedom of their intellectual and moral nature, they can be confirmed, only by a survey of the wrath, and the mercy, displayed in the punishment and pardon of sin, a moral universe, according to the objection, could not be mercifully created. And thus according to this hypothesis the capricious and rebellious choice of a few creatures, ought to prevent all the happiness and glory ever enjoyed and displayed in all the immensity of God's moral kingdom. This would be to sacrifice the *happiness* of the *many* to the *caprice* of the *few*; and is undeniably unreasonable.

And hence it is, that *God willing to show his wrath and make his power known*, endures with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted (by their sins) for destruction; that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he afore prepares unto glory. Over-ruling all things for good, God endured the presumptuous disobedience of Pharaoh, that in punishing him for his sins, he might make such demonstrations of his wrath and power, as placed on record, should be exhibited to the sons and daughters of disobedience from age to age, as motives of terror to warn them of a future judgment, and awe them to repentance; and thus to become the means of preparing them to be the vessels of glory and honour: And as of Pharaoh so of other wicked men.

The doctrine of this discourse, speaks comfort to the christian when almost overwhelmed in the deep waters of affliction. Troubles come not by chance: *The Lord reigneth*, and if he send trials to afflict his children, it is for their good; for, *all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*. If your heavenly Father corrects you, your sins have demanded this correction. It is designed and adapted for good, if you only look to him for grace to improve it for good.

If improved, *the light afflictions that are but for a moment shall work out for you, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*.

It proclaims terror to slothful professors of religion, and hypocrites. If God determine every being and event in the universe in the best possible manner to prevent sin and promote piety, think not to find a *shelter* for your lukewarmness and hypocrisy under the *decrees* of your Maker. He decrees, that you shall be free to choose, and to act as you choose; and also he decrees to employ with you the best possible means to induce you to choose aright, and woe, woe, woe, unto you if *ye will not!*

Here is the greatest encouragement for wounded spirits, who convicted of their sins and alarmed at their dan-

ger, would flee to some refuge from the wrath to come. He who rules the universe in the best possible manner to counteract sin, and prevent misery, seated on a throne of grace and wielding a sceptre of mercy, proclaims: *to this man will I look even to him, that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word.* Christ has already made a *propitiation* for your sins, and now offers to become to you, *atonement and redemption*; and only come to him, and he will give you the Holy Spirit to create in you a new heart, and thus enable you to repent and believe. Come then unto him, and whosoever cometh unto him, *he will in no wise cast out.*

Finally, this doctrine seals eternal silence on the lips of cavilling sinners. If your sins arise not, either from the choice, or the power of God, but wholly from your own abuse of your moral nature, and, if he holy and merciful, exhibits before you all the motives, both of mercy and wrath, to invite you, and warn you, and yet ye *will not*, in the day, the *terrible* day of judgment, your mouths shall be stopt, and you shall all become guilty before God. Therefore, *seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

NOTE.

“It *grates* upon the ear of peity to be told, that the existence of evil is *unavoidable* in the best possible system, and, that the present system includes the greatest amount of good which the power of God can effect.”

Christian Advocate, vol. v. No. 58. p. 449.

Had the writer of this article recognized any distinction between the *best possible system* as advocated in the Christian Preacher, and the theory of *Optimism* as generally understood, he had passed unnoticed in this work. This omission of an act of justice however, renders some notice necessary as a means of self defence.

Those who happen to dissent from this part of the writer's philosophy, might probably say, that if the word *prejudice*, were substituted for *piety*, the sentence would contain as much argument, as much truth, and as much charity as in its present form.

If the disobedience of moral creatures be not *unavoidable* on the part of the Creator, the reverse must be true—there is no medium—it is *avoidable*; and it exists solely as the object of his preference. Of course this writer advocates the doctrine, that God prefers, that the universe should not be sinless, and that there should be in it, just the amount of sin that actually exists—that the fallen arch-spirit should be a *Devil*, and *not* an angel of light; Adam *should sin*, and *not* remain the holy and happy tenant of Paradise; Cain *should* be a murderer, and *not* an acceptable worshipper; the antediluvians *should* corrupt their way, and fill the earth with violence, and *not* be the children of righteousness; the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, *should* be sinners exceedingly, and *not* holy men of God; and finally, that hypocrites, profligate men, and lukewarm professors of religion, *should* all be just *as* they actually are, *and no better!!*

If this be all truth, it ought to be faithfully preached. Should then the writer happen to be the pastor of a congregation, let him ascend his pulpit, and solemnly proclaim to lukewarm professors of religion, and to hypocrites and profligates—to all, that they are just what God *prefers* they *should be*, and then let him ask his pious hearers, whether such a doctrine falls not *melodiously* on their ears?

Whilst justice to the sacred cause of sacred truth, requires, that some strictures should be passed on these essays in the *Christian Advocate*, entitled “Philosophy subservient to religion,” yet it is believed to be but truth to say, that they betoken a mind capacious, vigorous, cultivated, and enlightened, which though like all other human intellects, is not absolutely above all error, is still above many errors. The general features of their philosophy are unobjectionable to the views defended in the *Christian Preacher*. Should Providence

grant time and space, these essays will again be noticed.

Since the name of the Christian Advocate, has been introduced, the opportunity is employed to recommend the work to my readers *generally*, and especially to the people of my charge. It is edited by the Rev. Ashbel Green, D. D. L. L. D. one of the most aged, learned, judicious, and profound ministers in the Presbyterian church, who having through the infirmities of age resigned the Presidency of Princeton College, is now employing the evening of his days in the more retired and tranquil, but scarcely less laborious and perhaps no less useful office of editing the Christian Advocate. The work is what might be expected from such an Editor. It is such as would be valuable to any christian, but almost *invaluable* to a Presbyterian, who would become thoroughly acquainted with the principles, usages, and state of his own church. Without professing to adopt, *in toto*, the sentiment of every writer who may be permitted to contribute to its pages, I should rejoice to see it in the hands of every family in the Presbyterian church.

APPENDIX.

(Continued from page 192)

To Joseph Lybrand, Samuel Merwin, Samuel Doughty, John Lednum, Elisha Andrews, Manning Force, Thomas F. Sargent, Thomas Miller, W. W. Wallace, and Thomas Dunn, Committee of publication, and John Clarke, Editor of the late Religious Messenger.

Were you not the agents of the Conference of Philadelphia, and had not your publications come before the world, under the authority of that body, they might possibly be permitted to pass with as little regard, as a certain class of sermons not unfrequent on the Peninsula, in which certain denominations of Christians, are designated by appellations, such as stiff-kneed Presbyterians, Prayer-book Episcopalians, muddy headed Baptists, and sundry other epithets too unseemly to be repeated. A

class of discourses that excite a smile, and are generally dismissed by saying, "such abuse is unworthy of notice. It is only the nonsense of *old or young A, B, C, or D,*" as the case may be from the beginning to the end of the Alphabet. Even the *Reverend* and *Solomon* act of the Reverend Solomon Higgins, in giving the *lie* to the Editor of the Christian Preacher, from the pulpit, was not publickly noticed, until it appeared in print under the authority of the Conference. And any one who reads the first number of the Christian Preacher, in the review of which, you first began to open the flood gates of personal defamation, sees that it contains a purely doctrinal discussion, without any odious personal or sectarian allusions, unless indeed so far as the consideration of abstract principles may be construed to involve such consequences.

Appointed by the Conference of Philadelphia to give utterance to their views and feelings, and to expound their principles of operation, and give them efficiency, you may be taken as a kind of *index* of the piety and theological knowledge of the Conference. If the Conference say you have acted unworthy of their confidence, the explanation will be admitted, but if not, we shall judge, that such as is the committee, such the Conference.

The following may serve as a specimen of *precision* in language, *dignity*, *charity*, and *truth*. In your Messenger of Dec. 13, 1827, you say:

"The trickery of theological charlatans" (and *ignoramuses* you might have added), "has ever been the curse of religion."—"There appears in all their conduct to be so much zeal blended with interest in their movements, *that like the royal Psalmist*, instead of being eaten up with the zeal of God's house, *they seem inclined to eat up God's house and all they can get in it.*"

The royal Psalmist's own language is, "For the zeal of thine house hath *eaten me up.*" But you tell us that this man after God's own heart, was inclined to eat up God's house and all to be found in it!!! A most outrageous calumny if you really mean what you *really* say!!!

The public will no doubt rightly judge, that an Editor and a committee of ten, who can obtrude on their readers, in the name of the Philadelphia Conference, such a farrago of nonsense, are at least, as well qualified for exercising the knife and fork over a wing of bacon, and a dish of Irish potatoes as either for writing strictures on theological systems and Biblical criticism or superintending the press.

Again you say: "Indeed, if we may judge from the large pretensions and little labours of these monopolizers of public teaching, we would reasonably infer, that the considerations of eating alone is the mainspring which sets in motion the whole machinery of their operations." Then you add by way of a note—"Since writing the above article, and while it was in the hands of the compositors, we have learned, that Mr. C. has deserted his call at Dover for a *louder* one at Church Hill, Md. fully confirming our remarks about eating." How hungry must this Editor and Committee have been for calumny!! They appear to have been as keen in appetite, and as far scented for a little slander as so many starved crows in pursuit of their fetid provender. The report was heard, no time must be lost to learn whether or not it was true. *While the article was in the hands of the compositors*, the precious morsel must be thrown into the mess, and doubtless gave it such a seasoning as made the Editor and the Committee smack their mouths over this sweet collation. Mr. C. never deserted a call at Dover, nor accepted one at Church Hill. The report is *absolutely a falsehood*, for the publication of which you are held accountable before the public.

Weakness leagued with *falsehood*, appears to attend the labours of this Committee and Editor. Even if it had been true, that Mr. C. had relinquished a call at Dover and accepted one at Church Hill, there are so many reasons which may frequently, not only *justify*, but *require*, a minister to change his location, that it really is difficult to decide whether we ought most to *detest* the *meanness*, or *pity* the *weakness* which the publication of this falsehood betrays.

Having disposed of the personal calumnies which never ought to have been brought into the controversy we proceed to your arguments.

In your Messenger of Dec. 6th, 1827. we meet with some strictures over the signature "Jeremiah." We are there informed, that Clarke, Parkhurst, M^r Knight, and others, warrant us in translating the Greek preposition *en* [see Christian Preacher No. 4. p. 94.] *through* and *by* as well as *in*. Who ever doubted the position? But what is that to the purpose? The Christian Preacher says [see No. 4. p. 94.] that it most *strictly* and *literally* means *in*. Then, because it *sometimes* means *through* and *by*, it does not most *strictly* and *literally* mean *in*!!! The very profound of logic! Prove to us by these authorities that it does not most *strictly* and *literally* mean *in*, and then you will have done something to the purpose.

"Jeremiah" also says, "In Heb. iv. 3. where *apo kataboles kosmou*, occurs it is manifest from the context, that it has a very different sense from that Mr. C. says it has." Where has Mr. C. told you that he believes to be the sense of *apo kataboles kosmou*? No where in the Christian Preacher. Had there been a writer and publishing committee selected from the *madhouse*, they could not have written and published any thing less to the purpose.

In the Messenger of August 30th, 1827, "An Arminian" says, "Mr. C. supports the first proposition thus: The eternity of the divine foreknowledge and divine determinations:—They are equally eternal according to the scriptures—Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world:—Here we have his eternal foreknowledge. Again, *as he hath chosen us before the foundation of the world;*" Here we have his eternal determination or choice:—"The two scriptures above quoted" ("An Arminian" proceeds to say) "to prove the coeternity of the divine foreknowledge and the *divine* determinations of *God*" (*divine* determinations of *God*! What tautology!!) "if literally taken prove no such thing. From the *foundation* of the world" (from the

beginning of the world, according to our English Testament, but misnomered by "An Arminian," who is evidently a *quack* in theology) "does not literally mean from all eternity. Nor do the terms "*before the foundation of the world,*" necessarily mean from all eternity."

Thus it is evident, that Acts xv. 18. is the text about which this Arminian is so ignorantly and awkwardly babbling. As his assertion is an outrageous misrepresentation of the original of that text, the Editor of the Christian Preacher hurls it back on him without correcting his mistake, in misnomering, "from the *foundation* of the world," for "from the *beginning* of the world."—That this was the fact may also be seen from the references made in the Christian Preacher (No. 4, p. 93.) The original of this text is not *apo kataboles kosmou*, but *ap' aionos*. For the meaning of the word *aion*, "An Arminian" was referred to R. Watson's book, at the beginning of his chapter on the Omniscience of Deity, where it is said that it should be rendered "*from all eternity,*" and to Aristotle [De coelo Lib. I. cap. 9]. If you are not satisfied by a reference to these authorities consult Wesley's notes on the text. Here is the authority of a man after your own heart—the very father of Methodism. Should you have leisure, you may just glance the eye over the Christian Preacher No. 8. p. 181. where the meaning of the word *aion* is argued. And then *perhaps*, (we say *perhaps* because judging from the past, you appear capable of committing any outrage on truth)—perhaps the *good sense* of the theological community will not again be shocked with the *illiterate babbling*, that this text does not mean from all *eternity*, or that Mr. C. says *apo kataboles kosmou* means *from all eternity*.

If it could be imagined that you can feel shame at being convicted of *ignorance* before the public, this might be supposed to be one of the cases, in which your faces would redden with confusion. Of this however there is not the least probability. It is one of the peculiar privileges of the ignorant, not to be ashamed of ignorance:—

"The wise are happy, nature to explore"

And the *fool* is happy that he knows no more."

Such specimens of Biblical criticism are a disgrace to the 19th century and become only the dark ages. With regard to the text under dispute, it is believed that *all*, friends and foes, with the exception of Universalists and Socinians, are against you. The world may now judge of your competency in Biblical criticism.

You tell us by the mouth of Jeremiah (not the prophet), that if Jehovah's plans existed from all eternity they are essential perfections of his eternal essence," and appear to suppose, that by this, you have crowded us into a dismal dilemma. It is to be sure a Solomon like argument! It has in it all the true spirit of a Duellist, who for the opportunity of shooting a pistol at the head of another, will give another a pistol to shoot at him. In your Messenger of Aug. 30th. 1827, "An Arminian" by your permission and under your authority says: "Now—we admit the foreknowledge of God in the fullest sense of the term as a doctrine of the Bible." Now your gun will shoot yourselves as well as us. We may retort your argument and say if Jehovah's foreknowledge existed from all eternity it is an essential perfection of his eternal essence. Remember that as foreknowing is the exercise of omniscience, so decreeing or choosing, or willing is the exercise of the power of volition. Then if we must not believe, that Jehovah's decrees, choosings, or volitions are eternal lest we make them essential perfections of his eternal essence, why should we believe that his foreknowledge is eternal, since in the same manner we make it an *essential* perfection of his eternal essence? This is one of the results, when *yearling* theologians catch new principles, just as madmen would catch wild horses, and mount and ride off without knowing whither these strange and untutored beasts will carry them. By your own argument, you are brought to choose one of two things; either, to give up the doctrine of God's eternal foreknowledge, or, admit it to be an *essential* perfection of his eternal essence. But if you believe the doctrine and admit, that it eternally exists in the divine essence, then why not acknowledge, that the divine volitions may eternally exist in the divine essence? I can just as readily conceive a perfect being,

without *foreknowledge* as without *meaning* or *intention*. There is to my mind something *awfully profane* in the thought, that the eternal God should ever have existed without *meaning*; that an *infinite* God should ever have lived without *infinite meaning*; that an *unchangeable* God should ever *change* in his meaning; and that a *perfect* God should ever have been *imperfect* in meaning. I do therefore, most certainly believe, that *meanings, intentions, decrees*, are absolutely essential to God as a perfect being. It is indeed a sage argument, especially when coming to us under the authority of the Conference of Philadelphia, to be told, that if the decrees of Jehovah are eternal, they must be just what we most sincerely, and rationally, and scripturally believe they are!!!! To convince you that this is not my ipse dixit, and to prevent you, if possible, from displaying before the world in future, such a shameful deficiency of theological knowledge, I will add some authorities.

Cùm ergo non possint accidentaliter Deo competere, necesse est, ut in Deo dicantur esse *essentialiter*, ut *actus immanentes voluntatis ipsius*, cum *schæsie* et terminatione ad extra, quique ideo non differunt realiter ab ipsâ Essentia Dei, cùm voluntas Dei, cum quâ identificantur, nihil aliud sit quàm ipsa Essentia volens inadæquato conceptu a nobis apprehensa.

Francis Turretin, vol. 1. p. 342.

“Since therefore they” (the decrees of God) “can not belong accidentally to God, they must be said to be *essentially* in God as the emanating acts of the very will with state and termination to things without himself, and which therefore, really differ not from the very essence of God, seeing the will of Deity with which they are identified, is nothing else, but the very essence willing, in a manner not understood by us.”

Dr. Dwight in his *Divinity*, vol. 1, p. 241, speaking of the divine decrees says, that they are “*no other than an unchangeable state of the divine mind.*” Those who believe in the eternity of the divine plan generally so far as I know, suppose, that it exists in the divine essence, just as *meaning* in the essence of an intelligent

being. To tell an opponent as you have, that if his doctrine be true, he will be compelled to admit another, which he believes to be equally true, may pass for the *argumentum ad ignorantiam inverted*, and is one of the blissful effects of having never, either read books, or studied systems, and of being profoundly ignorant of the doctrines of an adversary.

(*To be continued.*)

Errata in our last No.

- Page 170, 3d line from the top for *foreknew* read *foreknow*.
 " 173, 10th line from bottom in phrase "and say" omit *and*.
 185, 3d line from top "*He* indeed conceals" &c. read *It* indeed &c.
 188, 16th line from bottom, for of the brute matter, read of *brute matter*.
 189, 3d. line from top, for *adapted* read *adopted*.
 189, 5th line from bottom, for *creation* read *creatures*.
 190, 11th line from bottom, for Editors read Editor.
 191, 20th line from bottom for "Now it is certain" read Now *as it* is certain.
 192, 27th line from bottom, for "if you have represented," omitting *if*, read you have represented &c.
 193, 17th line for beleaguered read burlesqued
 181, in marginal reference, for "*illundo*," read *Mundo*, and for "*Corlo*?" *Cælo*.

Errata for the present No.

- Page 193, 9th line from bottom, for *finally* read *firmly*
 194, 20th line from bottom, for *appear* read *appears*
 194, 13th line from bottom, "for *feel* existence," read *feel the existence*.
 195, 4th line from top, for "*of being*," read of *his* being.
 195, 9th line from top, for "*understanding*," read *understandings*.
 195, 14th line from top, for "*hundreds*," read *burdens*.
 195, 12th line from bottom for "*and therefore*," read *and are* therefore.
 199, 12th line for top for "*perfections*," read *perceptions*.
 199, 14th line from top, for "*there*" read *then*
 199, 18th line from bottom, for "*where*" read *when*.
 200, 10th line from top, for "*there*," read *then*.
 201, line 5th from top, for *number objects* number of objects.
 202 15th line from top, for *peaccable* read *peccable*
 208, 4th line from bottom, for *satellites*; *had* read *satellites had*.
 211, 11th line from bottom for *teaches* read *teach*
 216, 16th line from bottom for *ineviable* read *inevitable*.

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N^o. 10.

BIBLE ELECTION.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ELECT according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.—I. Pet. i. 1, 2.

Whether these scattered strangers, addressed in the text, were Jewish or Gentile converts, is a subject of dispute among the learned. To the proper understanding of this epistle, the decision of this controversy, is however, a matter of mere indifference. As the Jews were scattered abroad among the nations, there were probably converts, both Jewish and Gentile, in the churches to which the apostle Peter addressed this circular. But however they were *scattered*, and in whatever sense they were *strangers*, they appear to have been *gathered* into the fold of salvation, and to have been the *friends* of the Saviour. They were elect, chosen ones, and elected or chosen of God. To elect or choose is variously employed in the Scriptures. Christ is called ELECT:—*Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth.* The tribes of Jacob were elected or chosen in their national character:—*The Lord did not—choose you because ye were more in number, than any people.* The angels, who have never sinned, are called ELECT: *I charge thee before—the elect angels.* By many the terms elect and chosen, are supposed to be frequently applied in the Scriptures to all those, whether Jews or Gentiles, who are set apart by the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost to the spiritual obedience, and the spiritual privileges of the Gospel. In this latter sense, the election alluded to in the text, will be explained and defended in this discourse.

The election in the text is,

1. *According to the foreknowledge of God the Father;*
2. *Through, or more strictly, in the sanctification of the Spirit; and,*
3. *Unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.*

1. *These strangers are elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.* It has already been argued, that God's plan of operations, is eternal and reaches every being and event in all the space, and duration of the created universe. As a result of this general doctrine, it follows, that the design of electing these strangers, was eternal. In confirmation of this, we need at present only call God to witness, that *he hath chosen* [elected] *us in him before the foundation of the world.*

It has also been proved in another part of this work, that God's foreknowledge and determinations are coeternal, and coincident. To avoid unnecessary repetition the doctrine will in this place be sustained only by a single text:—"Whom he did foreknow he ALSO" (not afterwards) "did predestinate". If this predestination be not coeternal with the foreknowledge, then there must have been a period of duration, when God must have foreknown some, whom he had not predestinated. So that his determinations, and his foreknowledge are coeval. But as the scripture testifies, that *Known unto God are all his works before the foundation of the world* (or according to the original *ap'aionos*, from all eternity), his foreknowledge must be absolutely eternal; and if with it his determinations be coeval, they also must be absolutely eternal. God's prescience and his plan are therefore coeternal. And as according to this position, there is between them no precedence in the order of duration, the one can not be the cause of the other; and the relation between cannot be that of cause and effect, or of antecedent and consequent; but solely that of coincidence or agreement; and this squares literally with the language of the text: Elect ACCORDING to the foreknowledge of God. In agreement with his foreknowledge of the manner in which these particular persons in the exer-

wise of their natural powers of mind, would on hearing the Gospel preached, regard its warnings, and seek its mercies, God determined their election. Coeternally with his foreknowledge, he determined to choose those, whom consistently with his glorious perfections, he could choose. And as he creates and governs the universe in the best manner to promote righteousness and repels sin, his eternal plan of creation and government, is such, as to induce the greatest possible number, to tremble at the terrors, and seek the salvation of the Gospel; and thus to become subjects, that could be foreknown as suitable candidates for his electing mercy. And thus, these strangers were elect according to, or in agreement with, his foreknowledge of their being so affected by his providences, word, and Spirit, as to come to Christ, and to implore the spiritual blessings of the Gospel. And although this coming to Christ, and imploring all the requisites of salvation, arose merely from the credence given to truth, by minds unenlightened by the rays of spiritual life, and comprehended in it, no repentance, but such as arose from a fear of future wrath, and consequently involved in it nothing, but what when compared with a holy law, is essentially sin, and brought with it nothing that was well pleasing in God's sight; yet in the mercy of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit met them, and in regenerating them, creating them in Christ Jesus, he carried into effect the election, designed before the foundation of the world in God's universal plan, to be completed in due time. That this election was performed by the agency of the Holy Spirit, we learn from the text, for these strangers were elect.

2. *Through, or more literally in, the sanctification of the spirit.* The agency of sanctification, is not unfrequently attributed in the Scriptures to the Godhead universally; to the Father, and also to the Son as well as to the Spirit. "*By the Father* we are sanctified, as we are chosen by him unto sanctification, as by his good pleasure and free grace the atonement of Christ, and the sanctifying agency of the Spirit, exist. *By the Son* we are sanctified, as his death is the only means by which

we ever become holy; and by which the Spirit came into the world for the benevolent purpose of making us holy. *By the Spirit* we are sanctified, as the immediate Agent in applying to us the blessings of Christ's Redemption; particularly in renewing and purifying our hearts and lives."*

Sanctification signifies setting apart from a common to a sacred purpose. God sanctified the seventh day by setting it apart from a common to a religious service. Under the law, the tabernacle, the temple, the priests, the altars, and the sacrifices, were all sanctified or set apart from secular to sacred purposes. Now as mankind in their natural condition, are represented as in a state of darkness, and under the power of Satan, and of death, that act of the Spirit, which translates them from darkness to light, and from under the power of Satan to God, and quickens them that were dead in trespasses and sin, undeniably sanctifies them by setting them apart from an unhallowed to a holy purpose, from a death of sin to a life of righteousness. And this can be none other, but the omnipotent act by which a sinner is born again, and puts on the new man which after God is created in righteousness.

These strangers were elected by the sanctification of the Spirit only. No human co-operation is recognized in the transforming act by which they were elected.

Although according to the system of agency which God is believed to have established in the moral creation, in recovering man from his apostacy, the creature is addressed as a being possessing natural liberty and the Spirit is offered to him to become his Sanctifier just as Christ is offered ready to become for him atonement and redemption, and motives infinite and eternal are urged upon him to induce him to flee from the terrors, and seek the mercy of the Gospel; yet in the recreating act by which the soul is set apart from sin to holiness, and by which it becomes prepared for the obedience of the Gospel, the sinner has just as little agency as in the

*Dwight's Theology vol. ii. p. 518.

sufferings by which the Saviour became his atoning and redeeming sacrifice. So far from co-operating in this work, he no more understands the mode of its operation, than he does the varied movements of the wind blowing as it listeth; and thus all cause of boasting is excluded, and the language of the apostle is literally applicable to every new man: *For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?* It is not in either the physical, or moral power of fallen men to will upon themselves this radical change of moral disposition; for, *it is not of him that WILLETH, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. The sons of God are born, not of blood, nor of the WILL of the flesh, nor of the WILL of man, but of God.* The convicted and alarmed sinner might call for mercy until his voice should weaken into silence, writhe under the agonies of a sin smitten conscience, until his whole frame should be distorted with anguish, tremble at the flashes of perdition, until every bone in his body should be dislocated, and weep, until he should extort tears of blood, and all would not give the natural man discernment to know the things of the Spirit, nor enable him to delight in the law of the Lord after the inner man. It is only the same voice which called light from darkness in the formation of the world, that can make the light shine in a dark place, and the day dawn, and the day star arise in the sinner's heart, and thus enable him to see the beauties of that law which when spiritually discerned, will ravish his soul with delight.

But great as is this change, and far as it is beyond, and above, all the physical and moral powers of man, in the merciful economy of the Gospel, God meets the sinner who would flee from the wrath to come, and who importunately and perseveringly seeks the mercies of the Gospel, and grants his regenerating Spirit to elect him by his transforming influences. But these strangers were elect,

3. *Unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.*

They were elect in the *sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience.* The first spiritual act of a regenerate man, is the exercise of faith in obedience to the Gospel command, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.*

And faith, the exercise of the creature, and also, the gift of God imparted in the act of regeneration, is the principle which gives life and soul to every thing that can be denominated spiritual obedience; for *whatsoever is not of faith is sin.* And thus God elects or chooses a people *to be holy and without blame before him in love.* He also elects them in the sanctification of the Spirit,

Unto the sprindling of the blood of Jesus Christ. So soon as the sinner believes, the Saviour's obedience to the divine law, and his endurance of its deadly penalty, are imputed to him for righteousness, and are accounted in the estimation of justice as satisfactory, as if performed and endured in the transgressor's own person: and hence, Christ becomes *the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* Thus a sinner becomes justified by faith.

Justification makes not a man morally pure, but legally acquitted. One man injures the person of another; the injured man arraigns the other before a tribunal of justice. The latter is found guilty of the offence, and is under a legal arrest until he makes the amends awarded to the injured by the court. A third person lays down on behalf of the criminal the amount of penalty demanded. The court receive it as such, and thus imputing it to the criminal's account, they pronounce him legally acquitted or justified. This sense agrees with the evident meaning of the word *justify* in such texts as these: *I will not justify the wicked. They shall justify the righteous.* In these passages it is supposed, that a man not righteous might be justified, and also, one righteous might not be justified, and in agreement with this conclusion, we read in the Scriptures of those who *justify the wicked for reward.*

In the act of regeneration, the sinner is chosen to obedience and justification; he obeys as a consequence of this sanctifying change in exercising faith; and as a consequence of his believing, the Saviour tenders to justice his own obedience and sufferings as the price of penalty for the sinner's disobedience; and finally, justice accepts the price as satisfactory and relinquishing all claims, pronounces the transgressor *acquitted* or *legally justified*. Thus as a consequence of his election, the transgressor becomes free from condemnation through the application of Christ's blood. And hence the appropriate language of the apostle: *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemmeth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again.* And if the man were to die as soon as this justifying act is performed on his soul, he would immediately pass into glory, for those who are redeemed by Christ's being made under the law, receive the adoption of sons, and if sons *then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.* And those that are justified by faith, not only have peace with God, but *rejoice in the hope of the glory of God;* and also those that are elected are *chosen unto salvation.*

Thus, these scattered strangers were elected *in* sanctification unto obedience, because by the life-giving and sanctifying act in which they were elected, a principle of spiritual life was infused into their souls, by which they were morally enabled to obey the requirement of the Gospel, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ;" and unto the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, because all the justifying efficacy of the sufferings of the Son of God, typified under the law by sprinkling the blood of the victim upon the mercy-seat, was, by the exercise of that faith given in the sanctifying act of electing mercy, imputed to them for justification of life.

It may perhaps be supposed, that in this discourse, the word sanctification is taken out of its usual meaning, and completely confounded with regeneration.

Although it be true that the term more frequently denotes that purifying operation of the Holy Ghost,

performed in the new man after he is not only regenerated, but justified; yet in its more extended sense, it includes regeneration as well as that purifying, which follows justification. "For really," says Witsius, "sanctification differs no otherwise from the first regeneration and renovation, than the continuance of an act, from the beginning of it."* Also Francis Turretin speaking of the sanctification, says, "Truely, this real change of the man, is made in various grades, either through effectual calling, which imports the donation of faith, and repentance through faith, and a translation from a state of sin to a state of grace; or through regeneration, which means a renovation of corrupt nature; or through the infusion and the practice of holiness. Hence sanctification widely taken extends to the whole state of the believer."† "Sanctification," as given in the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian church, "is a work of God's grace, whereby they whom God hath before the foundation of the world, chosen to be holy, are in time through the powerful operation of his Spirit applying the death and resurrection of Christ unto them, renewed in their whole man after the image of God, having the seeds of repentance unto life, and all the other graces put into their hearts, and those graces so stirred up, increased, and strengthened, as that they live more and more into sin, and rise unto newness of life."‡

This view of sanctification is reasonable as well as Scriptural. Regeneration is distinguished from sanctification, only as a part from a whole, and may justly be considered as the *act* which begins the *work* of sanctification, and is in nature a purifying, as well as a life-giving act. So that, although our authors on divinity, generally tell us, that sanctification in the order of time follows justification, the fact is, taken in its extensive sense, it *follows* justification and *precedes* it too. The former is a work beginning in regeneration, and continuing in progress, until sin is entirely crucified, and the latter is

*Witsius on Cov. vol. ii. p. 106, †Francis Turretin vol ii. p. 754.

‡Large Catechism Question 75.

an act (not a work) in which as a consequence of the sinner's believing, he is pronounced acquitted by the imputation of Christ's righteousness to him. And hence it will follow, that when the Scriptures speak of sanctification after justification, they mean simply the work of purifying; when of sanctification in the abstract, both purification and regeneration; but when of sanctification before justification, as in the text, they simply mean *regeneration*.

The sanctification in the text, is "unto the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," which can not be naturally interpreted to mean any thing, but "unto justification" together with all its consequences. And if so, the sanctification here designated must precede justification, and therefore can be none other, but that part of sanctification performed in regeneration.

And this interpretation is confirmed by another consideration. The strangers in the text are addressed, as though they were already elected, and of course the act by which they were elected, must have been complete; but this act is in the text said to be the sanctification of the Spirit, and therefore this sanctification must have been finished. This however, could not be true of sanctification as a progressive purifying operation; because in this sense their sanctification was still in progress; yet this would be strictly true of regeneration; because if these strangers were Christians in all the spirituality of the appellation, their regeneration as well as their election must then have been finished.

Again, to elect is an *act*, not a *work*; but purifying sanctification is a *work* not an *act*. Now to speak of God performing a simple *act* of choice by means of a progressive work, is to employ language, which conveys nothing like tolerable sense, and to associate ideas totally incongruous, whilst on the contrary, if we understand this simple electing act to consist in the simple sanctifying act of regeneration, we can perceive in the Apostle's composition, the strictest congruity of thought and the most entire harmony of language.

Thus we see, that God chooses or elects men, not *after*, but most literally *in*,* the sanctification of the Spirit.

There are two Arminian opinions with regard to this election. They shall be considered in order.

The first is, "that God from all eternity determined to bestow salvation on those, who, he foresaw, would persevere unto the end," which converted into other language, is simply saying, that God from all eternity determined to elect those who should believe, and persevere in the faith to the end of life.

This however can not be the election of our text; because these strangers of whom it is affirmed, are not said to be elect in design, but in fact, *in the sanctification of the Spirit*. They are addressed as already elect, not *after* obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, but *unto* this obedience and this sprinkling. The conditions of this text, can not literally comply with this Arminian idea of election. To have employed language corresponding with this doctrine, the apostle ought to have said, not "Elect," but "hereafter to become Elect," not "*in*," *through*, or *by means of*, the sanctification of the Spirit," but "*after* the sanctification of the Spirit," not "*unto* obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," but "*after* obedience and the springling of the blood of Jesus Christ." The Arminian will however inform us, that God *calleth those things that be not as though they were*. But this quotation is nothing to the purpose. God gives us no intimation, that he calls things so here. And as he generally speaks to men after the manner and in the language of men, it is most reasonable to suppose the same to be his mode of communication in this text. But it is unnecessary to press the matter far; the very attempt at evasive interpretation testifies, that this theory of Arminian election, shrinks from a rigid comparison with the literal and most obvious interpretation of the Scriptures, and like the dogmas of Socinus, seeks its refuge from the light of open scripture day under figurative inventions.

*Greek EN.

Another Arminian opinion is, that the election in the epistles generally, denotes God's choosing all, both Jews and Gentiles, who become professed Christians, to all the privileges of the Christian church, just as he formerly chose the Jews to the privileges of the Old Testament dispensation.

But neither can this opinion coincide with the conditions of the text. For, since this Arminian notion of election is nothing more or less, than choosing men to church membership, the act in, or by means of which, they were elected, can be nothing else, but that which constitutes men members of the visible church. Since in the text they are said to be elect in, or by means of the sanctification of the Spirit, the unavoidable result of this Arminian doctrine is, that the sanctification here introduced, can only mean to set men apart to the membership of the church. And as it has been shown in this discourse, that the sanctification of the text, is nothing other, but regeneration, the inevitable consequence is, that regeneration signifies becoming a professed member of the visible church, and as men become professed members of the visible church by baptism, as a consequence from this hypothesis, *regeneration must be baptism*. Hence if you adopt this Arminian and we may also add this Unitarian* explanation of election, you must either be inconsistent, or else also adopt this low Arminian and high Unitarian notion of sanctification and regeneration. How one departure from Scripture simplicity as it moves downwards, draws on others in its train! The beginning of error is like the letting out of water, which enlarges the breach, and widens in its onward and downward course. To Unitarians and one class of Arminians, this is not supposed to be any argument. They glory in these consequences, because they hate the religion which lives in the heart, but to all Arminians, that with Dr. Adam Clarke, believe sanctification so be, "significant of that change, which is to take place in the heart by the grace of God, producing that

*See the note at the end of the sermon.

obedience commanded in his word,"* it ought to be considered mighty, and irrefragably conclusive.

Nor will it avail to attempt an escape by separating the election from the sanctification named in the text in paraphrasing it thus: "Elect by your *formerly* having become members of the visible church, *now* in a state of sanctification unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;" since this would be putting a harsh and a forced construction on the text, and especially, since if we were to grant this paraphrase to be admissible, there is another text containing the same objection which puts such a gloss at defiance: "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through" (in or by means of) "sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Here in the sanctifying operation of the Spirit beginning in regeneration, and in its progress producing a belief in the truth, these believers were elected. Here we are not only told, that they were chosen, but also informed how they were chosen. It would be disregarding all the laws of language to suppose, that the sanctification of the Spirit here refers to the state of the persons addressed and not to the manner in which they were chosen.

From the preceding Scriptural facts and consequences, we are warranted in the conclusion, that neither of the foregoing kinds of Arminian election, is sustained by the conditions of the text. And it may be added without any fear of successful refutation, that by no literal construction of language is either of them taught in the New Testament in reference to the Christian church. Show us a single text within the lids of that volume, which informs us, that God's electing or choosing men in the Christian dispensation, merely signifies making them members of the visible church, or barely selecting them to the enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance after they have believed and persevered in the faith to the end of life. If there be any such texts, it is freely confessed, that they have not fallen within the compass of my knowledge.

But on the contrary, the election explained and vindicated in this discourse, we have taught in the sacred

* See note on the 13th page of his Preface to his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans

volume in almost so many words: "He hath chosen" [elected] "us in him before the foundation of the world." For what? merely that being professors of Christianity we should be conditionally *holy and without blame before him in love*? No verily; but "that we should be" (without any peradventure expressed) "holy and without blame before him in love."* But has he chosen us to be holy and without blame, only after we have lived and died in the faith? The contrary is obvious. His command to Christians while here, is to be holy† and blameless‡—the sons of God without rebuke. But how was this election, made in design before the foundation of the world executed in time? Merely by making men members of the visible church, as is one Arminian hypothesis, or introducing them into heaven after they have lived and died in the faith as is the other? Neither of the two. Let the Bible answer: "God hath—chosen you" (not after, but) "IN sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

And this Bible view of election, is entirely exempt from any objections, that can be legitimately urged from the deductions of reason:—

It contemplates man from first to last in the full possession of his natural liberty. The theory of the Christian Preacher, is that God has decreed that men shall be free to choose or refuse the offered Gospel; that he employs the best possible moral means to induce them to escape from death and choose life; and that coeternally, and in agreement, with his foreknowledge of their choosing or refusing, he has unconditionally determined either to elect them or to pass them by; and hence it is undeniably evident that according to this system no man is passed by in the operation of electing mercy, but such as resisting the best means employed by a gracious God for their recovery, will not come to Christ to receive the electing regeneration of his sanctifying Spirit. He has eternally and unconditionally determined to elect them that will come, and he has eternally and unconditionally

*Literally from the original: He hath chosen us—to be holy and without blame, &c. †I Pet. i. 15. ‡Phil. ii. 15.

decreed to pass them by that will not. If we would only say that such a decree is conditional, even the Arminian himself could not but acknowledge the thing decreed to be in itself reasonable. Why then should he object, when we argue, that God is so perfect, as to foreknow and foredetermine the same thing with absolute certainty without any conditions and consequences preceding and following each other in the operations of the Infinite mind?

Nor can the stale objection, that if God have decreed a particular number to be lost, they *must* be lost, constantly urged against the doctrine of election as exhibited by the patrons of the Calvinian philosophy, be intelligently made against the theory here explained and defended. Because it is supposed, that God decrees, not to influence men either directly or indirectly to the soul destroying sin of rejecting the Gospel, but after employing with them, motives infinite and eternal, to induce a different choice, simply to *suffer* them to choose as he eternally foreknew, that in the best system of moral government they certainly would, and that he has decreed their destruction, not because he delights in misery, but because it is the just desert of their chosen transgression, and demanded for the discipline of the moral universe.

Suppose that God had not foreknown, that they would neglect the Gospel, and that he employed with them no moral means either for or against their acceptance of its mercies, then all could not but admit, that he did not influence them to choose wrong. Again, suppose that after being for a period of his existence ignorant of their fatal choice, he should by some means become informed of the certainty of that fact, then it would be equally evident, that simply foreknowing the event, could certainly exert no influence in its production. And finally, suppose he should decree to suffer it to be just as he foresaw it would be, how can it be demonstrated, that in thus decreeing he would become any more, an agent in producing or modifying its existence? But according to the theory here advocated, God is not supposed to de-

termine even to *suffer* a soul to sin, and be lost, without employing the means provided in the best system of moral operations for prevention and recovery. With what kind of intelligence then can it be urged against us, that if God have decreed to pass any sinner by in the act of his electing sanctification, that there is therefore imposed on the transgressor *some fatal* necessity that he *must* sin and be lost? Those that are disposed to advance against us that trite objection, are bound to demonstrate, that God can not decree to suffer wicked men to act as he foreknows they will choose, without interfering with their natural liberty of choice, or in other words, to demonstrate, that he cannot determine, that they shall be free without destroying their liberty!!!

Nor can it be rationally argued, that this Bible theory of personal election involves God in the authorship of sin or in the production of misery, since in his creation and government it is supposed, that he pursues the very best system of moral operations to prevent the fall, and after the fall to induce men to escape from its ruin, and to accept his sanctifying, electing, and justifying mercy, presented in the Gospel.

Imagine at the head of an army raised for the purpose of defending an invaded empire, a general placed, who by the inspiration of some supernatural power, is informed of all the future certainties of his intended campaign. He knows, that if all his men would obey his commands, the enemy would be defeated without his sustaining the loss or the injury of a single individual, but at the same time, he is apprized of the certainty that some of his soldiers will not obey his most wise and reasonable orders, but by disobedience will render themselves proper subjects for the necessary penalties of martial law: that however by the disobedience and the punishment of these offenders, whom he foreknows by name, he can maintain authority and promote obedience and order throughout his camp, and finally, obtain success in defending the lives and liberties of his countrymen. With all these events as certainties before him, he determines his whole system of warfare. He resolves to

govern his army in the best possible manner to secure the obedience of all, and to suffer these men, whom he foreknew certainly to become disobedient, to choose the very course which he foresees they will, and also to punish their insubordination as a means of preventing others from similar disaffection. He considers it better to determine to suffer and punish the irregularity of the few, who he foresees will, in despite of the best means of prevention, disobey, and thus to impress the necessity of obedience on the minds of all the others, and so maintain the discipline of his army and save his country from destruction, than to disband his forces on account of these foreseen evils, and surrender his country to the ravages of an invading foe.

Now every event connected with the management of this army, is supposed to be elected or determined before hand by the general, yet who can say, that any thing is so elected or determined as to implicate him in the production, either of the disobedience or the suffering introduced into the camp? The men are supposed to be left entirely at liberty to choose obedience or disobedience. He is considered as presenting the best motives to induce their choice to a direction in which there would be neither transgression nor misery. The cause in which he pursues this best system of plans and operations, is among the most sacred on earth, the preservation of life and liberty.

Though in this supposed system of warfare, every event is determined by the commander, it is submitted to the judgment of every reflecting man, who admits at all the lawfulness of defensive war, whether there is involved in this plan any infringement of rational liberty, or any departure from the benignest humanity, and whether, all things considered, it is not far better, that the general should not only foreknow, but also in agreement with his foreknowledge of all the possibilities connected with the subject, fore-determine every event of his subsequent operations according to wisdom and benevolence, than to close his eyes to future certainties, refuse to form any plan for his future management, and surrender all

the concerns of his army, and with them all the interests of his country, to the wild vagaries of chance, and thus to pursue a system of trackless and traceless confusion. So it is believed, that Deity to effect the greatest possible created good, prefers the best and the wisest plan of moral liberty to no plan at all, as much as he prefers order to confusion, and knowledge to ignorance.

Some perhaps will imagine, that humanity in the general, would require him to dismiss from his ranks, the particular men, whom he foreknows to become certainly rebellious if continued in his camp, before they have disobeyed, and thus to prevent both their crimes and their sufferings, and that so God to be fully vindicated in his plan from the authorship of sin, ought to be supposed not to create a single being, knowing that disobedience however chosen, and eternal misery however imperiously demanded by the demerit of his transgressions, would be his certain conduct, and his certain interminable destiny. Though this objection bears with as much weight against any other theory, which recognizes the eternal foreknowledge of Deity, as against the general doctrine of this discourse, we will not take this advantage of obviating it, but will face it fairly, and remove it, and will simply request them who urge it upon us to do the same if they *can*.

Suppose the general knew, that if these particular men were sent home, and their insubordination and their punishment were not permitted to eventuate, and be exhibited to the survey of the whole camp, so as to impress their minds with fear, others would disobey, and that if these others should also be sent away, to prevent their disloyalty, and suffering, their example of punishment being in that case wanting, others without this exhibition of terror, would transgress, and that if these should be sent away, others for the same cause would disobey, and so others, and others indefinitely, so that eventually, if he did not determine to suffer some to choose transgression, and endure punishment as a terror to the others, he would finally have no army to defend his country; so

that the question would ultimately be, whether his country should be lost, or he would determine to endure the crimes, and permit the punishment of a few of his rebellious soldiery. Even so, if God make the commission of sin and the infliction of punishment a means of displaying his wrath, and making his power known, and of exhibiting *an ensample to those that after should live ungodly*, and if these displays of wrath and power, and ensamples of suffering, be made the moral means of deterring unfallen beings from disobedience, and of awing some of the fallen, so that from fear they seek to be restored to their pristine allegiance, and in this manner he maintains the harmony of the moral universe; if such be the best moral means of confirming the intelligent creation in loyalty to their Maker; and finally, if those that are actually brought into being and suffered to choose sin and endure misery, were not they suffered to be exhibited as examples of terror, to prevent the rest from the violation of their Creator's law, others without these exemplifications, would sin, and if the existence of these had been suppressed, others for the same reason would have fallen into transgression, and others, and others, until the final question is resolved into this: "shall God determine to suffer the sins freely chosen by some of his creature's in despite of all the means his wisdom employs for their prevention, and permit the misery, that is the inevitable consequence of those sins as the best means of confirming all the armies of the moral creation in rectitude and happiness, or shall he suppress all the happiness and glory, that shall arise from the creation of all the numberless worlds throughout the progress of eternity?" Now if it would be obviously unreasonable for the general to sacrifice the liberty, and the life, of an empire to the wicked caprice of a few soldiers, so it would be equally unreasonable for Deity to relinquish all the happiness and glory of the created universe, for the guilty choice of a few creatures, that would not by the best moral motives be prevented from their folly.

Thus we find, that the doctrine of personal election, not only coincides with the letter of the Bible, but also

can sustain the most rigid scrutiny of reason, and justifies at once in the sweetest harmony, both the wisdom and the goodness of God.

Having disposed of the objection placed by the Arminian at our door, in turn we will try his strength by placing it at his. Arminianism properly so called, recognizes the prescience of Deity, and therefore supposes, that in the creation of moral beings, he had before him all the events of their immortality. Accordingly, when he created Satan, he viewed him as ultimately becoming a sinful and eternally miserable spirit; before he created Adam, and before he creates every individual of the sons and daughters of Adam, he surveyed and surveys their future character, and all the interminable duration of their happiness or misery. As agreeably to our doctrine, God has a plan, and the best plan, and every being and event in it has a reference to the general good, we can systematically say, God mercifully and wisely suffers the existence of evil, as the *certain* though not the *necessary* imperfection of the best system of moral beings, because, in it there is almost infinitely more good than evil, and of consequence, there are more goodness and glory displayed and more happiness enjoyed, than could otherwise be possible. But as the Arminian denies that God ever determined every event in the universe, no one particular thing in creation, can, according to the supposition, have any reference to the whole. The admission of that reference, is at once the full acknowledgement of a plan, in which God *has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass*. But if he created beings without any view to the *general* good, he must have created them for their *individual* good or *for no good at all*. But how could he create *them* for their *individual* good, whose creation he foresaw would certainly be followed by eternal sin and misery?

It were better for Satan, had he never been created. It were better for any lost man, had he never been born. This the Creator must know, before he creates them, and then upon Arminian principles, *how* could he introduce them into existence with any design for their good, unless indeed, we can suppose, that he intended, that which

he knew would never be accomplished, or designed his own deception. Yet the Arminian theology supposes, that God creates every spirit, that is eventually lost, with all its sins, and its everduring darkness, chains, burnings, and agonies full before him. For what purpose?—because they are the unavoidable imperfections which attend the general good? This the Arminian denies, when he rejects the system of God's universal plan, and of course, his system supposes, either that God creates them without any purpose, or meaning whatever, or else, that his eyes are delighted with their unquenchable fires, and his ears with the sounds of their never ceasing woes. When he foreknew, that such would be the eternal and miserable consequences of his choosing the conditions of creating them, why unless he have pleasure in sin, and in the death of the sinner, did he choose the condition on which turned all the *eternal world* of sin and woe? So that according to this theory, Deity, either brought into being every lost spirit without any meaning in the operation, or he really preferred, that there should be *just* the amount of sin that is actually perpetrated, and misery that is actually endured; just the number of lost angels that are now reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day; and just the number of infatuated men, that are actually living, and will die, in the neglect of the salvation of the Gospel. Is a system of theology drawing such horrible consequences in its train, the divinity of the Bible, which declares sin to be, the abominable thing which God hates, and the death of the sinner to be, that in which he has no delight! O Reader, tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon, the Arminian philosophy, whilst it professedly denies the doctrine of *personal election*, carries the doctrine of *personal reprobation* in its bosom, hidden indeed from the passing eye, but still existing in all the magnitude of life!! If this philosophy be true, God created a particular number to be *lost*. He chose that they *should* be lost, or else why did he give them being knowing that they *would* be lost? Knowing that if they were created, they as certainly would be miserable, except he preferred

their destruction, why did he not stay his creating hand? But it is said, the destruction of every eternally miserable being, is the effect of his own choice. True. This however removes no difficulty. Why, unless God delights in sin, and has pleasure in the death of the wicked, does he create a being, which he knows will certainly make a choice of sin, and thus render himself the subject of eternal wretchedness? If it were better he had never been born, why was he ever born, unless God delights in the objects of sin and wretchedness?

Arminianism makes God, either act without any meaning whatever, or else choose the very condition on which are suspended all the unbelief in the world, and all the misery that ever will result from that unbelief. According to the principles, which it involves, Deity eternally beheld the unbelieving enduring eternal torments, *upon the condition* that they would certainly die in their sins, they would die in their sins *upon the condition*, that they would not believe and obey the Gospel, they would not believe and obey the Gospel, *upon the condition*, that they were created in a particular manner, and placed in a particular state, and finally, they would be thus created, and thus placed, *upon the condition*, that himself would choose their existence and their circumstances. Thus Arminianism conducts us to the conclusion, that God really preferred that unbelievers of every grade, should be just as they are, and no better; that one man should be a liar and not a man of veracity; that another should be a drunkard and not a man of sobriety; that a third should be a man of blood, and not a man of innocence; and the same of men of sin of every order, and character; for if he did not choose that they should be *just so*, why did he create them at all, or if he have not created and governed them in the best possible manner to prevent sin and promote holiness, why unless he chose that they would be no better, did he not choose to create and govern them according to the best possible system?

The theory of the best possible system, is the only *possible* relief from these Bible denying, and God accu-

sing consequences; but if the doctrine of the best possible system be true, the Bible doctrine of particular personal election, just such as is taught in the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, and in the thirty-nine articles of the Protestant Episcopal church, is true.

Reader since the election here explained and defended supposes, that in the sure plan of the divine mercy, between the use you make of the word, and providences of God, and of the common operations of his Spirit, and your obtaining the special act of the Holy Ghost, that will elect you, be entreated to come to Christ *now*, and thus make your calling and election sure. It will be in vain, that you believe the doctrine, if you neglect to participate in the blessings which it conveys. Come, and be assured, that God is both *able* and *willing* to elect *all* that will come. He is no respecter of persons, but whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out. Come then, and partake freely in the riches of his electing grace. He offers to elect you. Will you accept of his electing love?

NOTE.

Lest this should be construed into an odious and a groundless allusion, our authority shall be given, and that authority is none other, but Dr. Adam Clarke. From his preface to his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans the following is extracted:

“From the manner in which this Epistle has been interpreted, and applied, various most discordant and conflicting opinions have originated. Many commentators forgetting the scope and design of it, have applied that to men in general, which most obviously belongs to the *Jews* as distinguished from the *Gentiles*, and to them only. From this one mistake, the principal controversies, that have agitated and divided the church of Christ, concerning the doctrines of unconditional reprobation and election, have arisen. Men eminent for their talents, learning, and piety, have interpreted and applied the

whole on this mistaken ground. They have been opposed by others, not at all their inferiors, either in religion or learning, who not attending to the scope of the Apostle, have rather argued from the perfections of the divine nature, and the general concurrent sense of Scripture, and thus proved that such doctrines can not comport with those perfections, nor with the analogy of faith; and that the Apostle is to be interpreted according to *these, and not according to the apparent grammatical import of the phraseology which he employs.*"

"To compose these differences, and do justice to the Apostle, and set an important portion of the word of God in its true and genuine light; Dr. John Taylor of Norwich, a divine, who yielded to few in command of temper, benevolent feeling, and deep acquaintance with the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, undertook the elucidation of this much controverted Epistle. The result of his labours was a paraphrase, and notes on the whole book, to which is prefixed a *Key to the Apostolic Writings.*"—"This *Key* is, in the main, a most invaluable work; and has done great justice to the subject. Christians, whether advocates for general, or particular redemption, might have derived great service from this work, in explaining the Epistle to the Romans: but the author's creed, who was an ARIAN (for he certainly can not be ranked with modern Unitarians,*) has prevented many from consulting his book."

Dr. Clarke candidly acknowledges, that before the appearance of this Unitarian guide, the apostle was not interpreted by Arminians according to *"the apparent grammatical import of the phraseology which he employs!"* This is always the killing sin of heresy: but it is the part of the humble believer to go whithersoever the most natural, and obvious construction of the Bible will carry him, and not presume to say, that when God speaks one thing he means another. The object of the Christian Preacher is, to prove, that when we do this, we also act, in the strictest accordance, with Christian philosophy. It is believed, that the most literal, and the most natural sense of the Bible, and the most accurate process of moral reasoning, will always harmonize; because the Bible is given by the author of reason.

Dr. John Taylor's theory advocated, and partially adopted by Dr. Adam Clarke, is briefly this: In the Old Testament the terms *saved, bought, redeemed*, called, ELECT, *created, made, formed, born*, and sanctified, when applied to the Jewish nation, simply mean the act in which they were separated from the world, to the professed visible membership of the Old Testament Church; and so, when these same terms are employed in the New Testament, in relation to the New Testament dispensation, they merely signify the act by which men whether Jews or Gentiles, become the professed members of the Christian church.

This Unitarian theory takes two propositions for granted: *first*, that these terms among the Jews were understood to refer wholly to visible membership in their national covenant, and *secondly*, that they have a corresponding application in relation to the Christian church.

It is a *petitio principii* [begging the question] in a double sense. In the first place, it is not generally admitted, that such is always the meaning of the terms in relation to the Jews, and in the second place, if it were admitted, it

*The term Unitarian properly signifies all, who deny the Supreme divinity of Jesus Christ, and the personality of the Holy Spirit, and properly includes Arians as well as Socinians. The term is however more generally applied to Socinians.

does not involve the consequence, that these terms must mean nothing more in the Christian dispensation. If the Jewish Church was but the shadow of good things to come in the Christian church, then if in the former these terms only referred to a profession of religion, in the latter they ought to be considered to signify the reality of which a profession is made.

APPENDIX.

To Joseph Lybrand, Samuel Merwin, Samuel Doughty, John Lednum, Elisha Andrews, Manning Force, Thomas F. Sargeant, Thomas Miller, W. W. Wallace, and Thomas Dunn, Committee of publication; and John Clarke Editor of the late Religious Messenger.

In your Religious Messenger of Dec. 6th, 1827, by way of Editorial remarks you say, "An Arminian is *able* but not *willing* to enter controversy with Mr. C while his remarks are so wide a departure from the language of a Christian minister." If "An Arminian" wished to be treated as a gentleman, and a Christian he ought to have avoided writing down falsehoods, and making any odious personal allusion founded on falsehoods. The writer, the committee, and the Conference that can make themselves the pedlars of the small wares of personal defamation, have no particular claims to the treatment due to either gentlemen or Christians. As to the complaint of unbecoming language, any one who reads the Nos. of the Religious Messenger alluded to will see verified the proverb, "the real thief will always cry out, 'Stop thief the loudest.'" We are told, "An Arminian is *able* but not *willing*"—he retires from the field out of pure meekness and modesty. It must be a Moses like meekness and a virgin-like modesty, that can retire from the arena when convicted before the world of IGNORANCE and FALSEHOOD. [See remarks Christian Preacher, Nos 4 and 5].

"This subject," you however informed us, "will be made plainer before Jeremiah has concluded." But,

Quid dignum tanto tulit hic Promisor, Hiatus?

In the Messenger of Dec. 27, the hero appears with doubtless lofty expectations. But alashow changed! His golden days were gone! You tell him "that his second paper is published more from the previous notice of its forthcoming," "than otherwise."

Currente Rota cur urceus exit?

It was a lecture on style. But the author was told by the editorial faculty "The style of Mr. Campbell is not good, but Jeremiah has not mended it."

A raw lad who had never seen the whole world, in passing along the highway spying among a number of other marvellous things, an animal with long ears, exclaimed with astonishment "what fine horns that cow has!" on coming up a little nearer, again he called out, "But that's a queer cow!" And finally, feeling the ears with his hand, he remarked very sagely and pathetically, "soft is your horn poor beast?" So it appears, the Editor and the Committee of the Religious Messenger, once thought Jeremiah had a fine head and horns. On approaching however they began to think he was a queer beast for a cow; and finally discovered the secret, that he was an animal *with soft horns!* This argues more sagacity in the Editorial Committee of the Conference of Philadelphia, than we had supposed they possessed.

We have received, through the medium of the post-office a small abusive and anonymous pamphlet, purporting to be a reply to the appendix of the Christian Preacher No. 8. apparently written by some Methodist in Smyrna, Del. The performance is such as might, if placed in the hands of some Delaware attorney, possibly elevate its silly and obscure author to the distinction of the whipping post. Anonymous attacks on personal character, injure even a good cause, and always make a bad one worse. The author and his pamphlet are alike below any other kind of notice. Where nothing better is expected, falsehood is *harmless*.

THE CHRISTIAN PREACHER.

Vol. 1.

APRIL, 1828.

N^o. 11.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.—Math. vi. 10.

The efficacy of prayer in the conversion of the world.

Since in this work it is advocated, that in pursuing the best plan for recovering the greatest possible number of lost men, God regenerates all such, and *generally*, none but such, as choose to accept his atoning and regenerating mercy, it is probably asked by some, “How can the prayer of one man operate upon the conversion of another? If the man be already willing, then according to the doctrine of the Christian Preacher, God will certainly regenerate him without the interference of another; and if he be not, then his change is out of the ordinary course of God’s regenerating operations.” Although it be true, that if a man be now willing, a new heart will be given him, even if he should not be made the subject of another’s prayer, and although, if he be not willing, it be equally certain, that in the usual course of dispensing his regenerating blessings, God will not change him, until by the common means of grace, addressed to him as a moral agent, he consent importunately and perseveringly to implore divine assistance to believe; yet, in answer to the prayer of fervent faith, God can consistently with the constitution of his moral government, operate upon the minds of men more powerfully in the common strivings of his Spirit to produce this willingness, than he could without such prayer; and also, consistently with the fact, that it is the way of God *generally* to regenerate such only, as from a sense of guilt and danger, seek his salvation, he may transcend the boundaries of his usual operations, and in answer to importunate and pious prayer, made for another; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, without any previous work of conviction or alarm, make the most thoughtless human being the subject of his regenerating power.

The objection falls before the following propositions:

1. *Prayer for others may become a means of producing in them a willingness to accept the Gospel; and*
2. *In answer to the pious prayer of others, God may depart from his usual mode of operations, and renew the careless and the wicked without their previous willingness.*

Both these propositions are legitimately deducible from the general truth, that God will accomplish certain events in answer to prayer, which he otherwise would not. That in his eternal plan of moral operations, prayer finds a place in the production of events, is an acknowledged doctrine of the Bible. If God foretell the restoration of Israel from all their captivities, he also adds as an essential means of fulfilment, *I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them:* If he promise to the Son, the heathen for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, he says, *ASK and I will give thee.* And if he reveal in the sure word of prophecy, *that the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ,* he also directs us to pray, *thy kingdom come.*

Blessings are provided without restriction in answer to prayer. *Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.* But is this supposed to relate exclusively to personal blessings? The supposition is refuted when we are informed, that *WHATSOEVER ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.* We are also divinely taught, that the *effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much* when made for others in sickness and in sin. *Is any sick says the Spirit? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick; and the Lord shall raise him up. If he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him.*

In all these cases, it is obviously implied, that prayer is considered efficient as a means of producing events,

which without it, would be different. In some of the passages just cited, and alluded to, temporal blessings are promised. But if God give temporal good things in answer to prayer, how much more spiritual? If he so far regard the petitions of the pious as to heal the sickness of the body, how much more will he cure the soul of its moral maladies? If when besought by the house of Israel, he will restore them from all their captivities, how much rather deliver souls from the slavish dominion of Satan? But according to some of these texts, spiritual gifts are evidently communicated as the consequences of prayer, and hence, the doctrine that God dispenses the blessings of his grace, as well as the bounties of his providence at the fervent entreaties of the pious, ought to be acknowledged as a truth of revelation. And if so, he may

1. Employ means in answer to prayer, which by convictions and alarms, may constrain the most careless and the most obdurate to seek the regeneration and the redemption of the Gospel; and thus prayer may become the instrument of producing a willingness to accept the terms of salvation. With the mighty works performed in a Chorazin, a Bethsaida, and a Capernaum, he may so operate on a Sodom, a Tyre, and a Sidon, as to induce them to flee from the wrath to come, and seek a saving repentance; and still, mightier works of conviction and alarm, he may perform, to secure the repentance of a Chorazin, a Bethsaida, and a Capernaum. At the fervent supplications of his people, from heaven, he may flash terror on the eyes of a persecuting Saul, until trembling and astonished, he shall anxiously enquire, *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* Who can say that Deity can not; and that when addressed in the devout supplications of his church universally, he *will* not, exert on the hearts of all flesh, such a resistless convicting and alarming power, as shall prepare them for seeking and finding that renewing of the Holy Ghost, which is at once demanded and offered by the Saviour? *The thunders of his power who can understand?* Or he may,

2. *do more.* By a Sovereign act of his power, when fervently invoked by the prayer of his people, he may

for any thing we know, consistently with all the perfections of his moral nature, and the best interests of his moral kingdom, in some cases, desert the usual ways of dispensing his grace, and renew thousands and millions, without preparing their hearts by any previous convicting and alarming operations.

Having beneath his immense and eternal survey, just the number for whom the prayer of faith would certainly be offered, he may have eternally determined, so to affect their minds by the common workings of his Spirit, as to bow them before the footstool to invoke his salvation; or by a less usual demonstration of his mercy, to reinstate in their souls the lost conformity to their Maker's image, without pursuing his ordinary mode of antecedent operations.

These positions are not only consistent with reason and Scripture, but are apparently supported by facts. In seasons of revivals of religion, when churches become awakened from their slumbers, and offer prayers importunate and persevering for all around them, the very atmosphere becomes consecrated by their breath, and frequently, an unaccountable impression is made on the minds of men, who do not frequent the places of prayer, or mingle in the courts of God with the great congregation. Some of these neglecters of this great salvation, whilst pursuing their usual avocations, beyond the reach of any visible means, and without being affected in the least by any change in temporal circumstances, have been suddenly seized with such misgivings of mind, and stings of conscience, and forebodings of future wrath, as have driven them from their worldly pursuits to seek an asylum in the sanctuary, which they had long deserted, and despised; and to persevere in seeking, until they have found the renewing of the Holy Ghost and the sprinkling of that blood, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel; whilst others of the same character, in such seasons, are sometimes reported as having been changed from Satan to God by a single stroke of the divine mercy, without any appeal to their consciences, or address to their fears. Thus He is often found by them who seek him not.

This subject most naturally introduces us to some reflections on the efficiency of prayer, in the conversion of the world.

The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. All its nations, as well as the beasts of its mountains, and the cattle upon its ten thousand hills are his. The promise has passed the lips of truth, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and be exalted above the hills; and that all nations shall flow to it; and that to the Saviour shall the gathering of the people be; yet in the accomplishment of these grand events, the glory of the latter day, prayer is recognized by the word of truth as an indispensable instrument. It is indeed one of the deep things of God, why the petitions of mortals should give direction and impetus to omnipotence. But certain it is, and it is a truth enough for us to know, that infinite wisdom, by a strange identification, has associated the converting energies of that power, which garnished the heavens, balances the earth, and rolls unnumbered worlds and suns along in their orbits, with the prayerful aspirations of the humblest and meanest penitent.

How exalted the privilege of him, who can offer the prayer of pious faith! Angels sung, over the plains of Bethlehem, the Saviour's advent, they strengthened him in the agonies of the garden; they no doubt filled the heavens over his head as he passed from Gethsemane to the judgment seat, and thence to Calvary; watched his cross, and sounded their dirges over his sepulchre. And now their armies bend before their Maker and wait with reverence to hear his commands, or swiftly move with rapturous joy to perform the messages of redeeming mercy, accounting any agency in the accomplishment of that great salvation, which the Saviour died to secure, an honour which demands their praise in the loudest anthems. Whilst engaged in prayer for the conversion of men, the believer is exalted to participate in a work in which angels and God delight, and a work which strange to tell, the Almighty Majesty himself with all the unnumbered myriads of angelic hosts in his train, chooses

not to consummate but with the co-operating agency of saints on earth.

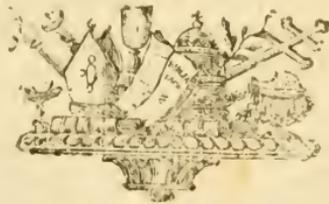
And if the privilege of co-operating with angels and God be *exalted*, so also is the object to be effected by the co-operation *grand*—nothing less than the revolution of the *world* from Satan to God. It is not merely to save our globe from the impiety of the fool's creed, "*There is no God,*" nor from the Satanic delusions of magic, incantations, soothsaying, and witchcraft; nor from idolizing the luminaries of the skies, the shades of departed heroes, lifeless forms of wood and stone, birds and beasts and creeping things, the fruits of the field, and the herbs of the garden, and all the thirty thousand forms of gloomy superstition; but to guaranty the rights of conscience as existing not between man and his fellows, but between man and his Maker; to restore justice and mercy to the society of men; to elevate one half of the human kind from the abjectedness of slaves to the dignity of companions: and above all, to save from the woes of an eternal hell, a whole world of ruined men, and exalt them to the unspeakable felicities of an eternal heaven, is the object to be achieved by the prayers of the faithful. Compared with these the conquests of a Cyrus, an Alexander, a Cæsar, and a Bonaparte are more insignificant than grains of dross, compared with globes of gold, or than sparks of light, shaken from the wing of the fire fly, compared with suns. Eternity stamps infinite worth on a single soul, gained in the glorious conquest. To know what is gained in the value of one soul, we should be able to estimate the amount of joy, which, over every sinner that repenteth, reverberates from vault to vault through the heavenly courts; to pursue the redeemed spirit as it soars upwards and upwards, from glory to glory in its approximations to the unattainable perfections of the infinite Glory; and above all, to compute the price paid in the sufferings of the Son of God, when he endured the sorrows of the garden and the agonies of the cross. But it is for minds only, that can comprehend the eternal aggregate of joy, that shall fill heaven for a world of repenting sinners; the amount of all the exceeding and e-

ternal weights of glory that shall rest upon the whole army of ransomed souls; and the eternal weight of woe that pressed the Saviour when pronouncing *it finished* he sunk from the cross to the sepulchre—it is for such minds only, to estimate the conversion of the whole living family of the human race.

What inducements to pray, *Thy kingdom come!* Christians awake from your slumbers and survey the condition of man. Here you may see within the boundaries of those kingdoms over which the banner of the cross waves nominally triumphant; yea, within the courts of the sanctuary, and around the altar, millions, your friends, your parents, your brethren, your children, alas! millions, with eyes, yet they see not, ears yet they hear not, and with hearts, yet they do not understand the power of the blessed Gospel. Three-fourths of the earth's population are Turks and Heathen. Behold the ways to Mecca crowded with their tens of thousands of Mahometan pilgrims, who infatuated by superstition go to appease the offended Deity by presenting their emaciated bodies in devotion at the shrine of the false prophet.

Who expose aged parents on the banks of desert rivers to the mercy of tygers and other beasts of pray, burn the living widow with the body of her dead husband, and roast their infant children in excavated ovens, to appease the God of mercy for the parents crimes? The heathen, the most numerous class of this world's inhabitants. What uttermost continents and distant isles crowded with the habitations of heathenism! What armies muttering their incantations, performing their senseless witchcraft, or to obtain the imaginary favour of some lifeless idol, pursuing pilgrimages in which the hungry vultures are fed with their flesh, and the ways, and the fields, strewed with their naked bones! These are the heathen, the inhabitants of the uttermost parts of the earth and of the distant isles. But for the Saviour it is written in the records of heaven and it is revealed on earth *The heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession, and the isles shall wait for thy law.*

Strange it indeed appears, and strange it really is, but it is nevertheless true, O Christians, that your prayers are demanded to give eyes that will see, ears that will hear, and hearts that will understand to the millions and tens of millions that in christian lands are blind, and deaf, and unfeeling to all that in the Gospel is precious and saving; to dispel the delusion of the false prophet; to convert his priests and his pilgrims to the faith of the Gospel and demolish his temples; to break the chains of magic and the power of witchcraft, to save the deluded devotee from the sanguinary worship of his idol and from the self immolation of his superstitious pilgrimage; the aged parent from fierce tygers and devouring lions; the widow from the funeral pile; the smiling infant from the burning alter; and finally, a world from eternal woe. Look upwards! Behold the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords with his sword on his thigh, and his armies in his train, ready to go forth conquering and to conquer! See the King stays his chariot and his millions of myriads pause; and all look down upon the saints on earth. Hark! the trumpet sounds, *To the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord, against the mighty.* Arise, Christians, put on your armour; God awaits for your co-operation; and the world is sinking in death. Will you withhold the prayer, "*Thy kingdom come*" when God spared not his Son, and Jesus shed his blood?—Amen.



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SCRIPTURAL PREACHING.

If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.

—1 Pet. iv. 11.

If it be enjoined on all men to take heed what they hear, surely it is no less required of ministers of the Gospel to ponder well what they speak. That their instructions may become a savour of life unto life; that they may save both themselves and those who hear them, they must speak, not after the wisdom of men, nor according to philosophy falsely so called; but according to the oracles of God. Let us therefore consider—

I. *What is speaking according to the oracles of God;*
and

II. *The motives enforcing the duty.*

I. *What is speaking according to the oracles of God?*

If the Scriptures be admitted the only rule, by which the Christian minister is to measure the length and breadth, the height and depth of every doctrine, which he delivers, and of every duty which he inculcates, it is obviously a dictate of reason, that these oracles should be interpreted in their most natural, and so far as possible, in their most literal sense. The licence too often taken in figurative interpretation, has ever since the days of Origen, been the bane of theology and the curse of the church. To preach truly scripturally, is to proclaim doctrines arising from comparing spiritual things with spiritual, so as to give the most opposite texts the most literal interpretation admitted by the comparison.

The eternity of Deity, is most distinctly recognized in the scriptures. From everlasting to everlasting he is God.

So also his immutability; in him *there is no variability neither shadow of turning; but is the same yesterday, to day and forever.*

In the language of his inspiration, he reveals his own foreknowledge to be eternal. *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.*

If the testimony of the bible be admitted, he is of *purser eyes than to behold iniquity; and one with whom no evil can dwell.* He is declared by the heavenly hosts to be, the *Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty.*

But he is also merciful and compassionate. "*The Lord is merciful*" and "*full of compassion,*" has *no pleasure in the death of the wicked,* and is unwilling that *any should perish.*

The Scriptures represent him no less eternal in his purpose, than in his being. They declare, that he has now a counsel that shall stand, and a pleasure which he will perform. And if so; then if he change not, that counsel, and that pleasure, must be as eternal as his being. This is taught in those Scriptures, which express the eternity of his design in choosing men to holiness: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son." This predestination is associated with the divine foreknowledge, which has just been proved to be eternal: With this, the divine predestination must be *co-eternal*; otherwise there must have been a period in duration, in which he did not predestinate those whom he did foreknow.

Now if his foreknowledge, and his purpose, be both scripturally eternal, and *co-eternal* with his existence, they are also *co-eternal* with each other. And neither can be to the other, antecedent or consequent, or cause or effect; but they coincide, as the *co-eternal* operations of the infinite mind. This is an obvious conclusion from the oracles of God as the premises. He is now a God who has neither any pleasure in wickedness, nor in the death of the wicked. As he changes not, he was ever the same. Then in forming his eternal system of the moral universe, he so constituted it, as to involve in its consequences, the least possible amount of sin and

suffering; and evil was introduced, neither by his approbation, or agency, but found its way as the certain, though not the necessary imperfection of one of the very best moral systems.

The natural liberty or moral freedom of man is a doctrine of revelation. God tempteth no man to evil but "every man is tempted when he is drawn away of of his own lust and enticed." "Lo! this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." Moral freedom implies a surrender of the creature to the liberty of employing, in acts of intelligence and choice, his faculties of understanding and will, addressed by moral motives, but uninfluenced by any direct agency of Omnipotence. Man is a finite being. He is liable to misjudge the motives presented to influence his choosings. An error in judging motives immediately produces a temptation to an error in choice; and hence, natural liberty in a finite being, unconfirmed by moral means, implies a liability to the transgression of moral law. Our first parents, placed in Eden and addressed by the prohibition, *Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ye shall not eat*, and by the sanction, in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die, were left at liberty to exercise their understanding in judging the prohibition, and the sanction, and their power of volition, in performing the choice, which their understanding might dictate. Their understanding being finite, was liable to be deceived, and to accredit the serpent and to discredit the sovereign mandates of their Maker. The consequence was, they believed the Tempter. This error in judgment prepared their minds for the fatal choice, "which brought death into our world and all our woe." Had the Moral Governor restrained their judgment and volition by any supernatural means, he would have destroyed their moral being. Moral agency consists essentially in liberty. And to have elevated them above all liability to be deceived in judgment and to err in choice, he must be conceived to have imparted to them his own omniscience. An absurdity as monstrous, as to suppose

the creation of another God. Yet nothing less could have placed them above exposure to temptation and error. The introduction of sin is therefore, most obviously an imperfection, against which no system of government, however wise, could possibly secure an universe composed of finite moral beings.

It is no objection, that some such beings are ultimately confirmed. They are confirmed by witnessing the penalties of transgression endured by the disobedient. But under the view of our first parents in Paradise, no such penalties could have been executed. As yet no visible beings, whose sufferings only, could, with bodily eyes, be surveyed, had sinned and become subject to penal sufferings.

If then it be scripturally true, that no plan of creation and government, however good and wise, could have secured to an universe of finite moral beings, the very essence of whose nature consists in liberty, an entire exemption from all liability to transgression; if God's hatred to sin and his foreknowledge of all beings and events, be co-eternal with his adoption of the present system of creation and providence; and if he be supposed ever to plan and act, consistently with his own perfections, then, notwithstanding the existence of evil, the most simple conclusion from these obviously scriptural truths is, that in the exercise of the most perfect omniscience, and the most uncompromising opposition to sin, he projected the mighty plan of accountable creation. And then, if it be true, that in wisdom he performed all his works, the design must have been conceived in reference to consequences the most remote, as well as the more immediate; and then also, if we admit, that the Holy One regarded his own holiness, his eternal projection of moral nature, as well as his own perfections, must, in the last degree, be opposed to evil. Thus the result of the whole is, the divine oracles sustain the conclusion, that the frame of moral being eternally formed in the infinite mind, and now in the progress of fulfilment, involves the least possible aggregate of evil, and the sum that actually obtains, results

not necessarily, but morally from its imperfections as a creature.

But if sin and suffering be the certain imperfection of a moral creation, the question will naturally occur, why did an infinitely perfect being, all the attributes of whose nature are opposed to evil, originate such a system? An answer to this enquiry is evidently deducible from those scriptures, which reveal the goodness of Deity. It must be visible to every beholder, that notwithstanding all the deductions from the general happiness, made by the wickedness and misery which we witness in the world, there is still such a balance of happiness, that more good is produced than could be, if no such world existed. Now if another world could not have been created in which there would have been less evil, then the choice of Deity as an infinitely good being, could not have been between this and a better; but between this and a worse, or between this and none. The supposition, that he preferred this to a worse, is an obvious acknowledgment of his goodness in the choice which he has made. And if so much happiness could not be enjoyed had no world been created; and if the proper object of goodness be the production of happiness, then Infinite goodness would require the creation of this world, attended with all its concomitant evils, in preference to none; just as a mortal might prefer a life in the general happy, but variegated with infelicitous events, to absolute annihilation.

The universal depravity of mankind is a doctrine of the divine oracles: "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." "In Adam all die." "The wages of sin is death." "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

In connexion with this humiliating truth, the preacher influenced by the spirit of the Bible, will speak to his hearers of the danger which follows closely in its train. In tones as loud and shrill as the sound of a trumpet, he will proclaim, "*The wicked shall be turned into hell and all the nations that forget God.*"

But whilst he convinces men of their sin, and warns them of their danger, he will also proclaim the riches of that mercy, which has provided, and now offers, the means of recovery. By the living oracles he is warranted to say, that if God have *concluded all in unbelief*, it is that he may *have mercy upon all*: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth upon him should not perish but have everlasting life."

The work of salvation executed in time is but the fulfilment of the system of mercy planned in the highest eternity. According to the scriptures the death of Christ, appears to be contemplated in the system as a *ransom for all*; and a *propitiation* for the sins of the *whole world*. A ransom is literally the price of redemption, intended or offered for the liberation of captives which may or may not be accepted for the purpose for which it is intended or offered: To *propitiate* signifies to *appease*. A *propitiation* is that which *appeases*. The death of Christ, has so far appeased divine justice, that God now sustains the whole world under a dispensation of mercy.

So also in the same eternal plan, his death appears to be contemplated, as it proves to be in fact, an atonement, and redemption, to all such, and none but such, as believe. Atonement literally signifies setting at one such as were at variance. It is a reconciliation between contending parties. *Redemption* means the *liberation* of a captive by a price. The sinner who believes is set *at one* with his Maker. God and he are reconciled. When he believes, he is also *redeemed, liberated* by the price of the Saviour's sufferings from the captivity by which he was held a prisoner to justice. The language of revelation is: "By whom WE" (christians) "have now received the atonement." "Forasmuch as ye know that ye" (elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father) "were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold from your vain conversation—but such with the precious blood of Christ."

Thus it is Scriptural to teach, that the death of Christ was in eternity *designed* and is in time *made in*

effect, a ransom and a propitiation for all men and atonement and redemption to those who believe.

The death of Christ, already a ransom and a propitiation for all, is freely and sincerely offered to those who come to God to be made Atonement and Redemption to them when they believe. And as they are dead in trespasses and in sins, and thus morally disqualified for exercising scriptural faith, he also offers his Spirit to renew by the infusion of spiritual vitality, all those, that will come to him, that they may have life. Thus God calls upon all men to come, and promises to those who obey his call, his Spirit to perform in them, the work of regeneration enabling them to believe; and the obedience of the Saviour, to be made to them atonement and redemption, when they do believe. When the sinner believes, God and he, once at variance, are *set at one*; for we have peace with God when justified by faith: When by faith we can overcome the world we partake of redemption; for when saved from our vain conversation we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. Thus the blood of Christ designed from eternity to become, to all such as were foreseen as coming to Christ, atonement and redemption, is made such by an actual appropriation when they become believers.

As in the exercise of moral freedom, man lost his original conformity to his Maker's image, so also in the economy of salvation, through the use of this same freedom, this conformity is restored. It is left as much to his choice now whether to receive that renewing of the Holy Ghost, which enables him to believe, and whether to make the Saviour's obedience, an atonement and redemption to him, as it was to the choice of the first man, whether he would eat the forbidden fruit. On the ground of the ransom, paid in the Saviour's sufferings, and the propitiation effected by the shedding of his blood, God furnishes guilty and ruined men with the means of coming to Christ to receive from the Holy Ghost that spiritual life, which enables them to believe. He addresses them even while in their natural state as intelligent and voluntary beings. By his word provi-

videnceⁿ and Spirit he proclaims to them their guilt, and warns them of their danger, informs them of their helplessness, invites them to come to the Redeemer, and promises spiritual and eternal life to every one who comes. It is no more at the option of an unrenewed man, whether he will walk to a house of worship and hear a discourse pronounced, than whether he will come to Christ and obtain the regenerating operations of the Holy Spirit. It is no more at man's choice, whether he will eat when he is pained with hunger, or drink when he is parched with thirst, than when convinced of his sin and alarmed at his danger, he will come to Christ to ask the spiritual life, which enables him to believe; and that atonement and redemption, which become his as a consequence of believing.

And it is not only optionary with man whether he will, when convicted and alarmed, seek the grace of God which bringeth salvation; but also, whether he will employ the means, by which as an unawakened and unrenewed man, he may become awakened and renewed. Whether he will attend to the dispensations of Providence, the teachings of the Scriptures, and to the convictions which often flash upon his conscience, making also the awful truths which they communicate the subjects of his daily and his nightly meditations, and whether he will cherish the feelings of guilt and terror which they awaken, is as much at his option, as whether he will choose the course which leads to wealth and honor, or any other earthly object.

And stronger assurances of success attend the use of the means of salvation, than can possibly accompany the employment of means for any earthly purpose. If God have constituted a connexion between the preferences of the man who chooses to plough and sow, and his obtaining the fruits of the harvest, yet he has no where promised the husbandman, that the seed, which he sows, shall certainly be productive. But he has promised that they who seek him shall find him, and that whosoever asks shall receive. The Saviour assigns as the only reason of man's ruin that men will not come unto him that they might have life.

But whilst the Book of God so clearly teaches, that the sinner who chooses to attend to the means of grace, and immediately to find grace in using them, shall never be disappointed, it also distinctly instructs us, that no exertion of his, restores divine life to the soul: *For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? The sons of God are born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but of God.* As the ploughing, sowing, or watering of the husbandman, can not of itself, shoot the blade or mature the harvest, so the meditations, tears, and prayers of the transgressor, can not restore divine life to the soul.-- But as the Author of goodness follows the work of the husbandman with that operation of Omnipotence, which nourishes and creates the grain, so also he succeeds the seeking of the sinner, physically and morally unable to enkindle in himself the least dawning, or awake in himself the least moving of spiritual life, with that transforming act, by which he that was dead in trespasses and sins, becomes quickened and raised from the grave of moral depravity.

As God eternally determined, that Christ's blood should be atonement and redemption, to all who believe; and that the Holy Spirit should *renew* every sinner co-eternally foreknown as coming to Christ so as to qualify him for believing; and as he declares, that he is not willing that any should perish; but that all should come to repentance, so it is an obvious inference, that would any more come to Christ, their coming would have been eternally foreknown, and co-eternally with this foreknowledge God would have decreed that the Holy Spirit should reinstate in them the life, which they lost by the fall; and that the Saviour's blood should become atonement and redemption to them.

And hence if any are passed over, in the eternal election by which God's people are chosen before the foundation of the world, and by which Christ's death becomes appropriated to them for the purposes of recon-

ciliation and redemption, it is, because they will not choose to come, and therefore, could not be eternally foreknown as the objects on whom God could consistently with all his perfections, eternally determine to bestow the renewing of the Holy Ghost and the blood of the covenant for redemption and reconciliation. If therefore, they are not elected, and Christ's blood was never designed for them as a redeeming and atoning sacrifice, it is because, they were eternally known as in time refusing to come to receive that life which the Spirit offers to all that come to Christ; and because, God could not as a perfect being, determine that which would contradict all his perfections, to perform.

He who speaks as the oracles of God, will urge unrenewed men to come *immediately* to Christ, and *immediately* to believe, and repent.* Every exhibition of Christian doctrine, which he makes from the sacred desk, he will accompany with the scriptural, and practical truth: *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation.*

And finally, he will teach, that every moment, spent in neglecting faith and repentance, accumulates guilt. If on coming to Christ, the Holy Spirit be offered* in all his Omnipotent agency, to qualify the unregenerate, by renewing them to spiritual life, for scripturally believing and repenting; and if on their believing, and repenting, Christ be offered† to be actually appropriated to them, as atonement and redemption, no man is excusable for living even the shortest time without a new heart; without faith and repentance; and without an actual application of the Saviour for all the purposes of *atonement* and *redemption*. If any are spiritually dead, it is because, they will not come to Christ, that they may have life.

Thus on the plea of neglecting the great salvation, *every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.*

II. *The motives enforcing the duties of speaking according to the oracles of God,* are to be exhibited.

*See No. 2, p. 47. Nos. 2 and 3. †No. 4.

1. *The philosophical difficulties and scriptural contradictions, incorporated in both the Calvinian, and Arminian systems of metaphysical theology, are by preaching scripturally, wholly avoided.*

The divine purpose, when admitted by the Arminian in any form, amounts merely to this: *That God* as a consequence of foreknowing the future choice of his accountable creatures, predetermined the particular events of his moral government—that foreknowing the fall of man, he determined to send his Son to save the whole human kind. But foreseeing that all would not believe, he determined to save those only, who he foresaw would; and to condemn the others to endless ruin. On this hypothesis, foreknowledge is the foundation of the divine purposes and is anterior to them, both in the order of nature, and of duration.

This philosophical theory contradicts all our experience in the operations of our own minds, and finds no sanction in the Bible. Although, it be admitted, that we may foreknow events, produced by causes, entirely unconnected with our agency, as mere objects of knowledge, without making them any part of our system of calculations; yet, all our experience denies, that we can foreknow events as certainly to be produced by ourselves, without also, determining, that we will certainly make them the subjects of our agency. A man may indeed foreknow, that an assembly will meet on a certain day, to hear a public speech; and yet give the foreknown occurrence no place in his plans; but he cannot foreknow, that *he* will certainly be a member of that meeting, without also determining *certainly* to become such. And so, although Deity might be supposed to foreknow the events, produced by causes, entirely unconnected with the consequences of his own agency, if such events were morally possible; yet, when we revert to the truth, that every cause producing moral events, is itself, either mediately, or immediately, the effect of his own power, and, that with every one of these events, he foreknows some one or more of his own acts to correspond, we feel, that to suppose them not to make a part

of his plan, would contradict all that we experience in the operations of our own minds. Could we imagine a world to exist some where beyond the limits of infinite space, and beyond the reach of Omnipresence, uncaused by the divine Omnipotence, and uncontroled by the divine providence, then we might also conceive the sins and sufferings of its inhabitants to be foreknown by Deity as subjects of mere speculation, without his decreeing either to prevent, or to permit them; but when we are informed, that God made the world, with every accountable being which treads its surface, and breathes its air; and, that with every moral act of the creature, he eternally foreknows some future act of his own to correspond—that for every sin he will inflict a penalty, and that for every act of righteousness he will render a reward—to suppose then, that he exercises a mere neutral prescience, is to relinquish in our credence all the experience, furnished by the laws of our own constitutions.

Also this Arminian hypothesis, by inevitable consequence, inverts the relations between the Creator and his creatures; and denies the immutability of him who changes not. It supposes the unchangeable Jehovah to reverse his designs, and revoke his counsels as frequently as his erring creatures choose to violate his laws, or neglect his mercies. The tenor of this metaphysical creed runs thus: God determined when he made man, that he should be happy. But no sooner was this creature viewed in prospect as made, than the whole design was beheld as broken! Man was foreknown as fallen. As a consequence of this foreknowledge, the disappointed Deity resolved to send his Son into the world to save the whole human race. But here again his purpose was defeated! Some were foreseen as not accepting his mercies. Again the disconcerted Jehovah amends his plan, by determining as a consequence of their foreknown neglect of his mercy, to destroy them and to save those only whom he foresaw, as certainly, to give an obedient credence to the Gospel. Thus, this doctrine elevates

the creature to the throne, and degrades the Creator to the footstool.

This peculiarity of Arminianism, also contradicts all our ideas of the wisdom of Deity.

If when the Creator made man, he acted in reference to no plan, it is difficult to discover any wisdom in the end for which he created this part of his works. To create a being, without designing any end for his existence, is to act without meaning, and is obviously unwise; and to create him with a design foreknown to be afterwards frustrated, as this tenet supposes, is scarcely any less devoid of wisdom. If then this doctrine be advocated, the Bible, which teaches, that *in wisdom God made all his works*, is in part denied, unless indeed it be proved, as we verily believe it can never be, that it is *wise* in God, not to exercise his wisdom.

Besides, it inferentially charges God with the authorship of sin; and therefore, denies his goodness.—Arminianism under its different modifications, sometimes supposes, that God eternally foreknew, and at other times, that he did not eternally foreknow, all the consequences of creating the moral universe in the manner in which he actually did create it. But it always appears to acknowledge, that, had he so chosen, he MIGHT have foreknown every event; and *might* have constituted the moral universe so differently, as *for ever* to have excluded the introduction of sin and misery.—According to this theory, God must have been so *reckless* of the wellbeing of his entelligent creation, as either not to select a system in which there might be less sin and suffering, than he foreknew would certainly prevail, and which has prevailed in the planless fabric which he has selected; or, as to be *unwilling* to foreknow, when he might, what would be the certain result of introducing moral beings into his universe. This when divested of all circumlocution and ambiguity, is just saying, that the wise, merciful, and compassionate Jehovah chose to create moral beings, capable of obeying his laws, and becoming eternally happy, or, of dis-

obeying his laws, and becoming eternally miserable; but was so regardless of their weal or woe, as not to adopt even a plan to secure their obedience and bliss, or, as not even to be *willing* to foreknow, whether they would by obedience secure eternal happiness, or by disobedience, sink themselves into everlasting destruction!!! If then to adopt a system—it matters not, whether a system of order or confusion—a system which produces sin, when another might have been chosen with all the good, and without any of the evil, constitutes an agent the author of evil, then the unavoidable consequence of Arminianism, is *that God is the author of sin!!* It can be legitimately argued, that he must delight in sin and suffering; or how could he have been *so heedless* of securing the obedience and the happiness of his moral subjects, as to be *unwilling* to foreknow the events of their existence; and as to devise no plan for uninterruptedly perpetuating their well being?

If this inference be just, the Arminian most unappositely appropriates, to his service, the texts of scripture which declare, that *God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked*, and, that *sin is the abominable thing which he hates*. The Scriptures whose authority he makes the chief corner-stone of his temple, are the very ones, which raise its deepest foundations. Such are the contradictions with which this first principle of philosophical Arminianism, confronts both reason and revelation. But, whilst this philosophy *falsely so called*, contradicts our reason as well as the Bible, by inferentially teaching us, that God eternally foreknew all the events of his own universe with a *meaningless survey*, that he in whom there *is no variableness nor the least shadow of turning*, changes with all the capricious choosings of his creatures, and is thus governed by their will; that he created the universe, not in wisdom, or else it is wisdom to create it without a plan; and above all, that he is the *author* of sin and misery; he who speaks as the oracles of God, will avoid all these horrid tenets. He will say: God's foreknowledge and determinations are co-

eternal,* and therefore, he never surveyed a single event without perfect meaning. All his own doings, and all the doings of his moral subjects, with which his own correspond, are the parts of his plan,† which he freely elected in eternity, and therefore, *himself*, and not his creatures, must be the Supreme Governor. When in his eternal mind, he adopted this plan of the universe, he had before him all possibilities, and out of these, he selected, without any beginning and succession in his mental operations, the very *best*‡ possible plan; and therefore, *in wisdom he made all his works*. And finally, he has chosen one of those possible systems of moral existences, which involve more moral good, and less moral evil,§ than any others, that could have been chosen. And thus having employed the very best means to produce the greatest moral good, and the least moral evil, God can not be the author of sin. He hates it as an abominable thing; and as he lives, he has *no pleasure in the death of the wicked*.

Again Arminianism teaches, that *election* signifies, *either selecting men to eternal life, after they have lived and died in the faith, or simply making them members of the visible church*.|| Both these definitions are perfectly gratuitous. They find no support, or even countenance, in the written word of God; but appear to be carved out by the necessities of a system, already shown to be in other respects antisciptural, as the doubtful alternatives of a laboured interpretation. This theory of theological philosophy, instructs us, that he hath chosen [elected] us in him *during the Jewish state before the Gospel was preached*,** that we should become members of the visible church, or, that if we believe, persevere, and die in the faith, we should be partakers of the heavenly bliss; but the book of God teaches us, that he hath chosen us in him *before the foundation of the world*, that (without any peradventure expressed or doubt suggested) we should be holy, and without blame

*See No. 1, p. 8. †No. 1, p. 11. ‡No. 1, p. 16, and No. 8 and 9 throughout. §No. 1, 16, 23, also No. 4, p. 91, and Nos. 7, 8, 9, throughout. ||No. 10, note. **No. 5, p. 120.

before him in love. And as such chosen persons are elsewhere said to be *elect* (already elected) *according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*, it is legitimate reasoning to infer, that they were chosen to be, even in this life, holy and without blame before God in love.* Thus he who speaks as an Arminian, teaches a doctrine, not only not supported by the Bible, but even contradicted by its most literal testimony; but he who speaks as the oracles of God, will say, that co-eternally, and in coincidence, with the foreknowledge of those, who would be influenced by the common means of grace, to come to the Saviour, in eternity Deity chose such in *design*, and in time chooses them in *effect*, *by the renewing of the Holy Ghost*, that they *should be holy and without blame before him in love*; and that all true christians are **ELECT** *according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*—**ELECTED** *through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*.

Besides, Arminianism supposes, that in the change by which a man is translated from death unto life, and in which, old things pass away and all things become new, the creature *operates* with the Creator.† But this idea is utterly irreconcilable with facts, taught by supreme authority: “For who maketh thee to differ from another?” “And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” “Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?” “It is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth; but of God that showeth mercy.” “The sons of God are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” “It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” “You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.” “A new heart also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.”

* See No. 10, 242, &c. † See Nos. 2, 3 and 4. See No. 2, p. 43. No. 10, p. 236.

The Arminian arrogates to himself a co-operation in that holy work, the honor of which, the Spirit claims as exclusively his own, because texts are found, which say to the sinner: *Work out your own salvation; arise from the dead; flee from the wrath to come; make you a new heart and a new spirit.* His is wholly a doctrine of inference. Man is exhorted to make him a new heart and a new spirit. The Arminian therefore infers, that the creature assists the Creator in this operation. But this inference is flatly opposed to the words of the Holy Ghost when he says: *A new heart also will I GIVE you; and a new spirit will I PUT within you. How can man co-operate in the production of what God GIVES, and in the creation of what he PUTS within him? How can he co-operate in the change by which he becomes a new creature, if it be performed not of the WILL of the flesh nor of the WILL of man, but of God? Especially when he no more understands the mysterious mode of the Spirit's operations, than he does the invisible movements of the wind? If these two classes of texts be understood to relate to precisely the same thing, they obviously contradict each other. This mode of interpretation has occasioned much strife about words.*

But he, who teaches as the oracles of God, will avoid these strifes, and contradictions, by teaching, that the texts which require men to make to themselves new hearts, and new spirits, are simply exhortations to meet God in the way of his own appointment, that consistently with the divine perfections, and with the economy of the dispensation of grace, the Spirit may GIVE them, a new heart, and PUT within them, a new spirit. Men may be said to make to themselves a new heart and a new spirit, when they pursue the method, which in the plan of the divine mercy, God will assuredly follow with a new heart, and with a new spirit, just as they are said to accumulate wealth, when they pursue the course, which God is pleased to crown with success.* Parents are said to

*See No. 2, p. 45.

rear a family, when they feed, clothe, and protect their children, and yet, it is not in their power to add a cubit to the stature of a single child. The agency of the parents, is indeed the *antecedent* to the operation, which conforms the body and increases the stature of the child; but makes no part of the operation itself. If Howard the philanthropist, beholding a Chinese parent, about to commit his new born infant to the waves, had addressed him thus: "Do not *destroy*, but *rear* the sweet and tender babe," who would have supposed, that the good man intended to intimate, that the father would *co-operate* with the divine agency, in conveying the food taken by the child, through the different parts of his system; and in all the varied, intricate, and mysterious process, by which the miniature frame of the infant, would be increased to the vigor and stature of a man! Therefore every one speaking as the oracles of God, will say, and every christian preacher ought to say, that when the Spirit exhorts *Work out your own salvation*, he means, come to Christ, that God may work *in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure*; when he commands, *arise from the dead*, he intends, come to Christ, that the Spirit may *quicken you* who are dead in trespasses and sins; when he warns to *flee from the wrath to come*, he requires you to go to Christ, that *he may deliver you from the wrath to come*; and finally, when he commands to make you a new heart, and a new spirit, he directs, to come to Christ, that the Holy Comforter may *give you a new heart and put within you a new spirit*.* With this application of these two classes of texts, confusion and contradiction vanish, and when the sinner is exhorted, he has a definite duty presented to his view. But who that teaches him, that in the change by which he becomes a new creature, he must *co-operate* with the Almighty, exhibits before him any tangible, visible, or comprehensible duty? If the nature of the operation, be as incomprehensible, as the movements of the wind; of which we can only say, "we

*See No. 2 throughout

hear the sound thereof but can not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth," who can describe the sinner's duty in this assumed co-operation? He therefore, who exhorts sinners to co-operate with God in making themselves a new heart, and a new spirit, exhorts them to do he cannot tell what!!

And finally, Arminianism in teaching, that Christ has made *atonement* and *redemption* for the sins of the whole world, assumes a position unsupported by any one text in the Bible; and of consequence it must be mistaken in the nature of the *atonement* and *redemption* of the Saviour. The Arminian's *atonement* and *redemption* are but the propitiation taught in the Bible. It is scriptural to say, that Christ is a PROPITIATION for the sins of the whole world. To *propitiate* signifies to appease. The scriptures undeniably teach, that God, through Jesus Christ, is so far *appeased*, as to hold all the race of man under a dispensation of mercy; but they no where intimate, that either in *determination* or in *fact*, God is *reconciled* or *atoned* to the wicked, or that he has redeemed them, "released them by a price from the penalties of their sins."* And thus the Arminian allows no meaning to such texts as say: "In whom WE" (saints and faithful brethren in Christ†) "have redemption through his blood even the remissions of sins." "WE" (beloved of God and called to be saints‡) "also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom WE have now received the atonement."

The teacher, who speaks as the divine oracles, will not suffer the shackles of a cramped, metaphysical system, so much to trammel him, as not to give the fullest meaning, sustained by the most literal interpretation of every text, which relates to the extent of the Redeemer's mediation. He will say, that as God co-eternally with forming his plan of mercy, foreknew, who would and who would not, come to Christ. so he determined that the Lord's death should be a RANSOM, and a PROPITIATION for all men, but an ATONEMENT, and REDEMP-

*See No. 4. †Col. i, 2, ‡Rom. i, 7.

TION, for those whom he co-eternally foresaw, as coming to Christ, obtaining spiritual life, and savingly believing the Gospel.

It is sometimes imagined, that by denying an *eternal* and *particular* election, and a *limited* atonement, and redemption, the Arminian renders the Christian system more simple, and as a consequence, more easily understood. Supposing the observation to be true, it argues badly for the verity of Arminianism. The Bible teaches us, that some of its own truths are *hard** to be understood. A system therefore, which involves no such truths, may be simple, and easily comprehended, but it can not be a system which embraces all the grand doctrines revealed in the Scriptures. He who infers the truth of the Arminian theory from this professed simplicity, argues very little more wisely, than the child, who after tearing out all the difficult lessons from his school book, should suppose now its contents being more simple, more readily learned, and more easily comprehended, it is preferable to those of his fellows.

Speaking as the oracles of God, will also demolish all the difficulties and scriptural discrepancies of philosophical Calvinism.

This theological philosophy supposes the determinations of God to be the foundation and the antecedent of his foreknowledge; and, that although, he might have created and governed the moral universe so as to have preserved it for ever sinless, and uninterruptedly happy; yet for the manifestation of his justice and mercy, he preferred that the system, should be so created as to produce the certain sum of sin and misery which actually exists.

The corollary of this doctrine, is, that God is the Author of sin. Not more so indeed, than he is made by the Arminian philosophy; but still visibly, and undeniably so. And just as visibly and undeniably, is this corollary at war with these words of revelation, "O do not the abominable thing that I hate." "The just Lord

*II P. III, 16.

will not do iniquity." "God can not be tempted of evil neither tempteth he any man." This philosophical dogma, so obviously antisciptural, is also at variance with the Presbyterian philosophical Calvinist's own creed, which testifies: "Neither is God the author of sin."

He adopts this uncomely tenet, not because he finds it contained in the language of sacred writ; but because he supposes it to be the inevitable consequence of the scriptural truth, that God "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will; and, that the Lord reigneth and doeth his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth."

This discrepancy, he who speaks as the oracles of God will remove; and these apparently opposing texts, will he reconcile, when he teaches, that co-eternally, and coincidentally, with his infinite foreknowledge of all events, Deity chose, that system of moral creation, which his unerring wisdom dictated, to be best adapted to produce the most obedience and felicity, and the least transgression and suffering. So that, whilst on the one hand, he will hold it, as true, and reasonable, that ruling in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth, and working all things after the counsel of his own will, he chose to create and govern the universe as it first existed, and as it now exists; on the other, he will proclaim it equally true, and equally reasonable, that hating sin as an abominable thing, and having no pleasure in the death of the wicked, God chose to create and govern it, as the universe in which there is the *least possible* sin and death.

This philosophy also, whilst it scripturally recognizes the death of Christ as designed in God's eternal plan, and actually made by appropriation in time, *atonement* and *redemption* to only those who believe; yet in many cases denies the *ransom*, and the *propitiation*, which the Saviour has made for the sins of the whole world. This is undeniably opposed to the literal acceptance of such Scriptures as teach, that Christ gave "himself a

ransom for all to be testified in due time;" and that he is "the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."

This Scriptural contradiction can never thwart the way of the Christian preacher, who exhibiting the oracles of God in the most obvious signification, will teach, that while Deity in his eternal plan of moral government, determined, that the death of Christ should be *atonement* and *redemption* for such only, as co-eternally with the formation of his plan, he foresaw coming to Christ, he also decreed it to be a *ransom* and a *propitiation* for the sins of the whole world. This is the manner in which the Scriptures most literally and obviously interpreted, constantly represent the Saviour's death.

This metaphysical philosophy also supposes no certain connexion to be constituted between any endeavours of the unregenerate man, and his receiving the spirit of regeneration. Because the testimony of sacred writ, is that the thoughts and sacrifices of the wicked, and the prayer of him that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, are an abomination to God; and, that if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me, it is inferred by the advocates of this doctrine, that the unrenewed man has no warrant to suppose any divinely appointed means in the use of which he can successfully seek a new heart. All this argument is based on the supposition, that nothing but holy prayers are regarded by a holy God. But if this were so, what petition from a fallen creature of earth, could enter the ears of the holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth? What flesh of this world so pure, as to be justified, when God lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet?

Let us examine the proofs separately. *First* those texts which represent the thoughts and sacrifices of the wicked an abomination to God.

Although sin is universally an abomination to the Holy One; yet he has revealed mercy for sinners and for the very chief. Although the sacrifices, and the thoughts of a sinful Mary Magdalene, and of a bloody Manasseh,

were an abomination to Jehovah; yet he visited them with his rich mercy; cleansed them from all their iniquities; and saved them with a great salvation. These Scriptures indeed prove, that God surveys sin as an abomination; but not, that he will not have mercy upon sinners. To prove that sin is the object of divine hatred is one thing, and to prove that God will not have mercy upon alarmed and seeking transgressors is quite another.

Secondly, Let us examine those texts, which say, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law even his prayer shall be abomination;" and, "if I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me." Here are particular classes of sinners described: those who will not hear the law and those who regard (revolve or meditate) iniquity in their hearts. Now does the anxious sinner, who has been alarmed by the threatenings of the law; and who calls for help to escape from the wrath to come, fall under either of these denominations? He indeed sees no beauty in holiness; yet seized by the terrors of future wrath, and pierced by the arrows of the Almighty, he turns not away his ear from hearing the law; but hears it with fear and trembling. He indeed finds not in his heart to love God, yet fearing, lest iniquity should be his ruin, he regards, revolves, or meditates the way of escape; and therefore, does not regard, revolve, or meditate, in his heart the pursuit of iniquity. These texts at the most, prove only, that the thoughts, prayer and sacrifices of those who desire not either from the principle of love, or of fear, to lay aside their sins, and who when they make any acknowledgement to their Maker at all, offer him but an hypocritical service, are unheeded by the Author of mercies and the hearer of prayer.

Again, this doctrine is also argued from such texts as teach, that the sons of God are born, not of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man; but of God. These words of holy writ, and others of the same class indeed teach us, that the *renewing* by which a man passes from death unto life, and becomes a new creature,

is exclusively God's; and denies all human co-operation; but gives us no designation of the character of the antecedents to this operation, or of the agency by which they are produced.

Thus the most literal exegesis of these scriptures without in the least limiting their meaning by a comparison with others, affords not the smallest support for the doctrine; whilst to say nothing of its discrepance with such scriptural exhortations as say: "Arise from the dead; "flee from the wrath to come;" "make you a new heart and a new spirit;" and of its incongruity with the whole tenour of God's dispensations to sinful men; and not to name the appalling consequences to which it inevitably conducts us, it is sufficient for its refutation to repeat the language of the Saviour: "Ask and it shall be given you;" "seek and ye shall find;" "knock and it shall be opened unto you." But lest any should suppose that this is addressed to such only, as can ask with a holy prayer, and that anxious sinners are excluded, the Redeemer also says "EVERY one that asketh receiveth."

This Scriptural contradiction disappears in the preaching of him who speaks as the oracles of God. To produce the greatest amount of happiness, he will teach, is the proper object of infinite goodness. This can be produced, only by the existence of a system of intelligent and voluntary beings. Composed of finite beings in the perfection of their nature not exempt from error in judgment, and consequent error in choice, any such system, is liable to a greater or a less degree of sin and its attendant misery. As an infinitely good being, God therefore, chose not only an intelligent and moral system, but one the very best of its kind—one, in which, although there is a liability to evil; yet a liability to the least possible. Co-eternally with the adoption of this best plan, Deity foreknowing, who among the generations of Adam's children would come to the Saviour, and who would not, determined, without any uncertainty or conditionality, to grant to those coming, power to become the sons of God. And as he believes this coming to Christ consists in the importunate and persevering

seeking of an anxious sinner, he will teach, that there is a divinely constituted and infallible connexion, between seeking and finding grace to become a new man and a spiritual christian.

2. *Speaking on these topics as the oracles of God, if universally adopted, would remove the principal causes of difference between all Trinitarians, who hold the the eternity of future rewards and punishments.*

If the views of doctrines exhibited in these discourses, be as the oracles of God, surely, in adopting them, neither Arminians, nor Calvinists have any thing to lose; but every thing to gain. If the doctrine of God's free mercy to all men, be secured to the Arminian, what can he lose by admitting, that the All Wise has eternally planned every event in the universe, according to the wisest and best counsel? And if it be granted, that the Spirit is freely given to all who ask him, what loss can be sustained in believing, that this Spirit himself renews the sinner, without any *human co-operation*? And if Christ's propitiation (all that appears to be meant by the Arminian's atonement and redemption) for the sins of the whole world, be acknowledged, what injury in supposing, that God eternally designed the Saviour's death really to become in time, atonement and redemption to none but those who believe?

Again, if the Scriptural doctrine that God worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will, be retained, why should it be any offence, to the Calvinist to believe the Scriptures literally, which teach, that God would rather, that none should perish; but that all should come to repentance? If it be admitted, that the work of renewing them who are dead in trespasses and sins, is exclusively the Spirit's; what if it should be also held, that God gives his Spirit to *all, even to the anxious unregenerate who ask it*? And finally, if Christ's death be exhibited, as it is scripturally taught to be, atonement and redemption to those only who believe, what fatal danger in proclaiming it also a sufficient *ransom* and an actual *propitiation*, for the sins of the whole

world? Where now the loss to either party in adopting the doctrines which are here supposed to be taught in speaking as the oracles of God? Nothing, absolutely nothing is lost, but what is a deformity and an incumbrance to any system, and the avoiding of many difficulties is gained.

He who would speak as the oracles of God, will view the temple of divine truth, not from a location, from which he can survey only a solitary side or part; but he will go all around the sacred edifice, and taking his stand, now in the vale below; now in a horizontal range; and again on the mountain cliff above, in all its various aspects he will familiarize his eye with its front, and rear, and both its ends, with its pillars and its colonnades, its arches and its domes; and although, to every particular site it presents widely different phases, he will discover a beautiful correspondence in the parts, and feel his soul elevated by the glorious symmetry and transcendent grandeur of the whole. And although he will find, that after all, his mortal sight can not explore the depth of its foundations, laid in the abyss of eternity; or penetrate the inmost sanctuary, the holy of holies, to feed his curiosity on the arcana of the Most High; yet he will learn, that the misty clouds which once appeared to hang around, covering all but a favourite part with the shades of deep and awful mystery, and exhibiting a legion of unsightly and contradictory shapes, have vanished, and, that on mount Zion illumined by the Sun of righteousness stands a beauteous temple of God.

END OF VOLUME I.







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