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CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN

ROGER SHERMAN AND SAMUEL HOPKINS.

FROM PROCEEDINGS OF THE AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY,
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HOPKINSIANISM.

BY ANDREW P. PEABODY.

SAMUEL HOPKINS was born at Waterbury, Connecticut, in 1721, graduated at Yale College in 1741, was settled as a minister at Great Barrington, then the Second Parish of Sheffield, Massachusetts, in 1743, became minister of the First Congregational Church in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1770, and died at Newport in 1803. He was a profound and original thinker, and while never attractive as a preacher, he exercised, through the press, an extensive and by no means short-lived influence on New England theology. His system, while at certain points it seemed Calvinism intensified, was, nevertheless, a revolt against some of the dogmas deemed fundamental by the Genevan reformer. Dr. Hopkins denied the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, and of Christ's righteousness to the redeemed; yet maintained that Adam's posterity inherited from him a sinful and ruined nature, being born sinners, and that Christ's righteousness is the meritorious cause by means of which alone a portion of the human race are saved from the everlasting punishment which all, even infants, deserve for their sinful nature, and which also is justly due as the penalty for any single sinful act or volition which, as an offence against the Infinite Being, itself becomes infinite. Selfishness, according to him, is the essence of all sin, and virtue consists in disinterested benevolence, embracing every being in the universe, God and all his creatures, and self only as an infinitesimal part of the universe. Thus so far is self-love from being the measure of brotherly love,

that love for the remotest being in the universe is the normal measure of self-love. Man, according to the same system, is a free agent, that is, can do as he wills, but is morally incapable of aught but evil before conversion, has a depraved will, can do nothing toward his own conversion, sins in his every endeavor to improve his moral condition, and is entirely dependent on the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit for his regeneration.

The supreme purpose of God in the creation of this world and of man, according to Dr. Hopkins, was the manifestation of his own glory, and that glory can be manifested only by doing what he will with his own. By his very nature he is above all law, and the laws which he enacts for his creatures have no claim on his observance. With him might creates right. From the human race, sinners by the depraved nature inherited from Adam, and therefore meriting eternal misery, he, in a past eternity, by his own arbitrary decree, elected a certain number who should be rescued from perdition, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and made partakers of heavenly happiness. They were elected, not because of any foresight of their faith or good works; but, being elected, they are endowed by the irresistible grace of God with the traits of character that make them fit for heaven. An essential pre-requisite to regeneration is the hearty approval of and assent to the Divine sovereignty in the arbitrary election of those that are to be saved, even to the extent of a willingness to be among those eternally lost, if the glory of God so require. He who is not willing to be damned is not in a salvable condition.

It will be readily seen how intimately connected are the two points on which Mr. Sherman assails Dr. Hopkins's system. Self-love must of necessity be extinguished, or reduced to an infinitesimal fragment of itself, before the soul can be willing to suffer everlasting torment.

Dr. Hopkins's earliest publication that drew the attention of theologians to his peculiar views was in 1759, namely,

three sermons entitled, "Sin, through Divine Interposition, an Advantage to the Universe, and yet no Excuse for Sin or Encouragement in it." Most of his many subsequent publications¹ were in maintenance of the ground then taken, against antagonists of the older Calvinistic school. Among these was "An Inquiry into the Nature of true Holiness," published in 1773, which is the special subject of Mr. Sherman's strictures. He had many disciples, and while among the most modest of men, without so intending, he gave his name to a sect.

For more than half a century Hopkinsianism, not only in fact, but in name, held a prominent place in New England theology. Many of the most eminent divines, for a period extending through the first quarter of the present century, were styled Hopkinsians. In Connecticut this type of dogmatic belief found special favor and prevalence, and led to several cases of local dissension and controversy, some of which had a more than local interest, and have left their record in pamphlets that had in their time an extensive circulation. In Windham County, perhaps in other counties, it was the occasion of a rupture in the Association of ministers, a minority seceding from their Hopkinsian brethren, and forming a separate organization.

The leading champion of this system was Rev. Dr. Emons, of Franklin, Massachusetts, who was unsurpassed, perhaps unequalled, among his contemporaries, in converse with the whole range of polemic theology, in dialectic skill, in keenness and subtilty as a controversialist, and in close logical consistency in admitting the most startling and repulsive inferences that could be legitimately drawn from his premises. Dying in 1840, at the age of ninety-five, he considered himself as almost the last depository of the

¹ But not all. He was a pioneer in the anti-slavery cause, and one of the earliest, so far as I know the very earliest American publication in behalf of emancipation was "A Dialogue, showing it to be the Duty and Interest of the American States to emancipate all their African Slaves," published by Dr. Hopkins, in 1776.

true faith. At his special request, his funeral sermon was prepared and read for his approval, by Rev. Thomas Williams, who, after paying this tribute to his venerable friend, regarded himself as the sole surviving Hopkinsian. In his late old age he repeatedly visited me, always with a volume of Dr. Emmons's sermons in his hand, and interspersing his portion of our conversation with extracts from the volume. He was the only person from whom I ever heard in express words the defence of the doctrine of infant damnation. But this was his favorite theme. He had braced himself up to regard it with entire complacency, and to consider it as a peculiarly resplendent manifestation of what he called the Divine glory, which, he said, would be obscured by the admission to heaven of unconverted members of a sinful race, though themselves guiltless of actual transgression.

Hopkinsianism is to be regarded as an important stage of progress from the earlier Calvinism to the new theology of Andover and New Haven. In denying the dogmas of imputed sin and imputed righteousness, and in affirming human freedom as a metaphysical certainty, it undermined the theology on which previous generations had reposed, and in its intense stress on inevitable, but abhorrent corollaries from other dogmas of that system which had not been strongly emphasized before, it led to a revision of the entire system. It is therefore to be accounted as holding a foremost place among the liberalizing influences, which have so largely modified the (so-called) orthodoxy of New England, and of those Western regions which have been colonized chiefly from New England.

Roger Sherman is so closely identified with the history of the country as to need no prolonged biographical notice. He was on the Committee to draft the Declaration of Independence of which he was a signer, and afterwards served in the General Congress on several of the most important committees. He was one of the framers of the Articles of the

Confederation of 1783, and one of the most efficient members of the Constitutional Convention of 1787. He was at different times Judge of the Supreme Court of Connecticut, Treasurer of Yale College, Mayor of New Haven, and Representative and Senator in the Congress of the United States. Hardly any man ever filled so many important offices, and none certainly, with a more noble record of ability, integrity and faithfulness. He was a man of whose like a generation sees but few.

He was at the same time not only a devoutly religious man, but active in the religious movements of his time and community, an earnest inquirer into Divine truth, and a ready recipient of whatever seemed to him of Divine authority. He held for many years the office of Deacon in the church to which he belonged in New Haven.

While there is not the slightest probability that these letters to Dr. Hopkins were ever printed till now, they may have been more or less circulated in manuscript, as the fact that so eminent a layman had entered into the controversy, would naturally have aroused curiosity as to his treatment of it. In a volume of "Sermons on Important Subjects," by Andrew Lee, D.D., of Hanover (now Lisbon), Connecticut, there is a sermon on the atrocious dogma of willingness to be damned as essential to salvation, in which he carries out precisely Mr. Sherman's line of thought, shows that damnation implies wickedness no less than misery, and more than intimates that to be willing to incur such a doom is to deserve it.

The spirit of protest seems to have been transmitted in Mr. Sherman's family. Rev. John Sherman, his grandson, was the first Connecticut minister who made profession of Unitarianism, wrote the first volume ever published in this country in defence of Unitarianism, and founded the first Unitarian church in the state of New York.

ROGER SHERMAN TO SAMUEL HOPKINS.

NEW YORK, *June 28, 1790.*

DEAR SIR:—

I have lately read your book on the nature of true holiness and approve the sentiments, except in two points, which do not appear to me well founded, and which I think may have a bad tendency. One is on the nature of self love; the other, “that it is the duty of a person to be *willing* to give up his eternal interest for the Glory of God.” I have also read a manuscript dialogue between a Calvinist and Semi-Calvinist on the latter subject, of which it is said you are the author. I have carefully attended to these subjects, and shall submit to your consideration the result of my inquiries.

I admit that *self love* as you have defined it, or selfishness in a depraved being that is destitute of true virtuous benevolence to others, is the source of moral evil. That this arises from the want of a good moral taste, or spiritual discernment, which occasions the person to place his happiness in wrong objects. But I consider self love as a natural principle which exists in beings perfectly holy, which by the moral law is made the measure of our love to our neighbor, and is therefore a principle distinct from general benevolence or love to others. I define *self love* to be a desire of one’s own happiness, or a regard to one’s own interest, which I think may be exercised in the highest possible degree consistent with the highest possible degree of disinterested love to others, by wishing perfect happiness to ourselves and others. I think these affections are distinct but not opposite. And in the great fountain of happiness there is a sufficiency to fill the capacities of all. You suppose that we ought to love ourselves and others in proportion to the importance of each in the scale of being in general. I was for sometime at a loss for a scale by which to ascertain the proportion of love due to ourselves or others; but I could find none short of the superlative degree, that is, to wish to each the highest possible degree of good and happiness which they are capable of enjoying, and to rejoice in the infinite happiness of the Deity.

I suppose a virtuous person feels the same kind of pleasure in the good and happiness of others, as in his own; not from any selfish views or motives, but from a disposition to be pleased with the happiness of being in general; this will incline him to refrain from everything injurious to others, and to do good to all as there may be opportunity and occasion; and his natural principle of *self love*, will dispose him to pay a due attention to his own interest. And as these affections are distinct and may consistently be exercised in the highest degree towards their respective objects, what necessity or room is there for degrees of comparison, or the subordination of one to the other? Both are subject to the law.—Beneficence or doing good to others, is not commensurate with benevolence towards them, for we ought to exercise the highest degree

of benevolence toward that being to whom our goodness or beneficence cannot extend; and the duty of extending it to others depends upon a variety of circumstances, so that much wisdom is necessary to direct in the proper application of it. On the other point, viz. "that it is the duty of a person to be willing to give up his eternal interest for the glory of God." I do not find any such thing required of any person in the divine law or in the Gospel; but it appears to me that the contrary is enjoined. I admit that persons are required to be willing to give up their temporal interest, and to lay down their lives, when the glory of God or the advancement of his kingdom in the world require it; to these all general requirements of submission to the will of God may be applied. The Old Testament Saints and Martyrs mentioned in Heb. II. endured great sufferings in the cause of religion, but they were limited to this state of trial, and they were supported in them by their faith in a future state of happiness; they considered that they had in heaven a better, and an enduring substance, but though they had respect to this recompense of reward, yet their love to God and religion was not founded in selfish principles, but they loved them for their own amiableness and intrinsic excellence; and in the exercise of this disinterested love, consisted their happiness and reward, as well as their duty. And in Heb. 12. 2. where Jesus Christ is referred to as our example, it is said "That for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross," etc. The whole tenor of the gospel appears to me to be against a person being willing to be damned on any consideration. God commands all men everywhere to repent. He also commands them to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and has assured us that all who do repent and believe shall be saved. And his voice to impenitent sinners is, not, be willing to be damned, but *Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die?* How do I know of any direction or example in the Bible for praying for spiritual or eternal blessings, with a willingness to be denied on any consideration. But God allows his people to pray for them absolutely and has absolutely promised to bestow them on all those who are willing to accept them on the terms of the gospel, that is, in a way of free grace through the atonement. *"Ask and ye shall receive. Whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life freely. Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."* But there are no such absolute promises as to the bestowment of temporal favors. It is impossible that it should be for the glory of God, or consistent with the gospel dispensation to punish with endless misery any man who has a supreme love to God, and regard for his glory, which in this case is held out as the motive to be willing to be damned. It also involves in it this absurdity, that a person ought to be willing to be fixed in a state of eternal enmity to God, from a principle of supreme love to him.

The reason why any of the human race are subjected to endless punishment, is, because they have sinned and voluntarily continue finally impenitent, which is wholly their own fault. And God has declared that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn

from his way and live. Ezek. 33. 11. Is this consistent with his requiring them to be willing to continue in sin and perish forever; for none can be damned who do not persevere in sin? I admit that it is the duty of all to acknowledge that the divine law which requires us to love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves, on pain of eternal damnation is holy, just and good; and I suppose that the conscience of every sinner who shall be finally condemned by the law, will witness to the justice of the sentence, and that seems to be sufficient to answer the ends of government, without his being willing to suffer the punishment. While in a state of probation sinners are required to turn and live, which appears to me inconsistent with their being required to be willing to be damned. And I believe that it is naturally impossible for any moral agent to be willing to be separated from all good, to all evil, and if so, it can't be his duty. The revealed law of God is the rule of our duty and it may be his will to suffer events to take place with respect to us, which it would be sinful in us to be willing should take place with respect to ourselves. For instance, it is the will of God to suffer the Saints during their continuance in this life to be imperfect in holiness, yet it is their duty to be perfect, nor ought they to be willing to be unholy in any respect or degree, for that would be a willingness to transgress the divine law, and would be sinful. The like might be observed respecting all the sins which ever have been, or shall be committed in the world, and God overrules all these for good, yet neither God's suffering sin to take place, or his overruling it for good, can excuse any person in the commission of sin, much less make it his duty to be willing to commit it. This is fully illustrated in your sermons on "Sin the occasion of great good!"

Mr. Calvin's comment on the words of Saint Paul, Rom. 9. 3. is quoted in support of the lawfulness of being willing to be damned; but Calvinists do not found their faith on the authority of his opinions, that would be to entertain an opinion contrary to his, viz., That the word of God is the only rule of faith in matters of religion. Expositors differ as to the meaning of those words of Saint Paul, but if they import what Mr. Calvin supposes, may they not be considered as an hyperbole which is never understood to be literally true? And the occasion on which they were spoken was only to express in strong terms the Apostle's great affection for his nation and concern for their spiritual welfare. Besides every wish of a good man is not a good wish. Moses in a like expression, Exod. 32. 32. seems not fully to have met with the divine approbation, as appears by the answer, verse 33. "And the Lord said unto Moses whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book."—Holy David was displeased because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzza. And the pious prophet Jonah was angry because the Lord spared Nineveh. And patient Job had some impatient wishes that would not be justified.

But if Mr. Glasse's exposition of Rom. 9. 3. is admitted it will remove

the difficulty, that is, that he himself once had wished anathema to Christ, etc.

It is further said in support of this opinion, that a number of mankind will eventually suffer endless punishment, and that all holy beings will approve the judgment of God therein, and that it ought to be approved by all. But can it be inferred from hence that it was the duty of those unhappy persons while in a state of probation to be willing to persevere in sin and suffer the just consequences of it? Are they not punished because they were willing to continue in sin? And does God punish his creatures for doing their duty? Or can it be inferred, that it is the duty of a person possessed of true holiness, to be willing to apostatize from his holiness, and abandon himself to wickedness and so plunge himself into endless misery.

It is said that it is necessary to be willing to be damned, if it should be God's will and for his glory, to evince that our love to God is supreme and disinterested: but would not the affection expressed, Psalm 73. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." etc., be a much better evidence of the sincerity and disinterestedness of our love to God, than to be willing to be forever separated from his favourable presence and fixed in a state of enmity to him for our own voluntary transgression and impenitence.

These few imperfect hints will communicate to you my idea on the subjects, and if I am mistaken I wish to be enlightened. I had not the book or manuscript before me when I wrote this, so that in my reference to them, I do not recite the words, but state the sense according to my best recollection. I am, &c.

ROGER SHERMAN.

SAMUEL HOPKINS TO ROGER SHERMAN.

NEWPORT, *Aug. 2, 1790.*

DEAR SIR:

I am gratified, and think myself honored by your address of the 28th of June last. I am pleased with your particular attention to the subject upon which you write, and the ingenuity manifested in what you have written. But your differing in judgment from me, and especially your thinking my sentiments may have a bad tendency, cannot be but disagreeable to me. However, as I apprehend my real sentiments are in some respects mistaken; and that what I have advanced on those points can be supported by Scripture and reason; and not doubting of your uprightness and candour, I am encouraged to write you on the subjects in dispute.

The self love which I have defined, in my tract on the nature of true holiness, and discarded, as wholly opposed, in every degree of it, to the divine law, and to that universal, disinterested benevolence, in which all holiness consists,—this self love you suppose to be a natural principle of human nature, and perfectly innocent, though exercised in the highest possible degree; and is really “subject to the law of God,” as much as universal benevolence, and consequently must be a holy affection, I think. This, if I am not mistaken, is the difference between us on this point.

In support of my sentiment, and in opposition to the contrary, I take leave to propose the following considerations.

I. There cannot be any need of self love, supposing it to be an innocent affection; and it can answer no good end, where universal, disinterested benevolence is exercised in a proper degree. And there is, indeed, *no room* for the former, where the latter is perfect.

Universal benevolence extends to being in general as its object, and wishes the greatest possible happiness of the whole: And the greatest possible happiness of every individual being, capable of happiness, so far as is consistent with the greatest happiness of the whole. The benevolent person is himself the object of his universal benevolence, as really as any other being; and for the same reason that he wishes the greatest possible happiness to being in general, he wishes the greatest possible happiness to himself, as included in being in general. This is necessary; for to suppose otherwise is a direct contradiction. Love to being in general necessarily regards and wishes the greatest possible happiness to him who exercises this love. This is not, indeed, self love, which is a regard for one’s self, *as self*, and as distinguished from all others, and to no other being; but it is the same disinterested affection which wishes the highest happiness to every individual, included in being in general; and therefore to himself, as necessarily included in the whole, and one among others.

What need then can there be of self love? It can do no more than wish and seek the greatest happiness of the person who exercises it: But this the reasonable and noble affection of universal, disinterested benevolence will do in the best and most perfect manner. Self love is excluded as wholly needless, at best; and there appears to be no use or room for it in the mind exercising love to the being in general. To suppose two distinct and different kinds of love exercised by the same person, at the same time, wishing and seeking the same greatest possible happiness to himself, is doubtless inconceivable, as it is monstrous and absurd. This view of the matter leads me to suspect that they who plead for self love as a useful principle, as consisting in a person’s wishing his own highest possible happiness, and as distinct from universal benevolence, do really mean that regard to our particular interest which is necessarily included in universal benevolence; and which I mean by disinterested, benevolent affection; and that the difference is only in words, and if we could understand each other, we should be agreed. To prevent mistakes of this kind, I endeavored to explain what I meant by

self love, and opposite disinterested affection, in my inquiry concerning the nature of true holiness (Sec. III., IV.) But perhaps have not distinguished with sufficient clearness, and therefore have not been understood.

I agree that this universal benevolence is exercised "in the superlative degree," wishing the greatest possible happiness to the whole, and to every individual, without any "degree of comparison," *so far as is consistent with the greatest good of the whole.*

This leads to another consideration.

II. Self love, as distinguished from universal benevolence, or disinterested, public affection, cannot be a holy and innocent affection; but must oppose the latter, because it will not subordinate a person's own private interest to the general good; or give up any degree of supposable, or possible personal happiness, however inconsistent with the greatest general good.

The greatest possible good of the whole may not be consistent with the greatest possible happiness of every individual, and certainly is not; for if it were none would suffer evil; and certainly there would be no individuals miserable forever. And whenever the interest and happiness of an individual is not consistent with the greatest happiness of the whole, or an infinitely greater good than the happiness of that particular person, it is reasonable and desirable that the interest and happiness of that individual should give way, and be given up for the sake of greater general good. And universal, disinterested benevolence will do this; for it wishes and seeks the greatest good of the whole, and of individuals, so far as is consistent with this, and no further, and therefore subordinates the interest of individuals to the greater and more important general interest and happiness. But self love which desires and seeks nothing but the greatest possible happiness of himself, and has not the least regard to the happiness of the whole, or of any other being but his own self, will not subordinate his own interest and happiness to any other interest whatever; or be willing to give up any degree of his own personal interest and happiness, for the sake of the greater happiness of the public, or of any other being. Therefore this self love always opposes universal benevolence, and the latter is, in the nature of it, contrary to the former, and directly opposes and counteracts it. And so far as the latter takes place in the heart, the other is weakened and rooted out. And perfect universal benevolence is inconsistent with every degree of self love. What can be more evident than this? The consequence is, that self love is unreasonable and sinful in every degree of it and cannot be reconciled with universal benevolence.

III. Self love cannot be a holy or right affection, or agree or consist with holy affection, because it does not desire or seek, or even discern that in which real good and happiness consists; but the contrary.

If this be true of self love, and can be made evident, all must grant that it is in its own nature an evil and vicious affection, and directly opposed to universal benevolence, which discerns and seeks the only

true happiness of all, and that to the highest degree, so far as is consistent with the greatest possible happiness of the whole.

You, Sir, "Admit that self love in a depraved being, is the source of moral evil. That this arises from the want of a good moral taste, or spiritual discernment, which occasion the person to place his happiness in wrong objects."

Is it not unintelligible if not a contradiction, to say that "Self love, in a depraved being, is the source of moral evil?" Is not moral depravity moral evil? This, according to your position, must take place previous to self love becoming the source of moral evil, and in order to it. Is it not too late for self love, or anything else to be the source of moral evil, after moral evil exists in the mind, in its full strength? Besides, if the above were consistent, is it not perfectly unaccountable that self love, if it be a perfectly good and innocent affection, should be the positive, productive source or fountain of moral evil; and yet continue itself, innocent and good, in all the exercises of it?

But to drop all this, upon the above position the following questions may be asked.

Question 1. How can the mere want of a good moral taste, or spiritual discernment, occasion a person to place his happiness in wrong objects? It is easily seen that the want of a good moral taste will prevent a person placing his happiness in right objects, or those objects which are suited to make him truly happy. But actually to place his happiness in wrong objects, supposes not only the want of a good moral taste, but a positively wrong or bad moral taste. Whence arises this positive wrong moral taste, which leads a person to place his happiness in wrong objects? It cannot be the production of the want of a good moral taste; for a mere negative can produce nothing that is positive. If there be nothing wrong in self love; but it is a perfectly right and good affection in every degree of it, and in its greatest possible strength; then this cannot be the source or cause of a wrong moral taste. And if the absence or want of a right moral taste cannot be the cause of a positive wrong moral taste; from what quarter or source can this come?

Question 2. In what does a right and good moral taste consist? It must consist in self love, or in disinterested benevolence, for there is no other moral disposition or affection in the mind of a moral agent but these, or that is not implied in them. And I conclude it consists in the latter. That so far as the heart is formed to disinterested benevolence, so far it has a right moral taste, or spiritual discernment. And he who is "destitute of all disposition to virtuous benevolence to others" is destitute of all right moral taste. But if self love be right and good in a moral sense, why is that destitute of all right moral taste? Or why does a wrong taste, which consists in moral blindness and delusion, and places happiness in wrong objects, take place, and lead the mind astray, where there is nothing but self love?

These questions cannot be answered to satisfaction, I believe, or the subject be cleared of insuperable difficulties in any way, but by adopt-

ing the proposition above asserted, viz. : That self love does not discern, relish and seek that good in which true happiness consists; but the contrary, which is the same as to say, that it is directly opposed to all right moral taste or spiritual discernment; and is itself wrong moral taste, in which all moral blindness consists; and which necessarily excludes all true moral discernment. Therefore it knows not, nor can know, what true happiness is; but places it in wrong objects, in that in which it does not consist, and pursues it in opposition to God, and the general good; and even the real good of the person who is under the dominion of it.

That this is the truth may be argued from the nature of self love. It excludes being in general from the mind. It has no eye to see it, no true discerning of it, or feeling towards it. Therefore it excludes all regard to God, the sum of all being. It has no true idea of disinterested universal benevolence; consequently is wholly in the dark with regard to holiness, the only happiness and beauty of the moral world; and has not the least degree of taste and relish for it; but contrary. It contracts the mind down to one infinitely little, diminutive object, which is as nothing, compared with universal being; and feels as if this *little object* was all that is worthy of regard. The constant language of this affection is, "I am, and none else besides *me*." This is to love and make the greatest lie possible; and is the sum of all moral darkness and delusion. Surely such an affection excludes all perception of true enjoyment and happiness; and all desire and taste for it; and necessarily includes as essential to it, a perfectly wrong taste, and pursuit of happiness; placing it wholly in wrong objects, where it is not to be found. And who can doubt that such an affection is the epitome and source of all moral evil?

But what the Scripture reveals on this point, is more to be relied upon; and that coincides with and confirms the reasoning above. According to that, all right taste and spiritual discerning consists in love, or disinterested benevolence. "Every one that *loveth*, knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God." (1 Joh. 4. 7, 8.) The love here intended appears from the context to be disinterested benevolence. Where this is not, it is said God is not known. Consequently there is no true taste and spiritual discerning with respect to anything in the moral world. "He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, because that darkness has blinded his eyes." (Chap. 2, 11.) What is it but self love, or selfishness which hateth a brother? This is here asserted to be moral darkness itself; which darkness is not a mere negative thing. It is *sin*. It is a wrong, perverted taste, placing happiness in wrong, forbidden objects. It puts light for darkness, bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.

The following words of Christ, rightly considered, will be found to assert the same thing. "The light of the body is the eye; If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." (Mat. 6. 22, 23.)

Here all moral darkness (for it is of this that Christ is here speaking) is said to consist in the *evil eye*; which is something positive, and not merely the want of a single eye. The evil eye is an exercise and affection of the heart, and is moral evil or sin; for "From within, out of the heart of men proceeds an *evil eye*." (Mark 7. 21, 22.) And this evil eye consists in self love or selfishness, as opposed to benevolence and goodness. (See Matt. 20. 15, Dent. 15. 9, Prov. 23. 6, 28. 22.)

From all this put together, it appears that according to Scripture, self love is itself moral darkness; gives the mind a wrong taste; knows not what true happiness is; and therefore always seeks it in a wrong way, and in forbidden objects; consequently is in its nature opposed to universal benevolence; there being no more agreement between these opposite affections, than there is between light and darkness, good and evil.

IV. That self love is in its nature opposed to disinterested love or true holiness; and therefore is moral evil itself, seems to be evident, in that it appears to be the sum and source of every evil affection of the heart.

Pride is inseparable from self love; and I believe it is impossible to separate one from the other, they being the same affection; or at least the one involves the other, if there be any distinction; so that if one exists, the other exists also, and if one ceases to be exercised, the other must cease also. He who regards and loves himself only, does in this think too highly of himself; sets himself infinitely too high in his affections and feelings towards himself. Self love is the source of all the bitter envying and strife in the hearts of men; of all the contention and unrighteousness among men; and of all the opposition to God in heart and conduct. Where there is no self love, none of these things can possibly exist, nor anything that is morally wrong. This I endeavored to illustrate, and establish in the above mentioned inquiry, P. 28, 29. And I do not yet see how it can be proved not to be agreeable to the truth.

V. That self love is a wrong and sinful affection in the nature and in every degree of it, is evident, in that the holy Scripture never speaks in favor of it, but condemns it, and requires men to renounce it.

When St. Paul undertakes to give the worst character of men who should arise, he sets self love at the head; which no doubt includes all the rest: "In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be *lovers of their own selves*," etc. (2 Tim. 3. 1, 2 etc.) If self love were a virtuous or an innocent affection, it would not be set at the head of a catalogue of the most odious and hurtful vices. Therefore the injunction is, "Let no man seek his own; but every man another's wealth." (1 Cor. 10. 24.) This does not forbid them to seek their own happiness, in any view and sense but directs them not to seek it *as their own* or in a selfish way, under the influence of self love, which seeks a person's own personal happiness, and nothing else. Therefore it is said that charity, or Christian love, "Seeketh not her own." Which is so far

from including, that it excludes self love; for that seeketh her own and *nothing else*; and therefore cannot be included in Christian affection.

When Christ says, "If any man will come after me let him *deny himself*." He asserts in the strongest terms, that self love must be crossed and renounced, in order to be a Christian; for it is impossible to tell what *self denial* is, if it do not consist in crossing selfishness, and giving up what self love seeks. That a man may deny himself in the exercise and gratification of self love, is an express contradiction; for this is gratifying and pleasing self.

The command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," has been supposed by some to approve of self love, and even to enjoin it, as a measure by which love to our neighbor is to be regulated. But this, I believe will appear to be a mistake, when carefully examined. He who desires and seeks the greatest possible happiness for himself, and for his neighbor, consistent with the honor of God, and the greatest general good, which he does who exercises universal benevolence, as has been shown, he, and he only, loves his neighbor as himself. He therefore has no need of the least degree of that self love which is distinct from universal benevolence, in order to obey this command. Perfect, universal disinterested benevolence is perfect obedience to it, and cannot possibly be otherwise. Therefore nothing but disinterested benevolence is here commanded, and no other kind of love is allowed or supposed; consequently self love is excluded by this precept. The least degree of that self love which seeks a man's own personal private interest and happiness exclusively, not having the least regard to his neighbor, will exclude and destroy that impartiality which is reasonable, and consists in loving his neighbor as himself. It necessarily renders him partial in his own favor, and seeks his own happiness exclusive of his neighbor's; consequently does necessarily oppose disinterested, impartial affection. This is particularly stated and considered in the above-mentioned inquiry (Pages 24, 25, 26), which I have not seen confuted or answered, and I believe is unanswerable.

I have been the longer on this point (perhaps too long, and to little purpose) because it appears to me to have a close connection with the other, and if we were agreed in this, we should not long differ in judgment with respect to that to which I now turn my attention.

The question in dispute is: Whether it be the duty of any person to be willing to give up his eternal interest for the glory of God, and the general good? You say, Sir, "I do not find any such thing required in Divine law, or the Gospel; but it appears to me that the contrary is enjoined."

I wish to have the question decided by the law and the testimony. I appeal to these. And if the affirmative cannot be proved by the Scriptures, I am willing to give it up.

It is granted, "That persons are *required* to give up their temporal interest, and to lay down their lives, when the glory of God or the advancement of his kingdom in the world require it." If it be reasonable,

and persons are required to give up their temporal interest, or ten degrees, or *one* degree of their interest, for the glory of God, and the general good, and it is contrary to the nature of universal, disinterested benevolence not to do this; then if it be equally necessary for the glory of God, etc., to give up *every degree* or the whole personal interest, it is equally reasonable to be willing to do this, and it must be *required*, and it is equally contrary to the nature of this benevolence not to do it. The glory of God and the greatest public good is an interest of infinitely more worth and importance, or an infinitely greater good, than the whole eternal interest of any individual person; and therefore when the latter interferes with the former, and consequently it is necessary that the latter should be given up to promote the former, universal benevolence will—it *must*—consent to it; and this is required, if it be required to give up any degree of personal interest, to promote the public good. This, I conceive, is as clear demonstration, as that three and two are more than two and two. This consequence cannot be avoided unless it be by denying that it ever is, or can be necessary for the glory of God, and the greatest good of his kingdom, that the whole eternal interest of any individual person should be given up and lost. But none will deny this, I presume, who believe, what is abundantly asserted in Scripture, that many of the human race will be miserable forever; for this could not take place, were it not necessary for the glory of God, and the greatest good of the whole.

It is said, this cannot be duty or required, since all are commanded to do that which is contrary to this, viz.: to repent and believe in Christ and be saved, to turn and live, etc. Answer: No repentance, believing and turning is required which is contrary to supreme love to God; and consequently seeking his glory above all things, and subordinating every other interest to this; but this love is implied and required in these commands. And if a willingness to give up a person's whole interest, if this be necessary for the glory of God, be not implied in this love, I will give up the point, and never plead for it again. A person must love himself more than God, and set his own personal interest above the interest and honor of God, and therefore not love God supremely and with all his heart, who is not willing to give up his whole interest, when necessary for the highest interest of God and his glory. And so long as he is of this disposition he will not repent, believe in Christ, or return to God.

If it be said, He knows it is not necessary for the glory of God, that his eternal interest should be given up, but the contrary; for God commands him to repent and come to Christ *for life*; and he turns and comes, that he may *live*, and not die.

Answer: His being commanded to repent, etc., is no evidence that he shall not live in impenitence, and perish, for many do so whom God commands to repent, to turn and live. And he knows not that he shall ever turn and come to Christ, until he *knows* he has actually turned and come, and therefore cannot know that he shall not be cast off, and that

this is not necessary for the glory of God. Therefore in the *first act* in which he returns and comes to Christ, he comes, not knowing that he does come, for this can be known only by reflecting on what he does, or has done. He comes to a Sovereign God and Saviour, not knowing that it is not necessary that he should perish forever, for the glory of God, and casts himself at the foot of Christ, who *has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth*; and cordially submits to this Sovereign God and Saviour, and is willing to be in his hand, not knowing but it may be most for his glory to cast him off, and not desiring to be saved, if this cannot be consistent with the glory of God; and on this supposition gives up his whole interest. This is the disposition in which the sinner comes to Christ. And as most Christians are not soon, if ever, *assured* that they are such; and none perhaps have this *assurance* at all times; they thus submit to God, to dispose of them as he sees most for his glory. And as they increase in love to God, this submission is stronger, and more sensible; though they may not think this is a being willing to give up their whole interest for the glory of God; and not know, in this respect, what manner of spirit they are of; yet this is all I mean by being willing to be cast off, if most for the glory of God. And I think it impossible to love God, and to come to Christ for salvation, without such a disposition and a cordial submission to his will, who has mercy on whom *he will* and hardens whom *he will*, while he knows not what is his will concerning him.

And such a Christian, if he attain to know he loves God, and has this submission to him, will not by this lose this disposition; but it will increase as his love to God increases; and he will more and more sensibly feel, that were it not for the glory of God, and the greatest good of his kingdom, that he should be saved, he would have no desire, on the whole, to be saved, however desirable that be, in itself considered.

I observe it is said, "There is no direction or example in the Bible for praying for spiritual or eternal blessings with a willingness to be denied, on any consideration. But God allows his people to pray for them absolutely; and has absolutely promised to bestow them on all who are willing to accept of them on the terms of the Gospel, that is, in a way of free grace through the atonement. Ask, and ye shall receive, etc."

Answer: We are certainly directed to pray for spiritual and eternal blessings, with resignation to the will of God, be that what it may; which implies, and really is, a willingness to be denied, if what we pray for be contrary to the will of God to give, and not consistent with his glory, and the general good. We must *know* that we ask for things agreeable to his will. That is, we must know that it is his will to grant them before we can ask for them absolutely, and without any condition. For if we ask *absolutely* for *anything*, when we know not that it is the will of God to give it, we set up our own will, while we know not that it is agreeable to the will of God; which must be the highest arrogance, rebellion and stubbornness.

It will be said, We know it is the will of God to give Spiritual and

eternal blessings to all who ask for them, because he has promised to do it. "Ask, and ye shall receive." Therefore we know, when we pray for those blessings, it is his will to give them; and consequently we may ask *absolutely*, not willing to be denied on any consideration; because we know that God is not willing to deny us.

Answer: All praying, and asking, is not asking in the sense of Scripture. We must *know* that we ask in truth, agreeable to the true import of direction and command, before we can know that it is the will of God to grant those blessings. But this we cannot know until we have first *asked*, if we do *then*. Therefore we must first ask before we can know it is the will of God to grant the blessings for which we ask; and therefore may not ask absolutely. And how few are there who absolutely know they have ever asked for spiritual blessings, so as to be entitled to the promise? None but assured Christians do know this. How few are they! Perhaps *not one*, at all times. From this view, I think it follows, that the prayer which entitles to saving blessings is never made absolutely, or without submission, not knowing whether it be the will of God to grant the things which are asked, or not; and that a person cannot know that it is the will of God to give him spiritual blessings, till he has thus submissively asked, and upon reflection knows that he has done it. And that, in this case, an unsubmissive asking is a wicked asking, which surely does not entitle to the promise. And that no person who does not know he has asked submissively, can know that he shall be saved, or ask saving blessings absolutely, without asking wickedly. And if he know that he has first asked submissively, and has obtained spiritual blessings, and so can *now* ask absolutely, knowing it is the will of God to save him; he can with truth say, "Lord, thou hast been pleased to give me saving blessings, and I know it is thy will, and for thy glory that I should be saved; but if this were not thy will, and for thy glory, but the contrary; salvation would not be desirable to me, in this view of it. I must say "Thy will be done." If this be not the feeling of his heart, his supposed assurance is nothing but delusion, and he has never yet asked so as to receive.

But there is a plausible, and in the view of some, an unanswerable objection to all this, as it implies that a person may and ought, for love to God, to be willing to be a sinner, and an enemy to God forever, if this be most for the glory of God, and the greatest happiness of his kingdom. This is thought to be contrary to the law, and all the commands of God, and in itself absurd and impossible.

If I am not much mistaken, most of the objections and arguments, if not all of them which I have seen offered against this, are founded on a mistake, or a supposition which is not true, viz. :—That to be willing to be a sinner, in this case, necessarily implies an inclination to sin, which is actually sinning, from love to God, and desire that he may be glorified, this being what God requires! If I could be convinced there were any truth in this, I should renounce the sentiment as false and dangerous. But I yet think directly the contrary to be true; and that a being willing

to be a sinner, if this were necessary for the glory of God, is itself an exercise of love and obedience to God; and not to be willing, on this supposition, would be itself an act of sin and rebellion. If the dialogue which you mention be one that I have seen, I think this point is there proved by argument which cannot be confuted.

God has revealed that it is his will that some of our neighbors should be given up to sin and ruin forever, for his glory, and the greatest good of his kingdom. It is granted that we ought to acquiesce in this, and be willing that it should take place, in as many instances, and under those particular instances which God sees will best answer his ends; that such acquiescence is implied in love to God; and therefore implies no inclination to sin, or to think favorable of it; but the contrary; and that the least disposition to object, and oppose this known will of God, would be an act of sin, and rebellion against God. And if it be as necessary that we ourselves should be given up to endless sin and ruin, in order to answer the same end, as that our neighbor should be thus given up, we must consent, and be willing, on this supposition, that this should take place, if we love God with all our hearts, and our neighbor as ourselves. And so long as we continue of this disposition, we obey the Divine law, and are friends to God and holiness; and cannot fall into sin and ruin until we give up this disposition and imbibe the contrary, and become unwilling to suffer anything for the glory of God. In this view of the matter, I think, it appears that "It does not involve any absurdity, that a person ought to be willing to be fixed in a state of eternal enmity to God, from a principle of supreme love to him," on supposition that this be necessary for his glory. This is so far from being an absurdity, that a person must cease to love God supremely, in order not to be willing, on this supposition, and actually turn an enemy to him.

You think, Sir, "It may be the will of God to suffer events to take place with respect to us, which it would be sinful in us to be willing should take place, with respect to ourselves." If the will of God respecting such events be made known to us, it cannot be sinful in us to be willing they should take place; otherwise it would be a sin for us to say, "Thy will be done," without making any condition or reserve; which I believe none will assert. On the contrary, it is our indispensable duty to submit to the known will of God, with respect to every event, be it what it may. And not to be willing it should take place, as He has willed it should, is opposition to God, and therefore an act of rebellion.

The following instance is brought to illustrate this position. "It is the will of God to suffer the Saints, during their continuance in this life, to be imperfect in holiness. Yet it is their duty to be perfect: nor ought they to be willing to be unholy in any respect or degree; for that would be a willingness to transgress the divine law, and would be sinful." I am pleased with this instance, because I think it is suited to illustrate the point in view. I grant it is the duty of Saints to be perfect in holiness; but do not think it will follow from this, that they ought not to be willing to be unholy in any respect or degree, or that such willingness would

be sinful: but the contrary. It is a holy will or choice, and not to be willing to be sinful, in this case, would be a transgression of the Divine law, and therefore sinful. It is, in itself considered, desirable to be perfectly holy in this life: and must be a duty, as their obligation to this cannot be made to cease. But it being the known will of God that they shall not be perfectly holy in this life: and therefore that it is, on the whole, wisest and best, most for his glory, and the general good, that they should be imperfect in this world: it is certainly their duty to acquiesce in this, and be willing it should be so, and say "Thy will be done." And this willingness to be imperfect and sinful, in this case, all things considered, is so far from being sinful, that it is a holy submission to the will of God; and the contrary would be opposition to the known will of God, to his glory and the general good, and therefore a transgression of the Divine law, and very sinful. It is, on the whole, all things considered, best, and most desirable that they should not be perfectly holy in this life; otherwise this would not be agreeable to the will of God. And not to be willing that should take place, which is on the whole best, most desirable, and agreeable to the will of God, is an unreasonable, wicked disposition, and directly opposed to God. And to be willing to be imperfect in this state of trial, is no part of that imperfection, nor has it any tendency to make them imperfect; but the contrary, as it is directly opposed to all sin, and is, as has been observed, a holy volition, a holy submission to the will of God.

The spirits of the just now made perfect, acquiesce in it, it is perfectly agreeable to their inclination and will, that they were imperfect in this life, and that all the redeemed should be so; and this acquiescence in the will of God, respecting this, is so far from being sinful, that it is part of their perfect holiness, and essential to it. And what reason can be given why this same disposition in the Saints in this life, is not a holy disposition? This is easily applied to the point in dispute; and I am mistaken if it do not serve to illustrate it, and obviate every objection made to a being willing to be sinful forever, on supposition this be the will of God, or most for his glory, and the greater happiness of his kingdom.

You say, Sir, "I believe that it is naturally impossible for any moral agent to be willing to be separated from all good, to all evil." I should believe this too, if I thought self love was essential to a moral Agent, and that it is right to exercise this to the highest possible degree, and wrong to suppress or counteract it in any instance. Yea, I should believe *more*, viz. :—that it is naturally impossible for a moral agent to give up the *least degree* of personal good, or suffer *any evil*, for the sake of any public good, however great. But universal disinterested benevolence will give up personal good; and be willing to suffer personal evil for the sake of a greater public good, and for the same reason that it will give up one degree of private good, for a greater public good, it will be willing to be separated from all personal good, to all evil, if necessary to promote a proportionable greater public good. And it appears to me, natu-

rally impossible, or impossible in the nature of things, that it should do otherwise, unless it be defective, or counteracted by self love.

St. Paul's wish (Rom. 9. 3.) has been an eyesore to many. They have thought themselves sure that he could not mean what his words naturally impart; consequently have set their invention to work to find out some other meaning. Most of which invented, forced meanings are, I think, so low and flat as to be unbecoming an inspired Apostle, and really cast reproach on the sacred oracles. The most plausible of these, perhaps, is that of Mr. Glass, which is wholly built on the original word, translated, *I could wish*, not being in the optative mood; but in the past tense of the indicative. But Grotius, who was skilled in the Greek above most others, says it is common for the Greeks to use a word so, when it is to be understood in the optative sense, of which there is an instance in Acts 25. 22. And Glasse's sense is so low, that it appears to me to come to very little, and to be unworthy of the Apostle Paul; and exhorts the true spirit and force of expression. The words, taken in the most easy and natural sense, in which Calvin and others have taken them, do strongly express the feeling and exercise of true benevolence, which St. Paul ought to have had, and to express on such an occasion; and which he certainly did profess in a very high degree, who sought not his own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved.

Calvin, I suppose, is not cited as *an authority*, but only to show the propriety of their being called *Semi-Calvinists*, who do not agree with him in this sentiment.

Wishing we may each of us be led into all important in truth, I am, Dear Sir, with high esteem, and much affection, your obliged, humble servant,

S. HOPKINS.

ROGER SHERMAN, ESQ.

ROGER SHERMAN TO SAMUEL HOPKINS.

NEW HAVEN, *October*, 1790.

DEAR SIR:—

I received your letter of the 2d August last, and am obliged to you for the observations it contains. I think there is no material difference of sentiment between us except on the last point. I am not convinced by what you have wrote on that subject that my former opinion was wrong; but I don't know that I can say much more to support it than I did before.

I believe we do not differ at all in opinion respecting that general benevolence wherein true virtue consists; which you admit includes a regard to our own greatest good and happiness, and that *regard* I call an exercise of love to ourselves. When I said that self love and love to others were distinct affections, I only meant that they were exercises of

the same kind of affection towards different objects, viz., ourselves and others.

I do not fully understand the force of your observations on what I said respecting the ground or reason why self love in a being destitute of general benevolence is the source of moral evil, viz., "That this arises from the want of a good moral taste, or spiritual discernment, which *occasions* the person to place his happiness in wrong objects." You do not here distinguish between *occasion* and *positive cause* though you make a material distinction between them in your sermons on "Sin the *occasion* of great good." President Edwards I think has illustrated this point in his answer to Dr. Taylor on original sin, and in a sermon published with his life, on the enquiry, why natural men are enemies to God. He supposes original righteousness in man was a supernatural principle which was withdrawn on his first transgression, and his natural principles of agency remaining, were exercised wrong, and his affections set on wrong objects in consequence of such withdrawal. The will and affections are the powers of agency, and the exercises of them are holy or sinful, according to the objects chosen or beloved, or according as their exercises agree or disagree with the divine law. Moral good and evil consist in exercises and not in dormant principles; the heart is the seat not only of sin but of holiness according as it is differently affected. Your observations on self love in persons destitute of general benevolence are not opposed to anything I meant to express in my letter.

You say, "that love to being in general necessarily regards and wishes the greatest possible happiness to him who exercises this love, this is not indeed self love, which is a regard to one's self *as self*, and as distinguished from all others, and to no other being; but it is the same disinterested affection which wishes the highest happiness to every individual included in being in general and therefore to himself, as necessarily included in the whole, and one among others." There appears to me to be a little ambiguity in those words *as self* and what follows. I suppose that the good and happiness of *ourselves* and each individual *being* who is a proper object of happiness, is *individually* to be regarded, loved and sought as an ultimate end, or what is desirable for its own sake as a real good. "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy him forever." Therefore when a person seeks his own highest good and happiness in the enjoyment of God, and in connection with his glory, he answers the end of his creation. Those texts which you cited to prove that self love is sinful, I suppose are not to be taken absolutely to condemn all love to self, but such only as is opposed to, or unconnected with love to others, as appears from Phil. 2. 4. Look not every man on his own things but every man *also* on the things of others. *No man ever yet hated his own flesh but nourisheth it and cherisheth it.* Our own temporal as well as spiritual good may be lawfully sought and enjoyed, and our sensitive appetites gratified, so that it be not done in a manner or degree prohibited by law. "Every creature of God is good and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving, etc."

I think you use the term *self love* in the narrower sense than it is used in general by others; and when pious persons find in themselves those desires and wishes of their own good and happiness, which I consider as inseparable from a moral agent, and which you admit are lawful as flowing from general benevolence, or as a part of it, when they find *self love* condemned by that general term, it creates in their minds groundless uneasiness and doubts as to their good estate. Though perhaps a critical attention to your definition and distinctions might prevent this.

As your observations on the other point have not removed my difficulties, I will make a few remarks on that subject.

1. The glory of God and his happiness do not depend on the will of his creatures. Acts 17. 25. *Neither is worshipped by men's hands as though he needed anything.* Job 35. 7. *If thou be righteous, what givest thou him, etc.* His goodness is his glory and that is displayed or manifested in his doing good. Exod. 33. 18, 19. *And he said I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.* *And he said, I will make my goodness pass before thee, etc.*

2. None of his rational creatures are miserable but for their own fault. He inflicts punishment, not in a way of mere sovereignty, but as a righteous Judge or Governor; and for the general good. *He gathers out of his Kingdom all things that offend and do iniquity.*

3. No person who has a holy love to God, can consistent with his *will* declared in the gospel, be finally miserable; and their self denial for his glory, and all their trials and afflictions in this life work together for their best good, and work out for them an eternal weight of glory.

4. The duties of self denial and suffering in the cause of God, are compatible only to this state of trial—and the precepts which require this, appear to me to be expressly limited to suffering in this life, and eternal life is promised as an encouragement to it; therefore I see no ground to extend them by reason or analogy to the point in question. Mat. 19. 29, John 12. 25. Luke 18. 25, etc., Mark 10. 29, 30.

5. No person who is to be a subject of everlasting misery is ever willing to endure it; but it is the providential will of God to suffer them to hate him and blaspheme his name because of their torment; therefore their willingness to suffer, is not necessary for the manifestation of his glory in their punishment. And it would involve an inconsistency to suppose any person to be willing to submit to the providential will of God, in all the circumstances of his damnation, *unwillingness* to suffer and *enmity* to God on account of it, being material circumstances. You mention the third petition in the Lord's prayer, "*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,*" as a proof that absolute submission to the will of God is a duty. I admit that God's perceptive will ought to be obeyed in all things, and his providential will submitted to as far as it is made known by revelation, or the event; but no particular person while in a state of probation can know that it is the providential will of God that he shall finally perish, but he knows that it is his perceptive will, that

he shall turn and live. And for persons who doubt of their good estate, to put it to trial by supposing a case that never can happen if they have any degree of true love to God, or if they ever comply with the requirements of the gospel; and which it is certain their hearts never will be reconciled to, if it should happen, would only tend to fill their minds with greater perplexity and disquietude. True Christians are assured, that no temptation (or trial) shall happen to them but what they shall be enabled to bear; and that the grace of Christ shall be sufficient for them; but no such gracious promise of support is made to any who shall be the subjects of damnation, therefore a willingness to suffer this, is not a trial required of a true Christian. The angels in heaven do God's will, but we have no intimation that they are required to be willing to fall from their holy and happy state.

As to your observations on the Saints' imperfections in this life, I shall only remark, that I allow that they ought to approve whatever is ordered or permitted by God concerning them as most holy and wise; but not their own conduct in being unholy or sinful in any degree.

As to the submission of the awakened humbled sinner to the divine sovereignty, I admitted that a sinner ought to approve the law of God, as holy, just and good in the threatening endless misery to sinners; but this is consistent with their hoping in his mercy. The convinced publican prayed, "*God be merciful to me, a sinner.*" I suppose that the divine sovereignty is the greatest encouragement that a convinced sinner has or can have, to hope for mercy. That a God of infinite goodness can (through the atonement) have mercy on whom he will, consistent with the honor of his law and government and of all his perfections, is a much better ground of hope, than if the sinner was left to his own will; but I don't see that this includes in it a willingness to be damned, though the convinced sinner has a sense of his just desert of damnation, yet he is invited and required to turn and live.

St. Paul's wish, Rom. 9. 3, taken literally (as translated) I think can't be vindicated.

1. Because it would have been opposite to the revealed will of God concerning him, he being a true Saint, could not be accursed from Christ.

2. It could have been of no use to his brethren—his damnation could not atone for their sins; and there was a sufficient atonement made by Jesus Christ. I think all that he intended was to express in strong terms his great affection and concern for that people and not that he did or could *really* wish damnation to himself for their sakes. Dr. Samuel Clark on the place says, "The expression is highly figurative and affectionate—But his intention was not to wish himself subject to the eternal wrath of God, which is absurd and impossible."

It still appears to me that no moral agent ever was or can be willing to be damned, and that no such thing is required by the divine law or the gospel. If a person could be willing to be forever abandoned to sin and misery, he must be so lost to any sense of good or happiness, as not to

be capable of any regard to the glory of God, or the good and happiness of the moral system; for if he could take pleasure in these, he would not be wholly deprived of happiness.

The bad tendency of this doctrine if it be not well founded, will be:—

1. To give uneasiness to pious minds who may believe it upon the authority of those whom they think more knowing than themselves, but yet they can't find their hearts reconciled to it.

2. Pious orthodox Christians who think it an error will be prejudiced against the books that contain it, however orthodox and useful in other respects, and will scruple the lawfulness of keeping them in their houses, or any way encouraging the spread of such books, lest they should be guilty of propagating dangerous errors.

3. It will give the enemies of truth occasion to speak reproachfully of the authors of such books, and prejudice the minds of people against them, and so obstruct their usefulness. Therefore I wish you to cut off occasion, from those who may seek occasion.

I am, &c.

ROGER SHERMAN.

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