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An earnest search for truth

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AN  
EARNEST SEARCH  
FOR TRUTH,

IN A  
SERIES OF LETTERS

FROM  
A SON TO HIS FATHER.

BY THE  
REV. L. A. LOWRY.

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

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A MISUNDERSTANDING of the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church has driven many good and pious people from her communion. A blinded and deeply rooted prejudice, engendered by the ignorance and bigotry of her enemies, has driven many more into violent opposition to her interests. Some have taken shelter behind an Arminian creed. Others, driven by the absurdities it contains, have sought a resting place in the depths of Pelagian and Semi-Pelagian darkness. Others again have sought a middle way between Calvinism and Arminianism, thereby hoping to avoid the difficulties of the one, and the endless contradictions and absurdities of the other. The latest of these theological pioneers, who have organized themselves into a distinct body, are the Cumberland Presbyterians, who date their existence from the commencement of the present century. They claim to have made new and important discoveries

in theology. They profess to have solved the problem that has baffled the combined learning and genius of the past—and have advertised to the world that the middle way as opened out by themselves, between the conflicting systems of Calvin and Arminius, is both a practicable and easy route, free from difficulties and dangers. Fascinated by the peculiar charm of the name, in the commencement of my ministry I entered their ranks. I soon found, however, every possible variety of opinion among them, which it was impossible to harmonize. They had a Confession of Faith, it is true—a mutilated copy of the Westminster—but in their interpretation of this there was the same difference of opinion. I paused. I asked myself the same question that had been asked repeatedly by others—where is the middle way?—a question which had never been satisfactorily answered. I resolved to make it the fixed purpose of my life to endeavour to clear the subject of all its difficulties—to examine thoroughly the groundwork of the system I had adopted—to survey carefully the whole field of speculative theology, to satisfy my own mind, and point out clearly and definitely the different points in the middle route. The nature and results of my investigations are briefly detailed in the following

letters—the publication of which has been forced upon me by a combination of circumstances over which I have had no control.

It may be proper here to state, that the respected and beloved parent to whom these letters are addressed, is a minister of the gospel in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, who for many years acted as a government agent and missionary among the Winnebago Indians. He is at present pastor of the church at Lebanon, Tennessee, and one of the associate editors of the "Banner of Peace and Cumberland Presbyterian Advocate," published at that place. A more painful task could not have been assigned me than to address a parent as I have done, under the circumstances to which allusion has already been made. Those circumstances I need not here detail. It is sufficient for me to say that, in all that I have done, I have acted under a sense of duty, and in the fear of God.

I am aware that, in consenting to publish these letters in their present form, I am widening the breach that has already been made between myself and many of those who were once my warmest friends. They, I trust, will not forget the bitterness of the assaults that have been made upon me, and to which they have given countenance, impugning my motives for following truth to its

legitimate and final results; and for giving testimony to those doctrines which I found, after mature investigation, to be revealed in the word of God, and confirmed by my own religious experience.

*Jan. 1852.*

L. A. L.

# AN EARNEST SEARCH FOR TRUTH,

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.

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## LETTER I.

DEAR FATHER :—I had hoped, on entering the ministry, to find a permanent and congenial home in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. It has been my ardent wish that our interests, our feelings, and views, in our ecclesiastical relations, might be the same, and our labours in life directed to the same ends. It has been the ardent and absorbing desire of my mind, and the devout prayer of my heart, that I might be permitted to labour as an ambassador of Christ, side by side with an aged parent; and if, in the order of nature, called upon to witness his departure from earthly scenes, to receive a father's mantle and a father's blessing. Nothing I can assure you could have given me greater pleasure; no earthly consideration could compensate me for such a loss; the imagination

itself could not have drawn a more pleasing and inviting prospect; the brightest of all earthly hopes beside, would have made but a feeble impression on my mind, when brought in conflict with this. But it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. God in his providence has disconcerted my plans, and led me in a way that I knew not.

I find myself in another branch of the Church, whose doctrines by the great mass of Cumberland Presbyterians are not only rejected but despised; and such have been the distorted views which they, in common with others, have taken of those doctrines, their opposition has often ripened into the most malignant hostility. Calvinism, says Alexander Campbell, is worse than atheism. Calvinism, says the Methodist, is a libel upon Deity—a system of blasphemy and impiety. Calvinism has, I fear, said a loved uncle, who has gone to his rest, and was once a co-labourer with yourself, done more injury to the cause of Christ, than the dogmas of the Romish Church. I myself, occupying the same stand-point, once indulged similar feelings. But that opposition and growing hostility that had begun to take root in my mind, received a timely check. My prejudices have all been removed, and looking out upon the broad

ocean of truth from a new and more elevated point of observation, I now love what once I loved to hate. I therefore feel it to be my duty to give a full statement of the circumstances that have led to such a change; and I owe it to myself and my friends to do it in a public manner.

I shall, in a few communications, endeavour to disclose to you only what shall be essential to the proper understanding of my own position, and the position of the Cumberland Church as I have viewed it; and I think that I have had every opportunity and every motive to judge correctly and impartially. Situated as you have been for the last eighteen or twenty years upon the extreme borders of the north-west, I am confident that you are not aware of the position the Church at present occupies, and the goal to which she is tending. Anything, therefore, that I may say, I trust will not be construed into a violation of any filial duty, or want of a proper regard for the feelings of a parent.

Permit me, in the outset, to call your attention to an important fact which you have doubtless often seen verified in your intercourse with the world. It is this: Where a sect or party have nothing peculiar and distinctive, of a positive nature, of their own to present to the mind as a

basis and bond of union, their constant aim is to tear down the systems of others, appropriate to themselves that which is popular, and poison the minds of the weak, the disaffected, and ignorant.

The Church furnishes to our hands, if necessary, many illustrations of this truth. In every age, some sect or society has been started without any fixed or well-defined principles of its own, and has enlarged its boundaries in no other way than by poisoning the minds of the disaffected, the ignorant, and the credulous, with distorted views of the truth. Since the time of the Reformation, Calvinism has been the watchword of alarm. Opposition has raged and waxed hot and fierce, till the enemies of truth, blinded by their own zeal, have been driven to the farthest extreme, and wrested every important doctrine of the Scriptures to their own destruction.

We have a painful illustration of the truth here referred to, in the history of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in many parts of the country. When they first made a start toward an independent organization, claiming a little latitude only on one or two points of doctrine, they repeatedly sought a re-union with the church from which they had been cut off; but having failed, they arrayed themselves in direct opposition and open

hostility to those at whose door they had so long knocked for entrance, which had been repeatedly and emphatically denied. From that day to this, their opposition has increased, and continues to grow with their growth, and strengthen with their strength. There is an obvious reason for it; yea, a pressing necessity that arises from the want of something *distinctive* to present to the minds of those upon whom they would operate. They boast, it is true, of a "middle way;" but nearly half a century has passed since the discovery was made, and it has not yet been defined. The majority of those who are esteemed fathers in the Church are in the grave. The few that are left, with bending and tottering steps, are at its entrance waiting for the summons; and yet all that has been effected in the way of presenting a system of doctrines to the world, has been a mutilation of the Westminster Confession of Faith. This upon the floor of the General Assembly of the Church has been pronounced with emphasis, "a ragged affair," because it savoured too much of Calvinism. Such a system, call it by what name you please, will not answer. A man may patch his garments with new or old cloth as suits his taste, but the truth in which the soul is clad must be seamless—woven from top to bottom. Princi-

ples will and must work out their appropriate and legitimate results. It has been lamentably true in the case before us; every development shows a tendency to the extremes of Arminianism. I will venture the assertion, if the whole can be judged by those with whom I have been conversant, that nineteen-twentieths of those who aspire to be teachers, so far as they have any system at all, hold to all the essential doctrines of the Methodist Church, save the doctrine of falling from grace and sinless perfection;—the latter of which is now practically discarded by Methodists, and the former, to an alarming extent, is beginning to be confirmed by the *practice* of Cumberland Presbyterians whatever may be their *theory* upon the subject. There is nothing distinctive that furnishes a bond of union, a positive influence, or an attractive force. Repulsion, in most instances, is the only power that can effect anything. If you wish to operate upon those inclined to Methodism, you must get up a noise upon the doctrine of falling from grace, and expatiate largely upon the beauty of persevering to the end by the semi-omnipotent self-moving energies of the will. If you would turn the course of those inclined to the Presbyterian Church, you must poison their minds by distorted views and caricatures of the truth; raise the cry of

“atheism,” “impiety,” “blasphemy,” “popery,” and every other raw-head and bloody-bones the imagination can picture. I speak what I know, and testify what I have seen and felt. The united voice of the Presbyterian Church in Western Pennsylvania will bear me witness, that this was the mode of operation practised by those who commenced their labours there as “missionaries;” who made their boasts that in a few years not a “grease spot” of Calvinism would be left to tell posterity of its signal overthrow. Innumerable changes were rung upon the doctrines of “election,” “predestination,” “reprobation,” “infant damnation,” and every thing else out of which any capital could be made; insomuch that if it were possible the very elect would have been deceived.

Their success for a time was unparalleled; but like every thing else of the kind, there was no depth of root, and the churches thus planted soon began to show visible marks of decay. As the eyes of the community were opened, the repulsive force they had succeeded in producing in the minds of many ceased to operate, and they were shorn of their strength. Repeated efforts have since been made to stir up the minds of the people in opposition to Calvinism and the Presbyterian Church, but to no purpose. Every means and

every energy has been applied, but nothing of any consequence has been effected. They have piped long and loud, but nobody has danced; from morn till night, as the children in the market-place, they have mourned, but nobody has lamented.

At such a crisis, a new occasion is offered, and a new theme presented, by which to stir up the minds of the people, and drive the alarmed and scattered flocks together. A young man, whom they had honoured with one of their most important stations, is led, in the fear of God, and by careful steps, to embrace the despised and rejected doctrines of grace. Something must be done to counteract the moral effect of such a change upon the minds of the community and the church abroad. They must make an effort to ruin his character; they must try to make it appear that the Presbyterians have taken to their bosom "a hypocrite," "a renegade," "a wolf," "a viper;" they must summon rumour with her thousand tongues, and accuse him of all manner of evil; they must heap upon him all kinds of epithets; brand him with all manner of infamy; and throw as much odium and suspicion on his path as possible.

I myself was the person thus assailed. I have borne it all in silence that they might have a prac-

tical demonstration of their littleness and folly. My object has been accomplished; their shafts have returned to their own bosoms. I shall dismiss all that has been said and done of a personal nature, by referring them to an important principle laid down by one who knew perfectly the hearts of men: "Every one that doeth evil," says Christ, "hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." John iii. 20, 21. In their deeds of darkness let this be their condemnation.

Your affectionate Son.

## LETTER II.

THEOLOGY A SYSTEM OF TRUTH—STARTING POINT  
—ORIGINAL SIN—CONDITION OF MAN—LOST  
IN THE FULLEST SENSE OF THE WORD—POSI-  
TION OF THE CUMBERLAND CHURCH.

DEAR FATHER:—One of the earliest impressions made upon my mind, in entering upon the study of theology, was that it was a *system* of truth, as all other branches of knowledge—of revealed truth, having the Spirit of God for its author, whose different parts are connected together by a logical sequence, as inseparably as cause and effect, that link together the phenomena of the natural world. It will not be my object, by any means, to develop the varied phases and elements of that system, in their different relations and consequences. Such a task would ill become a son, in addressing a father whose life has been spent in the active duties of the ministry. I shall only aim to disclose to you the workings of my own mind upon some of the leading doctrines of the gospel; and, with all due filial regard, to call

your attention to the untenable and undefinable ground occupied by the Cumberland Church. It is a painful task, I can assure you, but it is one that a high sense of duty impels me to perform.

In order to a correct understanding of the gospel plan of salvation, the system of truth revealed in the Scriptures, we must examine well the disease for which it is provided; we must probe to the bottom the subject of human depravity, its nature, its origin, and results. It is one of those doctrines about which the student of theology, the well instructed scribe, and even private member of the church, must have clear, well-defined, and correct views. A single mistake here will vitiate the whole scheme of salvation, both in theory and practice. You have already examined it, and know its importance; I shall therefore simply glance at some of its more prominent features, which, in the outset of my theological studies, I marked as the necessary ground-work of a system of grace.

“The sinfulness of the estate whereinto man fell,” says the Shorter Catechism, “consists in the guilt of Adam’s first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature—which is commonly called original sin—together with all actual transgressions which pro-

ceed from it." Here then is the disease for which the gospel remedy was provided. It includes three alarming symptoms, under the head of *original sin*. 1. The guilt of Adam's first sin, which has come upon us in view of a covenant arrangement. 2. The want of original righteousness, such as the creatures possessed in a state of innocency. 3. The corruption of our whole nature. Our personal transgressions may also be included in the disease, but they are more properly the result or acting out of our corrupt nature. They come from it as the fruit from the tree, or as the stream from the fountain. Matt. xv. 19.

The immediate and remote consequences of this estate of sin into which we have fallen, so far as they relate to our happiness, are thus briefly and forcibly stated: "All mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever." Such is the language of the Shorter Catechism, both of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and also of the Cumberland Presbyterian Confession as extracted from it. I have made the quotation, not with a view of discussing at any length the different points introduced, but

simply that the reader may see the position the Cumberland Church once occupied, and contrast it with the goal to which she is now tending, as regards the first elementary principles, the very ground-work of the whole gospel scheme. I shall only glance at some of the more prominent features of the subject, which, if properly apprehended, will necessarily lead to correct views of all the others.

There is a single word that embodies in its meaning the whole subject; a word which, if properly understood and felt, would break down many of the barriers that now divide the Church. It is found in the reply of our Saviour to those who complained of his being a guest with "a sinner." "The Son of man," said he, "is come to seek and to save that which was *lost*." Luke xix. 10. This, you recollect, was the passage assigned me to write upon, when I placed myself under the care of Presbytery. It led my mind into an easy and natural train of thought; and the opinions I then formed have remained with me to the present time. They constituted the foundation upon which I endeavoured to build an Arminian structure that fell before it was completed, and upon which I now stand, under "a covert" and a "hiding-place," formed of more

durable materials. Man I regarded as lost, in every possible sense in which the word can be used. This view is one I found not only revealed in the Scriptures, but confirmed by reason, by facts, and personal observation. In whatever situation of life we find him, at whatever period of his existence since the fall, in all countries and ages, he has been found to be lost in the highest and fullest meaning of the word. At all times, and under all circumstances, the same alarming symptoms have prevailed.

Lost as an intellectual being.—The light of nature, of science, and philosophy, with all the boasted wisdom of man, have been inadequate to penetrate the mists and the darkness that shroud the past, the present, and the future. The strange enigma of life, of death, of the providences of God, of human miseries, and the complete wreck of high moral capabilities, have, under all circumstances, transcended the limited and paralyzed faculties of the human mind. Where am I?—what am I?—whence came I?—and why the deep yearnings of the soul for some object of religious worship, where there is none but the wood and the stone, the workmanship of the creature's hands? When such questions as these arise from the great deep of our hearts where

shall we go for a response? Nature is silent, science is dumb, and reason and philosophy only serve to bewilder, and render more gloomy and dark the mystery.

Lost too as a moral being.—He is declared in the Scriptures of divine truth to be dead in trespasses and in sins; lost to a knowledge of God, and consequently to all holiness of character. “The Lord looked down from heaven,” says the Psalmist, “upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside; they are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Ps. xiv. 2, 3. There is no possible qualification of the sad truth. We are born in sin, conceived in iniquity, the whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint, and all the affections of our carnal nature are alienated from God, and at enmity against him. The verdict the apostle Paul brought in, after the most careful and masterly review of the condition of the world in his day, was expressed in the strongest possible terms; from which he draws the conclusion, that when the hearts and the lives of all who are under the law shall be tried, by the proper tribunal, “every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.” Rom. iii. 19.

But I need not enlarge upon this point. You have been sufficiently thrown into scenes, both of savage and civilized life, to have had a practical exhibition of the moral character and condition of the human heart in every conceivable light; and I presume that the great mass of Cumberland Presbyterians will subscribe to the doctrine of human depravity, to its fullest extent, if you will allow them the privilege, in common with all others who hold to Arminian sentiments, of stopping short of the legitimate consequences to which it leads. A man must be under a strange aberration of mind, who knows anything of himself or his kind, who, for a moment, can doubt the teachings of the Bible upon this subject, taking its language in the most unqualified sense, and in its strongest meaning. This, however, is but a part of the subject, and gives us but a partial and imperfect view of the condition of man as affected by the fall.

He is lost also as a subject of the divine government.—This follows as a necessary consequence, from the moral state of his heart developing itself in his life, and from the nature of the divine government and the character of God. “The Lord hath spoken,” says the prophet Isaiah, “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have

rebelled against me." Isa. i. 2. It is in this corrupt and rebellious state that man is met by the eye of infinite purity and justice; his acts, his feelings, and the moral state of his heart, are all condemned, and the solemn curse of a broken and inflexible law pronounced against him. Upon this point also I imagine we agree. Your views of the holiness of God, of the nature of sin, of the operations of the divine government, and the consequent condemnation of the sinner, are thus far the same as my own, and such as a careful examination will lead every mind to adopt. But there is yet another important aspect in which the subject is to be viewed, and concerning which our ideas must be clear and well-defined.

The ruin of man is not complete until we have carried our investigations still further. He cannot in any proper sense of the word be said to be lost until we can give an affirmative answer to the following question: *Would it have been just, on the part of God, to have left man in his estate of condemnation without a Redeemer?* A more important question could not be asked in the outset of one's inquiries after truth; it involves much that is vital, and furnishes an infallible test of one's theological creed. The Arminian, for example, *denies*, and builds upon his denial a system

that is destructive of every principle of grace and love revealed in the gospel, and degrades the gift of eternal life to a *debt* that God owed the creature for injuries he had received. The Calvinist, on the other hand, affirms, and builds upon his affirmation a system alike honouring to God and humbling to man; that magnifies the grace of God, and traces every offer of life, and every blessing bestowed, to the boundless and unfathomable love of the divine bosom, whose height, and depth, and length, and breadth an inspired apostle could not measure. To this latter view I early and readily gave assent. It was the instinctive feeling of my heart; and if there is a truth within the lids of the sacred volume, it is the feeling of every believer in his devotional moments, whatever may be his speculations when trying to bolster up a tottering and falling creed. You will pardon the unqualified expression, for I know that your heart and faith cannot be otherwise than with me here also. Struggling as you have been, for the last eighteen or twenty years, to elevate the darkened mind of the savage to a knowledge of gospel truth, you will not hesitate, I trust, to adopt the strongest language of the Scriptures on this subject, as applicable to man in all his relations.

Here, then, briefly is the condition of man since the fall; his ruin is complete; he is lost in the fullest sense of the word—intellectually, morally and legally; is justly condemned, and by nature a child of wrath; the consequences of Adam's first sin are upon him; he is destitute of original righteousness; his whole nature is corrupt, and his whole life is but the acting out of that nature; he has lost all "communion with God," the only source of life and happiness; is under "his wrath and curse," and "made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and the pains of hell for ever;" and were the darkness of the pit for ever to close upon him, without even the *offer* of salvation, the character of God would be untarnished; he would still be holy, just and true; and the hosts of heaven would still mingle their responsive notes of praise around the eternal throne unto him that lives and reigns for ever. No other view of the lost and ruined condition of man can furnish the shadow of a foundation upon which to build a system of grace, of mercy, and love. There is no room for either, if God is a debtor to us instead of our being bankrupt and debtors to him. It was this view, I say, of our estate of sin and misery that I adopted in the outset of my investigations. Any other I found

would destroy every principle of vitality the gospel possessed. It is a view, too, pregnant with consequences of the first importance in a consistent theological system; consequences immediate and remote, which must sooner or later force themselves upon the conviction of every investigating mind. In fact in it, as the foundation, is necessarily involved the character of the whole superstructure; and were there no other revelation on the subject, but that "the Son of man is come to seek and save that which was *lost*," it would be enough; for from this may be evolved, by a clear and logical sequence, every important doctrine of the gospel. Some of these doctrines I will endeavour to exhibit in their proper place.

I will close this communication with a single request. I would most earnestly and affectionately ask of you to consider well the importance of the view presented, and mark the position occupied by the Cumberland Church. Principles, I have said, will and must work out their appropriate results; and none, perhaps, involve more than the question as to the justice of God in leaving man in his estate of sin and misery, into which he is introduced by the fall. Where, I ask, is the Cumberland Church upon this point? They are not upon Calvinistic ground; they have

not struck out any new path, or made any new discoveries; but have taken, as in all their travels, the beaten road of Arminianism, their Confession of Faith and Shorter Catechism to the contrary notwithstanding. It is painful to see them in the dim distance, with new names upon their banners, and boasting of a *middle theology*, threading their way upon the very heels of the followers of Wesley. It is painful to see them, in different parts of the country, indulging in the most bitter abuse of Presbyterians and Methodists, and yet not having a foot of ground *between* the two that they can call their own. It will not do. A Church that takes as its starting point the principle that the offer of salvation is a debt instead of a free gift, must in the end find themselves in Arminian ranks upon the mountains of Edom, or their carcasses, to the latest generation, will be left in *the wilderness* as a memorial of their folly. This conviction early forced itself upon my mind; but I hoped to find the middle way leading off from some other point.

Your affectionate Son.

### LETTER III.

THE CAUSE OF OUR FALL—SIN OF OUR FIRST PARENTS—IMPUTATION—VIEW OF CLARKE AND WATSON—CONSEQUENCES—A MOUNTAIN PASS.

DEAR FATHER :—The view I have presented of the moral condition of man, is one that I found upon the very surface of the sacred page; one, too, that entered into all my religious feelings; and it is a view that must find its way to every heart that is properly exercised under the influence of gospel truth. It is not until the sinner is brought to feel his condition as one that is lost, in all its force, that he is prepared to feel his need of a Redeemer; it is not until then he is prepared to pray the prayer of the publican, and receive pardon and life as *the gift* of God.

I am confident that you will concur with me in the sentiment here expressed. But there is an important doctrine involved as its direct and immediate consequence, which is essential to a correct theoretical knowledge of the plan of salvation; a doctrine about which there has been

much counsel darkened by words without knowledge, and which in my early investigations of truth gave me many a painful struggle, and against which I contended for a time with a more determined and bitter opposition, than against any other in the Calvinistic system.

If all are born in sin, and thus brought into the world in a state of condemnation, a question naturally arises as to the cause of such a state of things in the government of a wise, a holy, and beneficent Being, who is infinite in all his attributes. Revelation alone can solve the difficulty. "By one man," says Paul, "sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Rom. v. 12. Back of this, however, is another question, which must be clearly and definitely answered before we have advanced a single step. Upon what principle are we made sinners by the "one man," and our destiny thus linked with his? In other words, what is the relation we sustain to him that furnishes a reasonable ground for involving us in the consequences of his first transgression? Both the Calvinist and Arminian agree in considering it, in some sense, a *federal relation*—a relation in which the acts of one individual are considered in law as the acts of those whom

he represents. According to the Calvinist, the sin of Adam is imputed to his posterity, or considered theirs in a legal sense in view of a covenant arrangement made with him as their federal head. The Arminian sometimes makes use of similar phraseology, but at the same time tells us that such a system would be unjust, had not God provided a plan by which we might work our way out of the evils and ruins of the fall. Hence they tell us that, as an offset or compensation for what we are made to suffer in our fallen state, all are restored by Christ, the second Adam, to a new state of probation. But hear their own language :

“Had not God provided a Redeemer,” says Adam Clarke in his commentary on the fifth chapter of Romans, “he would no doubt have terminated the whole moral story by cutting off the original transgressors ; for it would have been unjust to permit them to propagate their like, under such circumstances that their offspring must be unavoidably and eternally wretched.” “Before any issue proceeded from the first pair,” says Mr. Watson, “they were restored to the divine favour. Had no method of forgiveness and restoration been established with respect to human offenders, the penalty of death must have forthwith been executed upon them.” Inst. v. ii. p. 87. A mortal thrust is here blindly

made at the very vitals of the gospel. They may talk largely of the depravity of the human heart, of the federal relation between Adam and his posterity, of the justice of God in their condemnation, and of the mercy and love of God in the gift of his Son ; but it is all an unmeaning jargon of words. They may discourse much upon the efficacy of means and the moral power of divine truth ; but if this, their fundamental principle, is carried out, the whole gospel scheme is reduced to a mere carcass, and the carcass maimed of its most important limbs ; a carcass, such as the mummies of Egypt, which, after having been robbed of their vitals to preserve them from corruption and decay, must be wrapped in the spicy and slimy garments prepared by the priest that ministers to the ignorance and pride of the human heart. A hideous object indeed is presented to the sight when it is exposed to the light, its bandages untied and its covering removed. But we can form no just conception of what we have embraced, until the unpleasant task is accomplished. Indulge me, therefore, for a moment, while I call your attention to some of the more immediate consequences, in addition to what has already been said, to which this fundamental principle of Arminianism leads.

1. It robs the gospel of every principle of

vitality it possesses. To this I have already alluded; and again I would ask, if the redemption of man from his estate of sin and misery was a *debt* that God owed the creature, where is the love, and where the mercy, of the gospel? and what is the ground of our obligations to Christ for his obedience and sufferings unto death? There is none, and there can be none in such a system.

‡ 2. It degrades the character of Christ to that of a minister of sin. He is made the cause of all the sin and misery that have afflicted our race, both upon earth and in hell, from the foundation of the world. Look again at the quotations made above from Clarke and Watson. "It would have been unjust," says one, "to have permitted our first parents to propagate their like without a Redeemer." "Had no method of forgiveness been provided," says the other, "the penalty of death must have been forthwith executed upon them." If this be true, then our coming into the world with a depraved nature is conditioned, not upon the sin of Adam, but the death of Christ; and all the consequences flowing from that nature thus inherited are conditioned upon the same event. For example, if I dig a pit and draw a man into it, that I may have an opportunity of lifting him out again, to show how

benevolent I am, that which I choose to call a benevolent act is in an important sense the condition or cause of his misfortune. Again, if a servant administers poison to a family, at the instance of a physician who desires to show his skill in restoring them to health, the physician as well as the servant is chargeable with all the consequences that ensue. Precisely in the same sense is the death of Christ the necessary condition and cause of the fall of man and his consequent misery, if the position before us of those who hold to Arminian sentiments is correct.

3. It leads also to the denial of the very existence of sin — confounds virtue and vice, and excuses men in the greatest crimes. According both to the Calvinist and Arminian, the sins of our race flow from the corrupt nature we inherit. If, then, this nature is not ours upon just and legal grounds, surely we cannot be held accountable, upon any principle of justice, for the acts and feelings that flow from it, whatever they may be. It is a clear deduction; and there is no necessity of drawing out a lengthy argument, or of multiplying illustrations, to render it more apparent. Look at it as it stands. The corrupt nature we inherit, says the Arminian, is not justly ours. The Bible teaches, and his own system teaches,

that all sin proceeds from that nature as the stream from the fountain. What other conclusion can we draw, then, but that we are not accountable for anything we do in this our fallen state? And where is the goal at which we can stop?

4. It makes injustice and cruelty the most conspicuous attributes of the divine character. God is represented not only as holding us accountable for that which is not justly ours, but as heaping immeasurable reproach, ignominy, and suffering upon an innocent personage when there was no necessity for it; upon one whom he repeatedly declared to be his only and well-beloved Son. Where is the need of a Redeemer in such a system? Where, I ask, is the necessity of such a sacrifice to satisfy the claims of the law and justice of God, when the law can make no demands, and the sinner himself has claims upon justice for injuries received at her hands? Go, then, to the garden and to the cross. What a spectacle is there presented! The Son of God bathed in tears and blood, and suspended upon the torturing spikes by a centurion's band, at the instance of a Jewish mob! For what? Not to atone for his own sins; for he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, without spot and without blemish. Not to atone for the sins of others; for there is no

sin for which to atone that might not have been pardoned without violating a single attribute of the divine character, or endangering a single interest of the divine government. What then? Can any satisfactory account be given of such scenes in such a system? None whatever. Consistency will necessarily lead either to a denial of the divinity of Christ and of his death as a sacrificial act, or to the absurd and blasphemous assumption that God is the most unjust and cruel of all tyrants.

It also involves a gross contradiction in itself. If it is necessary in the divine government, that the sentence of the law should be executed in all its force as soon as the offence is committed, the result would have been far different from what it was in the case of our first parents. Eve being first in the transgression, would have fallen a victim to death the moment she was beguiled by the serpent, and tasted the forbidden fruit. In that case Adam might have been saved from the ruins of the fall, and blessed with another helpmeet, or left alone to enjoy the blessings and bounties of earth till his probation should end. But it may be said that it pleased God, in his inscrutable wisdom, to link together the destiny of our first parents; that there was a fitness and pro-

priety in it that we cannot comprehend. This is the very principle for which I am contending. If it be just thus to bind two individuals together, making the fall of the one conditioned upon the fall of the other, where then, I ask, is the injustice of conditioning the fall of a third or fourth upon the same event, if the natural and social ties that bind them together are equally strong? And what stronger ties can there be than those that exist between parent and offspring? If, however, those who subscribe to the view of Clarke and Watson are not willing to go such a length, they must modify their view of what would have been the course of the law towards our first parents without the promise of a Redeemer. They must consign Eve to perdition the moment she yields to the tempter, and let Adam go free, at least until his superior wisdom and strength have been fully tested.

I might go on almost to any length multiplying the errors and absurdities growing out of this fundamental principle of Arminianism; but it is perhaps unnecessary. Enough has been said to show that both its immediate and remote consequences are ruinous in the extreme. I might also add, that every difficulty and absurdity, real or imaginary, that is urged against the Calvinistic

view of the subject, may be retorted with a force and propriety, that can be resisted only by those whose eyes are closed to the light.

It was such difficulties and absurdities that pressed upon me, and drove me to a more consistent and safe position. I tried every means, however, to explain them away, but to no purpose. My way was always blocked up by a single passage of Scripture, that declares us to be "by nature children of wrath even as others." To this sad truth my heart gave a ready response; and finding no safe foothold on Arminian ground, I tried to find some other, by which I might avoid the difficulties I felt would press upon me if I adopted the Calvinistic view of the subject. I read McKnight, Stuart, Barnes, and others, but found no satisfaction. I had frequent discussions with my classmates and others, with whom I was intimate at the seminary, which served only to deepen my prejudices. But as I advanced in my course, I obtained more enlarged views of the different points of theology; and in the whole range of my vision, I could see but *one pass* through the mountains of difficulties that rose on every side. The whole question resolved itself into this: If the gospel is a system of grace, and the offer of life is a free gift, then is the sinner condemned.

If he is justly condemned there must be a legal or federal relation existing between Adam and his posterity, in which relation his sin is imputed to them, and their destiny linked with his. This view I found, on a more careful investigation, to be confirmed in the strongest and most unequivocal manner throughout the Scriptures. The fifth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans is sufficient to settle the question beyond all cavil or doubt. "The wages of sin," the penalty of the law, he tells us, "is death;" death temporal, spiritual, and eternal, as all are agreed. In the same connection we are told that death has passed upon all men, in view of their relation to Adam, as their federal head; even upon those who die in infancy, who have never sinned "after the similitude of Adam's transgression." Upon this also there is no controversy between the Calvinist and Arminian. It is contended, however, that the word death in the latter case does not comprehend as much as in the former. Be it so. It does not free the subject of a single difficulty; for if it be just to subject us to a part of the penalty of the law, in view of our relation to Adam, the same principle is involved; and there can be no injustice in subjecting us to the whole of that penalty. And that such is the case, is stated by the apostle

Paul in the same connection: "By one man's disobedience," says he, "many were made sinners"—"by one man's offence death reigned by one"—"by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation." Here, I say, was the only mountain pass through the difficulties and dangers that surrounded me. I entered it with the exclamation of the same apostle upon my lips: "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" The beetling cliffs towered high above me; with a trembling heart and careful steps I found my way through; I read again the oracles of God, and found a clearness, a beauty, and a force, in many parts which I had never before seen. But my mind was by no means yet prepared to receive the whole Calvinistic system. I paused to search for *the middle route*. I used every possible precaution. I spared neither labour nor pains to accomplish my object. I noted well every landmark. To use a figure drawn from scenes with which you are familiar, I kindled camp-fires in every valley, and upon every hill-top that I might obtain a correct knowledge of the country, and strike out some course in which all difficulties and dangers could be avoided. With what success the sequel will show.

Your affectionate son.

## LETTER IV.

THE REMEDY PROVIDED—AMBIGUITY OF TERMS  
—THREE VIEWS OF THE ATONEMENT—EARLY  
IMPRESSIONS—POSITION OF THE CUMBERLAND  
CHURCH—THE GOAL TO WHICH SHE IS TEN-  
DING.

DEAR FATHER:—Having presented the view of the moral condition of man that forced itself upon my attention and conviction, I would, in the next place, notice a few facts with regard to the nature of the remedy that is revealed in the gospel. The object and limits of these communications forbid my entering upon a discussion of the subject in its details. I shall therefore simply present, in general terms, the different views that are current among the denominations of professing Christians, and the early impressions I imbibed, together with other facts of importance that may be suggested. The subject is one that forms another important link in the chain of theological truth, and should be well understood, and clearly defined. Such, however, are the different shades of meaning attached to

words in their metaphysical and theological use, that it is impossible for us to tell what a man believes till he has defined his terms, and we have succeeded in getting at the ground-work of his system. More especially is it true of the atonement, concerning which every possible variety of opinion has been invented by the ingenuity of man, and zealously advocated.

When the question is narrowed down to the nature of that work, the discordant theories that divide the church may be reduced to three, at least for our present purpose, each differing from the others in its fundamental principles. For a full statement of these I am happy in being able to refer you both to Calvinistic and Arminian authority—such as Hill's Divinity, and Watson's Institutes.

1. The first goes upon the supposition that pure goodness, or benevolence, is the absorbing attribute of the divine character; that his only object is to communicate happiness to his creatures, and the only ground of his hatred to sin is because it leads to misery. Hence the work of Christ was in no sense propitiatory or vicarious, but simply that of a mere teacher, sent to reveal the clemency of God, and to offer pardon upon condition of repentance, without any satisfaction

being made for sin. Such is the Socinian view. "The great object of the mission and death of Christ," says Dr. Priestley, "was to give the fullest proof of a state of retribution, in order to supply the strongest motives to virtue. \* \* \*

Although there are some texts in which the pardon of sin seems to be represented as dispensed in consideration of the sufferings, the merits, the resurrection, the life, or the obedience of Christ, we cannot but conclude, upon a careful examination, that all these views of it are partial representations; and that, according to the plain general tenor of Scripture, the pardon of sin is in reality always dispensed by the free mercy of God upon account of man's personal virtue, a penitent, upright heart, and a reformed, exemplary life, without regard to the sufferings or merit of any being whatever." Hill's Div. p. 419. According to such a system, the sufferings and death of Christ have nothing more to do with the sinner's salvation than the death of Stephen, of Paul, or any martyr to the truth, only as it was necessary for him to die to furnish an example to his followers, and confirm his doctrines by his resurrection from the dead.

2. The second system alluded to above concedes to the first, that the object of God, in his

work of creation and providence, is the bestowment of happiness upon his creatures, and that there is no difficulty, founded in his nature, that lies in the way of his pardoning the sinner without an atonement. But it is contended, that in the government of a righteous Being some distinction should be made between an innocent person and a penitent criminal, and that, before any offer of forgiveness is made upon conditions of repentance, there should be some memorial of the evil nature of sin; which is all that renders an atonement necessary. This, of course, involves a denial of the priestly office of Christ, and renders the whole gospel scheme a mere *expedient* in the divine government to cover up the guilt of those condemned, without any proper satisfaction to law and justice.

I shall not enter upon an examination of either of the views here presented. It is sufficient to say, that they involve or lead to a denial of the divinity of Christ, and make the atonement as much applicable to the devils in hell, as it is to the fallen race of Adam. If he died for a mere abstraction, simply to make a grand display of the character of God, and the evil of sin, or that it might be meet and proper for God to honour and reward his philanthropy, by forgiving the con-

demned subjects of his moral government, then have Satan, or the lost souls in hell, as much right to the benefits of his death as Peter, Paul, John, or any other of those who have received forgiveness in his name.

3. The third view has for its fundamental principle, that there is a difficulty in the way of the sinner's pardon in the rectitude of the divine character, in his hatred of sin, as well as the nature of the divine government and the interests it upholds. Hence the sufferings and death of Christ are regarded as strictly and necessarily vicarious. He came not only to reveal and offer pardon, but to procure it; not merely to make an exhibition of the mercy of God, but of his justice also. He stands, therefore, in the sinner's place, and receives what he should have borne. His sufferings and death have reference, not merely to the interests of the divine government, but to the infinite purity and rectitude of the divine character, and are, in the fullest sense, substitutional, vicarious, and propitiatory. Such is the doctrine of the Westminster and Cumberland Presbyterian Confessions of Faith. There has been no alteration made in the latter, so far as the nature of the atonement is concerned. See chap. viii. sec. 5.

It was this last view of the atonement that I

early adopted. I could find no other that recommended itself either to my judgment or my feelings. When first I felt that I had found peace with God; when first I was led to the cross, and enabled to contemplate the sufferings and death of Christ in their true light, I felt that I had found something more than a grand display of the divine character; something more than a mere *expedient* to save the sinner, without any satisfaction to the claims of law and justice. It was "a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest;" from the tempest that had spent all its force on him as the substitute of the sinner, upon whom was laid the iniquity of us all, and by whose stripes we are healed. A mere exhibition of philanthropy, or governmental display of the divine character, will not do. When the fountains of religious feeling and emotion are broken up by the omnipotent energies of the Spirit of God; when deep calls to deep, and guilt, with its terrific voice, pronounces the sinner's condemnation, the trembling soul finds no relief here. God is *holy* and *just* as well as *true*, and from his own nature is evolved the truth that he is a consuming fire; and in his own bosom there lie the sleeping storms that shall for ever beat upon the unsheltered regions of the lost. Take from the gospel the

single idea of substitution ; take from it the doctrine of a vicarious atonement, and there is nothing left worth contending for. It is this doctrine, too, that not only provides a hiding-place from the wind and the tempest, but presents itself as “the shadow of a great rock in a weary land,” and furnishes “rivers of water” to the fainting traveller that measures over the parched deserts of life with a pilgrim’s step. This doctrine I imbibed in the outset of my religious life, as well as in my investigations of truth ; and upon it I anchored all my hopes. I tried, however, to reconcile it with the doctrine that the atonement is general in its provisions—a leading doctrine of the Arminian system, which led me into such a region of darkness.

I was called upon again, however, to note the departure of the Cumberland Church from her own standards, and the danger of her position. Upon what ground, let me ask, do they stand as regards the nature and design of the atonement ? Not upon medium ground ; not, as upon other points, in the rear or centre of the Arminian ranks, but upon the extreme left flank, crowding off into the regions of Pelagian darkness. Hear the language of one who has written a book upon the subject, and who stands high in the confidence and affection of the church : “The atone-

ment," says he, "is a sovereign and merciful *provision* introduced into the administration of the divine government, instead of the execution of the punishment on the offender. It is an *expedient* which justifies the executive of the government in suspending the literal infliction of the penalty threatened." Such is the language of one who is now editing a religious paper, and who has been placed, by the voice of the Cumberland Church, at the head of her "Board of Publication." His definition is taken almost verbatim from a work on the extent of the atonement, by a Dr. Jenkyn of England, whose views accord with the ultra portion of New School Presbyterians of this country. "An atonement," says he, "is any *provision* introduced into the administration of a government instead of the infliction of the punishment on the offender; any *expedient* that will justify a government in suspending the literal execution of the penalty threatened." I have neither time nor space here to develop the author's system; but by examining the work referred to, you will find that it not only destroys the vicarious nature of the atonement, but degrades the obedience, the sufferings, and death of Christ to a mere *apology* for restoring the guilty to favour, without any satisfaction, in the proper sense of the word, being

made to law and justice. And his views of the nature of regeneration and the influence of the Spirit, as presented in a work upon the subject, coincide, in every important feature, with the views of Alexander Campbell, of Bethany, Va.; are part and parcel of his theory of the atonement, and may be evolved from the loose definition he has given, as adopted by the Cumberland Church, in the only work she has yet produced on the subject.

Another, who would be called great in the Cumberland Church, and who is hailed as one of the brightest stars in the constellation of her talent, occupies, if possible, more dangerous ground. For condemning his opinions I have been charged with "slandering the brethren;" the author of the charge darkly insinuating that it was something too black to come to the light. Some time ago we were gravely told by him, in an article in the "Cumberland Presbyterian," that there is a great amount of "stuff" sung at the present day by "the orthodox," and he cites as an example the familiar couplet:

"God in the person of his Son,  
Hath all his mightiest works outdone."

This is the same man who, a short time since, found a fossil shell upon the top of the Alleghe-

nies, and in his sophomoric rhapsodies on the wonders of geology tells us, that the greatest work of the Almighty is that of creation. He calls it "a poem," whose closing strains shall never be sung. The atonement, together with the redemption of man, is but an "episode" of that poem; and when this shall have been finished—when the purposes of God upon earth shall have been accomplished, the great and the all-absorbing theme of heaven shall be the new and the mighty works of creation he shall bring to light. What then, I ask, shall become of the monuments of Calvary, that have been erected upon every plain and every field of the celestial world? What of "the song of Moses, the servant of God and the Lamb?" Shall its sweet and sublime strains, which now, "as the sound of many waters," burst upon the ravished ear of heaven be forgotten? Shall a new choir be ushered in to sing of a greater and more glorious work than that of redemption? No. Not a thought, not a note in the rounds of eternal ages but shall speak of Calvary and of Christ crucified. This shall be the song, this the theme, this the poem, of the redeemed of God. Away, then, with such "expedients," "apologies," "provisions," and "episodes;" and let not those who would

minister at the altar, touch the ark of God with such unhallowed hands. And permit me here to add, that if the Cumberland Church are to follow such leaders, they will sooner or later find themselves in a region of darkness and of night, where there is neither road nor course; and where the deluded traveller, for entering upon such forbidden territory, must give himself a prey to the monsters of the deep, or be prepared to navigate, as did a famous personage of Milton, who, in passing the limits of chaos and night,

“O'er bog, or steep, through strait, rough, dense, or rare,  
With head, hands, wings, or feet, pursues his way;  
And swims, or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies.”

This is the end to which many of the theological finger-boards of the present day point the anxious inquirer after truth; this is the land, to which such principles, and definitions, and ideas, as are now being stereotyped in the Cumberland Church, will ultimately lead. Pardon me in such allusions. I do not sound an alarm to bring odium upon a church that contains many with whom my heart still lingers. Far be it. I simply wish to call your attention to the development that is being made in the history of its doctrines; a development from which I have learned an important and useful lesson.

Your affectionate son.

## LETTER V.

APPLICATION OF THE REMEDY—A PAINFUL CONFLICT—A WRONG COURSE—UNIVERSAL REDEMPTION—UNIVERSAL GRACE—A GLOOMY PROSPECT.

DEAR FATHER:—The points examined, and concerning which my mind had become permanently settled, were these: The doctrine of human depravity—the complete ruin of man—the justice of his condemnation—the legal or covenant relation of Adam and his posterity—the necessity of an atonement—and its vicarious nature. These doctrines are dependent upon each other, and in their proper and scriptural sense belong exclusively to the Calvinistic system. The Arminian, it is true, often makes use of the same phraseology as the Calvinist, but his meaning, if he has any clear understanding at all of his subject, is widely different. Because two places have the same name, it is no evidence that they lie in the same direction, or have the same locality. Two men, for example, may hail from Boston, and yet when at home be a thousand miles asunder—the one in

Boston, Massachusetts, and the other in some obscure village of Eastern emigrants upon the extreme frontier. The Arminian attempts to connect with his system the doctrine of a vicarious atonement, because the phrase is a popular one, and he cannot well do without it; but when we come to examine its meaning we find that he has no claim to it whatever. He may hold on to the name, but nothing more. The substance is as different from the view which forms a part of his creed, as a city on the Atlantic coast differs from a small village in the backwoods. It is a doctrine intimately associated with that of imputation; indeed cannot be maintained without it. It is a point hard by that which I have represented as the only pass through the mountains of difficulties, that gather around the student of theology in the outset of his investigations, and that increase upon his pathway, winding among their frozen summits, unless guided by the light of heaven he is enabled to find his way through. But I must hasten on.

Having determined the disease, and the nature of the remedy, the next question of importance relates to *the application* of the remedy. There are two questions that cover the whole ground. 1st. Upon what conditions are we made partakers

of the purchased blessings of the gospel? 2d. How are we enabled to comply with those conditions? With regard to the first of these there is but little controversy between Calvinists and Arminians, though there is here also a wide difference in the meaning attached to terms and phrases employed by each. It would lead me entirely beyond my limits to enter upon a discussion of these differences at present. With regard to the second of these questions there has been much heated controversy. Over this one subject the dismembered body of Christ has wrangled and warred more than over any other that has divided the church; and it is yet far from being settled. Each generation gives birth to the same exploded errors and arguments of the past, and the combat is renewed with the same degree of ardour as before. The question is one of vital interest, and demands of all a most careful and impartial investigation. There is no subject in the whole range of theology that has left such an impress upon my mind as this. It has been, until of late, a source of continued anxiety and constant meditation, and has led to many painful sacrifices of friendly feeling.

About the time I left home for the Theological Seminary, a friend placed in my hands a little

work on "*The Divine Purpose.*" I read it with interest and profit. It made a strong impression upon my mind, removed many of the difficulties from a doctrine I had so often heard condemned, and led to further reading and reflection. I felt anxious to investigate thoroughly the system of which it formed a part, and compare it with others, and cast my lot where truth was to be found. I went to Princeton from the Assembly, in which their own Confession of Faith had been pronounced "a ragged affair," with the conviction on my mind that I would have to abandon the idea of labouring in the same field with those whom I loved. I asked, you remember, for a letter of dismissal from the church to which I belonged, with the view of shaping my course according to my convictions of truth and duty. The effect produced on my mind by your reply to this I will not attempt to describe. The very memory of it gives pain. Never shall I forget your appeal to my heart, warm with parental affection, when, pointing to "the ringlets of age," you asked me, with a father's tenderness, to pause before taking such a step. I read your letter with painful feelings. I was grieved for having thus given pain to one whom I loved. I found relief, however, in the consciousness of being actuated by the purest

motives. Such an appeal at that time, doubtless, had a secret and powerful influence in determining my future course. I tried, however, in all my investigations, to remember that I was responsible, in such matters, only to the Searcher of hearts. The words of the Saviour were before me: "If any man come to me, and hate not father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." I continued my studies, with the determination to follow as my convictions of truth and duty might dictate. I paused as you had requested. There stood before me the doctrines of original sin, 'a vicarious atonement, a general atonement, and the doctrine of election. One or the other must be discarded. Of the first two I felt fully convinced; nothing, if I knew my own heart, could have shaken my faith in them. If they are taken away, the gospel is stripped of all its power; of its power to convince of sin and guilt, on the one hand, and to bring peace and joy to the troubled conscience, on the other. The idea of a general atonement, with its blessings alike provided for all, had taken a strong hold upon my mind, and was one that I had been taught to cherish as the only warrant for preaching the gospel "to every creature." Such a view

of the extent of the atonement, however, could not be reconciled with the doctrine of election, without destroying its vicarious nature. I was again in trouble. It was an important crisis, a painful conflict, in which the tenderest feelings of my heart were called into exercise. One thought decided the case. I felt that I could discard, with more safety and comfort to myself, the doctrine of election, than that of a general atonement; that I could explain away the difficulties connected with the denial of the former more easily, than those that might follow upon the denial of the latter. I therefore discarded the doctrine of election, and with it there went by the board also "the decrees of God," "effectual calling," and other distinctive doctrines of the Calvinistic system. I was glad thus to have before me still the hope of finding *the middle way*, and of gratifying a parent's wishes without doing violence to my own conscience.

Having, as before related, satisfied my mind with regard to the doctrine of imputation, I had hailed with delight the doctrine of a vicarious atonement as its necessary consequence—a doctrine which had previously found its way to my heart. At this point, however, I drove my last stake in the beaten road of Calvinism. I did not stop

long enough to examine the doctrine of imputation and the nature of the atonement, in all their relations and consequences. A little more reflection here would have saved me from many difficulties and trials; but the fabled mountains, deserts, giants, goblins, and ghosts of the ulterior regions of Calvinism drove me away. I resolved, therefore, at this point, in completing my system of theological truth, to leave the Calvinistic path, and strike out for a popular point in the Arminian system, for which I had already formed a strong partiality. To continue the figure—my object was to open out a safe and continuous route from the less objectionable points of Calvinism, leading on through the great city of universal redemption. I knew it, however, to be a place of much resort, and one through which almost every road of error in Christendom, from Puseyism and Popery to Mormonism, is made to pass. But I was encouraged by the hope that from such a depot of systems and philosophy, one path, at least, could be found that would be safe and attractive. I bore off with the most sanguine expectations. Little did I dream of what was to be encountered. A wilderness was before me—deserts and swamps of every description, unexplored and untrodden by the foot of man; for who yet had

attempted and succeeded in connecting together the doctrine of imputation, a vicarious atonement, and that of universal redemption? It was the only possible chance, however, for the middle way.

After many days and nights of peril and anxiety, I completed a hasty examination of the proposed route. I found, it is true, many difficulties to be encountered, but hoped to be able to remove them all. I conceived the wild project of clearing out the forests—levelling the mountains—filling up the valleys—draining the swamps, and of becoming a second Saint Patrick, to go forth and destroy the many tribes of croaking reptiles by which they were infested. I was urged on, too, by the pleasing thought that he, whom providence might raise up to accomplish such a work, would not only be hailed as the greatest benefactor of his race, but at the same time would acquire a fame as imperishable as that of the man who is yet to invent a perpetual motion, find the quadrature of the circle, or discover the north-west passage to the Pacific. Inspired by such hopes, I began to feel that I was out of danger; but, alas, was destined to meet with difficulties and disappointments at every step, until I got back into the beaten path I had left. There

was much yet to be learned—much in Arminian and Cumberland philosophy, of which I had never dreamed.

Holding to the doctrine of a vicarious atonement, general in its provisions, and denying the doctrine of election, I was led into the very heart of the Arminian system; and was there compelled to adopt the doctrines of human ability, and of sufficient or universal grace, in answer to the question proposed as to the manner in which we are enabled to comply with the conditions of salvation required in the gospel. These doctrines, however, I found, after mature investigation, to be unscriptural in their character, absurd in their philosophy, dangerous in their tendency, and oftentimes destructive of the strength and vitality of religion. At first view, to a mind of limited research, they may appear exceedingly plausible, but when stripped of their appendages, and narrowed down to the germinating principle from which the whole system may be developed, they bear upon their face their own refutation. A simple statement of these principles is all that is necessary to a proper understanding of the subject. Two will suffice: one of which is, that a soul spiritually dead, under the ordinary operations of the Spirit of God, may exercise the

most important functions of life; the other, that a certain amount of grace is given to every man at his birth, or when he arrives at the age of discretion, upon the proper improvement of which his salvation is made to depend. These two principles constitute the ground-work and main pillars of the whole Arminian scheme, and are such as demand the serious attention and careful investigation of every lover of truth and order. Viewing them in this light, permit me here to solicit your attention to an examination of their merits as the importance of the subject may seem to demand.

The practical workings of these principles, together with some of the exhibitions of party zeal, so often made by their ignorant and blinded votaries, demand at least a passing notice. This I shall reserve for my next communication.

Your affectionate son.

## LETTER VI.

### OPPOSITION TO CALVINISM—THE BIG MEETING— ARMINIAN LOGIC AND ZEAL.

DEAR FATHER :—When I see a man trying to distort the proper meaning of words, and presenting a garbled statement of the views of an opponent, I take it as conclusive evidence that he has a bad cause; more especially when he is constantly at it, and manifests in all that he does a feeling of uneasiness and hostility towards those who oppose him. During my brief sojourn in the Cumberland church I was called upon to witness many such exhibitions that, in the outset of my ministerial labours, made anything but a favorable impression on my mind. I found there, in common with all others who hold to Arminian sentiments, the most uncompromising and malignant opposition to the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church, while there was not a man that I met in all my intercourse, that could state fairly and fully what those doctrines are. Their views were entirely one-sided—the truth was garbled to suit their own convenience, and the creations of their

own fruitful fancy were constantly being presented before the minds of the people, thereby deepening their prejudices, and drawing still closer the dark folds of their mantle of ignorance and bigotry. I found many things neither to edification nor profit; but, on the contrary, in their immediate and final consequences, highly injurious to the cause of religion and morality. I allude to the disgraceful scenes so often witnessed in Arminian churches, which some are pleased to call revivals of religion—where the sympathies and passions are worked upon by every possible means, and a combined and concerted effort put forth to make people religious by the instrumentality of mourners' benches, anxious seats, shouting committees, ranting exhortations, and such like—where noise and devotion are considered as synonymous, and the effect of the whole scene dependent upon the confusion that results from the extraordinary means employed. Am I wrong in tracing the origin of such exhibitions of enthusiasm to the Arminian doctrine of grace and ability? If God has already done all that he will do or can do for the salvation of the sinner, then the use of such means, under certain circumstances, follows as a necessary consequence. Do not consider me as condemning revivals of religion when properly conducted. By

no means. They are the very life and soul of the church—essential to her growth and prosperity, if not to her very existence. I do condemn, however, in the most unqualified terms, every counterfeit of a revival, where passion and not reason is addressed, where sectarian bigotry presides, and persons of every age and class are led to make “a profession of religion,” who can give no rational account of the gospel plan of salvation, or of the hope that is in them.

In order that I may not be misunderstood, and that I may accomplish my object with as much brevity as possible, permit me here to present a characteristic scene, illustrative of Arminian logic and zeal, in which the advocates of such a system so often congratulate themselves. Scenes similar to this are of no unfrequent occurrence among those whose main standpoint is this doctrine of universal and sufficient grace—and, I am sorry to say, have sometimes been witnessed in the operations of the Cumberland church. Its counterpart will be found in the early history of the church in western Pennsylvania, as well as other parts of the country; the unpleasant and bitter fruits of which are now every day realized.

I will locate the scene to which I allude in the town of ——, at what is called a “big meeting.”

It was at a time when religion was at a low ebb. The church was asleep. Many seasons of communion had passed without any tokens of the divine presence. Her broken ranks were becoming identified with the world, and their last end becoming worse than the first. Something must be done. A meeting must be appointed, not to obtain the divine presence and power, but simply to stir the inborn energies of the soul to the improvement of grace already possessed. The day was fixed—the meeting commenced—but its progress seemed to indicate a complete failure. Nothing was effected. Sermons had been preached, the people had been exhorted, yet they were still cold and lifeless. Something more must be done; every means must be employed to get up some kind of an excitement; it will never do to let a *Big Meeting* close without a fuss of some kind; there must be a little fox-fire kindled rather than have no fire; the dry bones must be rattled a little, even if there should be no prospect of giving them flesh and sinews. The machinery was accordingly put in motion. Divers kinds of meetings were appointed, as time and circumstances would permit—prayer-meetings for old men, young men, and women; love-feasts, conference-meetings, general class-meetings, particular

class-meetings, and every thing else that could be thought of. Preachers far and near were solicited to attend, and every arrangement was made by which to operate upon the prejudices and passions of the multitude.

Those selected to officiate on the occasion were well adapted to their work, among the most prominent of whom were two very noted and distinguished characters—a certain Professor Aristotle and Timothy Boisterous, whose sayings and doings demand our notice.

A timely announcement of their arrival was made, and the community fully advertised as to what might be expected from such an array of talent. The town hall was brilliantly lighted for the occasion—the bells were rung—the hour arrived—the people assembled—and all eyes were turned towards the noted and distinguished characters on the stand.

After the usual preliminaries, the Rev. Professor, with his colleague in the rear, arose and with solemn emphasis announced his text —“ Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.” Jer. xiii. 23. I can only give some of the leading thoughts of the discourse. The passsge of divine truth before us, said he, is

generally regarded as one of the strongholds of Calvinism; the doctrines of which, I am bold and free to assert, and able to maintain, have done the world more injury than any other heresy or system of error. Atheism, Infidelity, and Popery itself may hang their heads when it appears. Grim, dark, and forbidding, it is more to be detested than the wildest dream of Beelzebub, or any other of the tenants of the pit. It has ground the poor—exalted the rich—licked the blood of martyrs—and steeped the souls of men in bigotry, ignorance and vice. I therefore, said he, invite and solicit your serious attention; and when I have finished my argument, if there is any one here who will have the assurance to quote the passage before us, to bolster up the decayed, rotten, crumbling system of Geneva, I will venture to say that he will quote Scripture to prove the devil an angel of light.

So much for the exordium. Then followed a summary account of the creation, the fall of man, the antediluvian, the patriarchal, the Mosaic, and prophetic periods of the world's history; and, lastly, the gospel dispensation, in which *a sufficiency of grace* is poured upon all flesh—so that the Jew and the Greek, the bond and the free, the Christian and the Pagan, all have the neces-

sary light and ability to enable them to become as perfect as the angels in heaven, if they would only improve the means placed within their reach. This is the doctrine to which we hold, said he: free grace and fair chance to all. But to the proof, the points of which were as follows: 1. The Ethiopian is far more sagacious and tractable than the leopard; for the Scriptures expressly say that "Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands;" whereas, no promise is made to the latter, except that he shall lie down with the kid, "and a young child shall lead them." There is a self-determination and ability exercised, under the influence of motives and means implied, in the one case that are not found in the other. 2. The language of the text plainly implies, that it is as easy for the Ethiopian to change his skin as it is for the leopard to change his spots; and of course a far easier task to induce him to do it, if he could only be convinced of the fact, and the proper motives presented to the mind. 3. It is as easy for the leopard, unless caged or confined, to change his spots as it is to perform any other act. There can be no greater mistake, said he, than is often found in the interpretation of a single word in the passage before us. The prophet is not here speaking of the inability of the leopard to shake off the beau-

tiful and *spotted* covering that nature intended it should wear—this is a dogma of Calvinism—but simply of its power to go from one place to another, as prompted by its instincts, its desires, its hopes, and fears. Precisely in the same way, said he, may the Ethiopian change his skin, by changing his relation to the outward circumstances and causes by which his dark and swarthy appearance has been produced. Let him change his spots—let him migrate from the hot, burning, sandy deserts of Africa, to the frozen and snowy regions of the north. Let him gaze upon the perpetual snows of the frigid zone, as he has upon the scorched plains of the torrid, and in the course of time he will become as white and as bleached as the polar bear. The argument, then, is briefly this: as surely as the leopard has the power of locomotion, and can change his spots, so may the Ethiopian change his skin, and ye also do good, who are accustomed to do evil. Where, then, I ask, said he, in conclusion, are the absurdities and dogmas of Calvinism? of election and divine efficiency?—dead—thrice dead. And in view of such exhibitions of the truth of God, who will stand up for their defence?—who will avow his belief in such absurdities?—who, I ask, in this enlightened and progressive age will attempt to

uphold such a soul-destroying and God-dishonouring system? Echo answers—who?

Thus closed the discourse of the “learned” professor, when his colleague addressed the audience, by way of exhortation, in his usual vociferous and vehement style. He surpassed himself, and succeeded in raising the feelings of the numerous assembly to the highest point of excitement. The scene that followed beggars all description. The strongest hyperbole falls below the reality. While the preacher exhorted, the women shouted, and every thing that could make a noise sounded its highest and loudest note. Fiddles and fifes, kettles and drums, conch-shells and triangles, horse-fiddles and bag-pipes, and every other imaginable combination of sounds could not have produced a wilder discord. This, however, was a necessary part of the machinery, without which nothing could be effected. Accordingly, every appeal was now made to the passions and sympathies of the excited assembly. Nothing was too boisterous, and nothing too extravagant. The world was coming to an end—the judgment was just at hand—the stars were already loose in their sockets—and the moon was going crazy. The heavens are already black with the tempest, said Timothy. The old ship of Zion will soon be off

—the last chance is offered—steam high—and already loosed from her anchorage! Come one, come all—change your *spots* and thereby change your *skins* and your *hearts*—old men and matrons, young men and maidens, with bonnets and boots, trimmings and trappings, luggage and baggage—higgelty piggelty—roll in and let us roll off, ere the elements are melted, and the bending heavens empty themselves of impending wrath.

Amid such scenes of confusion the wearied and exhausted assembly tarried till the night was far spent. Had the priests of Baal been there, they might have found an atmosphere somewhat congenial to their own feelings. Had the old prophet been there, who mocked their devotions, he might have said to them as he did to the idolatrous worshippers: “Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awakened.”

But I forbear continuing this train of thought further. My object is not ridicule—far from it. Lest you should think me chargeable with such an attempt I will drop the figure, and in my next communication will endeavour to present this doctrine of *human ability* and *universal grace* in a more tangible form. You have here simply a

picture of the impressions made upon my mind with regard to the logic and untempered zeal of those who make it their main rallying point—impressions which I would gladly suppress, but they form an important link in the chain of causes that have led me to my present position.

Your affectionate son.

## LETTER VII.

SOURCE AND EVILS OF UNDUE EXCITEMENT—  
HUMAN ABILITY—SUFFICIENT GRACE—SAME  
AS ROMISH DOCTRINE—DIFFICULTIES AND AB-  
SURDITIES INVOLVED.

DEAR FATHER :—The extravagances to which I have referred, I am confident you will condemn, as much as I do, as being often both injurious and disgraceful to religion. But in condemning them we indirectly condemn the doctrine under consideration. Let a man be convinced that all men, under all circumstances and conditions of life, have the necessary light and ability in order to salvation, and what else has he to do, if he is a minister of the gospel, but to get up some kind of religious excitement, that by some spasmodic effort the will may be brought into exercise, something like getting in motion a wagon that has been stalled in the mud? The way is clear, the horses have strength enough to pull it out, if they would only exert it. To accomplish this, all the driver has to do is to lay on the whip. Thousands under the influence of such heated excitements as are here alluded to, may be led to

shout their unmeaning hallelujahs, and run well for a time, but, destitute of any clear views of the plan of salvation, and having no principle of vitality, their last end, in most instances, will be found worse than the first. In the Methodist Church such cases are more easily disposed of. They may be placed upon the list of those who have fallen from grace. But in the Cumberland Church, whose book of discipline has been taken from one intended for a different order of things, they will oftentimes be found, as the extra pots of manna in the Jewish camp, to breed worms and disease. I am not drawing upon my imagination. I speak what I have seen and felt during my ministry in the Cumberland Church. I might cite numerous instances that have come under my own observation, illustrative of the evil here alluded to, but I forbear pressing the point further. I promised to present this doctrine of human ability and sufficient grace in a more tangible form. For the sake of convenience, I will consider both together, as they are necessarily connected in the Arminian scheme.

I wish, in the first place, to call your attention to an important fact, that is not sufficiently noticed, with regard to this cardinal feature of the Arminian system. It is a favourite doctrine of the

Romish Church, and constitutes an essential element in "the mystery of iniquities." The decrees of the Council of Trent, on this subject, express the same views and feelings as are manifested by the great body of Arminians, of every grade throughout the country. "Whoever shall affirm," say they, "that when man's free will is moved and wrought upon by God, it does in no respect co-operate and consent to divine influence and calling, so as to dispose and prepare him to obtain the grace of justification; or that he cannot refuse if he would, but is like a lifeless thing, altogether inert, and merely passive—let him be accursed." There is the same harmless shaft here blindly thrown at the shield of truth, from the hand of the "mother of harlots," as now oftentimes comes in darkening showers from the Arminian ranks. This is no bugbear of the imagination. "The Jesuits maintain," says Pascal in his Provincial Letters, who himself was a devoted Romanist, "that there is a grace given generally to all men, subject in such a way to free will, that the will renders it efficacious or inefficacious at its pleasure, without any additional aid from God, and without needing anything on his part in order to act effectively—and hence they term this grace *sufficient*, because it suffices of

itself for action." This, I am sorry to say, is precisely the position occupied by the Cumberland Church, in common with the great body of the Arminians. It would be an instructive lesson here to trace the many iniquities into which it has led its blinded votaries, as guided by popes, cardinals and priests; but such a discussion would be foreign to my purpose. It is not my object to aim at presenting any new phase of the subject, but simply such views as he that runs may read and understand, and have operated upon my own mind in leading me from such a dark and dangerous position.

I found, it is true, many passages of Scripture, when isolated from their proper connection and meaning, that seemed to favour this doctrine; but, if followed out by the light of other portions of the word of God, no end can be found to the difficulties and absurdities into which it will lead us. Some of these I will now briefly notice.

It deprives the church, in the first place, of every motive to energy and action, in the great work before her—a work commensurate with the world's immortal interests. I will not draw out a lengthy argument to prove this fact; it is a plain case, and may be stated in a few words. The united voice of the Methodist and Cumberland

Churches will tell us that Christ suffered and died in the same sense for every man; and in view of the purchase of his death God is in justice bound to deal out to every man a sufficiency of grace, to enable him to comply with the terms of life as offered in the gospel; and if these terms are not offered to some by a living ministry, it must be done by inspiration, or some other way provided for their salvation, than that of "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." I am not speaking at random. "Since there is a future life," says Knapp, a popular author in the Lutheran Church, "we may trust that God will there lead the heathen to that higher degree of happiness and clearness of knowledge which they did not attain in this life; because, without fault of their own, they were incapable of receiving it. To such a dispensation in the future world, there is at least an allusion in Rev. xxii. 2,—in the tree of life by the river of life, whose leaves are for *the healing of the nations.*" Knapp's Theo. sec. 121. "God," says Adam Clarke in his commentary on the second chapter of Romans, "has never confined himself to any *one particular way* of communicating his salvation, any more than he has confined his saving grace to one people;"—"as he is no

respector of persons, all nations are equally dear to him; and he has granted, and will grant to them such discoveries of himself as have been, and will be, *sufficient* for their salvation." Where then, I ask, is the necessity of an organized Church, or the means of grace? What advantage had the Jew, and what have we, from the fact that to us are committed the oracles of God? The millions of Asia, and of Africa, although in the region of darkness and the shadow of death; although in a land full of the habitations of cruelty, superstition and idolatry, are, according to this system, upon the same platform of mercy with ourselves, have the same amount of grace, the same chance, and may have the same hope of heaven that we enjoy. And to what purpose, I ask, have you been labouring so long with the poor savages upon our frontier, if prior to your labours they had a sufficiency of grace, of light, and ability in order to salvation? Such a doctrine is infinitely more calculated to destroy the energies of the Church than any in the Calvinistic system can be. I might here appeal to facts in the history of the Church, as well as to standard authority, in proof of such a position; but I pass to another difficulty that stood in my way.

This doctrine of Arminian grace involves many

principles, not only unphilosophical, but ruinous to the cause of morals and religion, if carried to their legitimate consequences. I shall not here enter upon the vexed question concerning the nature and condition of human volitions and the freedom of the will; it is wholly unnecessary; one or two thoughts of a more practical nature will suffice. The advocates of this doctrine, for instance, take for granted a commonly received maxim, which, if carried fully into practical life, would undermine the most important institutions of society—a maxim upon which the Pelagian, the Socinian, the Arminian, the Papist, the Jesuit, and the libertine, alike build their creed and their hopes. “Responsibility,” say they, “can only be commensurate with ability.” Take this away, and all that is left of the system of each is in ruins. In order to test the danger and absurdity of such a position, apply the principle, for a moment, to the ordinary regulations of society. Let a proclamation be issued by the authorities of government, declaring that all persons disabled with regard to the performance of any duty required of them, shall no longer be amenable to law. Look at the consequences. The drunkard and the sot, whatever may be the crimes they commit while in a state of intoxication, must go free; not a hair

of their heads can be touched, though for every bottle of rum they take the life of a fellow-being. Every man, too, in a state of heated passion, may plead the same excuse, whatever may be the crime he commits. The debauchee, whose debasing and brutal habits have destroyed every refined feeling and sensibility of the soul, may wallow in sensuality and vice, till his body becomes as loathsome as the putrid carcass, that would even nauseate the fowl and the worm that feed upon it, and yet we are to look upon him with the same degree of complacency that marks our intercourse with the virtuous. And, if the maxim be true, the blasphemies of hell are as innocent as the songs of paradise; for there is no ability there to love God. If responsibility and guilt are to be measured by the ability of the creature at the time the offence is committed, then will Satan and his legions be for ever justified in their eternal and fiendish hatred of infinite purity and benevolence.

The principle I am contending for is simply this: *The morality of an act is determined by the state of mind under which it is committed.* Responsibility, therefore, in this case, must be referred to some other standard. The sinner cannot free himself from the charge of guilt upon the plea of his inability. God will not deprive

any of his intelligent creatures of their ability to spiritual good, to virtue and holiness, without good, wise, and just reasons. When that ability is lost, I care not by what means or instrumentalities it departs, they are held responsible for all that flows from their corrupt nature. It is an important principle, and should never be lost sight of, founded in reason and Scripture, and furnishes the only safeguard to the institutions of society.

An opponent here steps up, and tells me that he is willing to grant all this, but he contends that it is a *sufficiency of grace* that makes men responsible after all. I ask, is it *grace* that makes devils responsible, and fills all hell with blasphemies? Is it grace that has brought sin and misery into our world? Is it grace that has peopled the regions of despair with millions of immortal beings from earth? There is no escape from an affirmative answer to such questions, if it is grace only that makes men responsible; for without it, if this be correct, no charge could be brought against them. I am here told that a distinction must be made; that devils once enjoyed a probationary state in the immediate presence of God himself; but having rebelled, they were condemned and consigned to the burning lake;

whereas, we come into the world with depraved natures, in producing which we have had no agency. In reply, I answer in the language of the Westminster and Cumberland Confession of Faith, that we stood probation in Adam, as our federal head, and “sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression ;” or rather, in the more expressive language of the apostle Paul, “by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.”

I would here call your attention again, in passing, to the necessity that is pressing upon the Cumberland Church, and driving her from every Calvinistic position in her creed into the broad and beaten road of Arminianism. Already the whole body of the Church, as I have before stated, have departed from this important and fundamental truth of the gospel, the doctrine of imputation, so plainly laid down in her Confession of Faith, and by the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans. And now, there is scarcely a landmark that they can call their own, except a few outposts, that are being erected by individual effort, far off in the regions of Pelagian night. I will resume this subject again in my next.

Your affectionate son.

## LETTER VIII.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED—CHRISTIAN DEPRIVED OF ALL ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAYER—AND GOD OF HIS GLORY, AUTHORITY AND POWER—GOD HUMBLED AND ABASED, AND THE SINNER EXALTED.

DEAR FATHER:—The principles that lie at the foundation of the Arminian doctrine of *ability* and *grace*, are not only calculated to destroy the energies of the Church, and unhinge the institutions of society, as I have endeavoured to show, but they go still farther; they enter the Christian's closet, and destroy the life and soul of his private devotions. They are calculated to dry up every fountain, and destroy every spring of religious feeling and action. This you cannot fail to see by looking at the subject for a moment in a practical way—directing your thoughts to one in whose present and everlasting well-being you can but feel the deepest interest.

You have a son, my only and dear brother, who makes no pretensions to piety, and whose mind

is absorbed in worldly pursuits and pleasures. Every morning and every evening a parent's heart is burdened with petitions at a throne of grace for converting power that he may be made wise unto salvation. What encouragement thus to pray, can be drawn from a scheme of which this doctrine of universal and sufficient grace forms an important part? None. Not a ray of hope lightens up and cheers the Christian's closet when wrestling with God for the unconverted. If Arminians are right, if the Cumberland Church is right, heaven has already guarantied to every man a certain amount of grace, and all the prayers of men, of saints, and angels, although clad in sackcloth, and prostrated before the eternal throne in the most humble supplication, could not prevail upon God to add anything to that grace already bestowed, until it is properly improved. And when the sinner improves that grace, as required of him, the attributes of God, yea, the throne of God is pledged for the bestowal of more; and if the new supply is improved, still more is granted; and so on till he is brought into the kingdom. If this be true, then, we say, all our petitions, although they may rise from burdened, aching and bursting hearts, can avail nothing for the salvation of the unconverted. How chilling the thought to the pious

soul! What encouragement have we as ambassadors of Christ, to give ourselves to prayer as well as to the ministry of the word? What encouragement can the devoted missionary of the cross draw from the fact that he is followed by the prayers of the church, and his cause stately remembered before a throne of grace? If salvation is conditioned upon the will of the creature, instead of the will of God, there can be none.

I have before shown that this doctrine deprives the Church of all motive to intelligent labour; what then is left for her to do, if her prayers can avail nothing at a throne of grace for the unconverted? She can only fold her arms in sleep, and wait for the day of *the creature's* power and will. Now and then, it is true, she may shake off her slumbers, and put forth a spasmodic effort in her fitful operations, not to enlighten nor to convince—for such influences are already guaranteed—but simply to get up some kind of religious excitement to save the craft, and bring the will to its “self-determining” point. This is all that can be aimed at upon such a system; and when accomplished, what security have you that your work will stand for a single hour?

But we will go further still. Not only do the principles contained in the doctrine of Arminian

grace affect the Christian in his relations to the Church, to society, and to his God, as shown above, but they lead us into the very presence of God, and mar the most essential attributes of the divine character; yea, more, if carried out to their legitimate and utmost limit, they would even destroy every vestige of the glory, the authority, and power, of the divine Being.

It is common for Cumberland Presbyterians and others to illustrate this doctrine by what is called "an equilibrium of forces." The world, the flesh, and the devil, are represented as pulling the sinner in one direction, and the Spirit of God in another, till the two opposing forces are equally balanced. It is then left "to the self-determining power of the will" to give *efficiency* to the one or the other, as it may see proper to decide. The same idea is sometimes presented under the figure of a balance—the pivot upon which it is suspended, representing the will. The devil is represented as hanging all his weights upon one arm of the scales, and the Spirit of God as suspending a counteracting influence upon the other, till an *equilibrium* is produced. It is then left to the self-moving power of the pivot to give the predominating influence. To say nothing of the philosophy contained in such illustrations,

may I not with far more propriety bring the charge that is so often urged by Cumberland Presbyterians and others against the Calvinistic system—the charge of mockery and insincerity upon the part of God in his dealings with the sinner—mockery, not only of the sinner himself, but of him who died for his redemption? I say it with emphasis, yet with reverence and respect. Can it be that the Son of God was bathed in the sweat of his own blood, and hung and died upon the rugged spikes of the cross beneath the hidings of his Father's face, and yet all that is done for those for whom he thus died, is to deal out to them simply an influence equal in amount to that which is dragging them to the pit? Can it be that the thousands that daily crowd the gates of hell might have been saved, if only one more ray of light had broke in upon their darkness—if the feeblest breath of heaven, the smallest particle of down from an angel's wing had only been thrown into the scales—if the least possible influence had only been added to that already exerted upon them, and yet that influence withheld? Is this the operation of infinite power as guided by infinite love? And can it be that the heart that beat in the bosom of God, and bled upon the cross for human woes, is "satisfied" with such a display?

Is it reasonable to suppose that infinite love, and wisdom, and power could withhold so small a pittance of grace necessary to complete the work of the soul's redemption, that has already cost such an outlay of blood and treasure? If such questions can be answered in the affirmative—as they must if this doctrine of Arminian grace be true—then, I ask, where are the feelings in the divine bosom, corresponding to those revealed in his word?

When pressed upon this point, both Methodists and Cumberland Presbyterians tell us that God does all he can to save the sinner—that his power is *limited* by the free agency of the creature—that all the means that heaven could devise are exhausted. They go even farther than this. They tell us with a most unblushing confidence, that it is impossible for God to prevent sin in a moral government—that after the creation of man, omnipotence itself could not prevent him from falling. I will not attempt here to follow this view of the power and moral government of God to its legitimate consequences—its difficulties, absurdities and blasphemies. Their name is legion, which no man can number and no man can bind. It involves the insecurity of heaven and earth, the wretchedness of God, and the everlasting misery of

millions of his creatures whose salvation is beyond his reach.

Once more: another tendency and necessary result of the doctrine under consideration, is to cultivate in the human heart a feeling, the destruction of which is the great aim of the gospel, and essential to the happiness of man. It is that of pride—the strongest elementary principle of our carnal nature at work in the human heart. In its incipient stages, it has destroyed the image of God as stamped upon the soul in a state of innocency; it has brought ruin, misery and death upon our race; it has done more to destroy the temporal peace and happiness of man, than any other feeling of his nature; it has presented more obstacles to the plans and purposes of God upon earth, than any other; and remains unmoved amid all his judgments and threatenings as revealed in his providence and word. A salvation from sin, then, must put down this feeling in all its workings. God must be exalted and the sinner abased. God must be just while the sinner is condemned; and, if saved at all, the glory is due to sovereign and invincible grace alone. There is no foothold upon which the sinner can stand and claim anything to himself. Christ is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and re-

demption, that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. It is not so, if Arminianism be correct—it is impossible. Everything is here reversed; God is abased and the sinner exalted; God is unjust while the sinner is innocent and unfortunate in his condemnation; God has humbled himself from the very necessity of the case; the creature is exalted, not by the grace and power of God, but by the “self-determination” of his own will. God has done nothing toward his salvation but what he was in justice bound to do; and the creature has all the glory to himself. I am not now speaking of the extremes of Arminian error, as found in the systems of the Pelagians and others. I refer simply to that one fundamental principle of Arminianism upon which the Cumberland Church have learned to gaze as their *polar star* of theology. Look at the whole scheme as it stands out before us, and see if I am not right.

We are told, with confidence and emphasis, that without some method of forgiveness and restoration, the providences of God to our race would be unjust—that without the offer of life, the misery, the wretchedness, and the death to which all are doomed would convulse the universe. So say the

oracles of the Methodist Church, and the same sentiment is loudly echoed from the pulpit of the Cumberland Church. As an off-set or compensation for these evils, say they, God has brought life and immortality to light through a Redeemer. It was a debt, then, that God owed to the unfortunate race of man. Here we find introduced the doctrine under consideration. It stands thus: God is bound, not by the laws of his nature merely, but by the necessity of the case, to furnish a Redeemer, and bring life and immortality to light; he is, by the same rule, bound to furnish to every man a "sufficiency of grace" to enable him to understand and accept the terms of life. If, then, it is left to any imaginary spontaneity or "self-determining power" in man to render efficacious that grace, I ask, where is the mercy, the love, and the grace of the gospel. Grace is no longer grace—love is no longer love—and instead of justice and mercy reciprocating the kiss of reconciliation at the cross, it was justice and cruelty that met and embraced each other in mockery; justice with a sword bathed in innocent blood, and cruelty robed in the garb of mercy. And to what a degraded position is the great God brought upon such a scheme! He humbles himself to indemnify a race of creatures he has injured! He

sends his Son into the world to reveal his will, and the plan proposed—to make an apology to the universe for what he has done and what he intends doing; his Spirit also is sent, a church is organized, and a living ministry appointed to carry out that plan. And now to what a pinnacle of pride is the creature exalted, who, with his Maker under his feet as *debtor*, and with the keys of heaven and hell at his command, can do as he listeth! It is enough. The mind recoils from the contemplation of such absurdities; and my pen refuses to record the feelings of my heart.

A single remark, and I will close this communication. If those who hold to Arminian sentiments, would make a practical and personal application of the old adage, which teaches that those who live in glass houses should not throw stones—if they would only look well to their own views, they would find cause to spare much of the abusive language and epithets they are accustomed to heap upon the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church, or rather their perversion and caricatures of those doctrines.           Your affectionate son.

## LETTER IX.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED—ARGUMENT FROM  
SCRIPTURE—COVENANT OF GRACE.

DEAR FATHER:—Such difficulties as I have mentioned, growing out of the Arminian doctrine of “sufficient grace,” multiplying upon my path, led me to a more careful perusal of the Scriptures upon the subject. It was not until my mind was satisfied here, that I was induced to abandon the position, and receive the teachings of inspiration upon other points with meekness and submission. I shall not, by any means, attempt to collate and comment upon the many passages of Scripture bearing upon this doctrine. I have neither time nor occasion to undertake such a task. Your attention is kindly solicited only to one or two, out of the many that might be adduced.

There is one passage on which my mind has often dwelt with delight and profit, both from its peculiar adaptation to the subject under consideration, and the circumstances under which it was delivered. It was first announced by the prophet

Jeremiah to the disconsolate Jews, and reiterated with peculiar and marked emphasis by the apostle Paul in the eighth chapter of his letter to the Hebrews. It reads thus: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord. I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

Three distinct covenants have been entered into by God with man, in which have been offered to him the blessings of eternal life. Two of these having failed to accomplish their end, have passed away and are no longer in force; though the ulti-

mate and secret purposes of God have been fulfilled in them, as in all that he does.

The first was a representative plan, adapted only to a state of innocency, in which our first parents were placed upon trial, not only for themselves, but those also "descending from them by ordinary generation." The consequences in this case were disastrous—the covenant was broken, and the hopes of man seem buried forever in the ruins of the fall. The sentence, "dying thou shalt die," shattered his physical frame, by which he was left exposed to the rude attacks of disease, and finally to become a victim of death, and to rot in the grave. It left the immortal spirit deserted by the divine influence, and exposed to the withering and wasting moral disease that was to terminate in the deathless agonies of the second death. It left our world exposed to the curse of a broken and immutable law, and to the eye of sense, in a helpless and hopeless condition.

Vain now are the efforts of man to revive the broken contract or the covenant of works, as it is called, as a means of salvation. Vain are the efforts of the moralist by which he goes about to establish a righteousness of his own, to secure the favour of God and the reward of eternal life. The "filthy rags" of such a righteousness will only

serve to render still more exposed and deformed his nakedness and shame. Two insurmountable difficulties lie in the way. 1. The law requires an obedience which the sinner is not able to render: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself;" and "cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things written in the book of the law to do them." 2. The sinner's life is already forfeited for past offences—the penalty of the law must be met and the claims of justice satisfied; for, "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins."

Since the fall of man and his banishment from the garden, two important covenants have marked his history, embodying the terms of life and pardon—the one under the old, and the other under the new dispensation. The former of these proving to be defective, was annulled after the purposes of God were accomplished by it; the latter, being "established upon better promises," comes to us laden with all the purchased blessings of the gospel, and makes full and ample provision for all the wants of man in his lost and ruined condition. The points of superiority of this covenant over the former, as presented to us in the passage already quoted, have an important bearing

upon the subject under consideration, and are worthy of more than the passing notice I shall be able to give them here.

1. It contemplates a universal diffusion of a knowledge of God—"All shall know me from the least to the greatest." Under the old dispensation, all that was known of God was revealed in the law of Moses, the shadowy rites of the temple-service, and the extraordinary communications made to those raised up for a particular purpose. Such sources of knowledge were limited and obscure, and were *insufficient* to save the Jewish people from idolatry and rebellion against God. But under the new covenant or dispensation, it is not so. Every truth essential to the happiness and salvation of man is presented in the full revelation that God has made of himself, in the gospel of his Son, and every facility is offered for acquiring a knowledge of that truth. The promise is even now literally fulfilled. The covenant being made with Israel—with the church of God—none says to his neighbour, Know the Lord; for all know him, from the least to the greatest. The Sabbath-school scholar may learn more of God and the plan of salvation, by means and facilities placed in his hands, than the most learned of the priests or Scribes

that ministered daily in the temple and synagogue service.

It was in allusion to this fact, doubtless, that our Saviour said to the multitudes that had attended upon the ministry of John: "Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." What then, I ask, becomes of the levelling system of Arminians?—of "the discoveries of himself," that God makes to those who are not of Israel, according to Adam Clarke and those who sympathize with him in this doctrine of universal and sufficient grace? If the least in the kingdom of God has more of these "discoveries" than he who was sent to prepare the way for the Messiah, what an impassable gulf, what a world of night must there be between such and those upon whom the wrath of God abides, who have "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things;" "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves

over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Rom. i. 23. Eph. iv. 18, 19.

2. This new covenant made with the church of God makes full and adequate provision for the forgiveness of sin. "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

In this respect, the covenant made at Sinai was defective also. It promised, it is true, forgiveness to those who would repent and turn unto God; but the institutions of that covenant, in themselves considered, contained nothing upon which could be based the full acquittal of the sinner from the charge of guilt. "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Nevertheless, the sacrifices and institutions of the ceremonial law, though having no efficacy in themselves, pointed the devout and believing Jew to the great sacrifice that God himself was to offer up in the fulness of the time. The time has come—the Lamb of God has been offered—ample provision is now made for the forgiveness of sin, and the everlasting salvation of those who accept of it as presented in the gospel; and what is more, to such the promise is, "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." I will be

their God, their benefactor, their preserver, their defender, and everlasting source of life. But this is not all. The provisions of the covenant of grace stop not here, else man would still have been without hope.

3. It provides for the fulfilment of those conditions upon which all is suspended. "I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts." Here was the prominent defect of the old covenant. When God descended upon the burning mount to deliver the tables of the law, together with the ceremonial institutions of the Jewish economy, every promise made was conditioned upon some external act of obedience or of worship. If the Jew desired temporal prosperity or length of days, a strict obedience to *all* the requirements of the law was to be rendered; if he asked forgiveness of sin, the smiles of God, and the hope of heaven, sacrifices were to be offered at the appointed time, and in the appointed way; and this with the eye of faith resting not upon the bleeding victim of the altar, but upon the victim that was to bleed upon the cross, "the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world." But while every promise was thus conditioned upon the performance of some stipulated duty, the grace necessary to enable the sinner to comply with the

required conditions was not pledged. Its language in this respect was similar to that of the law—"do this and live." The vital principle thus being withheld, and prompted by their own hearts, the Jews not only failed to comply with the proposed conditions, but rebelled against God, "turned quickly out of the way, their fathers walked in," "went a-whoring after other gods," and brought upon themselves the severest judgments of heaven. "They continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord."

The same general idea is incidentally, yet forcibly, presented in the fourth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Galatians. "It is written," says he, "that Abraham had two sons; the one by a bond maid, the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bond woman was born after the flesh; but he of the free woman was by promise. Which things are an allegory; for these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem, which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all." According to this instructive allegory, we are born not as

Ishmael, who came through the "combined agency" of the free and the bond—of Abraham and Agar—begotten by the power that was given to the one in his old and decrepid age, in connection with the youthful and native strength of the other. Such is not our birth. "We brethren," says Paul, "as Isaac was, are children of the promise." All the agencies concerned in our spiritual birth, as in the natural birth of Isaac, are fruitless even to old age, until made efficient by the power and grace of God. Here we say, was one of the prominent and marked defects of the covenant made at Sinai, answering to the Jerusalem that once was; it left all those who were parties to it, and not to the new, in bondage, simply from the fact that no efficient grace was stipulated to enable them to comply with its terms.

But notwithstanding this failure of the Sinaitic covenant, this its most prominent and defective feature is incorporated as a cardinal doctrine upon the system of those who hold to Arminian sentiments—it is found in the very doctrine now under consideration. Christ is set forth crucified as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; the promises of the gospel are held out to comfort and encourage; obedience is enjoined; pardon

and the blessings of eternal life are offered; but all is conditioned upon the will of the creature, and no grace presented to secure the fulfilment of the conditions required; the free, sovereign, and efficient power, and grace of God, have nothing to do with the work. Those born under such a system, Paul would say, are children of the bond women, and not of the free, and correspond to the Jerusalem that once was, and remained in bondage with her children till cast out. The Jerusalem that is from above, and is the mother of us all, is under a different covenant.

“This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord. I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts.” I will not only make a full revelation of myself in the character and work of one who shall be constituted the light of the world; but I will open the eyes of their understandings; I will so illumine the darkness of their minds that they may see and understand the wonderful things contained in my law, that they may know him whom to know aright is life eternal. Yet more: I will write my law in their hearts; they shall not only see and understand, but my grace shall make effectual the truth; my precepts, and my commandments shall be engraven upon

their hearts in as legible and durable a manner as the law upon the tables of stone, upon the summit of the burning mount. They shall love me and walk in my ways, and I will be to them a God and they shall be to me a people.

Here is the plan upon which God bestows the purchased blessings of the gospel. Here is that everlasting covenant that was laid in the counsels of eternity, and executed under the sovereign will and purpose of God in his own time and in his own way. Here rest the hopes of the Church. The omnipotence of God is pledged for her defence; his sovereign power and grace are promised for the ingathering of those who shall be heirs of salvation. Nothing more could be desired, yet nothing less would suffice. Look, for a moment, at the Israel of God under a covenant in which such an influence was not stipulated. See their fears amid the dividing waters of the sea, after they had witnessed such miracles as had been wrought for their deliverance. See them bowing to the golden calf at the foot of the trembling mount, whose summit is wrapped in clouds and smoke, where God is holding converse with Moses, their leader. Follow them on through the wilderness, and mark their murmurings and their rebellion. Follow them on through all the judgments

and mercies of God that are visited upon them, and what a lesson is furnished to us of the necessity of divine efficiency in the salvation of man!

Strike this one article from the covenant of grace, as Cumberland Presbyterians, together with the whole body of Arminians, have done, and with it are entombed all our hopes for the Church and the world. And how sad the reflection that it is so often abused and caricatured, by those who would be heirs of the promises made to the spiritual seed of Abraham. But it is not to be wondered at—it was so under the old dispensation. “As then,” says Paul, “he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now.” And so it will always be, until “the bond woman and her son” are “cast out”—until there shall be found none in the family of Abraham, but those who are willing to ascribe their spiritual birth to the sovereign power and efficient grace of God.

Your affectionate son.

## LETTER X.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED—TESTIMONY OF  
FAMILIAR PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE—A DIFFI-  
CULTY REMOVED.

DEAR FATHER :—The view I have presented of the covenant of grace, illustrative of the doctrine of divine efficiency in the sinner's conversion, is one that beautifully harmonizes with every part of the plan of salvation ; is sustained by every passage of Scripture, bearing upon the subject, when considered in its proper connection and meaning ; and enters into the devotions of every pious heart. A fruitful field of illustration and proof is here opened out before me. But I can refer you only to a few out of the many passages that might be presented.

“ God, who is rich in mercy,” says Paul, “ for his great love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.” Eph. ii. 4, 5. The figure here introduced is one in common use, and from which its meaning may be easily determined. Thus

when we say that a man is dead, without any qualifying expression, we mean that he is incapable of feeling or action ; but when the word is used figuratively, its meaning must be determined by the connection. If I say of a man that he is dead to every feeling of humanity, you understand by the expression that he is incapable of exercising a benevolent feeling, till that particular feature in his character is changed. If I say of another who has become hardened in crime, and has trampled under foot every law and statute of the land, that he is dead to the interest and welfare of society, you understand me to say that he is incapable of another class of feelings, till his character is radically changed. If I say of another that he has become so steeped in drunkenness and debauchery that he is dead to virtue, to shame, and every refined feeling of our nature, you understand me to say that he is insensible to any other desire but that of gratifying a slavish appetite and his brutal passions ; and so if I apply the word to any particular feeling, or class of feelings, you understand me to mean that the person to whom I allude, is incapable of exercising those feelings, till he has undergone a radical change in his moral constitution. Precisely in the same sense must we understand the expression "dead in sins," as used by

the apostle Paul in the passage before us, and elsewhere. If it means anything, it must mean that the sinner is incapable of originating a single holy thought, feeling, or desire, until the work of regeneration is complete—until quickened by the almighty power and grace of God, “for his great love wherewith he loved us.” However much enlightened, however much wrought upon, by whatever agency you please, in his natural state, before the regenerating and quickening influence of the Spirit of God is applied, he is “dead in sins;” as incapable of originating those states of mind that are acceptable to God, as the stiffened corpse of giving life and motion to itself.

Again: “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.” 1 Cor. ii. 14. It requires no lengthy argument to show that the expression, “natural man,” is applicable to the sinner up to the time of his being made “a new creature” in Christ. The most superficial reader of the Scriptures, the Sabbath-school scholar even, need scarcely be told this. There is but one step, then, to the conclusion, that a man must be regenerated before he can acquiesce in the plan of salvation as presented in the gospel. Until

this important change takes place, everything therein revealed relating to the salvation of the soul, is foolishness, and cannot be understood in a saving sense, ; for there is nothing here but what is "spiritually discerned." The same idea is presented by the apostle in the first chapter of the same epistle. "The preaching of the cross," says he, "is to those that perish foolishness, but unto us who are saved it is the power of God." What avail, then, all our labours in the ministry of reconciliation, unless this healing and saving power is exerted to make effectual the truth? Any imaginary or supposed operation of the Spirit of God short of this will avail nothing, if this single passage of the word of God be true. The sinner will still remain blind, and stupid, and dead, however loud may be the external call, however great his privileges and the means of grace he is permitted to enjoy. But this is not all.

"The carnal mind," says Paul, "is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. viii. 7. The expression, "carnal mind," as used here, has evidently the same application as "natural man," in the passage already quoted. The word *carnal* throughout the New Testament is contrasted

with *spiritual*, and is applied to man in his unregenerated state, whatever may be the influences brought to bear upon the mind. "I would not speak unto you as unto spiritual," says Paul to the Corinthians, "but as unto carnal;" evidently meaning that he was compelled to address them as those who had never been converted. If you will turn to Adam Clarke's commentary on the eighth chapter of Romans, and third of first Corinthians, you will find the same idea advanced. I might cite to you any number of passages in proof of the position, but it is unnecessary. It would be like attempting to prove that black is not white, or red is not blue; which, if a man should choose to controvert, there would be no arguing with him. Substitute, then, in the passage before us, an equivalent expression, and how does it read? "The unregenerate or unconverted mind is enmity against God; is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Where then, I ask, is the possibility of a mind in such a state originating any thought, feeling, or desire, that will render it acceptable to God, and upon which can be conditioned the bestowment of life and pardon?—a mind, in all the operations of which the ruling and regulating influence is enmity to God, and a determined and malignant opposition

to his law? And what power, what influence shall be brought to bear upon that mind to overcome its enmity, and to bring all its faculties into subjection to the will of God? Is there any amount of grace or power that would be *sufficient*, short of that which is *efficient and invincible*? None. The carnal mind is *enmity* to God, and *cannot* be brought into subjection to his law till its carnality is removed. Bring all the ingenuity and the learned criticism of the living and dead to explain away the proper meaning of the Scriptures, we surely cannot rise from the contemplation of this single truth without being convinced that if we are saved at all it must be by "*the effectual working*" of the power of God—a power, which, in its operation upon the sinner's heart in his resurrection from the death of sin, is commensurate with that "which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Eph. i. 20, 21.

"I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but

God that giveth the increase." 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7. Paul was wrong here, if Arminianism is right. In order for the passage to harmonize with such a creed it should read thus: "I have planted, Apollos watered, *God assisted*, but the sinner gave the increase. So, then, neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth, nor he that assisteth, but *the sinner* that giveth the increase." This is no sophism; it is no caricature, but stands out in bold relief as a full and fair expression of this fundamental principle of the Arminian system—a principle which Cumberland Presbyterians have embraced as their dearest idol.

Once more: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Phil. ii. 12, 13. There are three important propositions contained in this passage which must be taken together. The first is, *we are commanded to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling*—the second, that *it is God that works in us*—the third, that *he works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure*. If either of these propositions is left out of view, or in any way concealed or obscured, we do violence to the whole scheme of salvation. The Socinian, for example, gives prominence to the

first and discards the others. The Antinomian, on the contrary, takes only what the Socinian rejects. Both make shipwreck of the faith. The Arminian takes the first and second, and discards the third, in fact, if not in form. He, too, founders, and is lost in endless absurdities. But the Calvinist, allow me to say, the man who endeavours to take the word of God as he finds it, receives with meekness each of these propositions. He endeavours to work out his salvation with fear and trembling, recognizing the fact that it is God that works in him, not merely to enlighten and persuade, but *to will* and *to do* of his good pleasure. Here, and here only, is safety.

I might multiply, to any extent almost, quotations from the Scriptures, each *sufficient* in itself to enable us to determine upon which side truth is to be found; but I have already prolonged this discussion further than I had intended. There are other important aspects in which the subject might be viewed, if the limits of these communications would permit. Enough, however, has been said, I trust, to satisfy your mind of the importance of the principles involved, and that the conclusions to which I have arrived are safe, sound, and scriptural.

I am aware that many hard things have been

said with regard to the Presbyterian doctrine of divine *efficiency* and human *inability* as taught in the standards of the church. I have heard them all. I have sifted them, weighed them, and examined them in every aspect, and in every instance have found them weak and harmless. My heart has been pained, too, in seeing the Cumberland Church gleaning up the blunted arrows that have so often been hurled at the shield of truth by those, who have gone before them, and left their carcasses in the wilderness or upon the field of strife. I might multiply examples illustrative of the ignorance and malignity manifested by them, in common with Arminians of every class, with regard to this important and vital doctrine of the gospel; one, however, will suffice. They are not satisfied with the charge of inconsistency, but go on to say that the Calvinist who commands and exhorts the sinner to repentance and faith, acts the part of "*a liar*" and "*juggler*"—a liar because he commands him to do that which he knows he is not able to do—a juggler because the means employed are inadequate to the end. I ask, in reply, was Peter a liar, when he said to the woman of Joppa, "Tabitha, arise," who having been sick had died, and was washed and laid out for burial? Was the blessed Saviour

a liar and a juggler when he stood at the grave of one who had been dead *four days*, and cried “with a loud voice” to the putrefying corpse, “Lazarus, come forth?” What blasphemy is here involved in the charge so often brought by the Cumberland Church and the whole body of Arminians!—I speak with reverence and affection. My feelings would urge me to say more, but I must forbear. A single thought and I will close this communication.

The ambassador of Christ, as you yourself acknowledge, must be a man given to prayer as well as to the ministration of the word. With this admission is answered every objection that is urged against the much despised and caricatured doctrine of inability. As Peter knelt and prayed for life-giving power, before he commanded the dead to arise; and as Christ lifted up his eyes to heaven in devout supplication, at the grave of Lazarus, before the omnipotent word went forth from his lips; so must we, as we exhort those who are “dead in sins” to “arise” and “come forth” to a new life of repentance, obedience, and faith. As the prophet Ezekiel not only exhorted the bleaching bones of the valley to “hear the word of the Lord,” but prophesied also to the winds, and prayed that the breath of heaven might

breathe upon the slain ; so must those who carry the message of life to the dead, whose “ bones are dried,” whose “ hope is lost,” till the Spirit of the Lord breathe upon them that they may live. The exhortation to the sinner to “ turn from his evil ways,” must not only be presented to the mind, and pressed home to the heart and conscience, but at the same time accompanied by the humble and devout prayer, “ turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned.” If we could but breathe this one sentiment, if we could but feel it in all its force, it would prepare our hearts for receiving with meekness and submission many of the despised and rejected doctrines of the gospel.

Your affectionate son.

## LETTER XI.

ARMINIAN DOCTRINE OF ABILITY ABANDONED—  
STILL IN THE WILDERNESS—STEPS RETRACED  
—CALVINISM ADOPTED IN FULL.

DEAR FATHER:—I have said enough, I trust, to satisfy your mind that the position occupied by the Cumberland Church in common with the whole body of Arminians, with regard to the ability and agency of the sinner in conversion, is involved in inextricable difficulties—difficulties far greater than can possibly be urged against the opposite view, even by its bitterest enemies. I have said that it is calculated to lead the church into the wildest extravagance, as shown in the operations of those who have made it their main stand-point; that it tends to the most dangerous and ruinous error; that it is opposed to the merciful and gracious terms of the covenant of grace; and that it is contradicted by every passage of Scripture, when considered in its proper meaning, that has any reference at all to the subject. If you will follow out the train of thought intro-

duced under each of these heads, you will find that I am right.

It was such difficulties and absurdities that, either directly or indirectly, pressed upon me while I occupied this fundamental doctrine of the Arminian system as my main stand-point in theology. I was again in trouble ; my mind became unsettled, and I found no other way of ridding myself of the dangers that environed me, but by abandoning the doctrine entirely. I did so, but not without a lingering hope of finding the middle way somewhere. To call up a figure already introduced, the woodman's implements were again my companions. Camp-fires were again kindled in the unexplored and untrodden regions of thought. I had already acquired some experience in such explorations, and spared neither pains nor labour in the work. Every possible means was employed to find some eligible point beyond the great city of Universal Redemption, as a substitute for the one I had been compelled to abandon, but all to no purpose. Many a beautiful ridge was discovered that promised for a time a pleasant and continuous route, but they all either led the deluded traveller, delighted with the grandeur of the scenery, to the precipitous cliff, or sloped off into interminable swamps, where

those who are so unfortunate as to enter them, are left to flounder in mud and mire without ever finding a solid basis upon which to stand and breathe safely and freely.

While my mind was operated upon as before narrated, I was compelled, on philosophical and scriptural grounds, to yield assent to the doctrine that saving faith is a holy act or exercise of the mind, and can in no sense proceed from a corrupt and unregenerate heart. I was therefore compelled to abandon the Arminian position, and receive faith as one of the consequences, instead of a condition, of regeneration, as one of the essential and necessary fruits of the Spirit in his saving work upon the heart. I still, however, sought for a place in some exercise of mind prior to regeneration where the so-called, "self-determining power of the will" could operate, independent of the sovereign and efficient agency of the Spirit of God. While prosecuting my investigations on this point, I had occasion to examine Dwight's Theology. I read with interest and profit his seventy-fifth sermon on the "antecedents of regeneration." After presenting in a forcible manner the exercises of the sinner's mind in conviction, he closes his sermon with the following paragraph: "In the struggle thus continued, and

thus earnestly conducted, he learns how obstinate his sinful dispositions are, and with what hopeless difficulty they are to be overcome. Convinced at length that all his efforts must, without the immediate assistance of God, prove entirely vain, he casts off all his dependence on himself, and turns his eye to God, with the feelings of Peter when beginning to sink, and cries out in *his* language, "Lord, save me, or I perish." Here, said I, is the proper place for the *self-determining power* to operate—here is the place where the will of man puts forth its efficient and self-determined act in deciding for God and for heaven. It flashed upon my mind at first with a dazzling and winning brightness. I hailed it as a new and important discovery in theology, as one pregnant with sound, wholesome, and popular doctrine; but alas, it was soon found to be embarrassed with all the dangers, difficulties, and absurdities that I have already rehearsed. I found, indeed, the exercises of the sinner's mind under conviction as Dwight and other Calvinistic writers, and often even Arminians have recorded them, but was at last forced to admit that back of those exercises there must be a divine, a sovereign, an efficient, and omnipotent agency at work.

Having been led to the adoption of this all-

important and vital doctrine of the sovereignty and efficient agency of the Spirit of God in the salvation of the soul, there was but one alternative left. I had either to abandon the idea of ever finding a continuous route, a complete *system* of truth, or to retrace my steps for the point I had left in the beaten road of Calvinism, and follow it as God might give me faith and strength. I had either to die in the wilderness, or encounter "the giants," "the Emims," and "the Anakims," of which I had so often heard, from those who loved "the onions" and "the garlic" of an earthly creed more than the clustering fruits of a sound theological system. Which shall it be? You may better imagine the mental suffering and conflict of feeling through which I passed, in answering this question, than I can describe. There was the warmest filial regard and affection for others that held me bound as by some strange spell; there was pride that would lash me into some still wilder visions than any that had yet entered my mind; there were fears and unbelief that would deter me from encountering the imagined difficulties and dangers of the ulterior regions of Calvinism. Love, pride, fear, and hope, were all united in urging me in one direction, while the strongest convictions of duty were driving in the

opposite—convictions that came as the whirlwind to the patriarch of Uz—a whirlwind from the Lord. There came also the same voice that reminded the patriarch of the ignorance, the weakness, and the folly of man. “Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God let him answer this.” What other reply could I make but the patriarch’s answer: “Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.” “There came a voice from the storm, such as the patriarch heard, that seemed to say, Gird up thy loins now like a man.” It was the same voice that had addressed the prophet who had fled to the wilderness through fear, and hid himself in the cave of the mountains: “What doest thou here, Elijah?—go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus.” It was enough. I obeyed the call. I retraced my steps. I returned on my way, through the wilderness of Universal Redemption and Sufficient Grace—the wilderness of Arminianism—to the point I had left in the Calvinistic route. I read again the oracles of God, and found that the whole Calvin-

istic system, as set forth in the Scriptures of divine truth and the standards of the Presbyterian Church, was involved in the principles I had already imbibed, as before related.

There was but one path in which I could travel with any safety or comfort to myself. I entered it with the determination to follow wherever truth might lead the way. The doctrines of *original sin* and a *vicarious atonement*, led me on, as the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night of the camp of Israel. I followed on as those who were not permitted to settle in the mountains of Edom, and who had seen the carcasses of the generation that had preceded them, fall in the wilderness because of their fears, their murmurings, and their unbelief. Every difficulty was met and every fear removed; for there was nothing to fear. The fabled giants and hydra-headed monsters of which I had so often heard were nowhere to be found: the walled cities and ramparts of the enemy fell as the walls of Jericho before the blast of the ram's horn, in the mouth of the Levite; every difficulty and danger disappeared before the light of truth. The vine-clad hills and vales, the fields of olives, the inviting gardens of pomegranates and figs were before me. I entered them, and, for the first time, experienced the pleasure of tasting the

rich and soul-satisfying fruits of a sound, safe, healthy, and consistent system of theological truth.

What an hour of triumph was that to the trembling faint-hearted Jew, when the Jordan rolled back its sacred tide for him to enter and possess the land he had so long sought! What a joyful hour was that, when for the first time he was permitted to celebrate the feast of the Passover, and to eat of the old corn, the unleavened cakes, and the fruits of the land! But these did not experience greater joy upon that day than did I, when for the first time it was my privilege to eat of the old corn, the unleavened cakes, and the fruits of scriptural Calvinistic truth as gathered by my own hands from the ripening fields. My only sorrow was, that many with whom my heart still lingered with the fondest and tenderest affection were yet in the wilderness, and doomed perhaps the remainder of their days to wander over its trackless waste, vainly in search of that which no where existed. But I forbear pressing the analogy further. You will pardon me in its use. Convinced as I was, that the sentiments I had adopted were the eternal truths of God, upon which are anchored all our hopes, my feelings toward those whom I had left behind could not be

otherwise. I know from experience something of the strength of religious prejudice—of prejudice fronted by distorted views of the truth, and backed by the secret workings of the pride of the human heart—and have, therefore, learned to regard with sympathy and charity those who are made its unfortunate victims.

Your affectionate son.

## LETTER XII.

DOCTRINES INVOLVED IN THOSE ALREADY  
STATED—ELECTION—DEFINITE ATONEMENT—  
CONFIRMED BY SCRIPTURE—OBJECTIONS AN-  
SWERED.

DEAR FATHER :—If my time and limits would permit, I would like much to enter into a more full and satisfactory discussion of the several points I have so hastily presented, and many more that I shall be compelled to leave untouched. My object has been, however, simply to give prominence to a few of the leading doctrines of the Calvinistic system which have been most assailed by its enemies. Growing out of these plain doctrines of the gospel, there are several important truths which it becomes necessary for me to notice.

From the doctrine of imputation, as I have before stated, flows the doctrine of a vicarious atonement. They both stand or fall together. Let the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin to us be once rejected, and the doctrine of the imputation of our sins to Christ must go too, and

also of his righteousness to us, and with these must go by the board also the only foundation of the Christian's hopes, the doctrine of justification by faith without the deeds of the law, and when this is gone there is nothing left worth contending for. These three aspects of the doctrine of imputation God himself has joined together, and no man can put them asunder, without destroying the whole gospel scheme, and making shipwreck of his faith. They are the mighty links in the chain that terminates in the doctrine of justification by faith—the anchor that holds the soul steadfast and safe in all its peaceful moorings. “As by one man's disobedience,” says Paul, “*the* many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall *the* many be made righteous.” From this plain statement of the doctrine of imputation as connected with the nature of the atonement, it follows that it is definite in its provisions. Nothing else can save from Universalism the Arminian as well as the Calvinist who looks at the substance as well as the names of things. And from the single word *vicarious* that enters into each of their creeds—from the single idea advanced by the prophet Isaiah, “surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;” and by the apostle Peter, in speaking of the sufferings of

Christ, "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree"—from this grand cardinal feature of the gospel, upon which every Christian's faith must fasten, may be evolved the whole Calvinistic system—the whole scheme of salvation by grace according to the full, the free, and definite provisions of the purchase made upon the cross.

Again, from this view of the nature and extent of the atonement, and also from the doctrine of divine efficiency which I have discussed at some length, flows the doctrine of election—a doctrine against which the pride of the human heart has hurled many a harmless and blunted shaft. It is a doctrine, too, that not only flows from what has gone before by a logical sequence, but is also confirmed by the plain and direct testimony of the word of God, and is there made a subject of the most intense joy and the highest praise. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," says Paul to the Ephesians, "who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; 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; having *predestinated* us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, *according to the good*

*pleasure of his will*, to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath *made* us accepted in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, *according to the riches of his grace.*" Eph. i. 3-7. Could language be less ambiguous? could anything be plainer than the doctrine here presented? But to make it, if possible, still more clear and emphatic, he adds, "in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, *being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*, that we should be to the praise of his glory." vs. 11, 12. The whole chapter, and the one following, are full of instruction upon this important doctrine; and as I read by the light that now shines upon the sacred page, I cannot see how it can possibly be rejected by the candid and prayerful inquirer for truth. Admitting, for a moment, the doctrine to be true, I ask, could it have been expressed, even by an inspired writer, in language more clear, more emphatic, more forcible, or more elevated? Admitting, I say, the doctrine of election to be true, need a single word of the passage be altered? Could its most rigid advocates have made it stronger or more emphatic? Could John Calvin himself, with his burning-glass of thought, have

thrown words to a brighter focus to express his own peculiar views of the subject? If standing by the apostle in writing to his Ephesian brethren, could he have desired him to have altered a single expression, a single word, or a single thought? This, however, is only one out of the scores of passages that might be adduced—passages, too, the obvious meaning of which all the learning of the living and the dead can never explain away. And the only possible way for the Arminian to escape from the plain yet hard and unpalatable doctrines to the carnal mind which they contain, is for him to close his eyes upon the light, and amuse himself with the goblins and the ghosts that dance before his darkened and disordered vision. It is only by amusing himself with the phantoms of his own creation—by dwelling upon the imaginary difficulties connected with the Calvinistic system, and by continually and fiercely urging the most absurd objections, that he is enabled to fortify himself in his own belief, and his unauthorized and unsafe positions. Pardon me in the expression of such a sentiment. It is the sentiment of my heart as confirmed by observation and my own experience.

The same general remark applies to the doctrine of a definite atonement, which is intimately

and essentially connected with the doctrine of election. We have here, also, principally to meet objections and imaginary difficulties that are continually being urged. It is true we are often told in the language of our Saviour, that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." But it requires no small amount of ingenuity to torture even this passage to give countenance to the Arminian view of the nature and extent of the atonement. If God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, in the sense in which the Methodists and Cumberland Presbyterians understand the phrase, why, I ask, is not the whole world saved by the purchase of his death? The answer I know is that the influence of Satan and the enmity of the human heart have defeated the purpose of God. What strange language this! Are not these the very things that Christ undertook to destroy—the very enemies of heaven and happiness he engaged to vanquish, so far as they conflicted with the plans and purposes of the Almighty? Can it be that the counsels of heaven have been defeated? Can it be that the blood and the treasure that have been spent for the recovery of man have been squandered for nought,

and made the trophies of hell? Strange counsel that, which has infinite wisdom for its source, and eventuates in such a result! And still stranger love is that, which will purchase the release of millions from captivity, and yet leave them in the galling chains of their bondage, without any effectual means to apply the benefits of the purchase! There is no other way of escaping from the endless absurdities into which we are led by such a view, than by returning and taking the language of the Saviour as he himself has given it: "God SO loved the world THAT he gave his only begotten Son, THAT whosoever believeth," &c. The divine love is here plainly measured by the *nature* of the gift, and the *extent* of the gift is measured by its *application*. This is the clear and obvious meaning of the passage, and he that runs may read and understand it thus, and all the ingenuity of man cannot extort from it anything more.

In answer to all that can be said, however, we have again and again reiterated in our ears the language of Paul to the Hebrews, where it is said that Christ was "crowned with glory and honour, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." But, by referring to the original text, it appears that the word *man* is not there,

and that the word rendered *every*, instead of being a distributive pronoun, is most commonly translated *all*, and has an ambiguity of meaning that can only be determined by the context, or the nature of the subject; as when it is said that *all* Jerusalem and Judea went out to the preaching of John, no one would infer that *every* man, woman and child were there; and when the woman of Samaria published in the city that she had found a man who had told her *all* that she ever had done, no one understood her to mean that he had rehearsed to her *every* act of her life. And so it is in every case where the word *all* occurs, either in the Scriptures or in ordinary conversation; the context and subject-matter must determine the extent of its application.

I shall not attempt here to notice the many strange and wilful misrepresentations that are continually made of election and its associated doctrines, as taught in the standards of the Presbyterian Church; nor shall I attempt at present to notice the many objections that are continually urged against those doctrines. There is one, however, that demands of me more than a passing remark, in view of the fact that it was urged upon my attention, when a student of theology, with considerable effect by yourself. You then

presented, in a most feeling manner, the supposed difficulty under which the Calvinist labours in reconciling the doctrine of election and a definite atonement with the general call of the gospel. I might easily evade such an objection, by calling upon the Arminian to reconcile his idea of a general atonement with the particular or limited call of the gospel; for the call is far from being general, in the sense in which he uses the term. Two-thirds, and more, of the human race have never yet so much as heard of the name of Christ, and are shrouded in the grossest ignorance, idolatry and superstition. Why is it so? Let the Methodist or Cumberland Presbyterian attempt to give a rational explanation of such facts, in the providence of God to our race, that stare him in the face, and he will find himself involved in far greater difficulties than those which are so often and so blindly urged against the Calvinistic system. He will find it a far more difficult task to reconcile the choosing of many with the calling of a few, than the calling of many with the choosing of a few, and a far easier task to reconcile the latter with the providences of God and the plain teachings of His word, for the Saviour himself has told us that "many are called but few are chosen."

But I do not wish to answer such an objection simply by urging another as an offset to it. Turn, if you please, to that remarkable scene in the temple recorded by the evangelist Luke, when the aged and devout Simeon, who had long waited for the consolation of Israel, took the infant Redeemer in his arms, and with up-lifted eyes blessed God for having spared his life and permitted him to witness the salvation he had prepared. After having predicted the future greatness and glory of the child, he turned to Joseph and Mary, and having blessed them, said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Luke ii. 34, 35. By referring to the original, or to almost any critical commentary on the passage, you will find that the word *again* is not a part of the text, and does not add anything to the sense, but rather obscures it. Comment is unnecessary. Language could not express in plainer terms the doctrine of election and a definite atonement, as associated together, than are here used; nor could the objection you have so feelingly urged upon my attention against those doctrines be more plainly and satisfactorily answered. The standards of the Presbyterian

Church nowhere give countenance to the idea that the blood that was shed for the redemption of man is limited in its *value*. And in view of the infinite sufficiency of the atonement, and the very nature of the law promulgated, God has laid all his intelligent creatures under obligations to love and serve his Son. Even the devils in hell are eternally increasing their condemnation for refusing that allegiance. It is in view then, I say, of the infinite *sufficiency* of the atonement and the very nature of the law promulgated under the gospel that our Saviour said to his disciples, "go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." And thus as I go in obedience to the command as God in his providence may call, I shall ever remember that, in the wise, the holy, and mysterious counsels of heaven, Christ is set for the *rise* of some and the *fall* of others; and that as I endeavour to urge the claims of his gospel upon the hearts of men, there are revealed thoughts and feelings that shall furnish the evidence for their acquittal or their everlasting condemnation in the judgment of the great day.

Under such presentations of the truth the Arminian, driven to his last resort, is in the habit of urging his hypothetical charges of the most wanton cruelty and injustice on the part of God

to the creature. Let an inspired apostle answer such an objector in his summary way : “ Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God ? ” When will men cease their cavils, and learn to receive the teachings of the Bible as the words of inspiration ? How long, in the very face of the plainest declarations of the Scriptures, will they continue to cavil and speculate as if they were wiser than God ? “ Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another to dishonour ? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction ; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory ? ” Rom. ix. 20–23. But if Paul’s summary answers to such objections are not satisfactory, let us go back to first principles. Let us go back to the dark hour of the fall, and see the whole race lying under the curse of a broken law. Here lie all the difficulties involved in the whole subject ; and if the Arminian can comprehend why it is that God has permitted sin to enter his moral government with all its fearful train of evils—if he can rid this question of its insuperable difficulties, then, and not until then,

can he with any show of consistency or propriety urge his objections to any part of the Calvinistic view of the plans and purposes of God as revealed in his word.                      Your affectionate son.

## LETTER XIII.

ANOTHER IMPORTANT DOCTRINE—DECREES OF GOD—FEELING OF CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIANS—STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE—OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

DEAR FATHER :—Before closing these letters, it becomes necessary for me to notice another important doctrine in the Calvinistic system, which is also involved in the views I have already presented, and which has given me many an hour of anxious thought. I allude to the doctrine of the divine decrees, as presented in the standards of the Presbyterian Church, and confirmed by the plain teachings of the Scriptures, in accordance with the principles of both reason and common sense.

There is no doctrine, perhaps, in the whole Calvinistic system that is more caricatured and misrepresented by Arminians of every class than this; and none against which Cumberland Presbyterians have manifested more violent and bitter hostility. A single incident will serve as an illustration of the state of feeling that prevails throughout the church.

Before I felt it my duty to sever the many ties that bound me to the church of my friends, my home, and my birth, I was strongly solicited, as you are aware, to take charge of one of her weekly journals. I felt anxious, then, to serve the church in some capacity, and to go as far as a sense of duty would permit in accommodating myself to your feelings and plans of usefulness in declining life. But before giving a definite answer either way, I felt it my duty to unbosom to those who had manifested so much friendship and kindness my whole heart. I did not wish to keep back anything, notwithstanding it might disappoint the expectation of friends and the fondest hope of a parent's heart, whom I had learned to regard with the warmest and tenderest affection. The very first intimation, however, of my feelings and views upon the subject of doctrine, called forth in reply a strange epistle from one who occupies the highest position in the church, from which the following is an extract: "Can it be," says he, "that you too are a convert to the system that teaches the blasphemous doctrine that God prefers the damnation of millions of the human race, and has brought them into being for that special purpose? That he has ordained and brings to pass the very crimes for

which he damns the sinner? If, indeed, you have any sympathy with that very simple and very absurd system of fatality, an editor's chair in the Cumberland Church is not the place for you." Concerning the writer's views of the qualifications of a Cumberland Presbyterian editor, I have nothing to say, but against such abuse and caricatures of those doctrines which, after mature investigation, I have found in the word of God, I must be permitted to enter a most solemn and indignant protest.

When men become imbued with the knowledge, or rather ignorance, that puffeth up, they imagine in their vain conceits, that they are able to scan the ways of the Almighty, and to understand the secrets of his counsels. They will go so far as to presume to dictate to God, as to what is the proper course for him to pursue in the administration of his moral government; and in their blinded zeal for creeds and confessions, both written and unwritten, will even at times exalt man to the place of God, and give him a power over himself which Deity cannot control. The ignorance and presumption of such can only be equalled by their bigotry and their pride. And when the eternal truths upon which rest the throne of God and the happiness of man are held

up to illumine the darkness of their disordered vision, they have no other means of defence but to close their eyes upon the light, and raise the cry of "blasphemy" and "impiety," forgetting that they themselves are guilty of the charge, while thus railing at the purposes and counsels of God.

Turn, if you please, to the third chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and read there the statement of the doctrine as held by the Presbyterian Church and drawn from the Scriptures of divine truth: "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." Is there anything here condemned by what is revealed? Is not the language of the Scriptures even stronger upon the subject than this? As we turn the pages of the sacred volume, the doctrine seems every where to stare us in the face in the most unqualified form. Take, for example, such passages as the following, which might be multiplied to an indefinite extent: "The Lord hath prepared his throne

in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all." "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say unto him, What doest thou." "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." "What his soul desireth even that he doeth." "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." "My word shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will." "The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea even the wicked for the day of evil." "A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps." "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Ps. cxiii. 19. Dan. iv. 35. Ps. xxxiii. 11. Job xxiii. 13. Isa. xlvi. 10, lv. 11. Prov. xxi. 1, xvi. 4, 9. Matt. x. 29, 30.

Time would fail me even to cite the numerous passages bearing upon the subject—passages which the learning and ingenuity of man cannot wrest

from their proper meaning and application. The subject, in every aspect in which it can be viewed, is exhaustless. There is scarcely a doctrine revealed in the word of God that is supported by clearer and more weighty evidence, when once it is properly understood; and yet there is scarcely a doctrine that has been more bitterly assailed, and against which more fruitless objections have been brought—objections which are continually being urged, both from the pulpit and the press, in a most unchristian manner. Bear with me for a moment, then, while I call your attention to several of the more prominent of these objections, and the painful task which I have undertaken will be done.

It is said, in the first place, that the Calvinistic view of the divine decrees and the administration of the divine government, makes God the author of sin. I repel the charge and call for the proof. No Westminster Calvinist, no sound Presbyterian, has ever yet advocated any view that would lead to such a result. The Confession of Faith expressly states that the decrees of God are such as that he *is not* and *cannot* be the author of sin. The affirmation is not contained in an isolated proposition, but is a part of the doctrinal formulary itself. Read again the language of the Confession

of Faith as quoted above. What more does it say, or what more can it be made to say, than that God has wisely, freely and unchangeably ordained whatsoever comes to pass, *yet so as* he is not the author of sin? Let language be taken in its most obvious meaning, and the whole difficulty is at once made to disappear. Let a proper stress be laid upon the three little words which are here made emphatic, and the far famed ghost has for ever vanished, which has so often haunted the pathway of the student of theology, and of which the Arminian delights to relate such marvels and wonders. I never yet have seen or heard of a Presbyterian who held that God exerted any physical agency or direct influence upon any of his creatures to lead them to sin. If any Methodist or Cumberland Presbyterian will be so kind as to inform me of one, I will lay down my pen, and seal my lips upon the subject, till he is removed from the pale of the church. And until this can be done, the charge, that Presbyterians make God the author of sin, applies with equal force to their own system. They cannot deny that God is the author of all his intelligent creatures, and also of the circumstances that gave rise to the introduction of sin into his moral government. But in admitting this self-evident

proposition, they have admitted that in which the whole difficulty is involved.

Another objection that is urged against the Calvinistic view of the decrees of God is that it destroys the free agency of the creature. I might answer this objection by asking what is meant by free agency? This, however, would lead me into a discussion foreign to my present purpose. By referring again to the doctrinal formulary as quoted above from the Confession of Faith, you will find that upon its very face this objection is also clearly obviated. We are there plainly told, in language that cannot be misunderstood, that the decrees of God concerning every event are made in accordance with his wisdom and holiness of character, *so as thereby* neither is he the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creature. If anything more is needed, turn to the Scriptures. Listen to Peter on the day of Pentecost, as he charges home upon the Jews the murder of the Son of God: "Ye men of Israel hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by

wicked hands have crucified and slain." Acts ii. 22, 23. Here is a clear case where the act and the manner of the act had been fixed by "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," and yet it was done freely, and with wicked and cruel hands. But this is not the only case. I might turn over the leaves of the Bible at random, and upon every page almost find an illustration of the same principle. Nothing can be made plainer than that God ordains the time, the place, and the circumstances of events, and yet leaves men free in acting while they are bringing to pass what he has wisely ordained. The Arminian tells us there is a difficulty here that he cannot comprehend. Is this any reason why the plain teachings of the Bible should be rejected, and exchanged for the vain and foolish imaginations of men? Upon the same principle we might reject every important doctrine that God has revealed to man.

But if the Arminian wishes to make the limited faculties of a fallen and corrupted worm a standard by which to measure the purposes and ways of the Almighty, he must look well to his own system. There is a beam in his own eye which must be removed, before he can see clearly to take the mote from his brother's eye. The same diffi-

culty he is urging against the Calvinistic view of the divine sovereignty and decrees cleaves to his own; and in condemning his brother he is condemning himself. The foreknowledge of God presents the same difficulty. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, saw it and was frank enough to acknowledge it. Adam Clarke, the Sampson and the Hercules of learning among his followers, saw it, and was led to the denial of one of the essential attributes of God, which, if we were disposed to retaliate upon the enemies of Calvinism with their own weapons, we might in truth pronounce to be "a libel upon Deity;" for what can be more essential in an architect in rearing a massive building, than to know whether it will stand or fall, especially if its tenants are liable to be buried in its ruins?

I am aware, however, that an attempt is made by many to show an imagined difference between the consequences of foreknowledge and foreordination; but it is far from being satisfactory. A distinction can easily be drawn between the two when viewed with reference to the mind of man, whose knowledge is drawn from experience and observation, and who reasons from cause to effect over which he has no control; but in the mind of God, the great First Cause or Creator of all

things, the one necessarily involves the other. For example, I am as certain that the sun will rise to-morrow as I can be of any event—though of this I am not absolutely certain; for the fiat of God may unhinge the universe before the morning light—but God foresees it with perfect vision and with absolute certainty, because he has foreordained it. . Again, the prophet Isaiah foresaw through a long vista of years the sufferings of Christ, yet he cannot in any sense be said to have foreordained them; but God who sent his Son into the world for the redemption of man, and raised up Pilate and Herod, the Gentiles and people of Israel, was able to throw the burning picture upon the vision of the prophet, because he had *foreordained* that they should be gathered together to do whatsoever his hand and counsel *determined* before to be done. Acts ii. 23; iv. 27, 28.

I am ready to concede that there is a wide difference between foreknowledge and foreordination when viewed with reference to finite beings; but in the mind of God, I say, the one necessarily involves the other. If I am certain to be saved, or certain to be lost, and God is the author of my being, a denial of the doctrine of foreordination or even of foreknowledge itself, does not free the

subject of a single difficulty. In fact each denial serves only to multiply and increase the difficulties ten-fold.

The whole subject of the divine decrees is involved in two simple questions, which every one is doubtless prepared to answer. First, did God when about to exert his creative power in bringing into existence a universe of creatures, comprehend in his infinite mind a perfect plan of his work? And second, is the existing state of things in accordance with that plan? If a man can answer both of these questions in the affirmative, he stands upon Calvinistic ground; if in the negative, he has no foot-hold either for an Arminian or any other intelligible creed. If an omniscient God has no plan of his work, or if the existing state of things is not in accordance with that plan, where, I ask, is the goal, short of the denial of the most essential attributes of the divine character? And that goal many in the Cumberland Church, following in the footsteps of those who have gone before, have already reached. They tell us, as do Arminians of almost every class, that both the wisdom and the power of God have been exhausted in endeavouring to prevent the introduction of sin into his moral government, and to defeat the machinations of devils and those

in rebellion against him, and yet he himself is defeated! Heathen fatality is often charged upon the Calvinistic system; but here it is in its worst possible form. Jupiter while he was under the dominion of the Fates still held an empire over mortals; but an all-wise and omnipotent God is here brought under the dominion both of the Fates and of mortals too.

It was such strange absurdities in the Arminian system that pressed upon me and drove me to the stronghold of the sovereignty of God, "who doeth according to his will, in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, whose hand none can stay, or say unto him, What doest thou?" Dan. iv. 35.

Your affectionate son.

## LETTER XIV.

### SUMMARY PROPOSITIONS—CONCLUSION.

DEAR FATHER :—I have endeavoured to present in as clear and brief a manner as possible, some of the operations of my mind, upon a few points of doctrine that divide the church, in reaching the position that I now occupy. Much remains to be said. Subjects of the deepest interest and importance are opened out before me, which I would gladly present in addition to what has already been said; but I must forbear. I have already continued these letters longer than I intended when I commenced. Enough has been said, I trust, to satisfy you that I have acted wisely, at least cautiously, in the change I have made in my ecclesiastical relations. I wish, in conclusion, to sum up what I have written in a few propositions; and would seriously and affectionately urge them upon your attention, as you may find leisure and inclination to examine them.

1. ARMINIANS ARE WITHOUT ANY CONSISTENT AND HARMONIOUS SYSTEM OF DOCTRINE. It is true that in speaking of the doctrines of

those who hold to Arminian sentiments, we are in the habit of using the word *system*, but it is only as a matter of convenience and courtesy. Some of those doctrines may sustain a logical connection with others—such as the doctrine of falling from grace and the denial of divine efficiency in conversion and sanctification—but Arminianism, as a whole, is a coat of many colours, that has been patched and pieced since the days of Pelagius, according to the taste and caprice of the man that wears it.

2. THEIR PRINCIPLES DIRECTLY AND NECESSARILY LEAD TO THE MOST DANGEROUS AND RUINOUS ERROR. It requires not the logic of an Aristotle or a Bacon to follow them out to their legitimate consequences. He that runs may read them, though a wayfaring man and a fool in worldly knowledge, if he has only a few correct principles to guide him, and will open his eyes to the light. It is painful to witness the ignorance and stupidity of men—their malignity and opposition to the truth—who have learned to misrepresent, caricature, and abuse Calvinism, with such bitterness of feeling, till, like a rattlesnake in dog-days, they have become blinded by the poison of their own minds. It requires but half an eye to see, that the view of the fall of

man and the relation we sustain to Adam, as found in the standards of the Methodist Church, vitiate the whole gospel scheme; that the principles growing out of the view there presented, lead to fundamental error with regard to the nature of virtue and vice, and destroy all human accountability; that the nature of the remedy found in the same standards necessarily destroys all motive to intelligent action and labour upon the part of the Church in the great work before her; holds out no encouragement to prayer; degrades the character of God to that of a debtor and apologist for injuries he has done to the creature; and exalts the creature to heaven by a kind of semi-omnipotence of his own. Such consequences as these, I say, are *dangerous and ruinous*. They have already been noticed in connection with others, but the half has not been told.

3. THERE IS NO WAY IN WHICH THOSE WHO REJECT THE DOCTRINES OF THE CALVINISTIC SYSTEM CAN ESCAPE THE DIFFICULTIES AND ABSURDITIES OF ARMINIANISM. Starting with the Calvinistic doctrine of human depravity, as Methodist and Cumberland Presbyterians are compelled to do, in form, if not in fact, there is no point from which we can diverge from the Calvinistic route, if we continue it a single step, until we get

beyond the doctrine of imputation—until we have found our way through the mountain pass of theology. Having got thus far, we are compelled to adopt views of the nature of the atonement and the moral condition of man, wholly incompatible with every principle of Arminianism. Moreover, the man who can subscribe to the Calvinistic doctrine of imputation cannot, with the least show of consistency, urge a single objection to any of the other parts of that system. After swallowing and digesting a camel, it is then too late to begin to strain at gnats. Having got thus far, there is no other alternative but to continue on, if we wish to escape the perils of *the wilderness*; for every difficulty in Calvinism may be resolved into this one doctrine. But if a man's unbelief and prejudices are such that he cannot subscribe to the doctrine of imputation, he must be content with following upon the heels of Arminianism, and adopting all its errors and absurdities; or crowd off into the numberless by-paths that lead the deluded traveller into the ulterior and darker regions of Pelagianism; or he must wander like the Arab of the desert, who pitches his tent as suits his convenience, lives upon his camel's back, and clothes himself with the spoils of the plundered merchant.

4. THE POSITION OF THE CUMBERLAND CHURCH, IN A DOCTRINAL POINT OF VIEW, IS ONE THAT CANNOT LONG BE MAINTAINED. "The middle way" is everywhere the watch cry of her leaders; but where is it? No intelligent answer has yet been given to this question. The world is tired of waiting. It is true the Westminster Confession of Faith has been mutilated and patched by unskilful hands, and published to the world as containing new and important discoveries in theology—as containing some of the prominent points in the newly discovered middle route. But something more must be done to save the hopes and credit of the Church. She has departed from the most important principles contained in her Confession of Faith. Upon the floor of the Assembly, as I have before said, it has been pronounced "a ragged affair,"—a sentiment which I would not repeat, were it not for the fact that the man who uttered it was furnished by the same Assembly with means and countenance to establish a Church paper.

Every development made in the history of her doctrines shows, as I have before said, a tendency to the extremes of Arminianism. In proof of this you have not merely the result of my own observation, but the publications of the Church

so far as any have yet been made. I have before me a book entitled, "A Plea for the Cumberland Presbyterian Church." Its author is the lamented relative to whom I referred in my first letter. It is a work of some five hundred pages, and has for one of its leading objects, as stated in the preface, "to answer the inquiries so often made as to what the Cumberland Presbyterians believe, and wherein they differ from others." Now turn to that part containing an "apology" to the Methodist Church, and you will see that the only point of difference in theology considered worthy of notice, is with regard "to the perseverance of the saints." What, then, has become of the Calvinistic doctrines of the fall of man, the imputation of the sin of Adam to his posterity, the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer in justification, and others I need not mention, found in the Cumberland Confession of Faith, as taken verbatim from the Westminster? They have been gradually discarded and given place to the rankest Arminianism, or something worse. The doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints must go too. It is impossible for the man who holds to one or two principles of *Arminian philosophy*, to advocate such a doctrine with any show of consistency, notwithstanding it may be found upon every page of

the sacred volume. The doctrine of "falling from grace" is nowhere found in the Scriptures, as you yourself are ready to acknowledge. It has been forced upon the Methodist Church by a singular philosophical and practical necessity, and the Cumberland Church must take it also, or abandon her philosophy and practice.

5. THE CALVINISTIC SYSTEM, AS LAID DOWN IN THE STANDARDS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, IS THE ONLY ONE THAT I COULD FIND, CONSISTENT WITH THE WORD OF GOD AND WITH ITSELF. That it is a system, is admitted upon all hands—even by its most bitter opponents—and that it contains much important, fundamental and saving truth. In this admission everything is conceded. Truth is ONE, and indivisible; it can no more be made to unite with error, to form *a system* harmonious and complete, than oil and water can be made to mingle together, their liquid drops. Light has no fellowship with darkness—nor Christ with Belial—nor truth with error.

Here, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter. In all my investigations I have found many creeds, but *one system*—and that is Calvinism—a system, solid and compact as the temple of old, where God displayed his presence and glory, the stones and timbers of which had all

been hewed and numbered at the quarry and among the cedars of Lebanon, so that the most inexperienced workmen could fit them together, if the foundation was properly laid—a system which I found, after the most careful examination, to be seamless, woven from top to bottom—a chain, whose golden links unite heaven and earth together, and bind the humble and contrite to the throne of God.

For the present, I will lay down my pen, which I can assure you was taken up with a trembling hand, and an aching heart. If I have said anything calculated to give offence to those whom I love, I trust you will extend to me a father's charity, and attribute all to a praiseworthy zeal for those truths which have cost me so many painful struggles and such a sacrifice of friendly feeling.

I am, as ever,

Your affectionate son.

THE END.



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