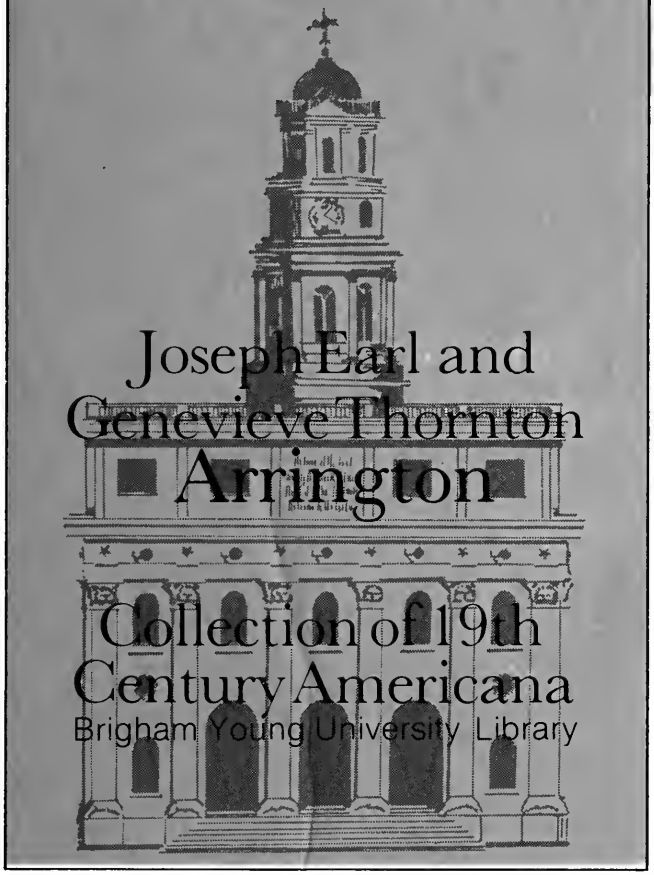

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PLAIN AND POSITIVE

REFUTATION

OF THE

REV. SAMUEL PELTON'S

UNJUST AND UNFOUNDED CHARGES,

ENTITLED

"The Absurdities of Methodism:"

CONTAINING

I. A Public Debate held at Haverstraw, Rockland County, N.Y.
II. Remarks on the several articles debated.
III. The perfect conformity of the Methodist Doctrine and Discipline to Scripture, Reason, and Common Sense.

BY THE

REV. LAURENCE KEAN.

NEW-YORK:

PRINTED BY J. AND J. HARPER,
NO. 230 PEARL-STREET.

1823.

Southern District of New-York, ss.

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the third day of June, in the forty-seventh year of the Independence of the United States of America, LAURENCE KEAN, of the said District, has deposited in this Office the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as author in the words following, *to wit;*

"A Plain and Positive Refutation of the Rev. Samuel Pelton's Unjust and Unfounded Charges, entitled 'The Absurdities of Methodism:' containing

I. *A Public Debate held at Haverstraw, Rockland County, N. Y.*

II. *Remarks on the several Articles debated.*

III. *The perfect Conformity of the Methodist Doctrine and Discipline to Scripture, Reason, and Common Sense.*—By the Rev. Laurence Kean."

In conformity to the Act of Congress of the United States, entitled "An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned:" And also, to an Act, entitled "An Act supplementary to to an Act, entitled an Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

JAMES DILL,
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DEDICATION.

To the Methodist Episcopal Church at Haverstraw; and the Members of other Churches, who were witnesses of the debate betwixt Mr. Pelton and me.

DEAR BRETHREN AND FRIENDS,

It is a thought that cannot but deeply impress the mind of a considerate person, that whatever relates to the important subject of Religion, puts in a peculiar claim to the attention of every sincere professor; who, in addition to his sound belief of the truth, is expected to manifest, both in public and private life, an imitation (however short of the original) of the meek and lowly model exhibited by our great Redeemer, when he condescended to sojourn among men.

Several of you being present at a debate betwixt Mr. Pelton and me, at Haverstraw, must recollect what impression the matters treated of, and the method and temper in which they were handled, made upon your minds, and who it was, who, through the

series of argumentation, supported his reasons and proofs, with the plainest and most positive evidences, as well scriptural, as rational and moral, upon the occasion.

Mr. Pelton, taking advantage of my absence, has ventured to appear before the public in the character of an author, as well as a professed disputant; but in this also, I am sorry to say, manifesting not the most candid method of proceeding: only publishing as much of our debate as he thought might serve the cause he espoused, and cutting short the remainder, where it suited him, by repeating et ceteras, &c. &c. Now in this way of proceeding, a person may as well separate the head from the body, or the superstructure and roof from the foundation, and then call either part by the name of the mansion of the owner.

My friends at Haverstraw, understanding that I am now at New-York, request that I would give his publication, (however insignificant) an immediate answer. I shall take it up, and by plain arguments and proofs, both scriptural and rational, proceed to a thorough refutation of it. Though the "Absurdities" be devoid of all solidity of thought, and propriety of expression, yet he undertakes by it no less an achievement than to level mountains at a breath. To persons of discernment, it must present itself under no very favourable aspect, while it betrays hurry of temper and want of serious thought, as well as a furious zeal all

on fire. Shallow as it is, it is at the same time too correct to be the genuine production of Mr. Pelton's pen. The facts and incidents which make up the matter of it, are a strange chaos, jumbled, heaped up indiscriminately, and running over, without the appearance of discernment in the collector, or candour in the examiner and judge.

After some serious consideration, I offer to your perusal, a few plain (and I hope not uncharitable) strictures, on Mr. Pelton's publication, purporting to be the substance of our debate at Haverstraw, which several of you heard, and in which you showed no small concern. Religious opinions and moral practice, have often a far nearer connexion than persons altogether unconcerned are aware of. The inward leaven (even of opinion) will have no small influence on the general mass of temper and conduct.

I request that the most unbiassed impartiality may be evidenced by you, in reading both sides of the question. The following pages were prepared for the press, in what might be called fragments of time, which I snatched from other very necessary avocations: you will therefore be so very kind as to excuse what defects you may happen to discover in them. Let it be our chief business, however, while we guard the walls from the attacks of open hostility, to walk worthy of the Lord, and of that Gospel which we know to be the power of God to

salvation. While every advancing year, and revolving day of life shall bring us nearer to a conclusion on earth, let us see also that they ripen us more and more for that state of everlasting quiet, where all shall not only be peace, but joy and assurance for ever.

I hope the following work will not only prove the truth, and disprove errors, laid to the charge of Methodism; but also breathe a spirit of seriousness, and an affectionate concern for the instruction of ignorance, the removal of error, and the salvation of precious souls. I hope the observations made, are not only intellectual and doctrinal, but calculated, by the blessing of God, to subserve the interests of pure and undefiled Christianity; directing the attentive reader to Christ, and encouraging his humble confidence in the mercy of God, through the great Mediator.

Should this publication, which undertakes to answer and refute Mr. Pelton's "Absurdities," promote the cause of genuine truth, and evangelical religion; should it remove the mists of prejudice, and advance mutual forbearance, in those who proceed in the heavenly course, my utmost wishes will be amply gratified.

I am, dear Brethren and Friends,
Your faithful Friend
And Servant in Christ,

LAURENCE KEAN.

PREFACE.

To be able to give a reasonable answer to serious inquiry, concerning the hope that is in us, the truths we believe, and the plan of our general conduct, is not only the serious demand of inspiration, but the necessary work of duty, in laying a sure foundation for some special time to come, when every man's religious attainments shall be brought to a test, as gold to a refiner's fire.

Opposition, arising from various causes, ought not only to be apprehended by the cautious and the wise individual; but also by every body of professing Christians; and particularly when on the spur of certain occasions, a sort of persons may be apprehended who attempt to confute principles, however conformable to the standard of truth; affecting to exhibit them alternately, as the objects of ridicule and of serious alarm. Not only the candid inquirer and genuine believer, but the heroic confessor and the triumphant martyr, have had patient endurance of undeserved evil imposed on them, as a most necessary duty. They had to pass through evil report as well as good report.

Religion itself, as exhibited in the works of the greatest divines, as a spiritual energy in the soul, stimulating to all outward holiness of life and conversation; as a little leaven leavening the whole lump, is by Mr. Pelton, and his colleagues in publication, incautiously resolved into the irregularity of Enthusiasm, even when applied to the seri-

ous concern of ever so true a penitent. Every agitation of inward feeling, is made to appear novel and irregular. The arrows of keen conviction, the self-abasement springing from a deep, a clear, and impartial view of past life; the remorse of mind which generally attends a true repentance; the serious inquiry of "What shall I do to be saved?" the pleasure which must flow from believing in Christ with the heart unto righteousness, as the atonement and mediator, are all indiscriminately attributed to the undefined principle of fanaticism. These leading, yet evident features of their book, must certainly show to every candid reader and observer, the great mischief which is but too likely to result from men undertaking to write on subjects which they do not understand, and to define and affirm, of that of which they have no experience.

In the management of an important subject, it is expected that its genuine principles will be thoroughly investigated, and that measure of serious consideration bestowed upon it, which it so justly demands. This part of the undertaking must certainly cost some labour, and put the flights of imagination under those necessary curbs which preserve it from wandering and levity, and render it the most essential service. It is by this necessary discipline that the inquiring mind becomes strong and vigorous, and proceeds under the guidance of reason, judgment, and orderly method.

A scriptural doctrine, when advanced for general instruction, to readers or auditors, ought to be attended with as little difficulty as possible. Embarrassment and obscurity ought to be laid aside: and the profit of the simplest ought not to be overlooked. It is impossible to edify them, unless the writer be very plain, and very clear in his subject and method. If a work be allowed to

appear in the world, which happens to be ill conceived, obscure, undeterminate; instead of advancing lucid proofs, or convincing arguments, which would mutually support each other, confusion and obscurity will be the inevitable consequences. Every candid promoter of the public good, prefers rather that the plain and simple should be edified, than that fancy should be tickled at the expense of edification.

A man may be a consistent Calvinist, and yet not so far a zealot of his system, as not to perceive the irrelevancy to the subject of many of the texts of scripture usually pressed into its service. Dr. Doddridge in this sense of the words, was a moderate Calvinist; having had the candour to give to sundry passages, interpretations different from those of Calvinistic expositors in general. While the Jew presses every favourable text of the Old Testament into the service of the church, as made up of the house of Israel, why should the Christian, and particularly the teacher of Christianity, exclude those that come from the North and South, and East and West, and who shall be preferred, even before the apparently elect,—while the latter, notwithstanding their pretensions, shall be cast out into outer darkness for want of something more and better than a name?

There are many things of which we cannot expect a complete knowledge in this life; especially if they be concerning God, who in his nature is incomprehensible. Even in nature, there are several things hard to be understood or comprehended: such as the continuity of matter; how the parts of it hang together in a close attachment;—there are many things in ourselves equally difficult to our comprehension: as the vital union of soul and body, by which a spirit comes

to be so closely linked to a material body, that they are not to be parted without great force and violence offered to nature. The like may be said of the operations of our several faculties of sense and imagination; of memory and reason; and especially of the liberty of our wills. And yet we certainly find all these faculties in ourselves, though we cannot either infallibly comprehend or definitely explain the manner in which their various operations are performed.

And if we cannot comprehend the manner of those operations which we plainly perceive in ourselves, how much less can we expect to comprehend things without us? Least of all can we pretend to comprehend the infinite nature and perfections of God. For, God himself is certainly the greatest mystery in the universe. The reason of this is very evident; because God is infinite, and therefore incomprehensible. Our powers are very scanty, and must for ever fall short in this great research.

The same difficulty is attached to God's certain knowledge of future contingences, which depend upon the uncertain wills of free agents. It being inconceivable to our capacity, how any understanding, how large and perfect soever, can certainly know beforehand that which depends upon the free will of another. And yet the Scriptures not only attribute this knowledge to God, but give us plain instances of God's foretelling such things, many years, or even ages before they came to pass. He knew of some things that could not come to pass but by the sons of men, in which we are sure that God could have no hand, though nothing could happen without his permission.

There is hardly any thing more inconceivable than how there should be such a thing as self-existence, namely, being of itself without any cause

of its being: and yet our reason compels us to acknowledge this. By this reasoning we are forced to acknowledge a Deity, the one, eternal, wise Principle, and great First Cause of all things, whom we call God. Here alone we find rest for the mind.

There is the like difficulty in conceiving how any thing can be made out of nothing; and yet our reason compels us to believe it. As matter is a very imperfect being, and merely passive, it must have been made out of nothing by an infinite and eternal Being, or must have always been.

Surely a Christian writer, who desires to improve, as well as to instruct, should banish from his thoughts those plans which may appear to dazzle, by a sophistical singularity, or a subtle paradox; plans neither sufficiently distinct to be retained, nor sufficiently important to be filled up, and which only hold out vain and useless speculations. Every plan should be simple and rational. Proofs which are clear and distinct, will impress themselves upon the memory, while show only aims at dazzling with quaint conceits and puzzling riddles.

It is unquestionably to be wished, that those who publish their private sentiments, may be animated with a pure desire to do good, and not by a blind wish to shine at the expense of that substantial honour, which might be obtained, were they to give themselves up to the pure emotions of genuine good will, which may very well be reconciled with the publication of such sentiments as contribute to ascribe glory to God, and good will to man.

I am sensible that in handling so tender a point, as this must needs be, there is danger of a warmth which does no honour to one's cause, and which is

by no means countenanced by the Gospel. I desire neither to show nor to feel this; but rather to speak the truth in love, (the only warmth which the Gospel allows) and to write with calmness, though not with indifference. There is, likewise, in controversy of any sort, a danger of despising our opponents, and of speaking with an air of disdain. I would gladly keep from this also, well knowing that a diffidence of one's self, is far from implying a diffidence of his cause.

To attract public attention, by sending abroad a literary production, is far from being the end of the present undertaking. Though the cause which I have espoused, and in which I feel an interest and an honour, be attacked in no very generous or candid way, I allowed the book a free scope, not believing that any persons well versed in the great and leading principles of the Gospel, would be likely to hazard any serious loss by it. They know that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself; and that he who showed this mercy, to which they had no claim, has no pleasure in the death of a sinner; but on the contrary, that he would turn from his evil ways and live.

However, on the intimation of some judicious friends, that all in that neighbourhood, and in other places where his libel may have circulation, are not of the same standing or attainment in religion, and that the young and the weak, who are compared to children, are liable to be turned out of the way, by an opposition, though of little magnitude, I consented to publish something by way of answer. No minister of the Methodist Church having thought fit to answer Mr. Pelton's "Absurdities," it falls to my lot again to step forward, to check, in some measure, the bravado of empty parade, assuming the characters of argument.

The object of the author of the present work, is the sustaining of what he conceives to be correct views in the controversy between some Christians, who, instead of attending to the things that are revealed, are sometimes too prone to pry into those secret things which belong only to the Lord our God. Being not only a sincere believer in what he conceives to be the true Gospel plan of salvation, (*i. e.* that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself,) but also a minister of the good news, he deems it his duty to give the weight of some special reasons to his opinions on these points. He considers the free offer of a universal salvation to all mankind, and which may be embraced by every individual, to be, not only the sentiment of the church of which he is a minister, and of many other churches, but also of plain, positive, and numerous scriptures, as well as of sound reason and genuine experience.

To be able to stand before splendid abilities, or to oppose any thing like sound argument, enlisted on the side of error, (which is too often the case) might distinguish an opponent, as one of some weight or importance. But to undertake the confutation of a work, which does not pretend to much depth of thought, or strength of language, and which employs at least the weak and absurd, and sometimes the irreconcileable, requires neither energy nor ability. Zeal and talents may shine in particular crises of affairs, and the press superadd its testimony in favour of many literary productions, while others who have to trace an antagonist through the meanders of wandering evasion, must arm themselves with no small stock of forbearance.

Mr. Pelton's book, having awakened the embers of slumbering controversy from their ashes, where they had lain silently for some time, and

excited some fresh stir, the author of the present work is sorry he has had to take notice in many places, of unjust misrepresentation, unfounded charges, and unwarrantable epithets, bestowed upon the Church with which he thinks it a high privilege to associate, and the sentiments which appears to him to be the most evangelical, as well as the general system and economy of that Church, which, under Providence, has been rendered instrumental, not only in reforming the vicious and profane, but in converting the obstinate, and bringing glory to God by the salvation of souls. To state the principles of Methodism in a plain, yet correct point of view, will be a considerable part of this work.

The doctrine of the freeness of the universal and saving grace of God,—the chief subject of difference or contest, (and which is here presented to the public in as plain a way as possible,) has occupied my serious thoughts. If my observations on this subject be just and scriptural, without being forced or constrained, let the reader weigh the statements, and give God the praise, for any benefit he may receive. It would be presumption in me, however closely and seriously I may have considered the question, to boast of entire originality of thought on a subject which has been so frequently and so ably discussed by men of the greatest talent and integrity.

In unfolding the doctrines of the Methodist Church, and which he sincerely believes to be the doctrines of the Gospel, the author is not without apprehension of the very great danger to which he must expose himself of being understood as assailing the tenets of other bodies of professing Christians. This is by no means the object which he proposes to himself. But in the defence of what he believes to be the truth, there must occur the

necessity of reference to principles, which are contrary to the principles maintained in this work. At the same time, he is convinced that a predilection for one system, ought not to give a tincture of severity to one's censures, or embitter his language. For the prejudices of education, country, connexions, &c. great allowances must be made by every liberal mind. True liberty must therefore be allowed to every reader to judge for himself.

As all the ways of God are good, in number, weight, and measure, there can be no doubt entertained for a moment, but the great end for which he allowed the discovery of the art of printing to his human creatures, was, not only to make them wiser, but better also. Where the unfolding of truth is conducted in a plain, instructive, progressive, and convincing manner, the sentiments cannot be seriously read, without our being animated with a spark of the fire which glowed in the breasts of the writers. Several of those stars of different magnitudes, have left us the best examples. They have not lost sight of the temperate Christian in the zealous controvertist. Not disposed to censure any temperate investigation of truth, they at the same time would not condemn to everlasting ruin all that dared in the least tittle to differ from them, knowing, that what a man is, must be taken into account with God, as well as what he believes or thinks.

If we look into sacred history, where sentiments most divine will be manifested, awakening the soul, and expanding the thoughts to the utmost pitch, we cannot but be convinced, in the clearest manner, that the design of the inspired writers, was to instruct men in the great concerns of their everlasting peace. All kinds of sacred instruction are intended to advance the great design of

making us wise to salvation. The intent of each part in particular, and of all the parts in general, when united and combined, will be found to be, not so much to please the imagination, as to enlighten the understanding, and amend the heart. Inspiration is pleased to make use even of the imagination as a canal, by which to convey truth to the heart, in the use of figures, allegories, richness of expression, and harmony of numbers. All the various ways and means are employed, for the great and holy purpose of bringing sinners to God, and building up those that are already true believers, in their most holy faith. None of this energy is employed to tell sinners that their case is already hopeless, and that they are under an unavoidable decree.

Should the author's open controversy with an opponent, and his remarks on it, appear in a stronger light, than that of merely exhibiting his views of the tenets of the Church with which he is connected, since he has gone so far sometimes as to cite and comment not only on the works of known authors of other communions, but even on the authorized standards of their belief, and of their public administrations, he hopes that while he asserts, that there should be a mutual bearing and forbearing among Christians of different denominations, and that all liberties should be taken with candour, and be free alike from misrepresentation and uncharitableness, that the present work will not be a contradiction to this principle. How far he has conformed to the laws laid down by the Christian rule, he hopes the candid reader will judge impartially.

If it be an arduous undertaking to appear on a set occasion, before a numerous assembly, which listens with a close attention to the verbal discussion of an important subject, since there is

scarcely an individual who will not have it in his power to observe if there be any faults or errors in the speaker, though carried along on the rapid wing of quick delivery; how much more attentive ought the writer of a work to be, however limited its spread, or silent its progress? If, when we speak in public, judgment be pronounced upon us, how much more likely is the sentence to be passed when we assume the hardihood to commit those sentiments to the press, and send them forth to sustain their trial and receive their doom? Besides the natural powers which instructive writing requires, and the want of which, application cannot supply, every writer who wishes to give solid satisfaction to his reader, must have no small or scanty knowledge of his subject. He ought to make this a matter of serious reflection, in order to discover its relations, and recommend its beauties.

Some persons may perhaps doubt the propriety of the present undertaking. They are those who dislike every public discussion; censuring all argument, and thinking it productive only of mischief in society. Such persons, however, seem not aware, that there are various junctures, in which, to decline the field of argument, is an abandonment of ministerial duty, and Christian fidelity. Doubtless it is to be lamented, that occasion should have been given for censure, by those whose zeal outrunning their charity, sow the tares of dissention, and excite depraved passion to all its pernicious consequences. But though this conduct is worthy of high disapprobation, in whatever cause it happens to be called forth, it is far from being an evidently correct position, that all religious speculation, is as indifferent as some suppose it to be, to the essential interests of society.

The language of inspiration itself is, "prove all things: hold fast that which is good."

Religion is a principle which exercises a great influence over the mind within, and consequently over the life without. It is necessary to the formation of solid character, that this religion should be built upon a proper basis; and while it is firmly believed, in its evidences, that it should be felt in its influences, and exemplified in a fair, candid, and upright demeanour. It cannot but be seen, by men of impartial observation, that while some opinions tend to harmonize, and give an amiable habit to the disposition, there are others, which not only have no such tendency, but an opposite one, of putting into motion the worst properties of the human system, and of sanctioning them to the misguided conscience. It is certain, however, (because a known fact) that many persons act altogether contrary to what seem the evident consequences of their opinions, some doing worse, and others better than we naturally expect or apprehend, from the connexion between a cause and its effect. So long as there is an interest taken in religion, its subjects must be productive of discussion.

It is not the entire suppression of controversy, but the moderate and judicious manner of conducting it, to which the friends of humanity and peace should direct their efforts. When more is undertaken, it seems a symptom of indifference, or of hostility to religion, which deceives the possessor of it, under a splendid appearance, while furious passion carries with it the imposing pretensions of godly zeal. If the author of the present work could perceive any thing in what he has written, the tendency of which would be to add to the mass of religious animosity and intolerance, he cannot foresee any advantage likely to

arise from its publication. On the contrary, having endeavoured to cherish a different disposition, and having executed to the best of his ability, and the extent of his means, a work, which seems to him to be dictated by the interest he feels in the truth, as well as by his connexion with the Church of Christ: and this not without looking up for help and guidance to the Great Source from which all good desires, just thoughts, and holy acts proceed, he commits it with a measure of confidence, not of the sufficiency of the execution, but of the integrity of the motive, to the blessing of God, and to the serious attention and candid perusal of those who may feel an interest in the importance of the matter treated of.

In presenting an impartial public with this feeble production, I propose, with a just diffidence of my own abilities, to lay before them some observations which have eventually occurred to me in the course of my reading and experience, respecting the doctrines of the Methodist Church, which to know and recommend has been the study of the best part of my life. If I have sometimes given a decided opinion or judgment, I entreat the reader to remember, that I speak to him with freedom, yet without presumption. Far from intending to shine by any thing like wit, or to dishearten any sincere person by reproach, I speak only the language of a pure and genuine affection. If the attention of any reader be arrested, who may be so confident of his opinions as to connect his eternal safety with them, to the exclusion of that holiness of heart, and integrity of life, without which none shall be happy hereafter, I hope he will reject the principle as dangerous.

In this work, I do not imagine that I have advanced any thing, which is not coincident with, and supported by, plain and scriptural

authority. Should the reader meet with an argument, or instance, that may appear to him deficient in connexion or satisfaction, let him dismiss that from his thoughts, but without prejudice to any other. If what is here offered, shall add one ray to the clearness of that light by which we see, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, having no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that all such persons may return, repent, and live; and that a saving measure of his grace is given to every man to profit withal, my design will be fully accomplished.

ACCOUNT OF A PUBLIC DEBATE,

HELD AT HAVERSTRAW, APRIL 2, 1821, BETWEEN THE REV. LAURENCE KEAN, AND THE REV. SAMUEL PELTON.

THE Gospel of Christ having found its way to Haverstraw, Rockland Co. State of New-York, through the instrumentality of his servants, the ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and a society or church being organized there, of persons who professed the doctrines, and conformed to the discipline, of the Methodist system, social and moral, the Rev. Mr. Pelton, the pastor of a congregation at Hempstead, apprehensive of his principles or office being in some danger, thought it necessary to act a part entirely different from that of a cool spectator.

I am sorry to say, that, instead of meeting his brethren in Christ, of the Methodist Church, with open arms, and encouraging them to go on hand in hand with himself in the good work of plucking sinners as birds from the snare, or brands from the burning—under the impression that in a work of that nature, two are better than one, either for wise and judicious consultation, or for united onset, in attacking the strong holds of the artful enemy of mankind, that he took quite a different plan. He did not think it beneath, or inconsistent with the character of a minister of Christ, to go up and down, and about from house to house, making ever so many curious representations, and, what is to be strongly apprehended, some very unfounded misrepresentations, concerning the doctrines, discipline, and general economy of the Methodist Church.

It is seriously to be regretted that a person should be such a zealous devotee to any system of doctrines, as to overlook, or shut out by wholesale, the morals

of the gospel, and to forbid men to cast out devils, or demolish the strong holds of the common enemy, from the single cause of not following any former set of tenets, that might have been established in a place. What adds to the evil of misrepresentation is, that any person should allow his mind to be so far warped as to imagine that evil means, of any sort, could have the sanction of heaven, in establishing any cause, however good its pretensions.

Misrepresentation is an evil which deserves to be destroyed, root and branch, from every individual, and community of Christians. How a person can lay claim to uprightness and sincerity of character, while, to serve the cause he has espoused, he can undermine the characters of the absent, and allow his zeal to traduce them in the grossest manner: while he can find, and express a pleasure in doing so, as if it were a duty necessarily incumbent, I can hardly conjecture, without making an open sacrifice of the Christian principle of brotherly love, without which the warmest zeal, even in a good cause, would profit nothing.

Mr. Pelton was not aware, or at least did not seriously consider the evil which this unwarrantable conduct, however zealous, might do to the young and early converts, whose first fruits appearing in the fairest bloom, must suffer considerably, by seeing the open manifestation of so much deficiency of brotherly love, or, indeed, of direct calumny, in persons who, as fathers in Christ, ought to strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. By a conduct, in nowise reconcilable to the spirit of Christ, in elder brethren, hundreds have, in all ages, been impeded in their way to the mount of Zion; and many have at length given up all concern, forsaking the assembling of themselves together, who, but for such disturbance, might have been useful ornaments, if not burning and shining lights, in the Church of Christ.

I am sorry, also, that Mr. Pelton should allow himself to be so far stimulated, and overcome by a party zeal, as to overlook, or not seriously consider, the true, yet lamentable fact, that character, however sin-

cere and unimpeachable, whether as referred to individuals or communities, is much sooner lost, even through the medium of false charges, than recovered again, even on the clearest evidences of innocence and vindication. Scandal, which sometimes comprehends all manner of evils, falsely declared, is a river or stream, which diffuses its putrid waters soon and rapidly by a thousand branches; or, as an ancient poet observes, "Fame, than whom no fiend is more swift, by exerting her agility, grows more active, and acquires new strength by progressive motion: small at first through fear, soon she shoots up into the skies, stalks upon the ground, while she hides her head among the clouds. Swift she moves with feet and persevering wings: a monster, hideous and enormous; who, wondrous to relate, for the plumes of her body numbers so many wakeful eyes beneath, so many tongues, so many babbling mouths, and erects so many listening ears. By night, through the mid region of the air, and through the shadow of earth, she flies buzzing, nor ever inclines her eyes to balmy rest. Watchful by day, she either perches on some high housetop, or on lofty turrets, and fills mighty cities with dismay: obstinately bent on reporting falsehood and iniquity."

Defamation, on ever so small a scale, seldom passes from one retailer to another, without exaggeration, in colours or magnitude. What at first appeared trivial and insignificant, is by advancement of evil progress, enlarged to enormity of dimensions. Defamation, surely, can plead no warrantable connexion with the simplicity and godly sincerity of the Gospel system; but rather incompatibility of union, as in the iron and potter's clay of the ancient image.

But, as the success attendant on this underhand method, fell short of answering the end intended, a still more zealous and determinate character is resolved to be assumed. There is so much of common sense and common justice in every breast, as to create a suspicion of misrepresentation, when an adversary advances a charge, however glaring. The unprejudiced, however, are justly inclined to suppose, that

interested statements may not be very correct in every particular and degree. Finding, therefore, that his private misrepresentations of the doctrines and discipline of the Methodist Church did not gain all the credit he expected, he laid aside the character of a secret opponent, and assumed a more public one, namely, that of an open champion and challenger. One of his first daring summons to open contest Mr. Pelton sent to the Methodist ministers of Haverstraw. Those persons being men of peace, and so deeply and constantly engaged in the more useful and glorious work of preaching the everlasting Gospel, paid no attention to the challenge of Mr. Pelton; knowing that Christ did not send them so much to a challenge, or answer challenges to public combat, as to preach the great and saving truths of the Gospel.

This silence as to his challenge, was assumed by Mr. Pelton, and even published by him, as a sort of acknowledgment on the side of the Methodist ministers, that their principles and system of discipline were incapable of defence. He therefore became the more strenuous in unveiling the imposture, (as he termed it) and magnifying the delusion, which he attributed to the Methodists. Instead of employing calm, rational, convincing, or demonstrative arguments, to scatter the mists which he imagined he could discern, insinuation, ridicule, sly suspicion, and unfounded charges, were the carnal weapons employed on the occasion.

It having been my lot to visit Haverstraw, and being called on to preach there, Mr. Pelton thought well to include me also (though a perfect stranger to him) in the number of public antagonists, and constituted me one by sending me a challenge also. Though a man of peace, and by no means fond of noise or tumult, yet being solicited strenuously, I allowed myself to be prevailed on to accept of the challenge. To a person of quiet and silent disposition, controversy is rather an irksome and unpleasant work. It has sometimes happened that very good men may be unintentionally and unavoidably engaged in the necessary, though unpleasant work of religious controversy. If their heads be

clear and cool, while their hearts are devoted and sincere, preserving an entire possession of their temper and sentiments, in that warm kind of service, they may do considerable service to the cause of truth, by dissipating the clouds of error, and diffusing the clearest light of the Gospel.

Prevailed on to accept Mr. Pelton's challenge, and to meet him on Monday morning, the 2d April, 1821, three persons were chosen to act as moderators, and four persons who were to take notes of the conversation. The time for debate was limited to four hours; that is, to two hours in the forenoon, namely, from ten till twelve o'clock, and two hours in the afternoon, that is, from two till four o'clock.

As Mr. Pelton had previously gone about publishing that he was some great personage, and that no Methodist minister could stand before him, I thought it not inconsistent with the duty which I owed the cause in which he had involved me by his challenge, to sound him a little on the solidity of his high pretensions, before we came to the ground, or began the controversy. Accordingly, when we first met, and were introduced to each other by our respective friends, I addressed him in a Hebrew sentence quoted from the first book of Moses. He showing apparent astonishment, and not being able to guess what I meant or said, I continued the use of the unknown tongues by another quotation from the Iliad of Homer: being unable to reply, I addressed him in another from the Æneid of Virgil. By this time he recovered a little breath, and told me that our debate was not to be about language or science, but about the doctrines of the Methodists. Accordingly I assented, and we proceeded to the appointed spot.

Mr. Pelton has since published, what he calls the substance of our debate; together with the most unfriendly and unfounded remarks on what he takes the liberty to term "The Absurdities of Methodism." It is a fact too evident to very shallow observation, that if blood be once drawn in a controversy, it will not be a very easy thing for a zealous antagonist to recover the

coolness of immoveable temper afterward. One controvertist will run the hazard of being so wrapped up in the subject of debate, as to be found in the horrid act of striking his fellow-servants, even at the eventful hour of his Lord's coming. How much better would it be to strengthen the things which yet remain, and which are ready to die, unless the hand of constant attention be engaged in the good work of their support?

It is rather a little curious, that Mr. Pelton, instead of confining himself to an innocent and useful employment of his time and labours, by exhorting his friends to make their calling and election sure, and from which some good might have resulted to a plain and private congregation, should be so haughtily confident as to undertake the province of a writer and a critic, to descant on such topics as are only fit for the pens of the most erudite. But, alas! the salvation of the elect (according to the system of inevitable decrees,) is looked on as secure already as the pillars of heaven. According to this plan, there is no fear of any branch becoming withered, which happened at any one time to be united to the living vine. Without harbouring the least degree of uncharitable detraction, I can hardly help pronouncing, that Mr. Pelton's views are too dim, and his attainments in scriptural and theological knowledge too scanty, to give him a just right to the authority which he assumes of uttering decisively, as a dictator, or judge, on many of those deep and mysterious subjects, which he undertakes to settle by an emphatic yea or nay, in a moment, to the annihilation of reason and common sense.

The sources of false reasoning are sometimes found, not only in that side of a subject to which we attach ourselves, but are very often in the advocates of those systems, who imagine themselves to be something of prime importance, when in reality they are nothing. The first productions of an author are too apt to be very far-fetched. His impatient mind, on the stretch, is bent on making continual efforts, but all out of the path of sober inquiry, or cool and deliberate research. He is suddenly caught with the swollen but unfounded confidence, of being able to touch the sky from the

summit of some high hill. Whereas, were mature experience to ascend to the summit of an Ætna, or the highest ridges of the towering Andes, it would find that those conclusions were drawn from mere appearances, too hastily transformed into facts, and magnified to immense realities.

It is matter of no small regret, that principles of a special kind are not laid down by Mr. Pelton, to guide him in something like a true estimate of the doctrines of the Methodists. He is constantly shifting, and sliding, and veering, between the Arminian and Calvinist, as he finds the strong holds tenable. The latent cause of every movement of the human soul, when sought out, whether it be good or bad, is by him at one time resolved into unavoidable fate or absolute predestination, and at another time into the irresistible influence of the grace of God, or the insinuations of the spiritual adversary, who, according to Mr. Pelton, foolishly goes about, seeking whom he may devour, when he clearly knows beforehand, that the elect cannot be lost, or the reprobated be saved.

Having carefully read Mr. Pelton's controversial volume of "Absurdities," though I cannot attribute the entire production to his pen, I think it my duty to show that the writers of the piece, however zealous they may be, have no high claims to sound reasoning, or clear understanding of Scripture context. I am sorry to say, that they do not plainly appear to possess any great command of temper, or of that charity which thinketh no evil. Their style also is neither the smooth and pleasing, nor the manly and nervous. Though in this their first production, their talents may have been exerted to the utmost; having a full year and upwards to revise, file, correct, and strengthen it against all objections; yet it has neither a sound and solid foundation, nor a sightly and commanding superstructure.

As no person has shown directly, through the medium of the press, the numerous and unguarded fallacies of Mr. Pelton's book of jargon; how unfounded his charges are which he produces against the doc-

trines and discipline of the Methodists ; and how unsound and unscriptural his arguments are in support of those charges, a sort of necessity is laid upon me, not only to refute Mr. Pelton's charges, but also to furnish those persons who sincerely desire to know the truth, or to be confirmed in it, with an accurate statement of the principles and discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, as well as an antidote against that deadly mixture of misrepresentation d calumny, which, when sent abroad, under the character of truth, is but too apt to diffuse itself among the feeble and ignorant, however sincere.

It may be justly inquired, whether the principles broached in Mr. Pelton's book be not highly dangerous to pure and genuine Christianity. As the writer professes to be a Christian, the unguarded reader unsuspiciously takes up his production, and not apprehending a dangerous snake in the grass, he is led by gentle degrees of apparent, yet unsolid reasoning, to the doctrines of unconditional election, and its twin sister, unconditional reprobation. What adds to the deception is, a text of Scripture quoted without any regard to the context, in order to prove it to be a scriptural doctrine. The reader is apprehensive of no harm from an apparent explanation of Scripture. But that even the sacred records and doctrines may be applied to a wrong and evil purpose, we need go no farther than the application of Scripture truths and facts to the temptation of Christ in the wilderness, by Satan, transformed into an angel of light, and affecting to be a vindicator of Scripture truth.

Though the superficial objections of Mr. Pelton's "Absurdities" may be easily seen through by persons of clear discernment, and unbiassed impartiality ; yet, among the shallow and unthinking, where also Mr. Pelton has caused his book to be circulated, and where the lines and shades which divide between appearance and reality are not so easily distinguished, provision ought to be made for removing the mist of misrepresentation, and for showing the genuine truths and doc-

trines of the Gospel, in their proper and native colours.

The "vilified Methodism" of Mr. Pelton's brush, dipped in defamation, is no more the native picture of genuine Methodism, than the figure in which Christ was made to appear at his trial, formed the general outlines of his fair and humble character and demeanour. Justice and candour have been not unfrequently laid aside, as shall be proved in the following remarks on Mr. Pelton's "Absurdities." Defect and perversion seem justly imputable, not only to the intention of the writers, but to their utter want of qualification for such an undertaking. The subject was indeed too deep for the penetration, as well as too high for the groveling capacities of the writers, who ventured beyond their lines into a boundless ocean, without a map, a compass, a quadrant, or telescope, to direct their first coasting voyage.

But, notwithstanding the shallowness, or even the emptiness of Mr. Pelton's "Absurdities," we are not to forget, that, to the vacant or inexperienced eye, a little tinsel may sometimes appear very fine, and a little goldleaf puts on the aspect of real solidity. When these pretensions shall be put to the test, and weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, I hope they will appear to the unprejudiced reader to be lighter than vanity, or even nothing itself. Though panegyric ought not to be expected from Mr. Pelton and his associates in defamation, yet justice and equity are fair demands, even on the most inveterate and determined antagonists. Where defect or perversion are the leading features, or where the picture is wilfully distorted, I fear that even Charity itself must pronounce not only an unfitness in the painter, but impute to him no small degree of evil intention. When a person can bring himself without much inward disturbance of conscience to taint the purest writers, and then boast of his having employed such discriminating methods as have discovered their impurity, he can hardly escape the just imputation of evil design.

Had Mr. Pelton and his associates been more ac-

quainted with the context and harmony of Scripture, as well as with the necessary influence of doctrines and discipline upon the hearts and lives of men, their work, by carrying some evidence on the face of it, would have borne a more decided character. As it stands now in scraps and fragments, it must appear to every candid judge to be distorted with inconsistencies, and teeming with sentiments, which, while they are advanced in favour of the inevitable decree, utterly undermine and demolish it, as well as destroy each other. To undertake to assert, that no man can in any one particular be any thing else than what he is, which he then is, necessarily and unavoidably—that man, so circumstanced, has no more freedom of will than a block of wood or of stone—that God predetermines unavoidably to an act that cannot be forborne or declined—that the just and righteous Judge of heaven and earth can blame a person for acting under the immutable decrees of rigid and unchangeable fate—that he can make a sincere and candid offer of mercy and grace, and yet with all integrity and consistency of character have previously and irresistibly determined the minds of the persons to whom the offer is made to reject it. To blame a person for being ignorant of what was totally beyond the possibility of being known by him; or for not undertaking and accomplishing what was altogether beyond the application of the united energies of all the powers he possessed, is a character, or conduct which can only be applied to unjust tyranny, and not to just and righteous government. Let the vilest offender against heaven and earth be but clearly and deeply convinced that he has only done what was irresistibly forced upon him by an omnipotent arm, and an irresistible decree, and his conscience must from that moment be completely eased of the intolerable load or mountain of personal guilt, and all the clamours of consequent accusation.

SUBSTANCE OF DEBATE.

HAVING arrived at the spot, where all necessary preparations had been previously adjusted, and taken our stations, at such a distance as to be conveniently heard, not only by ourselves, but by several hundred persons, of different denominations, who came to hear for themselves, it being my lot to question Mr. Pelton from ten till twelve o'clock, the first question which I put to him for plain solution, was,

Question 1. What is a Condition?

Mr. Pelton not being able or willing to risk an answer to this first question, called aloud to some of his friends for the assistance of Walker's Dictionary. Seeing this subterfuge resorted to, I renewed a demand for an immediate answer to the question proposed. But this demand made and repeated, only proved that Mr. Pelton knew not what to reply, or feared to hazard a plain answer to a plain question. In consequence of this, after some research in Walker's Dictionary, he produced five different meanings, and left to me and the audience to make our choice of the one which corresponded with the word in question. It is rather somewhat surprising, that a person who could presume to attack the doctrines of Methodism by a blind and illiberal violence; assailing its discipline, confuting its principles, and exhibiting the entire economy, at one time, as an object of ridicule, and at another of apprehension or alarm, should, when called on to answer a plain question, show, that he had no great fund of necessary knowledge laid up in reserve; but like the foolish virgins of old, go about to borrow or beg, in order to make up the deficiency.

Quest. 2. Does not the sincere advancement of a condition between God and man, about to engage in covenant, or already engaged in it, imply on the side of man, a sufficient measure of knowledge to know it, as well as a sufficiency of power to comply with its necessary requisitions? Can a covenant, of the conditions of which man is altogether ignorant, be binding on him? Or is he bound to perform that, for which he has not a sufficiency of power?

Mr. Pelton, instead of answering the question directly, as applicative to the condition of a covenant between God and man, only began to raise a dust and beat the air, responding altogether wide of the question. His irrelative answer was (page 17th of his book, and reply to question 2d) "When a covenant is made between two individuals, this is the case." By two individuals, he here intends that two men should be understood. He adds, "And also in the covenant made between the Father and the Son." Now I call on the candid and impartial reader to judge, and declare, whether Mr. Pelton gave a plain, direct answer to the question proposed, and whether his inability on the one hand, or obliquity on the other, was not the true cause of such an answer. I refer every unprejudiced person, not only to the sure word of prophecy, but to his own feelings, to make him sure that he is in covenant with God, and a free agent. Every reflecting man must feel a very keen consciousness of having done those things which he ought not to have done, and which he had power to forbear, and not to do; as well as a sufficiency of knowledge to know that they were evil and forbidden, and therefore to be avoided. He must feel likewise that he has left undone those things which he ought to have done, and which he had the power to do, as well as a conscious sense of their being his duty. While he feels his conscience accusing him in some instances, and excusing him in others, (which is the apostle's language, and his proof of the knowledge and guilt even of the heathen, who had no revelation) he can no more doubt of his being a free agent, than he can of his own existence. And while he feels

this sensation within him, all objections to free agency must vanish. To exemplify this to Mr. Pelton and the audience, I put the following inquiry—

Quest. 3. Did not Adam, our great ancestor, know the forbidden fruit, and had he not power to comply with the terms of the covenant, into which it pleased God to enter with him, by a total abstinence from what was prohibited?

Mr. Pelton's Answer.—He did know the evil, and he had power to abstain from it.

Now if a person possess both knowledge and power in that degree, and to that amount, which comprises a complete sufficiency, what then becomes of the doctrine of absolute fate, or inevitable predestination, as to the free actions of men? We cannot conceive of any plan on which they can possibly coexist. We cannot possibly imagine how a just and holy God, can punish sinners as a righteous judge, or how they can feel anguish or remorse of conscience, if they come to know that they are necessarily determined, and secretly, yet irresistibly, compelled by Omnipotence itself, to do as they did. In this Mr. Pelton answered rightly; but altogether at variance with the Calvinistic system, which looks on absolute predetermination, according to the common use of that word, as the standard of Calvinism; or as strong a pillar in the fabric as Jachin or Boaz.

Quest. 4. When God made a covenant with Cain, or an offer of the terms on which he would accept of him and his worship, did not Cain know the condition, and had he not power to comply with it?

Answer. God never made any covenant with Cain that I know.

I again appeal to the unbiassed reader, whether the conversation which God was pleased to hold with Cain, was not designed as a gracious promise, that though he had miscarried in a former instance, yet his case was not desperate, as the means of succeeding were yet in his power, and a victim proper for a sin-offering was lying at the door of his fold. The conversation was designed as a gracious warning also, and as a preventive

to sudden passion or meditated crime. "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" must certainly express, as well as imply, a fair and gracious offer of mercy, on terms not impossible.

Quest. 5. Does not the particle "If," in the offer which God made to Cain, when he told him, Gen. iv. 7, that "if he did well he should be accepted," imply a covenant, condition, or stipulation, which showed the case in question was not absolutely predetermined by any former decree?

Ans. The word "If" implies a condition, but not a covenant of grace with Cain, but of works, which binds all the children of Adam. If thou transgress or doest not well, sin lieth at thy door. Cain was a sinner, and God addressed him on the covenant of works.

I call on the reader to judge, if this jumble be a fair answer, and commensurate with the question proposed. The whole scheme of revealed religion, which addresses us as guilty creatures, depends upon this, or is joined to it, by a very strong connexion. For where there is no free agency, or power given to, or possessed by man, to act otherwise than he does, I cannot see how he can be chargeable with guilt, any more than a piece of dead matter acted upon. That Cain was conscious of being under the influence of free agency in doing what he ought not to do, as to the crime of fratricide, is glaringly evident. He felt himself expelled from the presence of God, in the comfortable sense of that term, without a fixed residence any where, his crime apprehended to be too great to be forgiven, on the awful verge of black despair, and without any well-grounded hope that God would forgive his sin, or remit the punishment he deserved. No state out of endless perdition can be considered more awful than this frame of mind. Whereas, could he but be certain that he was put to, and urged upon all this, by the energies of an irresistible power, his guilt must retire, and his accusing conscience cease its unjust accusations.

To Mr. Pelton's reply, I rejoined--The offer which

God made to Cain was a present one—"If thou doest well (now) shalt thou not be accepted," as well as Abel thy brother, and therefore meant all that is expressed, namely, a fair, open condition, which presupposes a sufficiency of ability in the person to whom the offer is made.

To this Mr. Pelton replied—"But Cain did not do well: for in order to do well, he must have had faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." See page 18 of his book.

To this I rejoined—Cain never heard of the Lord Jesus Christ. There were several dispensations, or manifestations of the goodness of God to men, as the Adamic, Patriarchal, Mosaic, Prophetic, Baptistic, and Christian dispensations. Those dispensations had something peculiar to each, as well as common to all. A man born under the Jewish dispensation is not to be judged by the Christian law. Cain did not exist under the Christian dispensation, and therefore is not to be considered as accountable for any thing peculiar to it, but for what it pleased God to manifest to the period and economy under which he lived. But to be as particular as possible on this interesting subject, I inquired,

Quest. 6. If a person be born under one dispensation, is he to be judged by the laws of another, which may happen to exceed the former in spirituality, and comprehension of duty and privilege?

To this question Mr. Pelton answered—There is no other name given among men whereby we can be saved but the name of Jesus: neither is there salvation in any other name, nor ever has been. This was implied in the promise originally.

Surely, this answer must appear to every candid judge to be quite indecisive, as to the question. Though God does certainly accept of the persons of all real penitents through the all-atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ our great advocate, yet he will certainly deal with every man according to the knowledge and capacity he possessed, as well as the time when, place where, and means afforded, of improving his talents in the great Master's employ. He will expect and re-

quire more from the steward or servant who had a deposit of five talents lodged with him, than from his fellow-servant of two talents trust; and consequently demand more from the well-instructed Christian, walking in the clear sunshine of the Gospel dispensation, than from a barbarian or heathen, who may with all propriety be said to be still walking in darkness and the shadow of death—To show that God's decrees or threatenings, as the providential ruler of the world, are not always, and in every particular, irreversible, but that they sometimes are constituted so as to admit of exception, escape, or mitigation, I asked him,

Quest. 7. Was the threatening with which God was pleased to guard the covenant he made with Adam, absolutely and in every particular executed in the day of his violation of that condition?

Mr. Pelton answered—Yes, Sir; that death is what is called in Revelation, (the Revelation of St. John,) the second death: or what may be termed a cessation of appropriate action. Man having sinned, the gracious presence of God departed from his soul, and he became dead in trespasses and sins.

I again call on the serious and well-instructed reader to judge, whether Mr. Pelton's answer can possibly be stretched to comprehend the extent of the threatening? The body of Adam was as really concerned and implicated, as his soul, in the threatening of death. Hence we are universally instructed to know and lament, that by sin came death and all its connexions and consequences into the world. Besides this, the second death, mentioned in the book of Revelation, is rather the punishment of guilt, than guilt itself. It is the fire that is never extinguished, rather than the worm that never dies. It is the effect and consequence; but not the origin and cause. To make this still plainer to the audience, I asked Mr. Pelton,

Quest. 8. Does not human action, in the present state of probation, imply a body as well as a soul?

His answer was rather of a curious complexion, namely—Man died a spiritual death, at once, and became subject to a temporal death afterward.

How Mr. Pelton could make such an irrelative answer to so plain a question, and at the same time snatch the public advocacy of a cause, from hands far better qualified for such a task, is rather odd, and difficult of solution. In his publication, he afterward acknowledges in a note, page 19, "Some of these answers I might have given differently, if I had time to deliberate; because many human actions for which man is accountable, consist in thought, and do not imply a body. But I must now record them as they were delivered on the spur of the occasion. I made no fatal blunder." Surely, a total want of connexion, or relation, between the question and answer, must be considered as a ridiculous blunder.

Quest. 9. Is not the punishment of Adam expressed by the terms "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die?"

Mr. Pelton's Answer.—He did die both deaths at once: he instantly fell into spiritual death, and became mortal.

Though this answer be incorrect, and restricted, yet it affords no small or indirect allowance, that the first precept which God gave to man, was given as a fair, impartial test of obedience, and as a proof of his being in a dependent and probationary state. It was necessary that while constituted Lord of this lower world, he should know that he was only God's vicegerent, and must therefore be accountable to him, for the proper use of his mental and corporeal powers, and for the use he made of the different creatures put under his care. The man from whose mind the strong impression of this dependence and responsibility is erased, necessarily loses sight of his origin and end, and becomes capable of any species of wickedness. As God is Sovereign, he has a right to give his creatures what commands he thinks proper. An intelligent creature without a law to regulate his conduct, is an absurdity. This rule God gives; and it is no matter of what kind it is, so long as obedience to it is not beyond the powers of the creature who is to obey. It is evident, therefore, that where a command is given, and a

threatening, or punishment denounced, a previous decree gently leading or forcibly compelling to the act, must be altogether inconsistent with the conduct of a just and holy God.

To show that we are not to separate a text or single passage, (however apparently favourable to our side of the question,) from the context, or general connexion, is very evident to a serious and judicious reader, from Gen. vi. 14, where terms of universality are to be considered as admitting of exceptions. I asked him,

Quest. 10. Whether God's decree—"The end of all flesh is come before me," however universally expressed, included all mankind; or whether in reality it did not admit of exception?

Ans. To this he openly acknowledged—Yes, Sir; there is an exception; we read that "Noah and his family found favour in the eyes of the Lord."

Can Mr. Pelton show any part of this peculiar favour which was shown to Noah and his family, contained in, or expressed by the decree, "The end of all flesh is come before me?" He must have recourse to the context and connexion. Besides, that all the men of that period might escape as well as Noah and his family, is evident from the clear declarations of the sacred word. It informs us that the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, for the space of one hundred and twenty years, while the ark was in preparation—that Noah was not only a righteous man, but a preacher of righteousness under the inspiration, energy, and authority of the divine Spirit. That he preached the necessity and possibility of repenting, and so of escaping the approaching judgment of God, to the inhabitants of the old world. Their punishment was delayed, to see if they would repent; and the long-suffering of God waited for no less a space of repentance than one hundred and twenty years, which were mercifully granted them for this purpose, during which time they are represented as detained under the arrest of divine justice, which waited either for their repentance, or the expiration of the respite, in which the punishment pronounced might be inflicted.

Quest. 11. Is it God that excepts Noah in the decree as expressed, namely, "The end of all flesh is come before me," or is it Moses, as a divine historian, that excepts him, in the course and context of the history?

Ans. All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God the Holy Ghost.

Whether this reply be a fair comprehension of the question, or a fair explication of it, I need hardly appeal to the ingenuous and candid reader, for impartial decision: whether it is not a hasty production, and betraying an entire want of consideration. There is the greatest danger of scattering circumstances, which God requires to be united. Nothing but truth can preserve consistency. Noah and his family found favour with God: and others might have found equal favour if they had accepted of the offer of mercy which the long-suffering of God waited to confirm. This great truth we collect, not only here, but in many other places.

Quest. 12. Did God give the promise of deliverance to Noah, at the instant of time that he pronounced the apparently destructive decree?

Ans. He commanded Noah to build the ark, and afterward directed Moses to write the fact.

To the candid reader or judge, this answer also must appear quite wide of the question, and therefore no direct or proper answer. Though the world was grown so foul with sin, as to require that God should wash it with a flood; and though wickedness had grown to such a pitch of rank effrontery to God, that he needed not have given them any warning of his approaching judgment; yet that he might approve his mercy to the very wicked, he gave them time to repent. How loath is God to strike the awful blow, even where it has been long deserved? A being who delights in revenge, surprises his adversary unawares. He who gives long warnings desires a prevention of the evil. Nor was it time alone that God gave, but a faithful teacher also. His character taught them, for he was a righteous man. His hand taught them as much as

his tongue. His work of building the ark was a real summons to the world.

Quest. 13. When the guests of Lot had discovered themselves to be angels, did they advise Lot to make a fair offer of escape from the approaching judgment which overwhelmed that city to his sons-in-law, who had already, or were afterward, to marry his daughters?

Ans. Yes, Sir.

If so, what becomes of the impassible decree? Lot was no firm believer in impassible decrees, at the time when offers of mercy are freely made by the lip of truth. Though sought for by the Sodomites, and pulled into his house by the angels, he hazarded his life in compliance with the divine permission, to go in quest of those persons. No good man wishes to be saved alone. Faith makes us charitable, even where charity is connected with danger. Lot warned them as a prophet, and advised them as a father; showing in both characters, that he meant what he said, and that the thing might be complied with. As in the case of Noah, a decree apparently comprehensive of "all flesh," might admit of an exception; and if so, disprove the awful doctrine of an irreversible predestination either to sin or punishment; so in the case of Lot, the freest offers are made, and the acceptance of the terms left to the fairest choice of the persons to whom the offers were made. The supposition, or doctrine of irreversible sin, and then of irreversible punishment, is absurd, and contrary to all our just ideas of God, and the characters given of him in his holy word. We cannot possibly see how God can be the moral governor of the world, and as the righteous judge of the earth, do rightly, if his moral creatures cannot do otherwise, in any one particular, than as they do. But to make this matter still plainer, I asked,

Quest. 14. If the angels commissioned Lot to make an offer of deliverance to his sons-in-law; and if he faithfully executed the divine commission, whose fault was it that they did not accept of the offer, and embrace the opportunity?

Ans. Their own: but that they should refuse was nevertheless decreed from the foundation of the world.

Now I call on every candid reader to judge, if linking a decree that cannot be reversed, with a fair, open opportunity, and possibility of escape, be not a dreadful, as well as unnatural union of absolute incompatibles. With such an easy answer can Mr. Pelton presume to unite into a most consistent reconciliation, the irreconcileables of free-will and absolute fate. It must surely appear to every unprejudiced reader of the word, that those young men, being considered as a part of Lot's family, and entitled on this account to God's protection, did not escape the perdition of Sodom, because they received not the solemn warning, or because they considered it as a ridiculous tale, the creature of Lot's invention, or the offspring of his fear. On this ground they made no provision for their escape, and so perished, notwithstanding the sincerely offered favour in the perdition that fell on this ungodly city. To make it still plainer, I asked,

Quest. 15. Could God absolutely and everlastingly decree, the overwhelming of those sons-in-law of Lot, in the conflagration of Sodom, and then make them a sincere offer of deliverance, which he previously decreed should be rejected by them?

Ans. Yes, Sir.

Such are the awful extremes of irreconcileableness, to which the system of absolute and universal necessity subjects its votaries. To choose or decree the persons or agents who are to do evil, and then, the sins which they are to commit, and which they cannot possibly avoid, in all their kind, degrees, and measures; while he, at the same time, persuades and induces to a contrary conduct by every possible reason of duty, privilege, or necessity; assuring, declaring, and even solemnly swearing that he has no pleasure in the death of sinners, but that his will concerning them comprises their sanctification here, and their eternal salvation hereafter, are downright incompatibles, and irrecon-

cileable with the principles of reason, scripture, or common sense.

Quest. 16. How could God be sincere in his offers of deliverance to those sons-in-law, when he previously, and throughout the whole affair, so conducted and managed the matter, as to allure and deceive them over to the adoption of a contrary plan?

Ans. God, who knows all things, has so arranged his plans, that he knows from all eternity what they would do, and he left them to act voluntarily: but his knowledge had no influence on their conduct.

The veering and unstable plan on which Mr. Pelton attempts to argue, must be glaringly evident to every reader of common discernment. In answer to question 14, he tells us that God had absolutely and unchangeably decreed the sin of Lot's sons-in-law. Therefore they could not possibly avoid, or evade the commission of it. In answer to question 15, he tells us, that God as unchangeably decreed their punishment. It was unavoidable, in consequence of an unchangeable decree. And now, in answer to question 16, he tells us, that those decrees had no influence on their wills, and that the whole act was voluntary, and free. Now to suppose an absolute decree which must be obeyed, and a freedom of will, which can choose for, or against it, must appear to the plainest capacity to be glaring contradictions. Not being able to wade through this horrible gulf, he thought it well to borrow some foreign support from the Westminster Confession of Faith, and so refreshed his memory by reading the 3d chapter of that work.

Quest. 17. Does God foreordain and decree, absolutely and irreversibly, from the foundation of the world, every thing that happens without exception?

Ans. Instead of a plain answer, he turned again to the Westminster Confession of Faith, and read, that God, from all eternity, did ordain whatever comes to pass, without being the author of sin, or offering the least violence to the wills of his creatures.

When a candid, unbiassed reader, meets with such scriptures as the following, he certainly must find it im-

possible to reconcile them to any previous decree, which has undertaken to secure the eternal ruin of the individuals addressed, or treated of. Why will ye die, O house of Israel? How often would I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but ye would not?—Ye will not come to me that ye may have life—As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. Turn ye; turn ye—God is not willing that any should perish—What more could I have done for my vineyard? After these and a great many declarations of the same sort, which God is acknowledged to make, in the plain, obvious, true, and sincere sense of the words, what must the reader think of a system that sets forth the Most High as dooming and decreeing irresistibly, and then alarming, and threatening, and punishing men, for accomplishing, as his agents, the necessary and unavoidable task, which his almighty power forced upon them?

Quest. 18. Can you possibly reconcile an irreversible decree of God, relative to a certain man committing murder, (and which he must consequently commit) with a freedom of mind or will in that individual, suffering no violence from the influence of such a decree, that must be necessarily fulfilled by him, God having undertaken such an event by his agency?

Ans. Yes, Sir. We will suppose Cain, or Judas, or any other wicked man you please to name. We will take Judas for an instance, and place him here on earth, and give him all the liberty of action you choose to name: he is active and will do something; and those actions may be regulated according to his own free-will; he is perfectly voluntary in all he does. He has neither compulsion nor restraint. And at the same time God knows from the beginning all his actions, both good and bad, and that with a perfect certainty so as to record them in a book; and they, in time, would come to pass just as they were recorded. Those actions, would therefore be certain with God from the foundation of the world. To this I answer,

Abraham does not seem to have the least idea of such a decree as binds men over absolutely to sin and

punishment. His great question at the threatened destruction of Sodom was, "Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? He even reasons the case from fifty persons down to ten; and while he continued to plead, the presence of God, and his favourable answer, continued with him. Nor does God cease to promise to show mercy, till Abraham ceases to intercede. Lot does not seem to be a firm believer in absolute decrees. He continued lingering, probably in affectionate entreaties, to prevail on there maining parts of his family to escape from the destruction which was about to descend. Even when desired to escape for his life to the mountain, he could allow himself to plead for permission to take up his residence in Zoar, or Bela, though one of the wicked cities of the plain, and condemned also; which request he obtained. It being a little city, it was less depraved than Sodom and Gomorrah, and therefore not so ripe for punishment. The answer to his prayer was, "See, I have accepted thee."

Our ignorance of an inevitable decree which must come to pass, can be no prevention to its accomplishment. If the Sovereign will of the Omniscient and Omnipotent God should contrive, design, and order that it must positively happen, and that it cannot be either resisted or evaded, whether we be in or out of the irresistible secret, we, as moral creatures, and utterly unable to resist the determination of an infinite mind and almighty arm, combined in the plan of our destruction, even through our own instrumentality, which he can work up to any pitch necessary to accomplish this his purpose, are as innocent of the evils committed, and connected with this irresistible and unavoidable agency, as the sword is of the deadly thrust, the fire of the conflagration in which a human hand employs it, the poison of the mortal corrosion, or the axe of the swing of decapitation. When we constantly read of the ruin of sinners charged upon themselves; and of God, the good, the just, the holy, the merciful, the patient, and long-suffering, beseeching, exhorting,

entreating, and even threatening, in case of our advance or continuing in evil, for which he will certainly judge and reward accordingly, at a period that shall try the integrity of all mankind, what idea can we have of God making those declarations, if men be not possessed of power or liberty to choose, to reflect, and to attach themselves to that which is right and good?

Quest. 19. Can you draw the line of distinction between God's foreknowledge and an absolute decree?

Ans. That is for you to do. In my opinion they run parallel. All the attributes of God are in unison and harmony.

Surely, as the question was put to Mr. Pelton, it was his province to answer it, and not mine. He might as well retort any other question which I put to him, however imperfectly answered by him. Besides, in his partial reply, he links together under the same characters, things which are entirely different; namely, the foreknowledge and decrees of God, calling them both attributes, indiscriminately, which is a false view of the subject.

With respect to the will of God, it is evident that God has ordained some things as absolutely certain. He has ordained other things as contingent. It would be absurd to say that the same thing can be contingent and absolutely certain. By absolutely certain we mean a thing which must necessarily be, in the order, time, place, and form in which Divine wisdom has ordained it to be, and which cannot be otherwise, than as the infinite power has ordained. By contingent we mean such things as the infinite wisdom of God has thought proper to poise on the possibility of being, or not being, leaving it to the will of intelligent beings to turn the scale. To deny this would be to involve the most palpable contradictions, and the most monstrous absurdities. If there be no such thing as contingency in the world, then every thing is fixed and determined by an unalterable decree and purpose of God; by which not only all free-agency is destroyed, but all agency of every kind, except that of the great Creator himself. For on this ground, God is the only operator either in

time or in eternity. All created beings, at that rate, are but mere instruments in the irresistible hand of God, and do nothing but as actuated and impelled by this omnipotent and sole agent. Every act of every kind, must at this rate be attributed to God. For, if he have purposed them all, as absolutely certain, having nothing contingent in them, then he must be considered as having ordained them to be so; and if there be no contingency, then no free-agency, and God alone must be the sole actor of all that is done. Hence must follow the blasphemous doctrine and conclusion, that God is the irresistible, original, and sole author of all the sin and evil in the world. Hence must necessarily follow another conclusion, that as God, who is the author and promoter of all things that are, can do nothing wrong, whatever is must be right as it is brought about by him. On this false ground, sin is no more sin: a vicious action is no crime, if God be considered as giving it the sanction of his irresistible decree, and as impelling the creature to the commission of it. On this ground, there can be no just punishment for delinquencies which could not be avoided. For if every thing be done as God has absolutely predetermined it, and if his determination must be necessarily right; then neither the instrument nor the agent must be considered as doing any thing wrong. On this dreadful ground, all vice and virtue, praise and blame, merit and demerit, guilt and innocence, are at one awful blow confounded beyond all distinction or difference. On the other hand, by allowing the scriptural and rational doctrine of the contingency of human actions, (and it must be allowed, to shun the above absurdities and blasphemies) then we see every intelligent creature accountable for his own moral conduct, and for the use which he makes of the power with which God has endued him. To grant this consistently, we must also grant, that God decrees nothing as absolutely certain which he has made contingent; and because he has designed it to be contingent, he cannot decree it as absolutely certain.

Quest. 20. How can the decrees of God, absolutely predetermining that a wicked act must be done, be reconciled with his holiness, goodness, truth, justice, and mercy.

Ans. Cain acted in an evil manner, and God knew before he was born what he would do: Cain did not know it, and therefore he acted freely according to the impulse of his own will. And Judas betrayed his Master here upon earth: there was no violence offered to the will of that man.

The question which I put to Mr. Pelton, was respecting God's predetermining decree, impelling a man irresistibly to evil: and how such a decree could be reconciled with the moral attributes of God; and his answers by evasion, substitute God's knowledge for his decree, and leave his moral attributes entirely unattended to. My opponent ought to prove, not only that the decree of God can irresistibly urge a man to the necessary commission of all sorts of evil, but that it actually does so, in perfect consistency with his moral attributes of goodness, truth, justice, and mercy. This he neither has done, nor is able to do: and so, his answer which shifts the question can neither be considered as begging nor solving the thing in dispute.

Quest. 21. Can you point to any plain text of scripture which positively declares, that God decrees that any man must commit sin?

Ans. Yes, Sir. Acts ii. 23. "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain." Again, Acts iv. 27. "For, of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hadst anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."

Now with respect to Acts ii. 23. Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, Bishop Pearce paraphrases thus, "Him having been given forth, that is, sent into the world, and mani-

fested by being made flesh, and dwelling among you, as it is said in John i. 14, and also iv. 28.

Kypke contends that the word 'delivered' does not refer to God, but to Judas, the traitor. The Jews received Jesus delivered up to them by Judas, the counsel of God so permitting.

The determinate counsel of God means, that counsel which defined the time, place, and circumstance according to his foreknowledge, which saw what time and place would be the most proper for his manifestation and crucifixion: so that there was nothing casual in these things, God having determined that the salvation of a lost world should be brought about in this way, and neither the Jews nor the Romans had any power here, but what was given them from above. Peter shows the Jews that it was not through Christ's weakness, or inability to defend himself, that he was seized, nor merely through their malice that he was slain; for God had determined from the foundation of the world to give his Son an offering for sin, Rev. xiii. 8. The treachery of Judas, and the malice of the Jews, became the incidental means, by which the great counsel of God was fulfilled: the counsel of God intending the sacrifice, but never ordering that it should be brought about by such wretched means. This was permitted, but not decreed.

With respect to Acts iv. 28, it is acknowledged that there is a parenthesis in the 27th verse, not so clearly noticed by the common reader. The 27th verse should be read in connexion with the 28th, thus, "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus whom thou hast anointed, (to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done,) both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel were gathered together." It is evident, that what God's hand and counsel determined before to be done, was not that which Herod, Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and people of Israel were in the act of doing; for then their "rage and vain counsel," would be such as God himself had determined should take place, which is both impious and absurd. So far was this from being the

case, that it is stated clearly that "These were gathered together to hinder" what God had before determined that his Christ, or Anointed, should perform: and thus the passage is undoubtedly to be understood. Had man, by any overpowering decree of God, been made passive, as brute matter is, he would be rendered absolutely incapable of praise or blame, virtue or vice, reward or punishment. Whereas it is evident that man was created in a state wherein he might yield a voluntary homage, and not a forced subjection. He is therefore endowed with freedom of will, which is in a certain degree, the image of God in man, and which renders him as independent as is compatible with the nature of a created being in a state of probation.

Quest. 22. If God by an irreversible decree had foreordained that Herod and Pontius Pilate should put Christ to death, to whom is the blame of his death to be attributed?

Ans. Neither Herod, nor Pontius Pilate, nor the Jews, had any such command given them: they acted according to the impulse of their own wicked hearts.

The reader will again be so kind as to examine how much of the question this answer comprehends: it has nothing in it, either solid, natural, or elucidating, capable of explaining, convincing, or persuading, on a grave and weighty subject. Every rational man, who is accustomed to reflect on the movements of his own mind, and the current of his life must be convinced, that instead of being under the force of an irresistible decree; instead of invincible impressions, which would have captivated the will, God has given him reason, by which he is enabled to examine the objects presented to his choice. He must perceive that man is placed in such a situation, and the supreme good so obscured or remote, and consequently diminished, as makes a possibility for temporal good to come in competition with it. Hereby the freedom of the human will is preserved, which would be annihilated in a complete and perfect view of the truth, or under the irresistible influence of an almighty operator. But such is the goodness of God, that he brightens our path, by shining yet more and

more to the perfect day. If Herod and Pontius Pilate could not possibly do otherwise than as they did, and only acted the part assigned them, because they were under the irreversible influence of an Omnipotent arm; then surely that power which was irresistible, and which impelled them to the act with a force which could not be withstood, must come in for the blame. If, on the other hand, their part of the transaction be considered as contingent; that is, capable of being either done, or left undone, then the irreversible decree retires, and they are justly chargeable with laying wicked hands on the Prince of life. This question cannot be otherwise answered to the satisfaction of any impartial inquirer.

A plain reader must clearly perceive that Mr. Pelton is not only constantly sliding from Free-will to irresistible fate; but undertakes to unite them in every thought, word, and work, of a moral nature, as attributable to man. He curiously presumes that man can be perfectly free, while he is at the same time under the irresistible influence of an Almighty power urging him, and that he is in all justice accountable for those actions which he cannot possibly prevent, or alter in a single particle, the most minute imaginable. Surely there must be an amazing difference between contingency and absolute necessity. As for example; If a man be seen walking on the earth at the same time that the sun is seen shining in the heavens; we must see that the man walks as a voluntary creature, while the sun shines, as natural and necessary. The man may not walk if he please, but the sun must shine, and could not do otherwise.

Though the Apostle Paul knew that bonds and afflictions awaited him, yet he was not so hopeless or unbelieving, or attached to the doctrine of irreversible fate, as to overlook the great support in the trying hour. Hence, in his Epistle to the Romans, xv. 30. "Now, I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea." Though these words express the sense of danger, which the Apostle felt, in his approaching visit

to Jerusalem, they express at the same time a positive belief that things were not so absolutely and irreversibly fixed, as not to be amended, or even changed or removed, by earnest prayer to God, who has all power in heaven and earth. While he sufficiently confesses his fears, he at the same time retains his hope. It is next to impossible, that Paul would express expectations so contrary to an absolute decree, and utter prayers without apparent hopes of success, and which he must have known would be frustrated in the issue. The numerous promises made to prayer, and the positive declarations that in many instances men "have not, because they ask not," must be sufficient to convince us that God's gracious dealings with his rational creatures, must be adapted to their circumstances of probation, and not unalterably fixed, by an impassible decree. To show Mr. Pelton and the audience the amazing difference between contingency and absolute certainty, I asked him,

Quest 23. When David inquired if Saul would come down to Keilah, and was answered that he would —and whether the men of Keilah would deliver him up, and was answered that they would, did not David, nevertheless, with his 600 men, escape into the wilderness, and so escape the decree? How can this escape be reconciled with an irresistible decree?

Ans. God told David that he had decreed that he should sit upon the throne of Israel. God knew that Saul would come down, provided David staid there, and that the men of Keilah would deliver him up.

The reader must see by this answer, that Mr. Pelton has positively changed sides; and has made an immediate transition from the unconditional and untenable, to the conditional scheme, in the words "God knew that Saul would come down to Keilah, provided David staid there."—Then there were two decrees, one a fixed and unchangeable decree, namely, that David should sit on the throne of Israel, and another of the contingent sort, namely, that Saul would come down to Keilah if David continued there.

Now that David did not look upon the promise re-

specting his sitting upon the throne of Israel, to be unconditional, is very plain from this very passage. For when Abiathar, the son of Abimelech the high-priest, had come to David at Keilah, with the ephod, David was so anxious about his own preservation, as well as the preservation of the young men who were with him, that he inquired of the Lord at two several times, as one truly concerned for the preservation of his life, notwithstanding the decree, or promise of God, that he should sit upon the throne of Israel. In this very short history we find most ample proof that there is such a thing as contingency in human affairs; and that God has poised many things between a possibility of being, and not being; leaving it to the will of the creature to turn the scale. In the answers of the Lord to David, the following conditions were evidently implied: "If thou continue in Keilah, Saul will come down; and if Saul come down, the men of Keilah will deliver thee into his hands." Now though the answers given in the text, positively assert that Saul would come down to Keilah, and that the men of Keilah would deliver David into the hands of Saul, yet Saul did not in fact come down, nor did the men of Keilah deliver David into his hands. And why? Because David left Keilah. But, had David staid in Keilah, Saul would have gone down, and David would have been delivered into his hands. We may observe from this, that however positive any declaration of God may appear to be, which refers to any thing in which the fidelity or probation of man is concerned, the prediction is not intended to destroy the free-agency, but comprehends it in some particular condition.

That contingency is attached to human affairs and conduct, is very evident from the dealings of God with many of his human creatures. Though the righteous Judge of all the earth had pronounced sentence of death on Adam and all his posterity, yet he could nevertheless, in all consistency with this sentence, spare Enoch and Elijah, who did not die, but were translated to their reward. The exemption will also be extended to all that shall be found alive at the last day, who shall

not die in reality, but be changed, in a moment, or twinkling of an eye.

This is likewise evident from Lot, obtaining the preservation of the condemned city of Belah or Zoar, in answer to prayer, though one of the five condemned cities of the plain. He saw the impending destruction so near, that he thought he should not have time enough to reach the mountain, according to the orders imposed by the angel, before it arrived. He therefore begged to be allowed to escape thither, pleading its being a little one, and less depraved than Sodom and Gomorrah, and therefore not so ripe for punishment. In this his humble and importunate request, he was accepted. Lot was no predestinarian. If the immediate destruction of Zoar, in consequence of an irreversible decree had been pronounced, Lot could by no means employ prayer, to reverse what could not be changed by any means. How prevalent is prayer with God! Far from refusing to deny a reasonable petition, he shows himself as if under embarrassment to deny any. Hence that most emphatic declaration, which shows that events are far from being absolutely fixed—"Ye have not, because ye ask not."

God declared that he had seen the affliction of his people in Egypt, and had heard their cry, by reason of their task-masters; and that he came to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them into a good land, flowing with milk and honey. The persons to whom this declaration was made, were those who were in affliction in Egypt, whose cry was heard, and over whom the task-masters exercised a rigid and cruel authority. Yet of six hundred thousand, to whom this declaration, or promise, was originally made, only two, who were above twenty years of age, namely Joshua and Caleb entered, and inherited it. Others, to whom the promise was equally made, fell short of its accomplishment through unbelief and disobedience in the wilderness. This shows the absolute necessity of connecting the means with the end, and the condition with the promise. We must not only begin aright, but persevere in the right way to the end, to be saved at last.

While the children of Israel were in the wilderness, their provocations of the divine displeasure rose to such a pitch, that God said he would destroy them, and raise up a different people, of the offspring of Moses. At the entreaty of Moses, however, he was pleased to spare them. It is said, "The Lord repented of the evil he threatened to do." Moses pleaded with God; and so powerful was his intercession, notwithstanding the decree, that even the Omnipotent is represented as incapable of doing any thing in the way of executing judgment, unless his creature desisted from interceding. The phrase "The Lord repented of the evil," is spoken merely after the manner of men, who having formed a purpose, permit themselves to be diverted from it, by strong and forcible reasons, and see proper to change their minds with relation to their former intentions.

The Lord was angry with Aaron, the high-priest of the Jews, for his very unbecoming conduct on a certain occasion, and threatened to sweep him off by a sudden destruction. The intercession of Moses prevailed in his behalf also, in answer to which, his life was spared. This is another plain proof, that the death of Aaron was a contingency, and not immutably fixed in the purposes of the Most High. Moses knew this, and therefore pleaded his cause, in modest, yet persevering entreaty.

The doctrine of inevitable fate was not believed in the days of Eli the high-priest of the Jews. This is evident from the message of the prophet to him, 1 Sam.ii.27, "Thus saith the Lord, did I plainly appear to the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt, in Pharaoh's house? and did I not choose him (Aaron) out of all the tribes of Israel, to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod, before me? Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed (Exod. xxix. 9. Numb. xxv. 10, 13,) that thy house and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever; but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me will I honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." It was positively promised that the priesthood should be continued in a certain branch of the family of Aaron for ever. But, although this

promise appears to be absolute, yet we plainly see, that like all other apparently absolute promises of God, this promise had a condition implied in it, though not expressed. The posterity of Eli possessed the high-priesthood until the time of Solomon, when it was transferred to another family, the family of Eli being still in existence, not rendered more happy by seeing the prosperity of its rivals, while it saw its own members destitute and despised. When Abiathar the last high-priest of the house of Eli was put out of office, Zadok was anointed high-priest in his room, 1 Kings ii. 26, 27.

In 1 Sam. xiii. 8, 9. we read that when Saul had waited to the seventh day in Gilgal, according to the appointment of Samuel the prophet, and Samuel not coming at the commencement of the seventh day, Saul took the whole matter into his own hands, and acted the parts of prophet, priest, and king, upon the occasion. He accordingly offered the burnt-offering, which was entirely unconstitutional. Hardly was this done, when Samuel made his approach and appearance, who severely reproved him for his rashness and precipitation. "Thou hast done foolishly, (said Samuel) thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee, for then would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue." Nothing can be a plainer or a stronger proof, that human actions and the consequences of them are contingent, and that God will deal with every man according to his works, that is, according to his inward integrity, and outward conformity to the will of God, as declared in his holy word.

David was a sound believer in contingency, and not in the absolute unconditional decree. This appears glaringly evident at the time when Nathan the prophet reproved him concerning the wife of Uriah. Among other particulars of which the prophet's awful message consisted, one was, that as he had afforded great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child born of that forbidden intercourse should surely die. Accordingly, as soon as Nathan had left David,

and departed to his own house, the child under sentence, became very sick. Now what did David do on the occasion? Did he believe the threatening announced so unchangeably fixed, as to submit himself quietly and peaceably to despair? Nay; so far from this was his conduct, that the sacred text informs us, "David besought the Lord for the child, and fasted, and lay all night upon the earth. And when the elders of his house arose and went to him, to raise him up from the earth, he would not, neither did he eat bread with them." The reason which he assigns for this conduct is very plain, and convincing to all such as are willing to open an unprejudiced eye to see the truth in the clearest light. David, when interrogated by the officers of his house on this subject, tells them and us, 2 Sam. xii. 22, "While the child was yet alive, (said he) I fasted and wept: for who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, (notwithstanding his threatening) that the child may live." Now from this very plain circumstance, which is so plainly stated, it must appear that David, and indeed all others under the Mosaic and prophetic dispensations, were so satisfied that God's threatenings were conditional, that even in the most positive assertions relative to judgment and punishment, they sought for a change of purpose. So notwithstanding the positive declaration of Nathan, relative to the death of the child, David mourned and fasted, and humbled himself, and sought or prayed for the life of the child, not knowing but that might depend on some unknown condition, such as earnest prayer, fasting, or humiliation. Accordingly, he continued in these acts, while there was any hope. Every part of David's conduct on this occasion is an open declaration, which not only renders his belief in contingency, and his disbelief as to unconditional predestination very plain, but likewise gives to all the parts such a consistency and mutual support, as to enliven and corroborate each other, uniting and harmonizing the whole.

When Ahab saw with a covetous eye the vineyard of Naboth, which not being able to procure by purchase or exchange, he took it greatly to heart, became heavy

and displeased, betook himself to his bed, not seeing any person, or eating bread. His wife gave him comfort by an assurance that she would put him in almost immediate possession of the vineyard. Accordingly Jezebel writing letters in Ahab's name, in which she counterfeited his authority, (his signature being lent to that authority) a fast was proclaimed, to intimate that there was some great calamity coming upon the nation, because of some evil tolerated in it, Naboth was ordered to be set on high, and brought to public trial. Two men, who were sons of Belial, and who had little or no scruple to tell lies, or take a false oath, were procured; (for life could not be attainted, but on the evidence of two witnesses at least,) who deposed that Naboth blasphemed God and the King, acting the combined characters of atheist and rebel. On this evidence Naboth was carried forth, and stoned to death, and his vineyard put into the possession of Ahab. That the family of Naboth was destroyed also, appears from 2 Kings ix. 26. But God, whose all-observant eye saw this, commanded Elijah the prophet to meet Ahab the next day, and to denounce the most awful judgments against him, which were ready to be poured out on him and on his house, in the course of the short remainder of his reign. Now when Ahab heard the words of the threatening, he felt himself affected to the centre of his soul, and gave some outward proofs also of the deep perturbation of his mind, by rending his clothes, putting on sackcloth, fasting, and lying in sackcloth. Though the threatenings denounced had all the appearance of an irreversible decree, yet the word of the Lord came to Elijah the second time, putting the question, "hast thou seen how Ahab humbleth himself before me?" The Lord continued the statement by declaring, "because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring on the evil in his days, (though threatened,) but in his son's days." It must plainly appear to every candid reader of this passage, that Ahab was no predestinarian, but one who believed that a Divine decree, however severe, might be mitigated, or even entirely removed. On this principle he humbled himself before the Lord God of Eli-

jab, afflicting his body for the benefit of his soul, lying in sackcloth, and giving every outward proof of the reality of his repentance. All these things proved that his sorrow was genuine; and God's approbation of it puts it out of all doubt. On what principle then can unconditional decrees be charged on the belief of the men of that dispensation? So far were they from believing in the rigid, unconditional, and irreversible decree, that various instances have been adduced with the strongest proofs of the contrary belief.

When Hezekiah was sick unto death, the prophet Isaiah was sent to him with a divine commission to declare an awful command and message, namely, "to set his house in order, for he should die and not live." It appears from the text that he was smitten with such a disorder as must surely terminate in death, without the miraculous interference of God. Accordingly, Hezekiah is commanded to set his house in order, or to give charge concerning his house, and to dispose of his affairs, as his death was at hand. Though the king had a full conviction of the high character of the prophet, and of the seriousness of the message, yet he was no absolute predestinarian. He showed by his conduct his firm belief in quite a contrary plan, by turning his face to the wall, and pouring out a most affectionate and humble prayer for mercy, by a prolongation of the span of life. On this ground and belief the prayer commences and proceeds, "I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight." Here I would ask, what it was which eventually and providentially followed this prayer? Before the prophet who had delivered the message of death to Hezekiah had gone out into the middle court, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "Turn again, and tell Hezekiah that I have heard thy prayer, seen thy tears, and will heal thee. On the third day thou shalt go up to the house of the Lord. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years." This is the first case, in which a man was informed of the term and conclusion of his life. This message was from God himself,

and apparently clad in all the unchangeableness of an absolute decree. Yet humble prayer procured its repeal. A condition was nevertheless attached to the cure, and with which God required compliance, namely, the application of a poultice of figs. This instance is so plain as not to aim its conviction at the understanding only, but also at the heart, affecting, melting, and encouraging it.

Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, king of Israel, 2 Kings xiii. 1, did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, for which the Lord threatened Israel that he would deliver them into the hands of their enemies. The king saw the awful threatening partly fulfilled; for the Lord was not only angry, but his anger was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael, and then of Benhadad, kings of Syria; but notwithstanding the severity of the threatening, and the anger of the Lord poured out in a great measure, Jehoahaz cried to God for mercy, and the Lord raised up a saviour, and delivered them.

The king and people of Nineveh do not appear to be believers in the doctrine of unchangeable decrees. For when the word of the Lord came to Jonah, saying, "Arise, and go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee," Jonah, after some time, went to Nineveh, a city of three days' journey, and when he had entered into the city a day's journey, he cried and said, "yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed." And the king of Nineveh believing God, proclaimed a fast, and the people put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least. For, when word came first to the king, he arose from his throne, and laid aside his robe, and covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, that neither man, nor beast, nor herd, nor flock, should taste any food, or drink any water: but that the men, covered with sackcloth, should cry mightily to God, and that every one should turn from his evil ways, and from the violence of their hands. The reason which the king assigns for this humiliation

is, "Who can tell but God may turn and repent, and and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not." And what was the happy result of this opinion, and consentaneous conduct? God saw their repentance to be sincere, and that they turned from their evil ways; and God repented of the threatened evil that he said he would do unto them, and he did it not.

The prophet Jonah also appears to believe that the severest threatening might comprehend and imply, though not express a condition of mercy. In his prayer to the Lord, he addressed him with, "O Lord, was it not my saying (and consequently his thought also) when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before thee unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, and slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil."

While we are on the subject of contingency, it may be added, that Saul was chosen to be king of Israel, and to be succeeded by his family. But offending against the will and command of God, (obedience being the condition of this family succession to the throne, the prophet Samuel made use of the following words in his reproof and punishment, as contained, 1 Sam. xiii. 12, "If thou hadst kept the commandment of the Lord, he would have established thy kingdom for ever; but because thou hast not, he hath taken it from thee, and given it to a neighbour of thine."

In 1 Chron. xxi. 15, 16, we read that God sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem, and as he was in the very act of destroying, David, and his people, and the elders of Israel, fell on their faces and cried for mercy, and found it: for the Lord repented of the evil, and laid aside the flaming sword.

God promised David, 2 Sam. vii. 15, 16, that he would not take away the kingdom from him as from Saul; yet if we turn to 1 Kings xi. 9—11, we shall find that this promise or decree was conditional, and that it did not prevent ten of the tribes from being rent from Rehoboam, the grandson of David.

Solomon, the son, and immediate successor of David, did not believe that the promise made to his father

was unconditional. For at the dedication of the temple, he took it for granted, that notwithstanding all the comfort that might be drawn from such a promise, that it would be possible to violate the condition, and so to forfeit the accomplishment of the promise. Accordingly, when he undertook the public dedication of the temple, as recorded 1 Kings viii. 33, to the end, in all the awful cases which were supposed to be the result and punishment of future sin, if fallen into by the nation, being at the same time the commencement or high accomplishment of the threatening or decree of God, he supposes that things were not so absolutely decreed, but that mercy might be found, if humble supplication were made to God for it. He enumerates a number of instances, in which, should they occur, instead of supposing their case to be absolutely hopeless in consequence of any unchangeable decree, they ought to supplicate a throne of mercy. One of those specified cases is, "When smitten down before an enemy," in consequence of God's displeasure, justly deserved, but manifested in the way of public defeat. Also when "heaven should be shut up, and there would be no rain," God refusing to send the earlier and latter rain. Likewise, when, as a consequence, "famine should visit them:" when "pestilence" should be felt as a general and contagious disease: when "blasting" should injure their crops, preventing them from coming to maturity: when "mildew" should corrode the texture of the stalk: when "grasshoppers" multiplying by millions, should destroy every green thing: when the "caterpillar" or the locust should spread its devastations: when an "enemy should attack their fenced cities," the keys and barriers of the land: when another sort of "plague" should break forth, affecting the surface of the body with botch, blain, and leprosy: when "sickness" should impair the strength by destroying the energies of the body, even then their case was not to be considered as utterly hopeless. The words of Solomon in his prayer are very expressive. "If they sin against thee" by some general defection from truth, to some species of false worship; "yet if they be-

think themselves, and repent, and make supplication unto thee, saying, we have sinned, and have done perversely, and return to thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive thy people that have sinned against thee," notwithstanding the apparent unchangeableness of the decree, and the high pitch to which the punishment as an awful consequence might have advanced. All these cases were therefore allowed to be brought before the Lord.

When Solomon himself had fallen into sin, he had it declared to him in a solemn message from God, that notwithstanding the apparent unchangeableness of the promise made to David respecting the firmness of his kingdom, that "the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, who appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the Lord commanded. Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant, &c. I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant." Had not Solomon's delinquency been marked with a high degree of the divine disapprobation, it would have a fatal effect on the morals of mankind. Vice is vice, no matter who commits it, and God was as much displeased with sin in Solomon, as in the most profligate. Circumstances also greatly aggravate offences, and subject the offender to greater punishment. Solomon was wise: God appeared to him twice, giving him direct proofs of his being, and his providence. The promises of God were fulfilled most remarkably to him. All these were aggravations of Solomon's crimes, as to their demerit, and demanded greater punishment than any of the Sidonians may be considered as liable to, for the worship of Ashtaroth.

The Lord himself speaks most definitely on this head. In 2 Chron. vii. 16 to the end, we are informed, that God, after appearing to Solomon, and assuring him

that he had heard his prayer at the dedication of the temple, and that he had chosen and sanctified the house to have not only his name for ever there, but his eyes and heart also; yet adds, as a condition, on which this great promise might be claimed, "And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments; then will I establish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel." Can words be plainer, or more express as a condition; or more opposite to every thing of the absolute and unconditional? And to make this yet more plain and forcible, the Lord adds, (notwithstanding the firmness of the former promise) "But if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them, then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them; and this house which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a by-word among all nations." Thus God sets before him death as well as life; the curse as well as the blessing. He supposes it possible, that though they had this temple built to the honour of God, yet they might be drawn aside to worship other gods. This plan of acting is in perfect harmony with all the attributes of the Divine Being.

Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, was no believer in absolute predestination. For "when (2 Chron. xii.) Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him. And it came to pass in the fifth year of Rehoboam, that Shishak, king of Egypt, came up with a great army against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the Lord. And he took the fenced cities which pertained to Judah, and came to Jerusalem. Then came Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam, and to the princes of Judah that were gathered together to Jerusalem, because of Shishak, and said

unto them, Thus saith the Lord, ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak. Whereupon the princes of Israel, and the king, humbled themselves before the Lord, (instead of trusting in the promise made to David, as absolute and unconditional) and they said, The Lord is righteous. And when the Lord saw that they humbled themselves, the Lord said, therefore, I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance." They acknowledged their sin, and that God had no hand in it, saying, "The Lord is righteous." This was equivalent to "We have none to blame but ourselves."

When Jeroboam got possession of the kingdom of Israel, or of the ten tribes, according to the word of Ahijah, the Shilonite, he nevertheless showed his conditional belief in this decree, though in an evil way. "He said (1 Kings xii. 26) in his heart, (notwithstanding the promise made to him) now shall the kingdom return to the house of David. If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord, which is in Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam. Whereupon he took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem, behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set one in Bethel, and the other set he in Dan."

How curious must Mr. Pelton's interpretation of David's questions appear to every candid and enlightened mind? When David inquired, "Will Saul come down to Keilah? Will the men of Keilah deliver me into the hands of Saul?" Mr. Pelton tells us that "God informed David of those circumstances (which were contingent, and not absolutely decreed, for they never came to pass) and that David acted accordingly; that no violence was offered to the will: nor was liberty or contingency of second causes taken away." Now surely, where Mr. Pelton openly admits and allows contingency, as it respects human actions, he allows all I contend for at present. If no compulsive violence be offered to the human will, then the mind must be acknowledged

to be free to choose or to refuse, which is what I prove. If David acted on the principle of freedom of will to choose, and on the contingency of events, why may not another do the same, or even all mankind? If contingency be allowed, then those actions, for which man is either approved or blamed, are the proper result of his own immediate choice. But Mr. Pelton perceiving by after-thought that he had plunged himself too far into the allowance of the freedom of human will and choice, endeavours in his publication to make some apology to his friends for this, by a note subjoined (page 24) in which he quotes the Confession of Faith, (Westminster) on "God's foreordaining whatever comes to pass." Now, if there be an absolute foreordination, which cannot be evaded in a single jot or tittle, manner or circumstance, and that by almighty power; I cannot, in the most cool and deliberate application of reason and reflection, possibly perceive how any thing like contingency, can have any connexion with human actions.

But Mr. Pelton's allowance of free will, being altogether contrary to the absolute and unconditional scheme, and fearing that he had gone too far; to retrieve the name of fatalist, he makes a fresh attempt to unite the solid iron and the unsolid clay of the potter, by adding in his note, that "therefore whatever comes to pass, is the decree, and not what is threatened." He therefore leaves the argument only where he found it. For if it be at any period a threatening, and not a certain fact; and if its being only a threatening, makes it contingent, then there is a certain period in all actions, when they are contingent, and not absolutely certain, and therefore, not necessary or inevitable. To hear Mr. Pelton a little more definitely on the question, I asked,

Quest. What is contingency?

Instead of attempting to give a direct answer, or to preserve a connexion with the groundwork of the preceding argumentation, he again called for his crutch; and Walker's Dictionary being consulted, he read, "the quality of being fortuitous, accidental possibility."

Now on this score, where an action is fortuitous, and accidentally possible, there can be no moral necessity. The necessarian scheme of which Mr. Pelton is an advocate, (but which he is obliged occasionally to give up as altogether untenable) puts man on a level with rivers and seas, in free agency. We can easily perceive an immense difference between what is merely natural or physical, and what is moral; and therefore liable to blame or approbation. Man can think, and speak, and act, being attributes which no astronomer has ever supposed to belong to stars and planets. To receive a direct answer, and avoid a sudden transition from one subject to another, I put another question, bordering on the last.

Quest. For what purpose, or to what end is the word "Contingency" used in common language?

Ans. It is a word used by men for a thing that may be casual; but God knows all things.

This answer shows how loath Mr. Pelton was still (even while he allowed the possibility of things happening, which never came to pass,) to give up his beloved, unchangeable fatality. He allowed that man is under no influence of any kind, equivalent to an absolute force, or inevitable constraint: and yet he endeavours to contrive some open or covered way, of bringing him forward under the all-constraining operation of an irreversible decree. Now it is in a high degree possible for a very plain man to ascertain whether he feels such an irresistible influence or not. He may easily prove his own free will, or power of doing what he wills, or desires, as connected with his duty to God, and of resisting the motives to sin. This is free will, in a plain, easy, and popular sense. Every person recollects instances, wherein he has done those several things. Every man of any discernment knows that he has free will, in a sense quite opposite to mechanism, which can only incline to the way to which it is compelled; whereas he feels that he is possessed of a power, which can either advance, retreat, or stand still. Under the principle of free will, though a man be tempted to a commission of a crime, yet if his motives

to abstain, be as strong as those which urge him to commit it, he must feel that he has it in his power to choose the one or the other. Or suppose two men in those circumstances, to yield to the temptation, and then to be differently affected by a review of their conduct; the one repining at fortune, or fate, for having placed him in too tempting a situation, and for soliciting him by motives too powerful to be resisted: the other blaming and upbraiding himself, for yielding to the bad motives, and resisting the good. I would ask, which of these two kinds of remorse is more rational? Now if there be any truth in Mr. Pelton's doctrine of absolute fatality, that which blames fate is the true kind. If, on the other hand, the doctrine of free will be true, (and which is the universal opinion of mankind,) the remorse of that man who blames himself for having done amiss, is the only rational plan of action. No divine, moralist, or man of sense, ever supposes true penitence to begin, until the criminal be conscious that he has done, or neglected something, which he ought not to do, or to neglect. Now this character of repentance would be not only absurd, but impossible, if all criminals and guilty persons believed steadfastly, that what is done could not have been prevented. Whenever a man becomes satisfied that he could not avoid doing the evil he has done, or leaving the good incumbent on him as a duty, undone, he may continue to bewail himself for years, or repine at the cruel conduct of fortune; but his repentance is a mere name, or error. It is always a part of the language of true remorse, "I wish the deed had never been done: wretch that I was not to resist the temptation: the remembrance of my sin is grievous." Does this imply that the penitent supposes himself to be under an absolute and inevitable necessity of committing the deed, and that his conduct could not possibly be a whit different from what it has been? Is not every man of reflection a perfectly competent judge of this plain, but interesting matter? Has not this very language often expressed the feelings of his own soul, when under a conscious, but unconstrained sense of having done what was

wrong, or neglected what was right? All men have had frequent and repeated experience of this part of repentance. Then why multiply words, when by plain and positive facts, it is easy for any man who looks into his own breast, or reflects on his past experience, to determine the controversy? As Mr. Pelton took both sides of the question, when it suited him, I wished to show him his error in a very clear light, and so put another question to him.

Quest. Can any thing be, at the same moment of time, a contingency and a certainty?

Ans. Yes, Sir: with God, who knows all things, they are certainties; but with man, who does not know all things, they are uncertainties.

Here, again, he plunges into the horrible pit, and miry clay; making what is negative and positive, odd and even, right and wrong, good and bad, injunction and prohibition, approbation and condemnation, promise and threatening, remorse and conscious joy, reward and punishment, to be terms mutually equivalent and synonymous. All subtleties which disturb for a moment the conscious sense of moral liberty, which every man feels himself possessed of, are only tares among the wheat, and sown by the hand of an enemy. The candid, impartial, and virtuous part of mankind, are enemies to fatality in their hearts; all arguments in favour of it are but mere tinsel, and not solid gold.

It is the nature of genuine truth to produce no effects inconsistent with general utility. Let a son when reproved by his father, (who is a fatalist,) only reply with all filial modesty, "Father, I could no more help myself, or prevent the evil by which I have offended you, than the sun could prevent its shining; for all human thoughts, words, and actions are under the irresistible influence of omnipotent necessity." Let a criminal, when brought before those persons whose province it is to guard the well-being and public good of the state, reply, "that he could no more help himself, or avoid what he has done, than the clock can help itself when wound up to a certain length of chain." If this be really the case, where is the use of all the laws

and precepts in the world? The bad consequences of admitting for a moment that human actions are fatal, and that no man can do otherwise at any time, than as he actually does, are most absurd as well as dangerous. No advocate of the doctrine of fatality, ought to be so blinded as to think it to be the duty of any rational man to sacrifice the general interests of mankind, to his reputation or opinion. This also shows that opinions ought to be considered with attention, before they are embraced and adopted.

Mr. Pelton has laboured ever so much, (but altogether in vain,) to reconcile his system of absolute necessity, with the general notions of moral good and evil. All he has been able to do, is, to perplex himself still more, and involve himself still deeper. If absolute necessity and inevitable fate, contrived from all eternity, plans to be accomplished, in spite of all the vigilance and precaution imaginable, then all religion is left to shift for itself. It is impossible for religion, on this principle, to vindicate the character of the Deity. We cannot help shuddering at the thought of a doctrine which overturns the only durable foundation of human society, and human happiness. To show Mr. Pelton and the auditory in general, that the condition on which God is pleased to hold out any future good is never to be separated from the promise, I asked,

Quest. Whether the children of Israel, who were brought out of Egypt, and to whom the promise was immediately given (Exod. iii. 17.) of being brought into the Land of Canaan, did not fall short of the possession of that land, seeing, that of 600,000 persons of twenty years old and upwards, to whom the promise was made, only Joshua and Caleb entered that land?

Ans. The promise of God was made to Abraham and his seed as a nation; and Joshua and Caleb led them into the land of Canaan.

Now it must be evident to every attentive reader, that this answer is a most glaring piece of absurdity. The promise alluded to, Exod. iii. 17, was not one made to Abraham, but to his posterity. "And I have said I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt, unto the

land of the Canaanites, &c., to a land flowing with milk and honey." Abraham was never in the affliction of Egypt. Now, that a condition is expressed in the promise, is evident from the 18th verse, namely, that "the people and their elders were to hearken to the commands of God, as expressed or declared by Moses." That the promise was especially made to the Israelites in Egypt, is also evident from Heb. iii. 17—19; "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart: and they have not known my ways. So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest." As these words were quoted from the 95th Psalm, and were a warning to the Israelites in the days of David, not to provoke God, lest they should be excluded from that rest which God had promised them, the apostle uses them here to persuade the Christians of Palestine, to hold fast their religious privileges, and the grace they had received, lest they should come short of that state of future glory, which Christ had prepared for them. What contemptible quibbling must be employed to maintain a false and dangerous tenet against the whole tenor of the word of God, as well as against the dictates of reason and experience? An apostle assures us, that the Jews in the wilderness fell short of the promise, through unbelief; and advises Christians to avoid the same dangerous rock, and not to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. What an evil work are men embarked in, who make it their business, to tell believers of this period, that they can no more finally fall away, than God can cease to be the universal and sovereign ruler? They also add at the same time, "that though they may fall ever so deeply, and foully, they cannot fall finally."

That things are not immoveably established by inevitable fate will farther appear from Deut. i. 20, 21, "Ye are come to the mountain of the Amorites, which the Lord our God doth give unto us. Behold, the Lord

thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee—Fear not." But instead of attending to the word of the Lord, as declared by Moses, the whole congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron, and said one to another, "Let us make a captain, and let us return unto Egypt." All this shows that they were under no unavoidable restraint. The assertors of human liberty, and freedom of will, have always maintained, that if all actions be unavoidable, man cannot possibly be an accountable being, or a moral agent, on any principles of justice. This principle is evident to all who look to their own experience. Our moral agency implies that we may attend to good, and forbear or avoid evil. But if every intention and action of life be fixed by eternal and immutable decrees, which cannot be prevented, it is as absurd to insist on a man's refraining from the property of another, and being honest, who is irreversibly doomed to an act of theft or robbery, as to insist on a human creature stopping the motion of the most distant planet in the solar system. Unless some events depend upon the will and choice of man, it cannot possibly be seen, how the terms "*Ought*," and "*Ought not*," can have any application to him. Moral agency implies that we are accountable for our conduct; and that if we do what we "*Ought not*" to do, we certainly incur blame and deserve punishment. *Conscience* also is a principle which is sufficient to convince us that we are accountable, and therefore under no inevitable decree. It convinces every man, that he is accountable for those actions which are in his power. But conscience cannot blame or approve those actions, which are the effect, not of choice, but of absolute compulsion. If we can believe but once that all our actions are unavoidable, the clamours of conscience are rendered silent and trifling; while the principle itself becomes a fallacious and impertinent monitor. From that moment, circumspection is unnecessary, and all remorse and penitence on the recollection of evil, absurd. Can any principle be of more fatal consequence to us, or to society in gene-

ral, than to believe that the dictates of conscience are false, unreasonable, or insignificant? Yet this is one certain effect of our becoming fatalists, or even doubtful in regard to moral liberty.

In addition to these evils of fatalism, it may be observed also, that when a man's understanding begins to be so far perverted by debauchery, as to make him imagine his crimes to be unavoidable; from that moment, he begins to think them innocent, and deems it a sufficient apology, that in respect to them, he is no longer a free-agent. The drunkard pleads his constitution: the blasphemer urges the invincible force of habit: and the sensualist would have us believe that his appetites are too strong to be resisted. If we could suppose all men so perverted, as to argue in the same manner, it is certain they would think all crimes equally innocent. And what would be the awful consequence? Licentiousness, misery, and desolation would become irremediable and universal. If God intended that men should be happy, he certainly intended also that they should believe themselves free, moral, and accountable creatures.

To be still plainer, and more particular, I asked,

Quest. Was not this promise of an introduction, and entrance into the land of Canaan, made to the posterity of Abraham, in the days of Moses? And not only to the people in general as a nation, but also to the elders of Israel?

Ans. No, Sir. The promise was made to the seed of Abraham, or the children of Israel, as a nation.

Now, surely, it must be evident to every candid reader of the Bible, that this promise was not only made to the seed of Abraham as a nation, but also as a nation comprehending elders of the people, who were men of years and experience, and of some authority among the Israelites. This is very evident from Exod. iii. 16, 17, where God commands Moses, saying, "Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, the Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt: and

I will bring you out of the affliction of Egypt, unto the land of the Canaanites, &c." Now that this promise included the elders as well as the people, is very evident to every unprejudiced person.

That this promise was not unconditional, appears plainly, where Moses assures the people, that though the Lord had avouched them to be his peculiar people, and to set them up on high; and though they had avouched the Lord to be their God, and to walk in his ways; yet, nevertheless, there was a dangerous possibility of forfeiting those promises and privileges, by drawing back to folly and disobedience. Hence he proceeds, Deut. xxviii. 1—15, to warn, as well as strengthen them. "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, and to observe and do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all the nations of the earth," and the following blessings shall be conferred upon thee, &c. But if thou wilt not hearken, the following curses shall overtake thee, &c. Here nothing is forced or constrained: all is free, and left to their own choice, with a fatherly injunction to choose aright. Hence the various methods of address, employed by the Most High, as expressed by terms indicating this freedom. The words *if*, *except*, *unless*, *although*, *yet*, *notwithstanding*, *&c.* appear to hold out motives, fit to encourage or deter agents of moral freedom. "If ye be willing and obedient—if ye refuse and rebel—if ye hearken to my voice—if ye do as I have commanded —except a man be born again," and a great variety of others, hold out a promise or threatening, as well as a warning or encouragement. Every person perceives himself possessed of a freedom of will in moral actions, the plainest man conceiving the meaning of the phrases, "I will" or "I will not." Every man is conscious to himself that he acts freely; and that where he is not under the impulse of some violent passion, or inveterate habit, he has it in his power to pursue a course of action even directly contrary to that to which he is invited by the present predominant motive which he al-

lows to actuate him. Now if a person, by any irregularity of conduct, should fall short of attaining to all the good intentions of God concerning him, let him not for a moment presume on such rashness, as to attribute the blame of this failure to his Maker, who has no pleasure either in his sin or his punishment. When the Lord caused Moses to see the good land of promise, he told him at the same time that he must not expect to inherit it, or to go over Jordan, which was the great line of separation. In Numbers xx. 12, we find Aaron joined with him, who also was denied an entrance into the promised land. The reason which God assigns for this prevention is a very plain one, and altogether unconnected with any inevitable decree, namely, "Because ye believed me not." The offence seems to be comprehended in the following particulars. God commanded Moses to take a rod in his hand, and speak to the rock in the wilderness, that it should give forth water. Moses approaches the rock, but thinking that speaking to the rock was not enough, he smote it twice without any command to do so, which seemed to indicate want of attention to the presence and command of God. He permitted his mind to be carried away by the people's disobedience, and being provoked, he spoke unadvisedly with his lips in the phrase "hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Thus it plainly appears, that they did not properly believe God, or honour him in the presence of the people. As Aaron appears consenting to these particulars, he also is prevented from entering the promised land. A just sense of our being under obligations to God must forcibly strike the mind of a wilful offender, and add remorse to conviction, where the person is conscious of guilt which he himself has contracted. It is by the application of this just principle that man is instructed, accused, convinced, and reclaimed. A conviction that our evil conduct is the effect of choice, and that God is clear of all blame, must impart great force to truth, and weight to reason and conscience. On the other hand, the person who believes himself to be a mere machine in the hand of

fate, shuts up all the avenues by which genuine truth can visit the soul.

I would now ask every candid reader, whether from the foregoing questions, the answers given to them, and the observations which I have made on them, Mr. Pelton is not justly chargeable with the greatest inconsistencies, as well as the most glaring absurdities? Whether the necessarian, or inevitable scheme of doctrine, while it fosters want of circumspection, and consequently, renders the individual an easy prey to temptation, dull in his devotions, and weak in his resolutions; making the good things of the world appear big and bright; while it augments the evils to be sustained in our passage through it, does not at the same time make the good and gracious God cruel, unjust, and unmerciful? I hope the impartial judge and examiner of the process of our controversy sees, how evidently the strongest arguments, in favour of the necessarian system, were proved to be utterly inconclusive, unscriptural, irrational, dangerous to faith and practice; as well as to public and private life.

As our controversy was chiefly of the doctrinal kind, the greatest part of it hitherto may be abridged, and reduced to the plain and simple question, "Whether God from all eternity absolutely predestinated a fixed and certain number of his human creatures to eternal death, without any possibility of escape, while he as absolutely elected the remainder to eternal life, without any possibility of failure?" If so, then he who has decreed the end, has also decreed the means, which must promote and accomplish the end. The elect therefore must be saved, let them do what they will; and the reprobates be damned, let them do what they can. Mr. Pelton being greatly embarrassed about the doctrine of absolute and unconditional reprobation, yet knowing how justly liable his scheme is to be charged with it, did all that lay in his power to disguise, exculpate, or conceal it. Not knowing how to justify the black act which necessitates all that are unconditionally reprobated, to sin on, that they may be damned at last, he did what lay in his power to keep from fair review

and observation this main pillar of his Gospel, positively (or at least apparently) denying that there was any such thing; or covering it with such a cloud as to render it invisible. But the bright beams of scriptural and rational truth, darting and continuing to operate on this cloud, he was obliged to come from under its skirts; not so much with arguments of defence or demonstration, but with absolute incompatibles. He was driven to the necessity of declaring, that a man could at one and the same moment of time be a fit subject both of election and reprobation, and that election and reprobation are not opposed one to the other. Now, where a just view is unfolded of so essential a doctrine, as that of being accountable to God for our actions, and in possession of a mind free in its volitions, and not under absolute and unavoidable constraint, it must appear that there is not a greater difference between liberty and bondage, or light and darkness, than there is between absolute and unconditional election to eternal life, and absolute and inevitable predestination to eternal death; and that they are entirely inconsistent and incompatible with each other. To allow the possibility of election at the same time that he contends for the unchangeable decree of absolute and unconditional reprobation, is in fact a glaring absurdity.

While Mr. Pelton attempts to maintain the doctrine of absolutes and unconditionals, he allows at the same time that a man's mind may be perfectly free, unbiassed, and unconstrained: and avers that everlasting torments and unavoidable damnation, cannot be fairly deduced from the doctrine of reprobation. But if there be such an unchangeable decree, why does he oppose it by so many grants and allowances, in several parts of his book. Now I ask, on what principle a man can be a rigid predestinarian, and at the same time allow that even one solitary individual, whose name is on the black roll of reprobation, can possibly avoid its ensnaring influence and be saved?

Several of the questions which I put to Mr. Pelton in our controversy, my manner of putting them, and the emphatic parts on which I laid a proper stress, have

been entirely overlooked, or laid aside by him in his publication, or diminished from insuperable rocks which he could neither clamber nor remove, to separate unconnected grains of sand. It is equally evident to all who were present, that the most direct questions received from Mr. Pelton only indirect answers. For, when questioned concerning a certain fact, doctrine, or word; he not being able to give a direct reply, had to feel it convenient, or even absolutely necessary, to drop the term in which the interrogation was put, and either openly or privately, and behind back, to make a glaring change; acting the Proteus, and giving his God two very different faces at one and the same time. He could find it in his heart, in order to preserve his tottering scheme, to make the just and holy Ruler of the world, take the awful oath, and swear by himself, that he has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, at the same time that by his decree, which unchangeably fixed the sinner's doom from all eternity, he has rendered pardon and grace impossible. But to get rid of the objection of the insuperable decree, he contrives to slip that out of the contest, (at least out of observation) and to slip in what he makes equivalent to it, namely, God's foreknowledge, intending to charge his Maker with the most horrible absurdities, and asserting that because God foreknows evil of any kind, he must therefore be the contriver and finisher of all the murders, blasphemies, perjuries, &c. which ever were committed.

The calm and unprejudiced witnesses of our dispute, will recollect how often Mr. Pelton was at an almost entire stand, when pressed to give a plain and direct answer to the questions proposed to him. And his publication, instead of giving a plain narrative of the debate, as a sincere record, passes an after judgment on every thing that occurred, and not unfrequently so marshals his questions and answers, as to give the appearance of greater plausibility to the censures he sometimes undertakes to pronounce. I have every expectation that the witnesses who were present on

the occasion, will form a judgment altogether impartial and unbiassed.

That Mr. Pelton's answers were not replies to the questions put to him, will appear very evident to every calm and unprejudiced reader. When I asked him what a Condition was? instead of replying, he called for Walker's Dictionary, from which he read five meanings, the last of which was "stipulation." This was certainly the true one on the occasion. When I asked him whether God's entering into a covenant, agreement, or stipulation with man, did not imply a knowledge and power afforded to, and possessed by man? he answered, "that God had entered into covenant with his Son." When I asked him whether Adam did not know the forbidden fruit from the other fruits of the garden, and possess a power from God to avoid it, as a temptation? he answered, "Yes, he did; but he was at the same time under the influence of an absolute decree." When I asked him whether God did not propose terms of acceptance to Cain? he answered, that "God entered into no covenant or terms with him." When I asked him whether the term "If," and many other words of like nature, did not imply a *condition*, and whether God did not employ that "term" in his address to Cain, as the mark of a fair condition? his answer was, "that God addressed Cain as a sinner on the covenant of works." When I asked whether "If," connected with the stipulation, "*thou doest well*," did not mean a present offer of fair terms of grace and mercy? he replied, that "Cain did not act well, which to do, he must have faith in Christ." When I, in reply to this, stated that there were several dispensations, and that a man born under the Patriarchal, or Jewish, or Gentile dispensation, could not be justly tried by the Christian law, any more than a man of one talent could be accountable for as much improvement as a man of two or five talents: and asked whether a man born and living all his life long under an inferior dispensation could be justly tried by the laws and rules of a superior dispensation? his reply was, that "there was no name under Heaven by which a man could be saved

but that of Christ; and that this was implied in the promise." When I asked him if Adam suffered the whole penalty of his sin, on the day of his transgression? he answered, that "he died the second death." Now almost every reader knows that the "second death" is another word for the state and punishment of the damned, and that Adam's body must die, previously to the execution of the everlasting punishment on his soul. When I asked him if God did not make an offer of mercy to the whole world by the ministry of Noah, before the universal deluge? he answered, that "Noah was an exception, and therefore found grace." When I asked him if Lot had not a divine permission, and even a commission to warn his friends in Sodom to escape from danger? his answer was, that "the reason which prevented them was, that it was otherwise determined concerning them from the foundation of the world." When I asked him whether, if God, from the foundation of the world, or from all eternity, had inevitably decreed the burning of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, how he could afterward make a sincere, late, ineffectual offer of safety to them consistently with his attributes of Justice, Mercy, and Goodness? his answer was, that "God knew his own plans: he fixed them from all eternity: but so that they could not be altered in the least: nevertheless, though he fixed every thing, yet he left men to act voluntarily." When I asked him whether God had decreed from all eternity every thing that happens? his reply was, "Yes; all is certain with him." When I asked him whether a man's being under an inevitable decree to commit murder, could possibly be reconciled to his entire liberty to choose or to refuse? his reply was, "Yes: as in the case of Cain, he having liberty to choose or refuse, though tied down to commit the murder"—here also he left out the decree, and slipped in "foreknowledge." To the question, Does God decree that men shall commit sin? he answered, "we have such a decree in Acts iv. 27," where our present translation refers the conduct (which the original applies to our Lord Jesus Christ,) to Herod, Pontius Pilate, and the

Jews. When asked who could be guilty, Herod, Pontius Pilate, and the Jews, if under a decree which they could not avoid, or God, who was supposed by the necessarian scheme, the maker of that decree? he answered, "that they had no such command given to them, but acted according to their own free wills." When asked whether God had not made some things avoidable, though at the same time decreed to be done and prophetically announced, as if to be done or accomplished? he answered, "No." When asked whether David (1 Sam. xxiii. 9—14) had not escaped from Keilah, and from Saul, notwithstanding the decree to the contrary? he answered, that "God knew of the escape, or he should never have promised him to sit on the throne of Israel." When asked whether the same thing might be a contingency and a certainty? his reply was, that "with men there might be contingencies, but with God all things were certainties." To the question whether God did not promise the Israelites in Egypt to bring them into the land of Canaan? his answer was, that "this promise was made to Abraham and to his seed." When asked whether the promise was not also made (Exod. iii. 17) to the elders of Israel? his answer was, "No." Let the candid reader weigh, compare, examine, and fairly decide on the side of truth.

MR. PELTON'S QUESTIONS; ANSWERS GIVEN; OBSERVATIONS.

Quest. Do you suppose that God is omniscient?

Ans. All the attributes of God are in perfect harmony. God is eternal, omnipresent, almighty, holy, just, and good. The justice, and mercy, and goodness of God, have as much to do with his Deity, as his knowledge. He is omnipotent, and therefore able to do all things: but his power of doing all things is in complete unison with his wisdom, justice, holiness, and goodness.

In speaking of the divine Being, who is infinite, and therefore incomprehensible by our finite understandings, we ought to be very modest and circumspect, as well in our thoughts as in our words. There are a great many things in fact which we cannot comprehend; such as the continuity and adhesion of matter—the vital union of soul and body—the operations of the faculties of sense and imagination—of memory and reason—the infinite nature and perfections of God—how any thing should be of itself, and without any cause of its being: how any thing can be made out of nothing, &c.; and yet we must believe all these things.

Quest. Turning to the 3d section and 11th paragraph of the Methodist Discipline, from which he quotes, "The scriptures tell us plainly what predestination is." Do you believe this?

Ans. Yes, Sir.—I explained this by some plain observations. The clerks, or secretaries, however, who were Mr. Pelton's friends, only observe here, that "I told a long story, in my mode of showing how inconsistent with justice in God, or accountableness in man, the doctrine of absolute predestination must be."

What a false representation of the religion of the gospel must that be, which, instead of being made to consist chiefly in pleasing God, is made to consist in displeasing and tormenting ourselves. This is not to paint religion in her true and amiable character, but rather, like one of the furies, with nothing but whips and scorpions about her. To imagine for a moment, that God, from whom every perfect gift proceeds, does not sincerely desire the salvation of men, but has from all eternity debarred the great bulk of mankind from all possibility of attaining that happiness which he so plainly offers them in his word, and by his ministers, would be a melancholy consideration indeed, if it were true; but there is no ground either from reason or scripture to entertain such thought. No man will be ruined who does not wilfully ruin himself.

Quest. Has God in his word spoken of things by way of prediction, which afterward came to pass?

Ans. He has spoken of some things that have, and of other things that have not come to pass. He has declared that Nineveh would be overthrown in forty days; but the people repented, and God was pleased to exempt them from the punishment which otherwise would have fallen upon them. The message of Isaiah the prophet to Hezekiah, is another instance.

God's foreknowledge of a thing, lays no necessity upon the event. The event, considered in itself, is future; with relation to its causes, it is contingent. God sees it as both; and so, as that, which, until it happen, or come to pass, may, or may not be, and when it does happen, he sees man as the free agent in it, and so under no necessity. Foreknowledge is not the cause of the things that are foreknown. It does not come to pass, because it was foreknown: but because it came to pass, it was foreknown. Knowledge of a thing is no more the cause of that thing happening, than my seeing a man is the cause of his existence; or seeing him agitated, is the cause of that agitation.

Quest. Did God know that the Ninevites would repent?

Ans. He knew it, though he left it optional to their own free choice.

God exhorts and encourages to repentance, but never forces or constrains. He reasons with man on the necessity and propriety of it, and expects it; as by his help and grace afforded, man may repent. He is said to be grieved for the impenitency of men; because they may do otherwise and will not. Where God exhorts, we cannot look on the endeavour to be vain or unnecessary; yet by the wilful obstinacy of men, it may be rendered vain, and so unproductive of any good effect. Because God's exhortations are serious and in good earnest, he will certainly punish those, who by a wilful contempt of his warnings, plunge themselves into final misery.

Quest. Do you believe that God is a spirit?

Ans. Yes: for so it is stated, John iv. 24.

We often read in scripture of the Spirit of God; the Spirit of Christ; the Holy Spirit: but we only read in

the place before alluded to, that God is a spirit, and that his worship ought therefore to be pure and spiritual. A spirit is not matter, falling under the notice of our senses, in being felt or touched. God is not matter, for that would contradict his infinity, or immensity. It would be equally contradictory to his wisdom, it not being imagined how mere matter can understand, or how it could distinctly comprehend such a variety of objects as fall under the notice and providence of God; and take in at one view, the past, the present, and the future. It would be equally contractory to the freedom and liberty of the Divine Being, for matter has no self-moving principle. It would be contrary to his goodness also; for he cannot be just or good, who does not know that he is so, and that what he does, is a free act. So that if we take away for a moment, the infinity, knowledge, liberty, and goodness of God, he is divested of his glory, and his most essential perfections.

Quest. In what did the image of God in man consist, when man was created?

Ans. Man was, in a certain degree, the humble representative of God. The great Ruler designed that man should be his political image, having dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field, as well as over every creeping thing. God is supreme in heaven: so man was upon earth. The moral image of God also was comprehended in the great privilege. God is an infinitely holy Being; and man also was holy in his measure.

Quest. When man was first created, had his soul a will?

Ans. When man was first created, he possessed no soul.

This answer exciting no small degree of surprise, and Mr. Pelton not being able to account for it, or rather about to deny it, I proceeded to explain thus:—Man's creation differed materially from the creation of other parts of the great system. When God created the world in general, it was produced in a moment, at a stroke. There were, however, several partial creations, which together, made up the whole, not only in

a state of existence, but of perfection. Thus he created the light, the firmament, the waters, divided the waters from the dry land, the grass, trees, and herbs, &c. Man's creation widely differed from the other creatures. When God is about to give existence to a moral, rational, and accountable creature, a council is held in heaven. "Let us make man." The powers of this moral creature, being intended for the present and future states of existence, God adds to the intended creature, "in our own image," and continues to add, "let him have dominion over the inferior creatures." But instead of producing the entire of man at once, as he did the other creatures; the body of man, which he formed of the dust of the ground, came first under the creating energy of God; yet this body continued as an immovable statue, having eyes, hands, feet, tongue, &c. The great Artist proceeded with his work, and breathed into this lifeless statue the breath of life, and then man became a living soul.—He still continued his great design, and taking one of man's ribs, while Adam was laid in a deep sleep, he made a woman, or partner for him, which he presented to him. Having given this creature eyes, God expects that he would employ them in seeing, as well as his ears in hearing, his hands in acting, his feet in walking, his tongue in speaking, and his mind in thinking. God gave the means, and furnished the opportunity, and therefore properly demands and claims the proper use and improvement of every power we possess. Man could not will any thing, therefore, until he possessed a soul and body, in vital union. This explication was thought a sufficient solution of the difficulty.

Quest. When the soul of man was created, did he possess a will?

Ans. Man possesses a will in all moral cases.

The power of beginning action without being impelled by any extraneous impulse, is one of the principal distinctions between spirit and matter. Matter being impelled by other matter, receives an impetus according to the quantity and direction of the force with which it is impressed. And without the exertion of some

such force, it remains altogether inert, a mere inactive heap. But mind is a principle essentially active; capable of beginning motion, and of communicating it to other things, antecedently to the action of any force upon itself. The infinite and eternal God, the author of all power and wisdom, has given existence and motion to all things, by that intrinsic power which mind possesses over matter. By the same mind he still controls all movements of the universe. He has given to man also to possess an image of that power, in the control which he possesses over his own will, and over all the actions of his mind, as well as of his body. Hence God can, with the greatest propriety, punish the moral creature, who has knowledge of his duty, and power to perform it; but who wilfully offends against it.

Quest. How does this "will" influence a man's conduct?

Ans. His *will* has the chief government of his demeanour. But to give a right judgment, or to make a proper choice, the mutual assistance of other powers is called forward, namely, of reason, conscience, common sense, memory, and even experience. When these set the matter before the eye of the mind, in its true size, shape, colours, and importance, the will chooses or refuses.

In all disquisitions concerning the will, it must be granted, as a primary principle, that the soul is perfectly free in all its volitions. It stands on the same footing with the clearest testimonies of sense and consciousness. Every man is conscious that he feels within himself the invincible principle of liberty. There is no proposition of reason, or perception of sense, more convincing than this is.

Quest. Does a man act in every thing as he wishes to do?

Ans. With respect to acting in every thing "as he wishes to do," there are several cases, to which his reason shows him he ought to conform, though his pleasure, appetite, or taste, may urge him to decline or resist. Though the medicine prescribed by wise direction be bitter and unpleasant, and therefore to be

shunned by the suggestions of sense, which is fond of sweet and pleasant things, as well as abhorrent of the bitter and nauseous; yet on the hopeful prospect of the future good to be derived, the afflicted patient calls up all the courage that is necessary to overcome the difficulty. In all actions for which man is accountable, he is free, and voluntary.

Liberty, as a principle of moral action, has a much more extensive power, than merely controlling our general conduct within a certain sphere, according to our present inclinations and dispositions. It extends to the power of resisting our inclinations, of correcting our habits of thinking and acting, which may be in opposition to our duty, interest, or pleasure. Of this, we need no other convincing proofs than the very obvious effects of moral culture upon the mind of man. The most ignorant, for instance, may become enlightened; the most rude and uncultivated taste may be refined; the most vicious disposition may be changed, and the most irregular life reformed. It is true, when any violent passion, or inveterate prejudice, has been allowed to take possession of the soul, it is very difficult to effect an immediate and radical change. But the ideas of difficulty and impossibility are totally distinct.

Quest. When a man takes what is bitter, does he drink it of his own free will?

Ans. Something like an unwillingness may for a moment spring from the unpleasantness of the taste; but when reason puts in its stronger claims, and the patient sees the great interest which he has in the medicine, though under the character of a bitter draught, he not only submits, but lifts the cup, and swallows the dose.

This power of choosing what is good and right, though apparently unpleasant, extends not only to the taking medicinal draughts, in which a person has an interest, but to the eradication of a right-eye, or the dissection of a right-hand. All this is choice. He sees that to retain an eye, or hand, under certain circumstances, would in all probability be inconsistent with the preservation of life, and he chooses, and prefers by a voluntary act, to resign a part, in order to save the

whole. Moral habits are equally strong. The ancient martyrs had two choices set before them, of a very different aspect, under the characters of pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour, life and death; with all their various attachments. They applied the principle of choice, and free will, to the incumbent duty, and they found it to stand the test. They accordingly preferred death, with all its terrors, to life, and all its pleasures.

Quest. Calling for the Methodist Discipline, and reading 131st sect. 27th paragraph—"We believe that the moment Adam fell, he had no freedom of will left, but that God, when, of his own free grace, he gave the promise of a Saviour to him, and to his posterity, graciously restored to mankind a liberty, and power, to accept of proffered salvation." Do you believe this?

Ans. Yes, Sir. Our privileges were not only forfeited in fallen Adam, but our very existence also. But God, who is infinitely good in allowing us to exist, has restored us through Christ, to a measure of the spiritual life also. He has graciously afforded us all necessary helps for the attainment of present and eternal good, and among the rest, the power of a free will and choice.

God's perfections shine in such a manner, as not to eclipse each other. His wisdom, justice, mercy, and truth, are attributes in which we are very nearly concerned. Now, if, in order to magnify his mercy, we shut out his wisdom and justice; or if, in order to magnify his justice, we thrust out his mercy and goodness, we act a part highly absurd and unnatural. God has wisely made men free agents, in order to display his holiness, justice, and truth, by judging them according to their moral state and works. God made them rational creatures, to judge them as rationals, namely, by wise and good laws, adapted to their condition, which is a truth that stands or falls with the Bible. On this ground, all inevitable fate falls for ever to the ground, respecting the moral actions of man. While all fair ways and means of escaping eternal misery, and of attaining to eternal happiness, are afforded to all persons without exception, how divinely must the attributes and con-

duct of God appear? and how worthy of admiration and praise? But if the inevitable chain of an unchangeable decree be once brought in, or hammered on, how is his wisdom blackened; his truth overthrown; and his justice destroyed? What a poor figure would the justice of God make, if he had said that he would judicially cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, for burying, or not improving a talent he never had, or for not receiving an offer of mercy which was never made to him? What human creatures would not wonder at a governor, who, after having constituted moral agents, in order to govern them according to their free natures, and to judge them in righteousness; ruled them by decrees which rendered every part of their conduct inevitable; yet so unjust as to punish them with eternal death, according to a sentence of absolute reprobation which he himself had passed upon them, millions of years before the foundation of the world? By what art could so strange a conduct be reconciled with the high and holy characters of lawgiver and judge of all the earth, or with his repeated declarations, that justice and equity are the basis of his throne?

Quest. Does God pledge himself to pardon sinners, however great their sins, if they repent?

Ans. God has promised to pardon all sinners that repent truly, and sincerely, and turn to him with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart. Hence the terms, "repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Hence the threatening, "except ye repent." Hence the fact and instance, "the people of Nineveh repented, and found mercy."

The offers of the gospel are of immense magnitude. Past transgression is forgiven, and past sin covered. Guilt, which is the burden of conscience, the sting of death, and the worm of hell, is removed from the mind, as far as the east is from the west. The reigning power of sin is brought under foot, and its dominion taken away. The tyranny of Satan is escaped from, even that spirit which wrought in them when children of disobedience. They are delivered from the curse and condemnation of the law. They are brought into a

state of favour with God, whose lovingkindness is better than life. Being justified by faith, they have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. They are adopted into his family, of which Christ is the great head. Being made children, they are also heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; it being no less than their Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom.

Quest. Has a man power to repent as long as he lives?

Ans. He may repent while the day of grace lasts, which is generally as long as life.

The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching them that denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present world. This grace comprehends all spiritual blessings, necessary to the change of our sinful condition; his pardoning mercy through his Son, and the renewing and sanctifying impressions and influences of his Holy Spirit; directing, assisting, quickening, comforting, and finally sealing such as hold out to the end in the good ways of the Lord. The love of God, through Jesus Christ, is the fountain and spring of all this good. And therefore, not unto us, when we are convinced ever so deeply, and repent ever so sincerely and severely, but to God, who affords his heavenly grace to us and to all mankind, in portions sufficient to the circumstances of each, be all the glory for ever ascribed.

Quest. If a man swear away his neighbour's life, may he afterward turn and repent?

Ans. He may, or he may not. The thing is contingent, and possible, though not certain. We have in the sacred records a variety of instances not to encourage the commission of sin; but for the example and consolation of penitent sinners, of persons who advanced to a very high pitch in evil, who nevertheless repented and found mercy. Among others, we have the instances of David, Manasseh, and Paul, who repented and found mercy, after being the agents or instruments in shedding no small quantity of human blood. One of the thieves, crucified with Christ, notified as a murderer, repented and found mercy. Many others

were brought from great extremes of evil, to high degrees of good. Their sins which were as scarlet, have been washed as white as snow. They have been brought from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. As high as heaven is above earth, so high are God's ways above our ways. He pardons iniquity, transgression, and sin.

Quest. May a sinner turn and repent at any time?

Ans. God's plans are not limited to particulars, but are of the general and comprehensive kind. If an earthly interest of honour, profit, or pleasure, were the offer of one person to another, it would in all likelihood be accepted with gladness at the first. But in those offers which respect the spiritual and eternal states, connected with which is the bearing of a present weighty cross, men, in general, are not so ready to accept of them. It is not an easy thing to a man of the world, to sell all, and give the produce to the poor, and then nakedly follow a naked master, to prison, judgment, and death.

The God of grace and mercy knows how to make every possible allowance for men, as the offspring of fallen Adam. He does not show himself in the character of an absolute tyrant, but as a gracious benefactor; in order to encourage the return even of the most degraded to him. By the unfolding of his gospel, he brings life and immortality to light, and commands an offer of its divine and gracious blessings to be made to all mankind, that men may be recovered from their lapsed state, and attain to the glory they had forfeited by sin. This gospel assures us that God is reconciled, and ready to receive returning sinners; that he has provided for them an eternal redemption in Christ their mediator; and an incorruptible inheritance in the everlasting kingdom.

Quest. Who determines the will in man to good? Does God do it, or is it the act of man?

Ans. Volition, or the power which the mind possesses, and exercises in making a choice, is certainly the act of man; just as thinking, designing, resolving, or any other act of the rational nature; or as seeing,

hearing, speaking, are other acts of man. Now that God helps and encourages, and promotes every exertion of the mind and will of man in favour of good, there ought to be no doubt, seeing that without him we can do nothing. Still, it must be plain to every unbiassed mind, that it could not be a human act, nor could man be liable to blame, or properly commendable, if the mind were not free to act and choose.

But, if Mr. Pelton, to maintain the inevitable decree of absolute predestination, should insist on bringing in the impulse of God to urge a good man to the preference of good, what will he do with the other side of his one-legged argument? Who is it, that, on the same ground, irresistibly determines the minds of bad men to evil? If choice in the evil man be free to evil; choice in the good man must be equally free to good. Or, if choice in the good man be absolutely determined by any irresistible impulse to good, then choice in the evil man must be equally impelled by an irresistible impulse to evil. The just and holy God must, on this principle, be the author of all the evil in the world.

Quest. Tell us, who determines the will, God, or man?

Ans. To consent, is a human act. The goodness of God directs its appeals, makes its offers, and affords its assistance. Still, it cannot be a human act, until man shall give his consent, and make his choice or resolution. That God is able and ready to confer all the help that is necessary, is very evident from his frequent declarations, promises, threatenings, encouragements, cautions, and pleadings. Hence the charges against those to whom he sent his messages, and offers, and promises, which required their acceptance to render them effectual.

When apostles, endowed with a true zeal for the glory of God and the good of souls, made an offer of eternal life to all who would embrace Christ and his gospel, they knew no other joy than conversions, nor any other reward but that of plucking brands from the burning. Instead of dwelling upon the dark scheme of absolute decrees, and unconditional predestination, they forcibly

affected their hearers, preaching in season, and out of season; impressing terrors on the guilty, by their threatenings, while they made the most open offers of eternal life to all that would embrace Christ as their Saviour. This mode arrested the attention of the multitude, while it wrought on the heart within. The very term "gospel" means good news, which it may be in effect, to all that hear and embrace it.

Quest. When the prophets of Baal, in the days of Ahab, appeared before Elijah, and the people cried out and turned to the Lord, who determined their wills on that occasion?

Ans. Elijah had engaged in a religious contest, with four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. The God who would answer by fire, was to be taken for the true God. The prophets of Baal chose one bullock for themselves, and laid it on their altar, and called on the name of Baal from morning until the time of evening sacrifice, saying, "O Baal, hear us:" but there was no answer. They even added dancing up and down, cutting themselves with knives, in the most frantic manner. When it came to Elijah's turn, he desired the people to approach, while he set about repairing the altar of the Lord. He took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of Israel; made a trench to detain the water that should be poured out all about the altar, and to prevent any suspicion that fire might be concealed underneath. At the time of evening sacrifice, he addressed a solemn prayer to God, that the people might know that the answer proceeded from Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The prayer being finished, the fire of the Lord fell from heaven and consumed the sacrifice of Elijah. The people, struck with awe at the sight of such a miracle, fell on their faces and cried, "the Lord, (or Jehovah,) is the God," and not Baal. This miracle became the great medium in the hand of providence, of convincing the people, and of turning them from an idol to the living God.

Quest. What is the cause of the revivals of religion in our day? For many years persons have not paid the same attention to religion as now.

Ans. The Lord is pleased to employ a variety of ways and means to bring men to know and feel interested in the things of their everlasting peace. Sometimes he warns, by setting life and death before them. Sometimes he sends temporal prosperity on a nation, church, or individuals, on which ground he asks, "what more could I have done for my vineyard?" Sometimes affliction is employed, as before, or without some strokes of this rod, men are too apt to go astray. Sometimes he exercises patience and long-suffering, waiting for three years, or threescore years and ten, upon some fruitless trees of his vineyard. Sometimes he invites in the pressing language of "come unto me, all ye weary and heavy laden." Sometimes miracles are employed, as on the day of Pentecost. In general he employs the preaching of the word, which is sometimes quick and powerful. If men would but attend, the greatest good would be the happy result. The word of God frequently declares in his name, "I would, but ye would not." If men would but allow the interests of the present life to take their true station "like Mary at the Master's feet," what a happy change would be effected? If the body were but rendered subservient to the soul, the creature to the Creator, and time to eternity, then should the peace of men flow as a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea. If men in general would but allow themselves to be seriously affected by a just sense of the presence of the omnipresent God, the infinite value of their immortal souls, the joys of heaven, and the guilty torments of everlasting misery, the most happy consequences would follow.

Quest. How comes it to pass, that some are willing to believe, and others are not?

Ans. If men will not receive the offers of grace in this life, and of glory in the next, it is altogether their own fault; and for which they are justly chargeable. As God is pleased to make the offer, this plainly presupposes, that men are in possession of a capacity of accepting of it.

God never sends an offer of grace and glory to birds,

or beasts, or fishes; because he has formed them merely for the present life. And yet, if any man be under a decree that is absolutely unchangeable, an offer of gospel benefits to birds, or beasts, would be as useful to them as to him. Nay, he is supposed to be accountable for not receiving what he has no lot or part in, or right to. This poor man is supposed to be justly liable to future condemnation, because he does not see without eyes, hear without ears, and understand without a rational soul; God having taken away his judgment in spiritual things. With respect to some believing, and others not believing, this also is a proof of the freedom of the soul, in the act of willing. It is not for want of means, but for the abuse or neglect of good and sufficient means, that God condemns the unbelieving. "If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin; but now their sin remaineth. This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and yet men prefer darkness rather than light. The grace which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. God would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

That believing or not believing is the free act of man, is very evident from this, namely, that such as do believe are approved of, and as such will be rewarded; whereas such as do not believe are reproved, and threatened with very severe punishment. If a patient possessed of reason, die with a sovereign remedy before him, prescribed by a physician of the highest character, and which has cured thousands, affected in the same way; or if a man wilfully starve himself to death, with a plenty and variety of good and wholesome food before him, to which he has not only an invitation but a right, would it be proper to blame the physician, the remedy, or the food? Surely all the blame must fall upon the individuals who obstinately neglect them.

That God is pleased to afford the power to believe to all men, is very evident. Angels are allowed to have been holy before they fell, and to have angelic power or grace. Adam had Adamic grace. The Lord Jesus gave Judas the grace of apostleship. God gave a

pound to a servant, or a talent of grace. Capernaum had mighty works done it, sufficient to convert and save Sodom and Gomorrah. Now could it be to bring Capernaum to repentance, that those works were wrought? or for a mere flourish? But it could not be for a flourish, for the people who refused to be converted by such open proofs of the power of Christ, are said to be "inexcusable" for their obstinacy and unbelief.

Quest. What is the meaning of the term predestinate?

Ans. There is no such word as predestinate. The word is, "to predestinate," and then it means to foreordain, or to predetermine.

The strongest and surest reasonings in religion are grounded on the divine perfections of God. Divine Revelation presupposes those for its foundation. Unless we be first persuaded of the providence of God, and his particular care of mankind, why should we believe that he would make any revelation of his will to them? Unless it be known to us that God is true, what foundation is there for belief in his word? What will the laws and promises of God signify, unless we be first assured of his authority and faithfulness? Nothing is to be admitted as a revelation from God, which flatly contradicts his essential perfections; and consequently if any person should pretend Divine Revelation for the foundation, "that God has from all eternity absolutely decreed the eternal ruin of the greatest part of mankind," without any respect to the sins and demerits of men, I am as certain that this doctrine cannot be from God, as I am sure that God is good and just; because this clashes with those perfections which are essential to the Deity. This is a thing which no good man would do if it were in his power; and therefore it cannot be justly believed that infinite goodness would do it. This is a thing which no affectionate father would do concerning his children; and therefore must be altogether irreconcileable with the character of a heavenly Father. Therefore, if an apostle or angel from heaven were to teach any doctrine which plainly

overthrows the goodness and justice of God, instead of believing it I ought to reject it.

All the perfections of God must be considered in conjunction, so as to reconcile them one with another. We are not to separate them, so as to consider them singly, without reference to the harmony of the whole. The greatest mistakes in religion have certainly sprung from this root. We are not to frame such wide and large notions of one perfection, as to exclude all the rest. That cannot be a divine perfection which does not agree with, or which contradicts all the other perfections of God. If this had been properly considered, men would not, by being too intent on exalting God's absolute sovereignty, and putting his other perfections into the back ground, have spoken those hard things about predestination. For the sovereignty of God does by no means set him above the eternal laws of goodness, truth, and righteousness. And if this were properly considered, men would not, by dwelling upon the justice and severity of God, be so swallowed up in despair. For God is not so severe, but he can be merciful to a true penitent. This, well considered, would check the presumption of those who encourage themselves in sin by fancying they have to deal with a God who is all mercy.

To understand the Apostle Paul on the subject of predestination, we must have reference to the context and scope of his argument. He tells us that all things work together for good to them that love God: that such are called according to his purpose. This is a metaphor taken from inviting guests to a feast. All things work together for our good, on the supposition that we love God; but not otherwise. He does not say that all things concur to the everlasting happiness of those who are called, merely; but of those who being called, love God. For how repeatedly has God cause to say, "I called, but ye refused." If we be in the visible church of Christ, and professing the faith of the Gospel, we are unquestionably called. As to what is termed "effectual calling," as distinguished from the general calling, or invitation of the Gospel, it is a dis-

tinction which men have invented, without any warrant from the sacred writings. Our calling, therefore, is considered by the apostle, as a self-evident proposition, which nobody denies; or, which indeed no Christian should call in question. He tells us, that "whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them also he justified; and whom he justified, them also he glorified." Here the apostle shows, that our calling is an argument that all things work together for our good, by showing the several steps which the wisdom and goodness of God settled, in order to complete our salvation. He foreknows, or designs at the beginning of the scheme, to bestow the favour and privilege of being God's people on any set of men. This is the foundation, or first step of our salvation, namely, the purpose or grace of God, which was given in Christ Jesus, before the world began. Even then he favoured us. He knew the Gentiles then, when the scheme was laid, and before any part of it was transacted. When God knew us at the formation of the Gospel scheme, he predestinated or designed us to be conformed to the image of his Son. The Gentiles whom he designed to call into his Church, (together with the Jews,) he has graciously called and invited, by the preaching of the Gospel, to believe on his Son Jesus Christ, and to accept of salvation in his name. When the apostle speaks here, he speaks of what was past, referring to what had already taken place; for the calling, justifying, and glorifying, are here represented as having already taken place, as well as the foreknowledge and predestination. It is therefore reasonable to suppose, that the apostle refers to what God had already done among the Jews and Gentiles, and not to what he would do in future. Besides calling them, he justified them, pardoning the sins of those Gentiles, who, with hearty repentance and true faith, turned to him; and also glorified them; honouring and dignifying them with the highest privileges, having already removed many of

them to the heavenly kingdom, while many more were on the way thither; and affording the promise that such as love him, and continue faithful unto death, shall inherit that glory as an everlasting reward.

The whole of this is conditional, as far as it relates to the final salvation of any person who professes the religion of Christ; for the promises are made to character, and not to persons, as some have injudiciously and even falsely affirmed. The apostle insists upon character from the beginning of the chapter. Thus he informs us, that "there is no condemnation to them (whoever they are) that are in Christ Jesus, and who, as such, walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." At the entrance on this subject, he takes care to settle the connexion between our calling and our love, thus "All things work together for good to them that love God, that are called according to his purpose," for those only who love God, can reap any benefit by this predestination, vocation, or any other instance of God's favour.

Quest. When God predestinates, will that take place?

Ans. It may, or it may not. If one man should kill another, and we at the same time undertake to imagine that God had inevitably decreed it, we cannot possibly help looking on God as the author of the murder. If God, from all eternity, predestinated a certain number of men first to sin, and then to punishment, in consequence of the sins which they could not possibly avoid, the plain consequence must be that the author of the unchangeable decree must be chargeable with what he laid on them, the avoidance or escape from which was utterly beyond the application of any knowledge or power they possessed.

If the principle of absolute predestination can, for a moment, be supposed as capable of being acted upon, electing some persons unconditionally while it reprobates others, in consequence of an unchangeable decree, then the elect must be saved, do what they will, and the reprobates be damned, do what they can, seeing that the lots of both, however different, are already

determined beyond all possibility of change. To attribute such a decree as this to a holy and righteous God, would be execrably shocking. To an unbiassed reader, it must appear that as God chose his ancient people, the Jews, and they became his peculiar people; so now the whole body of Christians, constituted of converted Gentiles, as well as Jews, are admitted to the same honour; they are selected from all the rest of the world. On this ground, who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect, who abound in knowledge, love, and obedience to God, according to his command? On this divine principle, the apostle might well add, "According as he hath chosen us (Gentiles) in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

The first step which the goodness of God took in the execution of his purpose of election, with regard to the Gentiles, was to rescue them from their wretched situation of idolatry and sin, by sending his Son Jesus Christ to die for mankind, and to afford them a claim to the privileges of the Gospel. With regard to this great and universal change, the Scripture is most express. "That he is the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world.—That he gave himself for our sins.—That he is able to save to the uttermost.—That he bought, purchased, and redeemed us.—That he wills all to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

As God sent the Gospel to bring the Gentiles out of Heathenism, making them welcome to the privileges of his people, he is said "to call them." Hence the apostle directs an epistle, To all (the Christians) that are at Rome, called to be saints. Hence the expression and declaration, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son." Hence the exhortation, "I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Hence we are commanded to "show forth the praises of him who hath called us from darkness into his marvellous light."

Though the election of the Gentiles be a leading feature in the Gospel dispensation, yet God is not

even then to be looked on as having cast off his ancient people. When the Gospel was preached to every creature, the first offer was made to the Jews. When Paul came to Thessalonica, as his manner was, he went to the synagogue of the Jews, and on three sabbath-days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures. Some of them believed, and associated with Paul and Silas. It appears to have been Paul's practice upon his first arrival at a place to repair to the synagogue, and to make the Jews the first offers of eternal life through Jesus Christ. At Antioch, in Pisidia, his words were, "It was necessary that the word of God should have been first spoken to you." If the Jews rejected his ministry, he then quitted the synagogue, and betook himself to a Gentile audience. At Corinth, upon his first coming thither, he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, but when the Jews opposed themselves, and refused to hearken to his calls, he departed thence, expressly telling them that "from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." All this, and a great deal more, must furnish proof, not only that God has no pleasure in the death of a sinner; but that what was said with respect to the rejection of the Jews, did not prevent them from having the first offers of eternal life made to them.

God's promises or decrees, in many recorded instances, have not come to pass, for want of using the proper means. We have a remarkable instance in the history of Joshua. Prior to the taking of Jericho, it was declared to Joshua that he should certainly become master of that place. Nay, so peremptory was the decree, and so express the declaration of it, that it was spoken of as if it had already taken place. "I have given into thy hand Jericho," Josh. vi. 2. But the Israelites crossed God's decree, by neglecting the means of its accomplishment. The Lord promised to Joshua, that "no man should be able to stand before him; and that he never would fail him or forsake him," Josh. i. 5. Now this peremptory decree of the end, was rendered void, by a certain flaw in the use of the means. The disobedience of Achan (for instance) re-

versed God's decree. The condition upon which God built his decree was, "turn not to the right-hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper." Achan made one of those turnings: in consequence of which the decree failed, and we find Joshua prostrate before the ark, a whole day with his clothes rent, and dust upon his head, lamenting the flight of Israel before the city of Ai. God's answer to Joshua, on inquiring the cause, was very plain, namely, that "Israel sinned, in taking of the accursed thing—therefore, the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies—neither will I be any more with you except ye destroy the accursed thing," Josh. vii. 1—13. Many other plain and positive proofs might be advanced.

Quest. Turn to 3d sect. 2d paragraph of the Methodist Discipline, "And so likewise he predestinates or foreappoints all disobedient unbelievers to damnation, not without, but according to his foreknowledge of their works from the foundation of the world."

Ans. Turn to 13th paragraph, and there you will find a complete answer.

We are persuaded that because God's foreknowledge is infinite, he foreknows future contingencies, and we think we should insult both his holiness and his omniscience, if we did not believe that he could both foresee that men would sin, yet not necessitates them to do so. He could foresee that Judas would be unfaithful without putting him under absolute necessity to be so. As the Lord Jesus loved the rich young man, though inclined to be covetous and fond of the world; so he loved his poor covetous disciple. For had he hated him, he can hardly be acquitted from the charge of having acted the part of a dissembler, by showing him for some years as much love as he did to the other apostles. The sin of Judas and of the young man, was of themselves, and therefore they are justly blamed for it.

Plain Scripture testimony in many instances confirms the just and fundamental principle, that when God is pleased to influence or work upon the soul of man, he expects attention and faithfulness from him:

and that when man, as a moral agent, grieves or quenches the good Spirit, that this conduct persevered in, will be attended with misery here and hereafter. This unfaithfulness or sin of man, God declares, and even swears is none of his work; and that men themselves are to be looked on as chargeable with it. Then how much more reasonable and scriptural is it to allow a reprobation of justice, or a casting off in punishment, which is perfectly consistent with the doctrine of free-will and free-grace, than absolute, inevitable reprobation, contrived by a just and holy God, against his creature man, and which he could not possibly avoid? The reprobation of justice which is perpetually asserted in the Gospel, leaves the stubbornly wicked entirely inexcusable, and God perfectly righteous, as a governor and a judge. Whereas a reprobation produced by a contrivance, which peremptorily obliges a man to be first a wicked offender, and then a miserable sufferer, must render such wretches excusable, as being condemned for doing what an omnipotent power had forced them to do. This unavoidable reprobation must stigmatize Christ, "whose words were grace and truth," for offering to all a salvation, from which he had previously debarred the most of them.

Quest. Look at the 12th paragraph of the Methodist Discipline. Do you believe that God from the foundation of the world, knew of all men believing or not believing, and according to his foreknowledge, chose or elected all obedient believers to salvation, and reprobated all disobedient unbelievers as such to damnation?

Ans. Yes; but not without taking in at the same time their believing or disbelieving, according to which he elected or reprobated them, not electing or reprobating in effect, until they accept or reject his offers of mercy.

God saw their believing as soon as he saw the election of some, and their unbelief as soon as he saw the reprobation of others. And if we dare speak of the Deity after the manner of men, he must have seen the conditions, accepted or rejected, in the order of things before he elected or rejected. This is his plan to

the present day, and all over the world. The commission given to the heralds of his free-grace was, "Preach my gospel to every creature: he that believeth shall be saved: but he only that believeth not shall be damned. Turn unto me, and I will turn unto you."

The gospel of Christ, instead of teaching us to see God, the great, the just, the wise, through the horrid medium of absolute decrees, instructs us to entertain the most pure and exalted conceptions of the universal Father, and righteous Governor of the world; as the standard of all purity and perfection; conducting his whole administration with an eternal regard to justice, truth, and equity. Now when the just, the holy, and true God, asserts that everlasting ruin is avoidable, if men will but turn from their evil ways, which thing he also commands; surely we, as believers in the plain unequivocal declaration of God, must allow that eternal misery may be escaped on the Gospel plan. To say that this God is the first cause, mover, and promoter of the ruin of the finally lost, is most barbarous, as well as blasphemous.

Quest. Why did God create men, whom he knew would never believe?

Ans. God did not absolutely hinder their unbelief, as his wisdom saw that a world where free-agents and necessary agents are mixed, is better than a world stocked with nothing but necessary agents, that is, creatures absolutely hindered from sinning. Because his distributive justice would be displayed in no other way than by the creation of accountable free-agents, made with reference to a future judgment. Because it would be as absurd to necessitate free-agents, as to bid free-agents be, that they might not be free-agents. And because, when God saw that the free-agency of his creatures might introduce sin, he determined to overrule or remedy it, in such a manner as would, upon the whole, render the world with all its voluntary evil and voluntary good, infinitely better than a world of necessary agents, where nothing would be displayed but an inferior sort of good, which would not admit of the

exercise of God's providential wisdom, or distributive justice.

That God's foreknowledge does not stand in the way of a sinner any more than his afterknowledge, must appear evident to every unprejudiced person; particularly so, when conversant in the sacred word. Paul advises that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be offered to God for all men, that they may be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." We are informed, that "we have one God, and one Mediator between God and man, who gave himself a ransom for all"—that "God has concluded all under sin, to have mercy upon all"—that "the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all"—that "God spared not his Son, but freely gave him up for us all." And he commands repentance, and remission of sins to be preached to all men.

The scriptures are very express in bringing the whole human race under the influence of divine grace, and within the reach of a present and everlasting salvation. While those Scriptures discover the moral evils of men, they at the same time point to a door of hope, wide enough to admit every true penitent. They never lose sight of the possibility of gaining this great end. Their arguments are sufficient to overcome all opposition. How a person can read a declaration, embracing all men, without exception, whom God would have to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth; under the pleasing encouragement that powerful pleadings are offered up for all by an all-sufficient Mediator, who gave himself a ransom for all men, and yet continue under the influence of an irreversible ante-mundane decree, must be altogether incomprehensible to a candid mind, which takes the truth according to plain, obvious statement.

Now, after the plain, as well as strong proofs and reasons which have been advanced, is it rational to suppose that a reader can be found, who can still positively aver, that the very comprehensive word "ALL," as often as it occurs, must be stinted to mean only a part, or a few, to the utter exclusion of the great remainder

of the human race? Whenever the great Author of Christianity addressed his numerous auditors, he made the most liberal offers to all. Even their bodily wants more than once drew from his very great sympathy, not only a plentiful supply for thousands, but a very great surplus. And if his compassion yearned to see the people hungry, and faint, where no bread could be procured, how much more solicitous is he to bestow the bread of everlasting life?

Mr. Pelton's questions being at an end, about thirty minutes before the conclusion of the stated time, we quietly retired from the field, and our several friends were left at free will to pass their own free thoughts on our free strictures.

A verbal debate, however, was not enough for Mr. Pelton. Whether he thought he had forgotten any thing in the debate, or that the irregularity of debate might be corrected through the medium of the press, he took advantage of my absence, and after twelve months he published *a libel* on Methodism, which I think myself called upon to answer.

From what has been stated already, it must appear to every unprejudiced reader, that the divine Being, so far from being chargeable with contriving the unavoidable misery of his creatures, frequently and importunately remonstrates with them on the unreasonableness of bringing themselves into those circumstances. "What more could I have done for my vineyard?" "Why will ye die?" &c. are plain proofs of this. In one view, the divine Nature commands our most solemn reverence; in others, it attracts the warmest affection of our hearts: but in every possible manifestation, it is entitled to our highest attention and respect. We never make the attempt to lift our hearts to God in the way of duty and sincerity, without being truly profited, both in mind and practice. Should his almighty power, his infinite wisdom, his strict justice, and his unspotted holiness, oppress us, we are sure to find relief in his goodness and mercy. To imagine for a moment, that this great and good God can be the secret contriver of sin and

punishment, must wrap his divine character in shades of unapproachable darkness.

It was not enough, that Mr. Pelton had already undertaken to contend openly with one Methodist minister; he now undertakes, and pledges himself to break in pieces their whole system, imposing on it all scurrilous and evil names falsely, while he openly acknowledges it has attached to it many pious and upright professors, who were converted and brought to God by it.

He has the effrontery to call the system of condemning infants before they are born, and dooming millions to unavoidable ruin, by the name of Protestantism, and the church in which he preaches those doctrines, the true Protestant church exclusively. On the same ground he asserts, that the Methodists, and others, are Catholics or Papists, because they believe that men are called upon to use the grace of God that is given to them, to work out their own salvation. On this ground, it would not be a difficult thing to prove Mr. Pelton himself to be a Papist or Catholic. For instance :

They believe that there is a God, infinitely wise, good, just, and holy.

That he governs every department of the world by his divine providence.

That his infinite perfections are beyond all human and angelic comprehension.

That he subsists in a unity of three divine Persons, i. e. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

That the second Person condescended to be born, and live, and die for us.

That man is possessed of a rational, moral, immortal soul, that shall never die.

That rational man is an accountable creature, in opposition to infants, lunatics, and madmen.

That, as he has a law to live by, God expects conformity.

That we must first die, and then stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

That heaven and hell shall be the final states and conditions of men.

Now I would candidly interrogate Mr. Pelton, whether he is not of the same faith with the Catholics, in all, or most of the particulars enumerated in the foregoing list, which might be swelled to a far greater amount? And if it be just to charge the Methodists, in an indiscriminate and wholesale manner, with being Papists, for holding doctrines which are held by almost all Protestant churches?

To outweigh this scale by a still heavier counterpoise, and measure back again to Mr. Pelton, what he has meted to his neighbour in an indiscriminating manner, he must allow me, merely for the sake of showing the unsoundness of his argument, to give him for a moment a seat in the lowest abyss of diabolical misery. Of the devils, it is said, they believe and tremble also. And would Mr. Pelton refuse to go thus far with Satan, Apollyon, and Belzebub? On this principle, Mr. Pelton is a Jew; for they acknowledge the great Jehovah, and the Old Testament. He is a Samaritan; for they acknowledged the five books of Moses. He is a Turk, and a Persian; for they acknowledge the supreme government of Allah, or Elohim. However, he must not forget his relationship to Pharaoh and the ancient Egyptians, who insisted, in the most tyrannical manner, that the poor, helpless, and utterly disabled Israelites, should make bricks to the usual tale or number, and quality also, without any straw, or means to do the work.

The following passage in Miller's life of Huet, a French bishop, in the seventeenth century, will perfectly accord with the sentiments of every true Protestant Christian. The bishop, in speaking of some works written by himself, proceeds—"But long before I occupied myself with these subjects, I had conceived a much more important undertaking, to which, indeed, more than to any thing else, all my studies and contemplations hitherto had a reference. This was an exposition and elucidation of the Holy Scriptures. From my childhood, such a veneration for its divine origin, and such a high estimation of the excellence of this book, had taken root within me, that though my youthful spirit

delighted, and almost revelled in the beauties of the fine arts, and the mathematics, it always returned with pleasure to these sacred records, as feeling itself in them at home, and in the former only as a wanderer and a pilgrim. And yet, at that time, I had no knowledge of the Hebrew language, and could not extend my research beyond the narrow limits of the Vulgate. But having broken through these bounds, and, as it were, standing at the fountain itself, my soul felt an increasing relish for this study, and I believed that I now saw the mysteries of heaven without a vail. My increasing and more intimate acquaintance with those sacred books convinced me, that we should devote all our care, diligence, meditations, and nightly lucubrations, to the study and understanding of them alone. Being therefore now released from the bondage of the court, I again betook myself to the study of the Hebrew, combining with it that of the Syriac and Arabic; and because the knowledge of languages requires long and repeated exercises, I never suffered one day to pass, between the years 1681, and 1712, without employing one or two hours upon it, being a period of thirty-one years; nor did I ever suffer business, journeys, or even illness, to interfere with this resolution. Thus, during that period of time, I have read the whole Old Testament four and twenty times, with the greatest delight, and essential benefit to my soul." Thus one of the most excellent and enlightened men of that age, remained in some degree in the dark, till the Spirit of God, by a progressive work, granted the rays of his light and truth to shine upon him. Surely, this should make us more candid and forbearing, in judging of the states of men's minds in other persuasions, differing from our own; conscious that we ourselves may have yet much to learn, before we attain to perfection.

When Mr. Pelton undertakes to appear in public, it is not as an "author only," to teach or enlighten the world with some new discovery as to subject or method, but in the dogmatic character of a critic and reviewer. He forms himself into an absolute judge, forcing his

way, assuming the bench, and exercising all the judicial powers in sentences utterly inconsistent with the clearness and strength of evidence, which he thinks he can lay aside or control, with "it must be so," or "so it is appointed."

Instead of examining with coolness, or judging with impartiality, in an unprejudiced or unbiassed temper, Mr. P. begins with scurrility and nicknames, to prejudice his readers also. Intending to hold up the Christian doctrines, and ecclesiastical discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, to the gaze of surprise, or the laugh of contempt, he employs a plentiful profusion of what may be called the "tar and feather" of illiberal and unchristian prejudice, as well as obloquy of all sorts.

To begin his abuse, he searches the English vocabulary, which contains one hundred thousand words, for one which can best express the thought which corrodes his heart, until it be affixed to the front of the system which he intends to stigmatize. This secret comes out at last, under the shape and name of "The Absurdities of Methodism." As the horse-fly to the sore, or as the ravens to the carcass, Mr. Pelton anticipates solid satisfaction and abundant pleasure, in imagining his deep rooting into Methodism will discover to the world, what was hitherto a most impervious secret.

I greatly question whether Mr. Pelton knows the proper meaning of the word "Absurdity;" and wonder how he can, with any assurance, apply it to others, while he and his unsightly system, are so highly chargeable with it. The great Instructer, himself, advises that we should first remove the beam from our own eye, before we undertake to pull the mote from that of another. Is it not an absurdity of absurdities, to insist on the usual number and quality of the bricks, without affording any straw? To demand the end without affording the means? To demand lectures on all shades and colours from the blind? To condemn the deaf because they do not notice the difference between the high and low in sounds? To correct the dumb, because they do not employ graceful tones and emphasis? To cast a lame person into the ditch, because he does

not clear the way instantaneously for a rapid stage-coach? To burn the dead man, but just expired, because he does not inter, or intomb himself? To expel all the poor from a church, because they cannot contribute talents of gold or silver to the general fund? To throw down the suckling of some days or months old, because it is not a regular, graceful walker? Or, in other words, how absurd and foolish must it be for God to expect a harvest of glory at last, where the seeds of grace were never allowed to be sown? Or only all rank weeds planted by an omnipotent hand? All these, and a thousand other instances, are but faint pictures of an absurd system, in which Mr. Pelton makes God first contrive the irremediable ruin of myriads, and then, by the great acts of creation, preservation, and redemption, put it in the road of sure accomplishment, assuring the persons, at the same time, that he gave them talents (though altogether imperceptible to their notice or recollection,) for which they are accountable to him. Now to say that God, as a sovereign Lord, can order their eyes to be blinded, and their hands to be tied behind their backs, and yet demand a good improvement of every trust he has confided to them, is downright absurdity and tyranny.

Like one of old, Mr. Pelton is sure to have two separate bags for holding faults or imperfections. In that which is suspended before, and under the eyes, he has placed his neighbour's faults, where he is sure they shall frequently fall under observation. Hence, in undertaking to show what he calls the "absurdities of Methodism," he is sure to put them in an unfavourable dress, and a most glaring aspect. He makes a three-fold division of this unfriendly labour. To show that the free-will of the Methodists is an essential doctrine of the Roman Catholics, he pledges himself to prove that free-will in man is contrary even to reason and providence.

On the very threshold of his undertaking, Mr. Pelton begins to show what we may justly expect in the sequel. It would have been well, however, if he had looked cautiously, before he plunged deeply. He begins with boasting, that if he can but prove half the charges which

he brings against Methodism, they must amount to an entire conviction that the whole of the system is wrong. Here also he must appear to have fallen deeply into absurdities, or even to have sunk into a quagmire, in pursuit of a shining fly. He has, by a good deal of scrutiny and research, as well as by the joint assistance of his contentious friends, collected three charges or statements, and brought them into open court for proof. To use his own language, his boast now is, "that if he can only prove the half of those three charges, he shall gain an open verdict. Does he mean, that having produced three charges, if he can only prove a charge and a half, that he shall be openly approved of; and so shall gain an entire victory? Now if one charge and a half should be proved to be absolutely false and unfounded, will an entire verdict be given to him from partial proofs? Besides, how to select a charge and a half out of three charges for proof, is not very easy of solution, and compatible with plain reason. Will he, in order to effect this purpose, take the first charge entirely, and half the second, or third? Or the second entirely, and half the first, or third? Or the third entirely, and half the first, or second? Or will he take his charges in halves, or uneven shares? What absurdity!

Adding a little more of his legerdemain, he undertakes to assert, that when he has made good the foregoing charge and a half, no matter in what proportions or divisions, that, "let who will be found right in the day of the Lord, the Methodist cannot." Here is another curious transition, from the doctrine of the Methodist, to the Methodist himself, and consequently to every Methodist. By this sweeping stroke Mr. Pelton dashes in pieces every individual who cannot pronounce his test of bigotry, and say "shibboleth," with as good a tone and emphasis as himself. But this is perfectly consistent with the absolute and undistinguishing system of decreeing nations to everlasting ruin, without any respect to their voluntary character. How cruel must an advocate of that system be, who, in consequence of his showing himself obliged to give it some support, must shut up the gates of heaven against every man of every

nation, who fears God and works righteousness, because he does not believe with him every letter of the dark decree?

How can Mr. Pelton, as a firm believer in everlasting and immutable decrees, consistently with this faith, blame the Methodists for their doctrines or discipline, seeing that every jot and tittle, connected with universal opinion and practice, were irresistibly forced on them by unchangeable predestination? Must it not appear a most glaring and notorious absurdity in Mr. P., first to put the Methodist Church and system under the fatal decree, which they could not prevent, and then to blame and punish them for it?

Another of his flat contradictions is, the statement with which he closes his remarks, where he tells us that "he looked back to the fatal rock on which he himself had well nigh made shipwreck; and that he fears for the multitudes who are resting upon it." I wonder Mr. Pelton does not occasionally recollect himself, and not attempt to keep his experience under proper subordination to his system. His creed binds him to maintain the final perseverance of the saints; and that, if men be once in grace, they shall continue in grace for ever. His experience, however, contradicts this: for he tells us, that "he also was in danger of shipwreck."

Mr. Pelton goes on to subdivide his three original divisions into nine sections, still leaving us in the dark with respect to the number of sections which are to comprehend a division—whether there be three regular sections to each of the divisions, by which plan the mind of the reader may be kept from mixing and combining particulars which in themselves are altogether separate and unconnected.

REMARKS ON SECTION I.

In this section, Mr. Pelton, to raise unfounded prejudice to the highest, undertakes to begin by attracting the eye of staring vacancy to a puff which he dignifies by the name of an undertaking "to compare the views

(he meant to say, the separate and very different views) of Mr. Wesley, the Pope, and the Bible, concerning personal election, reprobation, and the decrees." Instead of mentioning the decrees alone, or unsupported, he ought to have given their full dress, and introdued them in their true character, as unconditional decrees. He acted another sleight-of-hand part also with respect to reprobation in this particular place. For while he had no objection to bring in "personal election," he ought to have joined it with "personal reprobation."

To effect this purpose the more readily, and show his progress the more clearly, he undertakes another division, namely, of the Christian world into two parts, one of which is to consist of "such as hold the doctrines of free-grace, and such as hold the doctrine of free-will." Here again he plunges still deeper in the mire, as if free-grace and free-will were opposites, or incompatibles. His division, to be in point, should be "into such as hold, that God is willing that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth; and such as hold that he has put a stumbling-block, called an impassible decree, in the way of nine-tenths of the whole human race, because he can do what he pleases with his own," and make them reprobates first, to destroy them afterward.

Is not this division a presumptuous attempt to confound power with right, in the Supreme Being? And because he has the power to predestinate any portion of his creatures to eternal misery, he has also *a just right to do so;* than which nothing is more false, because being *unnecessary*, it would be *unjust*. It is therefore as impossible for *omnipotent justice to commit an act of injustice*, as it is for *infinite truth to lie*, *infinite wisdom to err*, or *infinite holiness or purity to be chargeable with sin*.

To show what a coat of many colours the foregoing statement is, made up of truth and error interwoven, I need but point the candid and unprejudiced reader to many scriptures. That the state of the whole human race, as fallen in Adam, was deplorable, there can be no

doubt. We, as his offspring, forfeited even our existence in him; but as connected with Christ, the second Adam, we are made partakers of an inward and spiritual grace, of the influence of which upon the heart, at ever so early a period, many retain a very pleasing reflection. And besides a state of existence in grace, while sojourners here, we may enjoy a glorious and everlasting inheritance in heaven. As Mr. P. builds his awful fabric on the foundation of absolute election and reprobation, it is necessary to begin with these.

OF ELECTION AND REPROBATION.

Mr. Pelton thinks that the sovereignty of God cannot be properly supported otherwise, than by the opinion that he foreordained some to everlasting happiness, and others to everlasting misery, without any reference to the good or evil to be done by them respectively; and also that he called them into existence for this very purpose. Some Calvinists indeed, who attempt to differ from their brethren, are almost brought to acknowledge, that this absolute foreordination looks too much like an impeachment of the divine benevolence and justice, and suppose that they avoid the difficulty by founding predestination on God's prescience, or foreknowledge of men's actions.

That part of infinite and interminable duration which is past, and which may be called a preceding eternity, is altogether beyond the grasp of the human understanding. The Scriptures, which are able to make us wise to salvation, harmonizing with this property of our being, have left all that concerns our destination from eternity, under the dark vail, behind which the subject itself lies hid. There is nothing declared to us that applies at all to God's eternal decree concerning his creatures. If this be fact, it follows that what is affirmed on this head, is not Christian doctrine, but metaphysical speculation.

If absolute and unconditional election and reprobation be laid down as scriptural, all the other peculiarities of Calvinism must follow, of course, in order to

render the system consistent and complete. Mr. Pelton supposes the Calvinian doctrine necessary, with a view to the aid which it was thought to afford in the argument against the errors of the Pelagians. It was however perceived, that the doctrine would seem to militate against an opinion universally entertained; that for God to condemn an innocent creature to hell, would be inconsistent with all our conceptions of his attributes. Hence arose a necessity for bringing in God as decreeing the sin as well as the punishment. Now to bring in the great and wise, the just and good God as employing guilt, to accomplish his sovereign will and purpose, does not mend the matter. To decree both the sin and the punishment of reprobates, seems rather to *double* the evil.

From the same source flowed the doctrine of absolute election, or a grace irresistibly saving, which was the exertion of omnipotence in the only way in which the decree could have been carried into effect. The doctrines of election and reprobation were introduced into the church in the beginning of the fifth century, and were afterward much cultivated in curious reasonings and distinctions; especially by the schoolmen and monks: still in connexion with an opinion very ill suited to the system; that of the possibility of falling from grace. It was reserved for Calvinism to discover the inconsistency, by establishing the final perseverance of the saints, to exhibit a connected chain of doctrine. One new opinion will naturally give birth to another, and this to a third, and so on, until a theory shall become complete.

The election of grace of which the apostle Paul speaks so highly, is altogether different from an absolute election to eternal life. The apostle means a gratuitous election to the covenant of Christianity. For as by a partial election of distinguishing favour, the Jews were once chosen to be God's peculiar people, while the Gentiles were left under the dispensation of Noah; so when the Jews provoked God to reject them from being any longer his peculiar people, he elected the Gentiles, to whom he sent the gospel of Christ,

with all its divine overtures. But far from electing those Gentiles unconditionally to eternal salvation, the great Elector charges them to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure, lest they also should be cut off, as the Jews were, for not doing so. In short, the election of grace mentioned in Scripture, is a gratuitous election, which implies no final perseverance in the truly upright, nor a merciless reprobation of the rest of mankind.

It is an infirmity of the human mind to allow itself to be driven by zeal against some particular error into whatever is the farthest removed from it; but which may be error also. And when this happens, the latter will beget its like, until there shall be a family of errors, with the same features and complexion. Hence, a theory arising, not in revelation, but in metaphysics, has become less dependent on revelation than before. I would be understood to allude here to the recently invented, or rather revived, doctrine of philosophical necessity.

Mr. P. (page 44 of his book) rages most furiously against the Armenians, [Arminians] Methodists, Pelagians, and Roman Catholics. His method of introducing the subject is not the most candid. He tells us that when Mr. Wesley first broached the doctrine of free-will in his "Discipline," he says, "O! then you are an Armenian, a free-willer; you hold free-will to be in man." Mr. P. adds, by way of review and criticism, "He does not deny the charge to be true, but by the manner in which he (Mr. Wesley) attempts to plead pity when he introduces it, almost any man can perceive that he knew free-will was a distinguishing doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, and that it was odious among Protestants."

Mr. Pelton, in this charge, betrays to what little extent his knowledge of Church History reached. He does not seem aware that Austin, or Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in Africa, in the fifth century, was a divine of the Romish Church, and that Calvin, in his Institutes, borrowed his predestination, and many other tenets, from him and from the Fatalists. He likewise

forgets, that the same Augustine was the oracle of the Dominicans, Thomists, Jansenists, and of all Roman Catholic predestinarians. So easy is it for a man who is in a hurry to go beyond his line, and to count without his host.

That some persons may be peculiarly favoured of God, there can be no doubt. He can dispense his favours as his wisdom sees best. He can give one talent, or two, or five, as he pleases. He can make one man to be as the cedar of Lebanon, and another as the hyssop, which springeth out of the wall. One soil or seed may produce thirty fold, another sixty, and another a hundred. One star may differ considerably from another in magnitude and glory. In the Christian Church it has pleased God to institute some apostles, some prophets, some teachers, some believers. To one person was given, by the extraordinary energy of the Holy Ghost, to speak in an unknown tongue, to another it was given to prophesy. One had a psalm; another had a doctrine; another had a tongue; another had a revelation. In a great house also there are vessels of different materials and uses: some vessels are of gold, some of silver, some of iron, some of stone, some of wood, and some of potters' clay.

That there are no vessels of wrath fitted to destruction in the original intention of God, seems perfectly plain to every candid examiner. Even Calvin himself, in his Institutes, book 2, chap. 3, sect. 10, acknowledges, "We grant, (says he) that the primitive condition of man was such, that during his state of integrity it was in his power to incline to one side or the other." He here means, that it was in the power of man, while innocent, to choose good or evil. Again, he tells us, book 1, chap. 15, sect. 8, "Man, in this integrity, was endued with free-will, by which, if he had chosen, he might have obtained eternal life"—and again, "All the powers of his soul were formed to rectitude; and there subsisted a soundness of mind, and a will free to the choice of good." Calvin's idea of the liberty of Adam, as opposed, not to force, but to necessity, is clearly unfolded in the eighth section of the

sixteenth chapter of his first book. The very circumstance of the change which has taken place among the Calvinists, in regard to the word free-will, shows the accommodation of their ideas concerning man's state in his apostacy to the necessarian scheme, which swallows down absolute election and reprobation as a grateful morsel.

The Epistle to the Romans, not being seen in its true character, is made a great handle in the point of unconditional election. But it ought to be remembered, that this epistle is not didactive or preceptive, but argumentative. Under this remark, however, are included the first eleven chapters only. The twelfth and thirteenth chapters are a beautiful delineation of Christian morals. The fourteenth is admonition, not without a degree of censure. The fifteenth chapter is partly personal, and partly contains miscellaneous remarks on the subjects which had gone before. The sixteenth is devoted to Christian and friendly salutation. The subject and design of the Epistle to the Romans is much the same with that to the Galatians, with this difference however, that in the Epistle to the Romans, the apostle advocated the liberty of the Gentile Christians; whereas, in the Epistle to the Galatians, he censured the converts from Gentilism to Christianity, for allowing themselves to be seduced afterward by the Jewish converts from that liberty into legal bondage.

There is in the Epistle to the Romans, one great and leading design, carried on without reference to other matters, any farther than as they contributed to it, namely, the determination of a known difficulty of the day; in regard to the terms on which Christian converts were to be admitted to Christian communion. They who from Judaism had embraced the Gospel, contended stiffly, that it was absolutely incumbent on the others to conform to the institutions of the law of Moses; to which they challenged perpetuity. As this Epistle is in a controversial form; why should it not be thought confined to the only controversy which showed its head in the course of the apostle's argument. Thus, when the apostle declares, "I am not ashamed of the

gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation," instead of confining it to any party, he adds, "To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile." It must be remarked also that the subject of the argument, as affecting Jews and Gentiles, is intended of them in their collective, and not in their individual capacities. For although a community be composed of individuals, yet it is evident, that a matter may be predicated of the community in general which will not apply to every individual in particular.

Abraham was highly favoured of God: yet his peculiar privileges did not exclude Melchizedek from being a good man, and even a priest of the Most High God. He is supposed to have preserved in his family, and among his subjects, the knowledge and worship of the true God, and the primitive and patriarchal institutions. In his person, he was even a representative and type of Christ. His name, which signifies king of righteousness, was one of the characters of our Lord, who is essentially righteous. Melchizedek represented Christ in his sacerdotal character also. He was king of Salem, or peace; so Christ is called Prince of Peace; because by his incarnation, sacrifice, and mediation, he procures and establishes peace between God and man. He blessed Abraham, it being part of the priest's office to bless in the name of the Lord. Abraham gave him tithes, as a tribute to the Most High God, who possesses heaven and earth, dispensing all spiritual and temporal favours, and demanding the gratitude, submission, and loving obedience of all his subjects, of every nation, and people, and tongue.

When the apostle asserts the admission of the Gentiles within the pale of the Gospel, on equal terms with the Jews, these are supposed to reply, or object—"What advantage then hath the Jew?" The apostle, instead of saying they had all the advantages, and the Gentiles none, replies, "Much every way; chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God." He adds to this in another place, saying—"Who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law,

and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and from whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen." But, notwithstanding those peculiarities, the apostle, by no means supposed the legal covenant to be the only dispensation of providence admitting of salvation.

Instead of supposing those high privileges of election and the oracles of God, and the line of the great Messiah as rendering the Jews utterly void of fear or responsibility, the apostle tells them that they shall give an account for the improvement of the light afforded them, as well as others. Accordingly, having denounced the threatening of "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile," he adds, "But glory, honour, and peace upon every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile." Instead of saying that God will be partial in his judgment, the apostle assures us of the great impartiality to be exercised, when "God will render to every man according to his deeds, for there is no respect of persons with God." The apostle Peter says, that "God is no respecter of persons, for in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." God will deal righteously with every man according to his circumstances and dispensation. "For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law." There is no reason why there should be different rules of judgment in different cases, unless on a principle which shall establish different standards of duties, respectively required. Where God has given to the heathen one talent, to the Jew two, and to the Christian five, his demands for improvement will be in proportion. Hence, "when the Gentiles who have not the law, do by nature, (not as distinguished from grace, but as without revelation,) the things contained in the law, these having not the law, (the Mosaic law,) are a law unto themselves, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else

excusing one another." The plain meaning of the apostle is, that though the Gentiles had not an outward law as the Jews, yet they had another law, which was equally the law of God, though inward; their consciences also bearing witness on a comparison of their actions with that inward law.

Lot, the nephew of Abraham, found favour with God, though not in the covenant made with Abraham, or considered by the Jews as one of the elect. He is said to have sat in the gate of Sodom, in order to prevent unwary travellers from being entrapped by his wicked townsmen, and to bring strangers to his friendly house. He showed the good principle within, in not only inviting the strangers, but "he pressed them greatly," and prevailed with them. He proceeded still farther, "making them a feast, and baking unleavened bread for them." His righteous soul is said to be "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked." He was allowed to send for the persons who had betrothed his daughters, and to offer them opportunity to escape. His family was allowed to escape. He also obtained the exemption of Zoar, though one of the condemned cities.

It might possibly occur to the advocate for absolute election, that on the supposition of all persons being eligible to a share of the divine favour, the promises of God, made to the stock of Israel, had now failed. The apostle meets this, by assuring the persons objecting, that the promise is to have a more liberal construction, than to be confined to descent by natural generation. For, if (as he goes on to show,) it be clear, concerning certain branches, deriving their pedigree from the stock to which the promise had been made, that they were cut off from all interest in it, at a very early period, it may the easier be believed, that, agreeably to some intimation given in the promise itself, and to more express prophecies kept in reserve by the apostle, to be produced in their proper places, that even persons not claiming by descent, may attain to an interest in the promise.

Abimelech, king of Gerar, though not of the family or

line of Abraham, had no small degree of knowledge of the true God. Indeed, his people are termed "a righteous nation." When Abimelech declares to his Maker, "I did this in the integrity of my heart," God replies, "I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thine heart, for I also withheld thee from sinning against me."

It is worth the while of every serious reader, to make a pause, and ask whether, in the Epistle to the Romans, consistently with the connexion, there can be any thing to follow in regard to Ishmael or Esau, that can have respect to them personally, rather than to their descendants; or, as to what is to happen in a future life? It is stated, that there had been given to Abraham the word of promise. "At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son." This same promised son is declared, by the apostle, to have been preferred to Ishmael. Now let it be remembered, that the apostle is framing his argument to the apprehensions of persons acquainted with the Old Testament. Is it clear to every reader of the books of Moses, that Ishmael has been cursed to all eternity? Let the narrative be examined. Abraham pleads with God—"O that Ishmael might live before thee." God answers, that "it should be as Abraham desired, and that *he should be the father of twelve princes, and become a great nation.*" Little did Abraham imagine, when he received this promise, that it contained *the sentence of eternal condemnation against Ishmael.*

Eliezer of Damascus, the eldest servant of Abraham, and the steward of his house, who ruled over all that he had, seems to have a high degree of the fear of God, though not of Abraham's family or line, and therefore not of the nominally elect. He expresses a high reverence for God in the oath which he took when sent to Mesopotamia to get a wife for Isaac. In the form of the oath, he acknowledged Jehovah, the God of heaven and earth, comprehending his self-existence and eternity; his dominion of glory and blessedness; and his providence and bounty. When he came to the entrance of the city of Nahor, and stood by the well, his

secret prayer to God appears no less devout than rational. He even prescribes the way in which the divine choice and approbation shall be made known, and God honours the purity of his motives, *by giving him precisely the answer he wished.* When Rebecca disclosed to him at the well, that she was a member of the family he went in quest of, "*He bowed down his head, and worshipped the Lord,*" in gratitude for the success with which he had been favoured. He added also, "Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, *the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren.*" When after his journey meat was set before him to eat, he said, *I will not eat until I have told my errand,* plainly indicating that he had his master's interest more at heart than his own.

If we go to the case of Jacob and Esau, concerning whom, "being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said, the elder shall serve the younger." And again, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." The elder's serving the younger, had reference only to the present life. And that the hatred extended no farther, is equally evident from the interpretation of the prophet Malachi, where he introduces the Most High as speaking thus—"I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste." And to show farther, how foreign this is from the use made of it by some, it must appear to refer to the fortunes, not of their persons, but of their posterities. For when did Esau the elder brother, serve Jacob the younger? Every thing recorded of the brothers has a contrary appearance; especially their interview described in the 33d chapter of Genesis, and the account given in the 36th chapter of the splendour of Esau's progeny, just before the incidents in the family of Jacob, which ended in his retreat to Egypt, where he lived and died dependent. National, and not individual character, is the subject of discussion; and the temporal, and not the everlasting states of those families. As to the term

"to hate," it must be understood often in a lax and not in a rigid sense. No man is bound to hate his father, or mother, or wife, or children, or his own life, in the strict sense of the expression; but only to love them less than God. So also it might please God to favour the posterity of Jacob more than that of Esau, without hating or reprobating the latter to eternal ruin.

When the father-in-law of Moses visited him in the wilderness, "he rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians." "And Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord, who hath delivered you out of the hand of Pharaoh—*Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods:* for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them. And Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, *took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God:* and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses's father-in-law, *before God.* Every part of Jethro's conduct proves him to have been *truly religious.* His thanksgiving to Jehovah is a striking proof of it. The Kenites, from whom the Rechabites came, were descended from him, and were *worshippers of the true God.* He seems to have been a man of great understanding, and prudence also. His advice to Moses, when exhausted with continual attention to the decision of cases between man and man, was probably *given by immediate inspiration.* Here is another instance of election, without being of the family or line of Abraham, and of its being *transmitted to children also of many generations.*

But it will be asked, What can you say to the case of Pharaoh, concerning whom it is said by the Sovereign of the whole earth—"Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee?" The Calvinistic scheme asks if the phrase "raised thee up," be not equivalent to "brought thee into being?" To which the answer is, by no means. God gave this impious king to know that it was in consequence of his especial providence, that he had "preserved him and his people from being destroyed by means of the past plagues;" but God had raised him up, or made him to

stand, or preserved him, that he might have a farther opportunity of manifesting that he was the only true God; for the full conviction both of the Hebrews and Egyptians; that the former might follow, and the latter fear before him. Neither the Hebrew, "I have caused thee to stand," nor the apostle's translation, "I have raised thee," nor the Septuagint, "On this account art thou preserved," viz. from the past plagues, can countenance that most exceptionable meaning put upon the words by certain commentators, viz. "That God from all eternity ordained or appointed Pharaoh, by certain infallible means, to this end; that he made him exist in time; that he raised him to the throne; preserved him from being cut off as yet by the other judgments; strengthened and hardened his heart; irritated, provoked, and stirred him up against the people of Israel; and suffered him to go the lengths he did go in obstinacy and rebellion; all which was done to show in him his power, in destroying him in the Red Sea, and particularly to involve him in everlasting destruction in hell." The plain meaning of the declaration is—"I might have cut thee off with thy subjects in my judgments already inflicted before thine eyes, but I have sustained thee and made thee stable in thy kingdom, for I have a heavier judgment yet to come." Now that by the temporal destruction of Pharaoh and his host at the Red Sea, the name of God was glorified in the Israelitish nation, is evident in sacred history. And that it was glorified in the surrounding nations, may easily be believed. But that the name of God had been glorified by the eternal damnation of this prince, does not appear; and especially, it cannot be imagined that there is the least allusion to it in the beautiful strains of poetry in which Miriam and her attendants gave glory to God for the temporal destruction of their proud oppressor. Besides, who knows but while the waters were returning to their place in the gradual manner in which the narrative implies, this wicked prince, hitherto untouched by calamities which did not affect his person, and beholding his unhappy and inevitable end near, did not lift up his once stubborn heart, now subdued and soft-

tened, in accepted penitence to the Lord of life and death? Be this as improbable as it may, it must be confessed possible.

But may it not be replied, that the apostle, in reasoning on this subject, infers, "Whom he will he hardeneth;" intimating that God is the author of this hardening? To this I reply, that the apostle's conclusion requires something altogether on the opposite side, and not at all unfavourable to the gracious scheme, namely —"Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy." Besides, hardening here, being in agreement with other places of Scripture, in which there is ascribed to God that which has its origin in the wickedness of men, and which he permits, with a view of overruling it to a subserviency of his designs. And that no more is here meant, we find confirmed by the circumstance, that God's hardening the heart of Pharaoh does not prevent its being said, that "he hardened his own heart."

Granting this, yet does not the apostle say that God has as much power over individuals of the "human race, as the potter has over the clay, to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour?" To this I answer, that, with evident propriety the apostle could so reply to those who challenged to the Jews the only and exclusive right of being God's peculiar people. No one can justly reply to God, or question the prerogatives of his government, for having made one people or another what they are as a people. They have no more right to do this, than the clay has to question the power of the potter. Besides, to make this plainer, let it be remembered that this similitude is taken from Jerem. xviii. 6, by which we ought of course to be determined, in the interpretation of it. It is there expressly applied to the speaking "concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to destroy," as well as "concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it." Will it be said that Jeremiah had within his contemplations, any thing beyond the present life? He surely had not. And if so, there cannot be any reason to imagine that the apostle strained the allusion

to a subject so different as his is supposed to have been from that of the prophet. The apostle advances to the application of his preceding reasoning. "But if God, (forbearance is no relinquishment of purpose,) 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." Here, by vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, we must understand the unbelieving Jews collectively considered, who were to be no more a peculiar people; but to remain under divine displeasure for an appointed time: and by "vessels of mercy prepared for glory," we are to understand not only believing Jews and Gentiles, as defined by the apostle himself; but such in their collective capacities, in a state of covenant with God. For, as the breaking of the vessel, in Jeremiah, signified the outpouring of national judgments; so the putting of glory on the other vessels must signify opposition to this. If there could be any doubt of this sense, it might be cleared up by what the apostle immediately proceeds to quote of two prophecies from Hosea, and of two others from Isaiah; all of them applicable to the Gentiles as one people, and to the Jews as another; and not to be applied even under a plausible appearance, to any persons as individually interested, or as respecting their condition in another life. For after applying the metaphor of "vessels of mercy," by declaring them to be "even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles," he goes on to recite the prediction of this by Hosea—"I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, who was not beloved." He goes on, "And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called the children of the living God." So much for the vessels of mercy. With respect to the "vessels of wrath," he shows that a people was designated, and quotes Isaiah, predicting the rejection of the Jews as a people.—"Though the number of the children of Israel be as

the sands of the sea, a remnant (only) shall be saved." And also—"Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha." The apostle winds up his argument thus —"the Gentiles (he still speaks collectively,) have attained unto righteousness;" that is, they have been brought into a state of acceptance with God, in which they are owned by him as a people; and this, through the medium of faith in Christ. The other part of the conclusion is, that "Israel" (considered also as a people, and not as individuals,) which followed after the law of righteousness, had not attained to the law of righteousness," being kept back from it by their attachment to the abrogated ceremonies of their law; the object of which had ceased, not as destroyed, but as fulfilled by the more extensive dispensation of the Gospel.

Let it be also remembered, that if there be a "casting away and a breaking off," they are nevertheless connected with a grafting in again. Now, as these expressions have a retrospective view to the former "vessels of wrath," they must be quite unfriendly to the doctrine of absolute and final election or reprobation. There is also a still greater difficulty, which the unchangeable scheme cannot remove. For when the apostle had compared real Christians from among the Gentiles, to branches of an olive-tree, wild by nature, now "grafted, contrary to nature, into a good olive-tree," and partaking of its fatness, it seems irreconcileable with the doctrine of final perseverance, to imply that such persons may be cut off, and on that account, to admonish them, as God spared not the natural branches, to "take heed lest he spare not thee." But to add to the inconsistency, on the supposition of individual interpretation, there is the assurance that at last "all Israel shall be saved," no exception being made of those who before were called "vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction." The difficulty seems stretched to the utmost, when we find, as the finishing stroke of the whole argument, that "God hath concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."

The apostle, knowing that the whole ground over which he had gone, did not contrive the least degree of moral or everlasting evil against an individual, breaks out in effusions of admiration of the infinite excellence of the Divine Being, which had been displayed; and closes with ascribing due praise and glory to his great name. O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: To whom be glory for ever, Amen. Had the apostle's reasoning consisted of such a series of subjects as the absolute plan supposes, a writer disclosing them to the world, under the influence of inspiration, might fitly bow in submission, under a fearful sense of the sovereignty of the Great Ruler, illustrating his glory in the damnation of millions of intelligent creatures, contrived for them before their existence, and without any undeservings of their own. But that, in such a writer as the apostle, the theme should awaken feelings like those expressed by him, is one of the most extraordinary associations which can be imagined.

What a pity that, instead of bowing with terror in silent submission to something like the sovereignty of God, in absolutely saving whom he will, and damning whom he will, for his own pleasure, there should be, in the life of President Edwards, transporting views of the subject. This author states, that he had been formerly full of objections to the doctrine of absolute predestination; but that at some particular time, well remembered, he became satisfied of it, although he could give no account how, or by what means, he was thus convinced. He scarcely ever afterward found a rising in his mind against God's sovereignty, in showing mercy or hardening whom he would. Then he goes on thus —"I have often since, not only had a conviction, but a delightful conviction of it. The doctrine of God's sovereignty has very often appeared an exceeding

pleasant, bright, and sweet doctrine to me." These words applying evidently to the salvation and the damnation spoken of before.

If we cast our eyes forward to the conclusion to which the apostle brings the subject, we must certainly infer every thing favourable to the universal grace of God. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." Had the apostle been laying down a scheme of eternal condemnation, from which a very few only had been rescued by a predestinating decree, there would seem an evident unsuitableness in the inference, to the premisses from which it was drawn. But if we suppose the argument to have been all along concerning the breaking down of a barrier to the covenant, and the laying of it open to all nations, without exacting from them a burthensome obligation, it may be seen that the leading feature of the dispensation is beneficence; and that the apostle might fitly apply the persuasive motive of the mercies of God, as an incitement to the sublime morality which was to follow.

On any thing like a survey of the ways of God, it must be acknowledged that he does all things well. There is a wise proportion and analogy in all his ways. There are four sorts of creatures in the present visible system, each occupying its own place and station: dead matter, as clods and stones: passive agents, as plants and trees: irrational agents, as dogs and horses: Rational creatures, who are free-agents, as human beings. Now is not that part of the system, which is composed of men, as free-agents, better than the passive, consisting of plants and trees? Yes: they are under a law, and accountable, whereas the passive are not. God has dealt with men as rational creatures from the beginning. He has employed human beings and angels as his messengers to signify his will; and he has come himself on this errand of love. Conditions, fortified with promises and threatenings, were addressed to their hopes and fears. Life and death have been set before the eye of man, with a powerful

incitement and suggestion to choose life. His messengers were commanded to make a fair and sincere offer to all. It was repeated, and renewed in every form that could win attention. Where men are conscious of being sinners, they are commanded to repent, with an assurance that God forgives the truly penitent. His very threatenings are often lined with a condition, "Except ye repent," still leaving the result to their own option. These threatenings are intended to do them good, as a father apprizes his child of the fire, or water, or precipice, or knife, or poisonous fruit, however sweet. His mind is developed, and its secrets unfolded in assuring us that He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should live even for evermore. Why will ye die? is an inquiry as sincere as it is ardent and affectionate. He upbraids such as will not listen to reason: Ah! foolish people. The appeal asks, "what more could I do for my vineyard?" The threatening denounces, that "the soul that sinneth shall die." His impartiality declares, that "every man shall give an account for himself." His oath is, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no hand in the death of the sinner." His love "gave his Son to die for the world." His exclamation is, "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen her chickens under her wings?" His charge is, "But ye would not."

Now, how a person can read these statements, and many others that might be adduced, and then say, that "Christ died only for a certain predestinated number, for whom only salvation is absolutely certain, to the utter exclusion of the rest of the human race," is rather unaccountable. And to mend the matter, they, at the same time, state, that if salvation be offered to the rejected remainder, it is in order to constitute a ground on which they may be at last condemned. The Scriptures, to which we must appeal for decision, are very far from such a sentiment; but clear and full in declaring that the satisfaction of Christ was for all mankind, and for every man in particular, although none reap the benefit but those who believe and obey the

gospel. Unless Christ died for all, and that all may be saved through him; he appears to send out, not a true, but a false message. Unless he died for all, then it would be a sin to believe the message; for that would be to believe a lie. Unless he died for all men, then unbelievers are not condemned for not believing the truth, but for not believing a lie. Unless he died for all, then God is not in earnest, or sincere, whether he employs the command, or threat, or promise, or exhortation, or warning, or exclamation, or even the oath. Unless God be in earnest, then unbelief can be no sin in those that finally perish. And unless the great Redeemer died for the world, how can he judge the world in righteousness?

Mr. P. does what he can to deny, that the divine decree of irresistible predestination is chargeable with the present sin and future damnation of men. But I shall adduce sufficient proof, by plain, positive testimonies, to which I shall refer, to show that his friends of the absolute scheme are so candid as to allow it, and contend for it, while they publish it on the house-top. The ingenuous translator of Zanchius tells us in his translation, page 50, that "Man fell in consequence of the divine decree." In his observations, page 7, he states, that "whatever comes to pass, happens necessarily, and whatever man does is unavoidable." In page 15, he says, "All things turn out according to the divine predestination, not only the works we do outwardly, but even the thoughts we think inwardly." In page 11, "the will of God is the sole cause why some are saved and others perish, he willing the salvation of the former, and the perdition of the latter." In page 15, "we can only do what God from all eternity willed and foreknew we should." Page 7, "no free-will of the creature can resist the will of God." Page 19, "the purpose or decree of God signifies his everlasting appointment of some men to life, and of others to death, which appointment flows entirely from his own free and sovereign will." Page 57, "if between the elect and reprobate there were not fixed a great gulf, so that neither can be otherwise than they are, then the will

of God (which is the sole cause why some are chosen and others not,) would be rendered of no effect." Page 56, "The word of God would not be true with respect to the non-elect, (or reprobate,) if it were possible for them to be saved." Page 15, "The condemnation of the reprobate is necessary and irresistible." Page 25, "God worketh all things in all men, even wickedness in the wicked." And now, gentle reader, may I not appeal to your unbiassed mind and tender conscience, and ask, if a legion of infernals were to sit in close and deep council for a thousand years, to contrive an artful way of reproaching the living God, could they do it more effectually, than by hiring into their service, men who pass the false coin of absolute election and absolute reprobation with this deceitful and alluring inscription, "Necessary Holiness unto the Lord;" and this detestable motto on the reverse, "Necessary Wickedness unto the Lord." And has not Mr. P. presumed too much on your credulity, to suppose that you would never have wisdom enough to look at the black reverse of the shining medal by which he wishes to bribe you into fatalism. Thus he is fond of employing the sweet term Election as necessary and irresistible, while he leaves out reprobation as too unsightly for open observation.

Predestination, as applied to individuals, and their condition in another life, is an error of the absolute scheme, on which the scriptures are silent. The necessarian thinks that the sovereignty of God cannot be supported otherwise than by the opinion, that for his pleasure he foreordained some to everlasting happiness, and others to everlasting misery, without reference to any good or evil done by them respectively; and even that he called them into existence for the very purpose of illustrating his mercy and his justice in these opposite evils, as decreed by him.

To reconcile unconditional reprobation with the attributes of God, is utterly impossible. To punish an unavoidable fault with uninterrupted torture, would be unjust in the highest degree. Therefore a just God cannot with any face of reason, first absolutely decree

our sin, and then our punishment. Though God be debtor to no man; yet he owes to himself to act like himself, as a gracious and just Creator towards his creatures. When God, by his promise, has engaged himself judicially to render to every man according to his works, would it be just in him to necessitate some men to work righteousness, and others to work iniquity, in order to reward the former and to punish the latter, according to arbitrary and unavoidable decrees?

Mr. P. will say, "God owes eternal salvation to no man; so if he confer it on his elect, he does no injury to the reprobates on whom he does not confer it." But this is only half the argument, the sightly part of it, namely, the salvation of the elect. Will this prove the justice or equity of reprobating also, and that in an absolute and irretrievable manner, as many of his unborn creatures as he pleases, decreeing to protract their infernal torments to all eternity; after first having decreed their sin, as the necessary medium to obtain this necessary end. Now what must we think of a system which absolutely and irresistibly reprobates any man to remediless sin and everlasting misery, before he thinks his first bad thought, or even draws his first breath?"

Instead of entailing necessary and remediless sin and ruin upon any of his human creatures, the scriptures assure us that God is so far from any connexion with this unsightly purpose, that he has graciously placed all mankind in a state of initial salvation from sin and hell, suffering the first Adam to propagate his fallen race, that the benefits of the redemption of the second Adam may be so far extended to them, as to save from eternal misery, all who die in infancy, and to put all who live long enough to act as moral agents, in a capacity of avoiding hell and gaining heaven, by affording them that grace which brings salvation, and the means and opportunities of making their calling and election sure.

Eternity past is utterly beyond the grasp of the human understanding. The Scriptures harmonizing with this property of our being, have left all that concerns our destination from eternity, under the dark vail, be-

hind which the subject itself lies hid. The Scriptures are far from giving us to understand, as Mr. P. does, (as openly as he dares,) that God worketh all things in all men, even "wickedness in the wicked," in consequence of an everlasting decree, assuring us that it is impossible to show the difference between permission and design in a Being possessed of unlimited power, and infinite wisdom. Those holy records and dictates declare that God is opposed to the sin and punishment of man, and that he has neither pleasure nor profit in the death of the wicked, which their consciences must charge upon themselves, and that this charge will constitute a material part of their future punishment, as the worm which never dies. What an awful charge must the necessarian bring against the economy of God, to declare, that, where he does not absolutely restrain from evil, or force to good; or where he leaves the individual to a free choice, and does not forcibly hinder the commission of sin, he must design and decree it? This is no less than an Antinomian blow at the root of the Divine sanctity. Now the Scriptures of truth assure us, that so far was God from countenancing sin, that when he placed the first man in Paradise he strictly forbade him to sin. Is it right, then, in Mr. P. to call God the permitter, or countenancer of sin, when the Scriptures represent him as forbidding it, under the threatening of an awful result? Is it not very pernicious to pour shame upon the holiness of God, as well as absurdity upon the reason of man, by attempting to make the world believe that forbidding and threatening are one and the same act, with permitting and promising? Who does not see the infinite difference between not absolutely hindering a free creature from an act of choice, and contriving, devising, and attaching this act to him, so as to become inevitable, and consequently impossible to be avoided? Now to publish to the world that God can contrive and impose evil, and then punish what is unavoidable, must be a very great misrepresentation of the high and holy One of Israel.

If the doctrine of absolute and unconditional election and reprobation, be once laid down as scriptural, all the other peculiarities of the inevitable scheme must fol-

low from it of course, and come forward in order to render the scheme consistent and complete. For God to condemn an innocent creature (an infant for instance,) to everlasting torments, was inconsistent with our ideas of the attributes of God. Hence arose the necessity of imputing Adam's sin even to the unborn, and as the medium by which the final result could be effected in those of riper years. From the same source flowed the doctrine of a grace irresistibly saving to some, and not attainable by others. These doctrines were not introduced into the church at the same time. Those of predestination and irresistible grace appeared in the beginning of the fifth century, and were afterward much cultivated in curious reasonings and distinctions; especially by the Schoolmen and the Monks; still in connexion with an opinion very ill-suited to the system; namely, the possibility of falling from grace given. It was reserved for Calvinism to discover the inconsistency, and by establishing the final perseverance of the saints, to exhibit a connected chain of doctrine. But although the introducing of this comparatively modern doctrine be here ascribed to Calvinism; yet it does not appear to have been taught by the reformer himself.

But what shall we think of Mr. P. undertaking to prove a most glaring contradiction, namely, that absolute necessity and free agency can subsist at one and the same moment of time, and be unequivocally applicable to their subjects. The omnipotence of God is brought in to cut this hard knot, which can put man under an unavoidable decree, and then justly blame him for acting as he is necessitated to do. On the ground of God being omnipotent, Mr. P. thinks he can reconcile the contradiction of God necessitating free-agents to keep the law already rendered impossible by a previous decree. But Scripture, reason, common sense, and matter of fact, deny this, and aver the contrary. For although God be possessed of infinite power, it must be recollected that he is also possessed of infinite wisdom, and that it would be as absurd to create free agents in order to necessitate them, as to do a thing in order to undo

it. Besides this, God's distributive justice could never be displayed, nor could free and willing obedience be paid by rationals, and crowned by the rewarder and judge of all the earth, unless those rationals had a free choice.

Another theory, not to be found in revelation, but in metaphysics, has carried this matter to a still greater extent, and made things quite independent of revelation, namely, the doctrine of philosophical necessity. Calvinism has heightened her metaphysical complexion, by having recourse to this for assistance. She has reclined on this prop, in failure of support, formerly supposed to be sufficiently abounding in the Scriptures, though the doctrine itself originated with, and in its progress has been improved principally, by men who were either indifferent or unfriendly to revelation. Nay, in some particulars of no small importance, it is contradictory to the doctrines of Calvinism, as held in the beginning. In regard to the origin of the doctrine, current opinion mentions Thomas Hobbes as having given the first hints of it, a name not very favourable to piety or morals. Some time afterward the doctrine found an advocate in Anthony Collins, a known unbeliever. Philosophical necessity, as brought forward now, undertakes to teach, that man, even in his innocency, was under a propellent motive, which produced his fall necessarily, by means of the dependence of every effect upon its proper cause. Calvin thought otherwise; for in his Institutes, book II. chap. iii. sect. 10, he says—"We grant that man in his primitive integrity had the power to incline to one side or the other." In book I. chap. xv. sect. 8, he tells us, "In his integrity man was endued with free-will, by which, if he had chosen, he might have attained eternal life." And again—"All the powers of his soul were formed to rectitude, and there subsisted a soundness of mind, and a will free to good." This power is acknowledged to have belonged to man in a state of integrity. In regard to the renewal of human nature, and in proportion as that is accomplished, the regaining of the freedom which has been lost by the apostacy, is

held out." Also, in book II. chap. ii. sect 1, Calvin tells us, that though man be at present a fallen creature as an offspring of Adam, "yet he should nevertheless be instructed to aspire to the good of which he is destitute, and to the liberty of which he is deprived." Not so the iron chain of philosophical necessity, which binds every motion of the will, in the track of a continued series of causes and effects, all which had their origin in the absolute will of God. When the comparative merits of Calvinism and Arminianism were put to issue in the synod of Dort, not having then formed the alliance with absolute necessity, the synod states in its 14th article, "We believe that God created man out of the dust of the earth; and made and formed him after his own image and likeness; good, righteous, and holy; capable in all things to will agreeably to the will of God." It is stated also in the 12th canon, after the change wrought on a sinner by grace—"The will thus renewed, is not only actuated and influenced by God, but in consequence of this influence, becomes itself active." How different from necessarian Calvinism at present!

When God rejected Cain's sacrifice, he assigned a reason for it, from the plain state of the case, namely, "that he did not do well." This is an appeal to his mind and conscience. But if God had previously and irresistibly determined Cain to do all the evil he did, at the same time that he effectually hindered him from doing better, is it reasonable that he should lay all the blame upon him, and make a most positive declaration that it was his own fault he was not accepted? So far was this from being the case, that an open door of hope is set before him, which no one but himself could shut. God told him in very plain terms, that there was a possibility of gaining his favour, which he condescends to disclose, assuring him that the condition was within his reach, namely, that "of doing well."

Nothing can be more absurd than to couple (as Mr. P. does) absolute necessity with moral free-agency. If men have no capacity of disobeying, they can have no capacity of obeying, in the moral sense of the word.

Their obedience would be necessary, and as far from true and genuine morality, as the passive obedience of a leaden ball is, which a person drops with an absurd command which orders it "to fall," having let go his hold of it. If men be unchangeably fixed in virtue or in vice, then all liberty is at an end, and man deserves no more praise or blame for the good or evil which he does, than a bullet for falling to the ground, which is its centre, and to which place it must fall when dropped.

This philosophical necessity, which makes every thing inevitable, should be altogether excluded from the sphere of Christian instruction. It ill becomes creatures of a day to presume to speculate with the perfections and attributes of the great first cause, the infinite, eternal, self-existent God. We are instructed on the highest authority, that "secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children." Yet there is an infirmity in the mind of man, which stimulates him to transgress the bounds prescribed to his understanding, to pry into, and dogmatize on subjects concerning which he has no solid ground to stand on, no data to be reasoned from with certainty, or authorizing to conclude with safety. There are evidences of this busy and presumptuous spirit operating within the bounds of the Christian Church from the days of the apostles even to the present day. The apostle speaks of it as "oppositions of science, falsely so called—philosophy and vain deceit." Even then, busy wits, by false reasonings, under the name of philosophy, brought the mind at length to rest in opinions not found in the word of truth.

God is inviolably just in all his dealings with men, as voluntary agents. Where there is no personal offence, as in the case of infants, their early removal will, on the gracious plan of redemption in Christ, answer the most valuable ends to all eternity. But that God can be just in ordaining involuntary agents, first to sin unavoidably, and then to be damned, is what Mr. Pelton has not been able to prove, by one single argument,

which can bear the light. If an involuntary being, who cannot help doing what he does, be chargeable, why are the sword of the murderer, the candle of the incendiary, and the cup of the poisoner innocent? They are involuntary, and only the instruments of others, whose will they could not resist. If a man happen to fall involuntarily on a child, whose death is occasioned by the circumstance, will the law condemn him as a wilful murderer? And if an earthly judge will not pronounce on an involuntary agent, why will Mr. Pelton assert, that God can be just in punishing involuntary agents, for doing that which they could no more avoid than the sword could help the murder?

When our great High-Priest had offered up his own life for the ransom of men, he desired the gospel to be preached throughout the whole world. This must be a very clear proof that individual and discriminative predestination, is but a fabrication of the human imagination, and not at all accordant with the commission which announced a free salvation to all men, indiscriminately, without the sting of any distinction between a secret and a revealed will, the latter holding out the offer of a good which the former keeps back, under the strong hold of an irresistible decree.

But if he should possess no answer to the question, or solution to the difficulty, perhaps he may attempt an evasion, by a false argument, i. e. "God owes no man salvation, either as a state of grace in this life, or of glory in heaven, and therefore he is not obliged to pay where he does not owe." This is somewhat like the prejudice of the people of a celebrated city, who with both their eyes widely open, could overlook the numerous and convincing proofs of the existence and providence of the Great Supreme, while to an image they could cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." But strip this declaration of its thin disguise, and it must stand in plain language, to be known and read of all men, namely, "As God owes no man salvation, he therefore owes to every man damnation. As he owes no sum of money, even one talent, he must owe a thousand stabs, one of which is deep enough to be mortal." Is this to the honour of God? But it may be replied,

"God afflicts some men with misery in this short life, and therefore, why not afflict as many as he pleases in hell for ever?" To this it may be easily replied, that though our afflictions here are not joyous, but grievous; yet even those afflictions are sent with a good intention, for they often work out the fruits of righteousness: and we who before affliction, are too apt to go astray, are often brought back through its medium. Our light afflictions here are but for a comparative moment; whereas, the worm that never dieth, and the fire that is never quenched, are quite different things. An affectionate father justly thinks, that while he owes a rod to one child, and physic to another, he does not at the same time owe to a third child to break his bones with a sledge, or to pour melted lead down the throat of a fourth. A surgeon, in opening an imposthume in the breast of a person, puts him to pain for one hour, as necessarily connected with his probable recovery. Does that liberty which is allowed by general custom, authorize him to flea the body, or cut it into fragments, or to put it to all sorts of pain unnecessarily, and where no possible good can be deduced?

Another unscriptural name, by which election and reprobation are declared and averred by Mr. P. and his system, is the curious distinction which has been fabricated between ordinary and efficacious grace; whereas, mankind are encouraged, by the warmest exhortations of a heavenly Father, to improve even one talent, to occupy and enlarge every trust; to improve every good inclination and opportunity, to a purpose that will bear to be reflected on with approbation, under an assurance that it cannot betray them into a fruitless labour, and the pursuit of an unattainable good. Where God commands, he does so on the reasonable ground of ability possessed. How unreasonable would it be to command a fish to walk? a bird to read? a beast to hear an edifying sermon? or a tree to sing a melodious sonnet? With equal propriety may one be first reprobated, and then invited by the promises of the Gospel.

Mr. P. makes it a point to keep the cloven foot

as retired and concealed as possible. But if he will consult Calvin's comment on Romans ix. 19, he will find the matter not minced, but asserted roundly. The word "to harden," when applied to God, "not only means permission, (as some moderate divines would have it) but also the action of divine wrath." This is as much as to say, "that the unavoidable purpose of absolute reprobation is eternal damnation, and that the medium conducive to this fearful end is wickedness." Now, if securing and accomplishing be terms altogether positive, applied to God, in contriving and completing the ruin of lost souls, it is rather odd that Mr. Pelton should stumble at the very threshold, and attempt to aver, that all these terms rise no higher than bare permission.

The gospel cautions the best of Christians, and the firmest believers, against the danger which still exists, of being at last destroyed, either by the remaining infirmities of their nature, or by the temptations of the adversary, who still goes up and down seeking whom he may devour. Though the promises of God be sufficient to support the soul in the way of duty and holy vigilance, yet it must not be presumed, that any information is given of a resistless power, which will at last snatch them from perdition, whatever sinfulness they may fall into before the close of life.

The arguments by which Mr P. would attempt to reconcile an inevitable decree of reprobation with free offers of divine mercy, are but mere show without either weight or solidity, and as inconclusive as those by which he attempts to reconcile it with divine justice; both sorts of arguments drawing their plausibility from the deceitfulness with which the necessarian scheme covers the blackness of the terms, "predestination, inevitable decree, reprobation, absolute contrivance," &c. such as "passing by, non-elect, not owing salvation, limiting the display of goodness, not extending mercy," &c. just as if all these phrases conveyed one just idea of necessarian reprobation, which is an absolute unconditional dooming of myriads of unborn creatures, to live in necessary and unavoidable wicked-

ness, and then to depart into everlasting fire, God having, by his decree, secured the end, namely, inevitable damnation, by the means, namely, inevitable sin.

Those ministers, who believe that the gospel uses the language of sincerity, and not of prevarication, where it offers the free gift of God, may address to their hearers the admonitions, the exhortations, the reproofs, the promises, and the threatenings of Scripture, free from all discouragement. It must, on the contrary, be painful to a benevolent man, to know that the offers of grace which he makes, will only increase the guilt of those who reject them, without the existence of any qualification or ability to be profited by them. But to be persuaded that the very end of preaching, in regard to some, is to make their damnation sure, would seem to swallow up whatever consolation can arise from any other source of the ministerial calling. The word of truth proceeds on quite a different plan. Not an auditor but may become a believer, a servant, a child of God, and after glorifying God upon earth, sing eternal hosannahs to God and the Lamb in heaven.

The idea of the Gospel offers being secretly intended only for a limited number, must greatly discourage the preachers of this plan. It must considerably affect the hearers also, though under different views of the subject; being naturally fruitful of presumption in some, who may believe, that they are of the number of the elect; and of despair in others, who may imagine themselves reprobated. For although these consequences may be incorrectly drawn; yet the misfortune is, that they are such as present themselves to ordinary understandings. When the promises and threatenings of God are announced as a terror to evil doers, and a reward to those that do well, the people will hear under the impression that in every instance, life and death are sincerely set before them, making their perdition, if this should be the sad result, the consequence of their own sinful obstinacy, without any influence of a contriving destiny.

That the first man was no predestinarian is evident,

from his bringing forward no decree to acquit himself: Eve brought up no foreknowledge by way of justification. How glad would the first murderer have been of such a subterfuge, when brought to account for the horrible sin of fratricide? Enoch the seventh from Adam charged the wicked of his day with their ungodly deeds, which *they had committed;* Noah was commissioned to warn also, and he is said to have been *a preacher of righteousness;* Lot was said to warn his friends in Sodom, who might have escaped the vengeance of devouring fire. The Gospel assures us that the damnation of the unbelieving and impenitent is of themselves, for neglecting their great salvation; desiring to be excused from the gospel feast; making light of its offers; refusing to occupy or improve their talents; acting the part of slothful servants: grieving, resisting, doing despite to, and quenching the Spirit of grace in its divine influence; shutting the eyes and ears, and refusing to have God to reign over them. But Mr. P. will ask, if there be no secret, irresistible decree, why does Ephesians, chap. i. 5, say, that "the Father had predestinated them to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ," and Thessalonians, chap. i. 1, "that their election was of God, and chap. ii. 13, that God had chosen them to salvation from the beginning?" To this I answer, that the apostle in addressing those Gentiles who had embraced the faith of Christ, means no more than that the Gentiles were called in an emancipation from the institutions of the law. And nothing could so effectually sustain this sentiment, as the resting of it on the divine purpose, entertained before the giving of the law, and even before the foundation of the world. The words "from the beginning," are applied in Scripture to different purposes. In Luke i. 2, they are intended of the commencement of the Gospel dispensation. In the first chapter of Genesis the same words look no farther back than the creation of the world. If we apply the words "chosen," and "predestinate," to all the members of the churches of Ephesus and Thessalonica, we must in that case attribute to the Apostle a discriminating knowledge of the

hearts of men. This would be very unreasonable. To apply predestination to their certain attainment of eternal life, would but ill accord with "Take to yourselves the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

The term "elect" which he applies to the members of one of those churches, was not inconsistent with the language of severe reproof, to some of those elect." This is perfectly consistent, if the term be intended of the church in general. But if it be applied to each of the members in particular, with a view to their destination in another world, it is not to be supposed that there should be charged on some of these elect, faults which are incompatible with the Christian state. Thus, Thessalonians, 2 Epistle iii. 11, "We hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies." The Thessalonians, collectively, were a church of God, while individuals, and their attainments, rested upon other grounds.

That God forces none is evident, while he uses means sufficient to demonstrate to all that he has no pleasure in the death of any sinner. If men fail of attaining this great end, the charge will be against themselves and not against God, who is free from the blood of all men. This is the condemnation which justly lies on the obstinate and wilful sinner, that light is come into the world, and that men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. And if they fail of salvation, it is because they reject the council of God against themselves.

Ephes. i. 4, is considered as peculiarly favourable to the Calvinistic scheme, and therefore requires notice. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy," &c. But, for the construction thus given the cause is indebted to the separating of the 4th from the 3d verse, which makes a part of the same sentence. It is "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." The sense of the place

is, there being conferred on the Ephesians spiritual blessings, to the end that they should be holy, the predestinating of them to be a church gathered from among the Heathens, is a circumstance noticed of the case. It was natural, that of all the inspired writers, the apostle Paul should be most abundant in references to antecedent determinations of the sovereign will of God, concerning his spiritual kingdom on earth recently founded. The mission of this Apostle was especially to the Gentiles. All his Epistles to churches are especially to those of the Gentile sort, except the epistle to the Hebrews, which has nothing concerning predestination or election to the purpose. He found himself thwarted in his ministry by a mixture of Judaism and Christianity; which had its foundation in the error that there was but one chosen people, in the mass of whom, of course, all the receivers of the new doctrine should be merged. That St. Paul is continually taking occasion to contradict this error, will not be denied by any. He largely refuted it in his epistle to the Romans, and in that to the Galatians. Underthese circumstances, is his salutation of churches: collectively he addresses them as objects of divine choice. But that he should have intended it of them in their individual characters, assuring them that each of them was marked out for eternal salvation by an unchangeable decree; and this in Epistles in which admonition, reproof, and even expulsion from the body of the church were to bear a part, is an inconsistency not to be supposed under the gift of inspiration.

But why are other words of equal force employed, namely, "*must and necessity?*" To this I answer, that there are a thousand instances where those terms differ ever so much from absolute necessity. Hence the expression, "It *must* needs be that offences come," Hence also, "seven days ye *must* eat unleavened bread," Hence, "New wine *must* be put into new bottles," Hence, "He *must* needs go through Samaria," Hence, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I *must* needs go to see it." Now to attempt to prove absolute necessity from any of these expressions would be alto-

gether trifling. There may be a necessity of duty, expressed by "I *must* pay my debts,"—Of civility by "I *must* pay such a visit,"—Of circumstances—"in going through Samaria," to Jerusalem, to avoid a circuitous passage—of convenience "when one is tired, to leave off in proper time." All these do not amount to absolute, insuperable necessity.

Mr. P. affecting to secure all the honour to God, would attribute the increase to him where no Paul planted, or Apollos watered, which is contrary to his gracious and providential schemes. Must absolute fatalism be brought in to account for the interesting picture of a true penitent, in his progress through all his deep and serious agitations, doubts, difficulties, hopes, and fears, from his earliest religious awakenings to the moment when he finds solid peace with God, giving serenity to his countenance, cheerfulness to his heart, and a holy confidence which continues with him and supports him in the last hours of life? Now though God be justly acknowledged to be the author and finisher of faith; and though it be a true assertion, that without him we can do nothing that is good; yet to the glory of his name be it uttered, that "with him we can, and he demands we should do all things." The Gospel assures us, that a measure of grace is given to every person to profit withal. We are the offspring of the most beneficent Creator, who has not only conferred human existence upon us, but given us an interest in the redemption which is in Christ. His administration is uniform, his promises hold out the sincerest offers, and are worthy of our most steadfast reliance.

The apostle Paul attributes his imprisonment, &c. to his asserting the right of the Gentiles to become the children of God, without conforming to the Jewish law. This was the doctrine to which he considered himself a martyr. Thus, Colos. i. 24, (I Paul) "who now rejoice in my sufferings for you." Shortly after, he adds, "I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." In Ephes. iv. 1, "For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of

Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." He tells us, that the mystery of Christ for which he was in bondage, was "what in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, but is now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise of Christ by the Gospel." When he related to the Jews a vision he had in the temple, which bid him depart out of Jerusalem, "for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles, they gave audience to *that word*, and then lift up their voices and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth." The seizing of the apostle's person, his shipwreck, his imprisonment at Rome, and a variety of other particulars, not in consequence of any general persecution set on foot against Christianity, (James and the elders at Jerusalem remaining unmolested) but brought upon him by his activity in preaching to the Gentiles, and by his boldly placing them upon a level with the once favoured, and still self-flattered posterity of Abraham.

Now that all mankind are made the joint partakers of the grace of God, is a truth firmly established on the basis of Scripture. What can be plainer or more consoling than the declaration, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself?" that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son?" that "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world?" "The Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world?" He was "indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." His commission was, "Go ye forth into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to *every creature*." These, and many more that might be easily adduced, are strong proofs of the virtue of that grace which has visited every soul of man, from the first openings of intellectual capacity.

How malicious must it be to aver, that "God has framed his laws difficult, and contrary to our inclinations, that he may take the advantage of our infirmity to ruin us for our disobedience to them?" So far is God from such an intention, that he declares repeatedly

that our destruction is of ourselves, while he is "free from the blood of all men." To withstand and overcome the degeneracy of human nature, God has provided an all-sufficient remedy in the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, and in that grace which, bringing salvation, has appeared unto all men.

Mr. P. tells us, that man is so void of any influence of God upon his soul, that "He has no disposition to will or do any thing acceptable to God, until God puts the will within him by his special grace." What Methodist doubts that it is God who gives both grace and glory; who gives to some person one measure or talent, and to others more; but whether this beneficent Father of all mankind overlooks myriads by a decree of preterition, or contrives their ruin by a decree of reprobation? Whether, after withholding all divine assistance, he can then with any thing like justice, make as rigid a demand for improvement, as if he had given five or ten talents to occupy and improve? God is good, and merciful, and just, as well as great and powerful. He is impartial without respect of persons; influenced by no power; impaired by no time; present every where; the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; essentially good; diffusing streams of goodness to all, according to their natures and capacities. He has not only provided for the body, but also for the soul; so that what we lost in Adam, is abundantly repaired in Christ. "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so the grace of God hath abounded to all men through Jesus Christ," to countervail the ill effects of the first offence, and to bring the whole man into obedience to Christ. And though there be a law in the members warring against the law of the mind; and the sensitive appetites be apt to rebel against reason and grace, yet every Christian, exercising himself unto godliness, may be able to say with the apostle, "Thanks be to God, who giveth the victory through Jesus Christ."

But does not our Saviour himself make use of the terms "elect and chosen?" I answer, he does, sometimes expressly, and sometimes figuratively, as his

sheep, and his branches. Our Saviour designates his followers, at first few in number, but contemplated as a great multitude in future, as the chosen of God. Moses, Deut. vii. 6, addresses the Israelites as a chosen people. But did he intend to ascribe sanctity of mind to every individual of the whole body? or of the major part? No; for he tells them "that they had been a rebellious people from the very day on which they departed from the land of Egypt." What then was the ground of the epithet? It was God's choice of the Israelites to be a people in covenant with him; to be favoured with a revelation of his will, and to maintain the profession of the true God, until the appointed time of gathering a church from among all nations. The same title of elect is applied to them by the prophets. It was therefore a maintaining the style of holy writ to speak of those who had been brought within the pale of the Christian Church under the name of "chosen or elect." The Calvinistic sense of elect is very inapplicable from John vi. 70, where Judas is recognised as one of them. "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition." The immediate disciples of our Lord were given to him for the laying of the foundation of his church. He acknowledged Judas as one of the chosen, but that although chosen, he proved a traitor.

Where Christ says that false Christs and false prophets shall deceive, if it were possible, the very elect, the words "if it were possible," are brought in by some as showing the utter impossibility of the elect being seduced from the ways of God. But while the words express some considerable difficulty, they do not imply absolute impossibility. Saint Paul hastened, "if it were possible," to be at Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost. The same apostle commands, "if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." If the former case were an utter impossibility, it would not be attempted. And if the latter had been such, it would not have been advised. The clause evidently intimates no more than that the accomplishment of the purpose was doubtful.

While God is acknowledged to have an absolute right to, and authority over all his creatures, as his own workmanship, he lays no claim to a right to contrive the extreme misery of innocent creatures, millions of ages before they were born. God claims an equitable right. He never makes them miserable without a cause, or provocation persisted in. And because some hard thinkers are very apt to entertain such unworthy thoughts of God, he has given his oath that "he has no pleasure in the death of a sinner." God cannot be glorified in doing evil where justice does not require it. He would be a monster among men who would do so. The good God does not tempt his creatures to evil, that he may afterward have the monstrous and cruel pleasure of punishing them. A reasonable creature cannot be guilty of any thing which it could not help, or deserve punishment for what it could not possibly avoid. Men cannot possibly have a blacker thought of God than to imagine that he has applied all the attributes of deity to the secret contrivance of drawing mankind into snares of ruin, that he might raise a revenue of glory to his justice in their condemnation and punishment. There is no generous father but would deny such a charge if brought against himself with respect to his children. And if men, who possess but comparative drops of goodness, would take such conduct for the greatest reproach, how much more our Father who is is in heaven?

Here, however, a class of texts is brought up, consisting of declarations of the immutability of the counsels of God, and of his foreknowledge of all the events which were to be brought about in the order of his providence, such as Isa. xlvi. 10, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Solomon tells us, "The counsel of the Lord shall stand." In the New Testament, it is said, "He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will," and "known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." Many other passages might be mentioned to the same effect, but they signify nothing in contrariety to those who acknowledge the sovereignty of God.

What I demand is scriptural authority, to show that God's power and foreknowledge are exercised or illustrated in creating, in order to everlasting destruction. The doctrine is first presumed by Mr. P. and then those passages produced as proof of the unchangeableness of the event.

Another class of texts is made to speak of wicked men, and of God making their wickedness the medium of their destruction. The Calvinistic interpretation supposes that God makes them wicked with a view to that unhappy end. Thus, where it is said (Joshua xi. 20,) concerning the Canaanites—"It was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly." This text amounts to no more than that those nations, being very wicked, and on that account their excision being determined on by the Lord of life and death; his providence so disposed the series of events as to incite them to hazard battle with a power, before which they had not strength to stand. Their wickedness had been frequently spoken of in the foregoing history, and made the ground of a destruction, of which the Israelites were declared to be the executioners. Will any one therefore infer, "that they were brought into existence under an inevitable necessity of being wicked." In Proverbs xvi. 4, we read, "The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of wrath." The word translated "made," signifies to go through a work, or bring it to effect. As applied in this place, it means that God so disposes matters as to cause the wickedness of men to bring them to the day of evil; if, indeed, evil to them be the matter intended in this place; and not rather their being the instruments of accomplishing the divine purposes in evil to be brought on others, as in the case of the king of Assyria, Isaiah x. 5, who was in the hands of God, the rod of his anger, and the staff of his indignation against the surrounding nations. The words will bear either interpretation.

How Mr. Pelton can charge the most holy and righteous God, either with a reprobation which decrees the

ruin and punishment of men, decreeing that they must sin, and so be unavoidably punished, is most difficult of comprehension. This must overthrow altogether our notion of goodness in God, as an inclination and disposition of the Divine Nature to communicate being and happiness to his creatures. But surely nothing can be more contrary to such a disposition, than an absolute resolution to make them unavoidably and everlastingly miserable. God is infinitely better than the best of men. No good man would positively and peremptorily resolve to destroy his children, and form this resolution many years before their birth, without any respect to their actions. It would not be an easy matter to devise a worse character than this of the devil.

Isaiah vi. 10, "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed," is a text brought in to support the inexorable decree. Here we have a denunciation, which was to continue in execution "until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, and the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land." The impending captivity at Babylon, is the matter intended in these words, which are also followed by the promise of a remnant who should return. The abounding wickedness of the people was the cause of the denunciation, and of the punishment which followed. The nation being excessively corrupt, was about to be punished by a seventy years banishment from their country.

But Mr. P. says, "that God can do what he pleases in decreeing, hardening, and blinding, as an act of absolute sovereignty." But surely this would be contrary to the moral perfections of God, and therefore inconsistent with them. And we must take heed of dishonouring the Judge of all the earth, by attributing such a sovereignty to him, as contradicts his justice, mercy, and goodness. For, if the sovereignty of God may break in at pleasure upon the other attributes of the Divine Na-

ture, then it signifies nothing to say, that God is good, or wise, or just, if his sovereignty may at any time act in open contradiction to them.

But, it may be asked, why does our Saviour make use of this passage, and after him his apostle Paul, in Acts xxviii. 26? To this it may be replied, that our Lord's ministry found the Jewish nation in just such a crisis as that formerly contemplated by Isaiah. Was there not impending an awful captivity now by the Romans? And was there ever a passage more pertinently transferred from a past event to a future? But after all, the passage, as applied by our Saviour, refers to a particular species of his discourses; not as hardening the heart, but as wrapping up his meaning in parables, to prevent their being the means of hardening it the more. When he delivered his sermon on the mount relative to the ordinary discipline of the mind, and government of life, the people were astonished at his doctrine, being expressed in language void of figure and concealment of every kind. But when he delivered what was peculiarly intended of his kingdom, that is, of his church, it was designed especially for his apostles, to whom it was "given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God." It is not said that those mysteries were withheld from the people, "lest they should convert and be healed." To give this construction, would be to connect two subjects without regard to what occurs intermediately. No; it is "because they, seeing, see not; and hearing, hear not; neither do they understand," Matt. xiii. 13: that is, (speaking of them nationally,) they would not admit the intelligence of his spiritual kingdom. Then follows the quotation from Isaiah, which is merely said to be fulfilled: that is, as in Isaiah's time, so now, the nation was waxing ripe for destruction; and would not be reclaimed. In the several passages of the New Testament in which the passage from Isaiah is quoted, the act of hardening is nowhere apparently affirmed of the divine Being, except in John, where the words may be divested of this harsh signification, if we construe the original word on the

supposition of its being used impersonally, which is frequent in the Greek language.

Now if the absolute reprobation of unborn creatures, and the moral attributes of God, cannot stand together, the question is, which side ought to be considered as taking the lead? What St. Paul determines in another case concerning the truth and fidelity of God, will equally apply here. "Let God be good, and every man (attempting to oppose his goodness) a liar." The doctrine reprobating human creatures to inevitable sin and ruin, cannot consist with the attributes of the good and merciful God; and cannot therefore be a true doctrine. If God have no pleasure in the ruin of sinners, how can he be supposed to be the contriver of their sin first, and then of their ruin? No father was ever as well pleased with the good conduct and thriving condition of his children, as God is with the welfare of his rational creatures. To express this, he uses the most expressive language. "O! that they were wise—O! that there were such an heart in them—O! that my people had hearkened unto me—O! that thou hadst known the things belonging to thy peace. These are some of the declarations by which God puts the matter out of all doubt for ever. If words be fair declarations of the mind, those declarations must convince us, that God has no pleasure in the death of a sinner.

Should Mr. P. ask, "why then do not all escape from ruin?" God himself gives a most sufficient answer. "O Israel (not I, but) thou hast destroyed thyself." I admonished, but "my people would not hearken to my voice—Israel would none of me." The declaration of God is most descriptive: "I called, but ye refused." After having made the generous offer, he closes with, "Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life." After sending his Holy Spirit as a divine influence, he had to add, "Ye resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did." When wisdom from above directed, it had to aver, "Ye reject the counsel of God against yourselves." Instead of being chargeable with contriving their ruin, the language of God is, "Your de-

struction is of yourselves." Hence he declares, "I am free from your blood—your blood is upon your own heads."

But cannot God do what he pleases with his own gifts and graces? To this it may be answered, that it would be unfairly interpreted, to suppose, that though divine grace must go before, in a previous discipline, and assist in it, that nothing can be connected with, or dependent on the predisposing habits of the individual. The previous state of the mind has no small concern with the great business. Hence the seed of the word is more likely to flourish in one soil than in another, from its having been sown "in an honest and good heart." The good or evil spoken of (John iii. 20, 21,) is preparatory to the coming to the light. The Jews of Berea (Acts xvii. 11,) are commended above those of Thessalonica, because they "received the word with all readiness of mind." When Christ opened his commission to the Jews, their reception or rejection of the gracious offer depended in no small degree on the states of mind cherished by them under the former dispensation. The Saviour said to a certain Scribe, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." Now we know that as propinquity may be favourable to a person's entering a place, so improving even one talent, may be an introduction to two or more, at an after period.

But whatever the previous states of men's minds may happen to be, God has made his feast—furnished his table—all things are now ready—his invitations are sent forth—his offers are most candid and liberal—It remains with men to come or stay. God forces happiness upon no man. He has constituted human nature rational and moral, and presents it with such motives as are fit to prevail with reasonable creatures; affording them, at the same time, all necessary and sufficient assistance. No man, therefore, can charge either his fault or his punishment upon that good God, who speaks of himself as clear of our blood. He speaks this without any reserve, or dark distinction between his secret and revealed will, decreeing one thing, and declaring

another. No man, therefore, has the least reason to be discouraged, under any thing like a surmise that God has put a fatal stumbling-block in his way.

But is it not said, Matt. xi. 25, "That these things were hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed to babes?" Answer. The words "wise and prudent" are here used in a sense implying censure; and the word "babes," in a sense of approbation. Under the simplicity and sincerity of the babe, there must be conveyed the sense of a mental preparation for receiving the truths of the Gospel, and under the worldly wisdom of the other, disability and hinderance. What has this to do with the subjection of some to an unavoidable necessity of sinning, and of others to an irresistible call of grace? Nay, our Saviour tells us that *this was good in the sight of God*, which could not be true of a dispensation constructed so as to contradict our best founded apprehensions of God, and his moral attributes. The very relation in which we stand to God, as his accountable creatures, is lost, the moment we imagine any such decree is in operation. If an offender be once persuaded that a decree is employed to bring about his sin, he will no longer submit to feel pain from the terrors of a guilty conscience. What must he feel in the hour of death, if he should imagine that God brought him first to be a sinner, and with intention to punish him for ever?

The greatest danger is to be apprehended from carrying any principle of religion to an extreme. For as some persons are too apt to entertain vain hopes of their superficially good condition; so others torment themselves with groundless fears of being reprobated. This is most unreasonable, as a surmise, of the infinitely good and just God. But where reprobation is sown in public, as a Gospel seed, it must be expected to spring up. For the comfort of such as are educated in this error, let them be assured, that we have no warrant from Scripture to suspect any such secret treachery in God. As to Acts xiii. 48, "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." The word "ordained" has a great latitude of signification. In 1 Cor. xvi. 15, we

read—"They have" addicted "themselves to the ministry of the saints." In Acts xx. 13—for so had he "appointed," or more strictly, so was he "disposed." The word "ordained," therefore, as applied to this place, means a certain preparation of heart, disposing certain persons to believe; which we ought the rather suppose to be the matter intended, as the expression describes a contrariety of character in the Jews, who rejected the Gospel—"It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo! we turn to the Gentiles." Here were persons indisposed to eternal life, who therefore of their own accord thrust it from them. On the contrary, as many "as were disposed to eternal life, believed."

The decrees of God being secret, cannot be a rule to us, either of our duty or comfort. No man, therefore, has any just reason to think himself rejected of God, who does not find something like the plain marks of reprobation in himself. Nay, should he know by an examination of his heart and life, that he is not in the favour of God for the present, yet he ought not to conclude that God has cast him off for ever. For men to judge of their everlasting condition from secret decrees, and not from the word, which is nigh and obvious, is to steer their course by stars which they cannot see, while they neglect the compass, map, and quadrant, which would afford a more certain direction. Moses determined the matter long since, by declaring that "secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed, to us and to our children." With respect to 1 Peter ii. 8—"Whereunto also [destruction] they were appointed." The context describes those persons as "disobedient," whereby the preaching of a Saviour became to them "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." The character of the party is "disobedience," after which follows appointed destruction, as the result of it. The Syriac is, "at which [stone] they stumble, who are disobedient to the word, to which [word] they also were set, [or

appointed."] The paraphrase of Erasmus is thus—"And they stumble who are offended at the word of the Gospel, and believe it not; seeing Moses's law made them ready beforehand, to the end that they should believe the Gospel, as soon as the thing was truly performed in deed, which the law signified in shadow."

If all things be so unchangeably fixed, as that the omnipotent providence of God cannot change them, a great part of religion, but especially prayer, is excluded. If God cannot interfere to help or change, it would be vain to pray to him for the advancement of any good purpose, or to thank him as the author of it. All prayer evidently presupposes that God can overrule events, and even direct them to the best points. The success of prayer being often evidenced, must convince us that there can be nothing secret which God cannot overrule. Evil that we fear, he can so overrule as to answer purposes of present and future good. Jude, ver. 4, tells us, "Some were before of old ordained;" the place itself mentions the ground of this condemnation. It states that they were ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. At the same time, let it be remarked, that there is here no ordaining in the usual sense of the word. It is "before written," and in its connexion may properly be translated "of whom it was before written." It must mean, either that the end of such ungodly men might be seen, it was foretold in prophecy; or that their destruction might be traced, either by themselves, or by others, in the ends of former ungodly men on record. Nothing can be farther from the sense of the passage, than that their being ungodly was part of the ordination.

If sins and punishments be absolutely decreed, what room can there be for speaking of God's patience and long-suffering, of which we so frequently read? He waited on the ancient world one hundred and twenty years; which not repenting, he sent a general flood. He waited on the Jews "forty years long in the wilderness." He allowed the Ninevites forty days. Now to what end does God exercise so much patience but that

men may come to repentance, forsake their evil ways, and live. God warns men, that by his threatenings they may be alarmed and fly for refuge to the open door of hope which is set before them. While by his prophets he threatened death to the people of Israel, he at the same time invited and urged them to repentance. The condition always expressed is, "to repent and turn from their evil ways," and the assurance is, that "God would repent of the evil which he said he would do to them." Thus, "At what instant I speak concerning a nation, and a kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation turn from evil, I will repent of the evil which I thought to do unto them."

The agency and exercises of conscience are incompatible with an unchangeable decree. Conscience is of vast moment in religion. It is the great principle of moral action, and our guide in matters of sin and duty. Every man is spoken of as having a court within his own breast. There he tries himself and all his actions. Conscience, under some character, sustains every part of this trial. The court is called the court of conscience. The bar at which the sinner is impleaded, is called the bar of conscience. Conscience is the accuser. It is the record or register of his crimes, in which their memory is preserved. It is the witness which gives testimony for, or against him. It is the judge which declares the law, and what man ought, or ought not to have done. Or, in still plainer language, conscience is the judgment of a man's own mind concerning his actions, informing him what things are commanded of God, and so his duty; what things are forbidden, and so consequently sinful. But if every thing good, bad, or indifferent which may happen, be determined already by an inevitable ordination, what need is there for conscience raising those ghosts, and spreading those alarms, when one of these acts could be no more prevented by him than the rising or setting of the sun. Why then should Acts ii. 47, be brought in to show the unchangeable determination? "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." The stress is here laid on the words "should be," as if the event

followed from some previous discriminating determination. But this is not exactly the sense of the original, which might be translated "were saved," or who had accepted of the salvation offered to them. The meaning is, that of those who had accepted of the conditions of the Gospel, there were daily additions to the Christian Church.

The scriptural doctrine of a divine providence, governing the world, and wisely disposing of the affairs of men, must remove a fixed unalterable fate. Though all things be wisely framed to attain their proper ends, yet we cannot avoid supposing that God has reserved to himself a power and liberty to interpose whenever he sees proper, to awaken men to the consideration of his presence and government, as well as to a continual dependence upon him; and at the same time to teach them to ascribe those things to his wise disposal, which, if no change were seen in their course, men would be too apt to impute to blind necessity. It must be acknowledged, therefore, that sometimes things so change from the general manner, that "the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." But if there be a providence, there can be no ground for fixed and unchangeable necessity.

Surely, the gospel dispensation, through a divine Mediator, raises our conceptions of God to the highest pitch. For, instead of framing any thing of a secret, ensnaring, and destructive nature, "he so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that men might not perish, but obtain eternal life." And if his love to the human race be carried to the highest degree in making him a curse for us, to redeem us from the curse of a broken law, we cannot consistently attribute to him any thing ungenerous. The love of Christ, so far from *being of the common kind*, "*surpasseth knowledge.*" He was "wounded for our transgression, and bruised for our iniquities." Hence may "forgiveness of sins be preached in his name to all people." Hence may his "gospel be preached to every creature." How irreconcileable must such a commission be with absolute predestination? How different is this from that

dreadful scheme which makes "God of his own pleasure, so ordain, that some should be so born as to be devoted from the womb to certain destruction, who by this might glorify his name;" alluding to Exod. xxxiii. 19, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy to whom I will show mercy." This would not be considered as importing more than a temporal promise if it had not been quoted from the Epistle to the Romans also, where it is thought to have a reference to eternal happiness. The word translated "I will be gracious," strictly means, "I will seize or take possession," alluding to Israel as "the Lord's inheritance." The word translated, "I will have mercy," bears the sense of compassion, thus Jacob prays, "God Almighty give you mercy before the man." But what has this to do with dooming some, by an everlasting reprobation, to unavoidable sin and punishment?

Joshua, the great successor of Moses, knew nothing of this unchangeable decree. He knew of nothing to hinder men from making a free choice. After he had settled the people of Israel in the quiet possession of Canaan, he called a general assembly, and after representing to them how God had delivered them, and brought them into that good land, and had punctually performed all his promises; he advises them to make an open and unequivocal choice of the Lord Jehovah as their God; showing that religion and all its divine connexions may be their own free choice. And to direct and encourage them to make a right choice, he openly declares to them his own resolution, which he hopes will be theirs also. Whether they will follow him or not, he leaves to themselves. He, for his part, is fixed in the resolution, that not only himself, but as far as his example and advice can affect his most intimate connexions and relations, his house or family also, shall be the humble servants of the living God. How different this language from the Institutes of Calvin? "Whom he (God) hath created unto shame of life, and destruction of death, that they should be instruments of his wrath, and examples of his severity, that they may come to their end; at one time he deprives

them of the power of hearing his word, at another, he the more blinds and stupifies them."

That there is no black decree which binds men over to damnation, is evident from the redemption of Christ, in which all are said to have an interest. God has made nothing that is necessary to our eternal happiness impossible. That is not impossible to us which we may do by the assistance of another, if we may have that assistance for asking it. Christ has even promised to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask for it. So that notwithstanding our circumstances as the offspring of fallen Adam, it is not absolutely out of our power, through the grace that is given us in Jesus, to leave our sins and turn to God. That may with all propriety be said to be in our power, which God has promised us assistance to do, if we be not wanting to ourselves. How misapplied is Isaiah, lxv. 1, when taken from its proper subject, the calling of the Gentiles into the church; and applied to individuals? The prophet, carried by vision to the time of the event, says, "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not; I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." And then, contrasting the calling of the Gentiles with the foreseen apostacy of the Jews, he adds, "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people." The 10th chapter of Romans applies the prophecy as here interpreted to the Israelites, of whom it is designed; but the Calvinists warp it into the service of the predestinating decree.

Nothing on God's part hinders our present and eternal salvation. He solemnly declares that he is ready to assist us in this great concern. What a lively description of this have we in the history of the prodigal son. What a number of circumstances descriptive of the affection of the true paternal relation and character unfold themselves to the plainest eye, in the course of this short narrative? The father is said "to have seen him afar off, and to have compassion, and to run to meet him." Why should we cast the awful stumbling-block of a decree in the way of such a father? or such a

son? Matt. xv. 13, is misapplied in this service—"Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." The Greek word signifies, not so properly a single plant, but a collection of plants; that is, a garden or plantation. The charge made by our Saviour just before, concerning the Pharisees, was, that they "taught for doctrines the commandments of men." Then, on being told that they were offended at his saying, he uttered the denunciation now in question. It means that the assumed authority of this hypocritical sect, would fall under the divinely instituted authority of the spiritual kingdom of the speaker.

God making of the same lump of clay, one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour, is made to advance a partial election or reprobation. The words in the original imply not an opposition, but a difference in degree of honour; as one glory of the sun, another of the moon, and another of the stars: and that as one star differs from another in glory, so shall it be in the resurrection. In the measures of grace also, God gives one, two, or five talents. Of him to whom much is given, much will be required. And the great Judge promises to deal with every man on this equitable plan. Of the same lump of clay, one branch of a family may possess higher privileges than another; but nevertheless, each of the members may possess a saving measure of the grace of God. While the Scriptures draw the most admirable picture of the Divine Being in creation and providence, and particularly in giving his only begotten Son, with what horror must the mind turn away from the Institutes, saying, "That God not only foresaw that Adam would fall, but also ordained that he should—that when men therefore perish in their corruption, they do nothing but suffer the punishment of that sin, into which, by God's predestination, Adam fell, and drew his posterity headlong with him." On the side of the elect also, every thing is made to be unchangeable. Where it is said, that "their names are written in heaven," is brought forward as a proof. Now a register may refer to the book of a general, respecting his army, or of a pastor, concerning his flock. The

subject does not preclude all possibility of erasure in consequence of default. There is always hazard run in building doctrine on figurative language; but when this is attempted, there should be consistency. When our Saviour "will gather his elect from the four winds," he announces a future judgment. When St. Paul speaks of certain persons, "whose names were in the book of life," he only declares his opinion of their Christian character. This has nothing to do with predestination, a speculation running so far ahead of any guidance found in Scripture, that it is not only "weaving the spider's web," but also "hatching the cockatrice's eggs," from which many a viper must spring.

If God's decree be accomplished by any one as an agent, does not the actor do God's will? How then can his conduct be ranked under the name of sin, and subject him to the heaviest punishment? Is not a conduct which fulfils his will, a pure, formal, and commendable obedience, and therefore entitled to his approbation and reward? But the Scriptures every where represent sin as displeasing to God, and justly liable to punishment.

When we speak of the goodness of God, and of his justice, we cannot but conceive of these properties, as the same in kind, with what we find in men, though infinitely higher in degree. And we certainly cannot err in thus conceiving of them. God has not disdained to invite us to judge of his dealings towards us, by the same rules of equity, which apply to our dealings with one another.

The observant eye sees the footsteps of infinite goodness impressed on every department of the divine administration. The wings of the bird; the fins of the scaly tribes; as well as the hoof which roams the dark forest, or inhabits the fruitful plains, are all so many means of good to them, as well as productive, both of instruction and consolation to man. Now if God extend his care to the meanest of his creatures, why exclude man from a share in the divine goodness? Surely, such as instruct others ought not to

press their own opinions as the decisions of holy writ. It is an awful threat—"If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." When doctrines are promulgated, which strike directly at the divine attributes, we ought to imitate the apostle Paul—"Let God be true, and every man a liar:" that is, let all the attributes of the divine nature be sustained; whatever may be the consequences to the theories of fallible and frail men.

If there be an unavoidable decree, which puts the Supreme Being under restrictions, and obliges him to do as he does in every thing, how can there be such a thing as grace, or favour? If the grace of God be a favour which he *must* bestow, it hardly deserves the name of donation, or largess. That cannot be a bounty which we are obliged to confer. Now to stop up the innumerable streams of divine goodness, in order to keep an unmeaning decree in public credit, must be a very great disparagement to Him, whose tender mercies are over all his works. Many sincere professors among the Calvinists, are shocked at this picture of the author and dispenser of all good, denying those consequences, at the same time that they are sensible of the difficulty attending their system, in this respect.

An absolute unchangeable decree, must be inconsistent with the commands of God. His giving commands presupposes that he gives also a sufficiency of power to obey them. Had God given us laws, but no power to keep them, his commands indeed would be grievous. It is true, we are weak and impotent as the fallen descendants of Adam; but the grace which the Gospel brings us through Christ, is altogether sufficient to answer every possible injunction laid upon us. This is a just foundation for declaring that "his commands are not grievous;" his assistance being proportionable to any difficulty that may attend the path of duty. But we are also to remember, that this divine assistance is not forced upon men whether they will or no. It is to be asked for; and when obtained, to be improved as a talent. We must not imagine, that because God is the author of every good work, and the bestower of

every good gift, that we are authorized from that to lay aside every endeavour of our own. Nay, if after commencing well, and going on regularly for some time, we turn aside to folly, we positively forfeit the divine aids, and are rendered liable to punishment.

Many of the rigid Calvinists believe that God cannot condemn an innocent creature to everlasting torments. Witsius affirms, that "It is unbecoming the goodness of God, nay, I would almost say his justice, to adjudge an innocent creature to everlasting torments." But then, he and others, to support their own creed, in such imminent danger here, add, "that being guilty as the offspring of Adam, we are deserving of punishment." Calvin also states, Institutes, book II. chap. i. sect. 8, "Infants themselves, as they bring their condemnation with them into the world, are rendered obnoxious to punishment by their own sinfulness, and not by the sinfulness of another." Surely reason (as well as revelation,) raises its voice here to interdict an evident interference of a doctrine or creed, with what we know of the attributes of Almighty God. For what is the difference between an absolute decree which forces evil upon a person irresistibly, and the subjecting of the same person to the necessity of sinning, by the circumstances under which he is brought into existence?

When our doctrines cease to be as true to the divine word, as the dial to the sun, it is amazing to what dreadful lengths of error we are liable to run. The sentiment held forth by the Institutes, must appear to every impartial mind, to cast a most awful imputation on the just and holy God, when it charges him with the determined act "of calling on reprobates for the express purpose of making them yet more deaf; of kindling a light for them, that they may be yet more blind; of affording them his doctrine, that they may be the more confounded; and applying a remedy to them, that they may not be healed." Surely the invitations of the Gospel must appear to every sincere reader, in quite a different light, when they call on all, pledging its truth, and holding out its great and precious promises. Instead of trifling with the hopes and fears of its vota-

ries, all is sincere, and means what it declares. Mr. Turretine argues, that "In an innocent creature there cannot be the consciousness of crime, and of the just judgment of God; which constitutes the punishment." Must not this acknowledgment comprehend every creature, not conscious of any act, but such as it has been irresistibly impelled to? What ground can there be, then, for the painful retrospect of lost opportunities, as things that might have been applied to the working out of salvation? Let a person live in sin, and then going to his punishment, find that all was forced upon him; whatever he suffers, he cannot suffer the reproaches of a convicted conscience. To suppose that such a horrible decree only "shows the glory of God in the highest point of view;" it may easily be replied, that from such a dreadful dispensation no glory can arise, but rather a tyranny, calling human creatures into existence for the purpose of illustrating his glory in their everlasting damnation.

Some men, in an almost desperate state of evil, are brought in as a proof "that they are under some secret decree which prevents them." Now though the cases of some may be alarming, yet they may not be desperate. There may be still some ground of hope left, of their being brought to God. Humanly speaking the thing may seem almost impossible, yet the things which with men are impossible, are possible with God. There is even in the worst, something which may awaken consideration. God may employ some providential stroke. There is left in the most vicious, some sense of the evil and unreasonableness of sin, which can never be totally extinguished in this life. Though evil habits be very apt to harden and stupify, yet the worst of men are sometimes under strong convictions, and their consciences severely check and reprove them. They are also under great apprehensions of the danger of their condition, and that their evil course will prove fatal. When the worst of men have any thoughts of returning to God, though they find all cause to despair with respect to themselves, yet they are apt to conceive some good hopes of God's grace and mercy.

His boundless compassion is apt to kindle some sparks of hope, even in the most desponding. But what must we think of a system which supposes the divine Being speaking thus to his human creatures, "Look upon me as the chief good; but know, that I neither am nor shall be such to thee. Hunger and thirst after me; but only to be for ever disappointed. Seek me above all things; but seek me in vain, never to be found." Surely he does not know God, who imagines such things to be worthy of him. Language which minces matters, and can suppose God capable of saying—"I command thee to seek me above all things, but have predetermined to withhold from thee that grace, without which thou canst not find. I have commanded thee to repent, and believe, and obey; but all in direct contrariety to a necessity, impelling thee irresistibly to disobedience."

To suppose for a moment, that God can be the irresistible contriver of his creatures' ruin, is a glaring inconsistency, because incompatible with his holiness. To justify such a conduct, requires the acquittal of the contriving cause, and the condemnation of the medium, which is so weak as not to be able to resist an irresistible energy. The "Institutes" aver that "Reprobates, in sinning, would be thought excusable, because they cannot prevent the necessity of it, especially when such necessity is cast upon them by the ordination of God; but we deny that they are thence rightly excused." Next to the belief of a God, and his providence, there is nothing more fundamentally necessary, than the conviction, that God is not the author of sin, and that every man must blame himself for the evil which he does. They forbid all appeal to our rational faculties, relatively to the connexion of the moral government of God, with his adorable attributes; when he himself has so often appealed to the same test in his word. For instance, in allusion to the equity of his commands, he expostulated—"O! my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me." When he allowed Abraham to reason with him concerning Sodom, the

language of the patriarch was—"That be far from thee to slay the righteous with the wicked: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" God admitted of the application, and allowed him to plead to a great extent. When God addresses the house of Israel, his language is, "Are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal?" Under these high authorities we say, that "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his seat."

How men who acknowledge that God has been merciful to them, can place others in a situation in which they are only prepared for the sin and punishment to which they are decreed, is very strange. Salvation is offered to those reprobates; but they say "it is only to delude them." The voice of mercy sounds in their ears, with the treacherous intention to tantalize them. A gracious God invites, beseeches, and begs of them to partake of all the joys of grace and glory; but it is only to thrust them deeper into the pit for refusing; which was unavoidable. How long will men represent the sincerity of God as mockery; his truth as falsehood; and his compassion as cruelty? If God had laid the train, and set the snare, it would be cruel in the same person, first to tempt, and then to punish. For as nothing is more contrary to the holiness of God, than to tempt men to sin; so nothing could be more contrary to justice, than first to draw men into sin, and then to chastise them for it.

A system which makes God the contriver of sin, cannot, by any means, harmonize with sound and sober reason. It contradicts the equitable plan of man's dealing with man, and the rules of mutual justice. It derogates in a high degree from the honour due to God's name and attributes; and ascribes to the Almighty the base names of tyranny, cruelty, injustice, insincerity, and delight in human misery. If, on the other hand, every man's fault be justly chargeable on himself, there can be no treacherous decree which binds him inevitably to the commission of that fault. This is the only and proper foundation on which men can be

guilty; so that when they have done amiss, they must be conscious it was their own act, and that they might have done otherwise, if they had rightly employed the power which God afforded to them. Guilt, in the true and proper sense of the word, is men's own desert, and which being wilfully contracted, makes men liable to punishment.

God's plan of dealing with his human creatures, when in circumstances of difficulty, amounting to a sore trial, is, to proportion their strength to resist and overcome, to the weight of the trial. Herein the security of the truly pious consists. The most steadfast would be in danger, if the providence of God did not watch over them. A temptation may so beset the best of men, or surprise them at such advantage, as no ordinary degree of grace may be able to resist; but when men are truly sincere, looking to God for direction and protection, his providence wards off those fierce attacks; puts by those violent thrusts or fiery darts of the enemy; and by a gracious disposal of things, keeps them from being assaulted above what they are able to bear. This must be a great argument for continual dependence upon God, and to abate our confidence in ourselves, knowing that the most confident has need to be on his guard, and to take heed lest he fall.

There are several persons to whom those decrees and their dreadful connexions are not known in their full extent, and who, if they knew them, would hardly endure them. It is very rarely that they hear the secret, everlasting, irreversible decree, preached from the pulpit. The system, instead of carrying its former harshness on the front, is in a good measure softened down to the moderation, which increasing light requires. Revelation informs us, that though all men may not be favoured with the same peculiar blessings, yet they are all chosen, and called to be righteous. Hence Peter says, that "In every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him." It was a deeply rooted opinion among the Jews, or former elect, that God would never extend his favour to the Gentiles, who were esteemed to be repro-

bates, and that the descendants of Jacob only, should enjoy his peculiar favour. Peter, on his visiting Cornelius, was convinced that "God was no respecter of persons;" and that, as all must be judged according to the deeds done in the body, so no nation, or people, or individual, could expect to find a more favourable decision than another, in precisely the same moral state. The phrase "respect of persons," is used in reference to unjust decisions in a court of justice, where, through favour, or interest, or bribe, a culprit is acquitted, or an innocent person condemned. On this ground, God could not receive to favour a Jew, who had either abused his grace, or made a less godly use of it than a Gentile. Nor was this the case with Cornelius only, but with the Gentiles of every nation. The great standard with Gentiles particularly, is, "He that feareth God and worketh righteousness," according to his light and privileges, "is accepted of him." It is not, therefore, so much the nation, kindred, profession, mode, or form of worship, which the just God regards; but chiefly the moral character, the state of the heart, and deportment of the life.

The apostle Paul speaks of some Gentiles, who not having the law of Moses or of Christ, nevertheless do by nature (in its state of initial restoration through the seed of life given to Adam in the promise,) the things contained in the law, being a law to themselves, and showing the work of the law written upon their hearts. Therefore, though a Gentile may be reprobated from the blessings peculiar to Judaism and Christianity, there is no inevitable decree which reprobates him from all saving grace, and necessarily involves the greater part of mankind in unavoidable damnation.

But it may be asked, "If there be no dark decree, why is such a term made use of in Scripture?" Ans. The dark mansion of decrees has been raised, not by Scripture, but by the metaphysical notions of some divines. The word "decree" was called in to answer some purpose to which the word "predestination" does not extend. Predestination, which is Scriptural, has not been found sufficient to support "the system of the

decrees." This word supposes the persons to be contemplated of whom it is affirmed. The word "chosen" does not answer to any thing in Scripture applicable to the present subject. Accordingly, the word "decree" is taken up, although not used any where in Scripture in the sense thus imposed on it. In the Old Testament, the word "decree" signifies a commandment or statute. In Isaiah viii. 1, the prophet is commanded to take a great "roll" or decree, alluding to the paper or parchment on which the command was written. In Acts xvi. 4, Paul and Timothy delivered the "decrees" or written institutes of the apostles and elders, who were at Jerusalem. In Acts xvii. 7, we read of the "decrees" of Cæsar, as brought against Paul and Silas, by persecutors, who would falsely charge them with sedition. The word "decree" here, has nothing to do with the absolute and inevitable scheme.

If any man's conduct were irreversible, how can we possibly suppose the author of the decree to be serious in his exhortations to repentance, his expectations of it, and his grief for the impenitency of sinners? God exhorts to repentance, and expects it; because, by his grace, men may repent, if they but coincide with the divine will, which they have power to do. He is said to grieve for their impenitency, because they might and ought to do otherwise, but would not. To attain this important end, all things are ready. We, by our obduracy, however, may render them vain, and of no effect. Hence the expressive language of "I have called, but ye have refused." Hence also "They began with one accord to make excuse."

The great discovery of the Gospel is, "That God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." On this solid basis, he has established the hopes of men. We are not left to dubious conjecture or intricate reasoning, concerning the conduct which God evinces towards his human creatures. Man, though oppressed and dejected, by a deep sense of the guilt of sin, and its dreadful consequences, is allowed to look, with an astonished eye, to the gracious signals of divine mercy,

which are too conspicuous to be either distrusted or mistaken.

But has not the word "predestination," wherever it occurs, an influence on the reader's mind, unfriendly to freedom? Ans. It may, by being first unguardedly considered as meaning a dark decree, just as our Saviour himself, by the purple robes, was transformed into another character. This word is often employed in the kindest service. Ephes. i. 5, speaks of the "Father having predestinated them, (the Ephesians, who before were Gentiles) to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself." Here the apostle shows that the Gentiles were called to be Christians, without passing through the rites of the law. Nothing could so effectually support this sentiment, as the resting it on the divine purpose, entertained before the giving of the law, and even before the foundation of the world.

To taste how gracious the Lord is, all indiscriminately are made welcome. The frequenters of highways and hedges, and streets and lanes, are freely invited to this most liberal banquet. Jews and Gentiles, Barbarians and Scythians, bond and free, may accept of the offer. Parthians, Medes, Elamites, the dwellers in Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Egypt, Libya, Cyrene, Cretes, and Arabians, may hear in their own languages the things which belong to their peace. The poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, are among the persons invited. If on the other hand, men be fast bound, hand and foot, so that they cannot move or stir, it is but mockery and insult to urge them to an utter impossibility, and cruelty to punish them for not coming.

But it may be replied, "If man be not under an inevitable decree; the Gospel cannot ensure salvation to any." Ans. This is a great mistake; for instance, the gospel ensures salvation to that numerous part of mankind, which dies in infancy. We assert, therefore, with our Lord, that "of such infants is the kingdom of heaven," who consequently must have some capacity to enjoy it.

It may be asked here, how an inevitable decree can be injurious to men? Ans. It must produce a world of mischief, making all the sins of all the men in the world, at all periods, and in all ages, absolutely inevitable. Besides this, it must be cruel to make them accountable and punishable for what they could no more help than they can prevent the revolution of the heavenly bodies. This must appear to every candid contemplator, to be a system which he could by no means ascribe to a just and holy God. The Calvinistic doctrine of absolute decrees, and the inevitable fate of the ancient Stoics are the same. The only difference is, that the professors of absolute predestination, bring in a divine decree, while the Stoics make their chain depend upon the immutable nature of things, and bind even the Deity himself with it. But to mankind in general, the effects are precisely the same. Men commit crimes upon the scheme of the decrees, because God has decreed that it should be so, and upon the system of the Stoics, because they were an essential part of a plan of eternal causes and effects.

Where "rejection" is spoken of, it means the rejection of the Jews in general as a nation, from being God's peculiar people, and not the rejection of any individual; for many thousands of them had embraced the Christian faith, and died in its noble army of martyrs. The apostle puts this into a very fair light, Rom. ix. 1, 2. "I say the truth in Christ; I lie not; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart." The cause of this was, the rejection of the Jews as a nation, because they had rejected Christ. Instead of speaking of all "reprobates" indiscriminately, the apostle tells us it was "for his countrymen the Jews" that he felt all this concern. He adds, "I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Now, that the apostle could not mean eternal reprobation or damnation, must be admitted. But if we apply it to an alienation from Christian communion, consistent with circumstances which might admit of excuse in point of ignorance, the apos-

tle might perhaps have allowed his vehement emotion to carry him thus far.

So far is God from forwarding sin, to fulfil any decree, that he prevents it by all ways and means that do not infringe upon our liberty. When intending to do evil, we often feel something like the joint influence of law, duty, grace, and conscience, thrown into the opposite scale, furnishing us with help to resist temptation. When sin is inwardly intended, he prevents its advancing to the outward act, as he prevented the men of Sodom from injuring Lot: Pharaoh from drowning the Israelites: Balaam from cursing Israel: Jeroboam from injuring the prophet, and Herod from destroying the infant Jesus. When it is ventured on, Providence sets bounds to it. Joseph's brethren intended to kill him—Haman to hang Mordecai—Satan to destroy Job—Jezebel to destroy one hundred prophets. And even when it is committed, God uses means to bring sinners to repentance and pardon, as Joseph's brethren, and the prodigal son.

When a system is embraced, men are very apt to adopt it wholesale. A divine of no small celebrity (Dr. Twiss) not venturing to call the doctrine by its true name of "unconditional predestination," softens it down to the "efficacious will of God." And if this be not expressive enough, he tells us, "it is impossible that any thing should be done but that to which God impells the will of man." And to give but one more quotation, but enough for any temperate reader, "God is the author of all that action which is sinful, by his irresistible will." This is the inevitable decree, when stripped of the false dress and colours, which some put upon it, for fear of startling the young, or frightening the weak.

There is a divine harmony in the sacred writings, which the doctrine of absolute predestination, if once admitted, will render altogether discordant. They advise, that supplications for averting evils, prayers for obtaining good things, affectionate intercessions in behalf of others; and giving of thanks to God as the great parent of all good, be offered in behalf of all men. As

God wills the salvation of all, he therefore wills that all should be prayed for; this being good and acceptable to God our Saviour, who would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. In the face of such a plain declaration, it is surprising how a Christian should harbour the unfriendly thought, that God has unconditionally reprobated any man or number of men, merely to show his sovereign right and power, to the great disparagement of his justice and goodness. Peter Martyr, who thought the honour of God at stake, if his right to decree unconditionally were in the least infringed on, makes the following declaration, which every mind, seasoned with the gracious doctrines of the Gospel must shudder at, namely, that "God supplies wicked men with opportunities of committing sin, and inclines their hearts to it." And if this sentiment be not tinged deeply enough with the unconditional doctrine, he goes the full length when he assures us, that God "blinds, deceives, and seduces them." He does not mean that God affords opportunities of probation or trial, which may be applied either way, but "He by working on their hearts, binds and stirs them up to do evil." This is plain speaking.

Now, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself; that Christ gave himself a ransom for all men; that he was the light which lighteth every man coming into the world; the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world; whose gospel was sent forth to all the world, and to be preached to every creature; I shall endeavour to show from plain and positive testimony of the divine word, repeatedly delivered on all occasions, where the redemption that is in Christ Jesus is treated of.

OF GENERAL REDEMPTION IN CHRIST.

Where reason and candour go hand in hand, in searching, weighing, and applying the divine oracles, they must acknowledge that so far is God from employing unconditional election and reprobation, to the prejudice of any, that wisdom and goodness appear as the

most prominent features of his conduct, in all his dispensations towards Heathens, Jews, and Christians. This must be seen, particularly by every observer, who directs his attention to the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Through the gospel medium, he sees the great victim, as the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. As this reconciliation required a sacrifice on the side of the peace-maker, Christ our divine advocate, gave himself a ransom for all men, paying down such a price as procured their redemption. This comprehends a deliverance from the power and punishment of sin, as well as from the slavery and misery of sinners.

To know God, is not only a duty most incumbent, but a privilege of immense magnitude. He is the sum and substance of all perfection, comprehending all that is excellent and desirable to be known. It is no small delight to know the creatures scattered up and down in the world, which are but some faint shadows of the divine perfection. But in God himself, all perfections are combined; all that is beautiful and bright, and amiable and excellent. To know God in his nature and perfections, as far as mortals can know him here, is desirable: so likewise to know him in those glorious manifestations of himself, in his works of creation and providence. But how must the affections be warmed, the wonder raised, and the mind pleased and astonished at the inestimable love of God, which appears in the stupendous work of redemption, which was such a divine mystery, that the angels are said to pry into it: struck with astonishment at the great plan, and justly wondering at the incarnation of that infinite object of their adoration. If these things be matters of deep consideration to the angels of God, how much more so should they be to every one of us, who are so deeply interested in them? Instead of restricting our belief of the redemption through Christ, to any peculiar number predestinated, or to suppose that his salvation is not intended for all, to whom it is offered; we have the strongest reasons, and the clearest proofs that the satisfaction of Christ comprehended all mankind.

God is not only an all-sufficient good, but perfect goodness itself. He is willing to communicate happiness to us, and to employ his power, and wisdom, and mercy for our good. His will is, that we should be happy: and nothing can hinder us from being so but ourselves. Such is his goodness, that he would have all men to be happy. Even when we have provoked him by our sins, he is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish. So great is his goodness to mankind, that he has omitted nothing that is necessary to our happiness. He designed us for it at first, affording us capacities for knowing, loving, and enjoying him for ever. And when this was forfeited by wilful transgression, God, of his infinite mercy, was pleased to restore us to a new capacity of happiness, by sending his only Son to suffer in our stead; and thereby to become the author of our eternal salvation. If those gracious manifestations of God be chargeable with the epithets of "Absurdities of Methodism," the unprejudiced reader will determine.

One of the plainest truths in the Bible is, that God has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that "*all would return, repent, and live.*" By the vivifying influence of grace, the strong propensity to evil, which is inherent in us, is restrained and counterbalanced. By the light which lighteth every man coming into the world, we know the day of our visitation, and the things belonging to our peace. We are excited by internal admonitions, and external calls, to resist our evil propensities, and to follow the leadings of divine grace, with all due dependence on God. This subject, instead of being covered with clouds and darkness, is as luminous as the region from which it has descended. Seen in its true colours, it is peculiarly calculated to raise the affections of man to love and gratitude; to form his heart to all inward piety, and his life and conduct to all outward order. So far from hiding its requisitions in darkness and reserve, it teaches its willing votaries, that to repent, believe, and obey, are the gracious conditions required, for which, all necessary assistance and encouragement shall

be afforded by the hand that supplies every reasonable want.

The gospel plan teaches us to entertain the most pure and exalted conceptions of God, who is styled by way of endearment, our Heavenly Father. He is the righteous governor of the world; the standard of all purity and perfection; the author and giver of every good and perfect gift; conducting his whole administration, with an eternal regard to truth and equity, and applying in this direction, his almighty power, unerring wisdom, and unimpeachable goodness. In some views, the divine nature commands our most solemn reverence; in others, attracts our warmest affection; but in every possible manifestation, it is entitled to the highest attention of the human mind. We never make the attempt to lift the soul to God, in the way of gratitude and duty, without being truly profited and improved, both in sentiment and practice. Should his Almighty power, his infinite wisdom, his strict justice, and unspotted holiness oppress our thoughts: we are sure to find relief in his mercy and goodness. Under this impression, instead of entertaining any apprehensions of secret treachery, in train to ensnare us, we cannot help paying our tribute of grateful acknowledgment to him, whose perfections are uniformly employed in doing us all sorts of good.

The very name which our great Deliverer assumed, and the intention attached to it, must inspire joy and confidence into the mind, when about to be seized by any uneasy apprehension respecting the universality of his redemption. This name was Jesus, as purporting to save his people from their sins. He can save from the guilt of sins, by a full and free pardon of all, though innumerable to us, and deserving the appellation of scarlet or crimson, for their daring atrocity. He can save from its tyrannic power, by the superior energies of divine grace. He can save from its nature, by renewing in righteousness the new creature. He enables us to love God with all the heart in sincerity, with the soul affectionately; with the mind rationally; and with the strength energetically; all the capacities being

united and engaged, in this good work of the Lord. Is this view of the interest which we have in Jesus, a hasty production, betraying want of patience or temper? Is this credible to the genuine Christian, or is it an absurdity deserving the name of enthusiasm, and the blind lashes of sarcasm and censure?

The consciousness that we are under the government of a Being whose administration is uniform, whose promises are sincere, holding out no false lights, but worthy of our most steadfast reliance, must furnish the simple and upright mind with sure grounds of trust and security, and establish the pleasing conviction that his favour is our highest interest here, and our everlasting reward hereafter. The very name of the history of our redemption, carries with it a confutation of all contracted theories. The gospel of Jesus Christ, in its plain meaning, signifies good news. Health to the sick, strength to the weak, deliverance to the captive, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound, are but comparisons of spiritual and everlasting joys, announced through the medium of the gospel. Now, what must be one's feelings, if it should be declared to him, that under the open, generous will, which was so lavish and diffuse in the offer of its benefactions to all, indiscriminately, there were another secret will, excluding the greater number, perhaps all the hearers, from accepting of it, and that the call, although made on every individual, and in such a manner as implied him to be personally contemplated, was nevertheless connected with the existence of a certain secret something, the want of which would render the call ineffectual. What shall we think of the persons who can, not only believe, but repeatedly teach, and even publish, that this is the double plan on which the Apostles of Christ preached the Gospel to every creature?

Nothing can be more absurd than to couple an open invitation with secret exceptions and reserves. If men, invited to the feast of the Gospel, have reason to suspect that all this is but a sham, or even worse, a snare, and that they, by some irresistible delusion, are prevented from accepting of the offer, however conve-

nient and necessary it may be to their condition, their ideas of such an economy cannot be the most liberal. That God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and that in his name the fairest and most unreserved offers of salvation were made to all, were doctrines uniformly taught in the Christian Church, in the days of the apostles, and continued to be taught until early in the fifth century.

If there be weight in any authorities that may be produced, it must appear consistent that the parts of Scripture which may appear somewhat obscure, should be explained by those which are more explicit. For it will appear in a considerable part of the texts to be brought forward in evidence of the universality of redemption; that it is the very truth intended to be taught in them; and that without it, the words have no meaning. So far are they from conveying the sentiment merely by implication, that the plainness of the declaration must arrest the candid eye at first view. Those Scriptures are very express in bringing the whole human race under the influence of divine grace, and within the reach of salvation. While they discover the mistakes and moral evils of man, and at the same time lament them, they nevertheless point the fugitive to a door of hope, and a city of refuge. They never lose sight of the possibility, as well as the necessity of gaining this great end. Their arguments, if attentively listened to, are sufficiently persuasive to overcome all opposition, and control all prejudice. They state that repentance and remission of sins should be preached to all men—that God has concluded all men under sin, in order to show mercy to all, the redemption of Christ being as extensive as the disobedience of Adam—that as the transgression was in the one case, so is the free gift in the other—that as we have one God as the great supreme object of worship and obedience, so we have one Mediator between God and man, that is, all mankind—that when he would be lifted up on the cross, he would draw all men to him—that even the angels announced tidings of great joy to all people. Surely there is no room here, to pass the

comfortless sentence, and say that this general offer is only a "Scriptural absurdity of Methodism," and not warrantable, as not connected with and emanating from the secret decree. But surely Mr. P. himself must be obliged to allow, that this is not so much a conclusion drawn from Scripture, as Scripture itself. The impression which the whole of those scriptures conjointly, must make upon the partial scheme, which makes every relation capable of a draw-back, must show on what a sandy foundation it is built. The person who condradicts the assertion of angels, that "they bring good news to all people," must act an unjustifiable part against the whole system of the Christian Religion.

Where the Saviour commissions his heralds to preach the Gospel to every creature, he comprehends all and each. Now this would be unworthy of the commission unless all to whom it was to be preached, were interested in it. Besides, it is well known to many, that the term "preaching" is but a faint expression of the original word, which might be more properly translated "publishing," or "proclaiming." There may, however, be propriety in remarking, that it is no violence to language to admit, what the truth of the case requires, that by proclaiming to all the world, is not meant that all mankind had heard the sound of the gospel. It is sufficient, that to all who were within the reach of the sound, the gospel was proclaimed; and for their benefit. But why should it be published to all? It concerns all: it is published as good news to all—as tidings of salvation to all. It is a common rule in interpreting the writings of men, that the more general character of the composition is to be sustained. This rule seems reasonable; and if applied to the present subject, must quash all controversy; because there cannot be any property of any writing more explicitly declared, than that of grace to mankind by the Gospel.

When we speak of God, we mean all that is great, and wise, and holy, and just, and good: influenced by no power; affected by no accident; impaired by no time. We cannot but perceive that he is not only good, but diffusing streams of goodness to all the creatures under his administration. Those footsteps of goodness are

fruitful of instruction to man, who sees nothing overlooked in the whole range of existence. The soul of man is as much the object of divine attention as the body; and while provision is made for the one, in temporals, the other is supported in its hopes and consolations by the grace of God, which is manifested by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, whose sacrifice is of universal extent and application. Those scriptures which unequivocally declare those glad tidings, will be urged with all modest confidence, as the proper means of bringing the controversy to an issue, because of the positive terms in which the Calvinistic doctrine declares, that whenever the term "all" occurs, it means but few, or hardly any.

How an unprejudiced person can read the most positive declarations repeatedly made, embracing all men without exception, whom a God of truth would have to be saved; for whom prayers are to plead in a most special manner; being still further encouraged by the pleadings of an all-powerful Mediator, who even gave himself a ransom for all, and yet continue under the dark influence of an ante-mundane decree, is difficult of comprehension to a mind which takes the truth of inspiration according to the plain and obvious statement of facts and doctrines. Surely our Saviour was swayed by no dark decree, when he declared—"The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." St. Paul speaks of the Saviour, "Who gave himself a ransom for all." St. John says, "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." St. Peter describes certain heretical teachers as "denying the Lord that bought them," and yet on account of this, "bringing on themselves swift destruction." According to Mr. P. by "all the world," and "all men," and "every man," must be meant "a select few." And they who are said (in reality) to have been bought by the Lord, and yet to have perished, are said to have been of this number, because they bore the same appearance with others who were of the number of the faithful. Now if this be reason, analogy, or just deduction, the reader will judge.

After proofs and reasons so plain and strong, can a reader be found, who will aver that the comprehensive word "All," as often as it occurs, must be so stinted and reduced in its dimensions, as to mean only a few, to the utter exclusion of the great remainder of the human race? Whenever the great Author of our faith addressed his numerous auditories, he offered to the general concourse the terms of eternal life, without the exception of any. Even their bodily wants drew from his very great sympathy, not only a plentiful supply for thousands, but a very great surplus also. "And if his bowels yearned to see the people hungry, in a place where no bread could be procured, how much more solicitous is he to bestow upon the souls of men the bread which endures to everlasting life? Titus ii. 11, makes divine provision for all men universally. The exact order of the Greek dictates the following order to the English—"There has appeared the grace of God, bringing salvation unto all men." Some render this "all sorts of men," instead of "all men." Beza, the successor of Calvin in the professorship of Geneva, has done justice to this text in his Latin translation, making his version conformable to the Greek, and to the Vulgate. To destroy the plain sense of this text, they say that the Apostle had been delivering instructions to servants just before; which is thought to favour the construction "all sorts of men." But to allow ground for this interpretation, it would be necessary for them to show that the salvation of servants was ever deemed an impossibility; or that putting servants on a level with their masters in the concerns of salvation, was a peculiarity of the Christian dispensation.

If the attentive eye be carried for a moment to the Gospel scheme, it cannot but see the divine mercy carried to the greatest extent, and forming the broadest basis for the hopes of true penitence. If it trace it to its source, it must assign as its moving cause, the love of God, "who would have all men to be saved." While this doctrine has the constant seal of Scripture, it has at the same time a peculiar claim to our warmest gra-

titude, excited to an admiration of those moral attributes of the just and holy Governor of the world, which have manifested to human view so distinguished a model of love and good will.

It would be difficult to devise words whereby Universal Redemption could be expressed more clearly than in 2 Cor. v. 19, in which the apostle plainly and unequivocally states, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." Surely, the apostle could not express himself more clearly, on this great and momentous subject. As this must appear to every unprejudiced reader to be the matter intended as well as expressed, the obvious interpretation should be allowed to prevail, and no artificial use be made of cramping irons to twist and screw the passage from its original intention.

Can any thing express General Redemption more explicitly than the pointed parallel drawn by St. Paul, between the death of all men in Adam, and the revivification of all in Christ? The apostle tells us, that "In Adam all die." If spiritual death be the thing intended, no human ingenuity can rescue the other clause, "So in Christ shall all be made alive." Or, if we understand death to be the loss of immortality, to which we shall be restored by Christ in the resurrection, the passage is equally easy in itself, and agreeable to the general tenor of holy writ. But to justify this, it is necessary to admit of the universality of the benefit bestowed.

All the doctrines peculiar to the gospel, witness the hand of a good God, in a high degree, making known a dispensation of providence, suited to the exigencies of man, and recovering him from the corrupted state into which he had awfully fallen, to a state of reconciliation with God, and of divine consolation through Jesus Christ, which must overflow the soul, and fill it with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. To this great and precious privilege, all without distinction are welcome and invited. Though the Jews looked on the Gentiles as aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, yet the apos-

tle Peter, who seems to have been greatly inclined to that system, had to acknowledge that God was willing to adopt those reprobate Gentiles into the family of his church. In Acts xv. 8, he says, "God, who knoweth the heart, bare them (the Gentiles) witness, giving them the Holy Ghost even as unto us." What he understood by "giving them the Holy Ghost," is evident in the transaction with Cornelius, recorded in chap. x. If the assertion of the apostle Paul be true, 2 Cor. v. 14, "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead," so must the premisses also, namely, that Christ did die for all. The meaning is still more firmly established by what follows—"And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again." If Christ did not die for "all" in general, then all were not fallen in Adam. If the term "all" be reduced to signify some, namely, the "elect," then only the elect must have fallen in Adam. The apostle uses the word in its plain obvious meaning, without any distinction of elect or reprobates, but as signifying "all men."

This great plan gives the most striking views of the mercy and goodness of God. The Son of God, who came on the heavenly design, passing by the nature of angels, and veiling his glory in human nature, endured the criminal and excruciating death due to "all sinners," for the express purpose of ransoming us from the death which we deserved to suffer. How sensibly must such a conduct as this discover the generous friend; meet and refute all objections; seize the whole attention, and call forth the language of purest affection! If "the free gift of God is come upon all men to justification of life" were not enough, the apostle brings it in through every possible medium, even the most indirect. Thus, "And through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ died." If none can perish for whom Christ died, what can these words mean? Dr. Doddridge gives the following paraphrase —"And so shall the weak brother, for whom the Lord Jesus Christ himself died, be liable to perish by thy

knowledge, in this instance mischievous." What can Mr. P. and his friends think of this "Absurd Methodism," proceeding from a Calvinistic Divine of great reputation?

The free grace of God, as manifested through our Lord Jesus Christ, is not a mere system of speculative truths. By a gradation of high discoveries; by a succession of interesting objects, which it places high in our view, it is calculated to encourage all who hear the joyful sound, to hope for mercy, and rely on the consolatory offer of eternal life held out for acceptance. It has a sanctifying influence also, encouraging and assisting to elevate the mind, purify the affections, and establish the soul in all holy conversation and godliness. The more the mind of such a candid person surveys the plans of providence, the brighter the display becomes of the wisdom and goodness of God. Christ's death was a full and sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world. The character of universality is almost always attached to this great sacrifice. This door of mercy is widely open, to afford an abundant entrance into the kingdoms of grace and glory. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." Such a merciful and gracious interposition of God, in loving a fallen "world," so as to send his only begotten Son, for the express purpose of its redemption, utterly removes all surmise or apprehension of any thing treacherous designed, or brewing underneath.

This infinite magnitude of divine love, comprises length, and breadth, and depth, and height. It passeth knowledge, and exceeds all calculation. What a most interesting object on which to fasten the contemplative eye, and the warmest hopes! When such an astonishing fact passes in review before such a contemplator, with what assurance can he say, "He that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for *us all*, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" Where

it is stated, 1 Tim. ii. 4, "God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth," can we for a moment so wrest the gracious declaration as to force it to signify "all sorts of men," or some of each sort? The apostle had just before exhorted, "that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;" and then it is specified for "kings and for *all* that are in authority." Therefore, the "all" whom God would have to be saved, and the "all" on account of whom the reason was given, are the "all" for whom we are to pray. And it will be allowed, that we are to pray for all men—rulers and subjects—saints and sinners. Dr. Doddridge rejects the Calvinistic interpretation of this text. "I must confess," (said he) "I have never been satisfied with that interpretation which explains all men here by all ranks of men; since I fear it might also be said, on the principles of those who are fondest of this gloss, that he also wills all men to be condemned."

A Scriptural view of the great doctrine of Universal Redemption strikes the mind with the most solemn reverence of the divine administration. The Redeemer had the prospect full before him of all that he was about to suffer. An hour was fast approaching the most critical and the most trying—an hour more pregnant with great events, than any other since hours began to be numbered. While the divine government is placed in a light the most amiable and encouraging, there is, at the same time, something extremely awful in the interposition of infinite mercy. Redemption, through the painful sufferings and atoning blood of the Son of God, must clearly point out some deep and dreadful malignity in the nature of sin, as well as its consequences. Men in general, as the offspring of Adam, and as offenders against the divine law, in the character of free-agents, had fallen into this awful condemnation. To save them from this state, the sufferings of Christ were endured, it having pleased the righteous Judge of the world to depart from the ordinary course of his providence, in allowing the innocent to suffer for the guilty. A

method so astonishing must awaken mankind to the most serious reflections, pointing in the clearest manner to the sanctity of the divine law, and the strictness of the divine justice. What must we think an apostle can mean, short of this great and general intention, when he speaks of our Redeemer as one, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe? Why should this passage be bent to mean only a temporal deliverer? Men in general, when they have adopted a system, are so fond of bending every thing to it, that they make it the test of right and wrong; as if the sun were to be directed by the dial or the clock; or the pole by the needle or compass. Beza grossly misrepresents the passage, as if the Greek word "Saviour" were to be rendered by the word "preserver." Dr. Campbell, in his dissertation, prefixed to his translation of the Gospels, although himself a Calvinist, severely censures Beza on account of the above, and other incorrect translations, calling him what Jerome had called Aquila, "a translator, who accommodates his version to his system." There can hardly be a severer censure on any man, than that which one Calvinistic divine here passes on another. Perhaps Mr. P. may call this "Calvinistic absurdity."

If any thing can move the heart, it is the all-commanding principle of disinterested love. The sinner, struck with a view of what Christ has done and suffered, as well as laid out on him, and laid up for him, yields to the softening influence. His first sentiments and language are self-accusation, and humble acknowledgment. From this he proceeds to entreaty, and gives an unrestrained vent to sighs and tears. The work is in high advance—it is done. The soul is persuaded to yield. It embraces the terms of reconciliation, and acknowledges with gratitude that it has obtained the victory through the blood of the Lamb. Let an individual but conceive for a moment the Son of the Most High, terminating a life of important labours by a most painful death; atoning, by his sufferings, for the guilt of mankind. Let but such a view be held up to the gazing eye, and the whole soul must pass

under the softening influence of sympathetic tenderness; and being as it were "crucified with Christ," this heavenly display will show its mysteries beyond the comprehension or discovery of man. That God should become man, to die for the offences of his creatures, is one of those things into which "angels desire to look." When the sacred writers describe the great mystery of Redemption, they show as plainly as language can express, that there was an efficacy in his sufferings comprehending no less than the reconciliation of the human race to God. The full efficacy of this great sacrifice we are unable as yet to trace. We behold a part now, which is infinitely worthy of our adoration. A happy eternity shall progressively open still wider displays, continuing to unfold by fresh discoveries, the everlasting results of the death of Christ.

The Old Testament plainly shows that a free salvation is left to the option of individuals. Moses admonished the children of Israel—"Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God; and a curse, if ye will not." It ought not to be supposed of the divine Being, or indeed of any human being, not depraved below the ordinary standard, that such an offer should be indiscriminately made, yet clogged with secret reserves and exceptions. Through the medium of the Gospel, these offers become infinitely brighter, giving man an humble yet most important part to act in making his calling and election sure, under the influence of the great Redemption. While God, the great Author and Finisher, is represented as giving the increase, man is assured, that what he himself sows now, shall be reaped by him hereafter. The Gospel, in fact, omits nothing in showing us that we are under the moral government of God, and within the reach of his great salvation.

To attain this important end, all things are now in train, and ready. The mercy of God is ready, who is not only rich in mercy, but the Father of mercies. The merits of Christ hold out the highest encouragement to sinners, while they inform them that he died for their

sins, and rose again for their justification. The energies of the Spirit are ready to assist in convincing, converting, witnessing, and comforting all, that submit to be saved on the Gospel plan. There is a sufficiency of room in the household of faith. The covenant of grace invites in language loud enough to be heard by all—"Ho! every one that thirsteth." The declaration in Ezekiel is most express: under the solemnity of an oath—"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel." Surely such melting tenderness has not been lavished under the inexorable determination that it shall be ineffectual. A faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation, informs us, that "Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief of sinners."

The great plan of the Gospel presents the Lord Jesus Christ to our view in the most amiable light of deliverer of mankind, and great restorer of our forfeited hopes. In him, and through him, we behold the greatness of almighty power, softened to the mild radiance of condescension and mercy. We behold the great Supreme, diminishing the awful distance at which we stand from his presence, by appointing for all mankind a Mediator, through whom the humble and penitent may approach with confidence to the divine presence, and obtain his blessing. By such gracious views of the divine Nature, the Christian plan lays the foundation for a worship which shall be at once rational and affectionate; in which the light of the understanding shall concur with the devotion of the heart, and the most profound reverence be united with the most cordial love.

Can any thing short of pure sincerity be attached to the following passages? "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," Isaiah lv. 1. "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," Isaiah lv. 22. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. 28. "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen

and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage," Matt. xxii. 4. Surely such offers as these must give the fullest proof of their standing under the stamp of the sincerity of the offerer. If Mr. P. can attach the character of *absurdity* to the belief that God was sincere in making those offers, he is at full liberty to attach it to *Methodism* also.

The numerous evidences which we possess of God's willingness to save all men, are sufficient to put every apprehension and doubt to everlasting flight. The glorious Gospel offers the most divine encouragement in the most unequivocal terms. It has already visited regions formerly defiled with iniquity of the most exorbitant kind, which are now converted, not only to the belief, but also to the inward experience, as well as the outward practice of the truth. And a time is on the wing when all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ. By a gradation of high discoveries which it places before the eye of the mind, it is calculated to inspire a holy confidence in its author, and to fill the soul with a joy unspeakable. One cannot help feeling a heaven upon earth, when he sees that to gain this great purpose, th; Redeemer condescended to become a man among men; dispensing instruction; adding example to precept-accommodating that example to the most trying and diffin cult situations; and then suffering a painful death, and offering up a full and all-sufficient sacrifice and atonement for the sins of the whole world. Micah vi. 3, contains an appeal to the candour of any man—"O! my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee?" Isaiah i. 18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." John v. 40, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Matt. xxiii. 37, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not." Why is such tender complaint employed? To use language combining all the means that love could use, and all the forms that love could take, only to meet with the rejection

which he himself contrived, must be difficult to reconcile with candour or equity.

A free and full salvation is constantly held forth, so as to strike the attention of every candid person. He cannot possibly see how the gracious advices given, and the earnest declarations made, can at all consist with any sentiment which for a moment would shut up the prospect of eternal life. That Christ came to save sinners, yea, the chief of sinners, is very evident. All references to that great transaction, speak not covertly, but openly and expressly, assuring us, that "by the grace of God he tasted death for every man"—that "the Son of man came to seek and to save that which is lost"—that a father has not a truer concern in the return of his prodigal son, than God has in the return of sinners—that "Christ is the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world," God accepting his sacrifice for the sins of all mankind—that "he made peace by the blood of his cross, to reconcile all things unto himself." He commanded his apostles to publish this, on the broadest scale, to all the world. "He is the light of the world," to enlighten all that are in the shadow of death, and to guide their feet in the ways of peace. He came "to save the world," with a present and an everlasting salvation. "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." So far is God from contriving evil secretly, that "God would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Least sinners, under a deep conviction of their sinfulness, should fly the divine presence, they are encouraged by the declaration, "that there is a Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." It was the language of a good old saint, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people." Hence he is said to be "salvation to the ends of the earth." He is also called the true light, enlightening every man coming into the world. If such a mass of evidence be "absurdity," so be it.

That the will of God is the salvation of all mankind, must appear from the sacred word, where it is expressed in the plainest manner. Can any thing be more obvious than that "He died the just for the unjust?" It is stated, that "He came into the world to save sinners," which was the character of men in general. "He redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," by dying in our stead. "While we were enemies, in due time Christ died" to procure reconciliation. "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree," to deliver us from everlasting punishment. "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich." Now wherein an individual can claim acquaintance with the terms, lost—unjust—sinner—enemy—criminal—under condemnation—under a curse, or poor; he can at the same time claim an interest in a Redeemer, in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is not only able to save those that come unto him, but willing also; possessing all the qualifications of mercy and compassion, and being touched with a tender feeling of our infirmities. If to these be added texts of admonition; of exhortation; of promise; and of threatening; so numerous in the sacred word, how must they convince?

Calvin says, "When he (God) addresses the same word to the reprobates, though it produces not their correction, yet he makes it effectual for another purpose, that they may be confounded by the testimony of their consciences now, and be rendered more inexcusable at the day of judgment." But surely, instead of laying any foundation for just accusation on the score of having done, or left undone, according to the power lodged with them, the effect of the Calvinistic system must be to release from the pains of conscience; such pains not possibly existing without a plain and direct conviction that the crimes might have been avoided; or the duty have been performed. Now if a person cannot be angry with a blind man for not seeing, or with a deaf man for not hearing, or with a cripple for not running, how can we ascribe such injustice to God, as to

make him the author of a cruel sentence, when he had given no power to avoid the evil which deserved it?

It will be said, perhaps, that "being in Christ is peculiar to the elect only, and not made a general privilege." Answer. The expression, "being in Christ," is sometimes taken in a more confined sense, when it means a being most intimately united to him. As in a vine, some branches are nearer to the root than others; so among mankind, some may have a more immediate union with Christ. There are as many ways of being in Christ, as there are dispensations of grace. Infants are divinely interested in him. Cornelius was in Christ, as a just heathen, before he was in him as a Christian believer. He was accepted through him; he wrought righteousness through his assistance; and brought forth fruits of repentance, in a state of connexion with the vine. The good will of God is, that all his human creatures may be fruitful branches in the living vine. Christ is, (1 John ii. 2,) "a propitiation for the sin of the whole world," and not for a favourite few. Can words be more pointed and special? Can they possibly be interpreted of a part, and not of the whole? The divine love extended to *all mankind*. Now, if the apostles of our Lord and Master were commissioned to preach redemption to every creature; with what face can his modern followers shut up and fasten with bars of adamant the gate of mercy, which he has set so widely open?

That God wills all men to be saved, is very evident likewise, from the general and comprehensive term by which he is pleased to express the application of this favour. "I will draw *all men* unto me." "The free gift is come upon *all men* unto justification of life." "The grace of God hath appeared to *all men*." "God giveth to *all men* liberally, and upbraideth not." "The Lord is good unto *all*." "He is liberal to *every man*." "His tender mercies are over *all his works*." "One died for *all*." "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of *us all*." "He bore the sins of the *multitude*." "If *any man* sin we have an advocate with the Father." "The advocate who undertakes our cause, is a Media-

tor between God and *all mankind.*" To restore offenders to favour, our Lord Jesus Christ became incarnate, and by uniting the human to the divine nature, Christ our Mediator gave himself a ransom for *All*, paying down such a price as procured their redemption. As God is the Father of *all*, and Christ the Saviour of *all*, so he gave himself a ransom for *all.*" God makes the most open and liberal offers of mercy to *all mankind.* But with what reason can the Calvinistic scheme employ the voice of mercy in singing men intentionally down to ruin? Justice, benevolence, and sincerity of intention, are properties in God which he can never disown. He is therefore sincere in all his offers.

God makes the interest which men have in the great plan of Redemption, a just ground of duty, which he has a right to demand at the hand of every man. The declaration is—"Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God with your bodies and spirits which are his—We are henceforth to live, not to ourselves, but to him who bought us." As we have a share in the ransom given for *all men*, the best returns in our power are but faint expressions of the infinite debt of love and gratitude which we owe to him. And having each received one, or two, or five talents of grace, time, and opportunity, the great Donor justly requires a proper improvement. Not one servant of his numerous family is overlooked in the dispensation of his favours. They all receive not only a portion, but in due season also. If this be "Methodistical absurdity," let Mr. P. publish it on the house-top. How inconsistent would it be in the great director, to require faith in Christ, and to censure the want of it as sinful, if the individual had no power to exert that principle, or interest in the great privilege? "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel," was the first summons of our Saviour, as recorded by St. Mark; agreeably to which, he uniformly characterizes the want of faith as a faulty state of mind. On the plan of general redemption, any person convinced of sin may reasonably reflect —"Christ died to save sinners; I am of that description; he therefore died to save me: and how then can

I escape if I neglect this great salvation? I will arise and go to my Father." On the contrary system of reprobation, a person must be very uneasy and uncertain. He does not know that he is of the number of the elect. He may be a reprobate in his own conjectures. How dark, unconfortable, and gloomy, such a state?

General Redemption is the great fountain head of all God's dealings. He has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ our Lord. Our great Mediator is a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins. Among the nations also are manifested the unsearchable riches of Christ. He is the great solar light of the Gentiles. God commands all men every where to repent. All the ends of the earth may look to him and be saved. Whosoever will may take of the water of life freely. The Lord is not willing that any should perish. Incline your ear: hear, and your soul shall live. Seek the Lord while he may be found. Let the wicked forsake his way. God will abundantly pardon. To the Gentiles I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light—That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified. Surely the cloud of Scripture evidence in favour of God's not being pleased that a sinner should perish, but find redemption in the blood of the Lamb, is so large and luminous, that any admirer of secret unconditional decrees, cannot raise dust enough to involve it in darkness. It is true, they attempt to make an appeal to John x. 15—"I lay down my life for the sheep." To this it may be answered, that his dying for some is no denial of his dying for all; otherwise than it may be proved from Galatians ii. 20, that he died only for St. Paul; who says—"I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

The plain conviction that men in general are on the great plan of redemption must be an aggravation of their sin, if persisted in. To sin against light, and means, and obvious duty, involves the offender in great guilt, as well as justly exposes him to great punishment.

To persist in sin where the hand of God evidently appears concerned, is a high pitch of presumption. Thus, when Christ sent forth his apostles, directing them not only to preach the Gospel, but to work miracles, he added, "If the city reject you, and your commission, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city." This certainly means that the city alluded to must have had the means of salvation within its reach, but instead of accepting of the offer, that it treated it with open contempt. How strong the following? "We pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." The men (all of them) were bidden—Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it—My people would not hearken to my voice—Israel would none of me—I call heaven and earth to record, that I have set before thee life and death, a blessing and a curse—choose life that thou mayest live—Mary hath chosen the good part—Choose you this day whom ye will serve—As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Seeing that ye (Jews) put away the Gospel, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. Can any thing be more evident from the concurrent testimony of Scripture, than that Christ died for all; that salvation is offered to all; that the Scriptures invite all; and that faith is required of all?

Even the circumstance of being within the covenant of grace, as members of his church, affords ground of presumption, in regard to all to whom the promises of it have been sealed by the divinely instituted ordinance which is the general introduction to it. How reasonable to infer that they are not admitted to the church militant upon earth, without the privilege which may be improved of being finally admitted to the church triumphant in heaven? For how great a character is attributed in Scripture to the divinely instituted society of the faithful! They are called the body, and the spouse of Christ, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people. It would be easy to multiply such evidences of the honour with which the church has been adorned by her divine

Head; and that not only about the time of her establishment, but even many ages before, by the mouths of the prophets, when in vision they contemplated her with a holy rapture, "Christ gave himself for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

The sacred records extend the benefit of the sufferings of Christ to "*the whole world:*" they state his sacrifice, as made for "the sins of *the whole world:*" that he is "the propitiation for the sins of *the whole world.*" There is not in the whole Bible, a single passage which speaks of the "*world*" as being made up of the "*elect*" only—there is not one text, which asserts that Christ made an atonement for one part of *the world*, exclusively of another, nor one word, which, being candidly understood, according to the context and general train of the reasoning, cuts off either *man, or woman, or child*, from the benefits of Christ's redemption, as long as the day of their visitation lasts. Nay, the very reverse is asserted, and that men are their own destroyers. Our Lord threatened his very Apostles with a hell, if they did not pluck out an offending eye, or cut off an offending hand. St. Peter speaks of those who bring swift destruction on themselves, by denying *the Lord that bought them.* St. Paul speaks of the destruction of a brother for whom *Christ died*, that one may be brought to trample under foot the blood of the covenant, *by which he was sanctified;* that other apostates were persons, who were once enlightened, and tasted the heavenly gift, the good word of God, and *the powers of the world to come.*

Nothing is more contrary to Scripture, than the doctrine of a particular atonement, to the utter and everlasting exclusion of the great majority. Temporal favours also, are to be viewed as a debt of gratitude due to God. Hence we are told that "He does good to the evil and unthankful; gives them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness, that they might seek after him and find him." But if the damnation of a considerable proportion of mankind be independent of themselves,

and in noway to be avoided by them, it is difficult to perceive, how the persons not interested in this, could be called to confess a debt of gratitude. For surely, if a decree had discriminated from all eternity, gratitude should be held a duty only in regard to those, of whom it should at last appear, that the things spoken of, are indeed mercies.

If a person lend an attentive ear to the repeated suggestions of the word of truth, it will surely attack him as an accountable being; accuse him of having done or left undone, contrary to known duty; abash him, as inwardly conscious of the evil he has yielded to. It unveils the most secret passions of the soul; shows him the most retired thoughts of his heart; and annihilates the best framed excuse, if he should attempt to bring it in as an apology; and tears that delight, and sighs that waft the soul to heaven, will announce to him that the powers of truth have penetrated to the centre of his soul, and that he is not far from the kingdom of God, which opens its doors widely to receive him. The Holy Spirit is striving gently, or forcibly with his heart; gracious desires are excited: good resolutions are entered into: these particulars are owned by Calvinists, as a divine operation on the mind. And yet, all these will be acknowledged to have been found in persons, who have afterward cast off every appearance of religion, and have lived and died in sin. But is it worthy of God, to suppose that he would thus put forth his holy energy, without intending to complete the work? doubtless every alarm of conscience, every pang of penitence, must have been evidences to such persons, that they had the gift of reconciliation offered to them. To imagine, as Calvin does, "that God manifests himself to some minds, for the purpose of rendering them inexcusable," must be a sentiment not very friendly to the character of the great Supreme. Can any person imagine for a moment, that the God of all grace, after having given over sinners to hopeles misery, ages of ages before they were born, would waste on the same reprobates, those inward suasions, the apparent tendency of which, is to make them renounce

sin in future, and avoid the punishment due to the past, if there were no foundation for the entire conversion of such persons? On any other supposition, how can preachers of all descriptions tell their hearers of a day of grace? there is no such day to those who are supposed to be under the decree of reprobation.

The Scriptures bring the whole human race under the influence of divine grace, and within the reach of a present and an everlasting salvation. They overcome all opposition, and subdue all prejudice. The tide of Scripture evidence in favour of general redemption is so strong, that it occasionally carried away even Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, and the famous author of the Institutes, notwithstanding their particular resistance. Augustine in his 59th sermon, has these words, "Mankind is sick; not with bodily diseases, but with sins. The huge patient lies all the world over, stretched from East to West. To heal the huge patient, (Mankind,) the Omnipotent Physician descends from heaven." As for the author of the Institutes, in a happy moment, he does not scruple to say, that "God shows himself propitious to all the world, when he invites all men without exception to believe in Christ; faith being the entrance into Christ." Agreeably to this, when he comments upon those words of St. Paul; "There is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ," he observes, "since therefore Christ is willing, that the benefit of his death should be common to all men, they do him an injury, who by their opinion, debar any one from the hope of salvation." Universality of redemption, is the constant topic of Scripture: It is rendered partial, only under limitations, which are the fruit of refined reasonings and minute distinctions. It is a material objection against those cramping interpreters, that they represent the divine word, as expressed very incautiously on a point, in which all men have the greatest interest.

How an unprejudiced person can read a declaration, expressed in the most general terms, and embracing *all men without exception;* whom God would have to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth; for whose

conversion all sorts of means are used, most likely to answer this great end; for whose salvation the warmest supplications are offered at the throne of grace; being encouraged by the powerful pleadings of an *all-sufficient Mediator*, who gave himself a ransom for *All men;* and yet continue under the influence of an absolute and antemundane decree, is almost incomprehensible to the candid mind, which takes the truth of inspiration according to plain, obvious statement. Instruction has much simple sentiment to subdue before acquiescence can be entirely gained from the young,to the partial plan. Those youths can hardly perceive how the language of holy writ can be so little accommodated to its awful contents, as to designate "some" under the denomination of "all," and "a few" under that of the "whole world."

That an interest in, and a claim to the redemption of Christ and its divine contents, are afforded to all men, are particulars obvious to the plainest capacity. God has concluded *all men* under sin, that he might show mercy upon *all*—He commanded that repentance and remission of sins should be preached *to all*—He promised to draw *all to him*—and invited *all men*. Now after seeing those plain proofs and a variety of others adduced, how can it be expected that a reader should be found who can possibly aver, that the comprehensive word "all," as often as it occurs, must be stinted to mean only "a few" to the utter exclusion of the great remainder of the human race? Is it not evident to every serious reader of the divine word, that Christ died even for those who by their own fault may lose all the benefits of that free, full, and sufficient sacrifice which he offered for all mankind? Some proceeded to such a pitch of apostacy as to deny the Lord that bought them—Some received the grace of God in vain. The Gospel offers terms of eternal life to all. That the God of all truth and equity should send true Ambassadors, anointed with his Spirit, and full of divine energies, to entreat a reconciliation between God and man; proposing the fair terms of repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; warning every man, and

teaching every man, to the end that they might present every man to Christ, certainly shows that God wills the salvation of every man. Who can help being persuaded that God would have all men to be saved, when he reads the following statement in the first Book of the Institutes, "Forasmuch as the upshot of an happy life consists in the knowledge of God, lest the door of happiness should be shut against any man, God has not only implanted in the minds of men, that which we call the seed of religion; but he has likewise so manifested himself in all the fabric of the world, and presents himself daily to them in so plain a manner, that they cannot open their eyes, but they must needs discover him." Why then do persons who glory in being called by the name of this reformer despise the seed of religion which God has implanted in the minds of men, lest the door of happiness should be shut against any? That God secretly wills the salvation of all men, as well as openly declares it, is very evident to any one engaged in the contemplation of scripture evidence. The great and glorious cause of our redemption is frequently declared to be the love of God, which surely thinketh no evil, designeth no evil, contriveth no evil. God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, who died the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. The offers of the Gospel carry peace and good will upon the very face of them. They were glad tidings, good news, and matter of great joy to all people. Though our Lord, in the prayer John xvii. 9, would appear for a moment, to pray only for his disciples present, yet, verse 20, he prays for his future disciples; and then giving the utmost latitude to his charitable wishes, he prays (verse 21,) that the world may believe; and, (verse 23,) that the world may know that God had sent him: and he prayed for his murderers, who were men of the world. The reason why he did not include the world immediately with his apostles was, because the world was not in a capacity to receive their peculiar blessings.

That the redemption of Christ was general, appears from its being rendered equal in interest to the fall of Adam. The undertakings and performances of the

second Adam being put in counterpoise against the sin of the first. As Adam was the general representative of men fallen; so Christ of men received again to divine favour. As by the transgression of one, judgment is come upon *all* to condemnation; so by the righteousness of one, the free gift is come upon *all* to justification of life. If *all men* have sinned and come short of the glory of God; so *all* are justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. If the offence of Adam affected *the whole human system;* the advocacy of Christ atones for it. He condescends to stand in the relation of Brother, Father, and Friend to his human offspring. The pity of a parent, and the relentings of a friend, are ascribed to our great Substitute. The comfort such relationship affords, is most precise and definite, and calculated to make the penitent hopeful, and the upright easy and happy. How this heavenly Substitute could be said to become our Brother, not being ashamed of the character, but confessing it, and at the same time either make an absolute decree, excluding the majority of the human race from his favour, or be the author of a partial redemption, is not only a paradox, but a contradiction. This Redemption was carried on by our elder brother, upon a plan perfectly calculated to banish distrust, and revive the most timid and dejected heart. The inference follows, "Let us come with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need?"

The affectionate prayers which our Great Advocate put up for the worst of men, even his enemies, persecutors, and murderers, not only argued the depth of his charity, but that they were in a capacity of pardon and salvation. It was for the great purpose of saving souls that he assumed our nature. He had experience of the external distresses and internal sorrows of the human condition. His state on earth was not an easy and opulent one, in which he might glide through the world with insensibility. He did not suit his mission to high life chiefly, but also to the poor and low, who endure the inconveniences of toilsome life. He underwent the

disregard of relations, the ingratitude of friends, the scorn of the proud, and the insults of the mean. The sharpness of pain, and the violence of reproach were no strangers to him. He felt as a man, being troubled in spirit, having groaned and wept more than once. And finally, he died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. All this was for the general good. Can we suppose for a moment, that a bosom, possessed of a principle of love beyond all comparison, who became the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world, could at the same time be engaged in contriving writs of exclusion, and binding by the chains of an absolute and impassible decree, millions of souls to an inevitable doom of everlasting misery?

When God declares that he is willing that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth—that Christ has purchased salvation for all—cordially and affectionately inviting all men to it—earnestly complaining and expostulating with men for not repenting—assuring them that they must impute their ruin to their own obstinate impenitence—that the great foundation of condemnation is, that light is come into the world, but that men love darkness rather than light—that he delivered the doctrines of salvation, but that men would not come to him to be saved—that they defeated the counsel of God against themselves—that they judged themselves unworthy of eternal life—having no way to escape if they neglected the great salvation freely and unequivocally offered to them. If all these reasons in mass, be not positive proof of a present state of probation, and a possibility of present salvation, the candid reader knows not whither the guidance of inspiration is conducting him. We should restrain the excursions of a wanton imagination, and reject such sentiments, however agreeable to our system, as are not accordant with the analogy of faith. When such open, manifest declarations and promises are made to all mankind, what power must a private system have over us, when, without any show of reason, we can clog these divine offers with secret reserves, impassible barriers, and insurmountable impediments?

To a candid reader of the Holy Scriptures, who searches their contents for edification, all the offers and promises of a free salvation must appear to be set forth in the plainest and most unequivocal terms, so as forcibly to strike the attention not already prejudiced. So far from apprehending unavoidable predestination or partial redemption in the cup, he cannot see how the advices given, and the declarations made, can at all consist with any thing short of universal grace and mercy. When we read that Christ fulfilled the conditions on which he became the Saviour of all men, it must afford us a very plain proof that he is worthy of that great title. He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world—He is the Mediator between God and men, or mankind in general—He tasted death for every man—He gave himself a ransom for all men. Like the exalted serpent of brass in the wilderness, as many as look to Jesus, the author and finisher, as well as the director of their faith, shall be healed.

So far are the Scriptures, when carefully and judiciously compared, from excluding any persons from the free offers of mercy, that they are most express in bringing the whole human race under the saving influence of divine grace. While they discover the nature and condition of man, as fallen in the first Adam, they discover at the same time the redemption that is in Christ, the second Adam. Their arguments are sufficiently persuasive to overcome all opposition, and control all prejudice. A Mediator between God and his human creatures was the object after which men in all nations, and under all forms of religion, had long and anxiously sought. Christ has ratified a new covenant in their behalf. Salvation is made attainable. It is offered upon easy and equal conditions—Every man, however distant, is invited to a near approach. However fallen man may be, depressed by a conscious sense of guilt, retired and shrunk from a direct approach to the Sovereign of the universe, he is welcome to an auspicious introduction to that divine presence, and a view of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

How an ungenerous exclusion of the generality of the human race from all saving grace, can consist with

the numerous pledges of good will afforded by our heavenly Father, I leave the reader to consider. Christ our great Saviour purchased and procured all necessary aids, in the great business of salvation. A sufficient knowledge of duty is graciously afforded. A power to withstand the temptations of the common enemy of souls: to subdue all evil affections and headlong propensities: to repent of sin, sincerely and heartly forsaking, renouncing, and disowning it; to believe with the heart unto righteousness, and confess with the mouth unto salvation: to taste the heavenly gift, and be made partakers of the Holy Ghost in his sanctifying and supporting virtues. Can we, with any show of reason, think that any secret reserves, impassible barriers, and insurmountable impediments, can consist with invitations, exhortations, promises, commands, and threatenings?—Must not the tender complaints which a heavenly Father is pleased to employ with his human offspring carry on the face of them an open declaration of all possible sincerity of intention and address? Why is his affectionate address thrown away? Would not the ruin of the party be sufficiently provided for by a mere offer, if the making, and the unavoidable non-acceptance of this were to be followed by such an effect?

The principle called conscience, which the Moral Governor of the world has implanted in every breast, is another plain proof of his willingness to save the individual who is under its direction and energies. Entering within himself, the human being hears a voice of no small command. How often does the individual become his own accuser, witness, and judge? How often does he become the serious auditor of discourses, which no ear but his own can hear? How often has he been obliged to recall the past, and to anticipate the most awful effects, as likely to be produced at a future period from the train of things as laid at the present? The more thoroughly any man examines what passes within his own breast, the more certainly will he be able to conclude, that the divine influence procured, by the redemption that is in Christ, operates powerfully through the severe yet faithful reproofs of conscience.

The Gospel affords another strong as well as pleasing proof of the great plan of redemption. It makes the sense of divine instruction easily comprehensible; placing things before men's eyes in so clear a light as to be understood without difficulty. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings it ordains praise. One need not go up to heaven, to bring Christ down from above; nor penetrate into the hidden mysteries of absolute decrees. The word is nigh to him, which assures him, that to him also is the offer of a free and full and everlasting salvation given. God has brought life and immortality to light in Christ, making the way plain and the conditions practicable, assuring us that he now calls all men every where to repent. These declarations, repeated and enforced by every possible argument, must encourage the humble, without flattering the presumptuous or excluding any.

General admonition affords a convincing proof of the universality of the redemption of Christ. As God does nothing in vain, we can hardly presume to suppose that he undertakes to admonish, where an utter impossibility of attending to his admonition bars up the way of profiting the individual admonished. So far is the word of truth from excluding any, that it speaks in the language of general declaration. "We warn *every man*, and teach *every man* in all righteousness, that we may present *every man* perfect in Christ—these things I say unto you, (Pharisees) that ye might be saved—If some of the branches be broken off; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith; be not high-minded, but fear. Now is the day of salvation: to-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts —Despisest thou the riches of God's forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?—Pharaoh hardened his heart and repented not—Take heed lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin—He that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief—They are without excuse, because when they knew God, they glorified him not as God."

General exhortation is another proof equally plain

and applicable. All the weary and heavy laden are invited to come to him for true rest. His ambassadors bring us glad tidings of great joy. They beseech us in the most affectionate manner, to be reconciled to God, through Christ. The times of ignorance God winked at, but now he calls all men, every where, to repent. Life and death being set before us in their connexions and consequences, we are exhorted to choose life that we may live. In the glorious race for eternal life, we are exhorted so to run that we may obtain the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. We are to put on the whole armour of God, that we may stand in the evil day, and stand at last before the Son of man. We are to lay hold on everlasting life. We are to let no man take our crown. A previous capacity to listen and obey, must be the ground on which God is pleased to build the reasonableness of exhortation.

Censure is another of the gracious means, which the good providence of God is pleased to employ in this important labour of love. As ignorance is to be instructed, and carelessness apprized of danger; so the principle of shame in man is to be roused to duty, by just reproof. What language can be more affecting than "All the day long have I stretched forth my hands to a gainsaying and disobedient people. I have stretched out my hands and no man regarded me. Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth! I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me: the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. How often would I have gathered you together, but ye would not. Thou knowest not the day of thy visitation. Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right? They have built the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire. Ungodly men turn the grace of God into wantonness. Ye put the word of God from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life. Need I ask, whether those censures be not equivalent to a positive declaration, that the per-

sons reproved had all necessary knowledge of their duty, and power to comply with it?

The promises of God are of the general or universal kind, and offer—"Whoso forsaketh his sin shall find mercy. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and the Lord will have mercy and abundantly pardon. As high as heaven is above earth, so high are God's ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts; and so great is his mercy to them that fear him. Because the sinner considereth, he shall surely live and not die. At what instant I speak concerning a nation or a people, to destroy it, if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, he shall save his soul alive. Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened." Surely these great and precious promises are sufficient to encourage the most desponding and timid, to lay hold on the hope set before them.

Threatening also is intended to produce the most divine reformation of character, as well as inward change of mind and disposition. Threatening, indicates that a softer mode of address had been spurned and rejected already. "Because I called and ye refused, I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh. Thus saith the Lord, Did I choose thy father out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest? Why kick ye at my sacrifice? Wherefore the Lord God saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever. But now the Lord saith, That be far from me: for them that honour me will I honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. I will bring evil upon the city, because they have hardened their necks. Threatenings on sacred record show that while they are fit for doctrine, reproof, and instruction in righteousness, they are also fit for correction, or amendment. What shall we think of the Institutes on this head, that "When God addresses the same word to reprobates,

though it produces not their correction, yet he makes it effectual for another purpose, namely, that they may be confounded by the testimony of their consciences now, and be rendered more inexcusable in the day of judgment." God is far from intending evil by threatening, that it is the last effort of our affectionate parent with his prodigal children, and even then it is not hopeless.

The texts and reasons produced, which attest and declare the universality of the redemption which is in Christ, are but a few of a great host. The plain arguments advanced are sufficient to convince any unprejudiced person, that their manifest scope best suits the idea of man's being a subject of probation. The predestinating system tells its votaries, "that reward is not to human merit, but to the divine gifts." Far be it from the true Christian to set up the claims of human merit; or to imagine himself possessed of gifts which he has not received at the hand of God. But can it be thought that the Calvinistic view of this great subject is correct, in distinguishing between the persons, and the gifts conferred? Our blessed Saviour instructs us fully on this great subject, when he assures us, "Your heavenly Father shall reward *you* openly," Matt. vi. 4. In Matt. xvi. 27, He speaks still more expressly. "He shall reward *every man according to his works.*" The great apostle of the Gentiles, in speaking of Moses, Heb. xi. 26, says, that "He had respect to the *recompense of reward.*" The apostle John, in his second Epistle, bids the members of primitive Christianity, "Look to *yourselves*, that we lose not those things which we have *wrought*, but that we receive a full *reward.*" Is not the reward acknowledged to be of grace? Must the agency be lost sight of, to which it is attached?

A dispensation which professes to be "grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ," requires it as a religious duty, to conceive of him in such a manner as may not hide from us the splendour of those divine perfections. When we listen to him, saying, "Give me thine heart," there

ought not to be wanting in our hearts, a just ground of the exacted tribute of affection. When he says, "If I be a Father, where is mine honour?" let there be found in us such a conviction of paternal right as shall make the motive operative. And when we read that he will finally "judge the world in righteousness," let us conceive of this attribute, as also governing in the preparatory dispensation of the Gospel. Yes, great Creator and Preserver, thou hast told us that thou art good to all! May we never then lose sight of thee, in this thine endearing character!

OF FREEDOM OF THE HUMAN WILL, OR OF ACTION.

Another "Absurdity of Methodism," at which Mr. P. hurls the fiery darts of disputation is, the doctrine of *free will, or the power of moral acting*, which the Methodists aver to be the gift of God to man. This power relates particularly to his moral capacity of knowing and fulfilling the united duty which he owes his Maker, his fellow-creatures, and himself. Should any evil follow in the present state of probation, from man's burying or abusing this talent, he must account for it hereafter.

It is acknowledged by all parties, that man, in consequence of the unhappy effects of Adam's fall, besides becoming mortal, is so changed that he cannot of himself alone, begin or accomplish his recovery from the state of sin and misery, in which his connexion with Adam places him, without a principle of grace or spiritual life, obtained through the great Advocate and Mediator, Jesus Christ. But surely wherever the the name of Adam is mentioned as a representative of our fall; the name of Christ is also mentioned as our great Restorer. We are assured that where the transgression abounded to condemnation, the free gift is equally abundant.

The will is a leading power of the human soul, and volition the exercise of that power, which is the immediate cause of action in man. Propensities, affections, and other active principles in our nature, may stimu-

late the mind to action, and thus prove motives to the exercise of its voluntary powers. These internal emotions, therefore, and the various external objects which tend to incite them, may be regarded as primary and remote causes of our actions; but the immediate and proximate cause is volition, or that power of willing and acting which man possesses and exercises.

It is evident to every minute observer, that in doing good or evil, he is so far free as is requisite to responsibility. The sense of liberty is so universal, as to warrant the strongest belief of it. This is plain and obvious, and not educed from remote or recondite speculations, which we are not bound to understand, or even to listen to. On no other ground can conscience do its work of a faithful monitor; and on no other ground will sinners, in a future state, look back with self-condemnation, on a day of grace, mercifully bestowed on them, but suffered to pass away unimproved.

Nothing can be more contradictory to Scripture, reason, and the common sense of all mankind, than to make absolute necessity consistent with a state of probation. Where there is accountability, there must be free-agency, or freedom of will in acting. If men have no capacity to disobey, they can have no capacity to obey in the moral sense of the word. The obedience of such persons as have no choice, is as far from true and genuine morality, as the passive obedience of a leaden bullet, which a person drops with an absurd command, which orders it "to fall," having first let go his hold of it. If men can be supposed to be unchangeably fixed in virtue or in vice, by any decree which they cannot possibly resist, or evade, then all liberty is at an end, and man deserves no more praise or blame for the good or evil he does, than a log for falling to the ground which is its centre, and to which place it must fall when dropped.

The necessarian scheme, however much a favourite with many modern Calvinists, was not a doctrine contended for by their early predecessors at the reformation; nor has it shown its head in the works of Calvin. Accordingly, when it is stated that the Calvinists and

Arminians agreed in the loss of free-will, instead of having any thing to do with the metaphysical subtlety of absolute necessity, it only means, that with whatever ability for keeping the law of his Creator, man had been originally clothed, he had become divested of it by the fall; so that his recovery cannot be either begun or perfected, otherwise than under the influence of divine aid, a sufficient measure of which the Arminians maintain to be given to every man, through Christ, to profit withal.

God always uses means sufficient to demonstrate to every individual, the very great trust or talent lodged with him, and its sufficiency to rise to a state of high improvement, unless he obstinately resist the heavenly claim, and refuse to work out his salvation, or to be (with all humility) a worker together with his Maker. The grace which is universally manifested through the great atonement, enlightens, assists, supports, and incites; so that if we fail in the attainment of the great end, which is the will of God concerning us, the charges attached to such conduct must be altogether imputed to those that receive the grace of God in vain, and bury the precious talent intrusted to their fidelity. The adoption of such a conduct is as great a charge against the power of choice lodged with men, as to hurl one's self, with eyes widely open, in broad daylight, over the rough edge of a dreadful precipice into the sea.

The nature of the will is understood, as we understand the other powers of our minds, namely, by an inward consciousness. The plainest and most unlettered man perfectly understands the meaning of the phrases, "I will, and I will not." It is also understood by its frequent acts. Religion is matter of our free choice; God himself assuring us that he has set both sides of this serious question before us, in their true lights and colours and magnitudes, attaching even death and life to the choice which he allows, or rather commands us to make. He assures us repeatedly, that he is an imprudent man and out of the sphere of approbation, who in this matter, which is of prime impor-

tance, can wait to be irresistibly determined, neglecting, at the same time, opportunities never to be retrieved. Such a person stands as it were upon the shore, and seeing the tide advance with awful pace, has but a few minutes to fly from ruin, and yet will allow himself to sleep there, unless God interfere in a miraculous or extraordinary way to rouse and save him.

The good will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us, being our present and eternal salvation; if we come short of this, we must bear the awful blame in our own persons. God himself assures us that "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." "They have eyes, but will not see; ears, but will not hear; and hearts, but they will not understand." "Ye always resist the Holy Ghost." "They rejected the counsel of God against themselves"—"Grieved the Spirit"—"Quenched the Spirit." "Jezebel had time to repent, and she repented not." "Their eyes have they closed." The freedom of the human will can no more be denied, upon the laws of natural and revealed religion, than they can upon the principles of common sense, and civil government; as nothing would be more absurd than to bind us by laws of a spiritual or civil nature, if we were not moral agents, having a competent knowledge of our duty, and a sufficient power to perform it.

The freedom of the will in its choice, or of the mind in its volitions, merits the closest attention and regard. To a close examiner, it must appear, that instead of being in all cases determined by irresistible motives; or being unable to act but when determined by the strongest motive, or the last motive in the view of the mind, at the time of acting; the will is free not only in acting, but in determining also. Instead of being void of all inward energy, or power over its own acts, or subjected to the irresistible impulse of motives, as the water-wheel is to the force and gravity of the fluid that turns it round, it possesses a power of determining in the face of interest, pleasure, habit, profit, and even life itself, if duty be on the contrary side.

Mr. P. will hardly allow himself to be convinced but that men can unite not only contrarieties, but also absolute contradictions. He contends earnestly for the possibility of man's sinning willingly, in doing evil or good, while under the all-commanding influence of the irresistible decree. Now it is really impossible to learn, on just principles, how involuntary beings can sin voluntarily. To sin voluntarily, the will must be supposed at liberty to choose or to refuse, according to its own preference. If this be so, the necessarian scheme is immediately renounced, and the doctrine of free will openly allowed, which must overthrow all inevitable predestination. This is one of the grounds on which God assures us that he will judge the world in righteousness. Whereas, were it to be insinuated for a moment that the wills of men are bound with an adamantine chain to that choice which they make, and to that conduct which they adopt; the scheme must pour shame, folly, and unrighteousness upon the tribunal of the just and holy Judge.

The possession of free will is not a subject, to know which a person need go up to the heights, or down to the depths of penetrating research. It appears to be a matter of the utmost simplicity, and the most obvious solution. It falls under the very plain head of general experience, to which an appeal ought to be made for true decision. Every man of discernment is conscious to himself, that he acts freely; and that in all cases of general or ordinary recurrence, when he is not under the impulse of some general or violent passion, or under the commanding influence of some inveterate habit, he has it in his power to pursue a directly contrary course of action, from that to which he is invited by the present predominant motive. Though others might do as they would, the resolution of Joshua was "*I and my house will serve the Lord.*" David could declare in all sincerity, "I have sworn and *will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.*" The prodigal could come to the resolution, "*I will arise and go to my father.*" Where this privilege is improved, the Christian is resolved to have heaven, let it cost what it

may. What dangers encountered, difficulties trampled upon, and terrors contemned, adorn the holy records? The resolutions of the *will* are soon followed by the vigour of the affections, which are the wings on which the soul rises in its flight towards glory; which also soon put forth strength of endeavour; not forgetting, however, that when all human strength is put forth, the great help and blessing of God must be supplicated and relied on.

Here it is entreated, that all misconception may be guarded against, as it respects this very important subject. If Mr. P. seriously hear the unequivocal voice of Methodism, (notwithstanding the charge of absurdities which he has brought against it for want of better acquaintance with it) it will be found in general to abound with passages, ascribing all the good in man to the grace of God, so that it must be a great mistake or error, to suppose it attributing any thing to the mere wills of fallen man, as operative of good of its own power or virtue. All is openly ascribed to grace; but this, consistently with human liberty, under the operation of the divine influence and help, while without it, there would be no liberty, but the will be enslaved to sin.

To the assertion, "that a man may possess a will while under the inevitable influence and energy of an absolute decree," it may easily be replied, that it is not merely having a will, but having a free will, which constitutes us accountable creatures, capable of blame or approbation, of punishment or reward. On this principle, God invites with "Come, for all things are now ready." Hence also "He gives to every man his portion to profit withal—He who believeth shall be saved; but he who believeth not shall be condemned." He assures us that none shall perish merely for Adam's sin, but for their own unbelief and wilful rejection of the Saviour's grace. He shows us in colours that must win our softest and warmest affections, the astonishing mercy which wept over Jerusalem, and prayed and bled even for those that shed his life's blood. Will not this suffice for every candid inquirer for truth?

The necessarian scheme opposes unfounded speculation to self-evident and repeated facts, presuming to assert that "all acts of the will must be determined irreversibly by the motives which appear before it, as they are presented." By the adoption of this error, they have been led to conclusions altogether contrary to nature and experience. We seem at this rate to be free, and yet we are at the same time borne along by a powerful stream, to which we make no resistance, because it concurs with our inclinations. We are like so many feathers swimming wherever the current carries us. Unstable as water, we cannot excel. We can be nothing but what we are: we can neither think, nor speak, nor do, but as the stream rolls us along. How a just and holy God can reprove, blame, censure, reward or punish, on this principle, is what Mr. P. will find it very hard to show, if in every particular, to the minutest, momentary, passing thought, we be absolutely and irresistibly bound over to the particular part we act, or the department we occupy.

Our Lord and Master held up a high prospect of freedom to all who would not stubbornly reject his offer and exclude themselves. Upon his preaching to the Jews, many believed on him. He told them that if they continued in his doctrine, "they would be his disciples indeed, and they should know the truth;" or advance, by progressive degrees, to a more perfect knowledge of the wisdom from above; and while the light of heavenly doctrine irradiated the understanding, and warmed and inflamed the heart and affections, it would also make them free," intimating that his doctrine, heartily embraced, would assert to men the truest and most perfect kind of liberty. Where the powers afforded are submitted to be enlightened and directed, as well as assisted, by the all-sufficient truth and grace of God, nothing that is a duty or demand of heaven, will be impossible.

The Scripture testimonies in favour of the self-evident doctrine of free will, amount to an illustrious host. The candid reader, however simple and inexperienced, remarks also, as he reads the sacred pages, that blame

rises in his own mind, as well as in the divine reproof, for the doing of things which might have been avoided; and that a single contrary authority could not be produced, which deprives a man of the power of choice, or first binds over to a wrong choice, and then condemns or punishes for choosing according to such preference. The uniform voice of reason also is, "If a man have not a power by free-will, to avoid what is evil, and to pursue what is good, no blame can attach to his actions, whatever they may be." The Scriptures not only set life and death, in all their various meanings, before the eyes of men, but beg, entreat, and command, that life may be chosen, and death as resolutely rejected.

But here it is asked by Mr. P., and brought as an absurdity not only against Methodism, but against Christianity in general—"If a man do or will any thing connected with his salvation, does not this deprive the great Redeemer of the glory?" Answer: By no means. While the Gospel offers a free salvation, man, to share its privileges and promises, must believe with the heart unto righteousness. While the glorious crown of righteousness is held out to the eye of faith, men are to be temperate, that they may so run as to obtain it. While men are to be saved by grace, through faith, they are at the same time to work out their salvation. While they are to rejoice in the Lord, this is not to hinder them from rejoicing in the testimony of a good conscience. To receive the gift of God, they had to ask—to find, they had to seek—to enter the door of mercy, they had to knock, with loud but sincere entreaty—to reap life everlasting, they had to sow to the Spirit.

The decision of the question relative to free-will and free-agency, involves considerations of high importance to morals, religion, and civil life. The doctrine of necessity, when pursued to its ultimate consequences, must destroy all possible distinctions between good and evil, right and wrong; taking away all commendation from what is good, as well as discredit from all the depths of wilful depravity. Surely the practical dictates of

truth and reason must show in the most open manner, the errors of such unfounded speculation. To put the moral and religious world under the chain of speculative necessity, annihilates all distinction, and destroys all order. The murderer and the supporter of life, the robber and the public or private benefactor, the perjurer and the man of equity, are all at this rate doing according to the inevitable decree.

The Scriptures speak of a freedom which, if properly exerted, will be rendered productive of the most glorious results. Hence we are commanded to awake; to arise from the dead; to shake off the slavish yoke of sin; to escape from the chains of darkness; and to fly for refuge to the open door which is set before us. We are commanded to take up a firm and manly resolution, and to enter the glorious liberty of the children of God. Though it be no easy matter to break off the ties of vicious habits; and therefore requires great firmness of mind: yet as surely as the duty becomes incumbent, the power to accomplish it will be instantaneously attendant. Nothing is too hard for firm resolution, supported by the grace of God.

God, who knew what was fittest to be done, made men and angels partakers of the great privilege of free will, inclining them to do well and justly, as rational creatures, in a state of probation. On this principle only, he could command and forbid, promise and threaten, reward and punish. On this principle he has promised that such as do good, shall be rewarded with glory and honour; because they entered on it with his assistance, and in obedience to his will; though he had placed them in such a condition as to leave it in their power not to have done it. On the same principle he threatens to punish those who have the knowledge of his will, and power to do it, because they have not done the good, and rejected the evil.

Mr. P. observes, "Man has no disposition to will or do any thing acceptable to God, until God puts the will within him by his special grace." What Methodist doubts that it is God, the great benefactor, who gives grace and glory? The question is not whether

God is the giver of all grace, but whether he overlooks and passes by ninety-nine out of a hundred, to whom he gives nothing, and against whom he has contrived this rejection before the foundation of the world? Is it consistent with our ideas of a God of grace and mercy, that where he has given no talent, he should nevertheless make as rigid a demand for improvement as if he had given five talents? Far be it from us to speak in this manner of the righteous Judge of all the earth. When we speak of him, we mean all that is great and good, and just and wise; not expecting to reap, but where he has sown, or to gather, but where he has strewn.

If we deprive man of freedom of will, and put him under an absolute necessity of choosing wrong, and acting immorally, the term so circumstanced, must relieve the consequences, as to the accountability or guilt of the agent. To say that notwithstanding the inevitable decree, the course of immoral action being voluntary, is therefore criminal, is merely an abuse of words, if the will to evil is to be considered as irresistibly infused by the author of our being. Can any thing like a trial be said to be imposed on a subject under the chains of an invincible decree, though softened by the deceptive name of moral necessity? To purge out the old leaven—to take the kingdom of heaven by a holy violence—to do whatever the hand finds to do with all the might—to watch and pray—to avoid entering into temptation—to consider the body as the temple of the Holy Ghost—to seek after truth as for refined silver, and to give all diligence to make the calling and election sure, is the necessity of Scripture. Wherever this simplicity is made the standard, it will plainly appear that man is considered as possessed of a power of willing, or of complying with the will of God, when this is required; or if men should feel a deficiency, all the help that is necessary will be afforded, if a sincere application be made at the throne of heavenly grace.

That we may not be discouraged by an apprehension of too much difficulty in this work of the Lord, we are

informed that thousands had to travel the heavenly road before us, and some through streams of their own blood. They have left it on record that the main difficulty occurs at first: that as surely as we exercise the measure of freedom of action which God has conferred, that our work is half done, while our talents or capacities of acting will be doubled. They assure us, that if we sustain the first attacks in the great contest of faith, and under the Captain of our salvation, we shall come off more than conquerors—that if in the strength of grace we resist the devil, he will flee from us:—that every day shall afford us more strength:—that the habits of sin shall be not only weakened, but demolished; while we shall be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

If the power of exerting ourselves in the great business of our everlasting peace, were not a sacred deposite lodged with us, can we conceive any grounds on which our heavenly Teacher would enjoin the doing of some things, and the forbearing, and even rejecting and flying from others? All mankind are addressed as of the same nature, endued with a gracious power to engage and advance in good; as well as with power again to lose and not complete it. Men can perceive, that zeal may be slackened to lukewarmness, and rapid progress to decline. Surely, this must be much more visible to him whose eyes are as a flame of fire. He commends some for their good choice and perseverance; while others are censured, because they drew back to folly. These things were written for our instruction. We have a cloud of witnesses, whose example cries out in the most expressive language—"So run, that ye may obtain."

In the Gospel dispensation of grace and mercy, God seems to have gone to the very extreme of things, in afflicting innocency itself to save the guilty. And if his love to the human race as the offspring of Adam, be carried to the highest pitch, making his Son a curse for us, to redeem us from the curse of a broken law, we cannot possibly attribute to him any thing ungenerous, at the time that he shows us the amazing plan of the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ.

On the freedom of the mind in acting, it may be stated that as far as duty is concerned, the mind which exercises the act of volition is perfectly free, even in the succession of motives, in the midst of which we are placed. The mind has all necessary and convenient power of deliberating or suspending its own actions, without which control, it would be like the magnetic needle, and subject to the minutest force impressed, or the minutest excess of force between two motives. If the will be determined entirely by motives, it must be merely the victim of events, or the slave of inclination, appetite, or passion. But surely, every man feels within himself a power or capacity of accepting or rejecting ever so pleasing or harsh an offer, as it coincides with, or opposes interest, duty, or inclination. Even the flesh, which is so near, and which was formerly pampered, is now mortified. The ivy, which formerly embraced the oak, is eradicated. The right hand is cut off; and the right eye plucked out. An Isaac is offered at the altar of God: The pleasing, the profitable, the customary, and habitual, which became, as it were, a sweet part of nature, are discarded, and even life itself resigned to the most cruel and ignominious death. Such is the power of the mind in willing and acting, when supported by the influence of grace.

Joshua, the successor of Moses, knew nothing to prevent the people from making a free, and at the same time, a deliberate choice. When he, as God's agent, had brought Israel into the promised land, he called a general assembly, and in a very wise and eloquent speech, represented to them in what an extraordinary and miraculous manner God had delivered them, and brought them into the good land, and punctually performed all that he had promised. And as if they had never engaged themselves by covenant before, he advises and exhorts them to choose the Lord as their God. Here he insinuates, that religion, or the service of God, should be their free choice. And to direct, as well as encourage them to make a right choice, he

openly declares to them his own resolution, which he hopes will be theirs also. How different must this exhortation and resolution appear, from the language of such as declare, "Whom he (God) hath created unto the shame of life, and destruction of death, that they should be instruments of his wrath, he deprives them of all means of instruction, that he may blind and stupify them."

The terms "to will and to choose; as also, not to will or to refuse," are familiar to the meanest capacities. If the choice be not accompanied with an alternative, or something which we freely reject, as freely as we choose the other side, it is not worthy of the name of choice; but rather deserves the name of necessity or compulsion, than of liberty. It can put in no claim to that endearing term, a free-will offering. If to love God with all the powers, be considered as an act that is unavoidable, I can see no reason why such stress is laid on the heart in religion. The man who is under the power of absolute compulsion, is as bound to this act and choice as the wheel to the axle-tree, and no more approvable on the principle of force. But this is so far from being the case with human beings, that for the encouragement of beginners in the good way, I would say, "Be not discouraged, even though you do not meet with that success at first, which you expected and hoped for." Though after several attempts to recover your spiritual or moral liberty, you have been foiled and cast back; still look to and rely on the strong for strength. By a mighty resolution, aided by an overpowering degree of the grace of God, some persons are reclaimed, at once, from a wicked life, to a holy conversation and godliness. In general, however, the good seed grows up insensibly and by degrees. The risen sun shines brighter and brighter to the perfect day. Though inclinations to the former course may break in, and sometimes prevail, still, this should make them resume new courage, and put themselves afresh under the conduct of the great Captain of their salvation.

In all the dealings of God with man, we cannot but

see him treated as one graciously possessed of the power of willing and acting in the greatest freedom. The injunction to "hold to that which is good," shows him possessed of a power to "will and to do" those things which God requires as a duty. In faith also has God preserved to man a will free, and possessed of the power of self-determination. Those who believed on evidence are commended: those who did not are censured. Neither the reward of good, nor the punishment of evil, could be justly dispensed to man, if he were to be good or evil of necessity, and not of will and choice.

If any secret decree be supposed to operate irresistibly upon the choice of man, can there be any grounds, on which men can be charged with having made a free choice of death, and a free refusal of life? If the person be not free in determination, mature in years, and wise in experience, how can he justly be said "to know how to refuse the evil and to choose the good?" The charge which is brought against men is, "Because they refused, and did not choose the fear of the Lord, therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way." They possessed a power of free choice; but they employed that power in a wrong way.

The volitions of the mind are the effect of its own internal energy, by an original innate power over its own actions, of which every man who reflects upon himself is conscious, but which, like all the other primary perceptions, and operations of our nature, it is not easy to express in words. The soul being endowed with the faculty of deliberating, judging, comparing, and estimating motives, before it acts, demonstrates in the exercise of this power, the freedom of its actions. If motives govern the mind always and necessarily, then the present motive at each instant, when there is none stronger to counterbalance it, or that among several motives, which has any surplus of strength above its antagonists, must immediately and antecedently to all deliberation, determine its action. But the exercise of its deliberative powers, affords sufficient proof

that it still possesses the power of commanding its own actions.

Many miscarry in the religious warfare, because they take a false view of things, expecting to get a complete victory at the first attempt. The spiritual warfare is not always completed in a moment: the habits of grace and virtue are not matured in a day. Though these habits may be acquired by slow degrees at first, and with a great deal of conflict, and it be a good while before a man can say, "I have conquered," yet if he persist in his holy resolution, and even when foiled, if he take heart again, in the strength of grace, he is in the way to victory. Therefore, should a soldier of Christ not meet with perfect success at the first, let him not on this account be discouraged, but go on, and God will tread Satan down under his feet.

The Scriptures make frequent appeals to the will and choice of man. They set forth that man was formed originally with free will: that in no one thing was the image of God more conspicuous than in this: that it is impossible to possess righteousness and true holiness, without offering the soul and body a free-will offering to God: that this property of man's condition is confirmed by the law enjoined on him; because a law could not have been given to one who had it not in his power to obey it. The same applies to subsequent laws as well as to the law of Paradise. The discipline of those laws requires, that man should be free in his will, to obey or to contemn. All necessary assistance is afforded through the agency of our great Advocate.

Surely Mr. P. must imagine himself addressing the language of page 42 of his book to babes. "God is free as a Ruler to punish or pardon whom he pleases: Man also is free, in the commission of sin at least." If God be free to do what he pleases, what becomes of the everlasting decree, by which he is bound to do as he does in every thing? And if man be free, even as to the commission of sin, how, on that supposition, can he commit it, in consequence of any previous decree? If there be liberty to choose sin freely, there must at the

same time be a liberty to reject it as freely, or the former is no liberty, but a mere name to dazzle or deceive the unwary. As well may it be said that a prisoner under sentence of death is at liberty, when he goes the length of his double chain; or to the extent of the floor of his dark cell.

As motives are of great weight in determining the mind, it seldom acts without some present inducement, or end in view. Nevertheless on many occasions it may form determinations without motive, by the immediate energy of its own self-control. No one motive, or assemblage of motives, has power to compel it in any particular direction. We can still deliberate, compare, judge, and reason, concerning their respective value, and the degree of influence which they ought to possess. We feel a power to accede to, and adopt, or to resist and refuse. Though heaven itself be given freely, yet it suffereth violence. Our earnestness for heaven, implying resolution of mind, vigour of affection, and strength of endeavour, they are set forth by those figures which imply intenseness, as striving, running, wrestling, and fighting. How these willing acts can consist with a state of complete and inevitable bondage, is a question impossible of solution.

The Scriptures assure us, that man, being a moral creature, has a certain degree of power over his own actions, and is therefore accountable to God. Hence men are frequently assured that if they do not repent and return to God, they will certainly bear the blame in judgment. Some persons are reproved, because, having it in their power, they would not exercise faith in God; and others, because having opportunity, they have not improved it. Can we for a moment suppose that the soul, oppressed with the weight of an irresistible decree, can be free to act or to forbear, and that to any amount or degree? Can it be said that one goes freely to hell, who never had power to go to heaven? Or that another goes freely to heaven, who never had power to take a contrary course? Are those scales free to ascend or descend, which are chained down to a certain pitch or stand? Can a sinner, with any pro-

priety be said to choose death in the error of his ways, who never had power to choose life? Does not a free choice of death necessarily imply a free refusal or rejection of life? And does not a free choice of life, as necessarily imply a free refusal or rejection of death?

It is perfectly evident to the reflecting mind, that when deliberating, we choose any of the motives before us, we feel that we form a free choice. We can resist it; we are sensible of a power to follow another motive within the contemplation of the mind; we can call up one at pleasure. Thus though always situated in the midst of various motives, addressed to the principles of appetite, affection, passion, duty, prudence, interest, and pleasure; yet we are always able to judge among them with freedom, and to admit and reject them at pleasure. On this principle our heavenly Father addresses us with motives of infinite value, such as the precious soul we have to save, the heaven we are to attain, and the hell we are to shun.

The human soul, so far from being bound over with a chain of adamant to any single motive, is placed as a judge listening to the pleas of different advocates; and when it has given each and all a patient hearing, deciding with magisterial authority between them. Hence appears from experience as well as Scripture, the possibility of performing the gracious condition required of us, by that divine grace which is offered, and ready to be afforded to us, by the Gospel plan.

The influence which motives possess over the soul of man, is a moral and persuasive, and not an absolute influence. Inclination and duty offer, on one side or on the other, their respective claims, which are in no case irresistible, unless we except the effects of violent passion, or inveterate habit. The mind contemplates and weighs them, and on the result forms its resolution; which, on the common occasions of life, it forms with promptness; on others, with more deliberation; but on all with perfect freedom. Christ himself asked, "Will ye also go away?" regarding the provision by which man, left to his liberty, and possessed of freedom of will, pursues for himself either death or life.

Can any thing be plainer, than that choice is the act of man, from God's plain declaration, "Behold, I have set before you life and death?"

Some persons employ this self-determining power to their own prejudice. They not only bury a talent, but make a vicious use of it. Instead of taking heaven by force, they keep it off by violence. Instead of knocking at the door of mercy, they even shut the door of their hearts. They shut their eyes against the light. "Thou hast rejected knowledge," Hosea iv. 6, was a serious charge. "They hated him that rebuked in the gate," Amos v. 10. "They put away the word of God from them," Acts xiii. 46. The sick man bolts out the physician, lest he should cure him. In the days of Job, they said to the Almighty, "Depart from us," Job xxi. 14. A prophet addresses his countrymen with "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself," Hosea xiii. 9.

Though it be granted, that of ourselves we can do nothing—that it is by grace we are saved—that it is God who works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure—that it is through Christ strengthening us, we can do all things—that our sufficiency is of God; still to have a clear view of our own state; to repent, believe, and obey, we must remember that the grace of God is ready to assist us, if we do not wilfully reject it. And this is what renders unbelief and impenitency inexcusable; because the sinner does not proceed from want of power, but from stubborn unwillingness, God being ready to assist and help men in every duty.

The principles which the holy Scriptures fix as a firm foundation, on which our reasonings and conclusions may rest, are clear, determinate, and obvious to the wayfaring man, unless he leave the highway of evident duty, and plunge himself into labyrinths which were no part of his original road. Instead of binding the minds of men by an unavoidable fate; instead of compelling absolutely and inevitably; instead of employing constraint and force to actions, in which men could be but mere passive machines, the Scriptures hold forth all reasonable motives. They allow the use of means, and even enjoin them; they open a door of hope; they show the

thing to be feasible; they draw a visible line between the wicked upon earth, and the damned in hell; they sound the silver trumpet of the Gospel in the ears of living men; they preach repentance and remission of sins. Though they threaten, they exhort; though the gate of mercy be strait, yet it is not shut. They advise us to strive to enter, and promise an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

To assist the weakest reader in his inquiries, it may be observed by way of illustration, that in the various operations of the mind, in which the influence of the will is concerned, we are usually sensible of the solicitation of some motive, more gentle or more powerful; some end in view—the gratification of some propensity or affection—the indulgence of some inclination—or obedience to some dictate of reason, or of conscience. Here, religion produces the most powerful arguments or motives, whether we consider the truths to be believed, or the duties to be practised. The great business of our short and uncertain life on earth, is to prepare for another life, not subject to evil. We are called upon to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure. Where such offers are made by the lip of truth, ought we for a moment suspect deception?

Although these great and precious promises be promotive of a divine nature, prompt us to action, and in many cases direct the tenor of our actions, yet we never perceive that they impose upon the mind any necessary constraint in acting. The experience of every individual may be appealed to as a test of the truth of it. No speculative or abstracted deductions of reasoning, will ever be permitted to establish a conclusion in opposition to the simple and obvious perceptions of our own consciousness. We are conscious to ourselves that whether Satan approach by open violence or secret treachery—suiting his temptations to the complexion of the individual—drawing men to evil under the appearance of good—hanging out false lights and colours—tempting gradually—asking but an inch, yet intending a mile—employing the excess of lawful things—attempting to put

men upon doing good from evil principles, or for bad ends, as praying, in order to receive the praise of men —we have it in our power, through the help of God, to resist him, steadfast in the faith. Faith may keep the fortress of the heart, and even drive the enemy from the field.

On the other hand, whatever may be the temptations of the enemy, however finely dressed out, and by whatever strength of motive they may be offered, as riches to poverty, ease to pain, and even life to one under sentence of death. Scriptural records furnish us with many remarkable instances, of individuals who were so steadfast and immoveable, that all the united powers of interest and pleasure, pain and death, were not able to shake their steadfastness. We also find that when we ourselves are solicited, we are not only able to suspend acting, but also to act in a manner directly contrary to the attraction of the primary motive.

After the numerous quotations already advanced, one might think it superfluous to superadd many more concurring testimonies, which combine to show that the sentiment branded by Mr. P. with "Methodistical absurdity," was dictated from heaven, as well as professed openly, as the firm belief of the Christian Church. Prophets and apostles frequently speak of that power in man termed free-will. They declare that men must make a decisive choice of good or evil, life or death. They inform us that *some choose the Lord for their God*, while *others refused and rebelled.* That some returned back to Egypt, and some to folly. That the language of others amounted to, *We will not have this man to reign over us.* That Mary, the sister of Lazarus, *chose the one thing needful.* That the language of the Jews, when Pilate put the question, "Whom will ye (Jews) that I release unto you, Jesus or Barabbas?" was no less, or otherwise, than, *not this man, but Barabbas.*

The power of suspending, or of changing action, which the plainest individual feels that he possesses in all moral conduct, is a most positive proof that the mind, in acting, is not subject to the constraints of necessity; but, on the contrary, is perfectly free in yielding to per-

suasive influence. Grace is sufficient for all sorts of duty. Christ is the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him. But there cannot be the guilt of disobedience, where obedience is impossible. The covenant of the Gospel, into which God has been pleased to enter with mankind, supposes that man is furnished with a gracious power of acceding to, and performing the conditions of it. While the benefit is ours, let all the glory be ascribed to God, the author and donor of all good.

If we examine the gracious influence of religion, through the different stages of it, we must certainly connect the freedom of the will with it, to render it such an act or habit as God will approve of. "*If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?*" The offering is "*a free-will offering.*" "*Choose ye*, this day, whom ye will serve." "My son, give me thy heart." "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.*" "When the word is quick and powerful, *it pierces the heart.*" "There is *a broken and a contrite heart.*" "He will give *a heart of flesh.*" Surely God does not change the heart, or purify the heart, against the will of the individual, or in spite of him.

It must be evident to every person of reflection, that the mind is possessed of a power of commencing action, or of exerting the acts of its will, by the energy God has lodged within it. Though surrounded by an infinite variety of motives in the structure of the world, the state of society, and the propensities and inclinations of our own nature, it has power to choose among them at pleasure. It can even change, at the slightest command of its will, the train of motives which are present to its view. All this it does by the inherent, self-commanding power which God has lodged within it. Motives may incite and awaken the mind to action, but they are at the same time subject to the control of the mind. Hence the possibility of resisting even the influence of the Holy Ghost—of closing the eyes at one time, the ears at another, and of hardening the heart also.

If men had no freedom of will so that they could not

move, must it not be equivalent to mockery and insult, to advise them to come to the waters of life, and to drink freely? When the Lord of the vineyard asked the labourers who were waiting to be hired, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" They gave him a very plain answer, "because no man hath hired us." He who commands the work, will give the power. But to command sight where there are no eyes, or hearing where there are no ears, and this upon pain of present and eternal misery, must appear to be awfully severe, if not dreadfully cruel.

The doctrine which binds man down to a conduct in which he has no free choice, but is a mere log or machine, is calculated to plunge him either into a false security, or everlasting despair. If man, as a probationary creature, cannot take a single step in the way of salvation, till irresistible grace compel him, he must live in sin until such a period shall arrive. Whereas, the plan of heaven is, "Now is the accepted time, and this is the day of salvation."

The rigorous supporters of the absolute scheme, can hardly help seeing how horrible it must be to every good and generous man, as well as painful to the tender feelings of the heart, by perceiving that thousands of sincere and upright individuals have already, as well as whole congregations, relaxed from the rigorous to the moderate professors of this system. They acknowledge that the Gospel plan is so far from depriving men of the liberty of resolving to be on the Lord's side, that it pronounces them happy only while they continue in this temper. If they seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near, he will hear from heaven, and finally bring them thither.

On a survey of the motives before him, man can resolve and choose, preferring one side, and rejecting the other. This resolution is what is called the will or decision, in which he acts as one who has the power to resolve on either side, and not like a slave, who can act only in one way. Almost every individual may recollect instances, in which he has not only done what

he willed or desired; but of his resisting strong motives even to sensuality, ambition, or revenge. Many have given a decided preference to duty, under every possible discouragement, which loss of character, liberty, and even of life itself could inflict. A plain proof that they held the key and formed the decision.

The Gospel is not a mere system of dry, speculative truths, unconnected with the conversion of the soul, or the regulation of the moral conduct. By a gradation of high discoveries which it manifests; by a succession of interesting objects which it places in our view, it encourages and assists us to look upward for grace and mercy; to elevate the mind, purify the affections, and to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Man has a free will which he can exert, in a sense entirely opposite to mechanism. He can take either side, as he makes the choice or forms the resolution. Suppose him tempted to the commission of a crime: his motive to commit it is the love of money, or the gratification of appetite: his motive to abstain is a regard to duty or to reputation. Suppose him to weigh these motives in his mind for an hour, a day, a week, or a month: and suppose, that during this space, no additional consideration occurs to him on either side: which may be supposed, because it is possible—While his mind is in this state, the motives remain precisely the same; and yet it is to me inconceivable, that he should at any time during this space, feel himself under a necessity of committing the crime. He is indeed under a necessity, either to do or not to do: but every man in such a case, feels he has it in his power to choose the one or the other side.

But what shall we think of Piscator, who, instead of reproving an evil choice, avers in the most open manner, and without any delicacy of reserve, that "men cannot possibly help the choice they make in any one particular." And as if this were not enough, he assures us, that "We can do no more good than we do, nor less evil, because God, from all eternity, decreed that both the good and the evil should be done, and gave the

bias to them, which could not possibly be avoided." Now, if the will be irresistibly determined by the Omnipotent, what must we think of his charge, "*Ye will not* come to me that ye may have life," and many others of like import?

Suppose two men, when tempted to commit a crime, to yield to the temptation, and to be differently affected by a review of their conduct; the one repining at fate or providence, for having placed him in too tempting a situation; the other blaming himself for yielding to the bad motive; I would ask, which of these two kinds of remorse is more rational? The first, according to the doctrine of the fatalists: the last, according to the universal opinion of mankind. Will Mr. P. aver, that God placed the first human pair in too tempting a situation, and that its influence was irresistible? Or will he say, that sin, in general, springs from the application of baits and hooks, equally successful, but laid by the hand of God to catch unwary souls? He must acknowledge this, if there be no power of choosing or refusing in man; but at all times, and on every occasion acting as he is stimulated by irresistible fate. On this principle, how could men be justly chargeable with "resisting the Holy Ghost?"

No divine, or moralist, ever supposes true penitence to begin, until the person be duly conscious that he himself is in the fault, either by doing the wrong, or neglecting the right; a sentiment which would be absolutely false, if all persons believed, that the evil which is done could not have been prevented. Whenever a man can be fully satisfied, that God, by an inevitable decree, has brought him into the evil, he may bewail himself, or repine at fortune, but this is no repentance. The language of true remorse is, "I wish the deed had never been done: wretch that I was, not to have resisted the temptation!" The language of the prodigal was, "Father, *I have sinned* against heaven and before thee." The publican's prayer was, "God, be merciful to *me a sinner.*" Neither of these penitents attaches any blame to circumstances, or to God. All the different confessions of sin on record in the

holy volume, *accuse the sinner*, and *acquit the providence of God.*

Will Mr. P. undertake to say, that the true penitent supposes himself to have been under an absolute necessity of doing in every particular as he has done, and that his conduct could not possibly have been otherwise? Surely, every individual of any possible claim to discernment or experience, is a competent judge of this matter. Has not deep regret been often the feeling and language of his soul? Why then multiply words, when by facts it is easy to determine the controversy? "I have sinned," or "We have sinned," is the general language of Scriptural confession. Hence, "they were cut to the heart—they smote upon the breast—they humbled themselves—they repented in dust and ashes—they wept—they exclaimed—they accused and condemned themselves."

Are liberty and necessity so absolutely blended as to become one principle? Surely, where prejudice does not pointedly resist and refuse the light, the arguments in favour of liberty are quite satisfying. And notwithstanding the subtleties of those who take the opposite side of the question, a full confidence must be reposed on that consciousness of liberty, which every man feels in his own breast. The most simple and virtuous part of mankind, are enemies to fatality in their hearts; and altogether unwilling to charge a just, a holy, and merciful God, with all the sins which men commit, or to discharge men from the blame of them.

To believe all actions to be unavoidable, is to believe that man is not an accountable being, and therefore under no law. Or if he be supposed a moral agent, of what use is that name when he is under absolute influence, and compelled to act as he does in every particular? Moral agency implies at least, that we can do some things, and abstain from others. But if every intention and act be fixed by eternal and immutable laws, it is as absurd to say to one, "You ought to be honest to-morrow," as to say, "You ought to stop the motion of the planets." Both are equally out of the power of the person. The Scriptures suppose no such lion

or stumbling-block in the way of duty. Hence "Cease to do evil: learn to do well—Seek the Lord," &c. are the divine commands.

Unless some events depend upon our determination, the terms *ought*, and *ought not*, have no meaning when applied to us. Why should it be made incumbent upon us by a righteous Being, to do what we *ought*, if there be no power to do the right, or to avoid what we *ought not to do*, if we be void of the power to forbear? As well may it be said, "the fire ought not to burn the elegant mansion; the powder ought not to spring the mine; the sword ought not to decapitate;" as to say that a passive human machine ought scrupulously to observe good conduct. This very necessary distinction is well observed in that excellent confession, "We have done the things which *we ought not to have done*, and we have left undone the things which *we ought to have done*."

Our liberty, freedom of will, or moral agency, farther implies, that we are accountable creatures. If we persevere in doing evil, or in neglecting good, we deserve blame, and are liable to punishment. So far is the great Ruler from plunging us into misery, or telling us that it is unavoidable, that he employs every appeal to *affection*, *interest*, *well-being*, *fear*, and *hope*, to rouse us from being supine in this great business, and to prevail on us to fly from the wrath to come.

How different is the fierce, though zealous language of Zuinglius! His creed is, "When God makes angels or men sin, he does not sin himself, because he does not break any law. For as God is under no law, he can break no law." Now for men, under the name of Christians, to publish to the world a system, by which God himself can be employed in contriving and compelling men into all sorts and degrees of sin, and at the same time openly charge the whole upon themselves, argues no small degree of blind dedication to a scheme, which they are determined to support, to the prejudice of conscience, reason, and Scripture. The appeal of Christ to paternal affection, silences for ever such an attempted imputation. If ye (men) being evil, be

addressed by a son, will ye give either the useless or the hurtful? How then can ye impute to the heavenly Father, to create for eternal misery, and help this dreadful end by all successful means?

Conscience must inform Mr. P. that he is accountable for actions that are in his power; while it neither blames nor approves what is not the effect of choice, but of necessity. Let man be once convinced, that all his actions are unavoidable, and his conscience is silenced for ever. If all action be inevitable, then all circumspection is unnecessary, and all remorse absurd. Can any principle be of more fatal consequence to society in general, than to believe that the dictates of conscience are false, unreasonable, or insignificant? Yet this is one certain effect of becoming an absolute predestinarian or fatalist. On this principle, "our rejoicing is no longer to be the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have our conversation in the world."

If every thing be so settled and adjusted, that it must come to pass, in spite of all caution and vigilance, then why does our heavenly Friend bid us watch and pray, to avoid entering into temptation? Why does he tell us, that "we have not, because we ask not?" To encourage supplication for others also, we are assured, that as we have one God, so we have one Mediator between God and man, that is, all mankind, whose office is to reconcile heaven and earth.

When a man's understanding is so far perverted by debauchery, as to make him imagine his crimes unavoidable, he begins to think them innocent, and deems it a sufficient apology, that he is no longer a free, but a necessary agent. The drunkard pleads his constitution; the blasphemer urges the invincible force of habit; and the sensualist would have us believe that his appetites are too strong to be resisted. Suppose all men equally perverted. Licentiousness, misery, and desolation would become irremediable and universal. If God intended that men should be happy, he certainly intended also, that men should believe themselves free, moral, and accountable creatures. Though a change

of habit, or confirmed custom, be a thing which has no small difficulty attached to it, yet difficulty is not impossibility. The human soul is susceptible of a purification in the laver and furnace of regeneration. Old things may become new in Christ.

So far are men from being under irresistible compulsion, that not an individual but must perceive that he is a free agent in his moral character. Now to reconcile this freedom of choice and action, with a secret decree, operating irresistibly upon our choice, is perfectly impossible. There is no truth of which every man is more certain than this; that he has within him a self-determining principle, and that if he were irresistibly forced to act, he could not be a free agent, and therefore not accountable for his conduct. To demand improvement without a talent, or ability, would not be accordant with the plan of Divine Providence.

Are not the words, "I will"—"I choose"—"I will not"—"I refuse," (which are in every body's mouth, in their plain meaning,) a convincing proof that such a power is lodged with man, and to that degree which answers all reasonable ends? And if such a power as choice, liberty, or free will be possessed, it must be altogether the reverse of necessity. If I freely choose to do evil, is it not evident that I have a liberty not to commit that crime? If a man were in prison, a willingness to continue there would not make him free, unless together with that willingness, he had a power to go out if he pleased. The powers which are given to the human soul are immense. "It may not only awake and arise from the dead, and see the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; but it may shut the eye, and close the ear against God, and shut the gate of mercy against itself."

Unless a free choice be the privilege of man, he cannot justly be brought to judgment hereafter. For if the minds of men be not free to choose either death or life, but inevitably bound over before they were born, the business is done already, and every thing is so surely fixed that nothing can shake or unfix it. But this is so far from being the sentiment of Scripture, that it bids us

"Prepare to meet our God—to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure."

Besides depriving men of power to choose the Lord for our God, what can be more unfriendly to human felicity, than speculations about destiny and fatalism, productive only of gloom and despair? For what can be a more uncomfortable and melancholy doctrine, than that of the already finished and everlasting destiny of every individual of the human race, which he cannot possibly escape by any exertions of his own? Does not such a stern decree, running so far ahead of any guidance found in Scripture, not only weave the spider's web, but hatch the cockatrice's egg, from which no good is to be expected, but rather a great deal of evil?

Besides many other particulars in which mind differs from matter, one of the principal distinctions is, that it possesses the power of beginning action without being itself impelled by any extraneous impulse. Matter that is impelled by other matter, receives an impetus according to the quantity and direction of the force with which it is impressed. Without the impression of some external force, it is inert. But mind is essentially active: it is capable of beginning motion, and of communicating motion to other things, antecedently to the action of any force upon itself. It was the infinite and eternal mind which gave the universe its motions. If we can conceive of any order in the divine mind, power and wisdom must have been prior to any system of motives that could arise out of the arrangement of the universe.

As an inherent, self-determining power, is essential to the Infinite Mind, by which he controls all the movements of the universe; so has he given to man, who is his image in this lower world, to possess a likeness to that power, in the control which he possesses over all the resolutions of his will, and the actions of his mind within, as well as of his body externally. Hence man feels himself accountable to his Maker, not only for the evil actions which are finished, but also for the evil thoughts which were encouraged, or yielded to. Hence

the necessity of looking to God for instruction, example, and approbation.

The divine Being always addresses his human creatures as perfectly free. "If ye be willing and obedient—Why will ye die?" In all disquisitions concerning the will, it ought to be laid down as a primary principle, that it is free. It stands on the same footing with the clearest testimonies of sense and consciousness. Hence man is called upon to serve God with the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength; hence an inward affection is as necessary in religion, as an outward deportment.

The idea of absolute inability, but when impelled, must, in its evident tendency, destroy all moral distinctions, and reduce human nature to an involuntary machine. But thanks be to God, we perceive that his care for human happiness contradicts this glaring error. The invincible feelings of liberty, every moment bring conviction or certainty, on this point, to the mind. Virtue and vice are more than names, invented for the use and convenience of society. There is a reality in pure and genuine religion, inspiring even joys unspeakable.

Is there any proposition more clear than this, that we are free in acting? The clear and ultimate perceptions of nature, are the foundations of all truth and certainty in reasoning. When we do what is right, we are conscious to ourselves that we do only our duty, and reasonable service. When we do what is wrong, we are equally conscious that we do what we ought not, and what we might have avoided, if we employed the power we possessed as we ought.

Freedom of mind in willing and choosing, is a principle of moral action which rises very high. It is a much more extensive power than merely controlling our general conduct. It extends to the moral ability of resisting our inclinations, and of correcting habits of thinking and acting, which may be in opposition to our duty or interest. Of this we need no other proofs than the obvious effects of moral culture. The most igno-

rant mind may be enlightened; the most rude and uncultivated taste refined; and the most vicious disposition reformed. The soul may, as it were, sit at the feet of Christ; hear, understand, and feel his instructions; and be changed into the heavenly image from glory to glory.

To meet the principle of moral liberty, God sends forth the message of the Gospel, presenting to the mind of man the true state of things, illuminating and directing it, in the free and proper exercise of its faculties and powers. The offers are universal: "He that believeth shall be saved." Nothing is compulsive: "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." There is no restriction: "there being room enough, and to spare."

It is true, when men allow violent passion to transform them, as it were; when any inveterate prejudice or habit, has, in a manner, seized and incorporated itself with the soul, it becomes extremely difficult, and in some cases, almost impossible to effect a favourable change. But the ideas of difficulty and necessity are totally distinct. There may be a change "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." Though the beginning of the heavenly road may be difficult, yet, "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings, as eagles: they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint." And surely the increasing strength of all moral and religious habits, arising from time, improvement, and experience, is a powerful argument against the fatalist and necessarian.

Though a man of depraved affections is often blind to the proper view of religion, yet there are principles in his moral constitution, which lead him to approve of a degree of virtue beyond his own attainments, and to perceive some faint rays of its beauty, before he is enamoured of its perfection. Here, then, we see a vantage ground in advance of actual attainment, on which moral and religious culture can take hold, to carry forward to an ulterior point, the first principles of religion.

There is a striking analogy between the cultivation of morals and religion on the one hand, and art or science on the other. The rude, uncultivated mind, is blind to the finer beauties of improvement, as the immoral heart is to the higher and more spiritual attainments of religion. The uncultivated mind prefers at first, a rude and coarse execution; because it is not yet prepared to relish those of a higher order. Still, however, there are principles in the rudest mind, which by degrees give a perception of beauty, in examples properly placed before it, greatly in advance of its present state of improvement. So likewise in religion, though a vicious, ungodly man may be far from being an Abel, an Enoch, a Noah, an Abraham, a Joseph, or a Daniel; yet he cannot but approve of some shining traits in those characters, and wish, at least, that he may "die the death of the righteous, and have a latter end like his."

These reflections must show the moral freedom of man, and the gracious power which God has given him over his own actions, to fulfil the duties required of him. Notwithstanding his present comparatively imperfect condition, he may be assisted to advance in the career of moral and religious improvement, from strength to strength, and from grace to grace. This power of growing in grace, and in the knowledge and love of God, cannot but be divinely consoling to human nature, and overturn the foundation of all the gloomy speculations of absolute necessity and fatalism.

OF THE FREE GRACE OF GOD, A SAVING MEASURE OF WHICH IS BESTOWED UPON ALL MANKIND, BEING PURCHASED BY THE DEATH OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

It is universally agreed, that the disorders inherent in human nature, can only be healed by the grace of God, which begins, advances, and completes in man, that which is acceptable to God. Those who favour the absolute scheme, assert, "that though all grace is from God, yet all grace, even from God, is not saving grace; which is given only to the elect, in whom it is efficacious." The Methodists, on better ground, assert, "that a saving measure of the grace of God is bestowed upon all men; that it does not act irresistibly, but suasively, as a counsellor, adviser, or exhorter; and that its gracious acts and overtures may be resisted."

All allow that God is the fountain of all grace; every good and perfect gift coming down from the Father of lights. Of his fulness have we all received, and grace to answer all the ends of grace. He helpeth our infirmities, and guides us in the way of truth. It must be allowed, therefore, that he excites, assists, and supports, as well as exercises a gracious agency over the mind, in the great work of conversion.

Where it is said, that "He worketh in us all the good pleasure of his will," this is not to prevent or exclude the co-operation of man, who is called upon to "work out his own salvation, with fear and trembling." Where "Christ is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins," we are called upon "to repent, and to be converted." Where faith is acknowledged "to be the gift of God," it is acknowledged also to be "the act of man." The want of it is censured—the exertion of it is commanded—the application of it is commended, and rendered effectual to the saving of the soul.

Sometimes it may please God to give a double mea-

sure of his Holy Spirit. He can give two, or five, as well as one talent. He works on the minds of men, so as to convince the most obstinate: and if they will not yield to conviction, but continue in a state of stubborn contempt, he may justly withdraw his grace and Holy Spirit from them, leaving them to the bias of their own perverse and malicious minds. Though "Christ was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet his people would none of him: so that when he came to his own, his own received him not." The power of the Lord was present to heal them, but the Pharisees murmured. They rejected the counsel of God against themselves. When Christ, by the power of God, cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God came unto them; yet he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief. Must not such plain scriptural proofs show the candid and unbiassed mind, that while divine grace is free to act, it nevertheless may be resisted, and even withdrawn?

God gives his Holy Spirit: but it is to them that ask him. The Holy Spirit still concurs with the Gospel in working upon the minds of men to excite and assist them to that which concerns their peace. And though this operation be secret, yet the effects of it are very sensible upon all minds, even upon the Heathen, who have not an outward law, being a law to themselves, by an operation of the Holy Spirit influencing the soul, and exciting condemnation or approbation according to the moral circumstances of the individual.

The Methodist, who contends for the universality of saving grace, contends also that a grace which is incompetent to salvation, is no grace, but is altogether unworthy of the name and characters of that divine influence. He remarks also, that the plain and more obvious sense of Scripture is on his side. The grace of God is generally spoken of as applicable to all mankind. And he argues from this, that if in contrariety to general offers explicitly made, and which every man may claim as he reads or hears men put in a secret reserve; there ought to be very luminous evidence of an invisi-

ble hand of God, subducting what his visible and open hand has bestowed.

That the influence and assistance which God is pleased to afford, do not excuse men from their necessary co-operation, is very evident. God is willing that all should *come to repentance*—He upbraided the cities *because they repented not*—I gave her space to repent, and *she* (*Jezebel*) *repented not*—Preach that *men should repent*—*He repented in dust and ashes*—The people of Nineveh *repented*—See how *Ahab humbleth himself*. Though the eye and ear be God's gifts; yet if man wilfully close the eye or ear, he can with no face of reason, expect that God will see or hear for him.

Before the dispensation of the Gospel was revealed to the world, the grace of God which brought salvation, embraced Jews and Gentiles. Such as sincerely endeavoured to know and do the will of God to the best of their means and capacities, were not left destitute of the divine assistance. Though propensities to evil may appear in the human constitution, yet that grace which brings salvation, teaches to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present world. Under the Gospel dispensation there is a double measure of grace afforded, so that whosoever sins wilfully, is not an offender for want of power.

The grace of God intends the present renovation and eternal salvation of the soul. It comprehends all spiritual blessings, as conviction for sin, repentance, and pardon. It extends to the renewing and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit; including also the farther supplies of divine assistance, direction, and comfort; finally sealing such as hold out in the good way to the end. The grace of God is the fountain and spring of all this good. And therefore not unto us, though we be convinced ever so deeply, or repent ever so sincerely, or believe ever so heartily, but to God be all the glory for ever.

The gracious covenant of the Gospel, necessarily presupposes such a measure of grace or power afford-

ed to us, as is sufficient for performing the conditions of it; otherwise it must leave us in as bad a condition as it found us, because it would only offer new blessings, without making the attainment of them possible; and even make our state worse, by bringing us under new guilt, in our not performing the conditions upon which such gracious offers were suspended.

If it should be replied, that some few persons, at least, have great benefit by it, because they, by an especial and effectual grace, shall be enabled to perform the conditions of this covenant, I ask, is not this an ungenerous straitening of the grace and mercy of the Gospel, to confine it within so narrow a compass as still to leave the greater part of mankind in a worse condition than if grace had never been offered to them? Can a doctrine be true which supposes the guilt and punishment of men to be greatly heightened by rejecting it, when it was not possible for those men to obey it, or to receive any good from it?

To state all the passages of Scripture, which are clear on the doctrine of free and saving grace, would be to transcribe a great part of the sacred volume. The Methodists contend, that there is not an admonition, an expostulation, a reproof, a precept, a promise, or a threatening, but what is predicated on the truth of their opinion, which, on any other ground, would be either deception or mockery: deception, if the party interested were informed of the apparent benefit, but kept in ignorance of the drawback; and mockery, if, as is supposed in the instance at issue, both the offer and the restraint were made known to him in the same heavenly message.

The grace of God is spoken of in such terms as are sufficient to remove all apprehensions respecting its freeness and sufficiency to answer all the purposes of religion, and eternal salvation. It is ready and at hand, in sufficient measure to assist us to perform the gracious conditions of the Gospel, which are Repentance and Faith, as well as all the purposes of a holy and useful life; if we be not wanting to ourselves, by rejecting or neglecting to make use of it. This renders all the

blessings of the Gospel effectual. Without it we could do nothing. By it we can do all things.

The very term "Gospel" means "good news." It is good news to all those to whom it has been authoritatively declared. And who are they? "Repentance and remission of sins were to be preached among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." "All nations" do not signify "some of every nation." This would destroy the whole spirit of the mission. The Gospel is preached to all men: therefore it must be allowed to make an offer to all, whether the offer be accepted or rejected.

The Scriptures of truth, instead of declaring that God has put the black mark of an everlasting decree upon nine-tenths of the human race, millions of ages before they were born, and confounding power with right in the Supreme Being, and averring, that because he has power to predestinate any portion of his creatures to eternal misery, he has the just right to do so, (than which nothing would be more false, as well as unjust) pronounce, that "God is willing that all should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth," and that he contrives the ruin of no man.

The sufficiency of divine grace as afforded to all, must render unbelief and impenitency inexcusable; as not proceeding from want of power, but from free, yet stubborn choice. Without this divine help, the revelation of the Gospel, though never so clear, would signify nothing; all precepts and directions relative to an upright conduct, and even the most vehement persuasions to obedience, could have no force in them. For what would it signify to direct the dead, or to speak to the deaf?

When to the express invitation, there were excuses made; of one, that he had "bought a farm;" of another, that he had "bought five yoke of oxen," and of another, that he had "married a wife, and therefore could not come," they are all of them considered as invited and bidden by the Master, in the sincerest manner. If not, why does our Lord complain—"Ye will not come to me that ye may have life?" And why does

he mourn over Jerusalem, saying—"How often would I have gathered thy children together?" And to the language of complaint and censure for not coming, why does he add that of wo and misery also?

Though fallen as the offspring of Adam, yet we have a principle of spiritual life through Christ, our second Head, who directs and overrules us through all the stages of life. Even the infantile and youthful capacity is restrained from evil, and inclined to good. Can it militate with the doctrine of free grace to say, that a measure of it is afforded to each by the hand of a beneficent God, through the redemption that is in Christ? Our consolation is, that we also are the offspring of our Heavenly Father. A conviction of this must furnish the youthful mind with sure grounds of trust and confidence, and establish the pleasing conviction, that God's favour is their highest interest, and within the reach of their attainment.

When our Lord and Saviour had lain down the precepts of inward and outward holiness, to encourage his hearers to the attainment of it, he assures them that God assists all those who are sincerely desirous to do his will, if they earnestly implore his help. "Ask, and it shall be given, seek, and ye shall find." So that if any person fail of the grace and assistance of God's Holy Spirit, it must be through his own fault, and for want of earnestly seeking it.

The invitations of the Gospel carry a generous sincerity written upon them, as—"Come unto me *all* ye that labour and are heavy laden." Surely this invitation is not given to those that cannot come. Where a man has real sorrow for sin, and a considerable tenderness of mind, directing his view to the consolations of the Gospel, present desire can furnish evidence to the person that he has an interest in the promises made to genuine penitence.

By the Gospel dispensation, God seems to have gone to the very extremity of things, in afflicting innocency itself to save the guilty. How justly might he say, What more could I have done? And if his hatred to sin, as well as his love to the human race, be carried

to the highest pitch, in making him a curse for us, to redeem us from the curse of a broken law, we cannot possibly attribute to him any thing ungenerous, at the time when he unveils the amazing plan of the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ. That Christ should not only die for the sins of the world, but command remission of sins to be published in his name to all people, must be utterly incompatible with a predestinating decree which excludes the majority.

In the parable of the Talents, he intrusts every man according to his capacity. God is infinitely beforehand with man, affording him advantages and opportunities of becoming truly happy, and furnishing such a measure of grace or spiritual help to that purpose, as if faithfully improved on earth, the good Master shall approve of, and reward in heaven.

Resistance offered to the Spirit of God, is directly affirmed in many places. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God," Ephes. iv. 30. If we conceive of the divine government in a similar manner to that in which we conceive of the human, sin must be a resistance of the governance of the divine Spirit: and if his gracious influence may be resisted in a degree, and for a time, why not fully and finally? Iniquity is as the letting out of water. Commencements are to be guarded against. One resolution of the Jews was, "We will not have this man to reign over us," and then another followed, "His blood be upon us and our children."

The gracious promises of the Gospel are so many assurances of the grace of God with us. Hence the apostle exhorts us to endeavour after the highest degrees of universal holiness. "Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord," 2 Cor. vii. 1. The consideration of God's readiness to assist us, and of his grace, which is always at hand to incite our wills to that which is good, and to strengthen us in doing it, ought to be a great argument to us to co-operate with the grace of God.

Nothing on God's part hinders our present and eter-

nal salvation. He has solemnly declared that he desires it, and that he is ready to assist us in it. When he tells us that "He has no pleasure in the death of a sinner," he certainly means what he says, without disguise or mental reservation. If the promise and invitations declare that there is no impediment on God's part, why should we charge him with a duplicity of character, in holding out the false lights of promises, if he himself had beforehand rendered the thing absolutely impossible?

In 1 Thess. v. 19, the language of genuine exhortation is—"Quench not the Spirit." The Holy Spirit is represented as a fire, because it is his province to enlighten and quicken the soul, and to purify and refine it. This Spirit is represented as being quenched. When evil acts are done, evil words spoken, or evil tempers indulged. This conduct will quench it so as to cause it to withdraw its influences, and then the heart is left in a state of hardness and darkness. Then is the Spirit quenched, and the light become darkness.

Rev. iii. 20, states, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." It is well remarked by Calvinists, and by others on this passage, that it puts off all pretence of any thing being done by the will of man, without the grace of God preventing, or going before. But surely it teaches with equal clearness, that compliance or resistance rests with man. That though the Omnipotence of God can accomplish what he wills, yet God's high pleasure has established the system of human affairs on a principle which takes in the will of man, as well as the influence of divine grace. God will save no man against his will.

While the Holy Scriptures every where ascribe our regeneration and sanctification to God; while they give him the praises of our commencement, progress and final perseverance in the religious course; while they acknowledge that we are born again of the Spirit; that we are sanctified by the Holy Ghost; that we are led by the Spirit in the ways of God; and that we are kept by the mighty power of God, through faith unto

salvation; they nevertheless enjoin on us a faithful use of the grace and assistance of the Holy Spirit. They advise us to give all diligence, to add to our faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity.

If there be such a thing as universal grace, which God confers on all, how can there be an unavoidable decree which puts even the supreme God under certain restrictions, and absolutely obliges him to do as he does in every particular, even the minutest? If the grace of God be a favour, which he is obliged to bestow, it hardly deserves the name of donation, grant, or largess. That cannot be a bounty which we are obliged to confer. Now to stop up the innumerable streams of divine goodness, in order to keep an unmeaning decree in credit, must be a very great disparagement to the ways of that God, whose mercy is over all his works.

Whatever we possess of grace, we owe to God: "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." So also 1 Cor. iv. 7—"Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou, that thou didst not receive?" The prominent fruit of it, also, we owe to God: Eph. ii. 8—"By grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Where the Scriptures make use of the term grace, or the grace of God, the Calvinistic system undertakes to offer violence to the grammar, to prove that it means "irresistible grace."

That cannot be said to be wholly out of a man's power, which he may have for asking; or which he is able to do by the strength and assistance of another. Surely the apostle did not in the least derogate from the grace of God, when he said, "I am able to do all things, through Christ strengthening me." He reckons himself able to do all that, which, by the strength of Christ, he was enabled to do. What the grace of God is ready to enable us to do, if we be not wanting to ourselves, may be said to be, in a warrantable sense, in our power.

The commands of God, which are inconsistent with an irresistible decree, are, at the same time, a proof that he gives us a sufficiency of grace to conform to them. Had God given us laws, but no power to keep them, his commands indeed would be grievous. It is true, we have contracted a great measure of weakness, by our being the descendants of Adam; but the grace which the Gospel brings us through Christ, is altogether sufficient to answer every possible injunction laid upon us. He gives us assistance proportionate to the difficulties of our circumstances.

That faith is the gift of God, is by no means denied. And yet the exertion of this principle being commanded, it becomes the duty of man. To assent to the truths of God, as revealed in his holy word; to consent to the conditions of salvation, in repenting and believing the Gospel, and to rely on the great atonement offered for the whole world, is the perfect and good will of God concerning us. This is the true ground of all persuasions to holiness and obedience, which would be, not only to no purpose, but very unreasonable, if we were entirely destitute of the grace of God, or power to do what God commands. But if he be always ready to assist us, with a grace sufficient for us, then there is an abundant encouragement to our endeavours. When God is pleased to allow the Sun of righteousness to shine upon us, why should we allow our views to continue dim, or gloomy?

All the help that is necessary is promised, in this great work of the Lord. The good Spirit of God will be more ready to encourage the weak, and help them forward, than the great enemy to retard them. Nay, the ministering spirits who are for us, and sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation, will exercise a greater power in promoting our good, than evil angels, in their attempts to injure us. But then we are to keep in mind, that this assistance is offered to men, and graciously afforded to them, but not forced upon them. If we even refuse to make a right use of our one talent, we run a risk of losing it. Nay, if after commencing

well, and going on regularly for some time, we wilfully slacken our progress, or turn aside, we forfeit the divine aids.

No passage has oftener been quoted, than Acts xvi. 14.—"And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul." What is there like irresistible grace, in the conversion of the character here introduced? She was already "a worshipper of God," being probably a proselyte of the gate. Surely the gentle and suasive motion of grace, under which she had lived for some indefinite time, is a cause sufficient to account for the effect of a ready ear given to the doctrine of Christ, and to the evidence of the divine commission of those who preached it. This exemplary woman was under the influence of the Spirit of God, before she heard the preaching of St. Paul: and therefore, nothing here said, is to the purpose of irresistible grace, in her conversion. What must we think of Mr. P.'s horrible idea of God's free grace, and free acts, page 42.—"We consider all mankind as sinners, who deserve punishment for their sins. God is free, as a ruler (a just judge,) to punish whom he will for those sins, and also free to bestow his favour, or grace, on whom he will, (the remainder in exactly the same circumstances,) by giving them what true Protestants term effectual calling." Can a father be at liberty, in perfect consistency with the parental affection, to enrich one half of his children, and to hew in pieces the other half, though their circumstances be identically the same?

As God is pleased to co-operate with man in the great work of salvation, then there is abundant ground of encouragement to our endeavours; and if we fall short of eternal salvation, it must be altogether our own fault; it is not because God is wanting to us in the aids and energies of his grace, which are necessary; but because we are wanting to ourselves, in not seeking the grace of God more earnestly, or by neglecting to use it faithfully, when afforded to us. Instead of making

man a free agent of God, in the great business of salvation, Mr. P. unites in one mass the following particulars: "total depravity, election before faith, effectual calling, perseverance in good works, and final salvation, as built on the same basis," pp. 42, 43. By this he would mean to say, that "whenever a man has one gracious thought, or begins well, he must positively continue well, and end well—When he enters the field, he must become a conqueror—Whenever he commences the race, he must win the crown—Whenever one comes out of Egypt, he must enter Canaan." These are gross errors.

Though it be granted, that of ourselves we can do nothing: that it is by grace we are saved; that it is God who works in us, both to will and do what is good; that it is through Christ strengthening us we can do all things: still we must remember that we are not to bury our talents, or to become foolish virgins, or wicked and slothful servants, under an apprehension that we could not improve our talents, but to the discredit of the master. The grace of God anoints our eyes with eyesalve, to see our condition: the Spirit softens the heart, to excite the tear and sigh of repentance, as well as to help us to believe and to obey. This is that which renders wilful unbelief, and stubborn impenitency, inexcusable. Free grace, according to Mr. P., page 43, is, "when God gives a will to one person, which he denies to another." Mr. P. does not seem to be a believer in the Gospel system, which declares, that "*the will of God is, that all may be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth!*"

If we suppose, that men in general are altogether incapable of the influence of divine grace, how can we think the Heavenly Teacher himself could be serious in his exhortations to repentance, his expectations of it, and his complaining of the impenitency of sinners? God justly expects it, because by his grace afforded to every man in sufficient measure, he may repent. Exhortations are afforded to answer this good and valuable end. It must be by our obduracy that we render them vain, and of no effect. All things are stated to be ready on

the side of God, the great author and finisher of faith. God is rich in mercy; Christ died for our sins. The energies of the Spirit are ready to help our infirmities. There is a sufficiency of room in the household of faith. And to crown the whole, an invitation is sent to all, and "he that wills may come." Mr. P. denies that man can "will or determine." To deny the power of choice to man, when God makes an offer, is to deny that the eye can see when light is afforded, or that the ear can hear, when sound rushes on it, or that the mind can think, when an easy and pleasant subject offers itself to its consideration. He particularly finds fault with Mr. Wesley, for holding the Scriptural doctrine, that man possesses, through the redemption of Christ, "a liberty and power to accept of proffered salvation," page 44. He means by this to insinuate, that though man may be a sinner through Adam, he cannot, even through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, repent, believe, or obey, or be any thing but a mere passive instrument. Though the Methodists maintain the necessity of the influence of the Holy Spirit upon the minds of men, yet they believe this Spirit may be grieved and withdrawn.

When Christians are said to be begotten or born of God, those terms are employed to express the sanctity of the Christian calling, affecting the community of Christians; and in this respect, no stronger language is used than there had been concerning the former chosen people. Sometimes it expresses the renovation of the heart. Here it must be repeated, that it is highly improper to give to Scriptural metaphors an interpretation, that implies a production of new powers, and that man is as passive in his second creation as in his first. Mr. P. is not aware how little he profits his argument by saying, page 45, that the Roman Catholics, believing the Methodistical doctrine of a sufficiency of free grace given to every man to profit withal, must discredit it; while he overlooks the other side, namely, that the Turks are joined with the Calvinists, in the doctrine of rigid predestination. He is wrong also in his statement concerning the Romish Church; for several

professors of that Church were predestinarians, particularly Austin, or Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in Africa.

As God is so ready to assist us with his grace and Holy Spirit in the great business of salvation, the Apostle exhorts us, "Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, confirm the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow after holiness without which no man shall see the Lord, looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God." He shows in the plainest manner, that it is for want of care on our part, or of that necessary diligence which God requires, that we lose the grace of God, not allowing it to be effectual to all the purposes of repentance, faith, and holiness, which was his great design in bestowing it. God does not withold his grace from us: but men may not make a proper use of it. This may be the case, when, if engrafted into Christ the living vine, they do not bear the expected fruit; or because they turn back to Egypt; or because they do not hold out to the end. Mr. Pelton has the effrontery to arraign the discipline of the Methodist Church, and with it not only the standard of our common Christianity, but the general tenor of Holy Scripture; assuring his readers, pages 46, 47, that such principles are not accordant with protestantism, but with popery. Surely that protestantism must be but a mere name, or pretence, which will undertake to tell a man, that if once he be one of the elect he can never be lost.

The discovery which the Gospel makes, is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. On this rests the great system of consolation which he has established for the sure support of the hopes of men. We are not left to dubious and intricate reasonings concerning the conduct which God may evince towards his human creatures. When oppressed and dejected by a deep sense of the guilt of sin, and of its dreadful consequences, man is allowed, and even encouraged to look up (however unworthy) with a most astonished eye, to the signals of divine mercy, which are too conspicuous

to be either distrusted or mistaken. The apparent impossibility is reduced to a difficulty, and the camel is made to pass through the eye of a needle. This is not a hypocritical offer, without any intention to make it good; but a liberal plan of God's construction, and founded on the everlasting basis of his good will towards man. Mr. P. would make the good will of God to apply only to a few, (page 47,) and that unconditionally. Hence he tells us, "God has formed the person called after his name, for his glory." And again, when men are said to show forth his praise, Mr. P. remarks, the words are "they shall, and not they will," as if the original alluded to some absolute energy, and not to *the future time*. On what principle can Mr. P. charge Methodism with ambition, because it magnifies the divine beneficence, "in giving to every man a portion of saving grace to profit withal."

But here it may be asked, Are not men said to be "dead in trespasses and sins?" are they not called on with "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light?" Answer: This very passage shows the danger of building doctrine on a strict adherence to the letter of a metaphorical discourse. The same persons are said to be asleep in one part of the verse, and dead in the other. By a state of death he merely intends that in which we are as under the fall; or a state of actual and repeated sins added to the former. We acknowledge that salvation is of grace. But surely this will never show, that the grace of God is not universal on the one hand, or that it is irresistible on the other. Mr. P. tells us, that "many are without this calling, even many wise men, and many mighty," 49. He alludes here to 1 Cor. i. 26. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." To this I reply, that the original does not express, as if God did not send his Gospel to the wise, and powerful, and noble; or that he did not will their salvation. The truth is, the Gospel has given an equal call to all classes of men: but the wise, the mighty, and the noble, are too busy, or too sensual, to pay any attention to an invitation so spiri-

tual and so divine; and therefore there are few of these in the church of Christ, in general.

The Methodists are as ready as any other Church or body of professing Christians, to acknowledge Christ to be the author, promoter, and finisher of our faith; but at the same time avow it to be the repeated, and emphatical tenor of Scripture, that "Christ is the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him," that is, to such, and only such, as cease to do evil, and learn to do well; who repent and believe the Gospel. Some men seem to be so much afraid of the merit of obedience and good works, that they are loath to assert the necessity of them, and do it with as much caution, as if they apprehended some dangerous consequences from it. But this fear is perfectly groundless. Any man may easily see the plainest difference between worthiness of desert on the one hand, and on the other the fitness of receiving a penitent, broken-hearted rebel, who is sorry for what he has done. Though his sorrow cannot deserve a pardon, yet he may thereby be qualified to receive it. Though repentance may not make him worthy, yet it may make him capable of it, which an obstinate rebel is not. This is a thing so plain in itself, that it is a waste of time to insist longer upon it. While Mr. P. excludes all conditions, as having any thing to do with our present or eternal salvation, the Apostle Paul will do it for him. God hath chosen you from the beginning, *through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth*, 2 Thess. ii. 53. Was this unconditional? The Jews considered themselves as the elect or chosen people. The apostle here shows that God had the Gentiles as much in the contemplation of his mercy and goodness as he had the Jews. To attain this election there were some conditions attached to the order of divine grace. They were to hear the truth, or doctrines of the Gospel. They were to believe this truth when they heard it preached. They were to receive the Spirit of God in believing the truth. That Spirit was to sanctify their souls; producing inward holiness and outward conformity to God. All this constituted a state of present or spiritual salvation, and

fitted them for obtaining the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the inheritance among the saints in light. But does the Apostle tell them that their state, however good, was unchangeable? By no means. He adds, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast." Their obtaining eternal glory depended on their faithfulness to the grace of God. For their calling did not necessarily and irresistibly ensure their eternal salvation. At any of the stagesof their journey they might have halted, and never finished their Christian course.

But Mr. Pelton will say, If religion may be lost, does not this make grace a precarious thing, and the Gospel insufficient to ensure our salvation? This is certainly a great mistake: for our Gospel ensures the salvation of that numerous part of mankind which enters the grave in a state of infancy. Besides this, it ensures a seed of redeeming and sanctifying grace to all mankind, as long as their day of grace or initial salvation lasts. For we maintain, with St. Paul, that "the free gift is come upon all men to justification of life." And we also assert with our Lord Jesus Christ, that of such (namely infants) is the kingdom of heaven. Add to this, that our Gospel ensures eternal salvation to all true believers who are faithful unto death. It is rather amazing that Mr. P. should forget the conditions attached to genuine piety. In page 48 he quotes Matt. xxv. 34, "Then shall the king say to those on his right-hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world." But if the Judge were not interrupted, he would proceed to add, "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked and ye clothed me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." Is this unconditional salvation? Does the Judge pronounce only on what he does in us and for us, and not on what we do for him? Nay, he will look upon this, as if we did it to himself, and pronounce accordingly. But how will the same Judge act with the believers in unconditional salvation, who do nothing, lest it should be a disparagement to Christ. He will say, "Depart, ye

cursed: for ye did not," &c. Of all the fruits of the Spirit, love and mercy give men the nearest conformity to God. The Jewish Doctors say, "As often as a poor man presents himself at thy door, the holy and blessed God stands at his right-hand: if thou relieve the poor man, God will give thee a reward." A moderate supply of food might keep soul and body together, which are often torn asunder for want of this supply. One of the sayings of the Jewish Doctors on this head is worthy of notice. "He who neglects to preserve the life of a fellow-creature when it is in his power, is as guilty in the sight of God, as he who commits murder." As to "this kingdom being prepared from the foundation of the world," let it be remarked, the inheritance is only for the children of the family. They must be sons and then heirs, not selling their inheritance for a mess of pottage.

Some persons are fond of pressing Scriptures, which speak of the divine agency on the mind, into a service which is made to signify the irresistible energies of omnipotence. Thus, in Philippians ii. 12, 13, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." They assert, that this means the sovereign, irresistible will of God. But the difficulty will be easily removed, if we recollect, that the apostle had commended them for obeying, "not only in his presence, but much more in his absence." He then exhorts them to continue in the same good way; still "working out their own salvation with fear and trembling," because, notwithstanding the want of his bodily presence, the divine Being was among them as much as ever, moving them of his benevolence, both "to will and to do." No Methodist doubts for a moment, that God is the origin and promoter of all good; but that his gracious plan requires, that "we should ask in order to have; seek in order to find; and knock in order to have the door of mercy opened—that we should repent, believe, obey, and hold out to the end, in order to be

spiritually and everlastingly saved. Mr. P.'s plan of making man a mere machine, and passive in every thought, word, and work, must plunge the abettor of it into a false security, if he imagine himself one of the elect, or into everlasting despair, if he think himself a reprobate. If a man cannot take a single step in the way of salvation, even after God has given the command to do so, until the moment when irresistible grace compels him, he is left under the absolute necessity of living in sin. Surely such a system must be unworthy of the Holy One of Israel.

The divine operations of the Holy Spirit are adduced as applicable to irresistible energies. Some instances are brought forward, which from the connexion, are clearly seen to be intended, not of a gracious, but of a miraculous influence and agency. Thus Ephes. i. 9—"According to the working of his mighty power." Now this power is immediately afterward described as illustrating itself in the resurrection of Christ. So also when we read, Gal. ii. 8—"He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles." This certainly means more than the mere preaching of the word. It was not by this only that three thousand Jews were converted on the day of Pentecost; but by signs from heaven also. This mighty working appeared in "the demonstration of power," on which the apostolic pre-eminence was established. This is what is called, in Colos. i. 29, "His working, which worketh in me mightily." All this was extraordinary, and not the gentle and gracious influence of the Holy Ghost, inclining the will and sanctifying the heart.

When Mr. P. brings in the power of God as able to do every thing, he must be understood with some caution. We allow the omnipotence of God to be an active principle, which can do all things that are proper with ease, in a moment, by the fiat of his will or word. We are not, however, to consider the power of God as separate from his divine will and wisdom. Hence he "does all things according to the counsel of

his will;" that is, freely and wisely. The Divine Power is not said to do that which implies a contradiction, as "that a thing should be and not be at the same time," or cause "that sound must be seen, as if it were a colour," or "that colour must be heard, as if it were a sound," or "that what is naturally and morally good must be evil," or "that what is necessarily true can be false," or "that the same thing should be and not be at the same time." Now that God should work irresistibly upon the souls of men, and make them good in spite of them; that the heart has nothing to do with the great business of religion; but that God works all things irresistibly, even wickedness in the wicked; that he should condemn for not seeing, or hearing, or speaking, or understanding, when he never gave eyes, or ears, or tongue, or rational mind, are charges which the great, and just, and holy God, does not deserve from his human creatures.

Mr. P. ought to remember the solemn charge, "Let not him that puts on the armour boast, as if he had put it off." In page 52, he charges the Methodist Conference, "with being driven to such extremities, that every person may know the difficulties they were in, because," as he says, "they refer to Psalm cxlv. 9, when they quote "The Lord is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works," instead of "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." Now I would ask Mr. P. what difference can be made to appear in the spirit of the quotation, from what it is intended for? Whereas, if he be so impartial as to look at his own quotations, page 50 of his book, he will see that Ephesians i. 10, is made to speak, "My people shall be willing in the day of my power:" whereas, in reality it is, "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." Now when Mr. P. makes such quotations, to what extremities must he be driven? How necessary, in passing a judgment, to be calm and unprejudiced, allowing

ourselves sufficient time to receive that impartial impression, which will form a basis of true deposition.

Instead of teaching the early converts to Christianity, that God designedly created the world for the express purpose of plunging the great majority into inevitable perdition, what the apostles would impress upon their minds was, that the divine intention is favourable towards the posterity of Adam—that God is loving to every man—that he so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son to die for them—that he who died for their sins, rose also for their justification—that he is now also their Mediator and Advocate, at the right-hand of Divine Majesty. They show the greatness of Almighty power, softened by the mild radiance of condescension and mercy. In their characters of God, we cannot but behold him diminishing the awful distance at which we stand from his presence, by appointing for all mankind a daysman and intercessor, through whom the humble and penitent may without dismay approach his presence and throne, and find mercy and grace to help in time of need. By such gracious views of the Divine Nature, the Gospel plan lays the foundation for a religion and worship, which shall be at once rational and affectionate: in which the light of the understanding shall concur with the devotion of the heart.

With respect to those passages of Scripture which speak of the operations of divine grace, there are none which represent it as irresistible, any more than will equally give occasion to apply other passages which relate to the operations of Satan, to prove his influence to be resistless also. For instance, 2 Tim. ii. 26, some are represented as being "taken captive by him at his will." In Eph. ii. 2, we read of "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Yet this powerful influence is by no means intended to prove that it is irresistible. Hence the apostle advises, "resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Though the Divine influence be powerful, yet we are commanded—"quench not the Spirit," and "grieve not the Spirit." There is no ground in the language of Scripture, to believe it to be irresistible.

Mr. P., page 53, adduces the General Conference as saying—"If then you say that Christ calls those who cannot come; those whom he knows to be unable to come; those whom he can make able to come, but will not; how is it possible to describe greater insincerity?" And to show, page 54, that God is the author and finisher of all the sin in the world, without the least variableness or shadow of turning, he quotes several passages of Scripture.

As to Prov. xvi. 4, "The Lord hath made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil," I answer, the word translated "made," is not *bara*, which is expressive of creating; nor *asah*, which signifies making; but *paal*, which signifies to go through a work, or to bring it to effect. As applied in this place, it means that God so disposes matters as to cause the wickedness of men to bring them to the day of evil. God can make the wicked also the instruments of accomplishing the divine purposes, in bringing evil on others, as the king of Assyria, who was the rod of his anger, and the staff of his indignation, to the surrounding nations, Isaiah x. 5. He can cause good things to bring bad men to evil; as wine, if too freely drunk, to inebriate, and the wholesome meat to surfeit. Now whose fault is it, if this result shall happen? Thus, also, the legislature of a country appoints the wicked to the day of evil, by passing laws which deprive certain guilty persons of life. But can the contrivance and accomplishment of their death be charged on it? With equal propriety may it be said of the Divine Legislator, that he is clear of the blood of sinners, if, after his repeated warnings, they die in their sin.

In 1 Peter ii. 8, Christ is said to be "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumbled at the word, whereunto they were appointed." Here the question is, Who were the persons spoken of, and to what were they appointed? The context describes them as "disobedient," and being disobedient, the preaching of a crucified Saviour was "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence" to them. The Syriac version is, "At which (stone) they stumble

who are disobedient to the word, to which (word) they were appointed." Erasmus paraphrases the place thus—"And they stumble, whosoever are offended at the word of the Gospel, and believe it not, seeing the law of Moses made them ready beforehand, to the end that they should believe the Gospel, as the thing was truly performed in deed, which the law signified in shadows." Archbishop Cranmer's Bible, published in 1541, translates the place thus—"Whereat they be offended, who stumble at the word, and believe not thereon, on which they were placed." Archbishop Newcombe translates it—"Even to those who stumble at the word, disbelieving that to which they were appointed." Mr. Charles Thompson translates it—"They, disbelieving the word, stumble at the thing for which they were laid." Being "appointed to the word," seems a more natural sense, than being "appointed to unbelief." Of this text, I notify, that Calvin did not apply it to the doctrine of reprobation.

With respect to Jude 1, 4, "who were before of old ordained to this condemnation," it may be observed, that the ground of this ordination is declared, in their being "ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Ordaining here, is not in any usual sense of the word. In the original the word is "before written," and in its connexion may be properly translated "of whom it was before written." It must mean, either that the end of such ungodly men might be seen foretold in prophecy, or that their destruction might be traced, either by themselves or by others, in the end of former ungodly men on record. Nothing can be farther from the sense of the passage, than that their being ungodly was part of the ordination. Dr. Doddridge's interpretation is, that God is perfectly clear of ordaining their sin, in order to their punishment. "Which interpretation (says he) I prefer to any other, as it tends to clear God of that heavy imputation which it must bring upon his moral attributes, to suppose that he appoints men to sin against him, and then condemns them for doing that which

they could not but do, and what they were, independent of their own freedom of choice, fated to; a doctrine so pregnant with gloomy, and, as I should fear, with fatal consequences, that I think it a part of the duty which I owe to the word of God, to reserve it from the imputation of containing such a tenet." This is another text, in which Calvin could see no reprobation.

Theodore Beza was the person with whom the drawing of reprobation from this text originated. Dr. John Gerhard, a Lutheran divine, who was a professor in the University of Jena in the 16th century, and who is honourably spoken of by Dr. Mosheim, in his 2d vol., notices the innovation here remarked on. He ascribes it to Beza, and adds, that "the perversion being very agreeable to some, they were not afraid to insert it in the text of the Latin Bibles, published at Frankfort in 1591. Gerhard's work, which was dedicated to the Elector of Saxony, appears to have been first edited in 1610; at which time it appeared an extraordinary instance of effrontery, to have introduced into Latin Bibles, what restricted the words to a sense now pleaded for by the Calvinists, as the true construction of the common English version.

Cranmer's Bible translates the passage thus—"Of which it was written, aforetime, unto such judgments." Luther's Bible, rendered into English, has it—"Of whom, in former times, has been written to such punishments." Archbishop Newcombe has it—"Who were, before of old, set forth for this condemnation." And Mr. Thompson, thus—"Who have been of old written of, and for this very crime."

Dr. John Gerhard quotes a work of Calvin, in which, commenting on Acts xiii. 26—"Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent," he illustrates the sentiment of it by this text, which he considers only as expressing that the Jews were placed in circumstances favourable to their reception of the Gospel. This is even stranger than what is stated above, concerning his not including the place

among the texts by which his system is supported in his Institutes.

As to Romans ix. 10—20, "The hardening of Pharaoh's heart." The case of Pharaoh has given rise to many fierce controversies, and conflicting opinions. Would men but look at the whole account without the medium of their respective creeds, they would find little difficulty in coming at the truth. All sober Christians must allow with St. Augustine, that, as the person here alluded to, is one who is said to have hardened his own heart frequently, by resisting the grace and Spirit of God, "that God does not harden him by infusing malice into him, but by not imparting mercy to him. Also, that God does not work hardness of heart in man, but in a certain sense he may be said to harden him whom he does not soften; to blind him whom he refuses to enlighten; and to repel him whom he refuses to call." It is but just and right that he should withhold those graces which he had repeatedly offered, and which the sinner had either refused and rejected, or trampled under foot. The Hebrew verb *chazak*, which we translate "harden," literally signifies to strengthen, confirm, make bold, or courageous. Joshua uses this word, Josh. i. 7, in his exhortation—"be strong." So also, in his dying exhortation to the people, Josh. xxiii. 6—"Be ye therefore very courageous." It would not be well to translate it in those places, "be hard," or "be ye hardened;" or "be ye very hard," or "very hardened." Yet if we use the word "hardy," it would suit the sense and context very well. "Only be thou hardy;" or "be ye therefore very hardy." Now if we apply the word in this way to Pharaoh, the sense would be good, and the justice of God equally conspicuous. "I will make his heart hardy, bold, daring, presumptuous. For the same principle acting against God's order is presumption, which, when acting according to it, is undaunted courage. The Hebrew verb *kashah* is also used, which signifies, to render stiff, tough, or stubborn, but it amounts to nearly the same meaning with the former.

All who are acquainted with the Scriptures know

well, that God is frequently represented as doing what he only permits to be done. So because a man has grieved his Spirit, and resisted his grace, he withdraws that Spirit and grace from him, and thus the sinner becomes bold and presumptuous in sin. Pharaoh made his own heart stubborn against God, Exod. ix. 34, and God gave him up to judicial blindness, so that he rushed on stubbornly to his own destruction. From the whole of Pharaoh's conduct, we learn that he was bold, haughty, and cruel: God permitted these dispositions to have their full sway in his heart, without check or restraint from divine influence; the consequence was, he did not immediately comply with his requisition to let his people go: this allowed God fuller opportunity of manifesting his power, by multiplying signs and miracles; and thus impress the hearts, both of the Egyptians and Israelites, with a due sense of his omnipotence and justice. The whole procedure was calculated to do endless good to both nations. The Israelites must be satisfied that they had the true God for their protector; and thus their faith was strengthened. The Egyptians must see that their gods could do nothing against the God of Israel, and thus their dependence on them was necessarily shaken. These great ends could not have been answered, had Pharaoh consented at once to let the people go. This consideration alone is sufficient to unravel the mystery, and to explain every thing. Let it be likewise observed, that there is nothing spoken here of the eternal state of the Egyptian king, nor does any thing in the whole of the subsequent account, authorize us to believe "that God hardened his heart against the influence of his own grace," that he might occasion him so to sin, that his justice might condemn him to hell. This would be such an act of flagrant injustice, as we could scarcely attribute to the worst of men. He who leads another into an offence, that he may have a fairer pretence of punishing him for it; or brings him into such circumstances, that he cannot avoid committing a capital crime, and then hangs him for it, is surely the most execrable of mortals. What then should we make of the God of justice and

mercy, should we attribute to him a decree, the date of which is lost in eternity, by which he is determined to cut off from the possibility of salvation millions of millions of unborn souls, and leave them under a necessity of sinning, by actually hardening their hearts against the influences of his own grace and Spirit, that he may, on the pretext of justice, consign them to endless perdition? Whatever may be pretended in behalf of such unqualified opinions, it must be evident to all who are not deeply prejudiced, that neither the justice nor the sovereignty of God can be magnified by them. Neither the Hebrew of Exod. ix. 16, "I have caused thee to stand," nor the Apostle's translation, Rom. ix. 17—"I have raised thee," nor that of the Septuagint, "On this account thou art preserved," namely, in the past plagues—can countenance that most exceptionable meaning put on the words by certain commentators, namely—That God ordained or appointed Pharaoh from all eternity, by certain means to this end; that he made him to exist in time; that he raised him to the throne; that he preserved him and did not cut him off in the past plagues; that he strengthened and hardened his heart; that he irritated, provoked, and stirred him up against the people of Israel; and suffered him to go to all the lengths he did go in obstinacy and rebellion; all which was done for the express purpose of showing in him his power, in destroying him and his host in the Red Sea. Now what is the amount of this horrible opinion, but that "this man was raised up by God in every sense, for God to show his power in his destruction." So man may speak; but thus God has not spoken. He had ever so many offers made to him: he might have submitted, and prevented his own destruction. He was warned beforehand, which must certainly show him that the affliction which happened was no casualty, but the effect of a Divine Providence in the exercise of Justice.

With respect to Romans ix. 20, Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? The plain meaning is, As if he had said, weak, ignorant man, darest thou retort on the infinitely good and righteous God? Reflect on thyself; and tell me, after thou hast

abused the grace of God, and transgressed his laws, wilt thou cavil at his dispensations? God hath made, created, and formed the Jewish nation: and shall the thing formed, when it hath corrupted itself, pretend to correct the wise and gracious Author of its being; and say, Why hast thou made me thus? Why hast thou constituted me in this manner? Thou hast done me wrong in giving me my being under such and such conditions. The apostle is here speaking of men, not individually, but nationally, as may be seen from Jeremiah xviii. 1, from which he brings the parable of the potter.

"The decrees of God are the rule," says Mr. P. p. 55, "by which he regulates his own conduct in his government." He has advanced this declaration, but given no proof of it. By the decrees of God, Mr. P. would make him the author and finisher of all the sin in the world. But the Holy Scriptures speak a different language. The language of Abraham was, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" In things that are more obscure we should govern ourselves by that which is clear, and should, with Moses, lay down this for a certain principle. "All his ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." With the apostle of the Gentiles, we should say, "Is there unrighteousness in God? God forbid. And again; we know that the judgment of God is according to truth. How malicious a suggestion must it be to proclaim on the house top, and spread through the medium of the press, the barefaced opinion, "that God seeks the destruction of men, and hath made his laws on purpose so difficult and cross to our inclinations, that he might have an advantage to ruin us for our disobedience to them." Alas! it must appear to every candid observer, that our destruction is of ourselves, and that God is free from the blood of all men. Besides this, he has provided a powerful and effectual remedy for our natural infirmity and impotency, by that sufficient grace which brings salvation, and which has been afforded to all men.

Mr. P. tells us, pp. 56, 57, that by a decree, we are

to understand a purpose, design, or determination in God, by which he has predetermined to do, or work in his people, to will and to do; and by which he also determined not to bring many of the wicked to repentance, but to punish them for their sins." He adds, that this decree, well supported, is "the doctrine which puts God upon the throne both of heaven and earth." To suppose for a moment, that a God of truth and equity should be engaged in laying the dreadful snare of a secret decree, intended to trepan and ruin his moral creatures, is a most ungenerous surmise. A decree is a secret thing; whereas, God's calls to repentance, the time afforded, the ministry of the word, the suggestions of the Spirit, and the means of grace, are all open; they are plainer signs that God is willing to have mercy, than any secret decree can be, of his intending the ruin of the individual. Why does Mr. P. raise those hobgoblins, and station those lions in the way, to disturb the minds of young persons and sincere penitents, who often, of their own accord, "fear where no fear is." Are the secrets of God to be our rule of judging, or "the word which is nigh us, and in our hearts." The word of God is very plain on this head, where it informs us, that "secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." Where the express command of God is, "Reject not the counsel of God against yourselves"—or where he asserts that their "blood shall be upon their own heads." Do not those Scriptures, and a whole host of Scripture testimonies that might be adduced, plainly show that God has set life and death before men, and gives them liberty to make a free choice? He will not irresistibly force happiness upon them, and make them wise and good, whether they will or no. He presents them with such motives, and offers such arguments as are fit to prevail with reasonable men, affording them at the same time all necessary assistance. We ought to rely on the truth of his open declaration; and that he does not speak with any secret reserves or dark distinctions.

No wonder Mr. P. pp. 58, 59, should quote the Methodists, as stating it as the opinion of the rigid holders of the predestinating decree, "that the elect must be saved, do what they will: that the reprobates must be damned, do what they can." Also, "By his unchangeable decree, he leaves thousands of souls in death, and compels them to continue in sin—Such blasphemy as this is sufficient to make the ears of a Christian to tingle—This is the blasphemy clearly contained in the horrible decree of predestination—children of a span long as well as their parents, are made to pass through the fire of hell—"Let the morning stars sing together, and the sons of hell shout for joy—The decree is passed, and who shall disannul it." Now I would ask Mr. P. if all these charges against rigid predestination be not only substantially, but even literally true, in number, weight, and measure? Does not he himself, page 60, positively declare, that every thing is irresistible and unconditional? "That if he (God) desires to bring any sinner to repentance, he does it, (he must succeed) for he is the Lord God Almighty, and there is nothing too hard for him." Now as to the exercise of God's Almighty power, Mr. P. will do well to recollect, that the Methodists allow this power to extend beyond not only description, but even the highest conceptions of mortals. But at the same time, that He exercises this power willingly, in such manner, and for the producing of such effects as seem best to agree with his divine wisdom and goodness. Now if Mr. P. deny this, and assert, that when sinners plunge themselves into guilt, and when the worst comes to the worst, he must then fly to the power of God, which he says can do all things, without contradiction, "even wickedness in the most wicked."

Although it is a Divine truth, that there is a gracious influence of the Spirit of God on the hearts of men; yet it is suasive, and not irresistible. This would make man to be a mere machine; and prevents his being a subject either of punishment or reward. Not only so; it seems eminently derogatory to Almighty God, by representing him as offering benefits which he de-

termined never to bestow; and which the party to whom the offer is made, is under an invincible necessity of rejecting. This is a point which Mr. P. trifles with, by saying that God can do what he pleases with his own, and that he has created the great majority designedly for the day of wrath, and fiery indignation." In page 62, he tells us that, "As God has created all beings, so he knows their ends, has them in his power, and what his soul desireth, even that he does." Surely, if this be the case, and if man be altogether a passive machine, or mere instrument in the hand of God, he is not to be condemned for the evil, or commended for the good which he could not prevent. However justly we may be cautioned in admitting the voice of reason in the things of God, yet we must sometimes appeal to it, as well as to common sense, on the score, that decreeing man to the commission of sin and its consequent punishment, is a matter that ought not to be ascribed to God, because contrary to our natural apprehensions of his attributes.

In page 64, Mr. P. asks, "Is Judas excused for fulfilling what God had determined to permit him to do?" Now, on his own principles, the question ought to be, not concerning what God had determined to "permit him to do," but "what God determined he should do," and rendered it impossible for him to avoid by an irresistible decree. Sensible of the pressure of this difficulty, he altogether shuns the possibility of reconciling any thing like the application of an invincible energy and bias to evil, and a just accountability in the creature so circumstanced, to the justice of the Almighty Being, constraining to the evil act. A presumption, so extravagant, which makes the Holy One of Israel the intentional author of evil, cannot but be considered as contradictory to his essential character and attributes.

If Christ came into the world to save not only sinners, but the chief of sinners, how could his goodness, impartiality, equity, truth, and holiness, permit him to reprobate millions unconditionally? And if he came to save sinners, the chief not excepted, why does the

publisher of inevitable decrees except any? When the plain language of Scripture is "Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man—that the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost—that the great end which he had in view was, that the world through him might be saved—that he is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world—that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." Why does Mr. P. fly in the face of reason, and Scripture, and common sense, and say that Christ died only for a select few?

As to Luke xxii. 22, "And truly the Son of man goeth as it was determined of him." The word goeth, signifies to die, go away, depart, and is frequently used for leaving the world. The word "determined," is in Matt. xxvi. 24, rendered by "written," or prophesied of, as may be seen in Psalm xxii. Isaiah liii. Dan. ix. 26. In all which the death of Christ is spoken of, and that, not for himself, but for the sins of the people, that is, "of all the people." He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He died, the just for the unjust. He came to save sinners. He bore our sins in his own body on the shameful tree. Now, where an individual can claim any connexion or acquaintance with the terms lost, unjust, or sinner, he can claim an interest in a Redeemer, in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Mr. P. adduces Acts ii. 33, (it should be verse 23,) "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." This certainly means that counsel of God, which can define time, place, or circumstance; which saw what was most proper in this respect for the manifestation and crucifixion of his Son; God having determined, that the salvation of a lost world should be brought about in this way; and neither the Jews nor the Romans had any power here, but what was given to them from above. It was not through Christ's weakness, or inability to defend himself, that he was taken; nor was it through their malice merely, that he was slain; for God had determined long before, to give his Son a sacrifice for

sin; and the treachery of Judas, and the malice of the Jews, were only the incidental means by which the great counsel of God was fulfilled.

As to Acts iv. 27, (it should be 28,) "To do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." It is evident that what God's hand and counsel determined before to be done, was not that which Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel had done, and were doing; for then their rage and vain counsel would be such as God himself had determined should take place, which is both impious and absurd: but these gathered together to hinder what God had before determined, that his Christ or Anointed should perform; and thus the passage is undoubtedly to be understood.

Mr. P. brings it as a dreadful charge against the Methodists, pages 68, 69, "That Mr. Wesley and they hold it as a sentiment, that God, of his own free grace, gave the posterity of Adam a liberty and power to accept of proffered salvation." To this I would answer, that not only God's free grace, but man's free will also, is a subject which is in every body's mouth. When the sorrowful sighings of the contrite heart are poured out at the foot of the throne of grace, in asking, seeking, calling, entreating for mercy through *the crucified*, will not the most rigid predestinarian allow that God is waiting to be gracious, and that he will hear and answer to the joy of their souls? Are not the plain assertions, "I will," "I will not," "I choose," "I refuse," (which are most familiar, and in every body's mouth,) a plain proof that such a power is lodged, by the grace of God, in the hand of men, to that degree which answers all reasonable ends?

Mr. P. seems highly displeased, page 69, that the Methodists should hold out the spiritual and saving influences of religion as attainable in the way of request or prayer, at the hands of God. When humble prayer lifts the eye to the hills of salvation, and holy hands without wrath or doubting--crying to the Lord in trouble—calling on his name with supplication, ardour, and earnest desire—asking, seeking, knocking, striving, be-

seeching, weeping, pouring out the voice of want to him who can relieve, and the voice of penitence to him that can forgive; he will certainly hear and answer.

"To say that man has free will to choose when God offers, or to accept of salvation when he proffers it, is pride, or something bordering on pride," in Mr. P.'s esteem. To this, I answer; can we for a moment suppose or imagine that God's natural or moral favours carry in them the intention to excite pride. Is not this the abuse, and not the proper use of them? Were the heavenly bodies intelligent beings, there could be no crime in their recollecting that "there is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another of the stars; and that one star differeth from another in glory." There is no pride in an angel's contemplating himself as superior to a man; or in a man, in contemplating himself as superior to a brute.

That doctrine of the Methodists, which states it to be our duty "to love God because he is good to us," Mr. P. condemns as selfish. Surely a proper consideration of the divine goodness ought to excite our inward affection and gratitude, as well as our praises. To this duty the Psalmist summons all the powers and faculties of his soul: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name." He invites others to the same work: "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever." The declarations of the New Testament are—"We love him, because he first loved us"—"Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift"—"In every thing give thanks." It is a sign that men are unfit for heaven, when they are backward to that which constitutes the chief employment of the blessed above, who sing the praises of God and the Lamb for ever.

While Mr. P., (pages 70, 71,) thinks it an easy thing to bring in the irresistible power of God, as forcing the wicked to their pitch of evil, as well as the elect to their piety, declaring at the same time that there is not a text in the Bible which speaks of any thing else but force, or which speaks of man having the power of choosing what is right, he is not aware to what diffi-

culties Calvinistic divines are driven in their public ministrations, by the distinction of general and special grace. They are aware how barren of all practical use it would be, were they continually bringing before their hearers, the dependence of the human will on causes over which it has no control. For on this ground, there would seem to be no room for persuasion. But they think it their duty to persuade, and to make an offer without reserve. The English Divines at the Synod of Dort, recommended to the states, that predestination should not be openly and indiscriminately inculcated. It was probably owing to those divines, who were spoken of as worthy men, that the Synod did not go the lengths that Gomarus and others aimed at. The same English Divines endeavoured, but without success, to procure a censure on the doctrines that "God moves the tongues of men to blaspheme him," and that "men can do no more good or evil than they actually do." What does Mr. P. think of such language as this? For, if the Methodists be irresistibly determined to believe and speak as they do, why does he yet find fault with his own doctrine?

When Mr. P. charges the Methodists (page 72,) with asking, "Who is bound to seek after that which is impossible? Certainly it would be mocking men to bid them do so;" instead of answering this objection rationally, he tells us "that the main pillar of their hope for eternity stands entirely on human reasoning, which expressly contradicts the word of God"—as Jer. xiii. 23, Can the Ethiopian change his colour, or the leopard his spots? But surely where difficulties are spoken of, in the strong language of impossibilities, Mr. P. ought to have some regard to figurative expression, and not to avow that conversion is an utter impossibility.

We allow, and maintain that were our works to arise to all the characters which self-flattery might wish, we should be but unprofitable servants. So even reason may tell us; and so our blessed Saviour has pronounced, in a manner not to be misunderstood. But besides, being sinners, we have nothing in our power

that can be a commutation for the punishment due to sin. It was Christ who "bore our sins in his own body on the tree." "He made reconciliation by the blood of his cross," and therefore, not unto us, but to him be ascribed all the praise.

The Methodists plead and publish, that the merits of Christ are the great procuring cause of the grace of God. Thus, in the case of subjects under the displeasure of their prince, if he should pardon them at the request of a son, raised high in his affection by an achievement eminently meritorious, the merit of the thing will by no means be imputed to the persons pardoned. In the case supposed, there must, however, be an acceptance of the act of grace; to be a pledge of dutiful submission in future. So in the case of a Christian; there must be a like acceptance, by faith, of the mercy of God through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Surely this view of the subject must utterly level and discountenance all human pride.

But while the Methodists acknowledge the merits of Christ as the great procuring cause of mercy, they cannot see how this should prevent the humble penitent from coming to Christ, believing on him with the heart unto righteousness, and loving him with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength; manifesting the sincerity of his inward piety by a holy conversation and godliness. The truth is, that as repentance, faith, and obedience, are means by which grace operates to our salvation from sin in this world, and to our final salvation in heaven; each of them is occasionally spoken of as if it were the whole of religion, and with good reason, because it implies the others in a high degree. They are all gracious conditions, to which every true Christian must conform. The Calvinists allow the impossibility of the enjoyment of heavenly happiness by persons habitually inclined to sin, even if they were admitted into heaven. Hence, where universal holiness can be dispensed with in life, from a fear of its detracting from the merit of Christ, they allow it is absolutely necessary in death.

Some Calvinists have applied to the righteousness of

Christ, what is found in Rev. xix. 8. "And to her (the Church,) was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints." But what says that candid Calvinist, Dr. Doddridge, to this application? "The righteousness of saints evidently signifies their righteous acts, and therefore, though I doubt not but it is with regard to the righteousness and obedience of the Son of God, that all our righteous acts are accepted before God; yet I cannot suppose that these words have that reference which some have imagined, to the imputation of his righteousness to us. And I hope Christian divines will have the courage to speak with the Scripture, even though it may be at the expense of their reputation for orthodoxy."

Mr. P. can hardly help feeling himself under a mistake, in adducing (page 74,) the case of the rich young man, Matt. xix. 24. For though men might infer that his case was altogether desperate, as well as the case of every other rich man, yet Christ qualifies this idea, and reduces the impossibility to a difficulty, by telling us that with God it was possible. Now if it were utterly impossible, any more than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, what shall we think of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Joshua, Caleb, Job, Obed, David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Josiah, penitent Manasseh, Nehemiah, Esther, the queen of Persia, the Maccabees, who were priests and kings, and Joseph of Arimathea, who was a rich man? Now when Mr. P. states that a single text cannot be produced to discountenance this, what shall we think of the bravado of such a challenge?

He adduces the reply of the Scribe, Mark. xii. 34, "And to love him (God) with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices." Mr. P.'s comment is a very curious one indeed, namely, "If this Scribe had lived among us at this day, it is not possible that any man could have persuaded him to join the Methodists, and put his name on the class paper,

because he proceeded too far in a knowledge of the truth to be made believe, either that a man could keep the whole law of God, or that God had not commanded more than mankind, in their fallen state, were able to perform." But to this it may be replied, "where can Mr. P. show from the reply of the Scribe, that he believed a compliance with the divine injunction to be altogether impossible?" While Mr. P. renounces all claim to absolute merit in sinners, does he deny it to be the duty of a sinner to conform to conditions of a gracious covenant? Not understanding this distinction, some speak of the whole body of the Israelites as necessarily subjected to the curse of God by the very condition of their law, which required unsinning obedience from the first to the last in every individual; so that according to this notion, it did not appear until the manifestation of Christ, how any Israelite could be saved. But is it to be supposed, that any people would willingly take upon their consciences a stipulated obedience to a law which could not be obeyed? Neither is it conceiving worthily of the all-wise and all-gracious God to suppose that he would exact any thing of this sort. The holy end in requiring stipulation on the part of man, to meet promise on the part of God, is, that by the union of these two matters in the form of a covenant, the resulting obligation may be the more impressive; and not for the extorting of a previous consent, to gain the appearance of justice, in a penalty that is unavoidable. Does not Mr. P. see the legal economy abounding with sacrifices, intended to make atonement for different species of transgression? As these sacrifices prefigured the great sacrifice to come, here was faith, associated with obedience, even under the preparatory dispensation. But when the object of that faith had appeared in person, then the seeking of salvation by the law, was an abiding by the condemning property of it, and a putting the more merciful out of view. Accordingly, it was highly proper in the apostle Paul, to caution the Jewish Christians against so great an error; by intimating that they thereby subjected themselves to the consequences of that threat-

ening—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Not that this curse, as it stood in the law, was not allied with a gracious provision for the relieving of the conscience from the weight of sin; but because this was henceforth to be continued under a new economy by which the former was to be superseded.

To show the doctrine of life and death, as set before men to be but a chimera, Mr. P. assumes the authority to tell us, pp. 75, 76, that this power to choose good or evil, is nothing but assertion made by short-sighted men, who would rise in rebellion against the word of Jehovah. Thinking his bare assertion to be equal to an argument, he tells us, "if it were necessary, more might be added." But to show that the influence of grace is irresistible; that the talent cannot be hid; the Spirit quenched, or the suggestion trifled with; he leaves the spiritual and ordinary ground, and becomes extraordinary and miraculous. The instances which he adduces to show the truth of irresistible conversion are miraculous. "Christ said to Lazarus, Come forth"—to the man with the withered hand, "Stretch forth thine hand"—to the palsied patient, "Take up thy bed and go unto thine house." Now I appeal to every candid reader, whether these cases be fair comparisons with a sinner, convinced, penitent, asking, seeking, and crying for mercy? And whether sinners in general be as passive in conviction, and repentance, and inquiry, as Lazarus was in his grave? What seems most unaccountable is, that he who in page 76 declares, that Lazarus did nothing, tells us in the same page, that "repentance unto life requires not only that a sinner refrain from sin, but that he should absolutely hate it." These two ideas, namely, "we can do nothing," and "we must do something," are utterly irreconcileable.

In pages 77 and 78, he labours hard to make the Gospel plan to consist in God's designing millions of immortal souls to a perdition which they cannot avoid; and in page 79, he adds, "Brethren, perhaps we are grieved as much as any people, to see the destruction of our fellow-sinners, and rejoice as much as others do to hear of

their conversion and salvation. We trust to his wisdom and goodness, and believe that he knows best how many it will be proper to enlighten and save." Then consequently, how many it will be proper, on the same reprobating plan, to darken, harden, blind, delude, and finally destroy. O shocking character! shocking acts! attached to the high and holy One.

To show that conversion is irresistible, he adduces 2 Cor. iii. 15, 16—"But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is on their hearts; nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away:" therefore, he adds, "it appears God can remove this blindness whenever he pleases." The allusion here is to the case of Moses, mentioned Exod. xxiv. 34. When he came from the Lord, and spoke to the Israelites, he put the vail over his face; but when he returned to speak with the Lord, then he took off the vail. Several thousands of this nation have already turned to the Lord; and a time is on the wing when all will return.

"The attributes of God ought always to be kept in view—that is, as just and powerful, as well as merciful." While we ascribe all possible perfections to God, we are not to blemish the divine nature with the least shadow of imperfection. This would strike at the foundation, and destroy one of the clearest conceptions which we have of God. The Scriptures are very careful to remove all moral and natural imperfection from God, such as slaying the righteous with the wicked, &c. Holiness is frequently ascribed to God, which signifies the purity of the divine nature. "He is a God of truth, and without iniquity." To want any thing, to be liable to any accident, to depend upon another for one's happiness, are imperfections from which He is infinitely removed. He can neither tempt nor be tempted to sin. It is easily credible to us, that all things were made and are governed by him. His goodness disposed him to communicate being or existence to creatures, and then to provide for them. Infinite power and wisdom render him able to do all this without any toil, or labour, or difficulty. We

know in a tolerable measure, what is meant by his goodness, justice, and truth: and therefore, no man ought to entertain any notion of God which plainly contradicts these. The perfections of God are in a divine harmony and reconciliation. God is not mere power or sovereignty; or mere mercy and goodness; or mere justice and severity; but an infinite, eternal, and glorious Being, in whom all these perfections are united, in a divine unison and consistency. We should never separate these perfections, or consider them singly, by framing such large notions of one as to exclude another. That is, not a divine perfection which contradicts any other. One perfection of God should not be raised upon the ruins of another. Some persons, by being too intent on God's Sovereignty to the neglect of his other perfections, have spoken hard things about predestinating power. The sovereignty of God does by no means set him above the eternal laws of goodness, truth, mercy, and justice. By poring upon the justice and severity of God, men are apt to be swallowed up in despair. God is not so severe, but he is merciful to the penitent, and hath left a retreat to the returning sinner. If this were well considered; it would check the presumption of those also who encourage themselves in sin, by fancying to themselves a God, all mercy or all goodness.

To show that only a select few, and not the general mass of men can have any thing to do with the declarations or promises of the Gospel, Mr. P. cites John i. 9—"That was the true light which lighteth every man coming into the world," and insists on it, that this Scripture, and many others which appear to be of general or universal application, are to be restricted to the most scanty dimensions, and to signify only a few, who receive not only God's calling, but an effectual calling. The very plain meaning of this passage is, that, as Christ is the spring and fountain of all wisdom, so all are enlightened by him in a saving degree. Some of the most eminent Rabbins understand Isai. lx. 1—"Rise and shine, for thy light is come," of the Messiah, who was to illuminate Israel. This divine

light lighteth every human being. As man sees the light when born, from which he was excluded before; in like manner, the heavenly light shines into the soul of every man. By this light, conscience is produced. There was much light in the law, but this shone only upon the Jews: but the superior light of the Gospel is to be diffused over the whole earth.

Mr. P. states, that "though the grace of God, or the doctrines of the Gospel, may appear to all men, being given and published to the world at large, yet the general mass of mankind being under a predestinating decree, walk in darkness, or are compelled to do so, while it effectually teaches Paul and Titus, and all other true believers." How Mr. P. can bring in the sovereign will of God, as the original barrier to the salvation of his human creatures, especially when so many Scriptures speak the doctrine of free grace and mercy in the strongest language, shows how thick the vail is which prejudice has drawn over the truth.

Mr. P., unwilling to leave his favourite ground, asserts that, "whatever comes to pass is foreordained and appointed of God." He asks also, "why God did not give equal powers to those angels who fell with those who stood?" as if a difference of powers, and not of choice or fidelity, constituted their fall. He asks also, "If they were upheld in their innocence by the power of God, why did he not uphold them all by the same power?" as if God had ceased to support, and not they ceased to rely; as if the vine had left the branch, and not the branch the vine; as if the father had left the prodigal, and not the prodigal the father; as if the shepherd had left the sheep, and not the sheep the shepherd.

He asks also, whether all the good and evil in the world must not have their origin in God's decrees? To this I answer, that next to the acknowledgment of God's Being, nothing is more essential to religion than a firm belief of his Providence, and a constant dependence upon him, as the governor of the world, and the wise disposer of all the affairs and concerns of the children of men. Nothing can be a greater argu-

ment of Providence, than that in the ordinary course of things, there is such an order laid, as that things attain their ends. A harvest may be reasonably expected, where the soil is good and well planted, at the proper time, and with convenient seed in proper measure, &c. And yet there is a mixture of contingency seen, when things fail of producing their usual effects. God has reserved to himself a power and liberty to interpose as his wisdom sees best, in order to awaken men to a continual dependence upon him. Solomon acknowledged, that though it was the duty of a man to do whatever his hand found fit, yet the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. The success of things does not always answer the probability of second causes and means. The Providence of God steps in, and turns the most probable events of things quite another way. For the universal prospect of the divine plan we must wait till we see things, not in a glass darkly, but face to face, when that promise shall be fulfilled—"What ye know not now, ye shall know hereafter."

When Mr. P. asks, "why God did not give the same powers to all?" it may be replied, that it is not inconsistent with the goodness of God, that some creatures should be inferior, or less good than others; that there should be this variety in his creatures; that they should be of several degrees of perfection; made for several uses and purposes; and to be subservient one to another: provided, they all contribute to the harmony and beauty of the whole.

Though temporal evils may be deserved by us; and though sometimes they come from the hand of man, yet they are disposed by the providence of God. Upon the supposition of sin, affliction is good, as a proper punishment. It is designed as a prevention of greater evil. It brings wicked men to a sense of their sin, and often reclaims them from it.

The evil of sin is the great question. "How is it consistent with the goodness of God, to permit so great an evil as this to come into the world?" To answer this, let it be considered, that it does not at all contradict the wisdom or goodness of God, to make a creature

of such a frame and capacity as to be capable of having its obedience tried; in order to the reward of it, which could not be, unless such a creature were made mutable, and by the good or bad use of its liberty, capable of obeying or disobeying the laws of its Creator. Where there is no possibility of sinning, there can be no trial of our virtue and obedience; and nothing but virtue and obedience are capable of reward. The goodness of God toward us, is sufficiently vindicated, in that he made us capable of happiness, and gave us sufficient power and direction for attaining that end.

Mr. P. adduces sundry instances of God's severity, in those great calamities, which, by his providence, have befallen mankind. I may add to the number, by bringing forward the transgression and sin of our first parents; the early and universal degeneracy of mankind; the destruction of the world by a general deluge; the sudden and terrible destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; the extirpation of the Canaanites, and the calamities which befell the Jewish nation, especially its final ruin and dispersion at the destruction of Jerusalem. Against these severe and dreadful instances of God's displeasure, it might be a sufficient vindication of his goodness to say, that they were upon great and high provocations, after much patience and long suffering, with a mixture of mercy, and a declared readiness in God to prevent or remove them by repentance.

He proceeds to notice what he calls "some of the contradictions of the Methodists," namely, the connexion of God's free grace and man's free will, which (he says) can no more be united with solidity, in the same system, than the different materials of Nebuchadnezzar's image, namely, the gold, silver, iron, and clay." To give this something like support from Scripture, he cites Romans xi. 6—"If by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise, grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more of grace; otherwise, work is no more work." He (though a rigid predestinarian,) betrays himself in his comment on, or inference from, this scripture, when he insinuates,

that notwithstanding the foundation on which every thing is built, so that it cannot be altered, " this subject ought to be well considered by all serious minds; which ought to examine the question with the utmost care." Now I would ask Mr. P. what he means by consideration, if not a fair view of things as they are in themselves, and in their future bearings, with respect to our duty and interest; that we may now and previously, provide for the future, by the adoption of such measures as are most likely to ensure the good, and avoid the evil?

The Methodist avers, that to sober reason, and unbiassed inquiry, there is not an admonition, an expostulation, a reproof, a precept, a promise, or a threatening, that is not predicated on the truth of his opinions: that to suppose God meaning a different thing from what he declares, would be either deception or mockery. How can we suppose the gift of light on the side of God, to be incompatible with the power of seeing on the side of man; or that the use which man is enabled to make of his eyes, must detract from the great honour due to God for giving both the light and the eyes? Are sound and hearing incompatible? Are air and lungs inconsistent and irreconcilable? Is it possible that men can attribute such conduct to God, for the purpose of saying " that he can do what he pleases with his own?" That God contrives present and everlasting evil against his creatures, by an inevitable decree, which they cannot avoid by any possible exertion, is infinitely more difficult to reconcile with the dictates of reason and Scripture, than the doctrine of free-will, according to which, if man perish, it must be by his own fault, adopted and persevered in, though he knew the error, and had power to avoid it.

OF FINAL PERSEVERANCE.

Mr. P. quotes the General Conference, saying—" On this authority I believe that a saint may fall away; that one who is holy in the judgment of God himself, may nevertheless so fall from God, as to perish

everlastingly." To show something like a contradiction in this, he quotes—"Every one that truly believeth hath everlasting life." How Mr. P. can see a contradiction in statements so consistent, I can hardly guess. The Scriptures, so far from holding out the sentiment, that if a person be once in grace he shall be ever in grace, and cannot fall from it, hold out various cautions and declarations to the contrary—as, that "many begin to build who do not finish"—"that many run in the race, who do not gain the prize"—that "it is not enough to enter in at the strait gate, without walking in the narrow way"—that "he only who endureth to the end shall be saved"—that "some make shipwreck of the faith." These serious statements challenge our belief and consideration. They must be considered as part of the great system of divine truth.

Nothing is plainer to a cool spectator, than that a person may be in health to-day, but not so to-morrow—that for a branch to be in the vine now, does not argue against its being taken away at a future time. A good resolution taken up under the ardour of a present stimulus, may cool again.

The impossibility of a final falling from grace is deduced by some from Rom. viii. 38, 39—"For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The Methodists acknowledge, that none of them can separate in the important matter alluded to. But they ask at the same time, with all possible candour, may not a man be so separated by his own voluntary apostacy? If a man's right to civil citizenship, should be called in question, we as advocating his right, on the ground of constitution and law, might declare, that "no opponent of his should deprive our client of his privilege." But it would not follow, nor should we design to affirm, that he might not forfeit it by treason, or lose the benefit of it by expatriation.

But what shall we think of Rom. xi. 29, where we read that—"The gifts and calling of God are without

repentance." These words are intended of the Jews, in their collective capacity. And indeed, the state of the Jews, is a powerful proof of the possibility of falling off, and fully sufficient to show every unprejudiced individual, that persons once in a state of acceptance with God, may be finally rejected by him.

Our Saviour speaks very plainly on this head, John xii. 35—"Yet a little while, the light is with you; walk while you have the light, least darkness come upon you." As if he had said, "my personal presence and teaching are among you, as the light of the world, which whoso followeth shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." Ye should therefore walk while ye have the light, least the darkness come, which will be a dismal scene.

There are a variety of terms made use of to call our most pointed attention to this very serious subject. We read of a "vineyard of his own right-hand planting, in consequence of not bringing forth fruit in season, destroyed"—of a casting away—of a breaking off—of a forsaking—of a giving up—a taking away—a being left desolate, &c. Christ assures us that if the opportunities afforded us be not improved, they shall be taken away.

God's dealings with the Jews, who were a peculiar people, ought to admonish us of the danger of trifling with duty, or making free with sin of any kind, Rom. xi. 21—"If God spared not the natural branches, take heed, least he also spare not thee." Does not this caution explicitly, and emphatically declare, that there may be an awful apostacy? If God could not tolerate sin in the people, whom he had so long cherished, miraculously preserved, and blessed, we ought to be convinced, that the same righteous principle in him will cause him to act towards us, as he acted towards them; if we sin after the similitude of their transgression.

The parable concerning the husbandmen, who, instead of rendering to their Lord the fruits of his vineyard in due season, killed those whom he sent to them, is another awful instance of the possibility of "receiving the grace of God in vain." And though this parable respected the Jews immediately as the pe-

culiar people of God, yet it does in a certain proportion concern all that live unfruitfully under the Gospel.

As the removal of the Gospel from any people is a great judgment in a spiritual view, so it is apt to be accompanied with the greatest temporal calamities. It was so with the Jews, when—"The kingdom of God was taken from them." In consequence of God's forsaking them, they fell into the greatest disorders and confusions, exercising all sorts of violence and cruelty on each other, being abandoned to all sorts of wickedness and misery.

The seven famous churches of Asia, to whom the apostle John wrote his book of Revelation, furnish us with another instance of temporal calamity, attendant on not bringing forth the fruits of righteousness in their season. The cities where those churches were originally established, were demolished, and laid waste to this day. So it has happened likewise to the flourishing cities of Africa, where Christianity is extinguished. Their site is become the seat of cruelty, barbarism, and slavery.

In Matt. xxi. 19, We find our Saviour "cursing the fig-tree which he saw in the way, because he found nothing thereon but leaves only." Leaves are an outward show; but if there be no fruit, we may justly fear a curse. Our Saviour did not curse the tree for its own sake, but for our example. Our spiritual barrenness must appear to every man of candour to be corrected and reproved in the curse which he pronounced on the fig-tree. This tree was particularly intended to point out the state of the Jewish people. The time was now at hand when God expected good fruit.

Among the many considerations which God employs to discourage us from sin, one, of prime consideration is, that if a man be induced by any means to engage in an evil course, there is a great hazard of proceeding in it, being drawn on from one step to another, so that the farther he proceeds, the more rapidly is he carried forward by the violent stream. All error, whether of judgment or practice, is endless; and when once a man is out of the way, the farther he goes the more difficult will his return be. Hence, he cautions men

against the beginning of sin, as very dangerous; or if they have already begun the evil course, why they should stop, consider, and without delay break off, least they should by degrees, be hardened in evil, and their case become desperate. Evil acts when repeated and renewed, gradually grow into habits, and habits, into a second nature. When men have once worn off their shame, they are ready for any thing. Delicate travellers are very careful to guard against the first specks of mire: but when they have travelled a deep road for some time, to be soiled and bespattered, ceases to engage their serious concern. Men commit sin with greediness, and drink in iniquity as the thirsty ox drinketh in water.

Changeableness is no small part of the human character and condition. Life is a state exposed to a variety of strong temptations—our enemy the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour:—our state in the world is peccable, or liable to sin. Now if the first state in Paradise, blessed as it was with a more vigorous intellect, and a subjection of the affections to it, did not exempt the first pair from sinning, so as to subject themselves to the most awful penalty, can we suppose the state of regeneration to exempt any of their converted posterity from like hazard?

Sin of any sort is dangerous, particularly the sin which easily besets, and against which we ought to set a double guard. If a man once give way, how soon is he apt to be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin? An apostle tells us of a case, in which "those who were once enlightened, and had tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and had tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, falling away, and it being impossible to renew them to repentance." Now if these Scriptural instances of the possibility of falling away be not sufficiently plain proofs of the possibility of finally falling from grace, I hardly know what can be so.

Ezekiel tells us of the possibility of "a righteous man falling away, and dying in his sin." And here let

it be seriously asked, and the question be seriously answered by Mr. P. or any other objectors, Why is the case introduced by the Prophet, and threatened by the awful penalty attached, if it be perfectly impossible that any such case could ever happen? They are rendered still more explicit by the frequent repetition of them. See Ezek. xviii. 26.

But are we not told, Luke x. 20—"Rejoice, that your names are written in heaven." This was addressed to the seventy disciples, after the accomplishment of their mission. There is reference here to a register which was held on several occasions; such as that which a general may keep of his army, or a pastor of his flock, or a city magistrate of the citizens. The names may however be erased, in consequence of default in the individuals. The names of the inhabitants of a city were registered in a book, that the several families might be known, and the inheritances preserved. Such a register as this is called the book of life, where the persons were enrolled as they came into life. When any person died or behaved improperly, his name was sought out, and erased from this book. To the custom of blotting out the names of disorderly persons, there are frequent allusions. See Deut. xxxii. 32, Rev. iii. 5, Deut. ix. 14, 2 Kings xiv. 27, Psal. lxix. 28.

God sets a number of examples before us as warnings, Jer. vii. 12, &c.—"Go ye now unto my place, which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up yearly and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not: I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren." Which Mr. P. tells us, that "faith which can be lost, is not the faith of God's elect." Therefore, when our Saviour tells us that the "salt may lose its savour, and the light that is within us become darkness," Mr. P. must suppose him speaking, not of "true salt, or true light," but of something fictitious.

In Luke viii. 13, some are spoken of "who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away." The reason assigned for their falling away is, "they had no root in themselves." The term "root" is a mere figure, expressing permanency. Though they believed, they did not continue steadfast in the faith, but fell away. To this it may perhaps be replied, that "their faith was only historical and not saving." Any authorities may be got rid of, by thus creating distinctions, concerning which there is not a word in Scripture. Now to suppose God to say one thing, and to mean another, is certainly trifling with the High and Holy One.

When a Church, or people, or individuals are made acquainted with the true knowledge of God, by the ministry of his word; if after some time, they not only slacken in their religious progress, but commit iniquity with greediness, "God will remove their candlestick out of its place," and consequently leave them in darkness, withdrawing his ministers, and "sending a famine of the word."

What an awful charge does Moses bring against Israel, Deut. xxxii. 15, &c.—"Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked, and forsook God who made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation." Upon this he mentions the awful consequences—"When the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons and of his daughters; and he said, I will hide my face from them, and I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation."

So far were the prophets and apostles from the predestinating scheme, which asserts that "once in grace" must infer "ever in grace," that they reprove the people of their day, who, instead of seeking the kingdom of heaven, or taking it by force, kept it off by force, and refused to have Christ as their king to reign over them; as if, as an old writer observes, "they were afraid of being happy; or, as if a crown of glory would hurt them." They reproved some, for shutting their eyes against the plainest light, and refusing to be taught the way to heaven.

In Luke xii. 42, &c.--Our Lord speaks of a faithful servant, who is made a ruler over his household, threatened, that in the event of an abuse of the authorities of his station, "the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers."

When Mr. P. reads of the Methodists setting before the people the necessity of right principles, in order to proper conduct," he calls this "an ill-natured cant." When we see the best of things through the medium of a prejudiced eye, our description is but caricatured representation. Thus, the preaching of Christ crucified, was to the prejudiced Jew a stumbling-block, and to the Greek but foolishness.

Christ tells us, John xv. 6—"If men abide not in me, they are cast forth as branches, and are withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." This very appropriate passage shows these branches were not only united to the vine, but drew nourishment and bore fruit. This could not refer to any person who was merely of the visible church, which is the general evasion employed to get rid of the difficulty. Can there be a stronger description of membership, than to be united to Christ as a branch to the vine? And yet this branch may be at last withered, fallen, gathered, cast into the fire, and burned.

Mr. P., in speaking of the General Conference giving examples of the doctrines of the Calvinistic churches, does it under the cover of a supposition that "they had not given the account fairly." When solid argument and sound proof are wanting, how apt are men to supply the place of fair statement by sly insinuation? Now if surprise should happen to urge a person to err through want of time, or pressure of business, there is room for some pleading on the side of mercy. Mr. Whitefield, a celebrated preacher of former times regretted that he had allowed the warmth of his zeal to carry him to the extreme of things. In his life, as published by Dr. Gillies, and republished at New-York in 1774, we have in page 81, the following acknowledgments, which he made after his arrival in England, at the new and un-

expected situation in which he found himself, in consequence of carrying some things too far. His own words are—"What a trying scene appeared here! In my zeal, during my journey through America, I had written two well-meant though INJUDICIOUS letters against England's two great favourites. The book called *The whole duty of Man*, and ARCHBISHOP TILLOTSON, who, I said (in those letters) knew no more of religion than Mahomet." Mr. P. had no such excuse.

"Destruction," is one of the names by which we are apprized of the danger of falling away. Thus, Rom. xiv. 15—"Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died." The matter here guarded against, is an undue use of Christian liberty. The person in contemplation is, a brother in Christ, and in the Christian church, from which he is in danger of being cast down and destroyed.

We may "fail of enjoying what God has promised," by our unbelief or unfaithfulness. Hence the apostle advises the Hebrews, iii. 12—"Take heed brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God," and "Let us therefore fear lest a promise being left of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." This promise, however, has a condition attached to it, namely, "that the people and their elders were to hearken to the commands of God, and to obey them." Many fell short of the promise, however, and of those who were above the age of twenty years, only Joshua and Caleb entered the promised inheritance.

"To perish," is another of the terms by which a final fall is expressed. Thus, 1 Cor. viii. 11—"And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died." This passage enjoins the temperate use of Christian liberty, which, if carried to an undue length, may be productive of a final fall from the grace of God. There is a possibility of falling from ever so high and holy a state. Angels fell by disobedience—the fall of Adam is generally known and acknowledged—Solomon fell from a state of high favour with God—multitudes of true believers fell, of whose

rise we have no account. They not only fell foully; but for any thing we can tell, finally.

Another of the terms of apostacy is, that of being a CAST AWAY, which must be of awful import. 1 Cor. ix. 27—"I keep my body under, and bring it into subjection, lest, by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be cast away." So says the great apostle of the Gentiles, with all his attainments, and after all his labours.

Warnings are numerous. The state of fallen angels is made an awful caution, who kept not their first estate. Adam, though created in the image of God, was not beyond the temptation of an enemy, and an awful fall. Believers are warned to shun the example of Esau, who sold his birthright. The Jews who were brought out of Egypt, fell in the wilderness. Though Saul was elected of God, not only to be king of Israel, but to enjoy a number of spiritual privileges, 1 Kings xv., yet he was rejected afterward; for the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit troubled him, 1 Sam. xvi. 14. Eli and his family were chosen as high-priests in the tabernacle of God, and for their sin, the high-priesthood was transferred to another family. God's vineyard may bring forth only sour grapes, and for this be trodden under foot. Names registered on the book of life are threatened with being blotted out. An evil spirit may be cast out of a sinner, who will afterward re-enter with seven other spirits worse than himself. Not only the candle, but the candlestick may be taken out of its place—the light that is in believers may become darkness. The salt may lose its wholesome savour. The "dog may turn back to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to wallow in the mire." Those who for a while believe, in time of temptation, may fall away. A faithful servant, or wise steward, may give his lord's household their portion in due season, or, by unfaithfulness, may neglect this, be cut off, and have his portion with hypocrites and unbelievers. The foolish virgins may neglect to procure a supply of oil for their lamps. A man abiding not in Christ, is cast forth as a branch that is withered, gathered up, cast

into the fire, and burned. A brother may be destroyed with thy meat, for whom Christ died. Paul kept his body under, lest while he preached to others, he himself should become a cast away. The Corinthians were to keep in memory the things they heard, otherwise they believed in vain. They who had begun in the spirit, might end in the flesh. The Hebrews are cautioned against the evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God: they are cautioned against coming short of entering into the rest which remains for the people of God. We may sin wilfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, and have no more sacrifice for sin. Some draw back to perdition. Those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, may fall away, and find it impossible to be renewed to repentance. Some may escape the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and yet be entangled again therein, and overcome, and find the latter end worse than the beginning. It would be better for some not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. We need to give diligence to make our calling and election sure. We must look to ourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. A tree of God's planting may be cut down. The good seed may be carried away by the fowls of the air—or it may be overgrown and oppressed with weeds, and prevented in its growth. The good Scriptures may be wrested by the unlearned and unstable to their own destruction. If God spared not the natural branches, we have need to be cautious lest he should not spare us. Of those whom thou gavest me, have *I lost none, except the son of Perdition.* A Solomon may become a rank idolater, and his recovery remain an uncertainty. Ten tribes of Israel went over to the calves of Jeroboam: were carried away captive, and never recovered. Some proceeded so far as to count the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing. The believer is desired to see that no man take

his crown. Some make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. The falling off of the Jews is a very strong warning to us. The husbandmen who returned not the fruits of the vineyard in due season, had the vineyard taken from them, which was given to other husbandmen. The cursing of the fruitless fig-tree, is an awful caution and warning.

From all these scriptural proofs and pointed arguments, we cannot but see that the possibility of a final fall from a state of grace is repeatedly affirmed in language the most clear, explicit, and unreserved. It is demonstrable by a great variety of texts and contexts, in such perfect harmony, that he who reads may run. We are continually reminded of this by the great shepherd and bishop of souls, and by the undershepherds in his service, that their cautions, and exhortations, and even the terrors of their threatenings may put us on our guard. This makes a great part of the general system of religion, as revealed in the Bible. All these particulars might be amplified to a great extent; but they are adverted to, and adduced, in order to show Mr. P. that there is a text, or a number, or even a great number, which must show him, if he allow himself to read with unprejudiced eyes, that we are under duty and obligation to God, and that we need to watch and pray, that we may not enter into temptation.

OF THE REFORMATION, AND HOW FAR THE REFORMERS WERE PREDESTINARIANS, &c.

OF LUTHER.

Mr. P., not counting the cost, tells us "that Luther, and all the other reformers were rigid predestinarians." To confirm this, he gives us some extracts from what Luther wrote in the beginning of his career. Now, is it fair to aver that the system of Luther was predestinarian in the highest degree, when it was only of the moderate kind? Or, to state only his first principles,

without stating also, that he departed from those principles, as is well known, when his mind became more matured and enlarged.

In the 6th volume of Luther's works, the reformer writes thus: "Concerning God as unknown, and not laid open by his word, to know any thing of what he is, what he does, and what he wills, does not belong to me. But this belongs to me—to know what he has taught, what he has promised, and what he has threatened. When you intensely meditate on these things, you find God. Yea, he himself gathers you into his bosom; from which, if you fall, that is, if you presume to know any thing beyond those things which he has revealed in his word, you rush into the abysses of hell." We should therefore have nothing to do with secret decrees.

Luther, in his last work of importance, which was his commentary upon Genesis, apologises for what he had formerly written concerning predestination. "I wrote, among other matters, that all things are absolute and necessary: but at the same time I added, that God is to be viewed as revealed in his word." Again; "You who hear me will remember my having taught that there is to be no inquiry after the predestination of an hidden God; but there is to be an acquiescence in those things which are revealed."

In regard to the doctrine of final perseverance, Dr. Laurence recites pointed testimonies against it from the works of Luther himself, as well as from those of Melancthon; from the Wirtemburg Confession, and from various other documents.

The Lutheran reformation was greatly regarded in England, as it respects the Protestant establishment, in the days of Edward VI. Calvin and his associates were so far from agreeing with Luther, or the church of England, on the doctrine of the co-operation of man with the grace of God, that they insisted that man must be as passive under the divine influence of grace, as a dead body under a miraculous restoration to life.

It is well known, that whatever attachment to the predestinating scheme might have existed in the mind

of Luther, or the Lutheran divines, that the said attachment had been done away when there was delivered to the Emperor and the Diet at Augsburg, in 1530, the celebrated confession which still continues to be the standard of the faith of the Lutheran Churches. In that Confession, the peculiarities of Calvinism are untouched. Luther was still living, and it is certain that the Diet never published any Calvinistic opinions, but passed them by in silence. It was Melancthon, who, under the eye of Luther, made his own elegant pen the instrument of the draft of that Confession. Besides this, Luther publicly commended one of Melancthon's anti-Calvinistic works, and lived in friendship with him until the death of the venerable reformer, which took place in 1546, sixteen years after the Confession of Augsburg.

OF MELANCTHON.

Exactly in agreement with the opinion of Luther, was his friend Melancthon, concerning the stoical disputations agitated in their communion at the beginning. The Augsburg Confession of Faith, which was delivered to the emperor and Diet at Augsburg, in the year 1530, and which continues to be the standard of the faith of the Lutheran Churches, was the product of his pen, under the eye of Luther, who was yet alive. At the infancy of the reformation in Germany, an intercourse took place between those concerned in it and Archbishop Cranmer, who had a chief hand in framing the religious or doctrinal system of the Church of England at this time. Melancthon, in one of his letters, thus opens his mind to the archbishop on the subject of predestinarian disputations: "Too dreadful in the beginning, were the disputations concerning fate, and they were an injury to discipline."

During the whole time in which the articles of the Church of England were under consideration, the divinity chair in the University of Cambridge was kept vacant, with the hope of its being filled by Melancthon, who had received pressing invitations to it. Bishop Lati-

mer took notice of it in a sermon preached before the king, wishing success to the design.

The distinction between elect and non-elect infants, found in the famous form of Concord, was drawn up in 1549, as follows: "Moreover we (Calvinists) industriously teach, that God does not promiscuously imprint his energy on all (infants) that receive the sacraments; but only on the elect." Melancthon was so offended by this passage, that he indignantly tore it from the copy sent to him.

In 1551, happened the controversy between Calvin and the physician Balsec, concerning which, Melancthon writes thus: "Lelius has written to me, that so great are the contentions at Geneva concerning stoical necessity, that a certain person dissenting from Zeno, has been shut up in prison. Oh unhappy event!"

Not only the Confession of Augsburg, but that of Wirtemburg, in which Melancthon had a principal hand, shows how widely the Lutherans differed from their brethren of Geneva.

OF ERASMUS.

Mr. P., who makes no very accurate distinctions between particulars and generals, tells us that Erasmus was a man who had joined the protestants in the days of the reformation; but afterward wrote and published a book, with which the Methodists are much pleased, because it maintains their doctrines. Erasmus having written a paraphrase on the New Testament, the greatest deference was paid to it, particularly in England in the days of Edward VI., there being a royal injunction for placing a copy of that on the Gospels in every Church throughout the realm, that "the people might read therein, and that the entire paraphrase should be in the hands of the Clergy."

The paraphrase of Erasmus, instead of going to the lengths of Calvin, is full of sentiments directly contrary to the predestinarian system. On Matt. xi. 25, "I thank thee, O Father," &c., it runs thus—"I thank thee, O Father, because thou hast hidden this heavenly

wisdom from them that are high-minded, and puffed up with pride, through an opinion of their own worldly wisdom and policy, and hast revealed it to the little ones, and the meek, and to such as in the judgment of the world are reputed but fools. Truly, so it is, Father; for so it seemed best to thy goodness; to teach that thou art not pleased with the stout, and that those who are despised by the world, should be great with thee *for their simplicity and faith.*"

His paraphrase on Luke x. 20, respecting the names written in heaven, runs thus: "It is not expedient for you to vaunt yourselves, because spirits are subject to you, for these things may be done by evil and wicked men. But rejoice in this thing, that your names are already written in heaven. For thither *shall your meekness and lowliness bring you*, if ye continue in your intents and purposes."

In his paraphrase on the Epistles, he applies what is said of Jacob and Esau, to the temporal inheritance. He prefaces what is said of Pharaoh in the same chapter, by saying that "God does not harden men's hearts, as that they are thereby caused to discredit the Gospel of Christ; but such as through malice and stubbornness refuse to believe, God uses as instruments to magnify his great benefits, and to set forth his mighty and glorious power."

CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

It is apparent from facts and dates, that the institutions of the Church of England were framed without any reference to Calvinism. A near affinity subsisted, as well in correspondence as in opinion, between the reformers of the Church of England and the Lutheran divines. In Mary's reign, the Protestants of England were put to death for being Lutherans, but not as Calvinists.

The first incident which brought the clashing of opinions into public view in England, was at Cambridge, in 1585. Dr. Baroe had in his lectures preached publicly against absolute decrees and reprobation, and as

appears, without offence. Collier quotes Bishop Jewel and Dean Nowel, who speak decisively to the point of universal redemption.

In the year 1585, the dispute took place between Mr. Hooker, (the author of Ecclesiastical Polity,) and Mr. Travers. The complaint of Mr. Travers was, that Mr. Hooker had preached against absolute predestination. In Mr. Hooker's reply, he says—"I termed God a permissive, and no positive cause of sin: 2dly, to their objection, who say, 'If I be elected, do what I will, I shall be saved.' I answered, that the will of God *is not absolute* in this thing, *but conditional*, saving his elect who believe, fear, and obey him."

The Church of England, in her XVIIth article, adopts the doctrine of election or predestination to everlasting life, as "full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons." This article is altogether silent as to reprobation. Besides, it does not speak definitely, but indefinitely, of the elect in general. So Malancton, as quoted by Dr. Laurence in his "Sacri Theologici," makes election to respect a church from among men in general. So the apostle Paul speaks of Jews and Gentiles as converts to Christianity.

The XXXIst Article offers a free redemption to all mankind. The words are—"The offering of Christ once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual." The council of Trent, in anathematizing the doctrines of this Church, does not bring in a single charge against it, as holding the doctrine of a particular redemption.

The VIIth Article says, "In both the Old and New Testaments, everlasting life is offered to mankind through Christ." Here, also, a term of wide interpretation is employed. 'Mankind' must certainly mean all mankind, and not a few.

The Catechism asks, "What dost thou chiefly learn in these articles of thy belief?" And answers thus—"First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me and all the world. Secondly, in God the Son, who hath redeemed me and all mankind." Now

if the Church of England were Calvinistic, how could such an answer be put into the mouths of the young of both sexes?

In the homily for Good Friday, we read, "So well pleased is the Father, Almighty God, with Christ his Son, that for his sake *he favoureth us, and will deny us nothing.* So pleasant was this sacrifice and oblation of his death, that we should take it for the only and full amends for all the sins of the world."

In the homily concerning the Sacrament, it says, "Now it followeth, to have with this knowledge a sure and constant faith, that the death of Christ is available for *the redemption of all the world.*" In the prayer for the consecration of the sacramental elements, it speaks, "Who madest there, (upon the cross) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction *for the sins of the whole world.*"

In the invitation to the Communion, are these words. "As the Son of God did vouchsafe to offer up his soul by death upon the cross *for your salvation*, &c." i. e. all present.

To such as attend the Lord's Table, the address to each is, "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was *given for thee*," &c. and "The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was *shed for thee.*"

On Ash Wednesday we have, "Who hatest nothing that thou hast made," and in another place, "Who hast compassion upon all men, and hatest nothing that thou hast made, who *wouldest not the death of a sinner*, but rather that he should *turn from his sin and be saved.*"

On Good Friday, we have "O merciful God, who hast made all men, and hatest nothing that thou hast made, nor desirest the death of a sinner, *but rather that he should be converted and live.*"

The Absolution expresses of our Lord Jesus Christ, that "He desireth not the death of a sinner." The Litany invokes, "That it may please Thee to have mercy upon all men," and again, "O Lamb of God, *who takest away the sins of the world*, grant us thy peace," and "O Lamb of God, *who takest away the sins of the world*, have mercy upon us." The general

thanksgiving gratefully acknowledges God's "inestimable love *in the redemption of the world*, by our Lord Jesus Christ."

Under this weight of evidence, from the plain and obvious sense of the articles, the homilies, the catechism, and the prayers, it is natural to ask, on what grounds can it be maintained, that they speak only of a partial redemption, intended only for a select few, from which the rest of the world is excluded?

Archbishop Cranmer, and Bishops Ridley, Hooper, and Latimer, were consulted in, and approved of, the establishment made in their day. Indeed, the two first mentioned have left no literary remains under their names. They who speak of the Calvinism of Cranmer and Ridley, carefully avoid all historic facts. They forget also to speak of the long intercourse of the Church of England with the Lutheran Churches and Divines. At the burning of Ridley and Latimer, the persecutors had a sermon preached on the occasion, in which they inveigh against the errors of Luther, Oecolampadius, and Zuinglius, but not a word is spoken against the errors of Calvin.

The only document which Bishop Hooper professedly gave to the public was, an exposition of the Ten Commandments. His words, as given by Dr. Laurence, are very plain. "The cause of reprobation or damnation, is sin in man, *who will neither hear nor receive the promise of the Gospel.* The cause of our election is the mercy of God in Christ. Howbeit, he that will be a partaker of this election, *must receive the promise of Christ by faith.*" He goes on, "In justification and the remission of sin there is a cause, though no dignity at all in the receiver of his justification. We judge him by the Scripture to be justified, and to have remission of sins, *because he received the grace promised by Christ.*" Again; "It is not the Christian's part to say, God has written fatal laws, and with the necessity of destiny *violently pulleth one man by the hair into heaven*, and *thrusteth another headlong into hell.*" Again; "The promise of God comprehendeth all men; howbeit, within certain limits and bounds, the which

if men neglect, they exclude themselves from the promise of Christ; as Cain was no more excluded than Abel till he excluded himself; Saul than David; Judas than Peter; or Esau than Jacob."

Good old Bishop Latimer saith, in his sermon on the marriage of the king's son, "The promises of Christ our Saviour *are general: they pertain to all mankind.*" Again, "Almighty God prepared this feast *for all the world; for all that will come to it.*" In the Sermon for Septuagesima Sunday, we have, "*There are none of us all but may be saved by Christ.*"

In the first English Bible, printed after the Reformation, and conducted by the English Reformers, the prologue to the Epistle to the Romans runs thus. "In this Epistle, St. Paul sheweth the Gospell, and grace thereof was foreseen and predestinate of God from before the begynninge; deserved thorowe Christe, and now at the last sent forthe, that *all men should beleve thereon*, therebye to be justifyed, made righteouse, and happy, to be delyvered from under the dampnacyon of the lawe."

The following is a summary of the first chapter—"The everlastying ordinance and election of God in savynge all men thorowe Christe Jesus his Sonne.—We are ordayned to good works." Now if these good men were Calvinists, how terribly must they have blundered against their system!

The doctrine of "Elect and non-elect infants" was not known in the Church until the introduction of Calvinism. The Church of England pronounces positively concerning all baptized infants that they are saved, and this has been shown to be the result of the principles of her system. Concerning other infants, she says nothing, but conceives favourably concerning all infants.

When the reformation had begun to dawn, the reformers naturally seized with avidity on the wholesome truths which they found in Austin's works. But it happened also, that some of them took from those works not only the silver and the gold, but also a considerable proportion of the wood, and hay, and stub-

ble. The XIth article declares, that "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," yet this faith, though opposed to merit, *is not opposed to practice*. Hence the XIIth article affirms—"Albeit that good works which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet they are pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith, inasmuch as by them a lively faith may be as evidently known, as a tree discerned by its fruit.

The homilies of the Church of England assert, that "These things must go together: upon God's part his great mercy and grace: upon Christ's part the satisfaction of God's justice: and upon our part, faith in the merits of Christ." God graciously accepts the returning sinner through Christ.

The XVIth article, entitled "Of sin after Baptism," says, "After we have received the Holy Spirit, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and by the grace of God we may rise again and mend our lives." Here we see the possibility of a fall. "We may depart from grace," and the possibility, but not the absolute certainty of a rise, "We may rise again." In the homily "*Of falling from God*," after reciting the threatenings of God to his vineyard, we read, "By these threatenings we are monished and warned, that if we bring not forth good grapes, he will pluck away all defence, and finally give us over."

In visiting the sick, the minister is to suppose every sick person to be within the reach of mercy. Hence he exhorts him: inquires concerning his faith in Christ, repentance for his sins, and being in charity with all men. The Lord's supper is then administered.

This charitable sentiment follows the silent dead to the grave. While the attendants pray for final rest for themselves, they add, "as we hope this our brother or sister doth." They pray also, "Suffer us not at our last hour for any pains of death to fall from thee," showing the possibility of such a fall.

I hope that what is here said, is sufficient to show Mr. P. and every candid reader, that he was greatly mistaken when he asserts in sect. 5, that "the doctrines of Calvinism were the religious sentiments and opinions of all protestants in the days of the reformation."

But to make this matter still more glaring, Mr. P. brings in a quotation from the pen of Mr. Toplady, which is known not to have been the most delicate in the world, charging Mr. Wesley with writing a letter to a priest of the Church of Rome, in which Mr. Wesley levels all distinctions between one profession and another, particularly between popery and protestantism. So far was Mr. Wesley from being of this mind, that he always looked on right principles as connected with right practice. In his preaching, printed sermons, journals, tracts, Christian Library, history, magazines, and in several pieces written expressly against Popery, he shows how very far he was from coinciding with the tenets of Popery. As Mr. P. brings this from Mr. Toplady, it would be well to notice for a moment what foundation he had for his assertion. There is, however, an observation on Mr. T.'s work, which I feel much disinclined to make: it respects the supercilious contempt with which he treats those who entertain opinions different from his own. This is a conduct which must disgrace the best of causes, and add strength to none. Instead of forming an attack with rational coolness, he levels every sort of artillery against the doctrines and persons of the Methodists, with the most rancorous violence.

OF THE REV. AUGUSTUS TOPLADY'S HISTORY OF CALVINISM.

His zeal for Calvinism was such, that it seemed to be his sentiment, "no Calvinist, no Christian." Mr. T. takes the Calvinism of the Church of England for granted, without bringing any proofs to support such a declaration. He explains the term, "the whole world," in the XXXIst Article, as meaning "the world of believers." Wherever "grace" occurs in the Articles,

&c., it is made to mean irresistible grace. Wherever predestination is mentioned as founded on the divine foresight of faith and works, he makes that to signify absolute predestination. Where the Duke of Somerset, who was protector in the days of Edward VI., mentions himself as recorded in the book of life, Mr. T. thinks it implies an impossibility of erasure. Where Edward prayed to be taken among the chosen, or elect, Mr. T. must couple this with reprobation. He tells us that Luther did not believe the being of God more firmly than he believed the final perseverance of the elect; whereas, the doctrine is left out of the Confession of Augsburg. Mr. T. gives us his own inference from Latimer's Sermons, as favouring the rejection of a certain number of the human race, at the same time that the Bishop tells us that "Christ shed as much blood for Judas as for Peter."

Personal abuse was the weapon in the use of which Mr. T. was very expert. By an intolerant zeal for system, he is very often not only warm, but outrageous. Mr. T. having engaged in controversy with Mr. Wesley and Mr. Sellon, besides the contempt which Mr. T. presumes to express for those antagonists, makes very free with terms of abuse, which do not argue coolness or deliberation. He calls them a "pair of insignificant adversaries," accusing them of "fraudulent perversion of truth." He calls Mr. Sellon "retailer general, white-washer in ordinary, understrapper, and pack-horse to Mr. Wesley, and a small body of Pelagian divinity, bound in calf, neither gilt nor lettered." He goes on to pronounce him "too blind to see, and too disingenuous to acknowledge; not able to distinguish a barber's basin from a helmet, and as dipping his pen in the common sewer." These sweet-smelling nicknames are but a few of the flowers of Mr. T.'s contentious eloquence, taken from the production of which Mr. P. boasts so much. The whole face of the work is scattered over with flowers of the same hue and scent. After all this abuse, Mr. T. apologizes for not being more severe, and says he was "fearful of sinning against Christian meekness, and that he would much rather endure scurrility than offer it."

OF THE REV. MR. MILNER'S CHURCH HISTORY.

Mr. P. makes frequent reference to this work. Mr. M. is a Calvinist, though not intolerant. Notwithstanding this, he can never find Christian doctrine except in alliance with Calvinism. His many quotations from the ancient fathers of the Christian Church, show that he thought they must abound in sentiments of genuine truth. Mr. M. has selected specimens of this with judgment ; and in doing so, has not confined himself to extracts savouring of Calvinism.

The only evidence of any thing like this, is in the Epistle of St. Clement, in the use of the terms "elect," and "election." These terms have been explained already.

Ignatius directs his Epistle to the Church of Ephesus—"predestinated before the world to be perpetually permanent in glory, immoveable, united, and elect, in the general suffering." Now, as this Epistle was written to the whole Church, it shows that not one of all its members need be lost, or reprobated.

Among the Bishops of this period, Hosius of Corduba, Paphnutius, and many others, men of primitive integrity, knew nothing of the doctrines afterward embraced by Austin and Calvin.

Justin Martyr wrote many things concerning the freedom of the will. In his second Apology, he says—"If things were brought about by fate, then there would be nothing in our power: *One man could not be commended for doing good, or another blamed for doing harm.*"

Ireneus lived at the close of the second century. He says, "*There is no force from God*, but a favourable disposition is always present to him. *He has placed a power of choice in man.*"

Tertullian lived in the same age with Ireneus. He speaks of free will, but not a word of the predestinating scheme.

Clemens of Alexandria, was cotemporary with Tertullian. In his book called Pedagogus, he handles the Christian principles. but says nothing on Calvinism·

Cyprian, Arnobius, and Minutius, say nothing about the predestinating scheme, though Cyprian's works be many and large, and on a variety of subjects.

Eusebius gives us a general history of the Christian Church from the days of the apostles, but says nothing of God's absolute sovereignty, or of a discriminating election.

The fathers of the fourth century are pointedly against the sense of Austin and Calvin.

Jerome says, "The vessels of wrath are the people of Israel, who would not receive the Son of God: the vessels of mercy are those *who received him of their own accord.*"

Hilary rejects absolute and unconditional predestination. "They are the children of the promise," says he, "whom God foreknew as those *who would receive the promise.*"

Basil speaks thus: "Let us not think that Pharaoh was made bad; for then the blame would be transferred to his Maker. He is a vessel of wrath *who receives into himself* every operation of the devil."

Cyril of Alexandria, in commenting on Matt. xx. 23, speaks thus: "It is not mine to grant you the highest seat, but to those whom *the highest degree of effort in contending shall have commended to it.*"

Chrysostom tells us, "*that God calls all men;* and *that Christ died for all men.*" The name of Chrysostom deserves to have an especial stress laid upon it, because of his great piety, and eminent reputation in the Christian Church.

At length arose Austin, who, in his early writings, trod in the steps of his predecessors. But having his mind afterward irritated by the Pelagians, got into the track of a discriminating providence, which precluded a great part of mankind from the possibility of being saved. His name gave a currency to his opinions; and their being countenanced by the papal chair, riveted the chain. For the same church which had sainted Chrysostom, for the doctrines of free will and universal grace, enjoined silence on those who complained of the harshness of Austin's opinions.

Among the quotations of Mr. Milner from Austin, is that father's application of the 7th chapter of Romans, concerning the struggle between the flesh and the spirit, which he applies to the apostle himself, before his acceptance of Gospel grace. This is a construction of the passage, evidently subversive of Calvinism. Besides, on the subject of universal redemption, on which Austin had been reserved, Mr. M. delivers himself thus: "The notion of particular redemption was unknown to the ancients, and I wish it had remained equally unknown to the moderns." It may be questioned how far it is fair for Mr. M. to call his own opinions "Calvinistic," when they do not hang together with the consistency of that system, and when, in a very important point, they openly contradict it.

PRINCIPLES OF THE METHODISTS.

Mr. P. having nothing more in his book demanding an answer, I think it fair now to draw up, in a few outlines, a short sketch of the principles of Methodism, which continues to advance in every direction.

The Reverend John Wesley, who, under God, was the principal instrument in this great revival of religion, was one, by whom God wrought mightily, to the pulling down of the strong holds of sin, and to the erection of the kingdom of Christ upon its ruins. Eminently fitted for instructing ignorance, reproving error, alarming the profane, and directing the penitent, his preaching was made the savour of life to many.

When it pleased God to send forth this eminent servant into his vineyard, the men of that period, in a very general sense, instead of preaching the Gospel, or that we are sinners saved by grace, had in a great measure gone back to the follies of heathenism again; and natural religion threatened the utter extinction of Christianity.

Instead of an amusing sophistry, Mr. Wesley made use of plain truth for plain people, and of set purpose, abstained from what could only amuse the ear without amending the heart.

In a spirit which breathed glory to God, the first ministers of this name convened to hold their first Conference, at which were present, the Rev. John Wesley, the Rev. Charles Wesley, the Rev. John Hodges, and several others. Here they resolved, that all things should be considered as in the immediate presence of God, and referred to his glory.

Having entered on the great work of preaching the Gospel, in the true spirit of the Evangelic office, they were providentially directed and acknowledged. Thousands who were so careless before, as to live without God in the world, were awakened to a just sense of their guilt and danger, and directed to Christ as their only and all-sufficient Saviour.

It is to be acknowledged with serious regret, that too many pulpits and presses abound still with what is very far from being the Gospel of Christ, or the sincere milk of the word. It is still publicly announced, that "a good moral life contains the whole sum and substance of the Christian Religion."

Their labours were not confined to the first principles of religion, but took in its progress also, comprehending not only deep conviction, genuine sorrow, sincere repentance, and a free justification; but the sanctification of a believer, dominion over sin, piety to God, and active benevolence to man.

Mr. Wesley being a very correct scholar, as well as possessed of a sound understanding, was providentially led to write on almost every subject, connected with the edification of genuine Christians.

His Notes on the New Testament, though short, are always judicious, accurate, spiritual, and impressive; and possess the rare and happy property of leading the reader immediately to God, and to an inspection of his own heart.

His Sermons are highly valuable for a clear statement of divine truth, and an impressive application of it. The subjects of his sermons comprehend the various doctrines of the Gospel system. They do not appear in artificial tinsel, but as addressed to the heart and mind.

His controversial pieces are on some of the most important truths in the Bible, immediately connected with holiness of heart and life. His arguments are taken up with coolness, handled with precision, and maintained in a masterly manner.

His Hymns, with those of his brother Charles, and a selection from other authors, form a volume, which, for real excellence, is probably the first in the English language. They are the addresses of the heart to the Father of Mercies, in that worship which comprehends glory to God and profit to man.

Through the peculiar providence of God, he was spared as a father to his large connexion for many years, having the pleasure to see the good work advance in every direction, and to prosper remarkably.

As a member of the Methodist Church, I feel a serious interest in the constant preservation of our doctrine and discipline in their scriptural and rational purity. The purport of the present sketch is to show the principles which we profess, and the necessity of guarding with care and fidelity the sacred deposit.

OF GOD.

We believe that God is the Self-existent, Eternal, Independent, Almighty Being, whose purposes and actions spring from himself, without foreign motive or influence. He is Absolute in dominion: the First Cause, and great Upholder of all things: Eternally Self-Sufficient. Infinitely Happy, because infinitely Good. Unconfined in his Immensity. Above all human conception or description. A Pure, Spiritual, and Simple Essence. He is Just, Merciful, True, Holy, Wise, as well as Omniscient, Omnipresent, and Unchangeable. He is a Being who from his Infinite Wisdom cannot err; and who from his Infinite Goodness can do nothing but what is just and kind. This is the God whom we acknowledge as our First Cause and Last End: the Great Object of our faith, trust, love, worship, and obedience.

OF THE TRINITY.

The original term Elohim, or God, implies a plurality. This appears in the Sacred Writings to be confined to three persons. The doctrine of the Trinity has formed a part of the creed of all who have been deemed sound in the Christian faith. Christians are baptized in the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost. The Christian Benediction is, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you all." What God has been pleased to reveal on this subject, the Methodists do not think to be a point of indifference, but of the highest importance, entering into the very heart of Christianity. It is a principal part of the Gospel, that the Spirit bears witness with our spirits, that the Father has accepted us through the merits of his Son.

OF JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD.

He is not only God, but the true God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him. His Omnipresence is where two or three meet together in his name. His Omniscience knows all things. He could say to the raging sea "Be still;" to Lazarus, in his grave, "Come forth." He has all power in heaven and earth. He is the same to-day as yesterday, and remains the same for ever. He is the great object of our worship. An epistle is directed to all that in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus. He could say to his apostles, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Faith, is a divine honour challenged by him. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." He is the object of our hope, being "Christ in us, the hope of glory." Divine praise is due "to Him, who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." A day, which may be called the Christian Sabbath, is consecrated to his worship and service. The great and final Judgment, which shall decide the everlasting con-

ditions of men is his prerogative. We must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Who but He, who is God, can collect, weigh, scrutinize, and decide on every thought, word, and work, according to their true character, nature, meaning, and consequence?

OF THE FIRST PAIR IN PARADISE.

In the great system of the world we see the clearest marks of an infinitely wise and supreme power, in the beauty, order, variety, and magnificence of the whole. He conferred peculiar favours on man. When about to be formed, a divine consultation was held. He was made after the image of God. He was constituted ruler over the other creatures. He had his name immediately from God. While other creatures grovel, man was formed erect. Blessed with the powers of speech and reason, a peculiar spot was provided for his reception, enriched with all good things.

OF THE FALL OF MAN.

This condition was not a state of reward, but of trial. The test of man's obedience was adapted to his local situation. "Of a certain tree thou shalt not eat." Satan, a fallen angel, was permitted to put the fidelity of man to trial, who made use of the serpent, as an agent. Under this creature he lay hid, and seduced our first parents from their integrity.

OF THE STATE OF MAN AFTER THE FALL.

The fall from innocence and happiness, to guilt and misery, was a change of which our first parents, in a short time, became very sensible. Then their eyes were opened to see something of this; yet their mind was clouded. They made an effort to hide themselves from the all-pervading eye of God. Adam acknowledged his violation of the law, but in such a manner, as to involve his partner. Eve wishes to lay the blame upon the serpent. Punishment followed sin. God

pronounces the awful sentence. They become mortal, falling under a great variety of unfriendly agencies, until the Spirit should return to God that gave it, and the body to dust.

OF THE EFFECTS OF THE FALL UPON THE OFFSPRING OF ADAM.

Of fallen Adam and his offspring, as it may justly be said, "that such as the root was, such were the branches, so as it respects fallen Adam, and his fallen offspring." The original sin still taints human nature, and corrupts human practice. Men aim at being happy out of God's way, procuring pleasure by unlawful means. They live without God in the world. Privacy is the vail for crimes. Few confess them ingenuously. What prevarication and misrepresentation are used? The punishment inflicted on Eve, still attends her daughters, in the languors and sorrow attendant on conception, pregnancy, and child-bearing. The ground which was originally cursed for the sin of man, still feels the application of that punishment. How often are the fruits of his hard toil destroyed? If labour be continued to any length of time, profuse sweat may remind him of his sin and punishment. Sickness, pain, decrepitude, and death are awful monuments also.

OF THE REDEMPTION OF MANKIND BY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Redemption places before us the greatest work that can be submitted to human consideration. In this act of God, the attributes of Justice and Mercy appear to be peculiarly exercised, and their claims divinely harmonized. This great plan has been referred to from the beginning, through all the dispensations of God. The symbols of Paradise, the sacrifices of the Patriarchs, the types of the Law, the visions of the Prophets, and the sacraments of the New Testament, served to this gracious end. With the assistance of this light from above, we can see the suffering Messiah

in the death of Abel, the sacrifice of Isaac, the paschal lamb, the uplifted serpent, the scape goat, the sacrifices and offerings for sin, and in the high priest entering the holy place with the blood of the expiating victim.

A Mediator betwixt God and his offending creatures, was an object, after which men, in all nations, had long and anxiously sought. Depressed by a conscious sense of guilt, the thought of venturing on a direct approach to the sovereign Ruler and Judge, caused human nature to shrink. Labouring to find out some auspicious introductor, the blind and trembling worshippers fled to subordinate deities as their advocates. Them they studied to sooth with costly gifts to favour their cause, and support their interests with the supreme Divinity. While mankind was bewildered in this darkness, the true Mediator appeared, who in this view may be called the Desire of all nations.

OF THE BENEFITS DERIVED TO MANKIND BY CHRIST.

The benefits of Redemption are innumerable. In this gracious plan we see that *God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but obtain everlasting life.* Here we view the most astonishing display of the love of Christ, in submitting to the ignominious death of the cross. He passed by the nature of angels, and took upon himself the form of a servant. He had frequent experience of inward sorrow and outward distress. Whatever is severe in the disregard of relations, the ingratitude of friends, the scorn of the proud, and the insults of the mean, he had to endure. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs. He was troubled, hungry, thirsty, weary, languid, faint, and grieved. In the garden of Gethsemane we see his innocent nature oppressed with severe anguish. A bitter cup is to be exhausted to the very dregs. He was sorrowful, sore amazed, and very heavy; exceeding sorrowful even to death. A sweat of blood streams to the ground.

Betrayed by one disciple, denied by another, and forsaken by all. Dragged to prison and judgment. Spitting, striking, blind-folding, and mocking are employed. Condemned to die, he is stripped, nailed to the wood, and hung up, as a gazing stock, and public malefactor.

Surely this Redemption must be acknowledged to be peculiarly calculated to arrest the attention, and to form the heart of man to all inward piety, and all outward good conduct. Some views of the Divine Nature command our most solemn reverence; but the Gospel plan attracts the warmest affections of the heart. In the scheme of Redemption we see the Divine Mercy carried to the greatest possible extent, surpassing all knowledge and exceeding all calculation, to all mankind, in all its important benefits.

HOW CHRISTIANS ARE TO ATTAIN TO A PERSONAL REDEMPTION IN CHRIST.

The Methodists do not believe that Baptism, administered in any form, is regeneration. The one is allowed to be but a sign of the other; namely, an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. The one is the act of man, the other operation of the Holy Ghost.

They profess and believe that to obtain a saving interest in the Redemption of Christ, a life of obedience, however sincere, is not sufficient. Every man is sensible of his having, at some time or in some instance, done the wrong, or omitted the right, and therefore to share the salvation of the Gospel, he must be "a sinner saved by grace."

The Methodists believe and maintain that there is no name under heaven by which a man can be saved but the name of Jesus Christ, who died to make atonement for the sin of the world: that the shedding of his blood in death, was a full satisfaction to the justice of God: that God, who does nothing without infinite reason, required the incarnation and sufferings of Christ. These sufferings are, to the Divine Justice, infinite reason, why it should remit the sins of all real penitents; who may

now, on this ground, approach the throne of grace in the name of Christ, and claim the divine favour.

Though the command of God be, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself," our consolation is, that in this great work of faith, patience of hope, and labour of love, we are not left to our own skill or industry. The Gospel discovers to us most powerful resources, and assures us, that wisdom to direct, power to help, and grace to sanctify, shall be his paternal gifts, on the easy condition of asking for them.

The rewards of another life, which are discovered to us by the Gospel, are likewise powerful incentives to continue steadfast in duty, and to go on to perfection, knowing that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Though the Methodists set all proper value on right or orthodox opinions, yet they would have it to be understood, that whoever says of a Methodist, "He is a a man of such and such opinions," and leaves his character to stagnate there, misses the whole affair. While they believe the written word of God to be the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice—with respect to opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, they think and let live.

They wish it to be understood, that no peculiar phrases, or forms of speech, are to be considered as forming the distinguishing marks of a genuine Methodist. They make use of the most easy, obvious, and current words, except when they make use of scriptural truths, in language of Scripture.

The Methodists are not to be distinguished by any peculiar form of dress. They believe, at the same time, that plainness and cleanliness, and not costliness, fashion, or show, ought to be characteristics of the followers of the lowly Jesus. They do not wish to be distinguished by abstaining from marriage, or from the temperate use of proper meats and drinks.

They do not wish to be distinguished by laying the whole stress of religion on any particular part. While the sinner is called to repent, the penitent is called to believe, and the believer to obey. The heart, the

hand, the lips, the life, must all combine in this divine work of the Lord.

A genuine Christian, though not always on his knees, yet finds frequent opportunity for humble supplication. The unaffected language of his heart is, "Thou Brightness of the Eternal Glory, unto thee is my soul, even without a voice, and my silence speaketh to thee. Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, Benefactor, I owe myself and my all to thee. I acknowledge the unmerited favour. I yield myself to thee; not being my own, but thine, bought with a price. Henceforth my soul and body shall glorify thee. Assist me, O Lord, for without thee I can do nothing. And graciously continue this assistance, until glory shall end what grace has begun. All this I ask through Jesus Christ my great Advocate and Mediator. Amen.

Nor do the customs of the world, in which he feels himself to be but a stranger and a pilgrim, hinder him from running the race which is set before him. He knows that sin, however fashionable, does not lose its nature, and therefore he is crucified to the world. He cannot follow a multitude to do evil. He cannot fare sumptuously every day, or make inordinate provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.

As he has time, he endeavours to do good to neighbours, strangers, friends, and even to enemies also. He feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, visits the sick and dying, opens the prison doors to the honest debtor, if it be in his power; supports the widow, and makes the orphan sing for joy.

These are the principles, practices, and marks of genuine Methodists. By these are they to be distinguished. If any man say, "Why, these are the common fundamental principles of Christianity," we reply to him, "Thou hast said it." So we mean. We teach plain old Christianity, renouncing and disowning all other marks. And whosoever is both in heart and life, what we believe and preach, is a genuine Christian.

While we avow these principles, we do not desire to distinguish ourselves from real Christians of any

other denomination. Them that do the will of our Heavenly Father, we acknowledge as our brother, sister, and mother. Why should genuine Christians be so much divided among themselves? Should not the language of Christian inquiry be, "Is thy heart right with my heart, as my heart is with thine? Then give me thy hand." Let us not destroy the good work of God, for the sake of a few terms or opinions. Dost thou love and serve God? That is enough. This is the true test. We give thee the right-hand of fellowship. If there be any consolation in Christ: if any comfort of love: if any fellowship of the Spirit: let us walk worthy of the vocation whereby we are called: with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love—endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

To the names already quoted in this work, many more might be added, whose works have been consulted on the present occasion, who were men of the first names for learning and piety.

I hope that this vindication and defence of the doctrines of Methodism, while it is allowed by the candid reader to be a fair, impartial, and adequate reply to Mr. P.'s unfounded and illiberal aspersions, will not prevent others, who are far better qualified for the task, from taking up the subject on a yet larger scale. While they are sedulously employed in furnishing their own minds, with a copious variety of useful and important matter; in arranging it judiciously and orderly; and in delivering it seriously and impressively; they will besides think it incumbent, to furnish those who are brought to God by their ministry, with clear reasons and proper answers, which they may give to those who may inquire concerning the hope that is in them.

THE END.

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