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EMBRACING

SEVERAL ON PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

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THE

STANDARDS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

A FAITHFUL MIRROR OF BIBLE TRUTH.

By the Standards of the Presbyterian Church, we mean the Confession of Faith, together with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of our Church. These, we verily believe, are, in every particular, based upon the Scriptures. As a faithful mirror presents, with great exactness, all the features of the object which it reflects, even so, in these Standards, may we all behold, as in a glass, that system of divine truth, which is taught in the Bible. And if the image reflected be the exact counterpart of the original, why should the *mirror* be blamed for its fidelity? *It* creates nothing. *It* is responsible for nothing, but the accuracy of its reflecting power. This being the case, if there be any thing in the image reflected which we do not like,—in condemning *that*, do we not really condemn the original? And would it not, indeed, be more candid and just, to find fault with the original, and spare the mirror? Marshal Suwaroff, we are told, was in the habit of dashing to atoms every mirror into which he happened to look, because he was not pleased with the image there presented. But what did this avail? Did not every feature in the image owe its existence to some corresponding feature in the original? and should he break a thousand mirrors, or substitute some other kind of reflecting medium which could make smooth that which was rough, or beautiful, that which was homely, would not every feature of the original remain still precisely the same? “What, if some did not believe?” says Paul. “Shall their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect? God forbid! Let God be true and every man a liar.” If some things in our Standards are “hard to be understood,” it is because they, with great fidelity, present the very image of the things “hard to be

understood," in the Bible. Yes, our Standards derive their existence solely from the sacred Scriptures. They are bound fast to the Bible, as with iron clamps, or a threefold cord, which cannot be broken; and that power which can bend or straighten one, can bend or straighten the other also. If there be any controversy, it is to be settled, not with *us*, but with the *sacred writers*, in whose wake we are found. The Bible is their shield and hiding-place; and the arrow which pierces one, must pierce the other also! And now, in order that the reader may, at one glance, see that the Standards of the Presbyterian Church, are, indeed, a FAITHFUL MIRROR OF BIBLE TRUTH, we will place one immediately over against the other, and it will manifestly appear that the language of our Standards is not a whit stronger than the language of the Bible—but is its very *echo, image, and counterpart*:—

*The Standards.**

1. All things, in Scripture, are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear to all.

2. Yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed, for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened, in some place of Scripture or another, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.

3. The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in his Providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all

The Bible.

1. Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you, as also in all his epistles, in which are some things *hard to be understood*. 2 Pet. iii. 15.

2. The entrance of thy words giveth light: It giveth understanding unto the simple. Psa. cxix. 130.

3. The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all. Psa. ciii. 19. I form the light, and I create darkness: I make peace, and I

* Controverted and unpopular doctrines alone are noticed.

other sins of angels and men.

4. And that, not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation to his own holy ends.

5. Yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who being most holy, and righteous, neither is, nor can be the author or approver of sin.

6. God from all eternity did, by the wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.

create evil : I, the Lord, do all these things. Isa. xlv. 7, 8.

4. And God came to Balaam at night, and said unto him : If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them ; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do. Num. xxii. 20. Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. Psa. lxxvi. 10. Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith ? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it ? Isa. x. 15.

5. Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and, *by wicked hands*, have crucified and slain. Acts ii. 23. And Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, *I have sinned*. The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Ex. ix. 27.

6. For of a truth, Lord, against thine holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, *for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done*. Act iv. 27. Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning. Acts xv. 18.

7. Yet, so as thereby, neither is God the author of sin; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

8. Although God knows whatsoever may, or can come to pass, upon all supposed conditions, yet hath he not decreed any thing, because he foresaw it, as future, or as that which would come to pass, upon such conditions.

9. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life.

7. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; but every man is tempted *when he is drawn away by his own lust*, and enticed. James i. 13, 14. And they said one to another, *We are verily guilty* concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear. Gen. xlii. 21. The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. Psal. cxlv. 17.

8. For the children, 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 unto her that the elder should serve the younger; as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this cause have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared through the earth. Rom. ix. 11, 12, 13, 18.

9. According as he *hath chosen* us in him, before the foundation of the world. Having *predestinated* us to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure

10. And others pre-ordained unto everlasting death.*

11. These angels and men, thus predestinated and pre-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed.

of his will. *Being predestinated*, according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. Ep. i. 4, 11. Moreover, whom he did *predestinate*, *them* he also called; and whom he called, *them* he also justified; and whom he justified, *them* he also glorified. Rom. viii. 30. The *elect* angels. 1 Tim. v. 21.

10. The Lord hath made all things for himself, yea, *even the wicked for the day of evil*. Prov. xvi. 4. There are certain men crept in, unawares, who were *before ordained to this condemnation*, ungodly men. Jude 4. Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour, and *another unto dishonour*? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction? Rom. ix. 21, 22.

11. *All* that the Father giveth me, shall come to me. John vi. 37. *No man can come to me*, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him. John vi. 44. And *as many as were ordained* unto eternal life, believed. Acts xiii. 48. I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but

* For their *sin*. So teaches our "Confession," just after the manner of the Bible.

12. And their number is so certain and definite, that it can neither be increased nor diminished.*

13. Those of mankind who are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere grace and love.

14. And those thus saved in Christ are chosen in him without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any

for them which thou hast given me. John xvii. 9.

12. The Lord knoweth them that are his. 2 Tim. ii. 19. And *as many* as were ordained unto eternal life, believed. Acts xiii. 48. *All* that the Father giveth me, shall come to me. John vi. 37. *No* man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me, draw him. John vi. 44.

13. According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world . . . having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, unto himself, *according to the good pleasure of his will*. Being predestinated, according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things *after the counsel of his own will*. Eph. i. 4, 5, 11. Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters. Job xxxiii. 13.

14. Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, *not according to our works*, but according to his own purpose and grace which

* And does not the *fore-knowledge* of God (which all must admit) make the matter as certain as his *fore-ordination*? If, for example, God *foreknows* that A. B. will live in sin, and die in sin, is not the *event* just as certain in the one case as in the other? And if God *foreknows* that precisely nine hundred thousand billions of the human family will be saved, and *no more*, can that number be *increased*? Can it be *diminished*? Those, then, who hold to *fore-knowledge*, and those who hold to *fore-ordination*, are in the same category, and should bring no railing accusation against each other.

other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving thereunto ; and all to the praise of his glorious grace.

15. As God hath fore-ordained the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, fore-ordained all the *means* thereunto.

16. Those who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ.

17. Such are effectually called unto faith in Christ.

he purposed in Christ, before the world began. 2 Tim. i. 9. Hath chosen us in him, *that* we should be holy. And as many as were ordained unto eternal life, believed.* By grace are ye saved through faith, and *that*, not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God, *not of works*, lest any man should boast. Eph. ii. 8, 9.

15. Elect, according to the fore-knowledge of God, *through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience*, and sprinkling of the blood of Christ. 1 Pet. i. 2. God hath from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, *through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth*. 2 Thes. ii. 13.

16. As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Rom. v. 19. As for thee, also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit, wherein is no water. Zech. ix. 11. Thou wast slain, and *hast redeemed* us to God by thy blood. Rev. v. 9.

17. Who hath saved us, and *called* us, with an holy calling. 2 Tim. i. 9. Being justified by faith, we have

* Observe ! Luke does not say, As many as *believed* were ordained unto eternal life ; but As many as were *ordained unto eternal life* believed.

18. And, by his Spirit, working in due season, are adopted, sanctified, and saved.

19. Moreover, such attain everlasting life, being kept and "saved by his power through faith unto salvation."

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

peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Rom. v. 1.

18. And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and in sins. Eph. i. 1. Because ye are sons, he hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your heart, crying Abba, Father. Gal. iv. 6. Saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. Tit. iii. 5.

19. Reserved in heaven for you, *who are kept*, by the power of God, through faith unto salvation. 1 Pet. i. 4, 5. I am persuaded that He which hath begun a good work in you *will perform* it, unto the day of Jesus Christ. Phil. i. 6. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and *they shall never perish*, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. John x. 27, 28.

20. *I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me.* John xvii. 9. Many are called but few chosen. Matt. xx. 16. And, *as many* as were ordained unto eternal life, believed. Acts xiii. 48. - Moreover, whom he predestinated, *them* he also called, and whom he called, *them* he also justified; and whom he justified,

21. The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his will, whereby he extendeth, or withholdeth mercy, as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by and ordain them to dishonour and wrath, *for their sin*, to the praise of his glorious justice.

them he also glorified. Rom. viii. 30.

21. I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou *hast hid* these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. Luke x. 21. Therefore they could not believe, because Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. John xii. 39, 40. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will, he hardeneth. Thou wilt then say unto me, Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will? Nay, but, O man, who art thou, that repliest against God? * What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction? Rom. ix. 18—22.

* It is worthy of remark, that, wherever a doctrine is taught in the Bible, which is *likely to be controverted*, the objection is stated *in advance*, and put down! Thus, when our Saviour said, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God, the objection of Nicodemus is recorded; How can these things be? and the answer of our Saviour is given, Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. With regard to the doctrine of the *Incarnation* of Christ, the objection started is the *mystery* of the thing. Paul admits the mystery, yet holds fast the doctrine. Without controversy, says he, great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh. Again Paul, having affirmed that a man is justified by *faith, without the deeds of the*

Thus have I compared the Standards* of the Presbyterian Church with God's blessed word. I have put the one directly over against the other. I have concealed nothing, masked nothing, glossed over nothing. And now, candid reader, is there not a *very striking resemblance*? Is the language of our Standards one whit stronger than the language of the Bible? Is not the one the very ECHO, IMAGE, and COUNTER-PART of the other? and if, in our Standards, we find some things "*deep and dark*," are they not the very fac-simile of corresponding things "*deep and dark*" found in the sacred volume also? Let us then beware how we rudely touch either, lest, haply, we be found to touch an enveloped thunderbolt, and "fight against God!" As for myself, fully believing that the Bible is the word of God, and that every thing which it teaches is right and good; and that, when properly understood, it will appear worthy of Him who is the essence of all wisdom and love, I am willing to follow the Bible wherever it goes, as the little child follows its parent, or the boat goes in the wake of the gallant ship, which safely ploughs the waves of the mighty deep! Yea, as Ruth said unto Naomi, so would I say to this, my heavenly guide: "Hinder me not from following after thee, for whither thou goest will I go; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried." But it may be objected,

1. That if the doctrines here taught are the doctrines of the Bible, *then the Bible cannot be the word of God*. But **IT IS THE WORD OF GOD**. It is proved to be so, by the commanding evidence of the most stupendous miracles. It is proved to be so, by almost innumerable prophecies, which have been most literally and remarkably fulfilled. It is proved to be so, by the fact of its giving an account, and the

law, meets the objection of the antinomian in this way, Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! yea, we establish the law. And, just so, in reference to the doctrine of *Divine Sovereignty*, having said, Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth, he anticipates an objection, Why doth he yet find fault? and *puts it down* in this way. Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, &c. Now this starting of the objection to an unpopular doctrine, *in advance*, and putting it down, is certainly the strongest possible way of establishing the doctrine!

* The things most objected to.

only rational account of the creation of the world ; of the origin of evil ; of the division of time into weeks of seven days ; and other matters connected with the early history of our globe. It is proved to be the word of God, by the sublimity of its doctrines ; the perfection of its precepts ; and its admirable adaptation to the wants and circumstances of man. Indeed, the character and teachings of Christ, his resurrection from the dead, and the power of his religion upon the conscience and the heart of millions, are convincing proofs of its divine origin. Yes, the blessed Bible comes to us, “with credentials clear ; on every line, marked with the seal of high divinity ;” and to deny it, is much the same as to deny that there is light in the sun, or stars in the firmament, or beauty in virtue, or deformity in vice ; and hence to deny that the Bible is the word of God, would be to plunge into difficulties incomparably greater than those we would avoid. But it may be said,

2. If the doctrines here laid down are true, then *man can be no longer a free agent. He is not responsible for his actions : and the doctrine of FATALISM is true.* But these inferences are not correct. The Bible teaches no such thing, nor do the Standards of the Presbyterian Church. Both teach clearly and strongly that man *is* a free agent ; that man *is* accountable ; and that *the DOCTRINE OF FATALISM IS NOT TRUE.* That we are free agents, we are perfectly conscious. In this matter our consciousness is as strong as that of our identity. Of course, then, neither the Bible nor our Standards can say aught against this. In all that the sinner does, he acts freely, with his own full consent ; and to say there is any Divine influence upon the sinner, impelling him, in any case, to do that which is wrong, is impious ; hence, the language of the apostle James, “Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God ; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man ; but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin ; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” This is a true, Scriptural account of the matter ; and, in most exact accordance with it, we find this language in our Standards, “*Yet so as there by, neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the freedom of the creature, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.*” And again, in speaking of the providence of God extending “to the first

fall, and all other sins of men and angels," we find this language, "*Yet, so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is, nor can be the author or approver of sin.*" To illustrate and establish the doctrine thus taught, both in the Bible and in our Standards, there are many cases upon sacred record. It is said that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and yet Pharaoh certainly must have been conscious that he acted freely, or he would never have said, "I have sinned. The Lord is righteous, but I and my people are wicked." Joseph's brethren, moved with envy, sold him into Egypt. When Joseph became governor, and made himself known to his brethren, and they were troubled at his presence, he said unto them, "Come near unto me, I pray thee, and they came near; and he said, I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold unto Egypt: now, therefore, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither, for *God did send me before you* to preserve life. Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Notwithstanding all this, it must be admitted, that Joseph's brethren acted freely, and, in conspiring against their brother, and selling him into Egypt, they certainly sinned grievously, and *this they felt and acknowledged*, in this language, when in trouble: "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; thereupon is this distress come upon us." The case of Balaam also is exactly in point. Invited by the messengers of Balak to go to Moab, and curse the children of Israel, he was expressly forbidden to go; nay he was assured, that the people whom he was called upon to curse were and should be blessed. This was surely enough to prevent Balaam's going. And it is true in the morning he sent away the messengers, saying, The Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you. As if he had said, I am willing enough to go, but I serve a hard master, who will not let me go. Upon the return of the messengers to Moab, Balak, the king of Moab, believing that the prophet of Aram might yet be won, sent other messengers, yet more honourable, and promised great things. To these messengers Balaam said, If Balak should give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more. Willing, however, to give the king of Moab every proof

of his readiness to please him, he invited the messengers into his house, and made an attempt to change the Divine purpose, as though God was a man, that he should lie; or the son of man, that he should repent. As Balaam's covetous heart was set upon the promised rewards of Balak, God, to punish him, and "make his power known," permitted him to go, yes, **WITHOUT APPROVING**, *permitted* him to go, to go on, to his own destruction! Wretched man! he braved every danger for filthy lucre's sake. "And God's anger was kindled, because he went; and the angel of the Lord stood in the way, as an adversary against him. And when Balaam's eyes were opened, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand," conscious guilt filled him with alarm, "and he bowed down his head, and fell flat upon his face, and said, *I have sinned.*" Observe! God *permitted* him to go, but Balaam had full reason to know that if he had the *divine permission*, he had not the *divine approbation*; for God, who changes not, had already said, Thou shalt not go; thou shalt not curse the people; for they are blessed. Now, this case illustrates our doctrine of the providence of God extending itself "even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men, yet so as the *sinfulness thereof* proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the *author* or *approver* of sin." But the case, which, perhaps, of all others, is the most striking, is that touching the crucifixion of Christ, which, we are told, was done by **WICKED HANDS**, although we are expressly told, also, it was done *according to the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God*. And note the language of Peter, in another place: "For, of a truth, Lord, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy *hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.*" Now, such things being brought to pass by the providence of God, whilst all the sinfulness thereof proceedeth from the creature, may seem strange—*quite inexplicable*; and yet it is all perfectly true; as both the Bible and our Standards positively affirm. But it may again be objected,

3. *How can these things be?* To this I would reply, many things, when stated, and not properly understood, may appear very strange, and even contradictory and absurd, which, nevertheless, are strictly true; and when light comes

in, all objections pass away. A *mathematician* tells me that a line may be continually approaching a certain point, and yet never can reach it! I am astonished! I am ready to deny the assertion; and say, How can it be? He draws a diagram, demonstrates the truth of his proposition, and I am obliged to admit the correctness of his proposition. A *traveller* assures me, that, in going down a river, he was, in the evening of a certain day, fifty miles nearer home than he was in the morning of that day, *and yet farther off!!* I hear the assertion with amazement, and, incredulous, I ask, How can this be? He describes on paper, the *windings* of the river, points out his position in the morning, his position at night; and shows me where his house stands. I understand it now, and what was an enigma before, is such no longer. I *affirm* that you are a *mortal* man, and *must soon die*. The next moment I say you are *immortal*, and *must live for ever!* This moment I tell you that my father is sleeping in the *grave*; the next moment I say, he is robed and crowned in *heaven*. If unacquainted with the twofold nature of man, you exclaim, “Nonsense! what can be more absurd? *mortal*, and yet *immortal!* Sleeping *in the grave*, and robed and crowned *in heaven!* Impossible! It cannot be!” I reveal to you the fact of the *twofold existence* of man, as consisting of soul and body. Your wonder ceases; your mind is relieved; the difficulty is now all gone! *Whilst the Pharisees were gathered together*, Jesus answered them, saying, What think you of Christ? whose son is he? And they said, The Son of David; and he said, How then doth David in spirit call him *Lord?* saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou upon my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. If David called him *LORD*, how is he then his *SON?* And, says the evangelist, no man was able to answer him a word. Not knowing the fact, that Jesus Christ was both God and man, the question was confounding; the thing stated perfectly inexplicable! And now, if we take the ground of modern Unitarians, what will we do with these words of the Saviour, I am the *Root* and Offspring of David. If Jesus Christ be no more than a *mere man*, how could he be the *Root* of David? the *SOURCE* of David’s being? And if we, quoting these passages of Scripture which speak of Christ as God, the mighty God, and God over all blessed for ever, should insist upon it, that he is *God only*, how then it may be asked, can he be *DAVID’S OFFSPRING?* What now

is to be done? Why, RECEIVE, AS TRUE, ALL THE DECLARATIONS IN THE BIBLE, *on the authority of God*. Is this unreasonable? Certainly not. It is only what every good child does, as regards the declarations of its earthly parent. For example, this father tells his little children that the earth is turning upon its axis, and is rolling very swiftly round the sun! At first, the child may be astonished, and say "Pa, the world is standing still. How can it be?" But when the parent seriously affirms the fact, the child submits, and believes the assertion made. Does that child trample upon reason? I deny it. There is a syllogism in the mind of that child. It is this: "My father says it is so: my father never tells lies; and therefore it is so." And now to apply this, the Bible says God sent Joseph down into Egypt; and yet the *crime* of selling him into Egypt is laid at the door of his envious brethren. With regard to Pharaoh, God says, For this very cause have I raised thee up, that my power might be shown in thee, and my name declared throughout the earth. And yet God expostulates with him thus: How long wilt thou refuse to let my people go? The Bible tells us that there is only one living and true God, and yet, speaking of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, declares each to be God! The Saviour says, No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him; and yet also uses this language, Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life. And the very same Bible which says, "Whom he predestinated, them he also called," says, likewise, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Are these "*dark sayings*?" Are these "hard to be understood?" Be it so. They are the words of a God, who cannot lie; and I receive every declaration as divinely true. I receive them all *on the authority of God*: I have received the declarations of man, which, at first, were equally inexplicable, and found them true. Shall I believe the word of man, and shall I not believe the word of God? If then I point out certain declarations of Christ and his apostles, and believe them all, and a controversy is started, in relation to certain "*hard sayings*," the quarrel is to be settled, not with *me*, but with *those who uttered* these dark sayings! And it is remarkable, as I have elsewhere shown, that in relation to the doctrine of *Predestination*, as with many others, the objection is started *in advance*! Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? and put down with a "Nay, but, O man, who art thou,

that repliest against God?" I firmly believe that, in a future world, every thing will be cleared up, and we shall read, in fairer, brighter lines, all the mysteries, even the *darkest* mysteries, both of the WORD and PROVIDENCES of God. In the mean time, WE are willing to receive the Bible, as *suited to a state of probation*, suited to try our *faith*, as well as our *obedience*, and, as the Saviour said to Peter, when he washed his feet, (and he did what Peter could not see the propriety of,) "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter;" even so will it be in relation to the things which appear inexplicable, in the sacred volume. What we know not *now*, doubtless we shall know *hereafter*. The word of the Lord is tried—every syllable true; and we may, without wavering, firmly rest upon it. This is what the Apostle Peter denominates "PRECIOUS FAITH." Only let me have a divine warrant. I am willing to believe any thing, venture any thing! and, in so doing, I honour REASON as well as the Bible, for the word of the Lord is true, and reason tells me, that what is true must stand for ever! When the light of eternity breaks in upon us, then all darkness and clouds will pass away, and we, who now see through a glass darkly, shall then see face to face; and we, who now, know only in part, shall then know even as we are known. Paul, in the very same chapter in which he speaks of the bright light of the eternal world, uses this language: "Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." Now, at first, this appears strange and even contradictory; and yet, when understood, is found to be both true and beautiful. As the stars which shine at midnight fade away and vanish at the rising of the sun, (their twinkling light being lost and swallowed up in the brighter splendours of the glorious orb of day,) even so all the knowledge which we may acquire on earth will be, as it were, lost and swallowed up in the overflowing flood of intellectual light, which shall pour in upon us from the throne of God! And now, as these words, "Whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away," (which seems strange and inexplicable at first,) are, upon examination, better understood, even on earth, even so, a careful examination of certain things, "deep and dark," in the Standards of the Presbyterian Church, may, even *now*, give us some light, which we had not before, and thus relieve the mind, and cause us to receive and love that against which we may have had strong prejudices in time past. And now, candid reader, let us notice some of the things most usually

objected to, in the Standards of the Presbyterian Church, and see if these objections be not entirely groundless.

1. ELECTION.—Does any one object to the *word*? It is in the Bible, in numerous places, and cannot be expunged. Is it the *principle* which is objected to? How common is the principle among men! Do we not elect our presidents, our governors, our judges, our sheriffs, and our partners in love and trade? No principle more common than this, and, may I not add, none more valued. Is the *doctrine* of election offensive? And what is the doctrine? Simply this, God's *plan of SECURING the salvation of some, of very many of the human family*. It is an act of super-abounding mercy, a pure work of grace, infinitely *bettering* the condition of the human family, and presenting at least one beauteous rainbow of promise upon the dark cloud which overshadowed our guilty globe! It is something *extra*, which smiles upon many, and frowns upon none; which places no new obstruction in the sinner's way; but leaves him precisely as it found him, untouched. Now, why object to a plan of mercy for *securing* the salvation of some, when, without it, the salvation of all would have been in fearful jeopardy?*

2. UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION.—And what is meant by this? Simply that salvation is *all of grace*, in other words, that those who are saved are chosen in Christ, not on *account* of any merit or obedience of their own, nor any faith. And

* We humbly conceive that the doctrine is virtually admitted, 1. By all *who admit that conversion is the work of God*. Say you are converted. Who converted you? You answer, "God, most certainly." Well, if God converted you, he must have intended to do it; and if he intended to do it, he must have intended it from all eternity; for it is written, "Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning." 2. By those who pray for *special influences*, who pray that God would come down, in mighty power, and slay the enmity of the sinner's heart; and subdue the stubbornness of the sinner's will; and make him a trophy of *victorious* grace: for what does this amount to, but this? Lord, we see that *that* "common grace, which is given to all men, to profit withal," does not bring the sinner to Christ; therefore, we pray for *more* grace, for *conquering* grace. This involves the very essence of our doctrine, and upon it is based the humbling and confounding question of the Apostle, Who made thee to differ? I should prefer that the objector would hold fast the "*form of sound words*," but if, in his "holiest moments," he distinctly recognizes that which is the very sum and substance of the doctrine of election, I am content. The thing itself is worth more than its name. I had rather have the jewel and the casket both, but if I cannot get the casket, by all means give me the *jewel*.

does not the Bible expressly say, By grace are ye saved, through faith, and *that* not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God ; not of works, lest any man should boast ? And what says Luke ? “ And as many as were ordained unto eternal life believed.” Observe ! It is not, As many *as believed*, were ordained ; but, as many as *were ordained*, believed. And what says Paul ? “ Chosen in Christ, *that* we should be holy,” not *because* we were holy, but *that* we should be holy. This, as I believe, is the precise idea intended to be conveyed by our Standards. It is simply the doctrine of grace strongly asserted. And where is the Christian that will not say, “ Grace ! ’tis a sweet, a charming sound,” or where the converted soul, that will not freely admit, that “ Grace shall crown the work that grace began ?” Precious doctrine !

3. ELECT INFANTS.—This need not be objected to. Surely it must be a very harmless phrase, as something equivalent, or, at least, very much like it, is found in the Standards of another Church, never charged with being too Calvinistic : “ Grant that this child, now to be baptized, may receive the fulness of thy grace, and ever remain in the number of thy faithful and elect children, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Now, to *remain* in the number of God’s *elect children*, implies that there is such a class, and being one of that number, must, of course, be *elect*, and being a child, must be an *elect child* ! Change the word child for infant, and we have the very phrase employed in our Standards ! The only difference, then, in these Standards seems to be this : that one requires the matter to be reiterated at the baptism of every child ; the other does not.*

4. REPROBATION.—And what is this ? A judicial act. Simply, God’s giving the sinner over to walk in the way of his own lusts ; giving him over to a “ *hard heart*, and a *reprobate mind*,” for the punishment of his sins. And where is the man, who has read his Bible, who has not seen this doc-

* And is not the doctrine of “ *unconditional election*” also recognized here ? for the child not having done, as yet, any good works, nor being capable of exercising faith, if elect, it could not have been on account of any of these things, and is not this *unconditional election* ? But if it be said that “ All mankind are elected in Christ to a state of probation, or possibility of salvation,” then, in praying that the child may ever remain in this state, is to pray, not that the child may attain *salvation*, but may always remain in a state of probation ! its salvation always attainable, but never attained ! As all denominations are imperfect, ought they not to deal very gently with each other ?

trine written there, as with a sunbeam? By reprobation, we mean nothing more than what is plainly intended to be taught in these words of the Apostle, (1 Thes. ii. 11, 12.) “For this cause, God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” If any still object, let it be thundered, not in *our* ear, but the ear of *Paul!*

5. THE DECREES OF GOD.—These, as some think, are dark mountains, frowning awfully; but, really, are rather mountains gilded with heavenly glories! for what are the decrees of God, but the calm divine purpose of infinite wisdom and love, to *bring* to pass, or *permit* to come to pass, whatever does come to pass, for the glory of his great name. Is not the glory of God the grand object for which all things were brought into existence? And if, in the work of *Creation*, this was the grand end in view, ought it not to be in the work of *Providence* also? And, whilst God causes many things to come to pass by his *own positive* influence or decree, (such as causing light to exist, and fruits to abound,) is it not desirable that he should also have full power over all the actions of his creatures, to *permit* and *prevent*, as to him may seem best? And is it not pleasing to think that infinite wisdom and love *have had* the arranging of the whole plan? that God, in full view of all possible events, has calmly and wisely determined to bring to pass certain good things, and also calmly and wisely determined to *permit* and *bound* and *control* evil things; only, however, in such a measure and way, as he foresees will ultimately redound to the glory of his great name? With regard to the *first*, James tells us, that “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights;” and with regard to the *second*, the Psalmist says, “The wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath wilt thou restrain.” And is it not pleasant to think that as God has, by a *decree*, fixed a bound to the sea, saying, Thus far shall thou go and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed, so he has, also, by a *decree*, fixed a bound to all the actions of his creatures, permitting, bounding, and controlling all things, in infinite wisdom and love? Hence this language of the Apostle: “All things work together for good, to them that love God;” and hence also the loud and harmonious shout in the heavenly world, in relation to the whole plan of the Divine government: “Great

and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints." And now, with this explanation, I ask—if the decrees of God *are high mountains*, do they not rise in grandeur before our eyes? Are they not gilded with heavenly glories? Precious doctrine! Alleluia! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth! Amen, Alleluia!

6. THE FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF SAINTS.—And what is this doctrine? Not that a person, once converted, may live as he pleases, and be sure of salvation, but that those who are truly regenerated, being kept by the power of God, will persevere *in grace* unto glory. And is not this the very language of Peter? "Blessed," says he, "be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who *are kept* by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." And in relation to the matter of being *safely* kept, does not Paul say, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God?" Now I should think that a jewel kept in such a casket, *thus* "*hid* with Christ in God," must be *safely* kept. Paul himself seems to have thought so, for he immediately adds, "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." But what is the language of the Saviour himself? "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them; and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall *never perish*, nor shall any pluck them out of my hand." It would be difficult to conceive of language stronger than this; particularly taken in connection with this prayer of the Saviour: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." But the correctness of our interpretation seems to be positively and for ever settled, by what the Saviour says, will be the language of the final Judge to those on the left hand in the great day, "Depart—*I never knew you!*" Observe! Not, I know you not *now*, but *I never knew you!* As *individuals*, he certainly always knew them; of course, then, he must have reference to them *as disciples*. Now if any of them had ever been truly converted, they would have been his disciples, and he certainly would have known them as such; but he, the blessed Saviour, the final judge, will say to all upon the left hand, I NEVER KNEW YOU. But the doctrine of the final perseverance of saints is believed,

as it would seem, not only by Presbyterians on earth, but by angels in heaven, yea, by *all* the angels; for our Saviour says, "There is joy, in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth." Now, if the doctrine were not true, I wonder if, whilst heaven rings jubilee, and the younger angels are shouting, "The dead is alive, and the lost is found," I say I wonder, if some of the older and more considerate angels would not say, "Stop, young cherub; wait a little; that converted sinner may not come to heaven after all!" But no check is given to the joy of any one! Joy pervades every bosom! One blessed wave of joy rolls all over the heavenly world; and the full choir of angels rejoice that another human being has entered upon the race for glory! another human being has become a child of God, an heir of heaven, and will soon join them in the skies! But some may object, and say, What will we do with other passages of Scripture, such as these, "If the righteous turn from his righteousness," "If the salt have lost its savour," "If they shall fall away, &c.?" Do not such passages overthrow the doctrine of final perseverance? I answer, By no means. Paul says "Though I, or an angel from heaven, should preach any other gospel than that ye have received, let him be accursed!" But was it possible for an angel from heaven to preach any other doctrine? And Paul, on a certain occasion, had said, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. But had not God said, There shall be the loss of no man's life? The idea in both cases is this—in the purpose of God the MEANS and the END are linked together; and what God has joined together let not man put asunder.

But it may further be objected: Does not Paul say, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that, by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway?" Grant it, freely! but does not the same Apostle also say, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?" But the whole matter is beautifully explained in Jeremiah xxxii. 40, where the Lord, speaking of his people, says, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good, and I will put my fear in their heart, that they shall not depart from me." When, therefore, Paul said, "*lest I myself should be a castaway,*" he only proved that he was a child of God, being under the

influence of that very fear which God promised to put into the hearts of all his children. This godly fear is a never-failing mark of true piety, and I hesitate not to say, that the man in whose bosom it does not exist, has no true religion. He may boast "of inward joys and sins forgiven," but he is not a converted man; he is not a child of God. But finally, it may be said, *We have known some persons who were converted, and who, for a time, were even useful ministers of the gospel, who became miserable apostates, and died in sin.* Not to say any thing about certain "foolish virgins, who took their lamps, and took no oil with them," nor any thing about certain stony ground hearers, "who received the word with joy, but had no root," we need only repeat the words of an inspired apostle, "They went out from us, because they were not of us, for if they had been of us, no doubt they would have continued with us; but they went out, that it might be made manifest that they were not all of us." This is conclusive; especially as it falls in with the usual method of the sacred writers, as we have shown, to notice objections likely to be made to certain doctrines, and to put them down! and, I must say, it was very kind in them to give the advocates of those doctrines such help in advance, thus encouraging them in times of trial, "to hold fast to the form of sound words," and to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." Yes, candid reader, believe it, the doctrine of the **FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF SAINTS** is a Bible doctrine, and like the other doctrines here presented, and with which it is inseparably linked, is divinely true. It forms an essential part of a system all glorious and beautiful throughout! Nay, it is the "key-stone of the arch, which shuts and binds the whole." *It must be true*, for not only does the Bible teach it, but reason also. "Do you think," says one, "that God would have suffered Elijah to fall, when he was taking him up to heaven? No more will he permit a child of his to fall, whom he is taking to his heavenly kingdom." It must be true. *Job* believed the doctrine, or he had never said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall appear at the latter day upon the earth; and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself and not another." *David* believed the doctrine, or he would never have so confidently exclaimed, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." *Peter* also certainly believed it, when he

broke out in this exulting language, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." Moreover, beyond all doubt, *Paul* believed the doctrine, when he said, in his epistle to the Philippian Christians, "Being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it, until the day of Jesus Christ;" and surely he must have been under the blessed influence of this doctrine when he uttered his well-known, triumphant language, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 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 be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." What a noble testimony to the truth of the doctrine have we here! And under its influence, how glorious and sublime is this flight and triumph of faith! Heaven in full view, heaven begins on earth! O blessed system of divine truth, which thus winds up in exultation and in joy! and loud and ceaseless songs of praise to HIM, who thus causes grace to reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ, our Lord!

" Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise him all creatures here below;
Praise him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."