

THE
UNPOPULAR DOCTRINES OF THE BIBLE.

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT

THE TENT MEETING HOUSE, IN FAYETTE COUNTY, PA.

On the third Lord's day in March, 1832.

BY **ASHBEL G. FAIRCHILD,**
PASTOR OF GEORGE'S CREEK AND TENT.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

Do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men I should not be the servant of Christ.—**ST. PAUL.**



PITTSBURGH:

D. AND M. MACLEAN, PRINTERS.

.....

1833.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following discourse was occasioned by the trying circumstances, in which one of the author's congregations was placed, during the winter of 1831-2. Some "Cumberland Presbyterians" appeared among the people of his charge, under the character of Missionaries, sent from the West to preach the gospel. They utterly disclaimed all party and sinister views, and made warm professions of *charity*. These professions, joined with much apparent sanctity and zeal, soon gained over some of the author's hearers to their party. The doctrines of the Presbyterian church were then assailed in language not very consistent with christian courtesy; and to render them odious, statements and representations were made, which, if not attributable to misinformation, could hardly be reconciled with manly frankness. For some time the author forbore to reply, as well from his averseness to controversy, as because the mildest defence he could set up might afford a pretext for the cry of *persecution*. He soon found, however, that an interpretation was put upon his silence injurious to himself and to that church which is dearer to him than his own life. This determined him to deliver in substance the following discourse, which was attended with happy results. He has been requested by numerous friends to commit it to the press; and although sensible of its defects, he has yielded, in the hope that, through the divine blessing, it may be of some small use in congregations situated similarly to his own.

THE UNPOPULAR DOCTRINES OF THE BIBLE.

LUKE 4:28—30. *And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, WERE FILLED WITH WRATH, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way.*

WHAT harsh and offensive doctrine can it have been, my hearers, that provoked all this ungovernable rage? What preacher, regardless alike of his popularity and safety, invited so outrageous an attempt upon his own life? Was he some gloomy Calvinist, who, in maintaining the sovereignty of God, at the expense of his justice and mercy, wounded the pious sensibilities of his audience? And do we see in the text, nothing but the overflowings of virtuous indignation, in a religious assembly zealous for the honor of Jehovah?

My friends, the preacher who occasioned the offence was no other than the mild and affectionate Saviour, who was anointed by the Spirit, and "spake as never man spake." He had explained to the Nazarenes a prophecy of Isaiah, and informed them that it was accomplished in himself. This seemed to afford them much pleasure. But after all, he was aware that they entertained objections to him, on account of the obscurity of his birth. He also knew that they had heard of the miraculous cures he had performed at Capernaum, and expected him to do at least as much for the people of Nazareth, "where he had been brought up." This expectation, he, for wise reasons, did not intend to gratify. He proceeded therefore to show them that he had an undoubted right to perform his miracles when and where it pleased him, according to the dictates of his own wisdom and goodness; and if he should withhold his favors altogether from them, he would be fully justified by their unbelief. In making such discriminations, he was acting just as the prophets Elijah and Elisha had done. Vs. 25,26,27, "But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them was cleansed saving Naaman the Syrian." The proud self-confident Nazarenes

imagined they held an irresistible claim to the miraculous services of the Lord Jesus; and could not brook the idea that they deserved to be passed by in the distribution of the divine favors. Supremely selfish in their dispositions, they could rejoice in no happiness in which they did not participate. If the Saviour had wrought no miracles at Capernaum, if he had withheld his favors equally from all, they would, perhaps, have been contented. But to perform cures at Capernaum, and none at Nazareth—this was an unpardonable offence. And when the Lord Jesus ventured to justify himself, by asserting his *sovereign* right, to “do what he would with his own,” and to confer unmerited favors as his own infinite wisdom and goodness might direct; they were all on a sudden transported with rage. And forgetting the sacredness of the day, and the purpose for which they had assembled, they rushed upon him with one accord, and made a bold and desperate attempt upon his life.

My hearers, the Nazarenes were by no means singular in their resentment. The same doctrines have uniformly excited “wrath,” wherever they have been preached. In every age, whoever has dared to defend them has provoked the enmity of the carnal heart; and if men have not always attempted his life they have sought to overwhelm him with calumny. Those churches which have ventured to uphold the language of Christ and his apostles, in relation to the divine SOVEREIGNTY, have ever been objects of the world’s peculiar hatred. And sectarians of every age, who have originated schemes of proselytism, while they have held out the allurements of a more *popular* system, have courted the favor of the multitude by ingenious attacks upon those churches. Indeed, when I look at these doctrines, and then consider what the human heart is, I am led to wonder that a single vestige of them remains on earth. I consider the fact of their being so generally maintained by the churches of Europe and America, as an amazing proof of the continued interposition of God. For what is there to induce a minister, to advocate such unpopular tenets, in opposition to his dearest worldly interests? On the other hand, is he not often tempted through fear, and fondness of the world’s favor and applause, to abandon his system for another, which is better adapted to the carnal policy, the unhumiliated pride, and the worldly wisdom of men? Why then, in spite of considerations to which he cannot be insensible, should he be willing to advocate these doctrines? It is only because He who revealed the truth has forced its evidence upon the minds of His servants, and inspired them with zeal and courage in its defence.

The doctrines referred to, have occasioned much angry feeling towards the Presbyterian church. The frankness and honesty,

the fearlessness and constancy with which she has supported the declarations of the Bible in reference to the *divine sovereignty*, have frequently excited "wrath," but never have we witnessed so much of it here, as at the present time. The truth has been of late so violently assailed, and misrepresentation carried to such a length, that I cannot longer be silent, without treachery to the cause of my Divine Master. I shall, therefore, in reliance on the divine aid, consider in order, those points of doctrine which have been handled to the discredit of truth, or to the injury of the church.

I. GOD THE DISPOSER OF EVENTS.

The first offensive article of our faith which I shall notice, is the doctrine, that *God is the disposer of all events*; or if we may be allowed the precise words of scripture, *that these events are "predestinated, according to the purpose of Him, who worketh ALL THINGS after the counsel of his own will;"* so that "*Of Him and through Him and to Him are ALL THINGS,*" and so that "*ALL THINGS shall work together for good.*"*

From this doctrine, a long list of most shocking absurdities, and monstrous blasphemies have been inferred, and exhibited to the world as parts of our system; such as these, that "*God is the author of sin;*" that the "*universe is governed by fatality;*" that we "*deny man's free-agency,*" and make him a "*mere machine;*" and that we "*set aside the necessity of the use of means.*" Further; in order to fasten the stigma upon us, an expression in our standards has been seized upon, which says that "God ordained whatsoever comes to pass." This, it is pretended, justifies the accusation. Let us go, then, to our venerable Confession, and see what it says. Let us read the sentence on to its conclusion. Chapter III. Sec. I.—God "ordained whatsoever comes to pass; yet, so as thereby neither is God the author of sin; nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established." Here are three very important limiting clauses, to which I wish to call your attention.

1. The first of the clauses declares, that God has SO ordained all things, as *not* to be the author of sin. And you may now see upon what grounds men have labored to fix upon us the odium of a tenet, impious and shocking in the extreme, and worse, if possible, than atheism itself.

2. The second limiting clause, denies expressly any such fore-ordination as would set aside free-agency. "Thereby, neither is violence offered to the will of the creatures." Here again you may see with what justice the clamor is raised against us, "that we deny free-agency and make man a mere machine." You

*Eph. 1:11. Rom. 11:36, and 8:28.

may now be assured that such a charge has nothing in our standards for its support. Turn to Chap. IX. Sec. I. and you will read thus, "God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to good or evil." This indeed is a truth of which we are all perfectly conscious. And we are aware that to deny it would be to set aside man's accountability to God.

3. The *third* limiting clause in the sentence says, that God, "so" ordained all things as not to take away human liberty, nor the necessity of means, but rather to establish them. "Thereby, the liberty or contingency of second causes is not taken away, but rather ESTABLISHED." Here again, you may see the dishonesty, or rather I should say, the ignorance of those who charge us with denying human liberty, or the efficacy of means, or with maintaining a system of fatality.* Charity should perhaps lead us to the conclusion that they have never seen, or never attentively examined the standards of our church. Any other supposition would be attended with such an imputation against their morals, as I am unwilling to bring. Those who hold the doctrine of our church, as you now learn, must believe in human liberty, in the necessity and efficacy of means, and must be, if possible, more free from fatalism than any others. If any have held contrary to this, they did not believe our doctrine; and it is uncandid, it is illiberal, it is unchristian to blame the whole body with the eccentricities of a few individuals.

What then is foreordination? I shall lead you to an easier understanding of the subject, by first inquiring how the decrees or purposes of God in foreordination are fulfilled. Our shorter cate-

*In Woodward's edition of Buck's Theological Dictionary, is an article headed "Cumberland Presbyterians," which, although written and furnished by members of that body, yet being without any distinguishing signature, has been perused by hundreds with the impression that it was penned by Mr. Buck, and therefore entitled to the credit of fairness and impartiality. Among many errors it contains, it represents the Presbyterian Church as holding the doctrine of "Fatality." Fate, according to the ancient heathen, modern Mussulmen, and some sceptics who have advocated it, is a blind undefined power, destitute of wisdom and godness, which governs the universe, determining men's actions by a physical necessity. Now the doctrine of our church is, that a wise and benevolent God disposes of all events without impairing free-agency. Who can discover any resemblance between these two doctrines? But what is still more remarkable, the same writers tell us, (after specifying the exception of fatalism against our Confession,) that if any candidates for the ministry, choose to adopt that Confession without the said exception, they shall still be admitted. It would follow that men may be ordained in the Cumberland body, who hold and preach fatalism! Surely there is a mistake here. Surely no respectable body of Christian ministers would lay hands on a man who holds a tenet so fundamentally erroneous. Nor would the clergy of that body be so pressing and importunate in their invitations to our people to commune with them, if they thought that we held such FATAL errors. No: they would feel bound by their ordination vows to debar us. Here, then, is certainly a mistake.

The writers of the article mention some other points of "dissent," which we shall notice in the proper place:

chism tells us they are all executed "in His works of creation and providence." Creation and providence, then, according to our standards, include the whole field in which the purposes of God are unfolded. The doctrine then is simply this: *Nothing comes to pass without the agency or permission of Deity; and further; what He now does, He always meant to do, and what he now permits, He always meant to permit, for wise reasons.* In illustrating this position, we shall reason from the effect to the cause, and prove the purpose of God from what he actually does.

God is the creator of all things, and upholds all in being. He also governs all things. He does not merely *see* what passes in the world, without daring to interfere in its concerns. He does not stand aloof from the universe He has created, to view it as an idle spectator, leaving it to the dominion of chance. By His providence, which reaches to all events, great and small, to the fall of a sparrow, or of a hair of our head, as well as to the dissolution of empires; He bringeth *all things* to pass for the advancement of His glory and the welfare of His people. All good, whether natural or moral, must be ascribed to His agency. His government extends to all the actions of men, and that without infringing upon human liberty.* The Bible teaches us to behold His hand in every event, whether connected with human agency or otherwise. Hence, even the disposal of the lot, of all things the most fortuitous, is expressly ascribed to Him. *Pov. 16:33.*

The Providence of God extends to the *sinful actions* of men. Hateful as iniquity must be to him, he, for wise reasons, permits it, and overrules it for good. There is "joined with this permission, a holy, wise, and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends; yet so that 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." *Con. of Faith, chap. V. sec. IV.*

The next thing is to prove, that *what God now does, he always intended to do*—what he now accomplishes in creation and providence, he always meant to accomplish. To make this matter plain, let us suppose that God creates a new world to-day; you will admit that he does it from *design*. And if so he must always have had that design, or else he has formed a new purpose and is

*Some have denied that God governs men's actions. The Cumberland body in framing their Confession of Faith from ours, dropped all those passages which ascribe such a power to God. As the compilers tell us, in their preface, that they have erased nothing from the old Confession but "fatality," of course they discovered that heinous monster here. On this principle we must never pray that God would restrain the wicked, or "work in us to will and to do," for this would be acknowledging his government of men's actions—would be the doctrine of fatalism. Query. What kind of a government must that be which has no control over the actions of its subjects?

changeable; which he denies, saying, "I am the LORD, I change not."

Again; if God creates a world to-day, and does so from *design*, when did he form that design? Not till to-day? Why not sooner? Is he more wise, more mighty, more benevolent to-day, or does he see something new, which induces him to form an intention which never existed in his mind before?

The same thing may be proved by the foreknowledge of God. For whatever any being foreknows he himself will do of his own accord, *that* he must already have resolved to do. If, for example, you know that you will, of your own accord, take a journey to-morrow, you must already have resolved upon that journey. Now God foreknew that he would, of his own accord, make a world to-day. He knew it from eternity. How did he know it? If his determination was unsettled at that period; if he had not already come to a decision on the subject, how could he *certainly* know that he would create a world to-day? The same reasoning applied to any thing else that God does in creation or providence, will issue in the same conclusions. Indeed if we deny the principle, that *what God now does he always meant to do*, we disrobe him of his perfections, and reduce him to the level of a creature.

In the same manner it may be shown, that *what God now permits he always meant to permit*. Did God know from eternity that he should permit a wicked man to persecute his church to-day? How did he know it? If his purpose was not settled, how did he know certainly that he should permit him? I need scarcely inform you that all truly Calvinistic divines distinguish foreordination into *efficacious* and *permissive*. The *former* relates to what God accomplishes by his *positive agency*. The *latter*, to whatever for wise reasons he chooses to *permit*. And this distinction you are aware is maintained in our church standards. See chap. VI. sec. I. and chap. V. sec. IV.

From what has been said, you may easily understand what is meant by *foreordination*. But I think proper now to present the subject in another point of view. To *foreordain*, in the technical sense in which the word is used by Calvinists, signifies to *render a future event certain, whether by positive agency or permission*. Thus: if you could know that the giving of a tract to a drunkard, would, with infallible certainty, issue in his reformation, and you determine to give the book; in this case you *foreordain* the reformation of the drunkard. You determine to do what renders his reformation *certain*, and you fulfil your decree by *positive agency*. Now suppose you could know with equally infallible certainty, that the reformation of the drunkard will occasion some of his friends to attack him with much profane abuse. I say you know it with *absolute certainty*, and yet rather than lose so great a good as the drunkard's reformation, you adhere to your first

determination; you give the book and thus render it certain that a man will commit the sin of profanity. Here then you *fore-ordain*, or are the innocent occasion of the *certainty* of an evil action. But it is plain that you did not "ordain" it in the same sense as you did the other event. You did not, properly speaking, *will* it. In itself considered you hated it. Yet rather than lose the great good you had in view you chose to bear with the evil. We say then, that you foreordained these disagreeable things *permissively*.

Now in one or other of these senses God ordained "whatsoever comes to pass." No event would ever have taken place but for his agency or permission. When he formed this world he had in view His own glory, which is necessarily connected with the highest good of the universe. He did not begin the work, as an ignorant architect commences a building, without a settled plan. No. He beheld with an intuitive glance, all the possible results of an infinity of systems, and out of them all chose ONE. All the long train of consequences which would flow from that system passed in review before him. The plan was so perfect in its details, that it extended to every particle of which the globe is composed; to every individual of the human species; to every thing that has existence. It embraced the connection between cause and effect, the free-agency of man, and both a moral and providential government. He held his eye steadily upon every event,—every action that would sooner or later flow out of this system of operations. He saw, as one *certain* result, that men would sin, that men would be punished. He knew that he could, by destroying free-agency, or by a variety of other alterations in his system, prevent the entrance of sin. But probably such alterations would have interfered with the main end he had in view, and that he saw it would be best to permit it. He might have determined to leave sin unpunished, but this would have tarnished the lustre of his glory. Besides, his plan was so admirable, that sin itself would be overruled for the promotion of his glorious designs. Perceiving then, all these results; being able to calculate to a certainty, all the holiness and all the sin, all the happiness and all the misery, that would take place through his agency or permission, from the commencement to the end of time, he deliberately chose this system and ushered it into existence. He did not choose it for the sake of the sin and misery, which, through the freedom of man, would certainly attend it; but he chose it for the greater good which would be effected by it, in spite of the existence of sin and misery. I say, being able to calculate to a *certainty* all the events which would result from it, he put his system into operation; and thus, either *efficaciously* or *permissively* determined the certainty of whatever comes to pass.

In support of this doctrine we appeal to the *sacred oracles*. However mysterious a truth may be, however humbling to our pride, if it be found in the Bible we are bound to receive it. And it is far more consistent to deny the scriptures altogether, than to admit their inspiration, and yet reject a part of their contents. Out of numerous passages which are in point, I shall adduce but a few.

Peter, in his 1st Epistle, 1:20, says that the Saviour "was verily FOREORDAINED *before the foundation of the world.*" Here we ask the question, If before the creation of the world, the fall of man was not a *certain* event, why was a Saviour then provided? Paul in Eph. 1:11, says, "In whom we have an inheritance, being PREDESTINATED ACCORDING TO THE PURPOSE OF him who *worketh all things* after the COUNSEL OF His own will." Here is "Predestination," a "purpose" of God and a "counsel," according to which he *worketh all things*. The same apostle, in Rom. 11:36, speaking of God, tells us that "Of Him, and through him, and to him are ALL THINGS." Does this bear no resemblance to the doctrine? Again, in Acts 4:27,28, we read thus, "Of a truth, against the holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel, were gathered together, *for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy COUNSEL determined before to be done.*" Here we ask, Were not the sufferings and death of Christ *certain* events? And did not God for wise reasons *intentionally* permit the Gentiles and Jews to do as they did? And were they on that account deprived of free-agency? No. On the contrary they acted the more freely, for God had for a long time held them back from taking the life of Jesus, but when the appointed time came, he was delivered into their hands. I shall add but one more passage, although it would be easy to cite a hundred. The brethren of Joseph acted very wickedly in selling their brother to go into Egypt, and did it of their *own accord*. Yet Joseph says to them, Gen. 50:20, "But as for you, 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." Does not this look as though the selling of Joseph was a *certain event*, and that God permitted it for wise reasons? Indeed how could the most High certainly know any thing future, unless it were certain?*

* That foreknowledge which God has of the actions of his creatures, must be *certain*; for nothing else deserves the name of knowledge. To foreknow that a thing may be, or may not be, is to know nothing about it. It follows, that all that was foreknown to God from eternity, was *certain* from eternity, and will infallibly take place, through his agency, or permission. But this is nothing but the doctrine of foreordination.

Pressed with this kind of argument, and supposing the certainty of an action, to be inconsistent with its freedom, some have denied that God is able to know all future events. What an idea is this! That God has set in operation a system, without being able to know whether its results will be for his glory! for this he

I shall take time to answer a few *objections*.

1st. If God is able to bring good out of evil, why are wicked men punished?" *Answer*. This very objection was brought against the doctrine in the days of Paul, Rom. 9:19. "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth God yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will?" The apostle answers, "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"

Obj. 2d. If foreordination be true, what encouragement have we to pray? I answer; a thousand times more than if the events of life depended on creatures or chance. It was a part of his eternal plan to answer the prayer of faith. He has so arranged all events as that every effectual fervent prayer of the righteous shall be fulfilled, and that without resorting to a miracle, or interfering with any other of his purposes.

Now take away this doctrine, and see what encouragement you will have to pray. You ask God to save the life of a sick friend; but God must not interfere, for he has left it to creatures or to chance whether he lives or dies. You pray for the conversion of a sinner; but you pray in vain, for God has left it to chance or to his own natural inclination to decide the question. Thus you see that the denial of the doctrine, and not the maintaining of it, discourages prayer.

Obj. 3d. "Although Presbyterians guard the doctrine of foreordination by several limiting clauses; yet do they not contradict themselves in saying, *first* that God has *ordained all events*; and then denying that he is the *author of sin*, that *free-agency is affected*, or that the *necessity of means is taken away*? Do not these consequences which they deny, flow necessarily from the first assertion?"

Answer. In replying to this objection, permit me to make use of a comparison. Suppose you were endowed with such extra-

cannot know, unless he knows all the future actions of his creatures. Dark indeed must be the prospects of the Supreme Ruler of the universe; and awful must be his suspense and anxiety, while sitting at the helm of affairs. He can make no provision beforehand to meet an emergency, but must govern the universe by sudden shifts and expedients. This theory is not only contrary to sound reason, but is contradicted by all the prophecies, and by the whole tenor of scripture.

To avoid these dreadful consequences, some have invented a theory, if possible still more absurd, viz. that although God could if he pleased, foreknow all the voluntary actions of his creatures, yet that he *chooses not to know them*, lest by rendering them certain he should infringe the liberty of the will. This scheme is pressed with all the difficulties of the former one, and in addition has some that are peculiar to itself. It represents the all-wise God, as putting a system into operation, shutting his eyes, and refusing to look at all its consequences, and of *choice*, remaining ignorant whether it will eventuate in his glory; plunging forward in the dark! According to the first of these theories, God is necessarily imperfect; according to the last, he is voluntarily so. This hypothesis was advocated by the Chevalier Ramsay, and from him it has been adopted by the learned and eccentric Dr. Adam Clarke. There is little danger of its being advocated by any reflecting theologian. But it serves to show how heavily the doctrine of the divine foreknowledge presses upon Arminianism.

ordinary faculties, as to be able to calculate to a certainty, all the train of effects which would be produced, by putting into operation any single cause, or combination of causes, whether moral or physical. I say, suppose you could calculate them with unerring certainty, and you know that the placing of Beecher's Sermons in the hands of a distiller, will, with infallible certainty lead him to quit his occupation, and consequently occasion a reform in the whole neighborhood. And you know, with the same certainty, that three of his drunken customers will become your enemies, and endeavor to injure your reputation and property. These attempts, you know you will be able to prevent, by presenting a claim against the men, and confining them in a jail, but this you find will not on the whole be best. And you are the more willing to permit, or bear with the wickedness, because you see how you can bring good out of it. For one of them will be caught in an attempt to burn your house, will be imprisoned, and thereby prevented from murdering one of the other two, which he certainly would otherwise have done in a few days. And further; you know that the kindness with which you mean to reward all the malice of the remaining two, will so overcome them, as to make them your friends; and the whole transaction will reflect lustre upon your character. I say, suppose you know with certainty that all these events will be consequent upon giving a copy of Beecher's sermons; and having them all in your view, you wisely decide upon giving the book. You accordingly give it, and thus you "ordain" or render certain, all that comes to pass in consequence of your act.

(1.) Suppose now that you have given the book, and that all the results have actually been realized. Can you now be charged as the *author* of the *sin* of the three customers. No; their sin was not the direct object of your will. You were only the innocent occasion of it. Their sin originated from their own hearts. And because it was certain that they would sin if you gave the book, ought the whole neighborhood to be deprived, on that account, of a signal advantage? Whilst, then, you *permissively ordained* their sin, you were by no means its "author or approver."

(2.) Did your decree or purpose affect the free-agency of any one? Not that of the distiller, for being convinced by forcible arguments of the evil of his occupation, he abandoned it as freely as he ever followed it. Not that of the people in the neighborhood, the certainty of whose reformation was determined by you. No; their liberty was increased by the removal of the enslaving influence of the distillery. Whose freedom then was impaired? not that of the drunken customers. If you had shut them all in jail at first, then they might have complained. But your determination, for wise reasons, to permit their sin, rather "*established*" their liberty than "*took it away.*" Thus, in no instance was "violence offered to the will of the creatures."

(3.) Did your decree or purpose, render the use of means unnecessary, or make it a matter of indifference whether the book were given or not? No: your intention did not interfere with the relation between cause and effect. It embraced within itself the *means* of its fulfilment. You not only determined to effect the reformation, but you determined to effect it *by giving the book*, without which no salutary results would have taken place. By your decree, then, "the liberty or contingency of second causes was not taken away, but rather established."

You will be able to make such an application of these remarks, as will remove all the apparent contradictions in the statement of the doctrine of foreordination.

Obj. 4th. If the certainty of men's actions is determined, how can they act otherwise than they do? *Ans.* They can *if they will*. They have the *power*. A man is able to commit a wicked action which it is *certain* he will not commit. And he has power to refrain from an act, which it is still absolutely certain he will perform. "But if I had done otherwise than I did to-day, would not God have been disappointed?" No: If you had done otherwise, the *certainty* would have been otherwise.

It is true that the words *can* and *could* are sometimes used with reference to mere certainty. In this sense they are found in John 12:39. "Therefore they *could* not believe, because that Esaias had said," &c. Here the sacred writer speaks of the prophecies as making it *certain* that the Jews would not believe. In the same sense the words are used in many ancient theological writings. Hence in our Confession, chap. III. sec. IV, we are told that the number of the predestinated *CAN* neither be increased nor diminished. In this passage, the word *can* is used in reference to mere certainty, and not to *power*. This is evident indeed from the scripture quoted in the margin. "The foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord *knoweth them that are his*." But employing the words *can* and *could* in their usual acceptation, we say with propriety that free-agents *can*, (have power,) to do otherwise than they actually do.

Obj. 5th. Why was not language so unpopular and so liable to abuse, as that on the subject of the *decrees*, left out of our standards? *Ans.* Why is such language found in the scriptures? Why did Paul say, "predestinated according to the purpose of him who *worketh all things* according to the counsel of his own will"? Why did he not leave out the whole of his first chapter to the Ephesians, and the 8th and 9th to the Romans? No doubt there are many who would gladly have omitted them, and who would now expunge them from the Bible if it were in their power. The scriptures contain abundance of language as *unpopular*, and as liable to abuse as any used in our Confession. Indeed I have often thought that there are many passages, which, if adopted

verbatim in our standards, would have excited even more "wrath" than is at present indulged against us.

I shall dismiss this subject with a few practical remarks.

The doctrine under discussion *furnishes us with a most exalted view of the divine character.* The most High God, did not push into existence a system, the results of which were involved in *uncertainty*. His glorious plan, originating in infinite wisdom and benevolence, embraced all created existence in its varied combinations, and reached to all events, from the greatest to the least. It included the revolutions of the celestial orbs, and the course of the mote that floats in air; every individual of Adam's race, and the minutest insect that science has rendered visible. It extended not only to the ebb and flow of the mighty ocean, but to every wave that wrinkles its surface; to the destruction of a stately city, and to the fall of a leaf of the forest. How amazing his wisdom, how almighty his power, how worthy is he of the confidence of the whole intelligent universe! Take away this doctrine, and you — take from me my God.

And *how safely may the real Christian commit himself into the hands of such a God!* Well may he exclaim, "If God be for me who can be against me?" This glorious God has condescended to arrange all the events of my life in subserviency to my happiness. He did not leave it to chance whether I should be rich or poor, whether I should be more or less afflicted. To him nothing that concerns me, was a matter of indifference. O did his plan extend so far into my minutest affairs, as to determine the number of the hairs of my head? How safely may I then confide in him that he will do every thing for me that I need! In every event, I can see the results of his wisdom and goodness. I receive every blessing as immediately from his hand. I bow to every chastisement as a part of his gracious scheme. Even when persecuted by the wicked, I can adopt the language of David and say, "the Lord hath bidden" them. O what a God have I for my Father! How unsearchable his wisdom! how astonishing his condescension! how unbounded his goodness! O what motives to love and serve him whilst I have my being!

And now, what are we to think of any system which would deprive the christian of all this comfort, and require him to throw himself into the hands of a God who has left all things in a state of uncertainty; who has consigned the events of our lives, and of course, our dearest interests, to the determinations of Chance? Well may we say of the votaries of such a system, "Their rock is not as our Rock, they themselves being judges."

What say you, my hearers, to the doctrine which has been exhibited to you to-day? If it be not true that the events of this world are disposed of by a wise and good God; they must be

governed by chance. Which of the two will you have to reign, God or Chance?

I know that wicked men do not like the government of a holy God. They have not confidence enough in his wisdom and goodness, to trust their interests with him. They think they can order events better than God. They would wish to be above him. They would like to reign themselves. They would rather consign the universe to the gloomy dominion of blind chance, than to see it in the possession of a wise and holy God.

But what say *you*, my *Christian friends*; are you willing to take the disposal of events out of the hands of God? Is there any creature to whom it may be more safely committed? Do you think you could order things better than your heavenly Father? In reviewing his dispensations toward you, can you part with the idea that "*all was for the best*?" When bereaved by the hand of man, will you refuse to say with Job, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away"? Are you willing to trust your dearest interests to the fluctuations of chance? Tossed on the tempestuous ocean of life, assailed by the storms of affliction and temptation, can you do without a skilful pilot? Part with this doctrine, and then what will become of that precious promise, "*All things shall work together for good*?" Remember that if one single event of your lives has been left to chance, that event may accomplish your ruin. But I know what you will say. "*Let me now fall into the hand of the Lord, for very great are his mercies, but let me not fall into the hand of man.*" "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." In this sentiment you are not alone. Heaven with all its countless myriads unites with you. "And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, ALLELUIA, FOR THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH."

II. THE SALVATION OF INFANTS.

The next thing I shall notice, is the charge brought against us of holding the doctrine of "INFANT DAMNATION." And here I would observe, that although I have been sixteen years in the ministry, I have never yet heard such an opinion expressed concerning infants, by any minister, or member of our church. And although I have myself, of late, been accused of preaching "*that there are infants in hell of a span long*," you know that, so far as I have ventured to express any opinion on the subject, it has been of the very opposite kind. In order, however, to fasten upon us this odious tenet, our enemies have caught hold of a passage in our Confession, under the head of "effectual calling," which reads thus, "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ, through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth." "Now," say they, "if some infants

are *elect*, then others are *not* elect; if some infants are regenerated and saved, then others are lost." Forcible argument! It is true that all but Universalists will admit, that some infants grow up to manhood, die in sin, and are lost; and so could not have been "elect," "regenerated," or "saved." But the question turns solely on those who *die in infancy*. Such we hope and trust are all regenerated and saved; and if so, are *chosen* out of Adam's ruined race, and will be found at the last day among those "elect," whom the angels shall gather from the four winds of heaven. Nor is there, in all our standards, the slightest intimation to the contrary. I repeat it, if all infants are saved they are all *elect*. "But why," it will be asked, "did not the framers of our standards say at once, that *all infants* are saved?" Why have not the Scriptures said so? They do, indeed, say enough to afford us the *pleasing hope*, that all who die in infancy are saved; but they do not *positively* decide the question. The framers of our Confession, were willing to leave it, just as they had found it in the word of God. Their object was not to please men. And hence as they would omit nothing because it might be offensive; so they would not insert anything, as an article of faith, for which they had not scriptural authority.*

III. THE ATONEMENT.

In the *third* place, efforts have been made to excite popular indignation against us, on account of our views of *the atonement*. And inasmuch as erroneous representations have been made on this subject, I think proper to remark,

1. We maintain that the atonement of Christ was, in one respect, designed not only for the whole world, but for the whole intelligent universe. It was intended to display the wisdom, justice, and mercy of God, harmonizing and shining with transcendent lustre in the salvation of the guilty. Thus it would unfold views of Deity, in no other way attainable by any of his creatures. In respect, then, of its *public* benefits, the atonement was as extensive as the empire of Jehovah. But the question under discussion, touches not its *public*, but its *personal* benefits. These last are limited to sinners of Adam's race.

2. We admit that some of the *personal* benefits of the atonement, are enjoyed by the whole human family. It is through the sufferings of the Redeemer, that the blessings of providence are

*In the article, inserted by the "Cumberland" body in Buck's Dictionary, they tell the public that they *dissent* from our Confession of Faith, "in that all infants dying in infancy are saved." This is calculated to convey the erroneous idea, that our church holds the doctrine of "infant damnation;" and that they, when they withdrew from our communion, renounced that tenet. It is curious to observe that they have altered the expression in the standards, above referred to, so as not merely to express the *opinion*, (to which no one objects,) that all who die in infancy are saved, but require their ministers publicly to assent to it as an *article of faith*.

extended to all, even to the evil and unthankful. It is through his death, that all sinners are respited from immediate punishment; and the *sincere offer* of eternal life through faith in his blood, is authorized to be made to them. To those who enjoy the light of the gospel, these offers are actually made. All these invaluable blessings, I say, flow down to mankind, through the atonement. They are experienced, even by those who persist in impenitency to the last. But the question concerns only the *cleansing* and *saving* efficacy of the atonement.

3. It is admitted, nay it is earnestly contended, that the atonement is of unlimited value, or sufficiency. The sufferings of Christ, would not, perhaps, have been less, if he had designed to save but one sinner. They would not, probably, have been greater, if he had intended to save a thousand worlds. Such is the infinite efficacy of the blood of Calvary, that it will cancel guilt to any extent, to which it is applied. If God had seen fit to make an actual application of it to the finally impenitent; they would all doubtless have been saved. If the whole world should believe on Christ, they would actually experience its cleansing and saving benefits. No sinner ever perished through a want of sufficiency in the atonement. Hence God authorizes a sincere offer of mercy to all sinners, even to those, who, he is certain, will never accept of it. But the *sufficiency* of the atonement is one thing, and its *application* is another thing. The question in debate touches only the *latter*.

Thus we have the point to be discussed reduced to this narrow compass. *Did God design an application of the saving benefits of the atonement to all mankind?* We are free to confess we cannot answer this question in the affirmative. In so doing, we could not in any rational manner escape the doctrine of universal salvation. Only admit that God is able to effect his purposes, and see where such a position would inevitably carry us.

God designs an application of the saving benefits of the atonement to all mankind.

But whatever God designs he will infallibly accomplish.

Therefore an application of those benefits will actually be made to all mankind.

Again. The finally impenitent are a part of mankind.

Therefore an application of those saving benefits will actually be made to the finally impenitent. But can this be true?

Take another view of the subject. The atonement of Christ, is "a proper, real, and full satisfaction" for sin. But did the Lord Jesus "fully satisfy the justice of his Father" for all the sins of all mankind; and does the Father notwithstanding, exact it again of sinners; exact beyond what justice requires—more than satisfies the law's demands? Brethren, is this the doctrine we are called on to substitute for that of our venerable standards?

Did the blessed Jesus die on the cross, with the design of extending the saving efficacy of his atonement, to those very Jews, to whom he had said a few days before, "Ye shall die in your sins;" John 8:21. and even to those who were already "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire"? Jude 7. I say are we to believe this of a Redeemer who was God. We may be censured, but we think it a very difficult task.*

Let us now go and submit the question to the decision of the inspired records. There we shall find the saving efficacy of the atonement, expressly limited by the design of God, to "his people;" to "believers;" to "his elect;" and to "his sheep." Math. 1:21. "And thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall SAVE HIS PEOPLE from their sins." John 3:14,15. "Even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Rom. 8:33,34. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's ELECT"—"it is Christ that died." John 10:15. "I lay down my life for the SHEEP." Again; for whom did the blessed Jesus offer the intercessory prayer? John 17:9. and 20. "I pray for them, I pray not for the world, but for *them whom thou hast given me.*" "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which SHALL BELIEVE ON me through their word."

*The Cumberland confession of faith, supports the following view of the nature of the atonement. "The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience," &c. "*hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father, and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for ALL THOSE WHO COME TO THE FATHER by him.*" page 22. So again "Christ, by his obedience and death, did *fully discharge the debt of ALL THOSE THAT ARE THUS JUSTIFIED; and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf.*" page 27. Now admitting this to be the correct view of the nature of the atonement, if it be universal, then all mankind must certainly be saved. If the "debts" of all are "discharged;" if a "proper, real, and full satisfaction," has been made, for all the sins of all mankind; then surely, none will ever perish. The compilers of the Cumberland confession, seem to have been aware of this difficulty, and hence they *limit the atonement in its design, to "those who come to the Father," and again to "those that are justified."*

I have heard that some have presented the following view of the atonement, viz. that all mankind being bound in a *joint bond* to God, for their sins; the Lord Jesus, by his sufferings, purchased the said bond, now holds it against mankind, and will release such as comply with his terms, but will prosecute the bond against those who refuse, &c. This representation is intended to reconcile a universal *satisfaction for sin*, with the limited extent of salvation. But unfortunately it brings with it all the difficulties it was designed to remove. For, from the nature of the "*joint bond*," if the Lord Jesus release one single sinner, without the consent of all the rest, (which will not likely be given,) the bond is rendered null and void, and the whole are discharged. This scheme is inconsistent with scripture, which declares that every man shall bear *his own* burden and give an account of *himself* to God. It seems to degrade the atonement also, by bringing it down to a mere mercantile transaction.

To avoid the difficulty referred to, others have denied the doctrine of a satisfaction for sin, and have represented the sufferings of Christ as a mere display of the divine perfections, calculated to make a grand moral impression on the universe. They deny that Christ "bare our sins," or that the Lord "laid upon him our iniquities." It would certainly be better to deny the atonement altogether.

Now if, as some contend, the Lord Jesus designed his atonement, in the same sense, for the finally impenitent, as for the people of God; why did he not pray alike for both? Why does he confine his intercession to those who "*shall believe*" in him?

I shall notice a few objections.

Obj. 1st. Do not the Scriptures say that Christ "died for all," and "tasted death for every man;" that he "gave himself a ransom for all," and "is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world"?

Ans. If we should admit, (what I think cannot be proved,) that the words *all, every man, &c.* in these passages, are intended to include the whole human family; still they will not clash with the views we have presented, but rather corroborate them. For as these passages do not prove that all men are actually saved, so neither do they afford evidence that the atonement was designed to save all. But they would establish the position we have already contended for, that there is an important sense in which Christ died for the whole world. Not only did he shed his blood to make an atonement *sufficient* for all, but he authorized its offers sincerely to be made to all, even to the vilest sinners. But there is no Scripture which asserts that he died *in the same sense*, for all mankind. On the contrary, the apostle Paul, in his first epistle to Timothy, 4:10, says that Jesus Christ "is the Saviour of all men, *specially* of those that BELIEVE." The same important distinction prevails in every part of the Bible.*

"But is it not said, 1 Cor. 15:22, "as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive"? I answer; if you will look at the connection in which this passage stands, you will find that the apostle is speaking of nothing but the resurrection from the dead.

But does not Peter speak of persons "denying the Lord that bought them, and bringing upon themselves swift destruction"? It is true; but they had never experienced the saving efficacy of the atonement. They were only "bought," or respited from im-

*Since writing the above I have discovered that my views on the subject are the same that are supported by Calvin in his Comments, written towards the close of his life. I subjoin a few extracts.

Romans 5:18. "Communem omnium gratiam facit quia omnibus exposita est, non quod ad omnes extendatur re ipsa. Nam etsi passus est Christus pro peccatis totius mundi, atque omnibus indifferenter Dei benignitate offertur, non tamen omnes apprehendunt."

1 John 2:2. "Hic movetur quæstio, quomodo mundi totius peccata expiantur?—aliqui dixerunt—sufficiuntur pro toto mundo passum esse Christum, sed pro electis tantum efficaciter. Vulgo hæc solutio in scholis obtinuit: Ego quanquam *verum esse illud dictum fateor*, nego tamen præsentis loco quadrare."

2 Peter 2:1. "Redemit nos Christus ut populum haberet segregatum ab omnibus mundi inquinamentis, addictum sanctitati et innocentie. Qui igitur exousso fraeno in omnem licentiam se projiciunt, non immerito dicuntur, Christum abnegare a quo redempti sunt."

mediate punishment while an offer of mercy, through faith, should be extended to them.

Obj. 2d. If this doctrine be true, may not a sinner come to Christ who will have to be rejected?

Ans. No. Although such an inference has been palmed upon us, it has no connection with our system. For the design of the atonement embraces all who *have*, or ever *shall* come to Christ by faith. So that, if all of Adam's race who are now out of hell, should be prevailed on to believe in him, its saving efficacy would be extended to them all.

“But how do I know that God has designed the atonement for my salvation? If he has not, what will it avail if I come to Christ?” If you come to him, you will be included in his design; you will know that it was intended for your salvation. How do you know that God has designed for you a crop of grain? If he has not, of what use will it be to sow the seed? The answer that will suit this question will equally suit the other. If you come to Christ you will know that your sins were laid upon him, and that God designs to save you.

Obj. 3d. If Christ did not design the saving efficacy of the atonement for the finally impenitent, will not the damned in hell experience too little remorse of conscience?

Ans. The finally lost will know that if they had embraced the Saviour by faith, God *would have designed* to save them. They will feel that no determination, or want of determination, on his part, hindered them from coming to Christ. They will know that salvation was sincerely offered to them, and that they rejected it because they *would* reject it.

Now if the opposite view were correct, there might, it is true, be some ground for the fear intimated in the objection. If a damned sinner could say, “Jesus Christ fully expected and intended to save me; he *fully discharged* my debt; he ‘made a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father’s justice,’ for all my sins. This doctrine was preached to me, I believed it, and rationally inferred that I was safe. But now God has altered his design. He refuses to credit me with the sum paid for me by my surety; and although justice has been satisfied in my case he now requires the payment again.” I say, if sinners in hell could say this with truth, there might appear to be some force in the objection.

Obj. 4th. How can God be *sincere* in offering salvation to all, if he did not expect or intend to save all mankind?

Ans. The offers of salvation have not yet been actually proclaimed to all mankind, although they are *authorized* to be made to all. Yet is God sincere in his invitations. Ask our opponents, “Why does God offer mercy to those who he certainly knows will never accept of it?” The common answer which Arminians give to the question is, that inasmuch as the sinner is not prevent-

ed by God; inasmuch as God is *willing* that he should come *if he will*, and stands *ready to receive* him if he comes; the offer is to be considered as sincere notwithstanding his foreknowledge. I make the same answer to the above objection; and if the scheme of our opponents is thus freed from difficulty, so is mine.*

IV. DISCRIMINATING GOODNESS.

In the *fourth* place, unpleasant feelings have frequently been entertained towards us, because we cannot believe that *all mankind are placed on an equal footing as to spiritual advantages*. But here we must not please men but God. The idea that all mankind are, all things considered, equally well situated, as to their prospects of salvation, may be beautiful in theory, but will not stand before the light of scripture and stubborn facts. It is true that where less is given, less will be required. But, after all, how can we suppose, that children brought up by unfaithful parents, are as well off on the whole as those who have been trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? And how can we believe that the heathen are as favorably situated, in respect of eternal happiness, as Christians? Would you be willing, my friends, to exchange situations with them, and take their chance of salvation, so to speak, instead of your own? Surely the apostles were not so minded, or they would not have labored and suffered as they did, to extend the light of the gospel among them. Nor would Christians, at the present day, make such sacrifices as they do in the missionary cause, if they believed that all men were alike favorably situated as to eternal happiness. Indeed if that doctrine be true, the gospel is no blessing; and we have been wrong in expressing gratitude to God that he has cast our lot in a Christian land.

“But, at least, does not the Spirit of God strive equally with all men?” My brethren, I know nothing about the extent to which the Holy Spirit operates upon mankind. I cannot look into the hearts of all. This is one of those secret things which belong unto God, and I have to do only with what he has revealed. It is true that the Lord Jesus lightens every man that cometh into the world, with the light of reason and conscience. (Rom. 2:15.) It is also true that Paul says, “the manifestation of the Spirit is

* “I reach you out a book and say, ‘*here take this book,*’ can I be sincere in my offer, if I do not intend you shall have it?” The deception in this mode of representing the offers of salvation, appears in this. It takes for granted two things which are not true; *first*, that the great Jehovah is altogether such an one as ourselves; *secondly*, that he offers to bestow salvation on men whether they believe or not, whereas the same authority, by which we make the offer, declares, “he that believeth not shall be damned.” If I offer to give a book to each person *who comes to my house*, if I have taken sufficient pains to have a supply fully equal to the demand; if I hinder none from coming; if I actually give a book to every one who does come, those who stay away cannot charge me with insincerity in inviting them.

given to every man to profit withal," but if you will examine the connection in which this passage stands, you will see that his meaning is that the extraordinary *gifts* of the Holy Ghost are given to every man who possesses them, to profit the church. We know this much, that the Spirit of God strives with sinners where the word is preached, even with many who die in impenitence, for this is revealed, (Gen. 6:3.) and this is acknowledged in our Confession of Faith, (Chap. 10, § 4.) But whether he operates on the hearts of benighted savages, or of idolatrous Hindoos, or Burman atheists, as he does in a Christian land, we are not expressly informed.*

Obj. 1st. It will be said, if God has not made the situation of all mankind equally advantageous on the whole, is he not unjust? No: he gives to all men more than justice requires him to give; and may he not do what he will with his own? This is a privilege granted to the meanest slave, and will you refuse it to the most high God?

2d. It will be objected, if God has placed some in a situation more favorable than others, as it respects their prospect of eternal happiness, is he not *partial*, and a *respector of persons*? No. Partiality is a *capricious* preference of one person above another; but God has wise reasons for what he does, and therefore is not partial. He does not respect any man on account of his nation, his rank, or his wealth, but deals with them all at last according to their characters.

V. GOD'S SPECIAL PURPOSE OF MERCY.

Lastly. Perhaps there is no doctrine which has occasioned so much "wrath against our church, as the doctrine of God's special *purpose of mercy*, or, to use a scriptural term, the doctrine of election. And inasmuch as this is a truth very clearly and distinctly taught in the word of God, great labor and ingenuity have been thought necessary in order to overthrow it. One very common expedient, employed for this purpose, has been to hold up false and distorted views of it, by which it may be brought into dis-

*The Cumberland body tell us that they dissent from the Confession of our church "in 4thly, that the Spirit of God operates on the world, or as co-extensively as Christ has made the atonement, in such a manner as to leave all men inexcusable." It follows, if this be true, that Presbyterians do not believe that the Spirit operates on the world, or as extensively as the atonement is made! How "co-extensively" we represent the atonement to be, has already been seen. Although in some sense it extends to all mankind, yet its saving efficacy is limited by the design of God in its application. It has also been seen that we believe the Spirit's operations are even *more extensive* than the application. But whether he strives with all men we cannot tell. Some exhibit very little evidence of it. The Cumberlands say, He operates "so as to leave all men inexcusable." It would follow, if the Spirit did not strive, men would be excusable. This we cannot believe. For if that gift of grace had never been bestowed on our sinful world, men would still have been bound to repent and believe the gospel.

credit. It will, therefore, be highly necessary in entering upon the subject, to guard it against the misrepresentations of its enemies, and to define it as clearly and accurately as possible. I remark then,

1. That it is no part of the doctrine of election, *that God made a part of mankind merely to damn them.* This is an aspersion cast upon it by its enemies. But it is not true. Election, properly speaking, has nothing to do with the damnation of a single sinner. It is a mere purpose of love and mercy, proceeding from that God who affirms with an oath, that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. If he destroys sinners, it is because their perdition is inseparably connected with his own glory and the highest good of the universe. At the same time; *in itself considered,* he desires the happiness of all his creatures.*

2. It is no part of election, *that the elect will be saved, let them do what they may.* It is certain that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The elect cannot be saved unless they come to Christ, and experience the renewing influences of his Spirit. They can no more enter heaven without a preparation for it, than the non-elect. If a man is never concerned about the salvation of his soul, if he never attends upon the means of grace, if he does not repent and flee to the Saviour, there is nothing in election that will save him. "Chosen," says the apostle, "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

3. It is no part of election, *that the non-elect will not be saved let them do what they may.* If they would repent and believe the gospel, there is nothing in election that would destroy them. If they would come to Christ he would "in nowise cast them out."

* In Buok's Theological Dictionary, the Cumberlands tell the public that they dissent from the Confession of Faith, "in that, 1st, there are no *eternal reprobates.*" As no such expression occurs in our standards we were at a loss to know their meaning. Our embarrassment was not a little increased by a passage in their own Confession, which appeared to maintain the very thing they condemn. Page 12. "If—the sinner finally grieves the Spirit of God to depart from him, he becomes doubly and **ETERNALLY REPROBATED.**" At last, however, we found a clew to the mystery, in a definition they have given in page 11, of the doctrine they oppose under that name. According to them it is "a sovereign determination of God to create millions of rational beings, and for his own glory, damn them eternally in hell without regard to moral rectitude, or sin in the creature." Horrid indeed! Who would not dissent from the Confession, if it contained such a doctrine? But charity constrains us to believe, either that they had never attentively examined it, or if they did, were not sufficiently familiar with theological terms to arrive at its true meaning. For we may safely defy any man rationally to infer such a doctrine from our standards. It is true there are some expressions of Paul, Peter, and Jude, quoted in the third chapter, which may seem harsh to them. Thus Jude says, that ungodly men were *before of old ordained to condemnation.* And the framers of our standards, thinking it no harm to use the language of the Bible, have said that they were "ordained to wrath and dishonor *for their sins.*" Now if they had used the exact language of scripture, instead of adding the explanation "*for their sins,*" what would our enemies have said?

What hinders them? No decree of God; nothing but their own aversion to holiness and their love of sin. Election does not stand in their way. Election merely says that some shall be made willing; but if any are willing to come without it, God has solemnly promised to save them. If they will not do this, it ill becomes them to throw the blame of their perdition on God, and say that, do what they may, they must be lost. The non-elect will not be lost unless they voluntarily persist in impenitence to the last.

What then is the doctrine of Election? I shall endeavor to exhibit our views of it by an easy illustration.

Suppose the monarch of some mighty empire, hears that a small province of his dominions has rebelled against him. Having no pleasure in their death, he sends them an offer of pardon on consistent terms. They all to a man refuse to accept of it. Still inclining to mercy, he sends out ambassadors, commissioned to use every entreaty with the rebels. These go forth and use every effort in vain. The rebels exclaim, "our cause is just and we will die rather than submit." The compassionate monarch, hearing of this, cries out, how shall I give up all these my subjects to suffer death! I will go among them myself, and by my personal influence will prevail on the greater part to accept of my proposal of pardon; and inasmuch as such signal obstinacy ought not to go unpunished, I will execute the sentence of the law upon the rest of them, that they may serve as ensamples to all my subjects." This determination he carries into effect. The greater part are reconciled and the rest punished.

But let us now make a slight alteration in the supposed case. Suppose that this monarch, being a prophet, can clearly foresee the rebellion, long before it will take place. He reasons within himself, and makes up his determinations respecting it in the following manner. "I see that ten years hence, that little part of my kingdom will rebel against me. Well, I will send them a proposal of pardon. But this I know they will all reject. I will then send messengers, commissioned to use every entreaty. But this again will effect nothing; and I am resolved to go myself and prevail upon the greater part to lay down their arms, and I will punish the remainder as ensamples to my whole empire." Seeing then that my proclamation and my messengers, will of themselves effect nothing, shall I omit to send them? No; I will send them to convince all of my sincere disposition to mercy; to show what obstinacy existed in the hearts of the rebels, to convince all of the wisdom, the justice and the mercy of my proceedings."

Now, before we proceed any farther, let me ask you, can you find more reason to blame the monarch in this last case than in the former? Does the circumstance that all his determinations were formed previously to the rebellion, alter their moral charac-

ter? Does it detract at all from the glory of his wisdom, justice, and mercy? Can you condemn him for pursuing the very course he ought to have taken if his purposes had never been formed until the time? Can you censure him for resolving to make a desperate effort to save some of his rebellious subjects? This were to blame him for being merciful. Will you condemn him because he determined beforehand to make a public example of some of the rejecters of his mercy? Can you say that he fixed their condition by his decree, and thus rendered it impossible to accept his pardon? No. They fixed their condition themselves. They were "ordained to wrath and dishonor for their sins." The monarch's determination to punish was, in the order in which it stood in his mind, subsequent to their refusal of a pardon.*

Finally; will you censure him for not constraining all to submit to his proposals? This is to allow him no room for the exercise of discretion. The good of his empire might, for aught you know, require that he should make examples of some of the obstinate rebels.

Now although no illustration will exactly meet the case; yet, I think, I have, in every material point, exhibited the Calvinistic view of election.

1. God is the sovereign Lord of the universe. This little spot of his dominions has rebelled against him. All mankind are in a state of sin and condemnation; all are exposed to his wrath and curse.

2. God, in infinite mercy, has offered a pardon to rebels of Adam's race, through the sufferings and death of a Redeemer. His language to all is, "Whosoever will, let him come;" and "him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out." But notwithstanding the free offer of pardon, mankind are all disposed to continue in their rebellion, and "will not come" to Christ that they might have life. Like the persons mentioned by our Lord in the parable of the supper; "they all *with one consent* began to make excuse." Left to himself, every individual of mankind will reject the offer of a Saviour, and sink to endless ruin. If God does not interpose, in the omnipotency of his grace, to subdue the obstinacy of the sinner's heart, all will perish in the refusal of his mercy, and Christ will have bled and died in vain.

* It is generally admitted that God from eternity determined to punish all the finally impenitent, knowing, at the same time, who the finally impenitent would be. The Calvinist only adds to this, that God is able to overcome their wilful obstinacy, and bring them to an acquiescence in the terms of salvation, but, for wise reasons, *permits* them to continue in sin and become, to the whole universe, appalling monuments of his justice. And herein consists the sovereignty of his dispensations towards them. Thus their destruction is of themselves; and their refusal of mercy was, in the order in which it stood in his mind, *prior* to his determination to punish. Our Confession of Faith assigns, as the only reason why the non-elect cannot be saved, that "they do not truly come to Christ." Chap. X. §IV.

3. God has determined that so distressing a result shall not take place. He was not willing to see the whole human family perish, as they inevitably would, if left to themselves. He did not intend that his Son should bleed and die in vain. He has not committed the question of man's salvation to the decision of chance, or human depravity. He has determined to save *some*. By the special influence of his Spirit, he renews their hearts, and sweetly constrains them to yield. Thus he "*calls* them according to his purpose," *justifies*, and *glorifies* them. What proportion of the human family are included in this his purpose of mercy, we are not informed. But in view of the future days of unclouded prosperity promised to the church, it may be inferred, that by far the greater part of the descendants of Adam, will at last, be found among the *elect* of God. And although the number of them is indefinite in the view of man, yet, with God, it is so *certain* and *definite* that he cannot be disappointed. Having thus explained what is meant by Election, I proceed now to *establish* the doctrine,

1. By the FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

It is admitted that God changes the hearts of some sinners and saves them through Christ; and that he does so of his own accord. Now, did he *foreknow* that he would do this? Did he know it *from eternity*? How did he know it, if it was *uncertain*? If his purpose was not already fixed; if his resolution was at all wavering; how could he know with *certainty* that he would change the hearts of some sinners and save them? Let any candid man look at this, and he must believe the doctrine of election. It may be further evinced,

2. By the HOLY SCRIPTURES.

You admit the Bible to be the word of God. If so, its statements are all entitled to your implicit confidence. Here there can be no error or mistake. Let us then go to the Bible; and let us go, not to alter, to pervert, or to wrest it from its natural meaning; but with a sincere desire to know what the Lord hath spoken, and determined to acquiesce in all his decisions, however repugnant to our pride or our prejudices.

Turn to the 1st chapter to the Ephesians, and there in the 3d and 4th verses you will read thus. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love." That his meaning might be still more evident, the apostle adds immediately, verse 4. "Having PREDESTINATED us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." What is this but the doctrine of election? Look now at the 11th verse of the same chapter. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being PREDESTINATED according to the

PURPOSE of him who worketh all things after the COUNSEL of his own will." Does not this look like election?

Turn now to the eighth chapter to the Romans. At verse 28, the apostle asserts that "all things shall work together for good to them that love God." And how does he prove it? By a reference to the eternal purpose of God in election. "And we know," says he, "that all things shall work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the *called according to his purpose*. For 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 he also *justified*, and whom he *justified* them he also *glorified*." Now if the doctrine of election be not true, what force is there in his argument?

In Thess. 2:11,12,13, we have this declaration. "And for this cause, God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. But we are bound to give thanks, alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath *from the beginning CHOSEN you unto salvation*, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." And in 2 Tim. 1:9. we read, "God hath saved us and called us with an *holy calling, not according to our works*, but according to his *own purpose and grace*, which was given us in Christ Jesus *before the world began*" Surely, language has no meaning, unless these passages assert the doctrine of personal election to holiness and salvation.

When Paul preached the gospel at Antioch in Pisidia, we are informed, that "as many as were ORDAINED TO ETERNAL LIFE believed." Acts 13:48. And at the commencement of a Christian church at Corinth, God looked on the heathen inhabitants and said to Paul, "*I have much people* in this city." Who were these people; and why should the Lord call them his, before their conversion?

Let us now hear what Jesus, our divine teacher, has said on this subject. He "was foreordained before the foundation of the world" to be a Mediator; and entered into an engagement to give his life as a ransom for sinners. But would he undertake the painful task on an *uncertainty*? Would he consent to endure the sorrows of Gethsemane, and the anguish of Calvary, leaving it to *chance*, or to the depraved heart of man to decide, whether any should ever be redeemed by his blood? No: he well knew, that in such an event, not one soul would ever be saved; and that he himself would reap no reward of his death. Hence it was *rendered certain* that some should come to him, and experience the saving benefits of his sufferings. We read of a *promise of eternal life before the world began*. Tit. 1:1,2: "Paul—an apostle of Jesus

Christ, according to the faith of God's *elect*—in hope of *eternal life*, which God, that cannot lie, *promised before the world began.*" To whom was it promised? Not to creatures, for they were not yet in existence; but to the Lord Jesus. The ancient prophets frequently refer to this promise made to the Messiah, and say, "a seed shall serve him." "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." "*Thy people shall be WILLING IN THE DAY OF THY POWER.*"* The Lord Jesus frequently spake of those who were promised him, with inexpressible affection, as his "SHEEP," and as those that were GIVEN him, by the Father. "I lay down my life for the *sheep.*" Who the *sheep* were, appears from what he says in John 10:27—29. "*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. My Father which GAVE THEM ME is greater than all, and none is

* The Cumberland Confession, in page 20, affirms, that God promised to Christ "a seed to be by him, *in time, redeemed, called by his word and Spirit, justified by his grace, sanctified and glorified.*" It is wonderful that they saw no "fatality" in this. The reason why such expressions occur in their standards is very obvious. They took our Confession as the basis of a new one, aiming to erase only its most unpopular features. This was a difficult task for unskilful hands; for the doctrine of the divine sovereignty is, throughout, interwoven with the very texture of the work. Hence we meet with some tattered shreds of Calvinism scattered about in their performance, which has led many to compare it to Nebuchadnezzar's image. They inform us that they are not pleased with the application, made of Predestination and Election, by either Calvinists or Arminians, (what application the *latter* make of them I know not,) but that they prefer the *intermediate* plan. What this middle way is, we cannot discover; it may be because we have not been raised to any *sublime degrees*, or initiated into any *mystic secrets*, but remain altogether *cowans*. We are placed pretty much in the same predicament as a traveler, who, on his way to a certain town, arrives at the forks of the road, and after some deliberation, takes to the right hand. A person calls after him and informs him that he is wrong. He returns, concluding as a matter of course that he must take the other road. To his astonishment he is informed that it is also wrong, and will lead him as much too far to the *left* as the other would to the *right*. "Well, then," says the traveler, "pray tell me how I shall reach the place of my destination, for I see no road but the two." "Follow me," says the other, "I will be your guide." He accordingly leads the way, by an *intermediate* route, and soon enters upon a miry swamp, in which they sink deeper and deeper, until unable to proceed further, they turn and gain a firmer footing on the *left hand road*. They go back and make another trial with no better success, then turn at a right angle and gain solid ground on the *right hand road*, covered with mire. "Farewell, guide," says the traveler, "I prefer going a little out of my way for the sake of a good road."

After all, it must be confessed that there is a manifest advantage in having doctrines suited to both Calvinists and Arminians.

As the Cumberland Confession is a professed *improvement* of the *old*, it may gratify some readers to see a specimen of the work. The following may be considered as a fair one, being taken from an edition which was revised and sanctioned by the united wisdom of their General Assembly, in 1830.

"On the other hand, press the doctrine of final apostacy if the creature does not so and so, making the perseverance of the creature depend chiefly upon his doings; you raise in the mind of the unregenerate professor the fear of hell as an high excitement of duty, confirm him in his legality, prepare his mind indirectly at least to say, 'glory to I;' for his perseverance, settles him down in a self-confident and deplorable situation." Page 41.

able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Elect Gentiles were counted as *sheep* before their conversion. "And *other sheep* I have which are not of this fold; them also *I must bring*, and they shall hear my voice." John 10:16.* Again, he says to the Jews, verse 26, "Ye believe not *because ye are not of my sheep*." And alluding to the promise of the everlasting covenant, "all that the Father *giveth me* SHALL COME to me." John 6:37. "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he *should give eternal life*, to AS MANY AS THOU HAST GIVEN HIM." John 17:2. To the mother of Zebedee's children, he says, "To sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them *for whom it is prepared* of my Father." Matth. 20:23. And again; in his prayer in the garden, "I pray for them, I pray not for the world, but *for them whom THOU HAST GIVEN ME*." John 17:9. Once more, he says, "No man can come to me except it were GIVEN UNTO HIM of my Father." Chap. 6:65. Many of our Lord's hearers were highly offended at this last declaration, and "went back and walked with him no more." Let me ask you, my hearers, in the words of your Saviour, "Will ye also go away?" Are any of you "ashamed of Christ or of HIS WORDS?" Remember they are the words by which you will be condemned or acquitted at the last day. You may wrest, pervert, or oppose them, but you cannot alter their meaning, or cause one jot or tittle of them to pass away. You may now refuse to believe them, but the time is coming when conviction will be pressed upon you with an eloquence, infinitely surpassing that of human or angelic tongues. The day is approaching that shall behold the Son of man bursting forth in dreadful glory from amid the clouds of heaven, sudden and terrific as the lightning's glare. He shall "send forth his angels and gather his ELECT from the four winds." Then will he preach the doctrine of election to an assembled universe, loud as the thunders of the archangel's trump. To those on his right hand, he will say, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom PREPARED FOR YOU FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD."

From the passages quoted, it appears that election is, *First, a purpose of mercy*. "According to his own purpose and grace given us in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. 1:9. *Secondly*, it is an *eternal purpose*. "Before the world began," and "Before the foundation of the world." *Thirdly*, it is a purpose to *save some*. "Chosen

*The "Cumberlands," in their Confession, page 11—12, argue that none are *elect* before their conversion. On Matth. 24:24, "If it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect," they reason thus, "It is evident that a man must be enlightened in the knowledge of God, and his Son Jesus, which is eternal life, before he can have spiritual wisdom to discern and detect the deceiver." Not so very evident as they may imagine. I should be sorry if the great body of our people, even those who are not savingly enlightened, had not wisdom enough both to "discern, and detect deceivers," of every description.

unto salvation," and "predestinated unto the adoption of children." Compare with this, the definition of the doctrine found in our "Shorter Catechism," which has occasioned so much "wrath," and drawn forth so much illiberal abuse. After the question, "Did God leave all mankind to perish in a state of sin and misery?" the answer is, "God, out of his mere good pleasure, (or, as the Larger Catechism explains it, "out of his mere love and mercy,") elected some to everlasting life." What is there in this definition, more offensive, or more dangerous, than the words of the scripture itself. Let us institute a comparison between the two:

PAUL.

"Predestinated unto the adoption of children—according to the good pleasure of his will." Eph. 1:5; and "hath saved and called us—not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace." 2 Tim. 1:9.

"He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Eph. 1:4; and "hath from the beginning, chosen you unto salvation." 2 Thess. 2:13; and "according to his own purpose and grace given us in Christ, before the world began." 2 Tim. 1:9.

—"He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." "Having predestinated us to the adoption of children." Eph. 1:4,5. "God hath from the beginning chosen you unto salvation." 2 Thess. 2:13. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called—justified—and glorified." Rom. 8.

THE CATECHISM.

"God, out of his mere good pleasure,

from all eternity,

elected some to everlasting life."

On what grounds, then, has so much displeasure been indulged against our church? Why should language, which is safe and orthodox in the writings of St. Paul, be so erroneous and dangerous in the mouths of Presbyterians? Strange heresy that we are guilty of! It is not that the doctrine itself is heretical. It is safe and profitable in the Bible; but becomes false the moment it is maintained by us! It is like a personal heresy. In order to avoid it we must cease to be Presbyterians. The doctrine will become harmless so soon as we unite with another denomination.

I am aware that all the passages we can bring in support of election, may be ingeniously explained away, so as to "please men;" and so can any truth contained in the Bible. The Universalist professes to be able, in this way, to erase the idea of future punishment from its pages. The Unitarian, also, will tell you that he can explain away the doctrine of Christ's divinity. For my own part I cannot conscientiously pursue such a course; I would

rather deny the scriptures altogether, than to attempt an evasion of their proper meaning. Various expedients have been employed to evade the passages which treat of election; and some have entertained unfriendly feelings towards us, because we could not adopt their expositions. Let us then examine some of them, and see whether we are so highly censurable in rejecting them.

1. Some tell us that ALL MANKIND were "chosen in Christ." But let us try this mode of exposition upon a few passages. Eph. 1:4,5. "He hath chosen [*all mankind*] in him before the foundation of the world—Having predestinated [*all mankind*] unto the adoption of children." Again, Rom. 8:30. "He did predestinate [*all mankind*]*—called—justified—and glorified*" them. This is universal salvation without much disguise.

2. Others think they can evade the offensive doctrine, by explaining the passages quoted, of an election of *nations*, and not of *persons*. But has God ever "chosen to salvation" nations, as such? Has he "predestinated" whole nations "unto the adoption of children," and *given* them to Christ? Well, if so, they will all come to him. Having been "predestinated," they will be "*called—justified—and glorified;*" and as nations consist of particular persons, it is after all, a *personal* election.

3. Another expedient, to get rid of the doctrine, is, to explain those scriptures as meaning, that God predestinated some unto salvation, *because he knew that they would believe and be saved, at all events*. I cannot adopt this scheme for several reasons. The **FIRST** is, that it is *not countenanced by the scriptures*. It is true, Peter says, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God." And we admit that God's election of men is according to his foresight of the fall and ruined condition of our race; and to his knowledge of the certainty, that without the interposition of his special grace, all would refuse his mercy and perish. But the inspired writer does not intimate that he chose any *because* he knew they would have faith. Paul also says, "Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate." But the verb know is often used to signify *love*. Thus, "I know my sheep and am known of mine." "Depart from me, I never knew you." So in this case, "Whom he did fore-know," or love from eternity, "them he did predestinate," "called," &c. agreeably to his declaration in Jeremiah, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, THEREFORE with loving kindness have I drawn thee." 31:3.

My **SECOND** difficulty, in adopting the above scheme, is, that it *disagrees with the scripture*. The apostle says, "God hath chosen you—through sanctification of the Spirit and *belief* of the truth." So far are faith and holiness in man, from being the moving causes of his election, that they are the only *means* through which God fulfils his designs of mercy. So, again, "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Here it is evidently the design of

the sacred writer, to represent the faith of believers as proceeding *from* the purpose of God to save, not that purpose as proceeding from their faith. Besides, the expressions, "according to the good pleasure of his will;" and "according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," plainly imply *sovereignty* in the predestinating act.

THIRDLY. I shall mention one more difficulty in the way of adopting the expedient referred to. Faith is either the work of man in his own heart; or it is the work of the Holy Spirit. Either man or God, is the *prime, moving cause* of its existence. If man be that cause; if we suppose that faith owes its existence in his heart to any work of his; then, to say that God chose some to salvation, because he foresaw their faith, is to say that he chose them "according to their *works*," which the apostle denies. Besides: it represents God as moved in his designs of mercy, by something good foreseen in the creature; for faith is something good. St. Jude calls it "holy faith." It would follow of course that when the apostle gave *thanks* to God for his own election and that of others, he is to be understood as merely expressing gratitude, that the LORD had foreseen their faith; and his language is to be paraphrased as follows,

"God, I thank thee that, as thou knewest well, I would not be as other men are; thou knewest that I would have faith whilst others would remain in unbelief. Thou knewest that there would be something in me, that would lead me to Christ and salvation. And foreseeing this good disposition of mine, thou didst choose ME to salvation in preference to other Jews. And for the same reason, thou didst meet me, when, on my way to Damascus, I was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against thy disciples." My hearers, was this the meaning of the apostle, when he gave thanks to God for his election? No. "Not according to our works" says he, "but according to *his own purpose*, and grace."

But faith is not of man. It is *wrought in the heart* by the blessed Spirit. God is its prime moving cause. The scripture assures us that it is "not of ourselves," but "the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast." Eph. 2:8,9. Jesus is said to be "the *author* and finisher of faith." Heb. 12:2. And it is placed among the "fruits of the Spirit." Gal. 5:22. If, then, God from eternity knew, that some would have faith, he knew that it would be a gift bestowed by himself; inasmuch as left to themselves not one would ever come to Christ. And how did he certainly know that he would bestow that gift, unless he had already *resolved* to bestow it? And why had he resolved to bestow it, unless he had already formed a *determination to save*; which is the same thing as election?*

* The Cumberland Confession says that, "the Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by *working faith in us*." Page 85. That God's

Once more; if God chose men on account of foreseen goodness, he may afterwards abandon them for foreseen evil. And if he selected them for the sake of their *faith*, he may cast them off for subsequent unbelief; and thus the doctrine of the "saints' perseverance" falls to the ground. It cannot long be maintained by those who deny personal election to holiness. If it be said that the scripture is very clear on the former doctrine, this is equally true of the latter. And it requires at least as much ingenuity to erase the doctrine of election from the sacred page, as to set aside that of the saints' perseverance.

Have we not reason to suspect the soundness of any system, which cannot be supported without elaborate criticisms, numerous evasions of scripture texts, and frequent alterations in the common translation? And may not our suspicion be confirmed, when we see the advocates of that system plainly manifesting a dislike to some parts of the Bible, never referring to them, except it be to do away their obvious meaning, and appearing always displeased, when they are read or quoted, even without comment, by others? Do not these things betray a lurking consciousness of holding some opinions, not easily reconciled with the word of God?

I proceed now, to reply to a few objections, which may be urged against the doctrine of election.

Objection 1. If election be true, some must be saved, and some must be lost.

Answer. It is true that some will certainly be saved; but it is not true that any *must* necessarily be lost, let them do what they may. Election does not say that a part of this congregation *must* or *will* perish. For aught we know, you may all be included in God's purpose of mercy. If you can be prevailed on to come to the Saviour, we shall be sure of this. And "my heart's desire and prayer to God for you" all, "is that you may be saved."

Now throw aside the doctrine, and see if the condition of mankind will be bettered. Will a single sinner be saved without election that will not be saved with it? No. Throw away God's special purpose to save, and all will continue in sin and perish.

Obj. 2. "If I am not one of the elect, what good will it do if I go to Christ?"

"effectual call," is "not at all from any *good foreseen* in man who is altogether dead in sin—until by the Holy Spirit he is enabled to answer this call." Page 27. And that man is "disabled, made opposite to all good," and has lost *all ability of will* to any spiritual good accompanying salvation"—and is "not able by his own strength to convert himself or to *prepare himself* thereunto without divine aid." pp. 16 and 24. These passages may surprise some who have heard the preachers of that body, and have learned other parts of their belief.

We have already remarked upon their entire want of acquaintance with the theological system of others. And if we may judge from their Confession of Faith and other writings, their own system is in quite an unfinished state; and what it may become, when reduced to order and consistency, we cannot venture to predict. For the present, it strikes most intelligent persons, as strangely incoherent.

Answ. Just as much good as if you knew you were elected. Election cannot injure you. It only touches the question whether any shall be constrained to come. But if you are willing to come, God has solemnly promised to save you at all events.

Obj. 3. "If I am not elected, how am I to blame if I perish?"

Answ. Because it is your duty to believe and be saved. I have no doubt indeed that you will reject the Saviour and perish, if God do not arrest you in your course. But this does not render you at all less blameable for pursuing that course. If it is certain that a man will commit a theft, unless he is prevented, does that render him less blameable for perpetrating it?

Obj. 4. If election be true, how can God be *sincere* in his invitations to all, to believe and be saved?

Answ. He is sincere, because if all men would repent and believe the gospel, they would infallibly be saved; and because he requires of them, in order to their salvation, only what it is their duty to do, and what they are blameable for not doing; and further, because he is most willing that his invitation should be accepted. Again: it is only on account of the universal rejection of his offers that he makes any selection at all from among mankind. In eternity, when he formed his purpose of special mercy, he viewed mankind as having already refused his overtures. Their refusal, as to the order in which it stood, in the divine mind, was *prior* to that purpose. Election represents God as saying, "I will make an unlimited offer of pardon to mankind, and as they will all refuse it, I shall interpose by my special grace, and constrain some to submission." Hence it is plain that his offers are just as sincere, as they would have been, if he had not formed a purpose to save a single one of mankind.

Obj. 5. This doctrine represents God as *partial*, and as a "respector of persons."

Answ. I grant that God is *discriminating* in his goodness. This is visible wherever you turn your eyes. He gave nobler powers to men than to worms, to angels than to men. He passed by the rebel angels, and provided a way of mercy for Adam's race. He has passed by the heathen, and sent his gospel to us. He brings one person into being, to become the child of many prayers and instructions, while another is left to the corrupting influence of evil example. But is God therefore *partial*, or a "respector of persons"? "No;" you reply, "because he has *wise reasons* for making these differences." Very well: this is the very answer we intended to give your objection. Partiality is an *unreasonable*, *capricious*, or *unjust* preference of one person above another. But God is not actuated by caprice in choosing some to eternal life, for he has *wise reasons* not always known to us, for what he does. He is not *unjust*, for he gives to no one less than he deserves. He does not respect the persons of the great, the learned,

or the noble of this world, for he calls "not many" of them. He does not accept the person of the rich, on account of his wealth, but has "chosen the poor." He still treats men uniformly according to their moral characters, so that "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him."

Obj. 6. If election be true why need I use any exertions to obtain salvation?

Ans. God's decree, instead of taking away the necessity of means, rather *establishes* it. He determined to save Noah by means of the ark, but that did not render the ark unnecessary. He determined to save Paul and his fellow passengers from shipwreck, by the exertions of the sailors; but did this render their exertions superfluous? God had promised to give him all that sailed with him. Yet, as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, "Paul said to the Centurion, *Except these abide in the ship, YE CANNOT BE SAVED.*" Because God had determined to deliver these States from European oppression, by the instrumentality of Washington and his compatriots, does it follow that there was no need of their services? If the Lord has designed that we shall soon have a new and more commodious house erected on this spot for his worship, as we hope he has, is it therefore unnecessary to provide materials, and employ workmen? And if God has determined to bless you with a bounteous harvest, does that prove that you may safely neglect to sow the seed? So, if you leave your salvation to God's decrees, without any anxiety or exertion on your part, you will sink to hell in spite of election: "Chosen," says the Apostle "THROUGH sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

Obj. 7. The doctrine of election is discouraging.

Ans. Who is disheartened by it? *Ministers of the gospel!* No: it affords them the greatest encouragement they can enjoy. Was it, think you, disheartening to Paul, when visiting the corrupt city of Corinth, to be told by the Lord, "I have much people in this city"? O, take not from us this most precious truth of the Bible! Under the burdens and trials of the ministry, we must sink without it. But is this doctrine discouraging to *praying Christians!* O, no. They never beg of God to convert a careless sinner without a tacit confession of its truth and preciousness, made in pleading with the Lord, that he would himself determine the question of the man's salvation, by the interposition of his own *special constraining influence.* Were it believed by them, that the destiny of immortal souls had been committed to chance, or to the wayward inclinations of the natural heart, the lips of prayer would be sealed in everlasting silence. To whom, then, is the doctrine discouraging? To the *anxious sinner!* No. He casts himself upon this glorious truth, as his last hope. When driven from all his "refuges of lies," he is brought to feel, that "if discriminating

mercy does not pluck him from the pit, he forever sinks. He feels that he must take his life in his hand, and cast himself at the footstool of sovereignty, pouring out this sum of all his hopes, 'Lord if thou wilt thou canst make me clean.' No, my brethren; this doctrine takes away none but false self-righteous hopes.

Says one, "I should like this doctrine if I were a christian, but it makes me uneasy while I continue in sin." True: it gives you no peace until you are willing to be reconciled to God. But do you therefore wish it were false? Because you will not accept of mercy, do you wish all others to refuse it? Because you choose to continue in sin and perish, can you not be contented to perish alone? Must you have the whole world sink to despair with you? Because you will force your way to perdition, do you wish to drag down the redeemed from heaven to mingle their wailings with yours? O! who are they that indulge this spirit? Are they men? or are they devils?

Obj. 8. The doctrines of predestination and election are mysterious.*

Ans. It is true, that when traced out in all their bearings, they are, in some degree, mysterious. But is that a good reason for rejecting them? Can you fully comprehend the sublime doctrine of the Trinity? Can you give a satisfactory answer to the question, how sin found an entrance into heaven? Can you explain to me the nature of the union between mind and matter? Can you tell me how the grain you cast into the earth, "springeth up and groweth?" To say you will not believe what you do not fully comprehend, is to deny the greatest part of human knowledge, is to cast contempt upon the revelation of heaven itself.

Does any one say, "My system has no mysteries in it. I can easily reconcile all difficulties that occur." Then, my friend, your system is most certainly false. For Peter tells us that there are some things in Paul's epistles "*hard to be understood, which they that are UNLEARNED and UNSTABLE, wrest*".... What those things are, it is easy to imagine. And if they were "hard" to an inspired apostle, how is it that they are all so easy to you? No, my friend, if your system has no mysteries in it, it is not the system of the Bible; for "great is the *mystery* of godliness."

Obj. 9. Still it is objected that these doctrines *do harm*, and that they are besides so *unpopular* that they ought not to be preached.

Ans. Are they doctrines of the Bible? and is it not true that "ALL scripture is given by inspiration of God—and is *profitable*." But how is it they do harm? By rendering Christians *negligent*? The apostle Paul was a most zealous advocate of the doctrines,

* This seems to be a principal objection of the Cumberland body against these doctrines. See Buck's Theological Dictionary.

and did he neglect the service of his Divine Master? Did he labor less than the other apostles? Only ask the question whether Calvinists, at the present day, are less engaged than others in Bible, Tract, Temperance, and Missionary Societies, in Sunday Schools, and other efforts for the conversion of the world. Will it be said that the doctrines exert an injurious influence upon society? Let us appeal to fact. Which are the most moralized portions of Continental Europe; and what is their prevailing creed? What part of Great Britain is most distinguished for purity of morals; and what theological system predominates? Nay, apply these questions to our own country; and then ask for the creed of the most immoral portions of Protestant Christendom, and the objection will vanish. Besides, that objection would lie with equal force against the doctrines of the Saints' Perseverance, Justification by Faith, and many others.

I grant there is one way in which they may do harm. When the enemies of them labor to impress the public mind with the idea, that Calvinists believe that God is the author of sin; that they deny free-agency, and consider the use of means unnecessary; I say, when efforts are used to impress such ideas upon people, some will take occasion to say, "If all these large and respectable bodies hold such sentiments, there is a strong probability of their truth, and we may be safe in acting accordingly." In this way harm may be, and is often done, not by the truth, but by its enemies. The doctrines have many important uses. They display, in a clear light, the total depravity and enmity of the human heart, in that, without the special agency of the Holy Spirit, all would have rejected the overtures of reconciliation. They show the sinner his inexcusableness, whilst continuing in sin. They discover to the Christian what he would have been but for constraining grace; and teach him to give the glory to God alone, who "has made him to differ" from others. They make it apparent, that God is *not such an one as ourselves*, and thus correct those false notions of his character, which we are apt to entertain. They display the mercy of God in its most transcendently glorious point of view, as making a last desperate effort in behalf of a sinking world. They are set in the scriptures as "a sign to be spoken against—that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed." They discover who is willing that the Lord should reign; who has confidence enough in his wisdom, purity, and goodness, to trust all events in his hands; and are adapted to lay open to view the hypocrisy of those who cry *hosannah*, but are hostile to the government of Jehovah. No wonder that doctrines so exalting to God, so humiliating to man, should, in a world like this, be *unpopular*. But shall we, therefore, abandon them? Did the Saviour ever hide the truth, to increase the number of his followers? Had

he shunned to declare the whole counsel of God to the Nazarenes, he might have avoided their outrageous attack. Did Paul vie with the false teachers at Galatia in efforts to produce as *popular* a system as they? No. On the contrary he asks, "Do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men I would not be the servant of Christ."

From what has been said we may learn the secret source of that "wrath" which is aroused against these doctrines, especially election, wherever they are maintained. I have no doubt, indeed, that some oppose them merely because they do not understand them. I am led to this belief by the fact, that some who deny them *in words*, do, notwithstanding, embrace them *substantially* as matters of experience. They will tell you that they never would have chosen God, if he had not first chosen them. They will acknowledge that if he had left them to the natural inclinations of their own hearts, they never would have accepted the Saviour. Now this is the very essence of election. But there are others who hate and oppose it, because they see it in a light which disturbs their sins, and tears away their self-righteous hopes. The idea that they are so depraved as to need the *constraining* influence of Almighty grace, in order to their salvation, gives a deadly wound to their pride; and leaves them no peace till they are reconciled to God. Hence, on one occasion, when our Saviour preached it, many of his hearers "went back and walked with him no more." At another time, as we are informed in our text, when he preached it to the Nazarenes, the people were so enraged, that they made a daring attempt upon his life. But against what is all this enmity directed? It is against that glorious purpose of mercy, without which not one sinner would ever have been converted to God; not one of our ruined race would ever have been admitted to glory. O what would become of us, my hearers, if those who hate this doctrine should succeed in the object of their wishes, and defeat the purpose of redeeming mercy! Vain would be the blood of Calvary. Our condition would become as desperate, as that of the fallen angels!

FINALLY; we may learn THAT WE SHOULD NEVER ABANDON ANY TRUTH OF GOD, THROUGH FEAR OF THE WRATH OF ITS ENEMIES. We see that the Lord Jesus passed unhurt through the midst of the enraged Nazarenes, and, by his Almighty power, preserved himself from their attempts. And he is still able and willing to protect his faithful servants when exposed to danger for the sake of his truth. Let us not, then, be ashamed either of him or of his words; or fear the reproaches of men. When false statements and accusations are urged against us, let us pity the ignorance and

prejudice of the authors; and prize the truth in the same proportion that it is violently assailed by its enemies. I conclude by urging upon you the apostolic admonition, Rom. 16:17,18. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions, and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such, serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

A HYMN.

1.

In songs of sublime adoration and praise,
Ye pilgrims to Zion who press,
Break forth and extol the great Ancient of Days,
His rich and distinguishing grace.

2.

His love, *from eternity* fixed upon you,
Broke forth, and discovered its flame,
When each with the cords of his kindness he drew,
And brought you to love his great name.

3.

O had he not pitied the state you were in,
Your bosoms his love had ne'er felt,
You all would have lived, would have died too in *sin*,
And sunk with the load of your guilt,

4.

What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
" 'Twas even so Father," you ever must sing,
" Because it seemed good in thy sight."

5.

'Twas all of thy grace, we were called to obey,
While others were suffered to go,
The road, which, by nature, we chose as our way,
That leads to the regions of woe.

6.

Then give all the glory to his holy name,
To him all the glory belongs;
Be yours the high joy still to sound forth his fame,
And crown him in each of your songs.