

A SERIES  
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TRACTS  
ON THE  
DOCTRINES, ORDER, AND POLITY  
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EMBRACING  
SEVERAL ON PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

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A BRIEF  
EXPOSITION AND VINDICATION  
OF THE  
DOCTRINE OF  
THE DIVINE DECREES,  
AS TAUGHT IN THE ASSEMBLY'S LARGER CATECHISM.

BY THE

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“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called us with a 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.”—2 Tim. i. 8, 9.

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# DIVINE DECREES.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE DOCTRINE OF THE DIVINE DECREES STATED AND PROVED.

*Quest.* 12. "What are the decrees of God ?

*Ans.* God's decrees are the wise, free, and holy acts of the counsel of his will, whereby, from all eternity, he hath, for his own glory, unchangeably fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass in time, especially concerning angels and men.

*Q.* 13. What hath God especially decreed concerning angels and men ?

*A.* God, by an eternal and immutable decree, out of his mere love, for the praise of his glorious grace, to be manifested in due time, hath elected some angels to glory ; and, in Christ, hath chosen some men to eternal life, and the means thereof, and also, according to his sovereign power, and the unsearchable counsel of his own will (whereby he extendeth or withholdeth favour as he pleaseth) hath passed by, and fore-ordained the rest to dishonour and wrath, to be for their sin inflicted, to the praise of the glory of his justice."—The Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly.

The doctrine stated in the foregoing answers, has not only been violently contested, but most shamefully misrepresented and vilified ; and its advocates held up to the scorn and indignation of mankind !

Passing by the unjust and shocking caricatures of our system, by individual preachers and local exhorters, I will mention a few of the statements, which have been widely circulated, in the Tracts published by the "General Tract Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church," under the care and control of the General Conference.

In these official tracts, we are charged with believing, (I quote their express language,) "that God by an eternal and unchangeable decree, hath predestinated to eternal dam-

nation far the greater part of mankind, without any respect to their works ;"—“that God is the author of all sin, working wickedness in the wicked ;”—“that God has taken the work of the devil out of his hands and does it more effectually :—the devil tempts, God forces men to sin and to perish.” We are charged with representing our blessed Lord, “as a hypocrite, a deceiver of the people, a man void of common sincerity ; as mocking his helpless creatures ; as pretending the love which he had not ; as weeping crocodile’s tears, weeping over the prey which he himself had compelled to sin, and then doomed to destruction ;—as thus representing the most holy God as worse than the devil, more false, more cruel, and more unjust !”\*

And even in their more elaborate and personally responsible works, their authors represent our system as teaching, That some men are born to be damned, without regard to their moral character, and by an arbitrary and unchangeable decree of their Creator !—That those who are elected must be saved, do what they may ; while those who are reprobated, must be damned, do what they will !—That men are not free agents, but mere machines ; laid under a physical necessity of sinning, and then damned for doing what they could not help !—That there is no provision for the salvation of the non-elect, and that the gospel only aggravates their eternal condemnation, without the possibility of doing them any saving good !—That our system either fosters the greatest presumption and tends to the grossest licentiousness, or else destroys all motive to effort and leads to the most gloomy despair ! Need I say, that we not only do not believe such blasphemous falsehoods, but we reject them with horror !

Further, not content with thus shamefully misrepresenting and vilifying our system, they have endeavoured to impugn our moral honesty, and thus to destroy our Christian standing and ministerial influence ! Finding that the public had discovered the gross discrepancy, between their published caricatures of our system, and the doctrines which we really believe and actually teach, instead of acknowledging their error and hastening to redress the wrong which they had so unjustly and wantonly inflicted, they issued another

\* For these and other evidences of their gross misrepresentations of our doctrines, and violent hostility towards the Presbyterian Church, see Annan’s Difficulties of Arminian Methodism.



official tract, reiterating their former slanders, and expressly accusing us of deliberate dissimulation and wilful hypocrisy! This tract is called "Duplicity Exposed!" and you may judge of its character and spirit from its title!

In addition to these official and public attacks, many of that sect busy themselves in private, in vilifying our doctrines and in prejudicing the public against our ministry and churches:—representing the former as unconverted and useless, and the latter as cold, formal, and heartless! Yea, they not unfrequently intrude upon the members of our flocks—endeavour to render them disaffected with their present relations—and seek to proselyte them to their sect;—and if perchance they should succeed, in seducing any from Presbyterianism to Arminian Methodism, they appear to exult as much, as if they had converted a heathen, from his damning idolatry, to the faith and practice of the gospel!

Now, we can excuse much of their misrepresentation of our doctrinal system, on the ground of their intellectual weakness and want of education; but for such wholesale traduction of moral character, involving the Christian reputation of some three or four thousand accredited ministers of the gospel:—for such dishonourable attempts to impair our influence and to injure our churches, we can conceive of no apology.

In view of this systematic and wide-spread misrepresentation and defamation, is it any wonder that multitudes should be prejudiced against the doctrine of election? But if any such should peruse these pages, let me ask their patient and candid attention; and if they are not thoroughly convinced of the truth of the doctrine, they will at least cease to regard it with pious horror!

Here let me remind you, that the doctrines which we hold are no novelties; neither have their advocates been contemptible as to number, talent, learning, piety, or usefulness. To say nothing of the ancients:—these were the sentiments of all the great luminaries of the Reformation;—and for more than a century they continued to be held by nearly the whole Protestant world. Nor will the thousands of ministers and churches who still adhere to the doctrines of the Reformation, and as they believe, to the unchangeable truths of the gospel, suffer in comparison with their opponents, with respect either to intellectual vigour, sound learning, enlightened piety, or public usefulness. Surely sentiments so venerable for their antiquity—embraced by the clearest and

deepest thinkers the world has ever seen—and still held by multitudes whose ministerial and Christian character is beyond reproach, should not be repelled with prejudice, but examined with due respect and candour.

In the first Answer, the subject of God's decrees, in general, is stated or defined; and to this general proposition I would first direct your attention, viz:—

I. "God's decrees are the wise, free, and holy acts of the counsel of his will, whereby, from all eternity, he hath, for his own glory, unchangeably fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass in time."

Now, observe, it is not said that God has pre-determined efficiently to produce and effect whatsoever comes to pass in time,—for that would indeed make God the author of sin, as well as of holiness. Hence in the succeeding answer, as also in other parts of our venerated Confession, our standards carefully distinguish, between the efficient, and the permissive decrees of God. All things that are the proper objects of his power and grace, He does efficiently or influentially produce, agreeably to his eternal and unchangeable purpose:—but all the moral evils which exist, are permitted, limited, and overruled, according to the same eternal and unchangeable will. Thus, in the Confession of Faith, chap. 3d, sec. 1st, it is said,—“God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin; nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.”

That all things, in this sense, are fore-ordained, is indisputable, unless the prescience or fore-knowledge of God be denied;—the denial of which would not only be impious, but if carried out, would lead to blank and cheerless atheism!

The argument founded on the necessary prescience or fore-knowledge of God, is briefly this:—

There must have been a time when no creature existed, as God alone is from everlasting. Before creation, and from all eternity, all things that are possible, as well as all things that actually have or will come to pass in time, must have been perfectly known to God. He must, therefore, have known, what beings and events would, on the whole, be most for his own glory and the greatest good of the universe; and therefore, as an infinitely wise, benevolent, and

Almighty Being, he could not but have chosen or determined, that such beings and events, and such only, should come to pass in time.

To allege, that, although he foreknew what beings and events, would, on the whole, be best, and yet that he did neither prefer nor fore-ordain that they should be produced and permitted, would be to deny both his wisdom and benevolence, and to charge the infinite God with supreme folly and malevolence!

Or to say, that he foreknew what would, on the whole, be best, and would have preferred to have secured its existence and occurrence, but could not;—that He fore-saw good that was desirable, but had not power to effect it, —and evil, that was, on the whole, undesirable, but had not ability to prevent it, is to deny his omnipotence, and to charge the Almighty with impotence or weakness!

The conclusion is, therefore, to our minds irresistible, that if God be infinitely wise, benevolent, and powerful, and perfectly foreknew, what beings and events would, on the whole, be best, he must have chosen and ordained that they should exist, or be permitted to occur:—and that, consequently, every thing that does actually come to pass in time, has been eternally and unchangeably fore-ordained; and is either the effect of the divine efficiency, or the result of his predetermined permission.

These general principles are acknowledged by the great body of Arminians themselves; and indeed they could not be disputed with any consistency, except by deists, who deny the doctrine of divine Providence in toto, and maintain, absurdly, that all things come to pass by chance or hazard!

While, however, Arminians acknowledge these principles, in the general, as they relate to the creation and natural government of the universe—they violently, and as we think, unphilosophically, dispute their applicability to the free actions of moral agents and their future destiny as determined by them. That is, they profess to believe, as well as we, that all things and events are the result of the divine will—except the free or voluntary actions of moral beings.

But must not these also have been included, in either the efficient, or permissive, purposes of Jehovah? Must they not have been equally foreknown to God? And would he not have prevented their occurrence, as he indisputably might have done, if he had not, on the whole, preferred to



produce those which are good, and to permit those which are evil? For example, he wills into existence, beings possessed of certain faculties, and placed in certain circumstances, which beings, so situated, he foresees will give birth to certain actions; now, could he not have prevented their existence, and so have hindered their occurrence? "As, therefore, he chose that beings should exist, who, he certainly knew, would perform such actions; it is evident, that he also chose, upon the whole, the existence of the actions themselves." He may indeed have determined that their actions should be free, as in truth he has, and that, so far as they are evil, they should be, as they are, the effect of their own agency, and without any direct exertion of his; yet, as they must have been foreknown, and might have been prevented, they are wisely permitted by the Almighty according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will.

I will merely add, at present, that on this subject, we are not left to reason alone. It is an undeniable fact, that many of the free or voluntary actions of men, have not only been foreknown and fore-ordained, but actually predicted—some of them for centuries before they came to pass; as every reader of inspired prophecy must know.

The only possible way to evade the force of this argument is, to deny that the foreknowledge of God includes all the voluntary actions of moral agents! Accordingly, Dr. Adam Clarke, in his concluding observations on the 2d chapter of Acts, says—that God does not know all things! that there are some things which he does not choose to know! (As if he must not first know them before he can determine that he will not know them!) And thus, rather than confess that the voluntary actions of men are fore-ordained—which the doctor concedes they must be, if certainly foreknown, he impiously denies the perfect prescience or foreknowledge of Jehovah! May God prevent us from adopting a system, which can only be logically supported, and that in the judgment of one of its most learned and popular advocates, at the expense of an essential attribute of Deity!

With these brief remarks relative to the subject of fore-ordination in general, let us now proceed to consider, the special decree of God concerning men, or that part of the Answer which refers to the election of some to eternal life, and which is expressed in these words:—

II. "God, by an eternal and immutable decree, out of his

mere love, for the praise of his glorious grace, to be manifested in due time, hath elected some angels to glory ; and, in Christ, hath chosen some men to eternal life, and the means thereof."

1. It is stated, that " God, by an eternal and immutable decree, hath chosen some men to eternal life."

The facts, that God has an elect or chosen people, and that none but they will be actually saved, are not and cannot be denied by Arminians themselves ; and therefore I do not deem it necessary to quote any of the numerous passages of Scripture in which those truths are expressly asserted. But our opponents deny that they are elected, by an " eternal and immutable" decree ; and allege that they are chosen in time and on the occasion of their actual conversion to God ; in other words, that every Christian is elected when he believes and obeys the gospel. Here then we are at issue ; and let the word of God decide between us. From many passages, I select the few following, and submit whether they are not entirely satisfactory and irresistibly conclusive :—

2 Tim. i. 8, 9—" Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner ; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God ; who hath saved us, and called us with a 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."

Again, Rom. viii. 29, 30—" 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."

Once more, Ephes. i. 4—6—" According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love : having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved."

By these proofs we regard this point as conclusively settled—that Christians are not elected in time, but from all eternity ; but it may be still further illustrated and confirmed, by showing,

2. That the election of God's people unto eternal life, is

unconditional ; that is, “without any foresight of faith or good works, as conditions, or causes, moving God thereunto ;” but, as the Answer before us expresses it—“out of his mere love, for the praise of his glorious grace.”

Here let me correct the uncandid and ungenerous misrepresentation of our opponents. They represent us as meaning by unconditional election, that God has predetermined to save a certain number, without any regard to the means that are necessary to qualify them for heaven ; and, consequently, that they who are elected will be saved, no matter how unbelieving or immoral ! Need I say, that we abhor such sentiments as much as our unjust accusers—and hold, as cordially and as fully as any, the absolute necessity of faith and good works in order to salvation ? But the real question at issue between us is, not whether faith and good works are requisite to salvation, but whether they are the cause, or the effect, of election ? They hold, that some are elected, because they believe and obey : we affirm, that some believe and obey, because they were elected. In other words, we maintain, that as none believe and obey the gospel, except as “God worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure,” the faith and obedience of any, must be the effect, and not the moving cause or condition, of their election unto life :—and this is all that we mean, by the much vilified, and to some, horrible term, unconditional election.

But let us appeal to the sacred Scriptures, whether election unto life be not an act of God’s free and sovereign grace : and as this is the most disputed point, you will allow me to be sufficiently full in my quotations.

John vi. 64, 65—“But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.”

1 Cor. iv. 7—“For who maketh thee to differ from another ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive ? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it ?”

Philip ii. 12, 13—“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

John x. 25—29—“Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not : the works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye

are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. 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 able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

Matt. xi. 25, 26—"At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

John vi. 37—39—"All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

John vi. 43—45—"Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."

John xii. 37—41—"But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him."

John x. 16—"And other sheep I have, which are not of this [Jewish] fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

Acts xiii. 48—"And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed."

Ephes. i. 4, 5, 6, 9, 11—"According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we



should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved: having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself: 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."

Ephes. ii. 4—10—"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

2 Thess. ii. 13, 14—"But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth; whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2 Tim. i. 9—"Who hath saved us, and called us with a 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."

Rom. xi. 5—7—"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for: but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded."

Romans ix. 11—16, 19—21—"For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written,



Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shalt we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then, it is not of him that will-eth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"

Now, judge ye, in view of these passages of Scripture, whether election unto life be unconditional, or conditional; whether it be of free unmerited grace, or of human works. In other words, whether God's people are elected in consequence of their anticipated faith and obedience, or whether, as we maintain, their faith and obedience are wrought in them by the Holy Spirit, agreeably to his eternal purpose, and out of his mere love and unmerited compassion. Men may, if they choose, rebel against this humbling truth; but, in doing so, they must contend, not so much against us, as against the inspired word and its holy and righteous Author!

I appeal to you, whether the statements of our standards are not in perfect accordance with those just quoted from the sacred writings. The truth is, they are little more than a literal transcript of their express language, as any one may see, by comparing the text of our Confession, with the scriptural proofs that are referred to at the bottom of each page. All we desire is, that our doctrine may be judged by the Bible, which is the only infallible rule of faith; and we again invite you, not only to ponder upon the passages just quoted, but to examine and study their connection; for we are persuaded that, if their spirit and scope are properly understood, the conviction will be irresistible, that the election and salvation of God's people, is from beginning to end, a work of free, sovereign, and unmerited mercy.

But although God was not moved in the election of his people by the foresight of their faith or good works, but chose them out of his mere love, yet, I remark,

3. In his sovereign and gracious purpose of election, all the means that are necessary to their salvation, are included, or were provided for. Hence, in the Answer before

us, it is said, that they are chosen, "in Christ," to eternal life, "and the means thereof."

Now you may judge with what justice we are charged with believing, that if a man be unconditionally elected, he must be saved, no matter whether he believes and obeys the gospel, or not! We believe no such thing. On the contrary, we maintain that the end includes the means:—or, in other words, that the purpose of election includes and implies, the actual provision, and the certain and effectual application, of all the means that are acknowledged to be necessary to entitle and prepare the elect for heaven.

In proof that such is our belief, I have already recited the language of our Catechism; let me quote in addition the express language of our Confession of Faith, chapter 3d, sect. 6th. "As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purposé of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ, by his Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation.

Again, chap. 10th, sect. 1st.—"All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly, to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace."

Once more, chap. 13, sect. 1.—"They who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are farther sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by his word and Spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified, and they more and more quickened and strengthened, in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

In view of these quotations from our public standards, and many more, of similar import that might be made, I ask again, how can any accuse us of denying the necessity of personal holiness in order to salvation? Have they ever read our standards? And if so, are they too ignorant to understand the force of language? Or do they knowingly and for selfish purposes, misrepresent and vilify our doctrines? However this may be, surely every intelligent and candid reader must be convinced, that our belief is, not that some are elected to salvation without regard to the necessary means, but that all the means necessary are provided for in the purpose of God, and their certain and effectual application infallibly secured.

That the doctrine of our standards, on this point also, is in perfect accordance with the word of God, we might prove by almost innumerable references; but as all agree that faith and obedience are necessary to salvation, I will merely refer you to the passages which have been produced in proof of the other points, and in which this truth likewise is clearly taught.

Let us now proceed to consider, very briefly, the remaining part of the Answer, viz.

III. "And also according to his sovereign power, and the unsearchable counsel of his own will (whereby he extendeth or withholdeth favour as he pleaseth) hath passed by, and foreordained the rest to dishonour and wrath, to be for their sin inflicted, to the praise of the glory of his justice."

On this part of the subject little need be added in the way of proof:—because, if what has been said concerning the election of some unto life be true, what is here said of the non-elect, must follow as a matter of course. But as this part of our doctrinal system has been specially misrepresented and vilified, it is proper that I should give, before I conclude, a brief explanation.

Here, then, let me again remind you, that our standards clearly distinguish between the efficient or influential decrees of God, and those that are only permissive. All moral actions that are the objects of God's efficient decrees, must be in their nature good, as God is holy, and he is their efficient cause or Author: But all moral actions that are evil, and that are the objects therefore of his permissive decrees, are produced, not by God, but by the efficiency of free moral agents: and these evil actions he has pre-determined to permit, under proper limitations, and to over-

rule for his own most excellent glory. And having thus determined to permit the existence of moral evil, and foreseeing all the wickedness of the wicked, he determined to punish them for their voluntary sinfulness, to the praise of the glory of his justice.

You perceive then the great distinction between the decrees of election and reprobation. With respect to the former, God is considered as the efficient cause or author of all moral good : but with respect to the latter, he is considered as simply permitting, or not preventing the production of moral evil, produced by the efficiency of free and therefore responsible moral agents. The decree of election unto life, is unconditional and is an act of God's free grace ; whereas foreordination unto death, is conditional and is an act of perfect justice. In other words, while eternal life is the free, unmerited gift of God ; eternal death is the wages or just desert of sin.

If we held that God has decreed moral evil, in the same sense that he has decreed moral good ; that he is the author of sin, as he is of holiness ; that he has made men mere machines, without any freedom of will ; that the non-elect are under the physical necessity of sinning ; that he has made no provision for their salvation, and that they could not therefore be saved if they would ; in a word if we held that the non-elect are forced or influenced to sin by the Almighty, and are by an arbitrary act of sovereignty and power predestinated to eternal death, then might men be excused, at the bare mention of our system, for raising their hands and rolling their eyes towards heaven in pious horror ! But the Searcher of hearts knows, and they ought to know, if they do not, that we are neither so ignorant, nor so wicked, as to hold sentiments so revolting and impious !

What we do maintain, I repeat it, is, that God has determined to "pass by" the non-elect, and to permit them to continue in unbelief and disobedience ; and foreseeing that, if left to themselves, they would thus freely and criminally reject his gospel and rebel against his law, he determined to punish them with eternal death, for their sins, and according to their just deserts.

And pray, where is the error or injustice of this ? Is it not a fact, that God does permit some to reject the gospel and continue to the last in sin ? Is it not a fact, that such are punished hereafter for their unbelief and wickedness ? And is not such punishment in fact righteous ? Well, then, why



should it be wrong for God to determine before-hand to permit, what it cannot be denied he does in fact permit? Or why should it be unjust for God to pre-determine that he will punish crimes that are foreseen by him, when it is conceded that he does punish them in fact, and that such punishment is in itself righteous? Surely that which it is not wrong for God to do, it cannot be wrong for God to determine to do: and as to the facts themselves, that are the objects of this supposed decree, there is, there can be no dispute concerning them. The "head and front of our offending" is, that we believe that God has pre-determined to permit and do, just what our opponents are obliged to acknowledge that he does in fact allow and do!

But let us submit this point also to the arbitration of the word of God; and then we shall see, whether the evil actions of men and their consequent punishment, are not, in the sense explained, the objects of the divine decrees.

Prov. xvi. 4—"The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil."

Psal. lxxvi. 10—"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

Rom. ix. 17—"For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth."

1 Pet. ii. 7, 8—"Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed."

Jude iv.—"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

Acts ii. 23—"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

But why multiply examples of this kind? Does not every reader of the Bible know, that the Scriptures are full of predictions relative to the evil actions of men, which God had pre-determined to permit and overrule for his own glory; and yet, for which, they, the voluntary and guilty authors,



should be punished? As we shall have occasion, however, to refer to this branch of the subject again, in the next chapter, I will merely beg you to remember, that these proofs cannot be rationally disputed, because they rest upon facts; facts divinely authenticated and infallibly recorded.

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## CHAPTER II.

### OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

IN the former chapter, we endeavoured to explain and prove the three following propositions:—

I. That all things that come to pass in time, have been eternally and unchangeably fore-ordained, because most certainly foreknown to the infinitely perfect Jehovah. In other words, that as all things possible, as well as actual, must have been eternally known to God, and as he must therefore have foreseen, what would, on the whole, be most for his own glory and the greatest good of the universe, he could not but have preferred and fore-ordained, as an infinitely wise, benevolent, and Almighty Being, that they should come to pass: those that are morally good, by his own power or efficiency; and those that are morally evil, in consequence of his divine permission, and by the efficiency of free and responsible moral agents.

II. That with respect to our race in particular, God has by an eternal and immutable decree, elected some to eternal life; unconditionally, as to human merit, and out of his mere love, or free, unmerited grace; and yet, not without providing, in the same eternal and gracious purpose of election, for the certain and effectual application of all the means that are necessary to entitle and prepare them personally for heaven.

III. That the rest of mankind God has passed by; that is, has not elected to eternal life: and foreseeing their voluntary and wilful unbelief and wickedness, he fore-ordained them to dishonour and wrath, to be for their sin inflicted, to the praise of the glory of his justice. In other words, foreseeing that, if left to themselves, they would freely and wickedly rebel against him, he determined to punish them for their wickedness, and according to their just

deserts ; in order that his justice might be both vindicated and honoured.

Having thus briefly recapitulated, what was, in the former chapter, more fully explained, and, as we trust, satisfactorily proved both from reason and revelation, I shall now proceed,

IV. To answer the objections of Arminians to our doctrine : in doing which, I shall take occasion to show, that the very difficulties which they press against our system, lie with equal weight against their own.

Before we proceed, however, allow me to call your attention to this remarkable fact ; that the objections which Arminians make against the doctrine of Divine Decrees, as held by us, are the very same which the inspired apostle anticipated would be made against the doctrine, as stated by himself ! Thus in the ninth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, in which he clearly states, illustrates, and argumentatively proves the doctrine, he represents the objector as saying, "Is there unrighteousness with God? Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?" The fact, therefore, that the precise objections which are alleged against the doctrine, as held by us, were anticipated by the apostle against the doctrine, as stated by him, is conclusive proof, that his doctrine and ours are identical : and we might therefore content ourselves with his inspired rebuke of such presumptuous and impious cavilings, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" But to proceed—

1. It is objected, that if all things that come to pass are fore-ordained, then is God the author of sin, as well as of holiness.

This objection we had occasion to anticipate and briefly answer, when explaining in what sense we understand that all things are fore-ordained. But as this constitutes one of their main objections to our system, and is in fact the principal ground from which they deduce the most horrible consequences, it deserves a more distinct and formal refutation.

I again observe, therefore, that our standards clearly and carefully distinguish between the efficient, and the permissive decrees of God. By the former, he is the efficient author or cause of all moral good : By the latter he simply

determines to permit, restrain, and overrule, for wise and holy ends, the existence of moral evil, produced, not by his own agency, but by the free or voluntary efficiency of responsible moral agents.

Some of our opponents allege, that this is a distinction without a difference : and others ungenerously insinuate, that it is not recognized by our official standards, but is a modern invention, designed to conceal our obnoxious sentiments !

That it is the doctrine of our Church, will plainly appear from the following quotations :—

The Larger Catechism, 19th Answer :—“ God by his providence permitted some of the angels, wilfully and irrecoverably, to fall into sin and damnation, limiting and ordering that, and all their sins, to his own glory.”

The Confession of Faith, chap. 6th, sect. 1st.—“ Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan,” [not by God’s power or influence,] “ sinned in eating the forbidden fruit. This their sin God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory.”

Chap. 5, sect. 2—“ Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly, yet by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.”

Again, chap. 3, sect. 1—“ God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass ; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin ; nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.”

Once more, chap. 5, sect. 4—“ The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in his providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men ; and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends ; yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God ; who being most holy and righteous, neither is, nor can be the author or approver of sin.”

And in the Explanatory Catechism, published nearly a century ago, and which, ever since, both in Scotland and this country, has been esteemed by Calvinists as a standard work, we have the following Questions and Answers:—

“ Q. How does the decree of God extend to things naturally and morally good ?

A. Effectively : because God is the author and efficient cause of all good.

Q. How does it extend to things morally evil ?

A. Permissively and directively only.

Q. How do you prove that God cannot be the author of sin ?

A. From the contrariety of it to his holy nature and law, and the indignation he has manifested against it, in what Christ suffered on account of it ; for he can never be the author of that whereof he is the avenger.”

The distinction, therefore, between the efficient, and the permissive decrees of God, is no modern invention, but the ancient and true doctrine of our Church.

And is there no difference, between God's making or exciting men to sin by his power or influence, and his permitting or not preventing them from sinning ? Between his determining to produce the evil himself, or to cause others by his power to do it, and his predetermining to permit men to abuse their liberty and to commit evil by the unprevented exercise of their own voluntary efficiency ?

True, the existence of moral evil may be said to be the consequence of the divine permission ; but the permissive will of God cannot therefore be said to be the cause of it. Take the following striking and beautiful illustration from the work of President Edwards on the Freedom of the Will ; a work, by the way, to which Arminians have never ventured to reply.

“ There is a vast difference between the sun's being the cause of the lightness and warmth of the atmosphere, and of the brightness of gold and diamonds by its presence and positive influence ; and its being the occasion of darkness and frost in the night, by its motion whereby it descends below the horizon. The motion of the sun is the occasion of the latter kind of events ; but not the proper cause, efficient, or producer of them. No more is any action of the divine Being, the cause of the evil of men's wills. If the sun were the proper cause of cold and darkness, it would be the fountain of these things, as it is the fountain of light and heat ; and then something might be argued from the nature



of cold and darkness, to a likeness of nature in the sun ; and it might be justly inferred that the sun itself is dark and cold ; but from its being the cause of these, no otherwise than by its absence, no such thing can be inferred, but the contrary. It may be justly argued that the sun is a bright and hot body, if cold and darkness are found to be the consequence of its withdrawalment ; and the more constantly and necessarily these effects are connected with and confined to its absence, the more strongly does it argue the sun to be the fountain of light and heat. So, inasmuch as sin is not the fruit of any positive influence of the Most High, but on the contrary, arises from the withdrawalment of his action and energy, and under certain circumstances, necessarily follows on the want of his influence, this is no argument that he is sinful, or his operation evil ; but on the contrary, that he and his agency are altogether holy, and that he is the fountain of all holiness. It would be strange arguing indeed, because men never commit sin, but only when God leaves them to themselves, and necessarily sin when he does so, that therefore their sin is not from themselves, but from God : as strange as it would be to argue, because it is always dark when the sun is gone, and never dark when he is present, that therefore darkness is from the sun, and that his disc and beams must be black !”

“ And as,” to use the language of another able writer, “ in this way, we can account for the existence of all manner of evil ; so we can thus understand how it is possible for God to bring about whatsoever comes to pass, without his being the actor, or maker, or instigator, of any thing that is not perfectly good. When he does not cause light, there will be darkness. When he does not make peace, there will be evil. The darkness takes place according to his appointment, with the same exactness and certainty, as if he actually created it ; and so does evil of every kind. What he determines to permit, knowing perfectly the circumstances and dispositions of every agent concerned, will as infallibly come to pass, as what he determines to do himself, or to effect by his own positive influence. The king’s heart, and the rivers of water ; the waves of the sea, and the tumults of the people, are in the hand of the Lord, to all important intents and purposes, if it be only true that he restrains them, or lets them run ; stilleth them, or suffereth them to rage, just as he sees fit.” His intelligent moral creatures act with entire freedom, and are the real authors of all their evil volitions and actions ; and he who “ knows the end from the beginning” who



perfectly foreknew all the evils they would commit, if left to themselves,—determined to permit them thus to sin, and yet to set bounds to their wickedness, and to overrule it for his own glory.

Now, unless it can be shown that the infinitely wise and almighty God, could not create finite agents, who, if left to themselves, would freely, and yet certainly act, in a manner which he infallibly foresaw they would act, there is no force in the objection that we are now considering. And this never has been and never can be shown.

We maintain, therefore, that God has created finite agents, possessed of certain faculties and placed in certain circumstances, who, he foreknew would, if left to themselves, commit certain moral evils; and that he determined, for wise and holy ends, to permit them to do, what he foresaw they would do freely, when thus left to themselves.

If we are asked, why did the Almighty will into existence, creatures who he foresaw would thus certainly, yet freely, sin? Or why did he determine to permit them thus to act, when he might have either prevented their existence, or else by his almighty power and grace have preserved them from sinning, as he did the angels that never fell? We reply, that the difficulty suggested, lies with equal, if not greater force against Arminianism. That sin does exist, cannot be disputed; that it was foreseen, is admitted; that it might have been prevented, cannot be denied: then let them explain, on their principles, why it was not prevented?

What does Wesley, himself, say, in his sermon entitled "God's love to fallen man," relative to the fall of Adam? "Was it not easy" (he inquires) "for the Almighty to have prevented it?" And answers, "It was undoubtedly in his power to prevent it; for he hath all power both in heaven and in earth. But" (he adds) "it was known to him at the same time, that it was best on the whole not to prevent it."

Now, I submit, whether this difficulty, thus confessedly pressing against both systems, is not capable, on our principles, of a much more full and satisfactory solution. For we not only say, as Wesley does, that "God knew that it was best, on the whole, not to prevent the first sin of Adam," but we add, that, knowing this, he determined not only to permit that, but all the sins that he foresaw would follow from it, and to limit and overrule the whole for his own most excellent glory.

I have dwelt thus long in reply to this first objection,

(that our doctrine makes God the author of sin,) because the principles involved in it, if satisfactorily and rightly settled, will furnish a ready answer to others, which rest in fact on the same foundation; as will appear as we proceed.

2. It is objected that the fore-ordination of all things destroys the free agency of men, and of course their personal responsibility.

This objection, you perceive, we have already anticipated and refuted, by showing that God is not the real author or efficient cause of the evil volitions and actions of men, which are freely originated and performed by themselves, although they are certainly foreknown to God and take place in exact accordance with his permissive will. And unless it can be shown, that the Almighty had not power to create finite agents, who, acting freely, should nevertheless act in accordance with his infinite foreknowledge, there is no force in this objection:—and this, I repeat it, never has been and never can be shown.

If we held, that God is the real author or instigator of the evil actions of men, then indeed would their free agency and responsibility be impossible! But we maintain just the contrary; that men originate and commit, freely, their own evil volitions and actions, without being forced or influenced by the Almighty; and acting thus with entire freedom, they are justly responsible for all their wickedness.

I frankly admit that there is a difficulty in reconciling the permissive and directive fore-ordination of the evil actions of men, with the perfect freedom and just responsibility of the agents by whom they are effected. But what then? Does not the same difficulty exist in relation to their certain futuration or foreknowledge, which is not denied by the great body of Arminians themselves? Hence Wesley, in answer to the inquiry, "How is God's foreknowledge consistent with our freedom?" candidly replies, as you may see in his *Miscellaneous Works*, vol. iii. p. 219—"I cannot tell." And yet his followers, with less candour, and much less sense, charge this difficulty upon us, as if it were peculiar to our system! The truth is, that this difficulty presses equally against both schemes; for it consists wholly in the absolute certainty of their futuration: and actions that are infallibly foreknown, are as certain, as if they were fore-ordained. When, therefore, I am asked by an Arminian, How are fore-ordination and free agency reconcilable?

I reply, as Wesley did, when asked, "How is God's foreknowledge consistent with our freedom? "I cannot tell! I cannot tell!"

But because we cannot comprehend or explain, how these truths harmonize, must we therefore reject them as false? We must not reject the doctrine of foreknowledge, because we cannot tell how it is consistent with our freedom: O no! Then, pray, why should we be required to repudiate the doctrine of permissive and directive foreordination, because "we cannot tell" how it is consistent with human liberty?

If each of these truths, separately considered, is established by sufficient evidence, why should they not both be admitted to be true, although we are unable to show their consistency with each other? Do we not act upon this principle in every department of physical knowledge? Are we not obliged to receive every fact upon its own evidence, even when unable to reconcile one with another? Why then should we not do so in relation to subjects which are in their nature so much more incomprehensible, or above our limited capacities?

We have proved, both from reason and revelation, that all things that come to pass, are fore-ordained; and no one denies, for every one is conscious of, his free agency and personal responsibility; and though we are not able to show, how these truths are consistent with each other, they must both be true, because separately proven to be so, and therefore in reality consistent with one another.

If further proof of the facts themselves be demanded, we refer to the infallible record. From many examples, take the few following:—

First, the case of Pharaoh, recorded in the beginning of the book of Exodus. There we are informed, that God appeared to Moses and commissioned him to go to Pharaoh and demand the liberation of his oppressed people: informing him, however, at the same time, that Pharaoh would not yield obedience, until after the infliction of many extraordinary judgments. Accordingly, we find that the Egyptian monarch refused again and again to let God's people go; that while, during the infliction of one and another judgment, he expressed his willingness to yield, he again and again hardened his heart, when respited, and obstinately refused; and that, at the last, though he suffered them to depart, from fear of death, they had scarcely gone, before he pursued after them in order to re-enslave them!

Now that the whole of Pharaoh's conduct had not only been foreknown, but fore-ordained, is indisputable, because it was expressly asserted by God to Moses, and requoted by an inspired apostle for the express purpose of illustrating and establishing this very doctrine: "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose," (or, as it is in Exodus, "In very deed for this cause,") "have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." (Rom. ix. 17. Exod. ix. 16.) And yet, who can doubt the free agency of Pharaoh or question his just responsibility? Is it not again and again declared, that Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people go? yea, did he not himself confess, in the midst of one of the divine judgments, that he had "sinned" against God and his servants, and promise that, if the plague were removed, he would let them go? And were not his personal responsibility and criminality recognized by the holy and righteous one in his final and terrible destruction? Men may cavil as much as they please, but facts are facts, and they cannot get rid of difficulties by denying them!

Take the case of Joseph, recorded in the book of Genesis. There we are told, that God revealed to Joseph his predestined honour and power, in dreams, which, when related to his brethren, so excited their envy and malice, as to induce them, first to plot his destruction, and finally to sell him into Egypt as a slave! Without reciting the series of remarkable events that followed, by which he was exalted, from a prison, to the highest honour and authority which the king of Egypt could bestow, I will merely quote the two following explanatory passages: "And God sent me before you, to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." "And Joseph said unto them, fear not: for am I in the place of God? 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." (Gen. xlv. 7—8; l. 19, 20.) Now who can doubt either the fore-ordination of the conduct of Joseph's brethren, or their free agency in doing what they did? Nay, is it not expressly asserted, that God determined before-hand so to overrule it, as that it should result in the very opposite of what they themselves so wickedly and cruelly designed? "Ye thought," or intended "evil against me; but God meant," or had appointed, "it unto good!"



Let us refer to the crucifixion and death of Christ. That this event was fore-ordained cannot be denied, for it was not only clearly, repeatedly, and circumstantially predicted, but it was absolutely necessary in order to the accomplishment of our salvation. And yet, was it not effected by the free and wicked agency of men? Let the record answer: Acts iii. 17, 18—"And now brethren, I know that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled." 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8—"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Acts ii. 23—"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Acts iv. 27, 28—"For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."

In connexion with the foregoing statements concerning the crucifixion of the Saviour, let us single out the case of one of the individual actors in that awful tragedy, one whose part was the most perfidious and execrable, and see whether his crime was not before ordained, and he the individual, pre-designated as its perpetrator! John vi. 64—"For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him." Chapter xiii—"I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, he that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he." "When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." "He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot the son of Simon. And after the sop, Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly." Yea, if you compare Zec. xi. 12, 13, with Matt. xxvi. 15; and xxvii. 3—10, you will find, that the very price that was paid for



the perpetration of this crime, and the object to which it was finally appropriated, were fore-ordained, and predicted centuries before !

Now that all these evil actions, and many others recorded in Scripture, were pre-determined by the permissive and directive will of God, cannot be disputed ; and yet, it is equally evident that the authors of them were perfectly free and responsible. And if these evil actions, some of them the most wicked that have ever been perpetrated, were permissively fore-ordained, without impairing the free agency or responsibility of those who were the authors of them, why not others ? why not all the wicked actions of men ? Certainly, the undeniable fact, that those specified were so fore-ordained, without impairing the liberty and accountability of the agents, proves conclusively, that fore-ordination is not necessarily, in any case, incompatible with the free agency and responsibility of man ; and, therefore, this objection of Arminians against our doctrine is without force. And now, recollect, this conclusion is not reached by a long chain of reasoning from abstract propositions, but is a simple, obvious, direct, and necessary deduction from many facts, facts which cannot be denied without impugning the integrity of the sacred record, or impeaching the veracity and justice of its holy and righteous Author !

3. It is objected that our doctrine is inconsistent with the goodness and justice of the Almighty.

As this objection is founded on either a gross misapprehension, or misrepresentation of our system, it is only necessary to expose this, in order to its refutation. It rests upon the assumption, that " God made a certain portion of our race," (I quote the language of one of their authors,) " for the express purpose to damn them ;" that they are laid under a " physical necessity of sinning ;" that God is " the author" or instigator of their wickedness ; that they are not free agents, but " mere machines ;" that there is " no provision for their salvation ;" and that their " unavoidable damnation" is an act of " arbitrary sovereignty and power !" Truly, if these premises were held by us, the inference stated in the objection would be as logical, as it is in itself awful and impious !

Need I again reiterate, that, instead of holding such abominable falsehoods, we maintain precisely their contraries ? We hold, that God made all men for his glory, and not any for the express purpose of damning them ; that

sinner, not God, are the efficient authors of their evil actions; that all men are perfectly free, and therefore justly accountable; that the provisions of the gospel are amply sufficient for all, and that all might therefore be saved if they would; and that the final punishment of the wicked is an act, not of sovereignty, but of justice: in other words, that God, foreseeing that all men, if left to themselves, would freely and wilfully sin, determined to pass by some, to leave them to themselves, and then, as an act of justice to punish them for their voluntary wickedness and according to their just deserts. And as he might justly have left all to themselves, and was under no obligation to save any, what wrong is there in his leaving some to their wilful disobedience, or in punishing them for their sins?

That God does permit some men to continue in sin, and then punish them hereafter for their wickedness, are facts which our opponents will not, because they cannot deny. Well then, if there be no wrong in actually permitting the wicked to sin, and no injustice in their actual punishment, where is the wrong or injustice in God's determining before-hand to allow them to sin, and to punish them for the sins, which he foresees they will thus freely and wilfully commit? Surely that which it is not wrong for God to permit and do in fact, it cannot be wrong for God to pre-determine that he will permit and do.

Here let me remind you that there have been two distinct schemes, on the subject of God's decrees, adopted by different theologians: the one is called the supra-lapsarian, and the other the sub-lapsarian scheme.

Supra-lapsarians maintain, "that God from all eternity, designed to glorify his divine perfections, in some objects out of himself, which he could not then be said to have done, inasmuch as they did not exist; and as a means conducive to this end, he designed to create man an intelligent creature, in whom he might be glorified; and since a creature, as such, could not be the object of the display of his mercy, or justice, he further designed to permit man to fall into a state of sin and misery, that so, when fallen, he might recover some out of that state, and leave others to perish in it."—See Ridgely. In other words, they consider the decree of reprobation as absolute as the decree of election, the one as much an act of sovereignty and power as the other, and they regard the creation and fall of man as only intermediate steps in the accomplishment of the divine purpose.

On the other hand, the Sub-lapsarians affirm, "that God considered men as made and fallen, and then designed to glorify his grace in the recovery of those who were chosen, by him, to eternal life; and his justice in them, whom he designed to condemn, as a punishment for their sins, which he foreknew they would commit, and purposed not to hinder; and he designed to glorify his sovereignty, in that one should be an object of grace, rather than another, whereas he might have left the whole world in that state of misery, into which he foresaw they would plunge themselves." (Ridgely.) In other words, that the decrees of election and reprobation, presuppose the creation and fall of man; and that, while the election of some to life was an act of divine sovereignty and grace, that of reprobation, was an act of justice, founded on the foreseen wickedness of the reprobate, which God determined not to hinder, but to permit and overrule for his own glory.

The latter, or sub-lapsarian scheme, is the true doctrine of our church. Thus in the Confession of Faith, chap. iii. sec. 6—7, it is said, "Wherefore, they who are elected; being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ," &c. And "the rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth, or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice."

As we maintain, therefore, that the decree of reprobation contemplates men as fallen and hell-deserving, and is an act of sheer justice, founded on the foreseen wickedness of the wicked, freely and wilfully committed, how can it be inconsistent with the divine goodness and justice? unless, indeed, the actual punishment of the wicked be so! or it can be shown that God was under obligation actually to save all men universally!

If we held with the supra-lapsarians, that the decree of reprobation is as absolute or unconditional, as the decree of election, then there might be some force in the objection; but we hold, as I have just proved, the very contrary. Do our opponents comprehend this distinction? and if so, why do they persist in charging upon us the views of individual supra-lapsarians, which are not in accordance with our confession, and for which, as a church, we are not at all responsible? And the public should observe that, when Pres-

byterians are charged with representing God as arbitrary and unjust, the accusations are supported by horrible extracts from the writings of supra-lapsarians, or isolated and distorted passages from the works of authors acknowledged by us as orthodox; and not by a fair and candid exhibition of our official standards! We cannot, however, be justly held responsible for all the expressions of any individual—not even those of Calvin himself—much less can we be held accountable for the objectionable opinions of those whose theological scheme differs so materially from our Confession and the general belief of orthodox divines! Would Arminian Methodists be willing to be responsible for all the expressions of their individual authors? Would they be willing to endorse all the published opinions of Dr. Adam Clarke? or some of those even of Wesley himself?—Let us test them on the subjects of Episcopacy and Republicanism:—In regard to the former, Wesley says, in a letter to Mr. Asbury, dated September 20, 1788, “How can you, how dare you suffer yourself to be called a bishop? I shudder, I start, at the very thought. Men may call me a knave, or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content; but they shall never with my consent call me a bishop. For my sake, for God’s sake, for Christ’s sake, put a full end to this!”—And with respect to republicanism he writes, in a letter to J. Mason, dated January 13, 1790; “As long as I live, the people shall have no share in choosing either stewards or leaders among the Methodists. We are no Republicans and never intend to be!” Now, would they like to be held responsible for these opinions and expressions and for all the odious inferences which might be drawn from them? Why, then, should they persist in parading, not merely the unguarded expressions of orthodox divines, but the most objectionable opinions of supra-lapsarians, whose theological system differs so much from ours, as if they were in accordance with the real doctrine of the Presbyterian Church!—Let us in fairness be judged by our official standards and the prevailing sentiment of our denomination. In other words, “Let them do unto us, as they would that we should do unto them.”

The truth is, however, that the real difficulty involved in the objection which we have been considering, does not press with greater force against our system, than it does against Arminianism. The difficulty does not lie in God’s determining to pass by some contemplated as fallen and



guilty, and fore-ordaining them to dishonour and wrath, as an act of justice, for their foreseen wickedness—but in his determining to bring those into existence, who, he foresaw, would, freely it is true, yet certainly, continue in sin and thus perish for ever. Now, how easy would it be for us to retort upon Arminians:—Did not God infallibly foreknow who would certainly and eternally perish?—Could he not have prevented their birth?—Why then did he bring them into existence, when he infallibly foreknew that they would perish for ever? Surely they are born to be damned, for their damnation is infallibly foreseen and might have been prevented, by his hindering their existence! Creating men who, he infallibly foresees, will perish, is not that, in effect, “making men for the express purpose to damn them!” Surely this is inconsistent with the divine goodness and “represents the most holy God as worse than the devil, more false, more cruel, and more unjust!” Thus you perceive that the same inferences may be drawn from their doctrine of foreknowledge, that are as falsely deduced from our doctrine of fore-ordination!

That there are difficulties connected with this subject—and difficulties which press equally against both systems, no intelligent, thinking man will deny; nor is it possible for any man perfectly to resolve them. While, therefore, we can see and do maintain, that there is no unrighteousness in God’s suffering men to sin, and that their punishment, on account of their free and wilful wickedness, is strictly just;—we are obliged to resolve the election of some to eternal life, and the creation of others, who, it was foreseen, would sin and therefore perish, into the mere sovereign will and pleasure of the Almighty:—and we are constrained to cry out with the apostle, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”—or to say, with the Saviour, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

4. It is objected that, according to our doctrine, the damnation of the non-elect is not only infallibly certain, but absolutely unavoidable!—That there is no provision for their salvation—that the invitations and promises of the Gospel cannot, in sincerity or truth, be made to them—and that they could not be saved if they would!

This objection I have already substantially answered; but as it is one of the most popular and injurious, suffer me to

add a few more words in reply. I will not repeat what I have said concerning the free agency of men, upon the assumed denial of which this objection partly rests. But I have a word to say in regard to the provisions of the Gospel, the sufficiency of which, this objection also falsely takes it for granted that we deny.

Now, observe, we hold, as cordially and as fully as any, to the infinite merit of Christ's obedience and death, and believe that it is, in itself considered, abundantly sufficient for the salvation of the whole world of mankind.

True, there is a sense in which we maintain that Christ died only for the elect;—that is, as the death of Christ does not in fact effect the salvation of any to whom it is not applied by the grace of God through faith—and as it was not the intention of God to apply it in fact to any but the elect—therefore we say that, in this sense, Christ died for his covenant people only.

What then? Do our opponents believe that all men are actually saved by the death of Christ? Do they not limit its saving efficacy to those to whom it is actually applied, or, in other words, to those who believe? They must either turn Universalists and affirm that by the death of Christ all will be certainly and actually saved, or else, when they declare that Christ died for all, they must mean, just what we believe as well as they, that the death of Christ is, in itself considered, infinitely meritorious, and therefore sufficient for the salvation of all mankind. The only difference between us on this point is this—they hold that none but those who believe will be saved by the death of Christ;—we affirm, in addition, that those who are elected shall most certainly believe: but, so far as the merit of Christ is concerned, there is no difference between us—for we hold as well as they, that it is, in itself, sufficient for all the race.

Ah, but, says one—with what sincerity can the offer of the gospel be made to those, (supposing it to be in itself sufficient for all,) whom God has determined to leave to themselves and who he foresees will certainly reject it? I answer—to say nothing of the ignorance of men in regard to the secret purposes of Jehovah—the determination of God to leave them to themselves, does not affect the freedom of their choice, nor prevent them from embracing the offers that are made.

But might not the same objection be urged—and urged with just as much show of reason—against the universal

offer of the gospel as made by Arminians? Does not God infallibly foreknow, who will certainly reject the offer? With what sincerity or truth, then, it might be asked, are such invited and exhorted to embrace the gospel!

The truth is, however, that this objection has no force as it respects either the foreknowledge or the permissive decree of God. For no man can tell what God secretly foresees, or what He has permissively fore-ordained; the agents all are perfectly free—they might (by the grace of God,) accept the offer of mercy if they chose—and would assuredly be saved if they did. Jesus knew, from the beginning, who they were that believed not:—was He insincere in His offers of mercy to them? Could he not say with sincerity, “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life?” How then can we be charged with insincerity in offering the gospel to all, when we do not know who will, or will not accept the offer? when we believe that the provisions of the gospel are amply sufficient for all—and that the secret purpose of God respecting the ultimate destiny of individuals, whatever it may be, does not in the least degree impair their freedom or hinder any from accepting the invitations of salvation?

Lastly, it is objected, that our doctrine either discourages all effort in seeking salvation, or encourages presumption; and that its legitimate and practical tendency is licentious!

I should be ashamed to repeat the same things in reply so often, were it not obvious that all their objections, however multiplied numerically, rest in fact upon the same false assumptions and unwarranted allegations—however varied they may be in form; and therefore we have little else to do than again and again to expose and repudiate these in order to their refutation. It cannot, however, be necessary, after all that I have said, to say much in reply to those presented in the form of the last objection.

I will merely remark therefore, that our doctrine cannot be said justly to discourage proper efforts in order to salvation—because no man can know what the secret will of God may be respecting his future destiny; because the secret purpose of God, whatever it may be, does not in the least impair either his personal liberty or responsibility; and because the Almighty has ordained the use of means, as necessary to the attainment of salvation, and has graciously promised to save, “whosoever believeth.”

Nor can our doctrine, rightly understood, encourage pre-  
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sumption : For as the election of God's people includes the proper use and effectual application of all the means that are necessary to entitle and prepare them for heaven ; so no man can have any assurance that he is one of the elect, except as he does sincerely and truly believe in Christ and is obedient to the divine commands.

And with regard to the accusation, that our doctrines tend to licentiousness, we need only refer to impartial history, or challenge a comparison with our accusers ! In this connexion I might cite the testimony of many who, though they were not themselves Calvinists, have yet gratuitously borne the strongest testimony in favour of the talents, the learning, the piety, and the usefulness of those who were.\* In truth, the advocates of our doctrines have

\* The following remarks by a distinguished divine of the Church of England, who professes not to be a Calvinist, are as just as they are striking. " Does not this opinion (of the immoral tendency of Calvinism,) in a great measure originate from a mistaken conception of what Calvinism is ? Those who would impute all these practical evils to the operation of Calvinism, appear to suppose that the belief of the Calvinist, by which he admits the doctrine of personal election, necessarily includes also an assumption of his own election. The Calvinist, properly so called, is no enthusiast. He believes, indeed, in the eternal purposes of God as to the salvation of the elect ; but as to the hopes of his own salvation, and of his individual interest in those purposes, he professes to obtain it by the evidences which he possesses of his being himself in a renewed and justified state. He knows from the word of God that the saints are ' chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit,' no less than ' the belief of the truth ;' that they are ' predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ,' and ' created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them. And hence he feels that it is only so long as he experiences the sanctifying influences of the Spirit in his own heart, so long as he himself in some degree reflects the image of Christ, and walks imperfectly indeed, but yet sincerely, in good works, that he can have any scriptural grounds for concluding that he is one of God's elect, and will have his portion with the saints. This is true Calvinism. And where is the tendency of this doctrine to make its followers slothful or confident, negligent of the means of grace, or inattentive to moral and relative duties ? While the practical evils which Calvinism is charged with producing, are so prominently and studiously exhibited to view by many of its opponents ; let us not omit, on the other hand, to do justice to this calumniated system, nor forget the abundant good which it is not only capable of accomplishing, but which it actually does accomplish. I have no doubt, but that some of the sublimest feelings of pure and spiritual delight which are ever experienced on earth, are those of which the Calvinist partakes, when in his secret retirement with his God, ' the Spirit bearing witness with his spirit,' and shining on his own gracious operation on the heart, he meditates on



been more frequently charged with undue exactness and austerity in Christian morals, than with their opposites;—so that their “blue laws” are still the theme of ridicule or hate—and the very phrase, “pūritanical,” is with many synonymous with undue preciseness! No, no, whatever may be thought of the truth or falsehood of the doctrines themselves, no intelligent and impartial man can affirm, that their advocates have been less moral or religious—less patriotic or evangelically useful, than their

the wonderful and unspeakable privileges to which, through Christ, he sees himself entitled; and resolving all the blessings which have been already received, or are prepared for him hereafter, into the eternal purpose, and electing love of God, his Father, and absorbed in a holy contemplation of the divine counsels and perfections, he lies prostrate before the throne of grace, in deep humiliation, and with overwhelming joy. I do not say that others have not their peculiar feelings of spiritual delight; but these are his. And does he rise from such communion with his God, without enlarged desires and resolutions of more seriously devoting himself to the divine favour, of more decidedly overcoming the flesh and the world, and of more faithfully doing the will and advancing the glory of his Lord and Saviour? Facts and experience reply to this inquiry. Among no denomination or description of professing Christians, is there to be found a larger portion of humble, pious, and devoted servants of God, persons of a truly Christian spirit, zealous of good works, and exemplary in every duty and relation of life, than among those who hold the Calvinistic tenets. I am sure that your observation and your candour will fully justify this statement. And, therefore, so far as this system is to be judged of by its actual effects, I think that, on a candid reconsideration of the subject, you will be induced to abandon your objection, and to admit that it was founded on an erroneous and partial view of the subject.”

A very able and learned foreign lawyer, the author of the article Predestination, in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, though he is evidently no friend to Calvinism, makes the following declaration:—“There is one remark which we feel ourselves bound in justice to make, although it appears to us somewhat singular. It is this: that, from the earliest ages down to our own days, if we consider the character of the ancient Stoics, the Jewish Essenes, the modern Calvinists, and the Jansenists, when compared with that of their antagonists, the Epicureans, the Sadducees, the Arminians, and the Jesuits, we shall find that they have excelled in no small degree, in the practice of the most rigid and respectable virtues; and have been the highest honour of their own ages, and the best models for imitation to every age succeeding. At the same time, it must be confessed, that their virtues have in general been rendered unamiable by a tinge of gloomy and severe austerity.” For the extracts in this note, see Dr. Miller’s Tract on “Presbyterianism;”—which contains, it may not be amiss to say to those who have not read it, an able defence not only of the Doctrines, but also of the Government and Form of Worship of the Presbyterian Church.

opponents. They may not be as ostentatious, or fanatical as some others, but they have quite as much moral principle, and exhibit quite as much uprightness and piety, in their domestic and social relations, as their neighbours.

Having thus answered the objections which have been brought against our doctrines, let me now proceed to state, in a very brief and summary manner,

V. Some of our objections against Arminianism.

I have not allowed myself time to do more than merely to state them; because my main object was, not to expose the system of our opponents, but to defend our own. With this explanation, I remark

1. That we object to the system of Arminianism, because we are fully convinced that it is contrary to the Scriptures; which, as we have shown, do not only positively teach our doctrine, but expressly deny the truth of theirs. Thus, 2 Tim. i. 9—"Who hath saved' us, and called us with a 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." And again, Rom. ix. 16—"So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

2. We object to their system, because we think it derogatory to the divine perfection. To suppose that the Almighty has no fixed plan in the government of the world, and no certain control over his moral creatures:—to suppose that to Him any thing is contingent, and that His designs are perpetually liable to be changed and frustrated by the uncertain volitions and actions of men, appears to us incompatible with the divine perfection, if not with the very idea of the existence of a God!

3 We object to their system, because it is inconsistent with the doctrine of a special or particular providence, which the Scriptures so clearly and fully reveal; and according to which, although "a man's heart deviseth his way, yet the Lord directeth his steps."

4 We object to their system, because it is inconsistent with the certain accomplishment of the plan of Redemption: for, according to their principles, it was quite possible that the death of Christ might have been wholly in vain, and not a single soul saved!

5. We object to their system, because it is derogatory to Christ, and detracts from the glory which is due to God

as the Author and finisher of faith. For just so far as faith, or any good works of men, are considered as the condition or moving cause of their election unto life, just so far do they detract from the merit of Christ and the infinite love of God which are the sole cause of our salvation.

6. We object to their system, because it engenders spiritual pride and self-boasting. Arminians cannot consistently say—"We are what we are by the grace of God;"—nor join in unison with the saints in heaven,—“not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the praise!”

And lastly, we object to their system, because it is inconsistent with the experience of all true Christians, and with the highest duties of devotion. Every real child of God is conscious that he is what he is, by the grace of God alone—that if he had been left to himself, he would never have turned from sin to holiness—and that, even now, if not restrained from sin, and constrained to holiness, by the power and mercy of God, he would fall and perish! Hence in all his devotions he humbly acknowledges these truths and gratefully ascribes the whole of his salvation to the free, unmerited grace and compassion of the Lord. It is remarkable that, however Arminian our Christian brethren may be in argument, they are invariably Calvinistic in their prayers! And one of the best methods to test the truth or falsehood of their system is, to request them to pray; and if they have any real experience of the grace of God, they will immediately confess and acknowledge every truth that is essential to our system: not, indeed, every false inference from, or horrible distortion of, our doctrine, but every truth which its enlightened advocates regard as essential to the system. Now, we object to preach a doctrine which contradicts the universal experience of Christians, and which even its advocates are obliged to abandon when they approach a throne of grace! We prefer to teach and pray alike—to tell the people, just what we are constrained to confess to the Searcher of hearts!

I had intended, before concluding, to show what practical use and improvement ought to be made of the doctrine of God's decrees: but having already occupied so much of your time, I must leave the subject to your own reflections.

I will merely add, that there is nothing in our system, rightly understood, to discourage any from seeking and obtaining salvation. For the decrees of God are unknown to

us, and do not in the least degree impair our personal freedom and responsibility. And as the provisions of the gospel are amply sufficient for the whole race, and its invitations and promises are freely addressed to all—without exception or reservation—it is the duty as well as privilege of every one to embrace them and live.

And finally, as the purpose of election unto life eternal, includes and implies the proper use and effectual application of all the means that are necessary to entitle and qualify the elect for heaven,—every professing Christian should endeavour to use those means assiduously, and so “make his calling and election sure”—sure to his own mind, to the joy and comfort of his own soul. And if he has the Scriptural evidence of his having been effectually called—if he is now walking by faith, and in obedience to the commands of God, then let him adore and praise the Author and finisher of his salvation, and be strengthened and encouraged in duty, by the absolute assurance of his ultimate and glorious reward. 2 Pet. i. 10—“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

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“GRACE! ’tis a charming sound!  
 Harmonious to the ear!  
 Heaven with the echo shall resound,  
 And all the earth shall hear.

Grace first contrived the way  
 To save rebellious man;  
 And all the steps *that* grace display,  
 Which drew the wondrous plan.

Grace first inscribed my name  
 In God’s eternal book;  
 ’Twas grace that gave me to the Lamb,  
 Who all my sorrows took.

Grace led my roving feet  
 To tread the heavenly road;



And new supplies each hour I meet,  
While pressing on to God.

Grace taught my soul to pray,  
And made my eyes o'erflow ;  
'Twas grace that kept me to this day,  
And will not let me go.

Grace all the work shall crown,  
Through everlasting days ;  
It lays in heaven the topmost stone  
And well deserves the praise."

THE END.