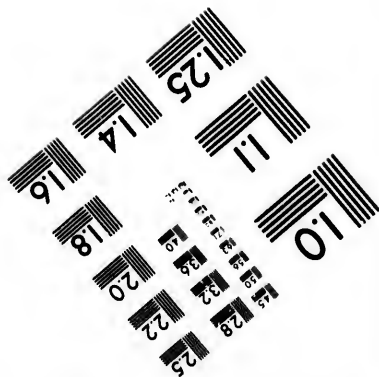
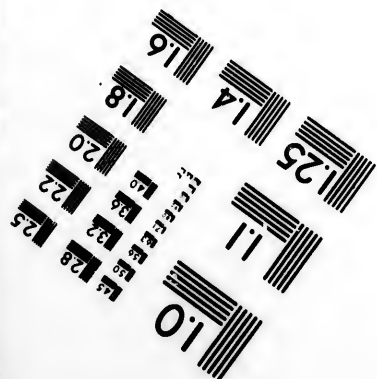
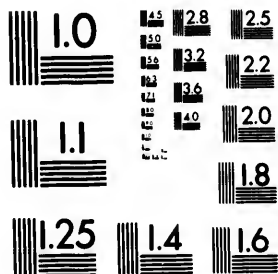


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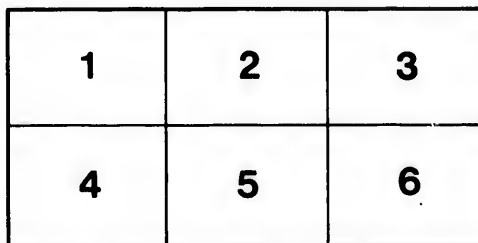
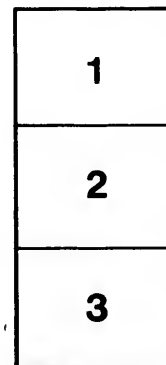
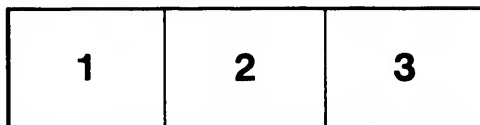
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A DISCOURSE  
ON PREDESTINATION  
OR  
THE DECREES OF GOD.  
BY REV. GEORGE CHRISTIE.

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A DISCOURSE  
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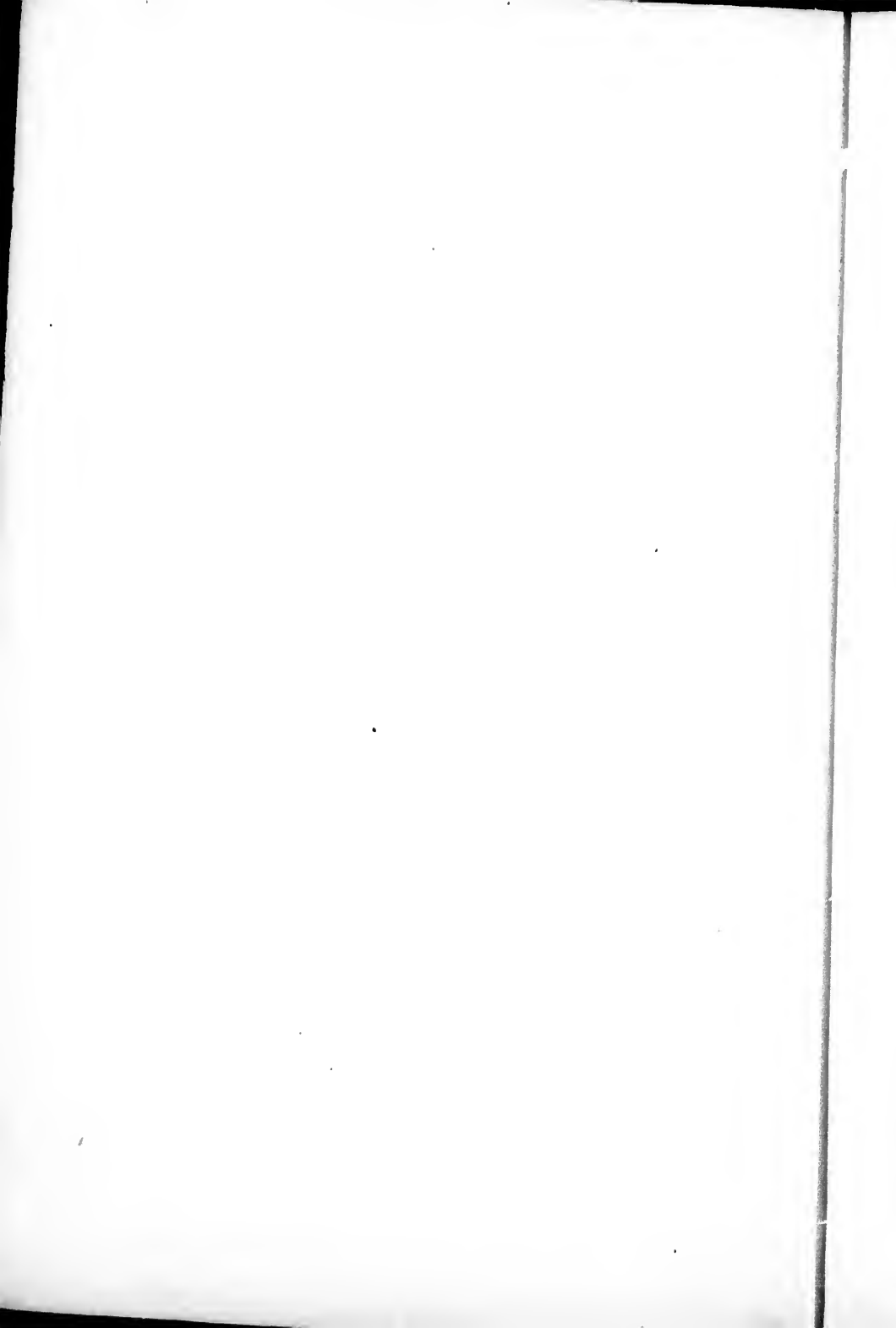
Preached in the Presbyterian Church,

YARMOUTH, N. S.,

BY REV. GEORGE CHRISTIE.



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## P R E F A C E .

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THE subjoined discourse on the "Decrees of God" was not, originally, intended for publication. It is one of a series which the Author, more than a year ago, delivered to his own congregation, for the purpose of explaining the leading doctrines of the "Confession of Faith." A part of the congregation at that time, expressed a desire to have it published; but he declined. Circumstances, however, have since changed considerably; so much so, that he deems it his duty to give it to his congregation and the public, in such a way that they may have it for reference, as occasion may demand. The change of circumstances which he feels has taken place, and which, to his mind, calls for some public vindication of Calvinism has been forced upon his attention; first, by the fact that certain parties have of late, been very diligent in their efforts to *run down* Calvinism—and particularly that venerable work, the Westminster Confession of Faith. For this purpose, they have been retailing very freely all the old charges which the opponents of Calvinism used to bring forward—some of which the reader will find examined in the following pages. Secondly, some of his congregation have been taunted with having a minister over them who does not, and *dare not* preach the doctrines held by the Presbyterian Church. This charge has even been extended so as to comprehend Calvinist ministers in general. The publication of this discourse, therefore, is intended to be a refutation of that calumny. It will also show that neither he, nor any others who truly hold the doctrines of the Confession of Faith, preach such dreadful things as are falsely attributed to them, by some whose great object seems to be to bring Calvinism into contempt.

The author of this discourse can truly say that he has never found pleasure in dwelling upon the differences which exist among professing Christians. He has rather preferred to give a prom-

inence to the great leading truths of the Gospel system—in which all Christians are supposed to agree. But if any have, from this circumstance, been led to conclude that he was ashamed of Calvinism, or afraid to defend the system known by that name, they are mistaken. Of this the following discourse ought to be taken as an evidence. At the same time, he thinks he can appeal to those who have sat under his ministry, as witnesses that, in stating and defending his own principles, he has endeavoured to do so without any offensive or harsh references to the opinions of those who differ from him in their views of divine truth. The following discourse, he flatters himself, will not be looked upon as involving a departure from this course: although he cannot help thinking that some of the arguments and conclusions may not be very palatable to those who differ very widely from him upon the subjects discussed.

Should any of this class of readers find that the system of doctrine, known by the name of Calvinism, is not after all such a repulsive thing as it has been represented; and particularly, if they find, as he believes they will, that it is sustained by the voice of inspiration, he trusts that they will do becoming homage to the truth; and cordially embrace a system which gives honour to God and provides for them a good and sure foundation to rest their hopes upon for time and eternity. “Buy the truth and sell it not.” “Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?”

The headings introduced into the discourse are intended to facilitate reference and have been inserted since the MS. left Mr. Christie's hands.

## OF GOD'S ETERNAL DECREE.

### Confession of Faith. Chapter III.

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“To do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.”—ACTS iv. 28.

THE subject before us is one of acknowledged difficulty. It has occasioned much earnest discussion—and not a little unpleasant feeling, on the part of those by whom the doctrine is denied. Like most others however, on which Christians differ, it may be presumed that those who have rejected, and railed against the doctrine of the divine decrees, have not rightly understood the sentiments of those whom they attack so fiercely. We have a striking proof of this, in the fact that the opponents of what is called Calvinism, when left to state their opinions in their own way, have often admitted the very points which they had condemned, when stated by others, in language a little different from what they employ. The reason for this is plain enough. In the first place, the doctrine of Election or Predestination is certainly taught, in some form or other, in the Scriptures. Now, those who take exception to the statement of that doctrine, as given by others, are laid under the necessity of declaring what *they* believe to be the true meaning of such passages; and, in order that they may satisfy others, they find it necessary to make one truth of the Bible harmonize with another. For the most powerful argument which an opponent can use against any doctrine is, to show that it contradicts other parts of the word of God—or is at variance with other principles which necessarily force themselves upon our belief.

This, as you are aware, is the very argument which has been brought against those who teach the doctrine of the “Divine Decrees.” If, say they, “God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass,” He is the author of sin—for there is much that is sinful occurring in our world. Or

again, "to hold that God has elected some to everlasting life, while others are left to perish in their sins, is virtually to charge God with injustice. But, from the known character of God, it is certain that he cannot be the "author of sin," neither can he be "unjust." And thus, the opponents of this doctrine think they have set the question at rest. Now, I freely confess that no doctrine can be received as true, that leads to such consequences. This however is the very point in dispute. For, while I believe that God has decreed all that comes to pass; and also, that he has elected some to everlasting life, I do not see that the doctrine involves any such consequences. And I am the more convinced of this, when I read what the Scriptures say on the subject.

But, while I deny the consequences which the opponents of this doctrine profess to discover, I turn to them, and ask them to state and defend their system; or, which is about the same thing, I ask them to show how they can deny the doctrines just stated, and at the same time believe in God as a Being infinite in power, wisdom and goodness, and the moral Governor of the Universe. Are we to believe that the events which occur in this world are under the control and direction of a Being both wise enough, and powerful enough to govern all? or must we rather submit to the conclusion that the occurrences which we witness are merely accidental. The heathen, with their imperfect views of the true God, worshipped a goddess which they called Fortune; and they represented her as blind, to signify that she was guided by no fixed rule, and distributed her favours at random. But surely no believer in the "true God" will entertain thoughts so derogatory to his character. It is neither philosophical nor scriptural, to suppose that this world of ours is subject to blind chance. Certainly it is not the doctrine of our Saviour, who declares that "even a sparrow doth not fall to the ground without his knowledge"—that "even the very hairs of our head are all numbered." Neither could such a doctrine afford us any satisfaction, or impart to any of us a feeling of security. We all want to feel that an almighty Ruler presides over the world—directing and controlling. If it were not so, we could not feel safe. Whither could we flee

in the hour of danger? We would cease to pray, believing prayer in such circumstances to be useless.

#### PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE.

But while it must be evident that God rules, and that he must have the control of every event, it is no less certain that he must act according to some particular plan. No wise man acts without a plan, previously formed. Random action indicates weakness or rashness—neither of which may be attributed to God. Surely he knows beforehand what he will do. Yes, the Scriptures teach us that the being who is infinite in knowledge had, from all eternity, a perfect foresight of every event that ever has, or ever will take place in this world—and formed his purpose, with this knowledge fully before him. “Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world.” This purpose too, is represented as unchangeable. “The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thought of his heart to all generations.” He is “of one mind.”

But while this self-evident principle is pretty generally admitted, there are many who seem unwilling to carry it through to its necessary consequences. To suppose that God is not the Governor of the Universe, and of our world in particular, they would consider impious. But, after all, there are many who hold the doctrine in its general form, and yet reject the application of the doctrine to particular cases. They talk of a “general providence,” but not such as has reference to particular events. God, according to them, takes care of the species, but not of the individuals that compose the species. Now this is simply absurd. How can the species be taken care of, if the individuals be neglected? The Providence of God extends to all his creatures, and all their actions. To us, it often *seems* as if there were the utmost uncertainty respecting the actions of men in this world. A very trivial circumstance may, not only decide the conduct of an individual in a particular case, but that again may have a bearing on a thousand other depending events. The whole chain of occurrences may, to a thoughtless observer, appear to be accidental—but, after all, there is nothing accidental in the case. They were all certainly known from eternity,—and the general

view of Providence was formed, in view of all. The "Confession of Faith" expresses the doctrine in the following words. "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." The framers of the "Confession" believed that the decree of God has reference to the actions of men, as well as to every event which takes place. Although man, in acting, may feel that he has the choice of twenty different courses, it is not true that, to the divine mind, there is any uncertainty. While it is certain that man is a free agent, and that he acts according to his own free choice, it is also true that God has "foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." I admit my friends, that there is a difficulty here which our reason cannot, in its present imperfect state, attempt to solve. But, on the other hand, we cannot reject the doctrine now laid down, without involving ourselves in other and greater difficulties. Unless it be true, it is impossible that even God could foresee the future, or be able to govern the world. All the future would be utterly dark and uncertain. But this we know from the Scriptures is by no means the case. Jehovah, is represented, by the Prophet as "declaring the end from the beginning," Is. 46. 10. And he thus unfolds the future, as something which he has carefully considered—and having done so, formed his purpose. "My counsel shall stand, and I will  
 o all my pleasure." The Scriptures not only teach us that God has a perfect knowledge of every future event, but that there is an *infallible certainty* respecting their occurrence. "New things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. The numerous prophecies recorded in the Scriptures, prove that events still future, are as certainly known to God as those which have already occurred. Think for example, of the things which were foretold concerning Christ. Many of them appear to be comparatively unimportant. Yet every word is fulfilled. The same is true respecting other prophecies. According to the word of the Lord, Israel must go down into Egypt. "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and

shall serve them ; and they shall afflict them four hundred years." (Gen. 15. 13.) Here an event is foretold and to the divine mind it must therefore have been infallibly certain ; but yet how many circumstances are there connected with the fulfilment of these words which, to all but God, appear purely accidental. As man would say, Jacob happens, on a particular day, to send Joseph to visit his brethren. These brethren from causes which appear accidental, are angry with Joseph. They determine to kill him, but they *do not* kill him. Had this occurred, the chain of providences would have been broken. They cast him into a pit. Just then, a caravan of Midianite merchants passes by. It is going to Egypt. This might occur once or twice a year, but it occurred just at this time. A happy thought, as Joseph's brothers would say, has just occurred to them. We will sell Joseph, and be rid of him, for ever. And so we might go on with this history, so life-like in every part. All the parties are free agents, in what they do ; and they are all, without knowing it, fulfilling the divine purpose. As Joseph said afterwards to his brethren, " God did send me before you to preserve life." " 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 !!"

#### DECREE OF GOD AND FREE AGENCY.

The usual objection to this view of the subject is that, " if the Decree of God has reference to men's actions, they cannot be viewed as free agents ; and of course, whatever moral quality the action may possess, man can neither be the object of praise nor blame." My friends, were this objection sound, the doctrine could not be scriptural. But let me assure you that it has no better foundation than the distorted and prejudiced views and feelings of those by whom it is brought forward. They have charged us with making God the author of sin—and this too with such unmeasured confidence in themselves, as to leave the impression that they believe themselves specially called upon to vindicate the divine perfections which, as they think, must be denied or overlooked by Calvinists. But we cannot confess judgment in the case. We plead " not guilty." The framers of the Confession were careful to guard against any such false and God-dishonour-

ing views. Their language is, "God so ordain as that neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of the second causes taken away, but rather established." The Apostle states the case in as clear a manner as it can be presented, when referring to the decree of God in reference to the crucifixion of Christ. "By the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," Jesus is delivered to suffer and die. The purpose of God, however, could only be fulfilled when Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Greeks and the people of Israel, were gathered together, *for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.*" Here then, we have the decree of God recognized by inspired Apostles, and the very classes referred to who are embraced in the divine purpose. But who will dare to maintain that Christ was not put to death by "wicked hands"? None of the parties are laid under *necessity* to act as they do in the case, yet they become the agents in the wicked work. They take, they crucify Him. In all this they are fulfilling the divine Decree—and yet, in all this they are sinning. "By wicked hands" they put Him to death.

Look again at the case of Judas—that man of whom Christ said, "Good were it for him if he had never been born." In him the Scripture was fulfilled, "he that eateth bread with me the same hath lifted up his heel against me." Christ made frequent references to the fact that one of his disciples would betray him. He spoke of it too, in such a way as to impress upon all a sense of the greatness of the crime. Yet it was plainly foretold that he would do as he did—foretold more than a thousand years before, and, with such distinctness that, had the event not taken place, discredit would have fallen upon the inspired record. It could not however be said that Judas was laid under a necessity to act as he did. He was, in every respect, a free agent. Now you may call this "foreknowledge", or a decree—I care not which. It amounts to the same thing in either case. A thing cannot be "foreknown," if there be uncertainty whether it shall take place or not. But, both from the fact of the divine omniscience, and from the circumstance that events have been foretold, hundreds or thousands of years before they occurred,



we are sure that they are unchangeably fixed. But then, on the other hand, it is just as certain that the decrees of God do not interfere with man's freedom of action, nor relieve him from accountability. I do not pretend to offer you any solution of the difficulty, which some profess to find, in reconciling God's decrees with man's free agency. Admit that the difficulty is one which we cannot remove—and what then? We have just put the doctrine of the divine decrees among the many deep yet solemn and important doctrines taught us in the Bible.

I beg you to remember, however, that the difficulty just referred to is theoretical, rather than practical—and this consideration is to us of the greatest moment. *There is no real practical difficulty* in the way of reconciling these two apparently contradictory principles. The human conscience finds no hiding place in the doctrine that "God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass." Though preached to the Jews, in connection with a view of their sin in crucifying "the Lord of Glory;" it had no effect in warding off the painful conviction that they were very heinous sinners. Probably, the prophecies which foretold the base and execrable conduct of Judas occurred to his mind, after he began to reflect upon the foul deed of which he had been guilty, but this had no effect in removing the sense of guilt from his soul. No, he was well aware that the decree of God had not taken away from him that freedom of action which constitutes man an accountable being, and, when he sins, a guilty being—and therefore he is overwhelmed with remorse.

#### THE DIVINE CHARACTER INDICATED.

Our Confession says, "God does so ordain whatsoever comes to pass that no violence is offered to the will of the creature." The Bible teaches us that when the conduct of man is good and acceptable to God, he acts under the influence of that divine spirit from whom all right dispositions proceed; and he is moved to this, by such motives as are suitable to lead to such a result. In reference to sinful actions, there is the same freedom of choice. *There is the act of the will.* God does not, however, present motives or employ means to lead the person to do wrong. "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God can-

not be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." God does however, when it seems right to himself, withhold those restraints whereby the person might have been kept back from the commission of crime; or those gracious influences which might have inclined the heart to a contrary course. This is part of the punishment which overtakes the sinner, in a present world. In this way too, God often chastises his people for their sins. "My people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up to their own heart's lust: and they walked in their own counsels." "My spirit shall not always strive." Ephraim is joined to his idols: let him alone." Oh, there is something unutterably sublime and impressive in the subject before us. Contemplating God as the Ruler of the universe, we lose ourselves in wonder, love, and praise. "It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers." "He doeth according to His will, in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." Alas for human pride that hath stumbled at the doctrine of God's Decree!—not because we do not find it in the Bible, but because some people suppose it cannot be reconciled with the teaching of other parts of the inspired volume. But, my friends, remember that, although human reason may stumble at this doctrine, the human conscience never does. We *feel* that we are accountable, when we do wrong; and this meets the only *practical* difficulty in the case.

From the remarks already made, it may occur to you all that, while the events which take place in our world have been decreed by God—and to Him are not even uncertain, they are not accomplished by the *immediate interposition* of divine power. On this point our Confession says "the liberty and contingency of second causes is not taken away, but rather established." When God would bring about such events as tend to the promotion of his glory or the happiness of his creatures, he usually accomplishes his purpose through the use of means. "Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved." And again, with respect to sinful actions, there must also be an agent upon whom the guilt of the action rests. We *do not* "make God the author of sin," as the opponents of this doctrine charge upon us. God permits sin in

the world, determining at the same time, to overrule even this, for his own glory. And moreover, God, in permitting it, is just doing what he had purposed to do. He could have prevented it. He could have taken away the power of sinning from the guilty person. But he did not. And in all this God is acting according to a plan previously formed. And this is "foreordination."

#### DIVINE DECREES NOT THE RESULT OF FOREKNOWLEDGE.

But there is another point, clearly connected with what I have now brought before you, to which I request your attention. Some people say, "God has foreordained certain things, because he *foresaw* that his creatures would act in a certain way." This however, is not the scriptural view. On this point the Confession says, "Although God knows whatever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions; yet hath he not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions". To suppose that God ordains certain things because he foresees them as future, would be to make the purpose of God dependant on the will of the creature. Now this, I presume, will at once strike any person who reflects, as both unscriptural and unphilosophical. It is, in the first place a denial of God's supremacy. According to that supposition the will of the creature is supreme. God determines in a certain way, because he foresees that the creature will determine in such a way as to render it necessary. This is just a reversing of the words of scripture. In the Bible, God is represented as saying—"My counsel shall stand, and I will do all *my* pleasure"; but if this doctrine were true, we would have to reverse God's words, and say, the counsel of the creature shall stand and God will do his pleasure. But "the counsel of the Lord it shall stand." "It is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

#### NO "CHANCE" IN THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT.

From the statements already made, it must, I think, be evident to all that that the affairs of our world are not subject to chance. That there must be, over all, a presiding and controlling power. And that even when men are boldly and daringly trampling upon God's laws, they are not thwarting

the general purposes of the Supreme Ruler—although they may by their conduct, be bringing punishment upon themselves as transgressors. In other words, while God *permits* wicked men to do many things that are wrong and displeasing in his sight, even that endurance of evil, or suffering it to come to pass, is a part of the divine plan, formed from all eternity, in accordance with which God accomplishes the counsel of his will. We have farther seen that, as God is infinite in knowledge, he must know all things past, present, and future. But to know a thing infallibly, while it is yet future, implies a *certainty that it shall occur*. And this certainty of the event taking place cannot depend on the will of the creature, but upon the will of God.

At the same time, it is evident both from our own consciousness of freedom in choosing or willing every action that we perform, and also from the word of God, that this previous purpose or determination in the divine mind does not interfere with man's "freedom of will." All this is so plain that, it strikes me, were it not for prejudice against certain words that have been used in expressing the doctrine—such as "God's decrees, Fore-ordination, Election, Predestination" &c., it would be believed by all who admit the perfections of God. The doctrine may be objected against as a mystery—but if the circumstance of its being mysterious should be made a reason for rejecting it, on the same principle we might refuse our assent to many other doctrines of the Bible—such, for example, as the Trinity, or the two-fold nature of Christ. But in reference to all it were more dutiful and becoming to adopt the sentiment of the Apostle, "How unsearchable are his ways, and his judgments past finding out."

#### DIVINE PURPOSE NEITHER CONTINGENT NOR ARBITRARY.

The Decree of God with respect to the everlasting state of angels and men is called, in the Scriptures, "Predestination." The meaning of this word, in the original, is to mark out beforehand. The Apostles, in speaking of those who were the objects of God's eternal love, and of the purpose formed respecting them, adopts this word to express his idea. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." "Moreover whom he did

predestinate, them he also called," &c, Rom. viii. 29, 30. In Eph. i. 11, believers are spoken of as "predestinated" to the enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance. And this too "according to the counsel of God's will," and agreeably to the divine purpose. If we enquire why God has bestowed such unspeakable mercy upon any of our fallen race, the Scriptures furnish the answer. "For his own glory." "To the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. Some people tell us that God has predestinated or foreordained some to everlasting life, "because he foresaw that they would believe, and afterwards, live holy lives." God says, "I do not this for your sakes, oh, my people, but for my own name's sake." In order that this purpose of God might be effected consistently with the divine character, he gave his own son to suffer and die in their stead. Hence the Scriptures, while referring to God's sovereign grace in the salvation of his people, take notice of the connection between the purpose of God and the mediation of Jesus Christ. "He hath chosen us in Him (Christ) before the foundation of the world." There is then a distinction made between those who are thus "appointed to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ," and the rest of the human family. Those who are not "ordained to eternal life" are "appointed to wrath." You are not, however, to conclude that this is a merely *arbitrary* distinction made between one class and another. The opponents of the doctrine just stated, are indeed very anxious to fasten this view of the subject upon us. They charge us with holding that "God has created millions of souls to damn them eternally." We hold no such doctrine. Our Confession says that "a part of mankind God was pleased to pass by and ordain to dishonour and wrath FOR THEIR SINS." In opposition to the doctrine charged to us, we hold that those who perish eternally are doomed to this as *sinner*s: "for their sins." We believe that the atonement of Christ was abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world—and that those who perish are neither lost on account of the insufficiency of the provision for the salvation of sinners, nor as the result of any arbitrary decree of God—but for sin which remains unpardoned because they would not come to Christ. The Confession says, "They never tru-

ly come to Christ and therefore cannot be saved." And on the other hand, those who are ordained to everlasting life, are not so distinguished, on account of any inherent goodness. Neither was it because God "foresaw that they would believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and bring forth the fruits of righteousness." Naturally, they are no better than others. Their goodness is not the *cause* of their salvation. It is the result of that distinguishing grace of which they are made the partakers. God says to such, ye were chosen in Christ, that ye should be holy and without blame before him in love." "Elect through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

OBJECTION, "SAVED NO MATTER HOW WE LIVE."

It is often said that, if the doctrine of "Election" be true, men need not trouble themselves about their salvation—for, say they, if we are elected, we will be saved, no matter how we live: on the contrary, if we are not elected, we cannot be saved do what we may. This objection, my friends, is common in our day. It is not however new. It seems to have been as old, at least, as the days when the Scriptures were written: and we are glad to know that the Holy Spirit speaking in the Word has anticipated and answered it. In Rom. ix. 19, the Apostle, having previously set forth the doctrine of Election in very plain language, ending with this very striking observation, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth," proceeds at once to notice an objection, in substance, the same as I have just referred to. "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?" And here is his short but cutting answer, "Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" To satisfy those who make this objection, if there be any such present, I would remark that, according to the words of the Confession already quoted, "In God's decree the liberty and contingency of second causes is not taken away, but rather established." While God decrees the event he also decrees the means by which the event is to be accomplished. Would the husbandman say, if God has decreed that I shall have a crop I will have it, whether I use the means or not? Would the sick man say, if God has decreed that I shall recover, I will recover, whe-

ther I follow the prescription of the physician or not? Did Paul after express information that God had decreed to save every soul in the ship, admit that it was all the same whether the sailors remained to work the ship, or left her to be drifted about according to the will of the waves? No, my friends, people do not reason in this way in other matters, where the event is as infallibly decreed as in the matter of the salvation of the soul. Neither does the man who really believes in the doctrine of Election act in this way when he desires to obtain salvation. Here is the doctrine of Election or Predestination as taught by Christ—and taught as distinctly as in any other part of the Scriptures. Let us see if he admitted that salvation was equally sure whether we use the means or not. “All that the Father giveth me *shall come to me*; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” To come to Christ is to believe in him, and rest in him for salvation, and this is represented as essentially necessary, although, by the decree of God, they have already been given to Christ.

Thus, we have seen that the acceptance of this doctrine does not involve any such consequences as the enemies contend for. And we can safely appeal to facts, to sustain our views. No class of Christians is more diligent in the use of the means of grace than those who are called Calvinists. The doctrine of Election becomes a powerful incentive to diligence in seeking salvation. And then again, those who have already been made partakers of Christ find, in the doctrine, that kind of assurance which nerves them for the discharge of the duties which devolve upon them—and at the same time imparts new joy and strength. Nay, it is evident, from the constitution of the human mind, that these people must become the most effective labourers in the vineyard of the Lord. They alone can be depended on when circumstances arise of a peculiarly trying nature, for they ever hear the voice of Jesus saying, “fear not, I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by my name. Thou art mine.” “The people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits.”

From the statements already made, it must, I think, be evident to all that Election does not secure the salvation of men—“let them live as they may.” And, though the opponents of the doctrine charge such consequences to us, we say they can

neither sustain themselves, by an appeal to the word of God—nor by reference to the conduct of those who believe the doctrine—nor yet by an appeal to the general laws which govern human beings. I know, my friends, that the doctrine is taught in the Bible—but I also know that it does not give the slightest encouragement to those who are disposed to live in their sins. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

OBJECTION, “THE NON-ELECT CANNOT BE SAVED DO WHAT THEY MAY.”

But again, it is objected by Arminians, that if the doctrine of Election be true, “the non-elect cannot be saved, do what they may.” Now, this is no part of the doctrine of Election. This is merely an inference which our opponents insist on deducing from the doctrine, as held by Calvinists. We of course deny it. We say the inference is not warranted. But still, our opponents reiterate the charge. In order therefore to settle the matter in dispute, we must appeal to a higher authority. Let us go at once to the “Great Teacher.” We ask, Did Jesus our Saviour and our Teacher say, “No man can come to me except the Father who hath sent me draw him.” We find he did. We find, moreover, in a following verse, that “every man” whom the Father draws *does come*. “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 vi. 44, 45. We will now approach the “Oracle” and ask another question—“When did God make up his mind to *draw* those who come to Christ”? Hear the response, “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” “The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thought of his heart to all generations.” To those very persons who are drawn to Christ, God says, “Yea I have loved thee with an *everlasting* love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.” Surely this must be “electing love.” All are not drawn. That is certain, for all do not come. But every man whom God draws *does come*. Moreover, they cannot come of themselves—for Christ says, “No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent



me draw him." This argument, my friends, I take to be conclusive. Consequently, while the opponents of Calvinism endeavour to strengthen themselves at our expense, by charging upon us a doctrine from which the human heart revolts, and which we *do not hold*—though they insist that we do, and *must* hold it, we turn upon them and say—You attack us on a point where it is evident, that our doctrine is the same as that of the Great Teacher himself: and now, therefore, we leave you to settle the charge with Him.

#### CHARGE OF PARTIALITY.

That special grace is bestowed upon those who are enabled to believe is denied by the opponents of Calvinism—though it is difficult to imagine how any person who reads the Scriptures can fail to find this doctrine there. They say, "If this doctrine be true, then God is 'partial.'" This objection, my friends, is made in ignorance of the motives that may influence the All wise and perfect Jehovah. Partiality means a capricious and unreasonable preference of one before another. But who will presume to apply such language to God? May God not appeal to us and enquire, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?" Must the master of the feast be charged with partiality because, for reasons that satisfy himself, he does not constrain any or all of those who were invited, and who refused the invitation? Ought those who are wilfully rejecting the offers of mercy now, to complain because God does not compel them to do what they are unwilling to do? No. If God is pleased for reasons that are satisfactory to himself, to pass by some of those who are refusing the offers of mercy, and to constrain others to accept he is not partial. The sinner who is rejecting salvation feels that he is a free agent. His conscience tells him that he is rebelling against God. And he knows that he is chargeable with the reproach of the Saviour—"Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." Oh my hearers, come now to Christ, while you are invited. Ask him to subdue your stubborn natures, and to make you a "willing people in the day of his power." He will not reject you. And, when you are brought to the exercise of faith in him, you will know that you are of the elect. And then

may you find unspeakable comfort in that very doctrine which hitherto may, possibly, have been to you a stumbling block and an offence. Remember also, as taught in the "Confession," that the decree of election will not save you, unless you make use of the means of grace, and come to Christ, in the exercise of that repentance and faith which lead to holiness of conduct, and devotedness to the service of God. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." "As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose 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." Sec. 6.

#### CHARGE OF HARSHNESS.

I am aware, my friends, that the doctrine which I this day bring before you is by many denounced as a harsh and discouraging doctrine. But it is, most assuredly, taught in the Bible. It is one to which the proud heart does not readily submit. But, in this respect, it just occupies the same position as many other doctrines of the Bible. It should not be viewed as either harsh or discouraging. It cuts off no penitent sinner. It throws no obstacle in the way of the salvation of any one of you. True, it tends to humble the pride of man, and to exalt God to his true position as a sovereign and independent Being. It teaches man his true position as a sinner, who has no *claim* upon the mercy of God; but still it encourages him to draw near to the mercy seat, with hope and confidence. It is in fact, the doctrine, in the spirit of which, the true Christian prays, when he draws near to the "throne of grace." Yes, to the "Throne of Grace"—and, using those words, I am reminded that, as words of inspiration they do, in fact teach the same doctrine. We have in them the idea of a sovereign—else, what need of a throne? He acts as a sovereign, giving freely—giving to those who are undeserving—giving as an expression of his nature, for he is gracious; and not saving in view of any merit which belongs to the creature.

## VIEWS OF THE REFORMERS.

This doctrine, as you have seen, was held by those who drew up the Westminster Confession of Faith. That which I have now laid before you was, substantially, the doctrine of all the Reformers. When men, at the time of the Reformation, began to read the Bible for themselves, they all believed that they found this doctrine in the Scriptures of Truth—and this is certainly a very cogent proof that it is there. For a great deal more reliance is to be placed in the circumstance that good and wise men have been led to the same conclusions by a candid perusal of the Word of God, than upon the bare fact that the ingenuity of man has afterwards succeeded in casting discredit upon a doctrine so disagreeable to the carnal mind, as is the doctrine of Election. Of a truth, it has cost the opponents of this doctrine many a weary effort to reason it out of its place in the word of God—but after all their mighty efforts, there it is, as firm as the projecting cliff against which the sea has been rolling and roaring for six thousand years. It is said that Galileo, when forced to recant his doctrines respecting the solar system, could not be restrained from murmuring, “*and yet it moves.*” A solemn and interesting proof of the supremacy of truth, which can neither be slain nor silenced. Just so, the opponents of the doctrine now under discussion have laid at it, with every imaginable kind of weapon. They have tried argument; they have tried ridicule; their fancies have painted some hideous apparitions, upon which neither God nor man could look with approval—and then, they have tried to alarm the world by crying out, “These are the progeny of that horrible doctrine.” But although, by means such as these, they have succeeded in enlisting for a time the feelings of the thoughtless multitude against the doctrine—they never could, and they never *can* blot it out of the Bible. After every objection has been heard, mankind will still be forced to acknowledge that the doctrine is a part of that truth which God has revealed to man. It is confessedly an unpopular doctrine, and is scouted by many; but, that it is not an unwholesome or unprofitable doctrine, may be proved by reference to the conduct of those professing Christians who receive it as a part of that formula of truth by which they stand. And my

conviction is, that when the Christian church shall have received a new spiritual baptism—from which she shall come forth as the bride of Christ purified, there will be even a more distinct recognition of this doctrine, than heretofore. Not indeed, as it has been held by many who call themselves Calvinists, but who do little more than caricature the true doctrine. **AND NOT BY ANY MEANS**, as it is often charged upon us by our opponents. But as held by the Reformers, and as still maintained, in some sections of the Christian church.

**PREDESTINATION NOT PECULIAR TO PRESBYTERIANS.**

It is generally considered, now-a-days, that the Confession of Faith can only be looked upon as the confession of the faith of Presbyterians. But I reminded you, already, that the Confession was an English production—and was a true representative of the prevailing religious belief in England two hundred years ago. In proof of this, I could appeal to history. But it is not necessary to go so far. The “Articles of the Church of England,” a production of that period, will bear out my statement. Look for example at the 17th, which treats of “Predestination and Election.” “Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby, (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation, *those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind*, and to bring them, by Christ, to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God’s purpose, by his spirit working in due season; they through grace obey the calling; they be justified freely; they be made sons of God by adoption, they be made like the image of his only begotten son Jesus Christ; they walk religiously in good works; and at length, by God’s mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.” “The godly consideration of Predestination and our election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons &c.” *ibid*—“for curious and carnal persons lacking the spirit of Christ to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God’s Predestination, is a most dangerous downfall where-by the devil doth thrust them into desperation, &c.” *ibid*.

Here, my friends, you have substantially, the same view of Predestination and Election that I have been presenting to you.

Rev. John Wesley even, did not reject this doctrine entirely. These are his words, "with regard to unconditional election, I believe that God has unconditionally elected some persons to many peculiar advantages, both with regard to temporal and spiritual things; and I do not deny that he has unconditionally elected some persons to eternal glory (though I cannot prove it is so.)"

#### ARGUMENT FROM THE NEW CREATION.

If we had no other proof than what arises from a view of man's state as a fallen being, I would consider it impossible to get rid of the doctrine of Election. He has lost the image of God. He is in a state of spiritual death. That faith by which he is saved is the gift of God. John Wesley as quoted by Rev. Richard Watson in his *Biblical and Theological Dictionary*, is represented as holding the real old and Orthodox doctrine, that "Faith is the gift of God." No man is able to work it in himself. *It is a work of Omnipotence. It requires no less power thus to quicken a dead soul, than to raise a body that lies in the grave. It is a new creation; and none can create the soul anew but He who at first created the heavens and the earth. It is the free gift of God which he bestows not on those who are worthy of his favour, &c., but on those who, till that hour, were fit only for everlasting destruction.*" page 687. The reason for this quotation will appear as we proceed. In our "Confession," the elect are said to be "effectually called unto faith in Christ, by his spirit working in due season" This is the same doctrine that our Saviour teaches in John vi. 44. "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Man is consequently represented in the Scriptures as spiritually dead. He is blind, and "receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him." Before he can believe in Christ, he must be "quicken" and made spiritually alive. He is opposed to religion; and in order to be saved, he must be made willing in the day of God's power. Now all are not thus drawn to the Saviour and led to accept of salvation—but those who are saved *are* drawn, as appears

most distinctly, from many passages in the Bible. And if language has any meaning, the same great truth is held forth in the quotations already made from the Articles of the Church of England, and even from the words of John Wesley.

Now I ask, was it a mere accident that God, by his spirit "drew" those who come to Christ; or was he in so doing acting according to a purpose previously formed? "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." Acts xv. 18. God knew from all eternity, and designed from all eternity, what he would do. His purpose toward them is therefore an "eternal purpose," for "He is of one mind."

The opponents of the doctrine of Election see this difficulty, and they try hard to get rid of it—but, in my opinion, their labour is in vain. Some of them, for example, say that God does just the same for one man as another—that every man has sufficient grace given him to enable him to accept of the offers of mercy—or, to use one of their favourite expressions, God has put all in a "salvable state." But there are serious objections to this theory. Are we indeed to understand that *in all*, a work is wrought that deserves to be called a "new creation" which, as John Wesley says, must be before they can believe? Have all experienced a quickening power, as much above the power of man as that which is necessary to raise a body from the grave? I believe as John Wesley asserts, that such a power is created in the case of every one who is enabled to exercise faith in Christ—but I cannot believe that those who still live in their sins and reject the Saviour have ever felt that power.

#### CERTAINTY OF CHRIST'S REWARD.

But again, this theory makes the will of man supreme; and upon the uncertainty whether any will choose to accept of salvation or not, is made to depend that glory which God the Father and God the Son are represented as deriving from the salvation of an innumerable company of the fallen race of Adam. *On the will of man* is suspended that hope which supported Christ in the endurance of what was necessary to procure the salvation of his people. For the joy set before him he endured the Cross despising the shame." And the ground of that joy was the hope, in subordination to the glory

of God, of bringing many sons to glory and happiness. Oh my friends, Christ had better security than this, that he should enjoy the reward of his labour, sufferings and death. He had the oath and promise of God attached to the everlasting covenant. "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations." Ps. xviii. 3, 4. "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul to death, &c." Is. liii. 12.

Again, if all men possess sufficient grace already, then there is nothing to ask for in connection with the sinner's conversion. Consequently, prayer for the unregenerate is unnecessary, and therefore prayer for special grace to enable them to believe is absurd. Why ask God to bestow what he has given in sufficient measure already? If all is depending on the will of the creature, God cannot interfere. But the opponents of the doctrine of election feel the duty of prayer for special grace, and they do pray for it as earnestly as Calvinists. And hence, their practice is better than their creed.

#### REPROBATION.

One of the heavy charges brought against us for supporting such doctrines as I have now endeavoured to vindicate is, that they involve the idea of "eternal reprobation." This word is not, so far as I remember, even once used in the Confession of Faith. Our opponents have coined it for us; and then, they have attached to it a meaning altogether at variance with the doctrine of Calvinists on this point. For example, the Cumberland Presbyterians in the United States, who are Arminians, tell the world that Calvinists teach that "God has formed a sovereign determination 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." And you will sometimes find in the writings and language of others who oppose the doctrine of "election," something not very different from this. Now, in reference to those who finally perish, it might be satisfactory to know what the people who utter such charges against others have to say, in stating the doctrine to suit themselves. For remember, that the people who oppose us do not presume to

deny the "foreknowledge" of God. They also know from the Scriptures that a portion of mankind will eternally perish. But how do they connect this solemn doctrine with God's "foreknowledge?" The Cumberland Confession contains language more harsh than what we find in our Confession of Faith, though not quite so bad as what they charge against us. It teaches that "God according to the counsel of his own will, foreordained to bring to pass the damnation of the reprobate, as an event for his own glory." Respecting the lost, our Confession just says, "God was pleased to pass them by and ordain them to dishonour and wrath, *for their sins*, to the praise of his glorious justice." Our opponents represent us as saying that God does this "without regard to moral character, or sin in the creature", but our confession says "*for their sin*."

Again, in a quotation from the Doctrinal Tracts of the Methodist General Conference of the United States, I find these words—"God, according to his own foreknowledge from the foundation of the world, *refused* or *reprobated* all disobedient unbelievers as such to damnation". This awful sentence they represent as founded on "foreknowledge"; but there is no difference between God's foreknowledge and actual certainty—for how can that be certainly foreknown which is not certain to take place? The thing which is *certainly* foreknown must *infallibly* occur. If the event might possibly turn out otherwise, it could not be certainly foreknown. But the "Doctrinal Tracts" speak of God "foreknowing from the foundation of the world". Here then, must be absolute certainty—and the only question is, Who can thus make the future certain? God, and He alone can do this. "I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, *my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure*." Is. xlvi. 9, 10. We shall not quarrel with those who have a natural antipathy to the word "foreordain" and who therefore prefer to express their idea by "foreknowledge". The thing which is "foreknown" must certainly take place—and the thing which is "foreordained" will certainly be accomplished in its time. The idea in the two cases is about the same: only the word used by Calvinists seems to be most scriptural.



Ex. Jude 4th. "Certain men &c, . . . who were before of old ordained to this condemnation."

NO SANCTION GIVEN TO SIN.

But then, it is urged that, if God has "foreordained whatsoever comes to pass", the non-elect are compelled, by the decree of God, to commit those sins for which they are condemned." My friends, if people are allowed when engaged in controversy to put any construction they choose upon the language of their opponents, they may make out of it something very different from what is intended. Now the men who drew up the "Confession of Faith" show, very plainly, that they attach no such meaning as this to the language which they used. They must not therefore be made responsible for the meaning which their opponents attach to the expressions employed. As a general thing, their modes of expression are taken from the Bible, and for these the Spirit of God must be held responsible. However, the framers of the "Confession" have endeavoured to prevent misapprehension of the language employed by them. Here is their own statement. Sec. 1st. "God did 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."

There is then no fatality in the case. Calvinists do not regard the decree of God as extending to every thing, *in the same way*. There are some things which he decrees to effect, by his own agency. And there are other things which he has agreed to permit, or suffer to take place. Now we are not alone in this view. The Rev. Richard Watson (Wesleyan) says, "It is obvious that by nothing can we fairly avoid making God the author of sin but by allowing the distinction between determinations *to do* on the part of God, and determinations *to permit* certain things to be done by others." This is a distinction very readily admitted by theological writers. Dr. Adam Clarke, a very able theologian, but one of the most illiberal and prejudiced men that ever wrote against Calvinism, adopts the views expressed above. But still, true to his instinct as a hater of Calvinism, he refuses to see or acknowledge that this is the very ground on which Calvinists explain the

subject in hand. He says—"All who have read the Scriptures with care and attention, know well that God is frequently represented in them as *doing* what he only *permits* to be done." So, because a man grieved his Spirit and resisted his grace, he withdraws that Spirit and grace from him, and thus he becomes bold and presumptuous in sin. Pharaoh made his own heart stubborn against God, and God gave him up to judicial blindness, so that he rushed on stubbornly to his own destruction. From the whole of Pharaoh's conduct, we learn that he was bold, haughty and cruel; and God *chose to permit these dispositions to have their full sway in his heart without check or restraint from divine influence: the consequence was what God intended*, he did not *immediately* comply with the requisition to let the people go; and this was done that God might have the fullest opportunity of manifesting his power by multiplying signs and miracles and thus impress the hearts both of the Egyptians and Israelites with a due sense of his omnipotence and justice. *The whole procedure was eminently calculated to do endless good to both nations.*"—Clarke's Commentary on Ex. iv. 21st. Now, mark the ungenerous in-sinuation which we have a few lines further on in the same piece. "Nothing in the whole subsequent account authorizes us to believe that God *hardened his heart against the influence of his own grace* that he might occasion him so to sin that his justice might consign him to hell." Now, no intelligent Calvinist ever did hold such a doctrine—and I never met with any person who ever believed such an absurd doctrine as that. Yet it is a fact that *just such opprobrious charges as the above* have, from time immemorial, been retailed, for the purpose of creating prejudices against Calvinistic doctrine.

#### USE OF STRONG LANGUAGE.

But do any ask why Calvinists use such strong language as "purpose", "decree", "foreordain", &c. I answer in the words of another—"Because they wish strongly to repudiate the notion of a *bare idle* permission. They cannot believe that God permits the sinful acts of his creatures, through weakness, negligence or indifference. On the contrary he permits those acts, with a fixed intention to order them to his own glory. Hence we doubt not a decree to permit is as

much an act of the divine mind as a decree to effect. In the second place Calvinists use this mode of expression because the Scriptures employ language equally strong in reference to the same subject. In the third place Calvinists adopt this strong language in reference to the permission of sin because a decree to permit renders the future existence of an event as certain as a decree to effect."

It is easy to find objections to such doctrines as I have this day been endeavouring to state and defend. Generally, the smaller the mind of the person who assumes the attitude of an opponent, the more successful will he consider himself in his opposition. But intelligent Calvinists ask only justice and honest dealing. They are perfectly willing to appeal to "the Law and the Testimony" for proof of the soundness of their views—or, if their opponents desire it, they are willing to appeal to Reason—with this simple stipulation, that no argument shall be made to rest upon bare assumption. Many of the difficulties which present themselves in connection with the decrees of God must of necessity be ascribed to human ignorance. God's counsels stand on higher ground than man can occupy in a present life; and we dare not say that even the light of the future state will raise man to a position in which he will be able to comprehend fully the plans and purposes of Jehovah. "With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?"

#### MISREPRESENTATIONS.

One of the evidences that the doctrines of Calvinism are unassailable we have in the fact that those who deny and reject them are so often attempting to bring them into disrepute by misrepresentation. As for example that "God created millions of people to damn them eternally," "that the elect will we saved let them live as they may"—while the non-elect must be lost do what they may." We are charged with holding the doctrine that men are *physically unable* "bound hand and foot" and yet are punished for not coming to Christ. Now Calvinists are never ashamed to declare what they believe; and for their belief to be held accountable. But they do consider it unbrotherly, and absolutely sinful for their opponents

to charge upon them such doctrines as the above, and many others which might be mentioned—doctrines which they have disowned a thousand times, and which, so far as Presbyterians are concerned, are contradicted by their “Confession of Faith.”

Various objections have been brought forward in opposition to the doctrines of Calvinism. The most important of these I have noticed. You will bear in mind that the most of them rest either on a misconception of the doctrine altogether, or on wilful misrepresentation. But that which especially proves the disingenuousness and prejudice of many of our opponents is the fact that they refuse to listen to an argument in favour of Calvinism, although resting on the very principles to which, apart from that subject, they would freely subscribe. But do people by rejecting Calvinism get rid of the difficulties which, in their opinion, encompass the doctrine of Election, and kindred subjects? By no means. The Arminian who rejects the doctrine of Election, and yet professes to believe in God’s foreknowledge, would find it just as hard to answer the objections that may be brought against his system as the Calvinist does: while, at the same time, his system would be far less likely to foster those feelings which we as creatures should entertain toward the infinite and eternal Jehovah.

#### SHOULD THE DOCTRINE BE PREACHED?

We sometimes hear it said that the doctrine of election or predestination is of no practical benefit, and therefore should never be preached. Such language indicates both ignorance and impiety. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, &” This doctrine in my opinion should not be thrust forward too frequently. On the other hand it should receive its just proportion of attention. At the same time in handling the subject, I have felt the weight of the caution given to us in the “Confession”: and I have tried to act upon it. “The doctrine of this high mystery of Predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care.” Chap. 3, Sec. 8. “As the godly consideration of Predestination, and our election in Christ is full of sweet, pleasant and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the

works of the flesh and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things, as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation, to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God: so for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's Predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the devil doth thrust either into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation." Art. 7, of the Church of England.

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.  
-AMEN.

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