

LETTER III. TO REUMAH.



SUBJECT.

ALL MORAL EVIL OR EVERY SIN COMMITTED BY EITHER MEN OR DEVILS. THE UN-AVOIDABLE RESULT OF GOD'S ABSOLUTE WILL AND SOVEREIGN DECREE.

“ Sin did not slip in unperceived among created beings; no! He whose single thought at once comprehends eternity's unbounded round, ORDAINED ITS BEING, and fixed its limits,” &c. TUCKER. *“ IT has been indeed, OF LATE YEARS, so customary to represent this subject, in the most shocking colors, that I know it will be very difficult to gain attention to any thing that may be said in favor of what is so EXCEEDINGLY UNPOPULAR,”* ALDERSON, A. M. *“ GOD'S will and pleasure, is the womb that conceived, and whence springs every work of the creature, whatsoever it be, whether it be good or bad.”* ARCHER.

Honored Madam,

IN two letters recently addressed to my friend ONESIMUS ON MODERN ANTINOMIANISM, I had occasion to remark that the first thing believed by modern Antinomians, in distinction from modern Calvinists, as a part of the faith once delivered to the saints, refers to the ETERNAL WILL, PURPOSE, OR DECREE of God, on

which subject MODERN CALVINISTS say that Jehovah as a Trinity of persons, wills or decrees the existence of what is morally good, whereas he does not decree or will but *permit* only, the existence of what is morally evil, ANTINOMIANS however, believe that the unerring disposer of all time, events did from ETERNITY, DECREE, PURPOSE, AND ABSOLUTELY WILL, the actual and unavoidable existence of whatever takes place in this world from its creation, to the period when time shall be no longer, in further defence and illustration of which subject, I have now taken up my pen, nor do I know any person to whom I could with equal propriety or pleasure address myself as I can to you. The very signification of your name, the import of which is lofty, sublime, elevated, inspires me hereto, it being in strict accordance with the divine doctrine under consideration, nor is this all, the awakening influence of your animating zeal for GOD'S TRUTH, your uniform devotedness to God's worship, your characteristic attachment to, and anxiety for the welfare and comfort of Christ's ministers, your solicitude for the use of all means calculated to further Christ's cause, your justly admired and ever to be imitated concern for the spiritual welfare of the young in particular, those of your own household, with your *unassuming* and therefore *endearing* manner of administering reproof, giving counsel and encouraging the dejected, not to mention your constant benevolence and tender affection to those who are infinitely dearer to me than my own life, yes Madam, I am bound to say without hesitation, such are my *obligations* and your claims with the knowledge I have of your hallowed thirstings for greater knowledge of truths sublime in their kind, exalted in their aspect, and

elevating in their influence, I say such is my assurance of your desire to grow in knowledge of these things, that I cannot do otherwise than address myself to you on the subject, which now engrosses my attention. **HERE**, however, it will be necessary to inform you, that it is by no means my intention to take up the subject of the divine decrees to the extent which the subject would admit of, indeed, this would be impossible in the narrow boundary of a single letter, nor is it necessary the dispute between modern Calvinists, and modern Antinomians, not being the doctrine of God's decrees in general, (i. e.) in reference to the existence of what is morally good, but whether or no he *absolutely* **DECREES** or **WILLS**, the actual and unavoidable existence of **SIN**, my friend will not, but there are persons into whose hands this letter may possibly come, who may wish to know how it came to pass that I, of all mortals living, should undertake the discussion of such a subject, to which inquiry I might with the greatest propriety reply, because so is my will but not my free will, for that cannot be free which is under the control or bias of another, and that such is the case, not only with me, but with all mortals beside is most plain from the scriptures, Jeremiah says. "*O Lord I know that the way of men is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps,*" were it otherwise, man would no longer be a *subject*, but a *sovereign*, these being the only two characters actually existing in heaven, earth, or hell. My object therefore, in taking up this subject is as you plainly see to give honor and *majesty* to whom it is due by ascribing to **GOD** as the first great cause of **ALL** things, the *exclusive* character of **SOVEREIGN** or **KING** in the legitimate sense of the word whereby **GOD** on the principles of

absolute monarchy (for to him it alone belongs) subdues all the creatures of his power under him, devoting them severally to such purposes as shall best serve his own glory, for as Homer says.

“ It is not good that many heads bear rule in any land ;
Let ONE be SOVEREIGN KING and LORD, and SO DECREES may
stand.”

Is GOD a KING then? yes, he is? Who then are his subjects? are not men, angels, and devils? most certainly they are. To what end then does he design the disposal of them? why to that end which shall conduce most to the promotion of his glory, whose property ALL creatures are, and whom they serve in *all* things, insomuch, that Solomon said, “ *The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the WICKED for the day of evil.*” Pro. xvi. 4. In contending therefore, for this doctrine, I am not acting with an unbiassed (another word for free will) although my will freely acts, it being by the force of truth on my understanding, that my will is constrained or *made* willing to act in fearless conformity to that sovereign injunction, “ He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully; diminishing not a *word.*” Such however would not, could not be my conduct, were I to refrain from a fearless and full avowal, either from the pulpit or the press, of those Scriptures which ascribe the most awful sins ever perpetrated by either men or devils, to the determinate unavoidable counsel or WILL of God. This then is my apology for being found among the daring reasoners who will affirm, that the *original* fall and subsequent conduct of both devils and men, was not only designed but helped forward by the WILL and PROVIDENCE of God, addressing myself thus to

some readers, I should have need to say, suspend your judgment, and spare your censures for a period, this however, is not necessary to you for you know as well as myself, that what Mr. Tucker says is true, which is "that God *requires* us to think of him consistent with what he has revealed of himself in his word. If his word is not our rule we are sure to err." This however is impossible on any other principle than that which ascribes to God the glory due to his character, as the FIRST CAUSE, and the ultimate end of all things, that ever did or ever shall exist in his dominions, from the smallest particle of matter to the most glorious spirit ever created, both alike being his creatures, both alike being prior to their creation predestinated to an unavoidable destiny, both of them acting in direct compliance with the design of their creator, who does nothing in vain, though forsooth it would be far otherwise could such a thing be possible as that which insinuates, the Almighty created creatures without designing each creature his occupation and certain employment, as instruments in their Maker's hands by which he works the accomplishment of those things which shall most conduce to his everlasting glory. You must be aware that I can have no design short of God's glory, in undertaking to give a statement and defence of this Scripture doctrine, this being certain, whoever will seek the glory of God, by the defence of his truth, at the expense of public applause, must secure to himself all that odium necessarily connected with nonconformity to popular evils, and I know those who would urge this as an argument for my desisting from an undertaking that must secure to myself the cross of scandal as long as I live. This, however, to me savours so much of the spirit which

urged Peter to inveigh with vehemence against the Lord's going up to Jerusalem to suffer, that I am truly disposed to treat it with similar regard to that which fell to the lot of the ignorant disciple. Do I believe the Bible to be the word of God? if not, I had better ease me of my present adversaries, instead of increasing them, which I might do with success and gracefulness by becoming an avowed Infidel; modern Calvinists, who in fact are my bitterest, if not my only enemies, having declared both Infidelity and Atheism to be preferable to modern Antinomianism; but I do believe the Scriptures to be the word of God, and it is on the probity of this article of my Christian faith that I also believe the existence of sin to have originated in the absolute will of God; for it is in the Scriptures I have been taught to believe in the existence of a SUPREME BEING called GOD: but where, I would demand, is his supremacy over ALL created existencies, if there exists that single subsistence which does not exist as the immediate consequence of his own will? must it not be the height of Atheism to talk of a God who sees that before his eyes which he wills not to exist? and, on the other hand, must it not be blasphemy, the most profane, to assign, in defence of such an assumption, that though God does not will the existence of sin, yet he permits it, for nothing can be plainer than the fact, that if it could possibly be an impeachment to the Divine character to *will* the fall of man, it must be equally so to the holiness of God to permit the sin which he could have prevented, unless they will allow that God permits its existence for good ends and purposes only; then what becomes of their disbelief of God's *willing* the existence of sin? why it is effectually negatived

by their own concessions. But, with a view to greater perspicuity, I shall propose, in further explanation and defence of the subject, the following considerations :

FIRST. What saith the Scriptures ?

SECONDLY. What saith sound argument ?

THIRDLY. What saith divers great, good, and wise divines ? and then,

FOURTHLY. Examine and refute the objections offered in disproof of the sentiment.

FIRST. What saith the Scriptures, that is, do they, or do they not positively ascribe the existence of sin to the will of God ? or, to use language more consistent with Scripture, to God himself, for to attempt separating between God and his will, may be worthy unmeaning words, but not worthy the character of God, or even good sense. Allow me to add, on this part of my subject, that whatsoever is not of faith is sin : now nothing can be of faith, which is not founded on the word of God. "To the law and to the testimony," therefore, as to the unerring standard of right and wrong, in matters of faith, would I make my appeal, candidly confessing, that if I am not able to keep my standing by this rule, I will give up the field to my antagonists ; but on the contrary, supposing that I succeed in establishing my belief from Scripture, I may rest satisfied that I shall meet with no obstructions from sound argument, or the most orthodox divines. I could have wished that it were as true as it is proverbial, "That the Bible is the religion of Protestants ;" for in that case there would have been no need for my present undertaking ; but, such not being the case, I hesitate not to say, that I go about my work with a good degree of confidence, in reference to the issue of my

appeal to divine revelation, on this controverted point, however much it may be "opposed by the WISDOM OF THE WORLD, OR RUN DOWN BY POPULAR OUTCRY." Cooper on Predestination. "*We must,*" says a popular contemporary, "*separate the exercise of the understanding from the tendencies of feeling and imagination, and be prepared to follow the light of Scriptural testimony TO WHATEVER CONCLUSIONS IT MAY LEAD US, we must train our minds to the hardihood of abstract thinking, and inquire NOT WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ADMISSION—or what other principles will be involved in it, or what shall we think on other collateral subjects; but to one point alone direct our attention, WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURES?*" This, Madam, is an exquisitely beautiful passage, and well worthy our most unqualified attention, as an axiom of infallible rectitude to guide our present inquiries. Here, then, allow me to ask, in defence of the tenet for which I am now contending, was there ever conduct more replete with *envy, malice, lying, cunning hypocrisy, and murderous designs*, than that exhibited by Jacob's sons in their behaviour to their brother Joseph? but to whom, I ask, does Joseph himself ascribe, suppose I say the oversight and chief management, of that bloody tragedy? WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE? "*And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now, therefore, BE NOT GRIEVED NOR ANGRY WITH YOURSELVES THAT YE SOLD ME HITHER: FOR GOD DID SEND ME BEFORE YOU TO PRESERVE LIFE. For these two years hath the famine been in the land, and yet there are five years, in which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. 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.*" This passage is too palpable to admit of explanation by either parties; nor has there ever been an attempt made by good men, however learned, among modern Calvinists to dissuade the English reader from an unreserved reception of it in its most unqualified sense, by a single suggestion against the correctness of its translation from the Hebrew text; what then becomes of the acrimony of modern divines against the faith of saints, indignantly referred to as **ULTRA CALVINISM, HYPER CALVINISM, ANTINOMIANISM?** by which it is *meanly* insinuated that these *Ultra* these *Hyper-Calvinistic Antinomians*, preach higher doctrines than the Bible reveals, which is an assumption the most unfounded; for though Dr. Williams, with his followers, have made it a very great sin, yea, a horrid blasphemy, in Dr. Crisp to say, "*believers need not be afraid of their sins,*" this saying is not to be compared with the instructions taught by Joseph. What I ask would be said of Joseph, had he been heard to utter such sentiments as those into which he took the greatest pains to initiate his brethren? Suppose I say that Joseph had occupied a pulpit in the metropolis of this kingdom, teaching his hearers such sentiments, with a view to their consolation against the grief occasioned by conscious guilt, as he taught his brethren with a view to console their agitated hearts, what sort of a daring reasoner would he be considered? But where shall we find the Ultra-Calvinist or Antinomian preacher, in the present day, who will dare to tell his brethren not to be angry or grieved with themselves, on account of their

evil conduct, assigning, for a reason, that their conduct is not to be regarded as their's, but as God's: and yet Joseph was not satisfied with making a declaration that no Antinomian would ever have thought of, had it not been plainly revealed in the Bible; but he goes much farther than the most consummate Antinomian would ever have expected to have heard from the lip of truth, that is, to affirm, that the *action* was not their's, but God's; this he insisted on without the least qualification or care to *guard* his expressions, lest the Devil and wicked men, or even weaklings in divine knowledge, should make an unscriptural use of it. But why write I about Joseph? no Scripture is of any private interpretation; holy men of old wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and though Joseph, as one of those holy men, spake so pointedly in favor of the belief contended for by Antinomians, as to render the denial of it decidedly infidel; yet there are numerous other instances, where the origin of moral evil, (the most flagrant) is ascribed to the decretive will and purpose of God; for instance, what could be more sinful in the conduct of Eli's sons than their not hearkening unto the voice of their godly father? but why did they not hearken to the voice of their father? "BECAUSE JEHOVAH PURPOSED TO DESTROY THEM," or, as our English translation renders it, "*Because* the Lord would slay them." Was Absalom guilty of moral evil when he went in unto his father's wives, in the sight of all Israel? unquestionably he was: but with whom did Absalom's sinful conduct originate? or, in other words, was *his so doing* the WILL and determinate purpose of God? for answer to this, we have only to read 2 Sam. xii. 11. "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil

against thee out of thine own house, and I WILL TAKE THY WIVES BEFORE THINE EYES, AND GIVE THEM UNTO *thy neighbour*, (the person nearest to thee, which will make the SIN the greater, and the affliction more weighty) *and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun*, For thou didst it secretly, but I WILL DO THIS THING before all Israel, and before the sun."

' " Again I may ask, was it, or was it not SIN the most flagrant which marked the conduct of Shimei, when he CURSED David, calling the LORD'S ANOINTED A " MAN OF BELIAL," inso-much that the righteous ire of Abishai, was justly kindled, seeing he saw no further then the man, even to a desire that he might go over and kill the hypocrite, but what saith David? why " *So let him curse BECAUSE the LORD HATH SAID UNTO HIM, CURSE DAVID; who shall then say, wherefore hast thou done so?* 2 Sam. xvi. 5. 10. The same might be said of David's numbering the people, which was a great sin, for which the people, not David, were greatly punished; and in what did that sin originate? why in the WILL of God, that being his chosen way of bringing evil upon the people against whom the Lord's anger was greatly kindled. " And again, the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and HE (JEHOVAH) MOVED David against them to say, go, number Israel and Judah, 2 Sam. xxiv. 1. The same argument in defence of the ORIGIN of moral evil may be strengthened from 1 Kings xxii. 23. where Micaiah fearlessly tells Ahab, " *Now therefore, behold the LORD HATH PUT A LYING SPIRIT in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee.*" Although the poor despised prophet got only bread and water for his sustenance with smiting and raillery for his clothing and reputation, as do poor despised Antinomians, in these days, neverthe-

less that did not invalidate his testimony. I wonder what my friends, who ascribe the origin of evil to men, would say if they were called upon to expound the following testimony from David! "HE TURNED their HEART to hate his people, and to deal subtlety with his servants." Psal. cv. 25, explained by Deut. ii. 30, "But Sihon King of Heshbon would not let us pass by him. FOR THE LORD THY GOD HARDENED HIS SPIRIT, AND MADE HIS HEART OBSTINATE, that he might deliver him into thy hand, as appeareth this day." For a further exposition of this incontrovertible fact, compare Exod. ii. 16, with Acts vii. 19. with the following reflections in proof, that there was nothing like blind chance or senseless *permission*, distinct from an antecedent absolute decree in all this; for in Gen. xiii. 16, we read that God foretold to Abraham, that his seed *should* go down to Egypt, and that the Egyptians *should* afflict them for four hundred years, which conduct on the part of the Egyptians, as well as the conduct of Jacob's sons must have been the WILL of God DECREED from eternity, as much as the issue designed thereby. Again what does David mean when he prays, "INCLINE NOT *my heart* to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity, &c." Psal. cxli. 4. the meaning of which is, as says Mr. Ainsworth, GOD MOVETH *men's minds by Satan as appeareth*, 1 Chron. xxi. 1, with 2 Sam. xxiv. 1, So Matt. vi. 13." where the Son of God taught his disciples to pray, "LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION." So Psal. cxii. 36, "INCLINE my heart unto thy testimonies and, NOT to covetousness." I refer you to this text as the directest way to find out the psalmist's real meaning in reference to God's *inclining* men's hearts; the import of which is the same in both pass-

ages, or otherwise they have no meaning at all: for proof of this, I need only refer you to the literal etymology of the word with the parallel texts, as Deut. ii. 20. 1 Kings viii. 58. xxii. 22. with Isa. lxiii. 17. "O LORD WHY HAST THOU MADE US TO ERR FROM THY WAYS, AND HARDENED OUR HEARTS FROM THY FEAR," compared with Joshua xi. 20. Isa. vi. 10—12. John xii. 40, each of which are in perfect agreement with the saying of Solomon, Prov. xvi. 1, "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue is FROM THE LORD." The margin very comprehensively explains this passage by rendering it "the DISPOSINGS of the heart, &c." which in fact have been already explained to us from Psal. cv. 25, where God is said to have *disposed* the hearts of the enemy to hate and deal subtilly with his people, which is further explained and substantiated from 2 Chron. xviii. 31, where God is said to have rescued Jehoshaphat by *moving* the Syrians to depart from them. So in Num. xxi. 18. *If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either GOOD or BAD of mine OWN MIND.*" Another passage of Holy Writ equally to the point, is Dan. iv. 17, where it is said, "The MOST HIGH RULETH IN THE KINGDOM OF MEN AND GIVETH IT TO WHOMSOEVER HE WILL, AND SETTETH UP OVER IT THE BASEST OF MEN." Do remark this, and no more hesitate to oppose those who would take the sceptre of universal and absolute dominion from God, and put it into the hands of the *sovereign creature man*, whereas Daniel is not afraid to teach that the "BASEST OF MEN" are set up by the Most High so that not only Pharaoh was set up by God, but Ahab, of whom it

is recorded that there was none like him, who sold himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, this man I say was set up by God, to sell himself to work wickedness ; for the wicked, Daniel says, SHALL DO WICKEDLY and the same may be said of Herod, Nero, and Bloody Mary, whose very names, in consequence of their wicked conduct, chill our blood on every remembrance of them, and yet God set them up, and that, purposely to act the base part which each party did act for, had God set up these base characters, to practice good and not evil, then indeed, the thoughts and designs of God's heart in setting them up, were frustrated and made void, but how would this agree with the testimony of Isaiah, " The Lord, the Lord of Hosts hath sworn saying, surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass, as I have purposed, so shall it stand, for the Lord of Hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it." So as God is said by Solomon, to have a purpose for every thing under the sun, he must have purposed that moral evil as well as good, should or should not exist in the hearts and lives of mankind ; for had not the Almighty willed the existence of all moral evil, as much as all good, he must have willed to the contrary, it being self evident, that Jehovah could not be neuter in a case so immediately connected with his own glory and prerogative. I am quite aware that the opposite opinion to this is the most popular, it being the language of men in general, "*With our tongue WILL WE prevail ; our lips are our own : who is Lord over us.*" " Knowest thou not that I HAVE POWER to crucify thee, and have POWER to release thee ?" So said the proud free willer Pilate to the Son of God, but, " Jesus answered, thou couldest have NO power at all against me, except it were GIVEN

thee from above, &c.” and though Peter had been an eye witness to all the nefarious proceedings of the Jews at the crucifixion of Christ, he was neither afraid nor ashamed to say, “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, BEING DELIVERED BY THE DETERMINATE COUNSEL AND FORE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” Acts ii. 22, 23, with chap. iv. 26—28, “The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord, and against his Christ, &c.” verse 28. FOR TO DO WHATSOEVER THY HAND AND THY COUNSEL DETERMINED BEFORE TO BE DONE.” Christ moreover, is said to be. A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, WHEREUNTO ALSO THEY WERE APPOINTED.” 1 Pet. ii. 8. Jude also says, “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 Lord lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” Surely Madam, I need not enlarge the number of Scripture testimonies already adduced in proof, that GOD DOES ABSOLUTELY WILL, PURPOSE, OR DECREE the existence of moral evil.” “I know,” says a late admirable writer on this subject, “it is the fashion to say, that this and such like representations of truth have no color of authority, save in a few detached passages of Scripture; which, as some would teach you, have been torn from their bases, and wrested from their natural and just meaning, that they may seem to teach

them. Of such tearings and wrestings I must, in this instance, at least, be pronounced guiltless. "Nor am I," as says Mr. Cooper on Predestination "determined to this opinion by the prejudice of education, but because after *careful searches and researches*, I am convinced of the TRUTH of it, upon what appears to me to be the strongest evidence; and the *more I inquire into it, the more I see it to agree with the HOLY SCRIPTURES, AND THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS.*" "When God," says Mr. Cruden, "would show his *absolute* dominion over men, and his *irresistible* power over their *hearts*, he has often recourse to the similitude of a potter, who makes what he pleases of his clay; sometimes a vessel of honor, and sometimes of dishonor." "Wherefore, as saith Isaiah, wo unto him, that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth, shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, what makest thou?" "Is it not lawful for me to do what I WILL with mine own?" Matt. xx. 15. "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his POWER (sovereignty) known, endured with much long suffering, the vessels of wrath FITTED (margin MADE UP) TO DESTRUCTION; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had AFORE PREPARED UNTO GLORY, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" Rom. ix. 22—24. Whereas "WHOM HE WILL HE HARDENETH." It may serve the purpose of John Wesley and modern Calvinists to affirm, "That even the heathen could say,"

"No evil can from thee proceed,
Its only suffered, NOT DECREED."

This, however, will not serve the purpose of those who, instead of flying to *heathen* authors, decide on going by the word of God, as the oracles of their faith, which word, instead of teaching, as is insinuated in the above lines, insists most positively and plainly—

“ *That evil does from God proceed,
Not merely suffer'd but decreed;
'Twas not by chance or MAN'S FREEWILL,
That either Eve or Adam fell;
For God in council had decreed,
By medium of that sorry deed
To raise a remnant of their race
To bless, distinguish'd by free grace :
Whereas “ the rest” of human kind
By REPROBATION, were consign'd,
By medium of man's awful fall,
To quit for hell this earthly ball.”*

“ This,” says Luther, “ is the highest degree of faith, to believe that He is merciful who saves so few, and condemns so many; to believe Him just, who of his own will, makes us necessary objects of damnation.” Thus far, my dear friend, I have showed you, “ that which is noted in the Scripture of truth,” and though there should be “ none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince;” seeing he does, I am satisfied, and under this sweet impression, I shall proceed, according to my promise, to show **SECONDLY**, not only what saith the Scriptures? but what saith sound argument in favor of **GOD'S WILLING OR DECREERING** the existence of moral evil or sin. Here, however, in particular, to avoid prolixity, I shall excuse myself from conformity to studied formality: *first* of all, then, suffer me to remind you, that “ God is *one*,” and on this account, his mind must be *one*, not only in point of immutability and un-

changeableness, which is the sense in which Job mentions it, (Job xxiii. 13) but as opposed to that which is complex; and on this account, I conceive, that the Almighty must have willed by a determinate counsel, the fall of man and angels, and of course all the sin and immorality which followed, for one of these two things he must have willed, either man's continuance in the state in which he was created, or his fall therefrom. Now, that Jehovah did not either *will*, *purpose*, or *decree*, man's continuance in his state of primeval holiness, is too palpable to admit of proof, FOR "The Lord of Hosts hath sworn, saying, surely as I have *thought*, so SHALL it come to pass as I have purposed, so SHALL it stand." Isa. xiv. 24. Solomon also says, "There are many devices in a man's heart, nevertheless the counsel of the Lord shall stand." Pro. xix. 21. "There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel, against the Lord." Prov. xxi. 30. "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" Dan. iv. 35. "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times, the things that are not yet done, saying, MY COUNSELS SHALL STAND, AND I WILL DO ALL MY PLEASURE." Isa. xlvi. 10. Surely these texts contain sufficient argument to satisfy any unprejudiced inquirer after truth, that God did not will either man's or angel's continuance in their condition of primeval holiness, therefore he must have willed, decreed, and purposed their fall therefrom.

Indeed it was, I remark, *secondly*, unavoidably necessary that God should *will* the existence of moral evil, by the fall of his holy creatures; that

God did so will, I have fairly demonstrated, nor am I less able to prove that he could not have done otherwise, it being impossible that the Almighty should act unworthy himself; we have only to ask, then, what was the ultimate design of all God's conduct? was it not his own glory? and will not this be effectually secured, by the introduction of moral evil into the world, in a way that it could not have been secured by any other method of divine procedure? To suppose otherwise is to sully divine attribute, by insinuating, that another method, more worthy the divine glory, might have been decided upon in God's counsel, for the consummating his glory in the superlative degree. The fall of both angels and man, therefore, was a divinely appointed and infinitely wise method of distinguishing between perfectly holy, yet mutable creatures, and their immutably holy Creator. Do not contraries best display each other? How, then, could the wide difference between a mutable creature, and an immutable Creator, be *better* (I say better, for it would be an impeachment of the divine wisdom, to suppose he had not adopted the best method of glorifying himself,) developed, than by God's willing that his mutable creatures should be consigned over to no better keeping than their own mutable perfections, the issue of which was sure and certain to be their fall from their first estate. Hereby I conceive God declared to all eternity his special glory and independent supremacy, as the alone I AM, or immutable JEHOVAH. What think you furnishes elect angels with matter for constant thankfulness and devout humility, before the throne of God? Were I requested to give an answer to this important question, I should say, the constant recollection of their native abilities, by which

they would as assuredly have fallen, as did their fellows, had they not been secured by divine favor, through which alone, and not the exercise of their mutable perfections, they continued in their first estate, in preference to those which fell; both elect and reprobate angels being created of the same nature, the former must have been beholden to a power superior to mutable nature, for their preservation in their created uprightness. "God cannot," says the late Rev. T. E. Vaughan, "in consistency with himself, create a being, which *simply, as a creature*, shall be immutable; that is, superior to temptation, which is, in fact, the test of mutability; if so, there will be in every such being a chord, which, by receiving a certain touch, vibrates into discord, and such a touch *must*, in due time, be given to it. Self-love, thus touched, became pride in the angels; love of the creature, thus touched, became idolatry in man." And where, I ask, is the wisdom of God, in giving existence to such mutable beings, if not to develope his own glory, as that supreme being who is alone IMMUTABLE.

None will deny, I should think, who allow the Bible to be divine, that Pharaoh was the subject of sin, the most flagrant toward both God and man, nor can any deny, without denying the truth of revelation, that his whole conduct was designed by God as a medium for the furtherance of his own glory. "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, (margin made thee stand) that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." From this passage we see plainly that Pharaoh was just such a character as is mentioned by Peter, even one who stumbled

at God's word, being disobedient, "WHEREUNTO ALSO HE WAS APPOINTED," for which end, the Almighty, as the Potter, whose sovereign prerogative it is to do as he likes with his own clay, tells his servant Moses, "I WILL harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. BUT Pharaoh SHALL NOT hearken unto you that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments." Exod. vii. 1-4. Of what unhallowed effrontery, then, must those professors be the subjects, who, in face of all this Scripture evidence to the contrary, designate it a "sentiment of horrid blasphemy, coming from hell, and leading thereto again, as opposite to truth as God is to the Devil," (all of which sweet Christian-like epithets have been inscribed on the character of my ministry) to say God wills and decrees sin, whereas divine revelation positively affirms not only that God "raised Pharaoh up," but that his so doing was the effect of an antecedent "purpose," the end of which was, as says JEHOVAH, "THAT I MIGHT SHEW MY POWER IN THEE, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE DECLARED THROUGHOUT ALL THE EARTH." Some persons, and good men too, in their expositions of Holy Writ, have urged that Pharaoh was raised up of God as a type of the Devil; but, be this as it may, it is evident that he was a great sinner, nor did his sins originate, as some modern divines would have it, by the mere permission of God, but by the determinate counsel of God, called his purpose, nor is it less certain, that the purpose of God, in which Pharaoh's extraordinary character originated was eternal and absolute, for in that purpose

was involved the glory of God's name throughout all the earth as a being of uncontrolled power and impeachable sovereignty. Here, then, let me submit to your notice three questions. Can God act unworthy himself? doubtless you will say, no. Then, secondly, does not God act worthy himself, in willing that which is the furtherance of his glory? I anticipate your answer, as in the affirmative. As a third question, then, may I not ask would God have acted more worthy himself, had he prevented the introduction of sin into his dominions? I am sure you will say, no, it being essential to Jehovah's perfections, to act in every sense, as is most worthy himself, and the promotion of his own glory. Then, fourthly, must not God have acted unworthy himself, not to have decreed absolutely that both angels and men SHOULD SIN, seeing such a purpose would have been less conducive to his glory than that which he has acted. This must be granted, from the undoubted fact, that God's present plan is most worthy himself, and the ultimate end of all things, even his glory. Then, finally, ought not this to be considered and received as the most satisfactory argument, in defence of the point contended for, which is, that God absolutely decrees or wills *into unavoidable existence all moral evil*. The truth is, to use the words of a late intelligent author, "God glorifies himself, by making himself known AS WHAT HE IS, so far as it is the good pleasure of his goodness to *reveal* the excellency which is in Him, the excellency of his essential nature. Now, there is no part of his essence, or, as some would speak, no attribute; as others would speak, no perfection of his, (but then, all that is called attribute or perfection in God is, in fact, essential to him; and so is, in reality,

part of his essence) which could have been shown as it really is, that is, as it is now shown (I say *could*; because, why else has God chosen this method?) WITHOUT the intervention of sin. Is it not matter of fact, that we are indebted to sin *instrumentally*, for by far the deepest and most penetrating knowledge that we have, of even the wisdom, power, love, grace, faithfulness, kindness, veracity, unchangeableness, immensity, infinity, and eternity, of God? But is He not also (I mean, has he not also shown that He is, and why shown, but because He would have it known that He is) mercy, patience, wrath, hatred, vengeance! Let any one inform me, then, how it was possible for God to show that He is THESE THINGS, if the creature had continued good, very good, as He made it?" But, *thirdly*, seeing it needs no further argument, in proof that God did decree the existence of sin, than to refer to the end of all God's purposes, that is, his own glory; may we not with equal propriety affirm, that the means whereby the Lord would accomplish or bring about his purposed glory, must have been equally identified in his all-wise counsels, or eternal decrees, if so, (and who dare deny the accuracy of the conclusion?) let me ask, did Jehovah decree or purpose the sojourning of the Hebrews in the land of Egypt? Must he not then have willed the sin by which that event was brought about? Did God design the rescuing of Moses from the watery grave, and his subsequent existence at the Egyptian court? Then must He not have decreed that which led to it, that is, the *murdering* of all the male children of the Hebrews? Was it not the will or purpose of God that two such powerful nations as the Moabites

and Ammonites, should have existed? and must it not have been decreed by God how their existence should originate? that is, by the incest of Lot and his daughters? Was it not equally the decree of God that Jacob should receive the blessing, and not Esau? who then will dare to invalidate the fact, that he must have decreed the means by which it was brought about? "It appears," says a friend of mine, "that if Moses had not struck the rock, he should have brought the Israelites into the land of promise, but as *there is an appointed time for man*, the date of his existence ceased before they reached the land, therefore there was a necessity for Moses's breaking the revealed commandment of his God. Was it not according to eternal appointment, that Bathsheba should be the mother of Solomon? if so, then David's horrid crime was in God's purposes." "It was God's will," says Calvin, "to have the false king Ahab deceived; the Devil offered his service thereunto: he was sent with a certain commandment, to be a lying spirit in the mouth of all the prophets, if the blinding and malice of Ahab be the judgment of God; then the device of mere *sufferance* is vain, for it were a fond thing to say, that the judge doth only suffer (permit), and not also decree what he will have done, and commands the ministers to put it in execution." Calvin's Institutes, sec. i. ch. xviii. The same argument might be conducted to the greatest length, especially in reference to the *most awful crime* ever committed, I refer to the crucifixion of Christ. Did God decree, from all eternity, the glory that should follow to all eternity Christ's sufferings? doubtless he did. Then could that glory have been brought about by other means than that of sin? certainly not. For, first, without the fall of man, the glory

peculiar to that inherited by the elect in Christ, as God's children, distinct from the reprobate, none of which were ever designed to have any glory exceeding that inherited before the fall, could have been brought about. The ingenious author of a sermon, entitled, "God the Doer of all things," says, **THE TRUTH** killed the angels, (John viii. 44) a lie killed man; both fell by the will of God, and by His operation; by His will manifestly, for he had an ulterior design to accomplish, to which their fall was preliminary, &c." Page 5. To what, then, was the fall of both angels and men, preliminary? why, to the glory that should follow in the church's experience, through the mediation of their incarnate Lord, who loved them from everlasting; but, for that love to be known and enjoyed by the persons beloved, especially with a view to their loving in return, the original lover must adopt a plan whereby his love must be exhibited in the strongest light in which it is possible to have it represented, particularly so when the object designed is to secure superlative and perpetuated love in return. Now, then, if God, in manifesting his love to his people, has not adopted such a plan, with a view to secure their love in return, then he has not acted worthy himself, and that design which could but actuate God in loving his children; but I say Jehovah has thus acted; indeed, an enterprize so worthy God, could never have been achieved but by sin, for without this there would have been no room for God's becoming man, especially to the end designed thereby, which was his being crucified for the manifestation of his love to the elect unto death, but by sin Christ could not have suffered as he did. The elect's obtaining the righteousness of God, and becoming holy

as God is holy, were objects well worthy the love of God to the church, but their attaining to this dignity of spiritual holiness and deified bliss was an ulterior design to be achieved by the instrumentality of sin.

In the *fourth* place, therefore, I argue in the language of Mr. Tucker, that "God could not give being to that, the existence of whose nature, property, and tendencies were contrary to his determination, will, and choice." But, such truly must have been the case, if, as modern Calvinists contend, He did not choose, will, or determine, the introduction of sin, for such, truly, were the properties and tendencies of the natures of both angels and man; otherwise, neither of their natures could have become subject to sin; the Deity itself, for instance, cannot sin, which is James's meaning, in saying, "God cannot be tempted with evil," his nature having no tendency thereto. Such, however, never was the case with either angels or men, in their primeval standing; had it been, they would have been as much proof against temptation, as is the Deity. "I *dare* not say, therefore," says Mr. Vaughan, "that they *might* have stood, it was the will of God that they should not stand;" and so say I, from the self-evident persuasion, not only that God ordained their fall, and, therefore, his "*counsel must stand*," let who will fall in consequence thereof, but also from the very constitution with which they were endowed, it being a principle, beyond dispute, that that which is fallible cannot prove infallible, when put to the test: suppose I make my application of this to the higher order of those intelligences, who kept not their first estate; and hereunto let me ask, *What is sin?* John says it is "The transgression of the law." This, however, must be considered

as referring to the actings of sin, rather than the thing itself. Sin, therefore, must not be considered in particular, in this place, in the character of a verb, any more than a noun substantive, it being more properly a noun adjective, I speak now of the grammatical construction of the word; but sin, more simply defined, may be described as an evil *infection*. Are fallen angels, then the subjects of an evil infection? they are; and how came they possessed thereof? why, they had it from themselves, their natures being so constituted, originally, as to be capable of evil as well as good. But by what was the evidence of their capability to evil, elicited? why, by the application of a test applied, not by the subject of that capability, but by another, it being a self-evident truth, as says Mr. Tucker, "That every act of the mind, of what kind and nature soever, is the *effect and consequent* of prior agency; and has a real cause, which is the reason and ground of its existence; distinct and separate from itself; and without which the act could not possibly take place. No act of the mind can be its own cause; neither can the mind, with all its own powers, be the unoriginated cause of any of its acts; as will be evident, if we consider, that perception, or the faculty of receiving, contemplating, and retaining ideas, or the images of things, is the first cause in the *soul* of all its after acts; for, without perception, we can have no idea, knowledge, understanding, or will, and if no will, consequently no power; so that, if power originate at all in the soul, it must be in the faculty of perception. But, perception being itself an *effect*, it must have a cause; and, therefore, cannot be the unoriginated cause of those other acts of the soul, of which itself is an antecedent ground." This, in

my opinion, is exquisitely beautiful, nor does it fail to serve my purpose, which is, to prove that the conception of sin in the minds of reprobate angels did not originate with themselves, the thought of sin, which was the first actings of the angel's sin, being an effect, and not a cause: the mind of Lucifer, let his powers have been what they might, not being capable of that, which is exclusively the prerogative of God; that is, conceiving thought, uninfluenced by agency, distinct from itself. By whom, then, was the forementioned test, which was the originating cause of sin in angels applied? why, by God, there being no other beings in existence (allowing that man was created) accessible to the heavenly host. But, on what principle, some will be ready to ask, could the Almighty apply, and not withhold the application of a test, when he himself knew what would be the result? To this I am at liberty to say no more than, "EVEN SO, FATHER; FOR SO IT SEEMED GOOD IN THY SIGHT." "O man, who art thou, that repliest against GOD?"

"Not Gabriel asks the reason why,
Nor God the reason gives." *Watts.*

This however the event authorizes us to say, that so was HIS WILL, and so was his will, because such an event was for his glory, by it, was *even* then demonstrated, that angels, if they continued good, must so continue by a power not their own, separate from any inherent property or goodness peculiar to their created existence, I thought proper to confine my remarks to the fall of angels, from the dislike I have to the procedure of authors who treat the subject of original sin, as if it originated in our nature, which was not the case.

Fifthly. A fifth argument in defence of the belief that God decreed, and consequently willed his creatures to sin, may be derived from the *law*, or principle of dependency; on the fall of reprobate angels, depended that separation between the elect, and non elect intelligences, to which each party were evidently designed by their God, with a view to their occupying distinct posts of servitude in the dominions of their Creator, for who dare insist that it was the will, or decree of Jehovah, that the heavenly hosts, called angels, should continue associated together in one place, in one employ, and in one enjoyment, to all eternity, it is even demonstrated to the contrary; indeed the Bible authorizes me to say, that the separation between God's created intelligences, occasioned instrumentally by the conception of sin, in the nature of Lucifer, was according, to the will of God, designed by him, for the carrying into execution plans, previously arranged by the ALMIGHTY I AM, for the development, I may say, of himself, the issue of which was to be his glory. "*For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things,* in bringing many sons unto GLORY, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings," Heb. ii. 10. Was it the ETERNAL WILL and DECREE of GOD, then, with a view to himself being glorified in them, to bring many sons whom he would adopt unto glory? it was. And was Christ the Captain of their salvation, so designated prior to the creation of angels? undoubtedly he was, and therefore called "*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*" On the fall of angels, however, depended the actual accomplishment of all this; for as the Devil is characterized the begetter of lies, and a murderer from the beginning, on his lying de-

depended the life of God in the soul of man, and on man's sinning, *depended* the coming of Christ into the world to save sinners; in other words, on the *fall*, as a medium, depended the Captain's bringing many sons unto glory. I am quite aware, that for this train of thought, I shall be railed at by modern Calvinists, as "a *daring reasoner*." Such persons however, will do well to recollect, that finding fault is easy, even with fools, but it strikes me, that my opponents will find it an insurmountable difficulty to disprove, or disjoint, the principles on which I have founded my reasoning. On what I ask, depended the Lord's slaying Eli's sons? was it not their not hearkening to their father's counsel? On the lie told by Jacob, depended his obtaining his father's blessing, and yet who will dare deny that it was the will of God, that so it should be. On Ahab's, prophets being lying prophets, depended Ahab's being deceived; but who can prove that it was not the decree of God that Ahab should be deceived? The same might be said of David's adultery, as the medium of Solomon's birth; and of the Sabeans thieving Job's cattle, and murdering his servants: but to multiply instances, in proof of what is so plain, for the bare reason that the subject defended, is so unpopular is beside my purpose. The case of Judas's selling his Lord, and betraying him into the hands of murderers with a kiss, is so much to the point, that it ought not to be overlooked. It is very evident, that the Son of God understood the subject, and believed the fact for which I am now contending, which is, that God must have decreed and willed the commission of sin, their so doing being essential to his glory, and the accomplishment of his eternal purposes. The Son of God longed for death, although he knew what death he was about

to die, for on this death *depended* the glory that should follow, and on what did his death *depend*? Why the perpetration of the most awful crimes that human beings were capable of committing, even the crucifixion of the Holy One of Israel. And on what were the Saviour's murderers *depending*, in order to their obtaining the possession of Jesus, as their prisoner? why the *perfidy* of Judas, of which the Lord himself was well aware, when he said to his treacherous assailant, "That thou doest, do quickly." And pray on what did all this sanguinary crime depend for its perpetration? why on the will of God. "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.*"

" Father 'tis thus, because thy WILL
Chose and ordained it should be so."

A sixth argument, demonstrative of the truth of what I am pleading for, may be derived from the etymology of the words employed by the inspired penmen, on the subject. What language, I would ask can be more *imperative*, commanding and *definitive*, than that employed by the Holy Ghost, in 2 Sam. xvi. 10? "The Lord hath *said unto him* CURSE DAVID, who shall then say, wherefore hast thou done so," as if David had said he is the Lord's servant, therefore, what business have we to resist the ordinances of God, he will not utter an oath more than what it is the will of God, he should utter. But some will reply, that David did remember Shimei even on his dying bed, therefore, it must have been Shimei's act: and be it so, does that invalidate the assertion that God bid him do it? If one neighbour commands his dog to worry another neigh-

bour's sheep, I suppose no one would think of denying the fact, that the dog's conduct, however injurious, and replete with evil, did not originate with himself, but with the person whose *will* it was that such an evil should be perpetrated. Again is it not said of the king of Sihon, that the Lord **MADE** his heart obstinate? Nor will it avail any thing to carp, as some people do about *now*, there is the fact. and in order to a more plausible denial of it, such cavillers as like to impugn God's truth on account of its not suiting their *feelings*, should find out a lexicon never heard of by either Parkhurst, or our honest translators, wherein a word can be found more significant of the original texts and less obnoxious to the severities of unbelievers. If a woman withholds food from her child, she as much kills the child as though she gave it poison; the process, therefore, by which God *made* Sihon's heart obstinate, is of no moment in the controversy. It is said moreover, that God *moved*, David against Israel, to say, go number the people. It is true we are told in 1 Cor. xxi. 1. "That Satan stood up and provoked David," but then his standing up was only like Shimei's cursing David, it originated with the Lord, and it is certain, such must have been the Lord's **WILL** and **DETERMINATION**, that David should number the people, which accounts for his adopting such an effectual method as that of *moving* David to sin, by the medium of Satan, who is always ready, whenever it is the **WILL** of God to empower him thereto, to persuade, excite, enable and strengthen the godly to sin. The same may be said of the word *incline*—"INCLINE NOT my heart to any evil thing, &c." It is more than possible that when David offered this prayer, it was in remembrance of some such dreaded evil as he was

the *unlooked* for subject of, when the Lord *inclined* his heart to practise the wickedness of numbering the people. It is evident the Son of God was no stranger to such a doctrine, otherwise, he would never have taught his disciples to pray "LEAD us not into temptation." "LEAD." This significant word is no where interpreted either by the *literati*, or orthodox divines in any other sense, than that of a verb *active*, on which account we need not hesitate for a moment, to reject as spurious, forced, and unnatural, the meaning ascribed to it by modern partisans, who, like John Wesley in his notes on this passage, would have us believe, that it only means *permit*, a construction decidedly opposed to the native simplicity of the word, which signifies says, the learned Ainsworth, to "MAKE *them go*," and this is in perfect harmony with Mark. i. 12. "And immediately the SPIRIT DRIVETH him into the wilderness TO BE (says Matthew) tempted of the Devil," in which case the Son of God was actually lead into temptation; BY GOD, which is all I contend for; thereby proving, that the originating cause of all evil, is the WILL, PURPOSE, or *decree* of God. "Let it be remembered," says Mr. Vaughan "that the particular object is to show that the Bible represents God as the doer of evil."

But would God, I ask, yea *could* God, regulated, as he declares he is, by working *all* things after the counsel of his own WILL, *permit* that to take place, which he *willed* should not take place? Such an error is too palpable to need refutation. But to return for a moment to the passage in Matthew, "Lead us not into temptation." "Such a petition as this is often to be observed in the prayers of the Jews, *do not lead me neither into sin, neither into transgression and iniquity.*" Gill. This prayer of the Jews not only furnishes Christ-

ians who are not too fond of their own dogma, that God permits what he does *not will* to be taught) with a just exposition of the petition taught by our Lord, but it also furnishes us with the most correct exposition of such passages as Gen. xxii. 1, 2 Sam. xxiv. 1, Psa. cxli. 4, in each of which passages God is represented as *leading* his people into temptation or *evil*. To this, probably it will be objected, that the word temptation, does not always mean evil or sin, but only *trials*. I admit this most readily, but that this is not the meaning of Matt. vi. 13, is self evident; for the saints of God are *no where* taught to pray, that God would not lead them into circumstances of tribulation, the very reverse of this being promised to befall them, as the unavoidable lot cast into their lap, the whole disposing of which is of the Lord. But, to increase evidence on a subject, in itself so incontrovertibly plain, will be to intrude unnecessarily on my reader's patience.

The *seventh* and last argument, therefore, to which I shall have recourse, in defence of the Scripture doctrine of God's *decreeing* sin, may be derived from the consideration of the great good connected with, flowing from, and thereby designed by, the Holy Trinity, in decreeing the unavoidable existence of moral evil; for proof and illustration of this position, I might refer my esteemed friend to a countless number of passages in the Holy Scriptures. This, however, is neither admissible nor necessary, the greatest good ever decreed by the Deity, being brought to pass by the greatest *sin* ever perpetrated by man, I refer, as you are aware, to the death of Jesus Christ, a circumstance that *ought*, among Christians, to set the controversy at rest, never to be broached again, but with a view to

defend the truth, that the origin of all sin committed by fallen angels and men, was according to, yea the very decree or will of God, itself. Moses taught the children of Israel to believe, that all God's conduct towards them was designed by God to do them good at *their latter end*. Deut. viii. 16, and this agrees with Rom. viii. 28. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." To SIN, instrumentally, Joseph owed his preferment in the dominions of Pharaoh; TO SIN, as a medium, (and surely the all-wise God decrees the medium by which he will accomplish his purposes, as well as the good designed thereby; by sin, therefore, I say as a medium, both Jacob, his sons, and their little ones were preserved from perishing from starvation; BY PHARAOH'S SIN, God wrought his own glory and the accomplishment of his covenant promise to Abraham, Gen. xv. 13; *by the sin* of Eli's sons, God wrought the great good of Israel's obtaining Samuel for their priest and judge; BY THE SIN of Saul sparing those whom God had commanded him to kill, God brought about his previously decreed good to his people, of making David their king; THE SAME might be said of David's adultery, the issue of which, was, great good to himself and to the church of God; from that awful circumstance, the great king and sweet singer of Israel exhibited more of his special character, as a type of Christ, than before; from that awful circumstance. (to say nothing about the issue of it, in reference to the birth of the illustrious Solomon) came into existence one of the greatest blessings ever bestowed on the church of God in every age of the world, I mean those precious psalms, which are as a holy sanctuary to which the god-

ly are flying, when no other part of revelation will meet their case; nor do I hesitate to affirm, what I can but believe, viz. that thousands have had reason to bless God for DAVID'S FALL, only for that they would have given up all hope of ever obtaining pardon for their complicated crimes, conceiving, as they have, that there never were sinners so guilty as themselves, but from the blackest despair have many souls been delivered by reading the li. and cxxx. psalms, especially Dr. Watts's paraphrase on the former. The same might be said OF SOLOMON'S SIN, from which issued the greatest good, both to himself and the church of God, even down to the present day; nor ought we to say less OF THE FALL OF PETER, of whose conduct too much evil cannot be spoken, except that it was not sin against the Holy Ghost; every thing but this it certainly was. The conduct of Judas was innocence itself compared with it. Judas had never received the grace and favor bestowed upon Peter. Judas had never been heard to make protestations of devoted fidelity to the person, interests, and circumstances of Jesus Christ, like unto those announced by Peter. The very wretches themselves, in fear of whom the inconstant disciple first forsook, and then denied his Lord; I say, the very murderers of the Son of God, had they witnessed conduct, similar to that of Peter's, in any one man else, towards another, I say they would have sickened at the scene, reprobating it as a crime, compounded of guile, which must beggar language to describe; and yet, after all, this was for Peter's good: from it flowed that preferment of Peter's soul, in the divine life, which was *essential* to his being duly qualified for the office of the Christian ministry. He was appointed to preach to *sinners*, but before this, Peter was

experimentally ignorant of what a sinner was; he was called to have compassion on the ignorant, and on those who are out of the way. For the better fulfilling of this most merciful station, Peter's fall was preliminary; only for this, in itself, unhappy and disgraceful occurrence in Peter's existence, he, like some men, *called* ministers of the merciful Jesus in the present day, would have dealt out to poor backsliders similar treatment to that exhibited in his drawing the sword, and cutting off the ear of the servant of the high priest, but from such self righteousness, which is the cause of all severity, either in ministers or people, towards fallen saints, Peter was sifted by his fall, and it was a *good* thing that he was; for hereby he was the better fitted for his office of mercy, in which he was to be a follower of him, whose prominent feature, as a minister of the sanctuary, was, that he did not deal with sinners according to their crimes, neither did he, as do the self righteous ministers of the present day, fall to *lashing* those, whose wounds have need to be bound up, and to whose hearts there is need to administer both oil and wine. Luke x. 34. My reason for thus referring to the falls of David and Peter, is to refute the errors of modern Calvinists, who teach their hearers, that although Paul said, All things work together for good to them that love God, &c. he did not include SIN among the ALL things; such, however, was not the opinion of the old school. Dr. Gill was of a very different opinion. "ALL things," says he, "all evil things, SIN, THE EVIL OF EVILS, original sin on the fall of ADAM, which contains all other sins in it, was attended with aggravated circumstances, and followed with dismal consequences, yet has been overruled for good; hereby a saviour became necessary, who was sent

came and wrought out salvation, and has brought in a better righteousness than *Adam* lost," which was the sentiment of the poet, who sang

" In Him the sons of Adam boast
More blessings than their father lost."

And this every Christian ought to believe, and, for the same reason, ought to consent to the belief, that God decreed the fall of Adam, on which depended the greater blessing of obtaining grace, mercy, and gospel peace, but Dr. Gill goes on to say, "Actual sin, inward or outward; indwelling sin, which is *made* use of, when discovered to abate pride, to lead to an entire dependance on Christ, to *teach saints to be less censorious*, to depend on the power and grace of God to keep them, and to wean them from this world, and to make them desirous of another, where they shall be free from it."

The above testimony, from the pen of Dr. Gill, is confirmed by the continuators of Pool's Annotations. See Rom. viii. 28. "And we know," &c. "This," say they, "is another argument, to comfort us under the cross, from the *benefits* of it, we know that ALL things, &c. It is not matter of guess only, and conjecture, but of certainty and assurance. How is this known? 1. By the testimony of God. The Scripture tells us as much, Isa. iii. 10. 2. By our own experience we are assured of it, by the event and effects of *all things*, both upon ourselves and others; EVEN SIN ITSELF; because, from their falls, God's children arise more humble and careful." "What is meant by all things?" says that admirable prelate, the Rev. Thomas Wilson, in his Dialogues on the Epistle to the Romans. "It contains (he answers) whatsoever may happen to a man, prosperously

or otherwise, and whatsoever is within, or without him, either good or evil, all angels, all devils, all men, wicked and righteous, and all *defects* of both *shall* return unto the good of God's children:" a sweet exposition this, of, "For all things are yours; whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; ALL ARE YOURS." "Augustine," says Mr. Wilson, "stretcheth it so far, as to the very *sins* of the *godly*; after the committing whereof, men become more humble and wary." After making such repeated references to different authors, you will smile to hear me invite your attention to the THIRD part of my epistle, in which I purposed to consider the subject of God's decreeing sin, from what is said on the subject by DIVERS GOOD, GREAT, AND WISE DIVINES. Here, however, I must be less prolix, my letter being already extended far beyond the limits I had purposed in my own mind.

The synod of Dort enjoined men to set down their particular judgments, concerning predestination and reprobation, at which time Maccovius, who contended against Lubbertus, by denying that it was the will of God to save all men, was brought before the synod, "undertook, in the very synod, to make good against Lubbert, his fellow professor, that God did *will sin, ordain men to sin*, and would not at all, that all men be saved;" on which occasion, it is said, he was "publicly declared in the synod to be *pure and orthodox*, and dismissed only with this kind and friendly admonition, that he should hereafter take heed of such words, as might give *offence to tender ears*, and could not well down with those who are yet incapable of such mysteries." I am more disposed to receive this statement, as

true from Bishop Devenant's not attempting to invalidate it, although he leaned to the sublapsarian side of the question. But, my most favorite author, and to whose writings I pay special deference, is CALVIN himself, although Beza, Zancius, and Augustine, were all of the same way of thinking.

The first quotation, to which I would now invite your attention, is from Mr. Calvin's Sermon, on Deut. ii. 30. "But Sehon, king of Hesebon, would not let us passe, FOR the Lorde thy God had hardened his spirit, and made his heart stubborne, to the ende to deliver him into thy hand, as it appeareth at this day. Nowe, let us come to that which Moses addeth, (in addition to what went before) He saithe *That Sehon, king of Hesebon, woulde not give the children of Israel leave to passe. And why? For the Lord (sayith he) had hardened his spirit, and made his heart stubborne.* I have told you already, that although God foresee that the message of peace shall not prevaile; yet he ceaseth not to send it. But here Moses expresseth yet a further matter; that God hardeneth men's hearts; and in the ende he addeth, moreover, that he doeth it of *purpose*, to overthrow them, and destroy them, which is much more. Nowe, this is very strange geere at first sight; and that is the cause why men have gone about to alter *these textes*; but, in so doing, they have marred them, for it is all one, when they would set such a glosee as this upon it, that God's hardening of Sehon's hearte, was no more but his promising that he should become hard-hearted, and that he had letted (hindered) not the hardnesse and stubbornnesse of his heart; that is to say, he did let Sehon alone when he shewed himself stubborne; *These are too feeble*

shiftes. For when, as the *Scripture saith expressly, that God hardened*; it fathereth *the verie worke itself upon him.* Thinke wee that the Holy Ghost wanted wordes wherewith to utter his meaning, when he saide, *I will harden Pharaoh's heart,* and beholde, God hardened him, and againe, when he saithe, in the psalme (cv. 25) that the Lorde converted their hearts into stubbornnesse, when they rose up so against Israel? If men should flee always to this glosse, God saithe that he will harden, that is to say, he will not hinder or impeache the hardening; to what purpose were that? we see it is a fond kinde of dealing, and the worde *turne* sheweth it well, *Beholde God turneth* the heart: whereas, men's heartes *were* plyable and disposed to courtisie, God turneth them, and maketh them to be inflamed with hatred, so as they be the first that begin the warre. But now let us come to the seconde point: that is, to wit, how it is that God hardeneth men, without being *partaker* of their sinnes. Let us marke, that sometimes the causes shall be apparent. And whensoever God *punisheth* men, wee must needes confesse that he doeth it justly, mark that for one poynt. Now one of the meanes which he hath to punishe men with all, is, that hee blindeth them, that hee hardeneth their heartes, that hee sendeth them the spirit of giddinesse, that hee delivereth them up to Satan; these are signes of God's wrath and vengeance; and, therefore, if there were any cause going before, we must glorify him: and why? for hee doeth the office of a judge, and for so doing there is no cause to carp and snap at him. It is sayed that God will send the spirit of drowsinesse upon men: and why? because they have misused his goodnesse, and the instruction that he gave them.

When wee see that this cause went afore; that is, to wit, that men did willfully shut their eyes, that they would not heare, and that they would not receive any instructions, but rather laboured to abolish God's truth vtterly: is it not reason that they should bee given up to the spirit of giddinesse: nay, moreover, they will needes bee wittee to mock God; and we see a number of these scoffers, which are alwayes frumping, and to their seeming, God is but a babe: by reason hereof, hee shaketh them utterly off, in such wise as they become brute beastes. Now, then, when that cause goeth afore, we see that God executeth his justice, and punisheth men sin such sort as we cannot but glorify him, mark that for one poynt. But yet, nevertheless, if there appeare no apparent cause, and that when wee have sought never so much *why* God hardeneth men, we find no cause at all; yet, let us not therefore cease to glorifie him, though wee see not the reason of his doings."

"As for example, a man might aske why Sehon was hardened rather than the Moabites, Edomites, and Ammonites? Ye see here, foure nations betweene whome there was *no* oddes, I meane in respect of naughtinesse. For if wee thinke that the Ammonites and Edomites, were better than the Ammorites: it is but folly and a deceiving of ourselves, then were they *all* infidelles, and could have found in their heartes that God's people had bin utterly sunk. But God boweth the heartes of the Ammonites and such others, to the ende that they should not enter into warre. Hee *meekeneth* and *suppleth* them; as if a wilde beaste were tamed; and in the meanewhile, he hardeneth Sehon's hearte, *pricking* and *influmiug* him forward to the ende he should come to give battle, whence cometh such

diversitie? wee cannot alleadge any reason, our wit is too rawe and weake thereto. And againe, God concealeth his purpose from us in that behalfe; what shall wee doe then? although wee bee at our wits end in this case; let us learne to doe God so much honor as to acknowledge that he is just and upright in all his doings. And although the thing bee strange to our understanding, *and it seems to us that we might speak against it*: Yet notwithstanding, let us forbear to reply, and let us humble ourselves under the magestie of our God. Also we have to note the ende for which this was done (God sayth Moses) *was determined to destroy Sehon: GOD had already assigned him his judgment; that was the cause why hee hardened him.* It is not in this texte only, that the Holy Ghost speaketh so (see Isa. xix. 13, 14) and therefore when wee heare that God's will was to destroy Sehon, and that *therefore* he hardened him: let us assure ourselves, that when it pleaseth God to drawe men to salvation, hee turneth their heartes to make them repent them of their sinnes, that they may bee sorry for them and seeke to obey him. After that manner doth God alter the heartes of such as were malicious and froward, and reformeth them to his obedience, yea, even when he intendeth to save them; likewise on the contrary part, when he hath utterly appoynted them to destruction, he hardeneth them, so as there is no meane for them to admit any amendment, or to come neare it, but they repine against him and his doctrine (truth) whereof they make as it were a deadly poison." The above extract is taken from a single sermon out of two hundred of the same high toned divinity, the whole of which I would recommend you to read, knowing, as I do, from experience, that they will richly repay you

for your undertaking; indeed, every Christian, whose mind is in the least doubt, about who, in the present day, have the most just claim to the name of Calvinist, that is, whether it belongs to those called *low* Calvinists, or those called *high* Calvinists, ought to make themselves acquainted with that blessed man's writings, the result of which would be essential benefit to their minds. Nor would they fail to decide in favor of Antinomians, his institutes, if any thing, being higher than his sermons; in confirmation of this opinion read the following confession. "It is certain," says Calvin, "that this which we before alleadged out of the psalme, that God doeth all things that he will, belongeth to '*all the doings of men.*' If God be the certain appointer of war, (and in what is there more *sin* than in war) as it is there said, and that without exception; who dare say that men are carried carelessly with blind motion while God knoweth not of it, and sitteth still: But in special examples will be more plainness. It was the Jewes purpose to destroy Christ; Pilate and the soldiers do follow their *raging lust*; and yet in a solemn prayer the disciples do confess, that all the men did *nothing* else but that which the hand and counsel of God had determined; even as Peter had before preached, that Christ was by the DECREED PURPOSE and foreknowledge of God *delivered to be slain*. As if he should say that God (from whom nothing is hidden from the beginning) did wittingly (wisely) and willingly APPOINT that which the Jewes did execute, as in another place he reherseth, that God which shewed before by all his prophets that Christ should suffer, hath so fulfilled it. Absolum defiling his father's bed with *incestuous adultery committed detestable wickedness*. Yet God pronounceth that this was *his own work*.

Jeremiah pronounceth that all the cruelty that the Chaldeans used in Jewry, was the *work of God*, for which cause Nebuchadnezzar is called the servant of God. For shortness sake, I bring forth of many testimonies but a few, by which yet it appeareth plainly enough, that they do *trifle* and talk fondly, that thrust in a base sufferance (permission) in place of the providence of God, as though God sat in a watch tower waiting for the chances of fortune, and so his judgments should hang upon the *will of man*." It is most certain, I add, that all things must hang either on the will of the creature or the will of the Creator. Now which think you is most worthy the supremacy of God, and answerable to the subserviency of all creatures? "What if it be true," says the late godly Vaughan, "that God can do nothing *certainly* except he do all things *really*? Yet nothing can be surer than this. For if there be a *single act* which is done in the world beside, and independently of the will of God, that single act may stand in the way of one, two, any number nay, the whole chain of *his* intended acts, and may frustrate, or bring them to naught. A dear good child of his is going to do some precious act of his; one that is all his, and is to be followed by a mighty train of important results, but a fly which God knew nothing of, and *did not mean* should be there, came buzzing into his eye, and incapacitated him for his work. He could not see to do it; he had no heart for it, the chain is broken, God is superseded." But to return to Mr. Calvin, "now as concerning secret motions that which Solomon speaketh of the heart of a king, (Pro. xxi. 1.) that it is *bowed* nether and thether as pleaseth God, extendeth surely to all mankind, and is as much in effect as if he had said; whatsoever *we conceive in mind* is

by the secret inspiration of God, directed to his end. And truly, if he did not work in the minds of men, it were not rightly said, that he taketh away the lip from the true speakers, and wisdom from aged men, that he taketh the heart from the princes of the earth, that they *may wander* where is no beaten way; these things also, many do refer to *sufferance*, as if in forsaking the reprobate, he *suffered* them to be blinded by Satan. But that solution is too fond, forasmuch as the Holy Ghost in plain words expresseth, that they are *stricken* with blindness and madness by the judgment of God, Augustine saith, continues Calvin "who shall not tremble at these judgments, where God worketh even in the hearts of evil men, whatsoever he will, and yet rendereth to them according to their deservings." But I must desist, my letter being too long already, otherwise I would have indulged myself with more copious extracts from my beloved Calvin. I am thankful however, that the doctrine for which I am contending has been too clearly proved already, to need such additions, nevertheless I will venture to introduce a few other divines who were of the same faith, the fact is, their so believing was essential to their preaching "THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD." The doctrine of reprobation for instance, being unavoidably included in God's decreeing sin, must be a part of the counsel of God, for as that able minister of Christ, the Rev. Thomas Newhouse, once preacher of Christ's gospel, in the city of Norwich, observes in his Sermon on 1 Thes. v. 9. The words themselves contain a description of the decree of God's election, which is amplified by the contrary, that is the decree of reprobation, which is also described to be the appointment of some unto wrath. The Scriptures (he

further observes) are pregnant in this point. Pro. xvi. 4. "God hath made all things for himself, yea the wicked man to the day of evil." "Christ is a stone to stumble at, and a rock of offence to certain men, &c. being disobedient, unto the which thing they were *ever* ordained." Why should we then be *squeamish* or *afraid* to speak with the Scripture, that saith there is a difference and disjunction of men in the decree and counsel of God, some elect, some reprobate, some appointed to salvation, some unto wrath. The use of this doctrine serveth to *overthrow* the opinion of those men who ascribe the CAUSE of REPROBATION unto the foreseen infidelity of men and contempt of grace; for hereof it should follow, that not the *will of God*, but foreseen infidelity shall be the impulsive cause of reprobation, which is a manifest untruth." From the above it appears evident to me, that Mr. Newhouse, conceived it impossible to preach the Scripture doctrine of election fully, but by preaching God's decree of reprobation; reprobation however, can only be believed in, by those who believe also, that God decreed the sins of the reprobate. This may be explained by the simile of a landholder's reprobating or casting away a piece of ground, apart from all the rest of his land, by which act he consigns it over, not only to barrenness from good, but to an unavoidable bringing forth pernicious weeds thistles, thorns, and briars. "Agreeably to this," says Robert Gallard A. M., (another gospel minister who once preached Christ in my native city) "This one point must needs be remembered, that in God's decree, the end, and the means, tending to that end need go hand in hand, insomuch as look what God hath appointed to come to pass by means, those means he hath as *necessarily* or-

dained to be used, as the end to be achieved; yea so inseparable are the means and the event knit together, as that, if we may suppose a denial of the means, a denial of the event will necessarily be inferred thereupon." God's decreeing sin, therefore, either in the elect or reprobate part of the human race, is simply reduced to this, *he decrees their sinning* as the means whereby he would bring the elect to heaven, and the reprobate to hell, for certain I am, that sin was as essential to the elect's obtaining the glory bequeathed to them in Christ from all eternity, as it was to the reprobates being brought like Judas to their own place as heirs of perdition.

"This doctrine, so decidedly asserts the sovereignty of God, and so effectually destroys the pride of man, that it is not at all surprising it should meet with *vehement* opposition. The bitterness and rancour, generally discovered in the opposition made to this doctrine, too plainly manifests from whence that opposition proceeds, not from a real concern for *the glory of God*, but from a proud concern for *our own*. It has been, indeed, of late years so customary to represent this subject, in the most shocking colors, that I know it will be very difficult to gain *attention* to any thing that may be said in favour of what is so *exceedingly unpopular*." J. Alderson, A.M. of Hevingham, in *Defence of Election and Reprobation*.

Again, what saith that great scholar, in Christ's school, Mr. John Archer, sometime preacher at Allhallows, Lombard-street, "God's will and pleasure is the *womb* that conceived, and whence *springs* every work of the creature, whatever it be, whether it be *good* or *bad*; as they are (that is continue) for *his pleasure*;

Rev. xiv. last verse : they so do and work, because it is *his pleasure* that they so should do ; the first reason, and that which determines all, why the creature *sins*, must be, because God's will was that it should sin ; for who hinted to God, or gave advice by counsel to him to let the creature sin ? was it not his own device, counsel, and will, that it should be so ? Did any necessity, arising upon the creature's being, "*uninfluenced by any agency separate from itself, must have been Mr. Archer's meaning*, force it, that sin may be ? Could not God have hindered sin, if he would ? Might not he have kept man from sinning, as he did some of his angels ? Therefore, it was his decree and plot before the creature was, that there should be *sin* ; and what incongruity is it, that God's *will and pleasure* should first lay a ground-work to bring forth sin ? For what is sin, but an *effect and discovery* of the *weakness and mutability* of the reasonable creature ? Wherefore, God's *unchangeableness* is alleged in opposition to the creature's *sinning*, and sinful tempting to sin, James i. 13—17. because sin, as it is *sin*, ariseth from mutability and weakness. Now, what incongruity is it, for the Creator to *will and order* it, that the creature shall show itself, and its *own shame* ? Yes, is it not necessary, thus to give God the *first hand* in controversy, and willing the creature's sin : because most of God's greatest works in this world, and the everlasting world to come, depended on the creature's sin ; and it is by sin that most of God's glory in the discovery of its attributes doth arise, wherefore must it not be said and thought, that his *will*, first and chief, was in the providing this way for all those *his ends*." Is there any thing by which God so serves himself (except Christ) as by sin ?

Therefore, certainly, it limits him much, to bring in sin by a *contingent accident, merely from the creature*, and to deny God an hand and will in its being and bringing forth." For more of this blessed man's masterly reasoning, I would refer you to his excellent little book, entitled "COMFORT FOR BELIEVERS, &c." a work replete with Scripture, and divine conducting, on the subject of God's decreeing sin. The next *great* and truly *good* man, to whose writings I would refer you, on the subject of God's decreeing all things, is Archbishop Leighton; the more so, because he was never yet classed among either Superlapsarian or Antinomian divines, although he wrote like one of them, in his beautiful "Lecture on the Decrees of God." See his works, vol. iv. p. 271—6. "Every artist, to be sure," says the archbishop, "as you also well know, works according to some pattern, which is the *immediate* object of his mind; and this pattern, in the all-wise Creator, must necessarily be entirely perfect, and every way complete. All that acknowledge God to be the author of this wonderful fabric, and all these things in it, which succeed one another in their turns, cannot possibly doubt, that he has brought, and continues to bring them all about, according to that most perfect pattern, subsisting IN HIS ETERNAL COUNSELS; and those things, that *we call casual*, are ALL UNALTERABLY FIXED AND DETERMINED to him. For, according to that of the philosopher, where there is most wisdom, there is least chance; and therefore, surely, where there is infinite wisdom, there is nothing left to chance at all. This maxim, concerning the eternal counsels of the supreme Sovereign of the world, besides that it *every where shines clearly* in the books of the sacred Scriptures, is

also, in itself, so evident and consistent with reason, that we meet with it in almost all the works of philosophers, and often, also in those of the poets. Nor does it appear, that they mean any thing else, at least for the most part, by the term *fate*; though you may meet with some things in their works, which I own, sound a little harsh, &c. But, whatever else may *seem* to be comprehended under the term FATE, whether taken in the mathematical or physical sense, as some are pleased to distinguish it, must at *last of necessity* be resolved into the APPOINTMENT AND GOOD PLEASURE of the supreme governor of the world. If even the blundering astrologers and fortune tellers acknowledge, that the wise man has DOMINION OVER the stars; *how much more evident* is it, that all these things, and all their power and *influence*, are subject and subservient to the DECREES of the all-wise God. It is, indeed, true, that neither religion, nor right reason, will suffer the *actions and designs of men*, and consequently, even the very MOTIVES OF THE WILL, to be exempted from the empire of the *counsel and good pleasure of God.*" I exceedingly regret that I am not at liberty to continue my quotations from the pen of this truly judicious (though oftentimes far too modest and intimidated, for fear he should appear dogmatical) divine, especially where he rebuts the objections brought against the doctrine, with regard to the *origin of evil*, but I forbear, as I cannot consent to pass by, altogether unnoticed, the opinions of Martin Luther on this subject. He did not hesitate to say, even in reference to himself, "What sort of a man I am, and with what *spirit* (there has always been, in every age of the church, such a dead weight of wickedness charged on more

than ordinary zealous ministers of Christ, by half hearted members of the Christian church as to make the saying quite proverbial, "Oh but see what a *spirit* he manifests, he preaches and writes so much in his own spirit") "and design I have been *hurried* into these transactions, I commit to that Being, who knows that all these things have been effected, not by my *own* freewill, but by His." And, on the subject of God's *absolute* foreknowledge, he writes, "It is most necessary, and most salutary, for a Christian to know this also; that God foreknows nothing contingently, but foresees and **PURPOSES** and **ACCOMPLISHES EVERY THING**, by an unchangeable, eternal, and infallible will."

"But, by this thunderbolt, freewill is struck to the earth, and completely ground to powder. Those who would assert freewill therefore, must either *deny*, or *disguise*, or, by some other means, *repel* this thunderbolt from them. You *seriously* dissuade us from this sort of doctrine, and fancy that you have almost succeeded. What is more injurious you say, than this *paradox* should be published to the world, that *whatsoever is done by us is not done by freewill*, but by mere necessity. And that saying of Augustine's, that "God *worketh both good and evil in us; that he rewards his own good works in us, and punishes his own bad works in us.*" You, Madam, will excuse the interruption, but I cannot forbear expressing the regret I feel at the conduct of good and able divines, in not illustrating and confirming each and every controverted point in divinity, by an immediate reference to the Scriptures, that being, in my opinion, the only hopeful ground of success against the common foe. The above sentiment, so boldly asserted by Augustine, will grate with such harshness on the *delicate* ears of most mo-

dern divines as, to call forth all their rage, in contempt thereof. To prove, therefore, that their rage is not hurled merely at the official character of the man, who taught it, but at the God of truth, it is highly proper to invite the attention, not only of *unsound* divines, but of weak Christians, to the original source from whence such an unwelcome sentiment was derived, with a view to the good therefore, which is likely to accrue therefrom, I beg leave to refer, even *your* attention, to the book of Jeremiah, where the Lord first calls and sends the families of the north with Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, whom he calls *his servant*, whom he employed to *murder* his people, and destroy their every comfort, and then afterwards punishes the king of Babylon, for doing no other thing, than what he was employed by God to do. Jer. xxv. 9—12, xxvii. 6. The same may be said of 2 Sam. xxiv. 1, where we are told, that God first *moved* David to number the people, and then punishes David, in his people, for doing that which God himself set him about; indeed, it was in defence of this sentiment, that the godly Archbishop Leighton was writing, when he said, “ Even the books of the heathens are filled with the most express testimonies of the MOST ABSOLUTE sovereignty of God, even with regard to the actions and designs of men, with the motion of the will. The poet Euripides says, “ O Jupiter, why are we wretched mortals called wise? for we depend entirely upon thee, and we do whatsoever thou intendest we should do.” But, to return to Luther, who goes on to say, “ It is asked, perhaps, how God can be said to work evil in us; as for example, to harden, to give men up to their lusts, to tempt, and the like? we ought, forsooth, to be contented with the words of God, and simply “ faith,” saith

Mr. Vaughan, "receives *implicitly* what God *explicitly* declares," to believe what they affirm, since the works of God quite surpass all description. But, by way of humouring reason, which is another name for folly, I am content to be silly and foolish, and to try if I can at all move her by turning babbler."

"In the first place, even reason concedes that God worketh all things in all things; and that nothing is effected or is efficacious without him. He is omnipotent, and this appertaineth to his omnipotency, as Paul says to the Ephesians. Satan then and man having fallen from God, and being deserted by him, cannot will good; that is, cannot will those things which God wills; they are turned perpetually towards their own desires, so that *they cannot but seek what is their own, and not his*. This will and nature of their's, therefore, which is thus averse from God, still remains a something. Satan and wicked men are not a nothing, having no nature or will, though they have a nature which is corrupt and averse from God. This remainder of nature, therefore, in the wicked man, and in Satan, of which we speak, seeing it is the creature and work of God, is not less subject to his omnipotency, and to divine actings, than all the other creatures and works of God. Since then, God moves and actuates *all things in all things*, it cannot be, but that he also *moves and acts in Satan, and in the wicked*, but he acts in them according to what they are, and what he finds them; that is, since they are averse from him and wicked, and are *hurried along by this impulse fo the divine omnipotency*, they do *only* such things as are averse from him and wicked, such as a horseman driving a horse which is lame in one or two of his feet, drives him according to his make and power, and so

the horse *goes ill*. But what can the horseman do? he drives the horse, such as he is, in a drove of sound horses, he makes *him go ill*, the *others well*; it cannot be otherwise, unless the horse be cured. By this illustration, you see how it is, that when God works IN bad men, and BY bad men, evil is the result; but it cannot be that God doeth wickedly, although he works evil by the agency of evil men, because, he being good himself, cannot do wickedly; but still he uses evil instruments, which cannot escape the seizure and impulse of his power. The fault, therefore, is in the instruments, which God does not suffer to remain idle, that evil is done; God meanwhile himself being the impeller of them,* just as if a carpenter should cut ill by cutting with an axe that is, "hooked and sawed." Hence it arises that the wicked man cannot but go astray and commit sin continually; inasmuch, as being *seized and urged by the power of God*, he is not allowed to remain idle, but wills, desires, and acts, just according to what he is. These are sure and settled verities, if we, in the first place, believe that God is omnipotent; and in the second, that the wicked man is the creature of God; but being averse from him, and left to himself, without the spirit of God, cannot will or do good. God's omnipotence causes, that the wicked man cannot escape the moving and driving of God; but being necessarily subjected to God, he obeys him. Still his corruption, his aversion from God, causes that he cannot be moved and dragged along, according to good. God cannot relinquish the exercise of his omnipotency, because of the wicked

* "The wheels of God's omnipotent providence. See Ezek. i. 15—21. carry the evil as well as the good along with them in their goings: and this is unto God's glory." Vaughan.

man's aversation; neither can the wicked man change his aversation into good will. Thus it comes to pass, that he of *necessity errs and sins* perpetually, until he be rectified by the spirit of God." But I must not, though very much disposed to do so, continue my quotations from the writings of this great reformer on the doctrine of God's *willing sin*. One thing however I must do, and that is, beg of my friends, who wish to be further informed on the subject, to read with attention and prayer, what Toplady calls "a masterpiece of polemical composition," I mean "Luther's Bondage of the Will," edited by the Rev. E. T. Vaughan, whose invaluable notes render his edition by far the most valuable that was ever published. One of Mr. Vaughan's notes, I will here insert. "Luther's account of hardening is, *first*, God actuates the wicked as well as the rest of his creatures, according to their nature; *second*, Satan is in them unresisted and undisturbed; *third*, they can only will evil; *fourth*, God thwarts them by his word, or deed, or both. Satan is an agent and minister of God (see Job. i. 11, 1 Kings xxii. 19—23, 1 Chron. xxi. 1, compare 2 Sam. xxiv. 1, Zech. iii. 1—3. O what is there that can give peace under the realizing consciousness of his being and agency, but the assurance, that he is in truth only the agent of God for good, and nothing but good, to his chosen? God's hardening therefore, I define *generally* to be, that special operation of God, upon the reprobate soul, by which, through the agency of Satan (whose Lord and rider he is) combined with his own outward dispensations of word and work, he shuts and seals it up in its own native blindness, aversation and enmity towards himself. There have been, however, and doubtless are, certain *special* and splendid exemplifications of

this operation, each having its minuter peculiarities, whilst the same essential nature pervades all. Pharaoh is one of these; indeed the whole history of the exodus is one of the most luminous displays, which the Lord God ever made, of the design he is pursuing and accomplishing in having and dealing with his creatures; second only to the marvellous and complicated history of the Lord's death, whereunto also it was appointed, whereunto also it hath been recorded." The above sentiment may be both illustrated and confirmed by the following questions, can the Devil do any thing but what is evil? certainly not. Then, doth God ever employ the Devil in his service? unquestionably he does; and wherefore, but that he may perform that which God had previously willed and decreed to be executed? "God," says Beza, "in his election and reprobation, doeth not only appoynt the endes but the meanes leading to the same; God's predestination binds whom he pleases, not only to damnation, but to the causes also of damnation; and they that are offended with this kind of speech bewray their own folly." There are other authors to whom I might, with both pleasure and profit, refer your attention, in particular as the works, especially the *polemical* works of good men, raised up of God, as were Luther, Calvin, Beza, &c. to defend his TRUTH in opposition to human errors, have the most imperative claim on our deliberations. On this occasion, however, I must desist from further reference to the writings of godly divines, except to one only, and that is Mr. Tucker on Predestination, who in his inimitable, though not faultless letters, is not a whit behind even Calvin, in defending the doctrine of predestination, which he very justly represents to include both election and reprobation: not so much

as allowing the possibility, of one existing without the other. "It is," says he, "a common but true saying, that what must be will be; and if it will be, its existence is a certain and fixed event. And as all things were future from eternity, they were fixed, permanent and certain, and would be, are, and must be, in all respects, as their beings have made appear;" and on this principle of reasoning, which no one can disprove, we are necessitated to believe, not only "that our existence was future from the beginning, and we have a being accordingly, and consequently, a fixed thing;" but that our state in endless bliss or wo, is a future thing. We may not know which will be our *lot*, but, be it which it will, it is a future event; that only which *will take place* is future, and that which is future, **MUST** and will exist, and the other not; and, consequently is, notwithstanding our ignorance, a fixed and certain event in itself." I need no ally from the science of reasoning, to establish a point in divinity, so clearly demonstrated in the Book of Revelation, as is the doctrine of God's decreeing sin. It is nevertheless very pleasing, and not less confirming, to the faith of those who have been taught to believe the divine testimony, to see it so ably supported from the arsenal of sound reason; the more so, considering how much the doctrine has been impugned and objected to, "Not so much," says Mr. Tucker, "from a supposition that Scripture *did* not, but because, in their apprehension, it was contrary to reason, and therefore *could* not reveal it." What then are the distinguishing points in divinity, substantiated by the succinct reasoning of the foregoing arguments? Why first, that the existence of *sin* in all its modes, periods, places, connexions. relations and every circumstance, connected with

its existence, was future from eternity. Then *secondly*, because it was future it was *unavoidable*; for whatever is future *must* be, its existence was from eternity a *fixed* thing; so that the fall of angels and man, elect men's going to heaven and reprobate men's going to hell, being all future from eternity, were all fixed from eternity. Perhaps you will expect an apology from me for stopping to make these comments on the foregoing extract; in this, however, as in many other of your expectations from me, you will be disappointed, but to prevent the possibility of its being rumoured by any ill-natured reader, that I have applied Mr. Tucker's reasoning to the creature's sinning without his designing such a use to be made of it; to prevent this, I say, I will do myself the pleasure of inserting the following extract on the introduction of sin into the natures of once holy creatures. "Sin did not step in unperceived among created beings; no! He, whose single thought at once comprehends eternity's unbounded round, *ordained its being*, and fixed its limits with the utmost precision; nor shall a *single thought*, more or less, than is fixed, in the all-wise plan, be ever found among rational beings. MORAL EVIL, that *seemed* to threaten with destruction the whole empire of God, is made by infinite wisdom, subservient to the manifesting and glorifying of all his moral excellencies, and must have been ordained, determined, and permitted, for that very end, as evidently appears from the everlasting covenant of grace, in which such ample provision is made to deliver the guilty subjects from the dire effects thereof. CHRIST COULD NOT have been set up from everlasting, and appointed to appear in the fulness of time, to purge away SIN by the sacrifice of himself, had not the *being* of it *then* been *fixed* and DETERMINED.

His engagement with the divine Father in eternity, is a full and clear demonstration that SIN or MORAL EVIL is no accidental thing, but a wise and holy determination of God, for the manifestation of his own glory, in the person of his dear Son, the adorable Redeemer, from it. SIN could not have existence contrary to the *divine will*, its being *must* be a *consequent* of the sovereign purpose. This is demonstrable, from the infinite wisdom and unlimited power of God, by which he might, with the most perfect ease, have prevented its being, from its increase, and the extensive spread of its dire effects, when God could have stopped its progress in a moment, at any period of time, had it been his pleasure. And also, from the glorious provision and remedy prepared for its subduction, and the delivery of millions of its guilty subjects from its baleful and ruinous effects. These things, among others, indubitably prove, *that the being of moral evil was a certain consequence of the divine purpose*; FOR IF GOD HAD NOT DETERMINED ITS EXISTENCE, IT COULD NOT HAVE HAD BEING; UNLESS WE SUPPOSE SIN TO BE GREATER THAN GOD. Here, dear Madam, I must close my quotations from the works of divers great, wise and good men. Wherefore, FOURTHLY, I hasten on to examine, and refute, the objections offered, in disproof of the above doctrine. The first objection, to which I invite your attention, is contained in the Rev. Joseph Fletcher's Discourse in favor (he calls it, whereas, it is directly AGAINST) Divine Sovereignty, the very *acme* of God's sovereignty being to do as he WILL, independent of every reason, save that of SOVEREIGN PLEASURE, on which alone hangs, from eternity to eternity, the unavoidable FATES of angels and men.

“ Chain'd to his throne, a volume lies,
 With all the FATES of men,
 With every angel's form and size,
 Drawn by th' eternal pen. ’

WATTS.

which belief makes Mr. Vaughan insist, “ that God's WILL is the ALONE will that is done in all creation, the one source and *spring of every action, and of every event*—thus ascribing, what is properly called freewill, to God only.” To this, however, Mr. Fletcher rashly objects, as to “ the most unhallowed of representations of the Divine Being;” for first, he goes on to say, “ on the principles of this *daring* reasoner, *sin itself* is considered, not as a subject of mysterious permission, overruled and controlled in its operations, by a Being, to whose nature and perfections it is essentially opposed; but as actually resulting from his *direct and positive appointment, and produced by his agency!*” To the first part of this charge, I plead not guilty; to the rest, I readily confess myself obnoxious: nor have I failed, in the former part of my letter, to give the most substantial reasons, why I consider *sin itself*, as actually resulting from his direct and positive appointment, and produced by his agency; and, on this account, it would be nothing less than a profusion of vain tautology, to repeat the grounds of my faith, until what I have insisted on, be disproved by those, who dare undertake the *task*. But do I thereby contend, that *sin itself* is *not* a subject of mysterious *permisson*, overruled and controlled, &c. by a Being, to whose nature it is opposed? indeed, I do not. I am quite aware, however, of the difference between divine permission and divine decrees; although of this Mr. Fletcher, and most modern Calvinists, seem to be wilfully ignorant, or why argue, as does the above named author.

Instead of Mr. Vaughan's *not* considering *sin*, as a subject of mysterious permission, he contended for it as such, and so do I ; but we wish to be understood, in what I thought was too plain to be misunderstood, which is, that the divine permission, is that to the divine appointment that an effect is to its cause. As a matter of necessity, God *permitted* sin, because he first willed it? this is sufficiently demonstrated by the bare circumstance of his permitting it to come into existence. I hesitate not, therefore, to tell Mr. Fletcher, that he ought to discipline himself with more caution and integrity, when writing against the sentiments of those, who differ from him ; in which case, he would have refrained himself, however, unpopular it might have rendered him, from fathering on his contemporaries, that which they neither teach, nor liable themselves to the charge of, except from the pens of mean casuists. I have never met with a single divine, to whom belongs the charge of "*not considering sin as a subject of mysterious permission ;*" but I have met wiser men than Mr. Fletcher, who were not afraid to insist on the divine permission of sin, as a thing of imperative *necessity* on the part of God, it being but an effect of an antecedent decree, by which Jehovah himself must be *ruled*, without power to deviate therefrom. "What must that teaching be, which has such a God for its object," as is their God, I add, who *permits* that to come to pass, which is opposed to his will and decree, for such is the dogma, advocated by all who contend for bare permission, as opposed to the Deity's willing—what is permitted to take place in the divine dominions ; for "He need not," say modern Calvinists "be the originator of it but *may*." God himself, I remark, by the same art of reasoning, becomes

subjected to the law of *permission*? he MAY "only have determined to *permit*, what some other being has devised and ordained." "Seenow" says Mr. Vaughan, "what this quibble leads to—hereby" (the fall of man, for instance.) "was fulfilled, what God did not originate," another word for begin, by a positive decree, that it should be so, but did only *permit* and acquiesce in. Whether is greater, to permit or to originate? Is not to originate? Then God sitteth in the *second* place, not the *first*. But who, then, originates? Why, there is but one God. Then it is the creature which originates. So God makes creatures to originate his measures for Him. "There is no man," says that great casuist, Mr. Tucker, "that sees an advancing event, which is contrary to his will, but he will, if in his power, prevent its existence. And can it be, that He, who does according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, would permit the existence of that which he wishes should not exist! Can it be, that he, whose will is omnipotent; who speaks and it is done; who commands and it stands fast; and whose mighty fiat, the whole creation united, cannot, in the least degree, resist; I say, can it be, that he should be the dupe of his creatures, give up the reins to them, and suffer them to run their mad career, beyond the bounds prescribed, and thereby endanger the overturning and rendering abortive his own infinitely wise purposes and designs! impossible! Besides, the will of God is wisdom itself. What he wills, is most wise, yea, infinitely wiser than its contrary: it being the result of consummate sapience: consequently, if he suffers things to be, and wills, or chooses, that they shall not be, he must suffer folly to triumph over wisdom, and be either

unwise, (wanting skill) or impotent, (wanting power.) But, as neither of these is possible, it undeniably follows, that whatever has been, is, or shall be, exists, in consequence of his DETERMINATE WILL AND CHOICE."

Nor did Calvin deny, but confessed, that sin was a subject of mysterious permission, but he would not allow it any in other sense than that in which I have argued for it, that is, that God permitted, or did not prevent, the first any more than all subsequent transgressions of which his creatures became the successive subjects, because it was his decree and will that they should thus transgress. That, therefore, to which we object, in reference to divine permission, is not the belief that the Divine Being does permit his creatures to sin, for to this we readily concede; but to their assumptions, who would have us believe, agreeably to their dogma, that God permits that to take place in his dominions, which he did not will or purpose should take place; thus making the Divine Being, at war with and revenged on himself; and all this proceeds from the senseless rant, in which attempts are made to distinguish between God's permissive and decretive will, as if God were possessed of two wills, one that is his decretive or sovereign will, decidedly opposed to man's sinning, the other his permissive will, in favor of and therefore conniving at the sinner's transgression: but where shall we find such distinctions in the word of God? by what, I would ask, is the decretive will or eternal purpose of God to be made known, but by the creature's conduct, either good or bad? Whether Jacob believed such to be the case, or whether he only said it to deceive his father, I cannot tell; but, of this I am most certain, that he never spoke a greater

truth than, when in answer to Isaac's inquiry, "How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son?" he answered, "Because the Lord thy God brought it to me." For, first, it must have been the will of God that Jacob should have the blessing; and secondly, he will do, bring about, or accomplish, that which he previously wills to be accomplished; and, therefore, with him rests the whole business, such as the *appointment* of the means and the success that shall result from them; insomuch, that I am more disposed to conclude, that young Jacob even then saw the hand of God upon him, through the medium of his mother giving success to his enterprise, rather than otherwise; nor will it avail any thing to object that God did not decree it, "he only overruled and controlled it in its operation;" for what, I would learn, does God overrule and control sinful actions, but with a view to their answering the ends for which he designed them, as was the case in Jacob's getting the blessing, Joseph's being sold by his brethren, and the Saviour's death. This part of the controversy, however, may be settled with a single reference to the word of God. Daniel says, "He doeth according to his WILL in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth," &c. To suit modern Calvinists, it ought to have been, "He doeth according to his *permisson*, &c.;" so, when the Saviour prayed, saying, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done;" it ought to have been, thy *permission* be done, allowing that the sin by which Christ was crucified was not committed by the counsel or decree of God, but only by his permission. Paul said, he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God, and that "God worketh ALL things." Jacob's obtaining

what he had no right to; Joseph's being sold by his brethren; Eli's sons not adhering to their father; Ahab being deceived by his lying prophets; Shimei's cursing David; Absalom's lying with his father's wives; Judas's betraying Christ; and the Jews, crucifying him; I say, rather the Holy Ghost saith, that God worketh ALL things, even all the above mentioned abominations, after the counsel of his own SOVEREIGN WILL, which implies something more than bare permission; so that Calvin's words are very pertinently expressed, "Here is no talke about I wote not what, *permission* or sufferance, so as God should play the blinkard, or shut his eyes, as these fantastick fellows imagine, which have as much experience in the Holy Scriptures as dogges; but it is said that God's *will was to have it so.*" Calvin's Sermon on Deut. ii. 30. A second objection, urged against the doctrine of God's decreeing sin, is, that it makes God "the author of sin."

The length to which my letter is extended already, compels me to be more brief in this part of it than I could wish; otherwise, I should have great pleasure in inserting the different replies given to this objection by the different authors, whose writings I have consulted on the subject; I must content myself, however, with the slightest reference to the works of others, followed with my own mind on the subject. With Mr. Edwards, I would first remark, that "they who object, that this doctrine makes God the author of sin, ought distinctly to explain what they mean by that phrase, *The Author of Sin.* I know the phrase, as it is *commonly* used, signifies something very ill." "I use the term AUTHOR," says Vaughan, "in opposition to my own judgment, adopting the language of the

gainsayer; author supposes sin to be a substance, which it is not, but only an infection of substance; a privative **ORIGINATOR** is what I should rather have chosen: some even confound the manifestation or drawing out of sin with its origination."

Archbishop Leighton says, "Some distinguish, and justly, the substance of the action, or what is physical in the action, from the morality of it. This is of some weight, but whether it takes away the whole difficulty, I will not pretend to say." Mr. Archer, however, represents God as the author of sin, so far as a thing ordained and brought about for good, but not as a thing in itself, and in its actings and consequences evil. But, so far as my opinion goes, I am frank to confess, that I see no reason why God should be "**THE AUTHOR OF SIN,**" on account of his having decreed or purposed its existence. Let us suppose, for instance, that the pope of Rome wills, and therefore decrees, the existence of a work in the papistical hierarchy, on the subject of heresy, in which book all Christians shall be maligned as characters the most awful, and their doctrines, if possible, much worse; this book, however, although both its existence and effects *originated* in the mind, and was decided upon as a foreseen, and therefore certain existence, by the pope, should nevertheless be the entire production of another, a second Tetsal, for instance. Who, I ask, in such a case would be considered as the author of that work, the pope having no share whatever in its execution, save that of not preventing it, and that because he willed its existence? It is very common, in our dissenting associations, to have a circular letter published annually by the decree of the ministers and messengers in association, in which decree some one individual is pre-

destinated to perform the work designed; and, in every such case, it is the executor, and not the originator, of such a work, who is distinguished from the rest, as, "The author of the Letter," no others being looked upon as having the least claim to that title. But why hold up such a cavil about a subject that every schoolboy may decide; and yet, with all its simplicity, it cannot fail to demonstrate that, although in God's mind, will, or sovereign pleasure, originated the fall, and, therefore, all subsequent evil connected with man's first transgression; yet man, and not God, was the author of sin. This, as far as I am capable of judging, is settled, beyond a doubt upon the subject, by the following ludicrous dialogue between George and Washington, which originated in G's. finding W. with a newspaper in his hand.

Dialogue.

George. Well, Mr. Washington, what, after politics again?

Wash. Indeed I am; and what have you to say against that?

George. Now, Mr. Fly, can't I ask you a question, or at most joke you, on a pursuit for which you are so famed, without liabling my head to be snapped off?

Wash. O, I could not tell but what you had just come from one of those know-all schools, where fools teach fools to believe, that religious men, in particular ministers, have no business with politics.

George. And suppose I had, what then?

Wash. Why, then I should have served you just as you deserved, by telling you to go about your business, leaving me to read, learn,

and inwardly digest, as next in kin to the subject of theology, the subject of politics in particular, as all government measures, from the incongruous union of church and state, are inseparably connected with our religious rights.

George. I beg your pardon, Mr. Washington, for the interruption; but, now I think of it, allow me to ask, what you think of government measures, in reference to individuals prosecuted for blasphemy?

Wash. I suppose you refer to such characters as Carlisle and Taylor?

George. I do.

Wash. We, ENGLISH SLAVES, are liable to laws which make *reason treason*, and *truth a libel*; nevertheless, I do not hesitate to say, that of all events capable of disgracing the memory of a Protestant government, that of persecuting men, because they choose to speak or write what they please on the word *religion*, is the most impolitic. Why not allow infidels, in common with other men, to propagate sentiments after their own hearts, although they should go from Infidelity to Atheism, and teach there is no God. Christianity can have nothing to fear from such a circumstance; in fact, the whole Christian church would be essentially benefited thereby, spiritual teachers would be inflamed to greater zeal in the propagation of Christian doctrines, the result of which must be the total overthrow of Infidel sentiments, the latter being no more by the side of the former, than chaff would appear by the side of good bread corn.

George. But, would not such a measure, on the part of government, sound something like "doing *evil*, that good may come of it."

Wash. Perhaps George will be kind enough to point out the instances, in which he conceives the *evil* of such a measure to exist. For my

part, I think you might as well impute *evil* to GOD, because, forsooth, it was his sovereign pleasure, (to the end that he might manifest his own glory, and secure consummate good to his elect church) to WILL, PURPOSE, AND DECREE the fall, with all its awful effects, of both men and reprobate angels.

George. Aye, but hold; stop, pray stop, you cannot be aware to what awful lengths your own language is carrying you. What, God, “a being, to whose nature and perfections SIN is essentially opposed,” WILL AND DECREE the fall; and, therefore, all the subsequent sins of his rational creatures!! Most unhallowed representation of the Divine Being. On this principle of awful reasoning, sin itself is considered as actually resulting from God’s decree and positive appointment, and produced by his agency. Little did I expect to hear such horrid blasphemies asserted, when we first entered into conversation. God the author of sin, God the author of sin!!! I,—I.

Wash. I,—I. Why, George, “you’ve cut,” as says the proverb, “more than you can eat.” I say *you*—for certain I am that neither you nor any one else ever heard me so much as insinuate that God was the author of sin. The very idea—

George. O, but *I will say* that you do make God the author of sin; for if, as you say, God decrees and wills that man should sin, then He must be the author of sin, and man is not to blame, for who hath resisted his will?

Wash. Pray, Mr. Consequence, to whom does the appellation of “Mr. Fly” belong, now: your representation of a subject, which your overheated *sanctity* will not allow you to deliberate upon, makes me think, of Luther’s satire on a

similar representation of the very same subject. "By such hobgoblins as these, Satan has deterred men from reading the Sacred Writings." And do you really think it an "unhallowed *representation* of the Divine Being, a *statement* of horrid blasphemy, making God the author of sin," for one to affirm that man never sins, but by the determinate counsel and decree of God?

George. Indeed I do.

Wash. Then you are much such another reasoner as was the wicked servant, who stood condemned out of his own mouth; or are you such an ox, in human shape, as to be incapable of distinguishing between an *originating cause* and *authorship*. In whose WILL AND AGENCY did the present conversation originate? Why don't you speak?

George. Well; why of course it originated with me: I spoke the first word; it must have been in my will and pleasure therefore, that the conversation originated; and although you have predicated sentiments and avowed opinions that never existed in any thoughts. O, awful—I cannot bear to think of their being uttered.—Oh, how grieved I am, that I should have been the *innocent* cause of your uttering such wicked, such sinful sentiments.

Wash. So, then, you will allow that you were the *originating*, though *innocent cause*, and spring of the present conversation.

George. Yes; but I will not allow that I am the *author* of your unhallowed representations and blasphemous assertions, in which, you say man never sins, but by the will, decree, and determinate counsel of the Divine Being. There, now, what a fool I am.

Wash. Indeed you are.

George. Well, if I'm a fool, you are a crab.

Wash. Well, but go on, unless that is all you have to say.

George. Oh! how angry you do make me; I do so hate your nasty way of catching people up, and setting them down; I have a great mind never to speak to you again on any subject whatever. I was then going to tell you, only you make me so mad with you, that I now see my mistake; for, although with *me* originated our present conversation, connected with which so much SIN has been committed, nevertheless, the sin was not mine, but your's; *you* being the alone author of those statements of blasphemy, wherein you have represented God as decreeing sin.

Wash. But, surely, you are not going to stop there; I thought you were going to say, that you were now satisfied with the distinction, made by me, between God's decree or sovereign will being the originating cause of sin, and his being the author of it; for, although it was his decree, that sin should come into existence, by the medium of those who had only to be left to their own mutable natures, (although perfectly holy) under the influence of temptation, to bring into existence the sovereignty decreed evil, yet God had no part whatever, either in the conception or bringing forth of sin; this was wholly the work of God's mutable creatures, a work, in fact of which, God was incapable, not because he was more holy than were either angels or men, in their primeval existence, but because his holy nature is immutable, whereas their's were mutable. Do you understand me?

George. I think I do. If I mistake not, your remarks were designed to prove, that the Almighty, who knew the nature of man to be

but mutable, *at best*, resolved, with a view to his own glory, and the future good of the elect, to discover to his creatures, the difference between the mutable perfection of man's primeval standing, and the immutable perfections of the divine nature ; for the accomplishment of which SOVEREIGN PURPOSE, he placed them in circumstances, obnoxious to a temptation, under the influence of which, his own mutable nature concurring thereto, he was *sure to fall* from his state of native probity towards his Creator, into the sin of robbing God, by prostituting to the service of idolatry, those possessions with which he was entrusted, although previously awed therefrom, by the positive command and attendant threat, contained in Gen. ii. 17. So that, notwithstanding the fall of man, with the circumstances leading thereto, originated with the sovereign will and decree of God ; nevertheless, the conception, breeding, and bringing forth of sin, was man's act, on which account *man*, and not GOD, was the author of man's sin.

Wash. Now then, George, seeing you have gone so far into a subject, at which, a few minutes since, you were mightily alarmed, will you have patience with me, while I suggest to your consideration, in recollection of the former part of our conversation, *that* if it should be the sovereign will and decree of George the Fourth, (without letting them know his design, yea, he should positively prohibit such a thing) so to manage, as to place Carlisle and Taylor in circumstances, in which they should be exposed to the temptation of writing a work, defamatory of the Christian faith, to which temptation, from the powerful influence of the tempter, in concurrence with their own liable nature, they could but comply, although warned beforehand

of the fatal consequences which must follow their compliance; I say, supposing that such a case should exist, with whom must the writing of such a work have originated.

George. Why, with the king to be sure; for, although he did not let them know his designs of serving himself, and the Protestant faith thereby, yea, more, he even gave them a positive command not to do such a thing, although he had previously decreed that such should be the case, and, to this end, he placed them in circumstances, under the influence of which they could but violate his command, which violation, after all, was but the fulfilling of his determinate counsel. But, I must go.

Wash. No, don't go for a minute; but, let me ask, do you really allow then, that the king was the *originator* of this said book's existence, which, notwithstanding the infidels wrote it freely, they did it of *necessity* and not as free agents, and at the same time were accountable for what they did, it being *their* act, and that in known rebellion against their lord's command. To all this, and more, you have certainly conceded; and, do you allow, moreover, that his majesty was the author of that infidel work? I suppose you do. From what?

George. Oh! no, indeed I do not; for, although I so argued at the beginning of our conversation, I am of another mind now, the necessary conclusion, deducible from my own arguments, have fully satisfied my mind, of the essential difference between his majesty's originating the plan, and his executing the work determined upon therein. To Carlisle and Taylor, therefore, we must ascribe the authorship of the blasphemous book. Such is the good of controversy, however warmly conducted for a time.

Wash. Am I to conclude, then, that you are now satisfied, that, notwithstanding, the introduction of sin into our nature, *originated* with the wise, and sovereign decree, and absolute will of God, yet it is man, and not God, who is the author of sin.

George. Yes, Mr. Washington, of this I am both certain and satisfied, not only from reason but also from revelation; and, therefore, as the present discussion originated with me, with me also it shall close. Adieu, I'm off; only let me add—

To God be all the good ascrib'd,
Which from man's sin shall be derived;
But unto man all sin impute,
Thus all objections you'll refute.

Wherefore, I proceed to observe, that a *third* objection, urged against the doctrine of God's willing sin, is, that it does away with man's responsibility; "for if," say they, "man does only what God decreed he should do," "Who hath resisted his will?" This is an old, worn out, thread-bare objection, urged against the inspired apostles, which circumstance, furnishes us with the most unquestionable proof, that the doctrine, contended for in this letter, is the very same that was contended for by the Apostle Paul, (Rom. ix.) the very same objections being urged to refute it. Such objectors would do well, however, to recollect, that man's responsibility never did depend on, or originate, in, the decreative will of God, but on the word of, or the rational creature's relationship to God; for as all personally considered, are alike obnoxious to the divine decrees, infants and idiots would be liable to equal responsibility with others, on the supposition, that man's responsibility originates in

the decretive will of his Maker. Man's responsibility, therefore, must be looked for from a quarter, distinct from the decrees or purposes of the divine sovereignty, God himself and himself only, being amenable to them; whereas his creatures are amenable to his word. Therefore, let such objections be abandoned as futile, it being more wise for guilty creatures to arraign themselves at the bar of God's word, not his will, and thereby, they will not only find human responsibility to exist, without denying the divine decrees, but, it is to be hoped, they will find themselves so guilty, as to have need of recourse to those very decrees, which they now despise, as the only ground of hope of any being saved; for, without decrees, all must be lost.

Fourthly. It is objected, that this sentiment interferes with man's free agency. What is free agency? Why, as applied to any being save God, it is what Luther calls "freewill—a downright lie;" for, who else is, or can be a free agent, but one who acts in thought, word, and deed, independent of any influence out of himself. This I confess, is what proud man would like to be, and, though he is not so, he would like to be thought so, and therefore, those divines who will sell their consciences to teach such a doctrine, are the most approved and the best rewarded by their deluded followers. Such an agent, man never was yet, not even in his primeval standing. Man may, or may not; sometimes he does, and sometimes he does not act freely in what he does and thinks, but there is a wide difference between a man's doing what he does freely, and his doing what he does independently. This, however, is too plain in the language of common sense, and therefore, easy to be understood to need explanation, or to admit of refutation; consequently, I

need only remark, in further refutation of the supposed ostensible objection, that man's crime can only originate in his not being a free agent, for where there is free agency, there can be no law to prohibit or bind, and no law no sin; a bond on law, being directly opposed to the very idea of independency: bring the Deity under law, and God himself at that moment ceases to be a free agent, insomuch, that Toplady has wisely argued, "That Christ himself was an absolute necessitarian," indeed he might have gone further, and said that God himself in his *covenant character*, is not a free agent but a necessitarian, for such truly is the case, inasmuch, as he *bound* himself over to the service of the elect, from which he is not at *liberty* to retract without the commission of sin. This therefore, disposes at once of the foolish idea, which says, man cannot be the subject of crime, unless he acts as a free agent, not considering the difference between even a *slave's* doing what he does *freely*, and doing it independently. Did either sinner or saint act as free agent, the latter would have whereof to boast with "a well done I," in direct opposition to Jer. ix. 23, 24, x. 13, Gal. ii. 20; while the sinner Judas, must be regarded as becoming the son or heir of perdition of his own freewill, and Pilate consigning over Christ to be crucified without *power being administered* or *given* to him, for the express purpose of his doing as he did. No sinner, the most diabolical, ever yet acted as a *free agent*; although every sinner, in the perpetration of the vilest deeds, invariably commits such acts freely, and from choice; the latter therefore, is sufficient to constitute crime, and render the subject of sin obnoxious to the justice of that God in whom he lives, moves, and has his being. How freely does the suicide commit the fatal deed of self destruction, by drinking up

the awful draught of deadly poison, but who dares say, that he did not thereby accumulate crime; enhancing to himself (unless saved therefrom by sovereign grace, which is not only possible, but in many cases of the kind most certain) the dismal destiny of a murderer! And yet how was it to be avoided, seeing Jeremiah most positively avers, “*I know that the way of man is not in himself*: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps,” Jer. x. 23. Daniel also is equally positive in his declaration, that “*The wicked shall do wickedly.*” Dan. xii. 10; while Solomon does not hesitate to say, “*The DISPOSINGS of the heart in man, are of the Lord;*” texts point blank against the *notion* of man’s being a free agent, though in perfect concord with the Scripture doctrines of man’s *accountability* and *culpability*, the former originating in man’s dependence, as a creature, justly obnoxious to the revealed commands of his Creator, as the rule of his actions; while the latter consists in his *violating freely, by choice*, the decalogue, imposed as the guide of his actions; although in breaking the same, he, like those who crucified the Son of God, did only FULFIL THE DETERMINATE COUNSEL OR DECREE OF GOD, in which Jehovah himself had appointed not only when, how, and where every human being should come into the world, but when, how, and where, every human being should go out of the same. This, therefore, ought to suffice for an answer to the fourth *foolish* objection. “Therefore,” said the Son of God, to account for the unbelief of the Jews, “they COULD NOT believe because that Esaias had said again, HE hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that they SHOULD NOT see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted,

and I should heal them." John xii. 40. "These things," says Calvin, "many do refer to *sufferance*, as if, in forsaking the REPROBATE, he suffered them TO BE blinded by Satan. But that solution is too fond, forasmuch as the Holy Ghost in plain words expresseth, that they are stricken with blindness and madness by the just judgment of God. It is said, that he hardened the heart of Pharos, also that he did make dull and strengthen it. SOME do, within savoury cabillation, *mark* out these phrases of speech, because wherein, another place it is said, that Pharos did harden his own heart, there is his own will set for the cause of his hardening; as though these things did not very well agree together, although in divers manners, that man, while he is moved in working by God, doeth also work himself; and I do turn back their *objection* against themselves. For, if to harden, do *signify but a bare sufferance*, then the very *motion of obstinacy shall not be properly in Pharos*. Now how weak and foolish were it so to expound, as if Pharos did only *suffer* himself to be hardened." And yet, forsooth, such is the ridiculously foolish exposition of Scripture, given by *modern Calvinists*, who contend that when the Holy Ghost teacheth that *God* hardened Pharaoh's heart, he only means that God *permitted* his heart to be hardened: wherefore, with what pertinency does Calvin rebut such sophists, by turning their objections on themselves, by rendering the text, Exo. viii. 15, as follows, "But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he *permitted* his heart to be hardened," &c; although this fantastical twisting of the sacred text goes no further towards the cause of freewill than does the true sense of it; for, where the sinner is hardened, it matters not who hardens him, seeing he is there-

by incapacitated for free volition." "Those of us, who go to church" says the ingenious Top-lady, ' profess ourselves to be' TIED and BOUND with the CHAIN of our sins; why then should we deem ourselves too grand to be TIED and BOUND with the good, though not always perceivable, CHAIN of providential necessity. An independent creature is a contradiction in terms." And yet, such creatures *were, are and ever must be*, both devils, angels, and men, allowing that they were created free agents. Such, however, was not the case; elect angels being so *tied and bound*, that there was no possibility of their not continuing what and where they were when first created; whereas, the non-elect angels were so dependent on their mutable nature, to which God had *subjected* them, as to render it impossible that they could have acted otherwise than as they did, that being the door way, appointed by their Creator, for their going out of that place and condition of bliss, in which it was never intended they should continue; nor is it a less fact, that man fell from his first estate by necessity. What, then, becomes of the golden calf called man's free agency? Is it not, as I before stated, what Luther designates, "freewill—a downright lie," designed to make the creature on a level with the Creator. This, however, by modern divines, is styled horrid blasphemy, "originating," to use the language of a *fifth* objector, "in my not distinguishing between God's prescience and his decretive will." In this objection, I am urged to adopt a system, (to avoid the charge of blasphemy) which represents the Almighty, as foreseeing and foreknowing the existence of events in his dominions, which he did not will should occur: therefore, they occur, contrary, yea, in direct opposition to, and at war with, his

sovereign pleasure. But the question is not, whether the Almighty foreknew that angels and man would become sinners ; but whether he foreknew those events, in consequence of his having decreed and determined both their occurrence and effects. In reply to this interesting inquiry, I shall here insert the unanswerable reasoning of great Tucker, " God must be infallibly sure of the things foreknown, or he could not be said to foreknow them. But whence could this certainty arise, if not from his own immutable will ? His having determined them, must be the *source*, both of their certain existence and of his own immutable knowledge. For, as a late great master in Israel has observed, certain and immutable knowledge, is founded on some certain and immutable cause ; which can be no other than the *divine will*. God knows that such and such things *will be*; BECAUSE HE HAS DETERMINED IN HIS WILL, THAT THEY SHALL BE." And, therefore, nothing can be infallibly foreknown, but as it is known to be his immutable will. To examine this a little further, let me ask, what is it that we do, or can foreknow, unless upon this foundation ? Is it the positions of the heavenly bodies, and some of their various effects, as eclipses, and change of seasons ? Is it the flux or reflux of the sea, at certain periods ? These are still the will of God, as manifested in the established law or order of nature. Nature, in her operations, evidences his will, as clearly as any thing revealed in his word : and it is only the divine will, manifested in this established order, that can be any ground of foreknowledge in these operations. How could we know that a body, lighter than air will ascend, while the heavier descend ; that heat will melt wax, while it hardens clay. If these effects were not the

apparent laws of nature, as settled and established by the immutable will of the Omnipotent Ruler, could we be sure, that the rolling planets would continue to perform their revolutions, and night and morn, and seasons again return? Were it not revealed, as the *sovereign will*, that day and night, summer and winter, seedtime and harvest, should continue, could we be certain, that this ponderous globe, hung upon nothing, with others more ponderous than it, would continue to whirl, with force so rapid, through such immense tracks of space, and never vary their course? Did not we know it to be the will of the all-wise mover, and that his omnipotent arm is equal to the mighty work, or could we have an absolute certainty of their continuing a moment longer? Were we not assured, by the divine word, and unaccomplished prophecies, that the end is not yet come? These things must appear evident to the views of impartial reason. From which we may justly infer, that no creature can have any certain infallible foreknowledge of any thing which has not its foundation primarily, in the *sovereign and immutable will of God*, either as revealed in his word, or manifested in his works. It follows also, that if creatures cannot be to themselves the foundation of infallible knowledge, much less can they be so to God: and if they are not the ground of his foreknowledge, nothing out of himself can be. Further, as there cannot be a knowledge of the existence of things, without the existence of the things known, and as bare knowledge cannot give or be the cause of existence to any thing, (for they must have either an actual, or a certainly determined existence, before they can be known) we must conclude, that God must have determined all existences and events, before (in order

of nature) he could know them. And, as his knowledge, is eternal and immutable, his will respecting all things, must be no less so."

Now, Antichristian therefore, and not less stupid, must it be in modern divines, to teach, that God foreknew and foresaw that man would sin, but he did not will that such *should* be the case; whereas, God himself can foreknow nothing but on the broad principle of his first willing the existence of the thing foreknown: let it be otherwise, and the divine prescience must be founded, not in the divine will, but in the contingencies of mutable existences. And then, what becomes of God's foreknowledge? Why, it will amount to a mere nonentity. It being demonstrated to the understanding of Dr. South, that the doctrine of divine prescience, and the doctrine of absolute decrees or predestination, must stand and fall together, he was immediately converted to the predestinarian side of the controversy, and continued so till the day of his death. See Cooper on Predestination 67, 68. Indeed, I am at a loss to know how any person, especially a student in the Holy Scriptures, can read the prophecies contained therein, and afterwards object to believe in the ABSOLUTE WILL of God, as the originating cause of all evil? What are Scripture prophecies, but the matter of divine prescience predicated? and in what does God's foreknowledge consist? why, in nothing else but his absolute knowledge of his own immutable will. For God, therefore, to foreknow his own mind, concerning what shall or shall not take place even to a creature's thought, his mind being his absolute decree, God prophesied (if I may so say) to Abraham, that his seed should go down to Egypt, in which place they were to exist four hundred years; also, that the people, among

whom his seed were to sojourn, should afflict them, &c. Now, what was this predicated fact but the divine prescience, foretelling the divine decrees, the latter being the life of the former. But was there no SIN connected with the Egyptians afflicting the Hebrews? I should think there was indeed, if killing innocent children is sin; and was that sanguinary tragedy included in the divine prescience? it was most certainly. Then must it not have been included in God's absolute will and decrees? necessarily it was; nor can any one divine living prove to the contrary, but by proving that man to be the only Christian, who teaches his votaries to believe, that "there is no God." Wherefore, having disposed of the fifth freewill objection, I proceed to remark, that the *sixth* objection urged against the belief of all things, both good and bad, being ordained by the decree of God, is the abuse, and ill use of such a sentiment among carnal men. To this objection, I might reply, in some what the same language as that made use of by Mr. Richard Baxter, who believed a suicide might be saved, and who he says "if it should be objected, that what I maintain may encourage suicide, I answer, *I am not to tell a lie, to prevent it.*" Christian ministers, I add, are to preach THE TRUTH. Wherefore, not till it can be proved, that God's decree, as contended for in this letter, is error, am I at liberty to dispense with it in my ministrations, let wicked men make what use they will of such a sentiment. The Apostle Paul was too well acquainted with human nature, not to know, that not a few of his hearers, indeed all who were uninstructed by the Holy Spirit, would wrest his ministerial testimony to their own destruction, but did that deter him from preaching doctrines, which were hard to be understood? certainly

not ; the fact is, (as far as it relates to myself) I should hesitate to continue to preach any sentiment, which did not provoke natural men to rebellion against God ; nor do I hesitate to say, that the rebellion produced in the minds, words, and conduct of natural men, will be proportioned to the opportunities they possess, of hearing the truth ; and the more truth they hear, the more at enmity will they be, against the God of truth ; wherefore, instead of its being an argument, in disproof of any doctrine being Scripture truth, because of the evil it genders in the minds, extorts from the mouths, and produces in the lives of natural men ; it affords the most demonstrable proof, that sentiments, producing such effects on natural men, are the very *acme* of gospel mysteries. Paul says, “ I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou SHALT NOT COVET,” which divine prohibition, though the very truth of God, called forth Paul’s lusting after prohibited objects. “ What shall we say then ? Is the law sin ? God forbid ! ” The same may be said of Christ, as the TRUTH, who, when on earth, made the Jews, especially the Pharisees, sin sevenfold more than they would have done, had he never come. And how did he do that ? why, by preaching the gospel of free grace, in opposition to the Mosaic ceremonies. The same may be said of the gospel of Christ, which I will answer for carries as many men to hell, as it does to heaven ; it being, yea, the very preachers of it are said to be, “ Unto God a sweet savour of Christ,” not only “ in them that are saved, but in them that perish ; ” the gospel of Christ being, through their faithfully preaching it, life to the former and death to the latter. What shall we say then ? Is the gospel sin, or even error, because of the great evil to which it tends, in the

minds, lives and final destiny of those who hear it, as natural men? God forbid! "Whence," says Calvin, (when combating the very same objection as the one I am now refuting) "I pray you, cometh the stinke in a dead carrion, which hath been both rotted, and disclosed by the heate of the sunne, yet, no man dooth therefore saie, that the sunbeames doe stinke, away therefore with this doggische forwasdnesse, which maye indede afarre off BARKE at the justice (and so at the TRUTH) of God, but cannot *touche* it."

Once for all, therefore, without detaining your attention longer on this part of my defence, ever remember, that the truest way to know, what is truth, is to ask, and get an answer to this question, What influence has the doctrine, advocated by your preacher, on the minds of those who hear it? does it make the wicked do more wickedly? driving them to desparation, and calling forth the most latent evil of their natures against the Christ of God; calling him, and his ministers, ALL MANNER of evil names? if so, you may rely upon it as the TRUTH OF GOD, which will be further manifest, by its opposite influence on the *minds, words, and doings* of those, who are made partakers of the divine nature. See this in the life of Paul, the gospel being like the sun, which *while it melts the wax, it hardens the clay*; nor can it be otherwise with the *truth*, it must melt the quickened together with Christ Jesus, to a state of evangelical contrition, while it hardens the unregenerate in their unbelief, impenitency, and enmity; making them reprobates to every good work; and this accounts for the vilest, and most hardened sinners, among mankind, being found among those, who, while they are most conversant with gospel doctrines, are destitute of God's grace in their hearts; these are they, who will,

frame their excuses for sin, from God's truth, yes like the philosopher Zeno's servant, who being caught in an act of theft, either with a design to ridicule his master's doctrine, or to avail himself of it, in order to evade punishment, said, "It was my *fate* to be a thief." But did that invalidate the truth of Zeno's philosophy? I should think not, indeed. And is it not the same with gospel sinners? do not they, when told of their abominable deeds, either with a view to excuse themselves, or to ridicule the doctrine of God's decrees, cry aloud, O! you teach that all things are decreed! and therefore, we were predestinated to live in riot, in drunkenness, in knavery, and such like flagrancies, as the open profligate would be ashamed of. But does such vileness of conduct, in which such professors encourage themselves, make God's truth, thus abused, a lie? Oh no; truth is truth still, wherefore, let such ridiculers of gospel doctrines know, that the time will come, when fearfulness shall seize the hypocrite, so that the *sinner*s in Zion, shall be afraid, knowing to their cost, the truth of Zeno's reply to his hardened servant, who endeavoured to ridicule his master's doctrine, by saying, "It was my fate to be a thief;" received for answer, "and to be punished for it," said Zeno. Wherefore, let such hardened wretches, who think to make a mock at God's truth, especially the divine decrees, by saying, they were predestinated to sin, recollect also, that they are also predestinated to **BURN IN HELL FIRE!** at the same time, I beg to remark, that such abuse of the doctrine, will not be found in the life of any godly person, (except when subjected thereto by the power of temptation, which is not only a possible, but a too frequent case) on which account let me *beseech* believers to be very care-

ful to avoid this temptation, and at the same time allowing that on some occasions, they feel their vile hearts capable of such demoniac delusions, let them, I say, be cautious, that they do not add to their sin, by denying or even objecting, to the doctrine of God's decrees, another word for predestination, because, they, under the power of temptation, have been left at some seasons of their pilgrimage, to make an unhallowed use of them. The importance of this advice may be argued for, from the dear price it has cost some of God's flock to learn its worth, I may say with Calvin, they who will mind this counsel "neither for the time past will murmur against God for their adversities, nor lay upon him the blame of wicked doings, but rather, they will search and learn out of the Scriptures, what pleaseth God, that by the guiding of the Holy Ghost, they may labour to attain thereunto;" proving "indeed, that nothing is more profitable than the knowledge of his doctrine." Nor will the godly in Christ Jesus follow their pernicious habits, who *pretend*, that the belief of God's having decreed all men's thoughts, words, and deeds, will furnish men with just authority to think light of sin, it being impossible, that those to whose consciences the *exceeding sinfulness* of sin has once been manifested, can ever be prevailed on, to think otherwise, than did Seneca, who said "were there no God to punish me, no Devil to torment me, no hell to burn me, no men to see me, *I would not sin, BECAUSE OF ITS UGLINESS, AND THE GRIEF OF MY CONSCIENCE.*" Sin is to every believer, what it was to Paul, a source of unequalled wretchedness; wherefore, when a passionately fond mother, can think indifferently of the assassin's crime, who embrued his guilty hands in the blood of her innocent

child, without any incentive, save that of superlative delight in such sanguinary deeds, then may a believer think indifferently of sin. But I must hasten, to consider a *seventh* objection; and that is, if I may be allowed to frame it into the objector's own language, "Well, but allowing, that it is truth, and we are compelled, (how generous; something like misers' being necessitated to resign, what the King of Terrors would not allow them to retain) to allow that such a doctrine as God's decreeing sin, is in the Bible, (at which, by the by, they ought to have added, we are very much chagrined) still what good can it do to preach it?" To this objection, I have already replied more than once, that "All Scripture is profitable, either for doctrine, reproof, correction, or instruction in righteousness." Wherefore, two things being granted, first, that the doctrine of God's willing or decreeing sin, is positively revealed in the Bible; and secondly, that *all* Scripture was written for edification; it only remains to know, whether Paul preached the **WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD**; and then, whether he could have done this, without preaching the divine decrees, in their most extensive latitude. The latter question being answered in the negative, we may easily decide upon what is the duty of a gospel minister, in reference to whether he is to go, and do likewise; fully concluding, that God never yet instituted or authorized the preaching of that doctrine, which he did not design as a medium of good.

What says Calvin? "And although the doctrine be strange to our understanding, and it seems to us, that we might speak against it, yet, notwithstanding, let us forbear to reply, and let us humble ourselves under the majesty of our God; for truly, the thing wherein he will

try men's humility, is, that we should glorify him in ALL his works; yea even though they agree not, neither match with our natural reason."

"There is not truer obedience of faith, than that, and if they which babble so much nowadays against God's providence, had learned but this one principle of honouring God, by confessing, that *he* is righteous; and measure not *his* justice or righteousness by their own brain, there would be no more difficulty. But what? There are a sort of proud beggars which set themselves against God, and swell at him, like toads; insomuch, that if they have once taken a toy in their head, *although God have spoken flat to the contrary*; they pass (care) not for that, neither will they cease their rage against it." In a word, then, I ask, what greater good can come from preaching, than that of bringing Christian men and women, to bow, by faith, to the sovereignty of God? (referring the most inscrutable, and incomprehensible doctrines, as are those which teach God's sovereignty in the disposal of Jacob and Esau before they were born, the children having done neither good nor evil) to the unfathomable depths of the wisdom of God. This, as Calvin says, is the zenith of *Christian obedience*, to say, from the heart, "What is, is best," not because we can perceive in what respects it is best, but, because our faith is, that in God's wisdom, as that we cannot possibly believe otherwise, which made the Saviour say, "Blessed are they which believe, and see not;" nor is the practical tendency of such a doctrine, less worthy the honor of God, and the best interests of his believing people. "Of this knowledge," says good Calvin, "necessarily ensueth, both a thankfulness of mind,

in prosperous success of things, and also patience in adversity, and an incredible assuredness against the time to come. Whatsoever, therefore, shall betide unto him prosperously, and according to his heart's desire, all that he will ascribe unto God, whether he feel the bounty of God by the ministry of men, or be holpen by lifeless creatures; for thus he will think in his mind, surely it is the Lord which hath inclined their minds to me, to be instruments of his goodness toward me. If any adversity happen, he will by and by therein also lift up his mind to God, whose hand availeth much to imprint in us a patient and quiet moderation of heart." See all this, I would add, and much more, made good in the faith and conduct of Joseph, toward God and his brethren; Eli's submission to the predicated judgments of God, on his family; David's bearing patiently the cursing of Shimei; Job blessing God, for the trial of his mind and adversity of circumstances, into which he was plunged, by the murdering of his servants, and the loss of his cattle; all of which he ascribed to the hand and decree of God. The first occasion of my being so furiously anathematized from the good opinion of my late runaway "lord brothers," at Zoar, was, my expounding the Lord's prayer, in particular on the sentence, "thy will be done;" in which exposition, I fearlessly stated, the doctrine of God's decreeing sin; nor was any doctrine, ever preached at Zoar, more blessed of God, to the reconciling of his tried people to his inscrutable dispensations; insomuch, that, those who were before murmuring against God's government, which, in fact, they did not eye as his government; whereas on hearing that all evil,

as well as good, was from God, I say, they were heard to sing,

“What may be our future *lot*,
Well we know concerns us *not*,
This should set our hearts at *rest*,
What thy WILL ORDAINS is BEST.”

Of what religion, then, must those Christians be possessed, who urge, as an argument against God's decrees, that *they cannot see* what good such high doctrines can do. “The Scriptures are written, not to gratify curiosity, but to nourish faith. They do not stop to tell you *how*, nor to answer a number of questions which might be asked; but to tell you so much as is necessary, and no more.”

A great deal more, however, I wish you to *remember*, might have been said, on several subjects, introduced to your notice in this letter, but the subject on which I undertook to write, which was the origin of moral evil, being but one, every other polemical topic, referred to therein, has only been glanced at, as a subject of reference, and not of discussion. I am quite aware, that there are other objections urged against the doctrine maintained herein, but they are too contemptible to merit attention, and too foolish not to secure their own refutation; and as for the undue length to which I have extended my epistle, this was without design, for which reason, without one single apology, I send it as it is.

Perfect love casteth out fear; I *know to whom* I have written; *what* I have written; and *why* I have written it; believe me, therefore,

My dear Madam,
Ever to remain your most
Grateful, obliged, and
Affectionately devoted servant,
WASHINGTON WILKS.

" LEARN mortal, saved by God's divine decree,
 To take his word, whose word is very truth ;
 So wilt thou see that highest, purest love,
 Decreed, unerring, every single jot,
 Which e'er found place among the wondrous whole.
 That direful monster, sin, had ne'er been known
 By holy angels, or by sinless man,
 Had not their fall been previously ordain'd.
 And why? was't not his *glory* at the first
 He sought ; else why create at all?
 His glorious self, can never know a change,
 But is, for ever, what he ever was,
 The sovereign, holy, self-existent, God!
 But, he had formed the grand design
 Of shewing, what Almighty power could do,
 By making all things work his mightiest praise.
 So angels fell, *necessitously* fell,
 Because 'twas meet, that for his future work,
 Vile Beelzebub be fitted for his place,
 Whose fiend-like power was needful for the fall
 Of holy man, Jehovah's noblest work ;
 Had man, and angels, kept their first estate,
 (As stupid moderns testify they might,)
 Then, great Jehovah's well arrang'd decrees,
 Had all been disarrang'd, and null, and void.
 But who will dare deny the glorious truth,
 That 'tis redemption crowns the mighty whole ;
 What cavalier dares despise so wise a plan
 As that which subjected to grief and shame
 Th' insulted Sovereign, for the subject's sake.
 But know the truth, this work, ye so admire,
 Had ne'er been known, had sin, with all its death,
 Ne'er rear'd its head, and kill'd the beauteous whole,
 Because 'tis sin that yields Jehovah's Christ,
 The way to shew his august grace and love.
 No mortal's crime, how black soe'er it be,
 Can be more base, and vile, than God
 By his determin'd counsel (which shall stand)
 Eternally in wisdom pre-ordain'd it should.
 And so ordaining makes that guilt and crime,
 Produce, unthought of, unexampled good.
 And shall a mortal contradict his Lord,
 Or dare arraign Jehovah at his bar?
 Unhallowed thought, and insolence extreme,
 Which no poor earthly monarch would receive,
 Yet which th' Eternal condescends to bear.
 Be mute, oh man, be mute, and since thou art
 That creature who partakes his highest thought,
 Oh never dare despise his grace and love."