

THE  
**THEOLOGICAL WORKS**

OF THE  
**REV. THOMAS SCOTT,**  
AUTHOR OF A COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE.

CONTAINING  
THE FORCE OF TRUTH,—TREATISE ON REPENTANCE,—GROWTH IN GRACE,—  
SERMON ON ELECTION AND FINAL PERSEVERANCE,—SERMONS ON SELECT  
SUBJECTS,—ESSAYS ON THE MOST IMPORTANT SUBJECTS IN RELIGION,—AND  
THE NATURE AND WARRANT OF FAITH IN CHRIST.

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THE DOCTRINES  
OF  
ELECTION AND FINAL PERSEVERANCE,  
STATED FROM SCRIPTURE,  
AND SHOWN CONSISTENT WITH EXHORTATORY AND PRACTICAL PREACHING  
AND CONDUCTIVE TO HOLINESS OF LIFE.  
**A SERMON,**  
PREACHED AT THE LOCK CHAPEL,  
NOVEMBER 26, 1786.

## PREFACE.

THE Sermon, originally published under this title, was written on a very particular occasion, and in too great haste for the difficulty and importance of the subject. The author's mind likewise was agitated at the time, by the circumstances in which he was placed: yet, amidst these disadvantages, it was deemed necessary to print it *verbatim* as preached, except as some notes were added.

When therefore the occasion which required the publication was passed, and the second Edition, which had been called for in a few days, was disposed of, he dropped all thoughts of reprinting it: deeming it too *personal*, and *too much adapted to special circumstances*, to answer the permanent purposes of a calm, deliberate, matured, and impartial treatise on the deep and mysterious subject.

He finds, however, that the Sermon is frequently inquired for: and this has made him apprehensive lest the circumstance of its being out of print should be considered as a dereliction of his principles. He has, therefore, at length, determined to publish another edition: but in doing this, while he adheres strictly to the *arrangement* and *sentiments* of the original Sermon, he deems himself at liberty to omit some things *personal* or *occasional*, to revise the style, and to make several additions and alterations, in order to render it something more adequate to the ends proposed by the publication.

The reader will perceive, that the principal difference betwixt the statement here given of the doctrines in question, and that of many modern Calvinists, relates to Redemption by the death of Christ, as being of *infinite sufficiency*, and therefore in some respects, the *common benefit of mankind*. This view of the subject makes not the least difference, in respect of the entire freeness of salvation by the sovereign purpose and grace of God, made known in the effectual calling of his chosen remnant: while it gives the preacher an immense advantage in fulfilling the ministry of reconciliation, and yields the awakened sinner the greatest encouragement in applying to Christ for salvation. On this ground we may say to any human being, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." But, on the other plan, no sinner can know, previously to conversion, whether he has any more right to rely on the merits and mediation of Christ, than fallen angels have.

The Author earnestly desires the candid inquirer after truth, and all who dare to think for themselves, to examine the passages quoted from Scripture in this Sermon, and to observe accurately whether they do not fully establish his statement. Then let them weigh all the other testimonies of holy writ with the same design; and finally let them consider what immense pains and ingenuity it requires, to explain a variety of texts in consistency with the other scheme; with what confidence and plausibility opponents urge them against our doctrine; and yet how naturally they coincide with the view here given. To the author they give no trouble; they express his sentiments, and in similar circumstances he should use the same language. The statement here given, is by no means *new* or *peculiar*. He has proved that the compilers of our liturgy held the same sentiments. Many of his brethren at present coincide with him. The most eminent Calvinist divines in North America, who have lived during the present century, view the subject in the same light; and abundance of testimonies of this kind, from every quarter, might easily be ad-

duced: but let the word of God decide.

The author is not anxious about the class of professed Christians among whom his brethren may rank him. No one of them is either right or wrong in everything; and that which in one situation is disgraceful, in another is deemed honourable. But it appears to him of great consequence to show, that these despised doctrines are scriptural, rational, holy, consolatory, and consistent with every other part of Christianity: and that the objections commonly urged against them, originate in misapprehension of their nature and tendency: and may generally be traced back to distorted views given of them, or scandalous perversions made of them.

In some few places, however, the terms *Calvinist* and *Calvinism*, *Arminian* and *Arminianism* are retained; not as invidious distinctions, but for convenience, and to prevent circumlocution. It is a great mistake to suppose, that self-righteous pride is peculiar to Arminians, or Antinomian laxity to Calvinists. Pride and dislike to the holy law of God are alike congenial to our fallen nature: so that every man is radically of himself both self-righteous and Antinomian. No creed, as such, will cure either of these distempers; but regeneration renders us *convalescent*. Yet even true Christians frequently hold and contend for doctrines, which very inadequately influence their own hearts and lives; nay, they often maintain errors, without being proportionably injured by them. Hence many Calvinists are prone to pride and self-preference, and many Arminians evidently humble. But the Christian temper, wherever found, even though a man express himself, as we think inaccurately, is vastly more valuable than the most exact notions without “the mind which was in Christ Jesus.”—On the other hand, the Arminian is not at all secured from Antinomianism, nor the Calvinist exposed to it, by their several tenets; seeing both of them are *Antinomian* just as far as they are *unsanctified*, and no further: “because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Perhaps speculating Antinomians abound most among persons professing to be Calvinists: but Antinomians whose sentiments influence their practice, swarm among such as are really Arminians. Does the reader doubt this? Let him ask any of those multitudes, who openly trample on God’s commandments, what they think of predestination and election, and he will speedily be convinced, that they are Arminians: yet they take occasion from their notions concerning the mercy of God, to encourage themselves in impenitent wickedness. It would, therefore, be unspeakably better for all parties to examine such subjects with impartiality, meekness, and brotherly love; than reciprocally to censure, despise, and condemn one another.

May 2, 1798.

## SERMON, &c.

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JOHN VI. 37–40.

All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

**T**HE holy Scriptures, being the word of God, are doubtless perfectly consistent. Moses and Samuel, David and Isaiah, Paul and James, being merely the penmen of the Holy Spirit, must perfectly harmonize in the truths which they inculcate. Precepts, threatenings, warnings, judgments, counsels, exhortations, invitations, promises, privileges, histories, examples, types, and parables, in divers methods, subserve the same great ends of instruction. They all display and illustrate the same character of God, and of man; and impress the same ideas of sin and of holiness, of time and of eternity, of happiness and of misery. They all concur in displaying the glory of the divine perfections in the dispensations of Providence in this world, and the final distribution of rewards and punishments in the world to come. And though these constituent parts of holy writ do not in all respects answer the same purposes, each has its distinct important use in the accomplishment of one vast and uniform design.

But though the Scriptures are in themselves completely harmonious, yet men do not readily perceive this harmony. Many imagine they see in them numerous inconsistencies and contradictions: others, judging it impracticable to reconcile the sacred writers, give a partial preference to one above another, and set them in opposition to each other, according to their several opinions. The various sects and parties professing Christianity, appeal to Scripture in proof of their discordant tenets; and multitudes, content with those passages which seem to speak the language of the favourite system, pass over all the rest as if nothing to the purpose, or nothing to them; a mere *caput mortuum*<sup>1</sup> in divinity.

These things are notorious; but whence do they arise? We allow that the vastness of the design revealed in Scripture, which has relation to things unseen and eternal, and to the perfections of the incomprehensible God

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<sup>1</sup> The worthless insipid mass that remains when the spirits are all drawn off by distillation; or the *mere dross* left in refining metals.

must very far exceed the capacity of our narrow minds, and cannot enter the understanding at once, nor be apprehended at one glance; and, when viewed in parts, the unity is broken and the harmony obscured: insomuch that we may justly question, whether any creature can perfectly comprehend the consistency of the glorious plan, which “angels desire to look into.”—But other reasons concur in producing this discordancy of sentiment. The Bible is a revelation from God to *sinner*s; and it seems an apparent intention of the Holy Spirit, so to arrange and constitute this revelation, as to make trial of men’s hearts: and to distinguish betwixt the humble teachable inquirer after the way of salvation, and those who read the Scriptures with captious self-sufficiency in order to start objections; with attachment to a party for weapons of angry controversy; or with a worldly and sensual mind to find excuse for their sins. “The *way-faring* men, though fools, shall not err therein.” “But the Lord taketh the wise in their own craftiness.” “They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; and for *this cause* God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”<sup>2</sup> “Unto you,” saith our Lord to his inquiring disciples, “it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables; that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.”<sup>3</sup> My brethren, let us pray for a humble teachable spirit, which will avail us far more in understanding the Scriptures to the good of our own souls, than all the acuteness and learning in the world. In proportion as we possess this temper, and really love truth and holiness, we shall escape these dangers, and more and more perceive the consistency of the word of God.

But as this disposition is imperfect, and counteracted by remaining prejudice and corruption, in the best of men; so none of us perceive all that consistency which really subsists in divine revelation. A satisfactory discovery, however, of the harmony of Scripture, is doubtless a good test of the degree in which we really understand divine things; and, ever since the Bible became my peculiar study, this discovery has been my invariable object. No arguments could procure my assent even to the doctrine of *Justification by faith in Christ alone*; until I was satisfied of its perfect agreement with the honour of the divine law, and the indispensable necessity of per-

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<sup>2</sup> 2 Thess. ii. 10–12.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah vi. 9, 10. Matt. xiii. 13–15. Mark iv. 11, 12. Luke viii. 9, 10. John vii. 39, 41. Acts xxviii. 25–27.

sonal holiness, and fruitfulness in good works, which I was sure were everywhere insisted on in the sacred volume. In like manner, my objections to the doctrines of *personal election and final perseverance* were insuperable, till I was fully satisfied of their consistency, with exhortations, warnings, invitations, and persuasions, on the minister's part; and with diligence, watchfulness, and strenuous exertions, on that of the people; which are far more spoken of in Scripture than even these doctrines themselves. At that time I was almost entirely ignorant of the sentiments of *modern Calvinists*: and I am not sensible that any material alteration has since taken place in my views of these doctrines, by all I have seen, or heard, or read.

What those views are, I feel myself called upon more fully to declare from the pulpit and the press; that is, I consider it my duty at present to lay before you and the public, the substance of the doctrine I have preached, and probably shall preach, as long as the providence of God continues me among you. I say *probably*; for I trust I am open to conviction and desirous of instruction; and possibly some person may point out erroneous and unscriptural tenets in this statement of my sentiments. And whether he do it publicly or privately, as a friend or as an enemy, provided he convinces my judgment that I have been mistaken, he shall certainly have my thanks and acknowledgments for so doing.

I have in this view chosen a very copious text: but I neither intend to enter particularly into the *minutiae* of explanation, nor to confine myself closely to it; but, according to a very simple plan and method, to advert to a variety of other Scriptures as we proceed with the subject. I shall therefore take occasion from the text to observe:—

I. That Christ came down from heaven to execute the Father's commission.

II. That this commission hath a special reference to those whom the Father hath given him.

III. That all these, and none else, will come to Christ.

IV. That he will most certainly receive all that do come to him.

V. That his commission extends to the infallible and everlasting salvation of the body and soul of everyone, who is thus given to him and comes to him; or who sees him, believes in him, and depends on him for salvation.

VI. That all these observations are perfectly consistent with many things which some professed Calvinists object to as Arminianism: and this will naturally lead me to close with a brief application.—And may God the Spirit open all our understandings and hearts to understand this truth; and bless this design to the edification and establishment of many souls; and the promoting of true godliness within us, among us, and around us.

I. "Christ came down from heaven to execute the Father's commission."  
"I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him

that sent me.”—It might have been supposed that this expression, “I came down from heaven,” would create considerable difficulty to such as look upon Christ as a mere man, who never was in heaven before his ascension: but criticism, in the hands of an ingenious man, is a magic wand, and nothing can stand before it! It is, however, greatly to be wished, that these modes of interpretation had been conceded, as a kind of monopoly, to the Socinians, and had never disgraced the writings of those who call Jesus their Lord and God,” and who profess to trust in him alone for salvation. Oh! when will men show due reverence to the oracles of God, and suppose that the Holy Spirit dictates proper language, which needs not be tortured from its plain meaning, in the cause of truth, whatever the interest of a party may require?

But let this hint suffice: we are, I trust, otherwise minded as to the divinity of Christ. We profess at least to believe, that “being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God: *nevertheless* he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man.” Originally he was no servant, and therefore no creature: for all holy creatures must be the servants of God: but he condescended to assume that character along with human nature. In this character he acted on earth, and doth and will act in heaven till the day of judgment, by *commission*, and *according to instructions*. He came not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him; in which he not only is our Saviour, but “hath left us an example that we should follow his steps.”

We must not, however, suppose that there is any opposition betwixt the will of the Father, and that of the Son. He appeared on earth as Man; and by such language he intimated that he acted not by human partiality, but according to the counsel of God. It is likewise an accommodation to our infirmities, and serves to obviate our misapprehensions.

But what is the general purport of this commission? Let us hear the word of God: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of *all* acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.”—“His blood is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.” John i. 29, iii. 16–20. 1 Tim. i. 15, ii. 5, 6. Had the penmen of the Scriptures been as scrupulously careful to prevent even the appearance of deviating from exact systematical consistency, as many moderns are, they would never have thus expressed themselves. For my part I dare not use any of the above-mentioned arts of criticism, to narrow the obvious sense of these and similar texts: and as I hope this day, previously to receiving and administering the Lord’s Supper, to use the fol-

lowing terms in solemn prayer, Christ by his own oblation of himself once offered, made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world;”<sup>4</sup> I would no more contradict this solemn profession from the pulpit, than I would preach against the seventeenth article respecting predestination. The compilers of our Liturgy evidently thought both true, and consistent with each other; and I am happy to coincide in sentiment with these venerable characters.<sup>5</sup> It will appear that none but the elect can eventually be benefited by the death of Christ; yet there is a sense, of vast importance, in which it may be properly said, and the Holy Spirit hath expressly said, that “his blood is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.”

The principal, though not the only object of Christ’s appearing in human nature, and living so many years a holy sufferer, and dying in unknown agonies on the cross, was to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to make propitiation for iniquity;” as preparatory to his mediatory office in heaven, and his intercession for sinners. The perfection of his arduous obedience, and the intenseness of his complicated sufferings, were doubtless of indispensable necessity, and of vast efficacy, in this plan of redemption: yet it was the union of the *Deity* with the Man Christ Jesus, in one mysterious person, which stamped its full value on this sacrifice for sin. But can any man, who believes the *real Deity* of Christ, hesitate to pronounce it an *infinite ransom*? Infinite honour was given to the divine law by his obedience,

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<sup>4</sup> 1. “I learn, to believe in God the Father, who hath made me and all the world.”

2. “In God the Son, who hath redeemed me and *all mankind*.”

3. “In God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and *all the elect people of God*.”

(Church Catechism.)

Here *Election* is supposed to be connected immediately with *sanctification*, not with *redemption*; and this appears to me most evidently the scriptural way of stating the subject; though it differs in some measure from many Calvinist creeds and systems.

“Christ was crucified to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for the actual sins of men.” (2d Article.)

“The offering of Christ, once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual.” (31st Article)

Hence it appears, that this was the *deliberate judgment* of our venerable reformers: and that it is the *standard doctrine* of our established church.

<sup>5</sup> It is very well worthy of observation, that the Liturgy of the Church of England, though compiled by known Calvinists, is most pointedly opposite to every degree and species of Antinomianism. The conclusion of the general Thanksgiving, a great part of the Litany, and innumerable other passages, might be adduced in illustration of this remark. But the Collect for the day, when this Sermon was preached, is so directly apposite to the subject, that I shall insert a part of it.—“Stir up, O Lord, we beseech thee, the *wills* of thy faithful people, that they, *plenteously* bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of thee be *plenteously* rewarded.”—It hath been much wondered how Socinians, Arians, or Arminians, can subscribe our articles, or use our Liturgy: and it must be at least equally surprising, if any Antinomians can do either the one or the other.

and infinite satisfaction made to divine justice by his atoning sacrifice.<sup>6</sup> And through this infinite sufficiency, that hindrance, which arose from the perfect holiness and righteousness of God, and the inconceivable demerit of sin, is once for all entirely removed; so that it would be no impeachment of the purity of the divine character, no deduction from the honour of the law, and no abatement of the horror and hatred which we ought to conceive against sin; should God through Christ pardon all the sinners who now live, or whoever shall live, on earth.

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<sup>6</sup> Even Calvin himself writes thus: “He,” (the apostle) “maketh it the common grace of all men, because it is proposed to all, not because it is actually extended to all. For although Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world; and is *offered* indiscriminately to all men by the goodness of God; yet all do not apprehend him.” (Rom. v. 16.) And again, “Christ suffered *sufficiently* for the whole world: but *efficaciously* only for the elect.” (1 John ii. 2.)—Indeed, if human authority availeth anything, it would be easy to adduce abundant evidence from the most respectable Calvinist divines.

To this it is objected, that it does not consist with the *justice of God* that any should perish for whom Christ died. It is allowed that Christ in dying for sinners *intended* to save none but those who eventually shall be saved. In respect of this *intention*, he says, “his blood was shed for many for the remission of sins:” and “he gave his life a ransom for *many*.” Yet in paying this ransom, there was not barely a sufficient atonement made for them, but as it were a redundancy of merit sufficient even for the sins of all men: and in respect of this *sufficiency*, he is said to give himself a ransom for *all*,” and to be “a propitiation for the sins of the *whole world*.” Peter, therefore, scruples not to speak of those “who deny the Lord that *bought them*, and bring upon themselves swift destruction;” and Paul of “destroying those for whom Christ died.” It might be expected that systematical expositors would find out other interpretations of all these testimonies; but the question is, whether their interpretations are natural and obvious, and such as they would deem admissible in different circumstances.

The idea of Christ paying *exactly so much for one*, and *so much for another*, and so much for each; and then adding the sums together, and forming a large *limited* sum, just sufficient to ransom the elect, appears unscriptural, and gives a degrading view of the glorious subject. An *all-sufficient* atonement was made at once, and an immeasurable fulness of mercy and grace is treasured up in Christ to be communicated, according to the eternal purpose and counsel of God. Every believer receives from this fulness; others remain under condemnation, not through defect of merit in Christ, but through their own impenitency and unbelief.

It would not have consisted with divine justice to have saved sinners without an atonement; as it appears from the apostle’s reasoning; (Rom. iii. 25, 26;) otherwise perhaps we should have been rash in asserting it. But where is it written, that God cannot consistently with justice condemn any unbeliever or that he is *in justice* bound to give faith to any man, because of the ransom Christ paid? Doubtless he will fulfil his whole counsel, and save all whom he intended to save. But previously to faith in Christ, no sinner hath any claim upon his offended Sovereign: afterwards the divine faithfulness and mercy are his sole and sufficient security; and it seems to be a deduction of human reasoning, not any doctrine of divine Revelation, to assert, that even a believer can in *strict justice* claim eternal salvation on the account of Christ’s atonement.

In love that surpasseth knowledge, the Redeemer, having executed this part of his commission, arose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, there in glory at the Father's right hand to complete the grand design; and hath all power and authority in heaven and earth, and all the fulness of the spirit, at his disposal for that purpose: and this design consists in pardoning, sanctifying, defending, and bringing to perfect holiness and felicity, all without exception, who come to God through him. But this leads us to show:—

II. That Christ's commission has a special reference to those whom the Father hath given to him.

Though no obstacle from divine justice to the salvation of any sinner, or of every sinner, now remains; yet a hindrance equally insuperable, except by omnipotent grace, is found in the depravity of our fallen nature. The sun is created, and placed in the open firmament, for the common benefit of mankind; there is in that luminary no defect of light, nor would there be any, were innumerable additional millions to share the benefit. Yet some men do not see; not from any defect in the sun, but from one in themselves. God, who is no debtor to his creatures, gives the blessing of sight to whom he will: but if he withhold or withdraw it, the man is benighted at noonday.

Christ was lifted up upon the cross (like the brazen serpent on the pole,) and is held forth in the preached gospel, for "all the ends of the earth to look unto, and be saved." This may properly be called the *common benefit of mankind*: there is no defect of merit, of mercy, or of grace in him; nor would there be any, if millions, as numerous as the sand, should receive out of his fulness. But the want of a right *disposition of heart*, which fallen man has not, which God alone can give, but which he may justly withhold from a rebellious subject, effectually prevents the salvation of all who do not receive it. The case is parallel: except that bodily blindness is not generally in any sense a man's fault, or a defect in his moral character; whereas the want of humility, spirituality, and love of God, is *sin, original sin*, the fruitful parent of all other sins, in fallen men and fallen angels.

Let the blessings of the Gospel be fairly proposed, with solemn warnings and pressing invitations, to two men of exactly the same character and disposition: if they were left to themselves, in entirely similar circumstances, the effect must be precisely the same. But, behold! while one proudly scorns and resents the gracious offer; the other trembles, weeps, prays, repents, believes! Who maketh this man to differ from the other? or what hath he that he hath not received?" The scriptural answer to this question, when properly understood, decides the whole controversy. Human depravity produces different effects in vast variety, and gathers strength by habit; but, in its root and nature, it is the same and equal in all men. This can be effectually overcome by nothing except a new creation, a "work wrought

by the exceeding greatness of that mighty power, which raised Christ from the dead.” I do not now argue with such as oppose the doctrine of original sin.

In the case before stated, the man who proudly scorned and resented the offer of free salvation from merited perdition, had this work been wrought in his heart by the energy of the Holy Ghost, he would certainly have embraced it: and had the other, who believed, been left to himself, he would as certainly have rejected it. This distinguishing grace is previously neither *deserved* nor *desired* by either of them: it might justly have been withheld from both; but it is graciously communicated to one, and not to the other, by a sovereign God, “according to the counsel of his own will.” He and he alone, “hath made one to differ from another.” Now, was this distinction *intentionally* made by the sovereign Disposer of all things, or was it not? If *intentionally*, was that *intention first conceived at the moment of execution, or previously*? If *previously*, why not from eternity? Indeed, if any of the works of God, when actually accomplished, be righteous, holy, wise, good, and faithful, the eternal purpose of performing them must have been equally righteous, holy, wise, good, and faithful: unless it can be *wrong to determine to do right* because that determination was formed long before it was executed! If it consists with divine justice and goodness to leave one sinner to perish, and to save another equally guilty by an act of sovereign grace and power, it must have been equally consistent with justice and goodness to *decree* the destruction of the one, and the salvation of the other. In short, the two doctrines, that of “man’s *entire depravity*,” and that of *a new creation unto holiness* by the sole energy of the Holy Spirit, without any help, and notwithstanding every hindrance from nature, can never consistently be separated from that of *personal election*: nor upon this ground can a satisfactory reason be given, why any are saved and sanctified, but this,—that “God hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we *should* be holy, and without blame before him in love! having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will; to the praise of the glory of his grace; wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins.” Eph. i. 4–7.

“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” In his unsearchable judgments, (Oh, how deep are they!) doubtless for wise and righteous purposes, though not clearly discernible by us purblind mortals, he was pleased to permit the first entrance of sin, the fall of Adam, and the depravation of the human race. It suits not my present limits to descant on this subject: I may scarcely pause to drop a tear for the awful catastrophe. But that man is fallen and depraved, that “the whole world lieth

in wickedness,” all we see, hear, read, or experience, demonstrates, and all confirms the testimony of God, in Scripture, to this humbling doctrine. Utterly destitute of love to the holy character of God, desire of his favour, delight in his service, gratitude for his benefits, or regard to his glory, man is universally disposed to inordinate idolatrous self-love, and love of worldly objects. His own honour and glory he seeks, his own imagined excellencies he admires, his crimes he vindicates or excuses; he affects to be at his own disposal, wishes to be independently his own master, and would have all others admire and honour him, as much as he does himself. At the same time he also idolizes worldly objects: “The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,” he chooses as his portion. These are his good things for which he most ardently thirsts, on which he chiefly depends, and in which he places his highest felicity. Hence eventually proceed all unrighteousness, licentiousness, and ungodliness, according to the different constitutional propensities, educations, and habits of different men. “The law of God is weak through the flesh,” and cannot restrain their impetuous desires. In the pursuit of their self-exalting or carnal projects, the will and worship of God are neglected, the rules of justice, truth, and benevolence violated, and every excess committed. But “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;” and eternal punishment is annexed to the transgression of this holy law, by him to whom vengeance belongs:” and when this is made known to the proud rebel, his neglect and contempt break forth in enmity against the holy character, perfect law, and righteous judgment of God; “because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; so then, they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God.

This state of the human race God foresaw; and he, who alone is competent to estimate the tendency of such a temper of heart, and the malignity of such a conduct, evidently considered all men both as meriting eternal misery, and as “vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.”

Redemption by the blood of Christ was a most distinguished part of his original plan. He was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Whatever other method God in his infinite wisdom could have devised, for his own glory in the salvation of sinners, this was doubtless the best; for it was actually chosen. But this plan could have no foundation except in the humiliating truth; that all men were so exceedingly guilty and deserving of everlasting misery, that it would have been derogatory to the justice and holiness of God, to have been reconciled to any of them, or to have rescued any of them from destruction, except through the interposition of such a sacrifice, as that of “his well-beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased.” If man does not deserve damnation, deliverance from it is not of grace but of

debt.”<sup>7</sup> And though eternal life must in strict propriety of language be an unmerited gift of God to any of his creatures; yet, as far as we know, it might have been honourably given to us; had not man been so guilty and God so holy, that without the atonement made by the death of the divine Saviour, it would not have consisted with his holiness to save so vile a rebel. If this be not so, “then Christ is dead in vain.”

But if the proud, carnal, ungodly heart of sinful man is enmity to a holy God, and disdains the authority, dislikes the precept, and abhors the sentence of that holy law which condemns him to eternal punishment for his crimes; if the Gospel shows the malignity of sin, and the desert of every sinner, in the most conspicuous light; if it maintains the authority, magnifies the precept, and vindicates the justice of the sentence of the law; and if it gives no quarter to any sin, saves no man in his sins but from all sin, and to all that very holiness which the law demands, “writing the law in the heart;” could it be reasonably supposed, that man would not also hate and quarrel with the affronting, though most merciful, message of free salvation? It might have been previously expected, and matter of fact indisputably proves, that the unadulterated Gospel, notwithstanding its surprising largeness and freeness of grace and love, is more offensive to the proud rebel, than the very law itself, and excites more enmity and blasphemy. Nor need we hesitate to assert, that every individual, left to himself, would as infallibly have either neglected and opposed, or perverted and abused, the Gospel, as he has broken and quarrelled with the law. From this source especially have arisen all the persecutions of Christianity, which in many ages and places have raged; all the indifference and contempt which have prevailed; and all the innumerable corruptions of Christianity which have been devised, to render it more palatable or tolerable, to the pride or to the lusts of men.

Foreseeing this as the inevitable consequence of leaving the Gospel to take its own course in the world; knowing that he would reject it, or pervert it to their deeper condemnation; the Lord did not consider himself bound *in justice* to afford such obstinate enemies any further grace, but judged that he might *righteously* have left them all to the consequences of their perverseness. He is no man’s debtor, he doeth no man injustice, he punisheth no man who hath not deserved it, nor anyone above his deserving; and, however men may now dare to find fault, all his dealings will be shown

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<sup>7</sup> If we could not by other arguments prove the justice of God in the damnation of sinners, the method of Redemption would alone demonstrate it. And it is more our interest, and more becoming us, to submit to his righteousness, and apply for his mercy, than, in the midst of our ignorance and blindness, to spend our time in vain reasonings upon a subject, for which we are incompetent; and in making objections to those appointments, which are unalterably determined, whether we submit to them or no.

most glorious in wisdom, holiness, truth, and love! and “every mouth will be stopped” in “the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render unto every man according to his deeds.”

But where none has any claim, may not the great Ruler of the universe bestow his unmerited favours on whom he will? Is he alone restricted from “doing what he will with his own?” Seeing that none either deserve or desire mercy in *his appointed way*; but all harden themselves in impenitent and obstinate rebellion; in high sovereignty he declares, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.”—“Therefore he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.” Not but that all who are saved, do run and seek; and “every one that seeketh findeth:” but God’s mercy takes the lead; his preventing grace hath produced this willingness; and therefore the sinner wills, runs, seeks, and finds: whilst others, left to themselves, and to their own lusts, and to Satan’s temptations, meet with those things in the righteous providence of God, which harden them more and more to their destruction.<sup>8</sup>

Doubtless the Lord acts with the most perfect wisdom, in making this difference among sinners: but he deigns not to inform us of his reasons; and who are we, worms, rebels, and enemies, that we should expect it from him!

When, therefore, he appointed his beloved Son, (“his Elect whom he had chosen”) for salvation to the ends of the earth; that his grace might not be frustrated by man’s perverseness, as otherwise it must have been; while he saw good to leave others under the condemnation of the law, and through the tendency of their evil nature to reject the Gospel, “from the beginning” he chose a people unto salvation, “through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; whereunto he calls them by the Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Thes. ii. 11–14. These are the persons spoken of in the text, as “given unto Christ” by some mysterious transaction, (according to our low apprehensions,) betwixt the Father and the Son, when he undertook the work of redemption.<sup>9</sup> With an especial in-

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<sup>8</sup> “The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to *faith and calling* upon God. Wherefore we have no strength to do good works pleasant and acceptable unto God, without the grace of God by Christ *preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working in us when we have that good will.*” (10th Article.)

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

<sup>9</sup> “Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to

tention of saving this “remnant according to the election of grace,” Christ shed his precious blood. “I lay down,” says he, “my life for the sheep.” His death was a *sufficient* atonement for *all*: this forms an encouragement for any; and leaves everyone without excuse who neglects such great salvation, through pride and love of sin. But he foresaw who would eventually partake of this infinite ransom, and for them he specially paid it. These are *his* even before their conversion: “Other sheep,” says he, “I *have*, which are not of this fold:” meaning the unconverted Gentiles. When as lost sheep they are wandering in the ways of destruction, he providentially sends his ministers to those places, where each of them resides, that by them he may seek and save them, and bring them home to his fold:—and notwithstanding opposition from others, and their own discouragement and purposes of removal, he continues them in their stations till his purposes are accomplished. “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; *for I have much people in this city*,” Acts xviii. 9, 10. saith he to persecuted Paul at Corinth, concerning the licentious inhabitants. And for these he especially intercedes, and not for the world. “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when dead in sin, hath quickened us together with Christ—For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” Ephes. ii. 1–10. Thus he separates his elect by new-creating grace, and makes them “a willing people in the day of his power, in the beauties of holiness.” “We ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared; not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”—“He hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” 2 Tim. i. 9. Tit. iii. 2–9. Others are invited, but these only are *made willing to come*; the rest make light of it, and go their ways to other more favourite pursuits. This leads me,

III. To observe, that all these shall come to Christ, and none else will.

This is illustrated by the decree of Cyrus to the captive Jews. Ezra i.

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deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore they which he endued with so excellent a benefit of God, he called according to God’s purpose by his Spirit working in due season; they through grace obey the calling; they be justified freely; they be made sons of God by adoption; they be made like the image of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ; they walk religiously in good works; and at length, by God’s mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.” (17th Article.)

“Who is there among you, of all his people? his God he with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem.” This was *general for all*. But many had got comfortable settlements at Babylon: and they did not care enough for the ashes of the holy city, or for the interests of religion, to encounter the perils and hardships of such an expedition. Who then eventually availed themselves of the king’s unlimited permission? “All they whose spirit God had raised to go,” and none else. The others might and could, had they possessed a *willing mind*; but they did not, and therefore they went not. Nor would any have gone, had not God interposed *to make some of them willing*.<sup>10</sup>

May not sinners come to Christ? How runs the proclamation? “How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity, and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.” Prov. i. 22, 23.—“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters: and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat: yea, come buy wine and milk, without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?” “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him: and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon.” Isaiah lv. 1-3, 6, 7. “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled unto God.” “We beseech you, that you receive not the grace of God in vain.” 2 Cor. v. 17-21, vi. 1. “Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever *will*, let him take of the water of life freely.” Rev. xxii. 17. Who is expected, by name or character, in these general proclamations?—Christ complains of men, that *they will* not come to him that they might have life; and he thus pathetically laments over Jerusalem, “How often *would* I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *ye would not!*” Jehovah says with the greatest solemnity and earnestness: “As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die?”—Justice indeed demands the execution of the criminal; but the merciful Prince, as it were, sheds tears, whilst, as a matter of necessity, (if he will maintain the honour of his kingdom) he signs the death-warrant. The reason of the destruction of sinners is therefore thus stated, “Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calam-

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<sup>10</sup> I refer the reader to a letter of Archbishop Usher’s, for a more full discussion of this point; and for this and several other illustrations and arguments.

ity, and mock when your fear cometh.” Prov. i. 24–33.

But sinners *cannot* obey the call. This is a truth if truly understood. They are under a *moral*, not a *natural inability*. Is this distinction useless and unintelligible? Is there no difference betwixt a covetous wretch, who with a full purse hath *no heart*; and a compassionate man who hath *no money*, to relieve a fellow-creature in distress? Both are effectually prevented, but the one *from himself*, the other *by an external hindrance*. Every generous man at once indignantly condemns the one, and wholly justifies the other. When the case is put, divested of all false colouring, the one *could if he would*, and the other *would if he could*. It is said of God that he “cannot lie.” But whence arises this impossibility? Surely not from external restraint, but from the perfection of his essential holiness. Satan cannot but hate his Maker. Not because of outward force put upon him, but through the horrid malignity of his disposition.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> If there be no real difference betwixt the *want of natural faculties*, and the *want of moral dispositions*, there can be nothing culpable even in Satan’s opposing God, and endeavouring the destruction of men; for it is as impossible at least that he should do otherwise, as that sinners should perfectly obey the law, or of themselves repent and believe the gospel; and if they are excusable, Satan is consequently so too. Indeed, on this supposition, all characters are reduced to a level; for in proportion to the degree of evil disposition, or *moral inability* to good, evil actions become excusable; and by parity of reasoning, in proportion to the degree of moral excellency of disposition, or of *moral inability* to evil, good actions being unavoidable, become less praiseworthy. Thus, the more inwardly holy any man is, the less esteem is his piety, justice, and charity entitled to; for he *can* scarcely do otherwise. An angel, as confirmed in holiness, is still less entitled to commendation; for in *some sense* it is impossible he should do otherwise than be holy. He *cannot* sin. And through *necessary* excellency of nature it is strictly impossible that God should do anything inconsistent with the most consummate wisdom, justice, truth, and goodness. He *cannot*: and, shall we say, this inability (which is the incommunicable glory of his nature) renders him less entitled to our admiring, adoring, grateful love, than otherwise he would be?

Everyone must see what confusion would be introduced into civil and domestic concerns, if no regard were paid to this distinction, and an inveterate propensity were allowed as an excuse for crimes: and it introduces equal perplexity into all our discourses on divine things; because it runs directly counter to all our rules of judging characters and actions. A good outward action without the *least corresponding disposition*, is in reality *mere hypocrisy*: as the disposition to good and aversion to evil increase, good actions have more *genuine sincerity*, and the character more amiableness. When we can say with the apostles, “We *cannot* but do” so and so—we are entitled to as much esteem and approbation as mere men can be. This *moral inability* to evil is much stronger in angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect; and therefore we are taught to look forward to such a holy state and temper as the summit of our wishes and desires: and God himself, who, being under no restraint, but doing his whole pleasure, cannot but be perfectly and unchangeably holy, is proposed as the object of supreme love, admiring gratitude, and adoring praise.

On the other hand a bad action, if done without *intention*, or the least disposition to

Sinners cannot be *willing* to stoop so low, and to leave so much, as the gospel requires; they cannot be willing to part with every lust, to renounce the world and deny themselves, to take up their cross and follow Christ; and without this *willingness* they cannot be his disciples. This is the real and the only hindrance. Were they once willing, they would ask, and God would give them all the rest.

Do they not come because these blessings were not intended for them? No man out of hell can possibly know this respecting himself: and very few indeed habitually think it. God's secret purposes and open declarations perfectly coincide: but secret things belong unto the Lord our God, and the things which are revealed to us:" (a distinction not sufficiently attended to:) the former are not, and cannot be, the rule of our conduct: but the latter are; and these exclude none, but such as *will not come* to the gospel-feast. Matt. xxii. 3. Luke xiv. 18.—Esau sold his birth-right for one morsel of meat. Now in fact the Lord did not intend that birth-right for Esau, but for Jacob: but this not being the *motive* of Esau's conduct, formed no excuse for it. He is condemned in Scripture as profane, a despiser of his birthright, and an example of one who repented not till it was too late; and he is proposed as a warning to us, not to despise or pervert the mercy of God, lest our doom should be irreversibly determined. Heb. xii. 17. Proud contempt of free salvation, idolatrous love of earthly objects, and profane disregard for spiritual blessings, are the real motives of men's rejecting the gospel; and therefore no unknown purpose of God is allowed as an excuse. It is true, the elect were of the same disposition, and, had they been left to themselves, would

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such moral evil, is deemed purely accidental, and not culpable. When it is contrary to a man's general disposition and character, and the effect of *sudden temptation*, it is considered as more venial than when the effect of a rooted disposition; and for a criminal to plead, "I am so propense to theft and cruelty, that I *could not* help it," would be to condemn himself as the vilest miscreant, not fit to live, in the opinions of judge, jury, and spectators.

There can be no difficulty in proving, that this distinction is implied throughout the Bible, and has its foundation in the nature of things; and so far from being novel, it is impossible that a rational creature can be unacquainted with it. No man ever yet *missed the distinction between the sick servant who could not work, and the lazy servant who had no heart to his work*; that is, *betwixt natural and moral inability*; and no man could govern even his domestics in a proper manner, without continually adverting to it.

"But," say some, "human nature now must be laid low, and grace exalted." Now we ask, "Which lays human nature lowest? To rank man among the brutes, who have no *power*, or among fallen spirits who have no *disposition*, to love and serve God? Or which most exalts grace? To save a wretch who could not help those crimes for which he is condemned to hell: or to save a rebel, who was *willingly* an enemy to his Maker, and persisted in that *enmity*, till almighty power, by a new creation, overcame his obstinacy, and made him willing to be reconciled?"

have made the same choice: thus “boasting is excluded,” and God appears glorious in justice in condemning sinners, but more glorious in *grace* in saving believers.

“No man can come to me,” saith our Lord, in the discourse from which our text is taken, “except the Father which hath sent me *draw* him.”—“They shall be all *taught of God*; every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh to me.” We are here informed, how this otherwise insurmountable hindrance is removed. Men are *drawn* by rational inducements, not *forced* by external violence; and this drawing is effected by the communication, not of new faculties, but of new dispositions and discoveries, which give a new direction to the judgment, desires, and affections. They are “taught of God,” and “learn of the Father,” who both opens the eyes of their understanding, takes the veil from their heart, and causes his light to shine upon them, and within them. Frequently after long patience with them, and preserving them during their ungodly course of life; in some cases, when they are grown more determined in wickedness than ever, and it might be supposed they were nigh unto destruction; by his Holy Spirit he shows them his glorious majesty and holiness, their relations and obligations to him, and the authority, extent, and reasonableness of his law. Thus he “convinces them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment;” and lays open the eternal world to their view in all its tremendous importance; till, alarmed at their danger, they tremble at his work, and take warning to flee from the wrath to come.” Their terror is accompanied by humiliation and penitent remorse, when the Holy Spirit teaches them the odious nature and dreadful tendency of sin, and the vileness of their own conduct and character: and then every kind and degree of reformation and amendment, prove utterly insufficient to appease their disquieted consciences. While others, after awakenings, take shelter in this refuge of lies, they are taught to exclaim, “We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags.” Thus by despair of atoning for the past, or justifying themselves before a holy God, by such unholy services, they are made cordially willing to accept of gratuitous salvation.

They discover, likewise, that personal holiness is absolutely necessary; and are taught that “the Lord can have no pleasure in iniquity;” and that none can be meet for a holy heaven, and the enjoyment of a holy God, without conformity to his holiness. Thus they are preserved from that fatal refuge of lies, into which the love of sin betrays vast numbers, of perverting the doctrines of grace into a reason for being satisfied in the neglect of holiness. At the same time they are taught of God their own utter inability to obtain this holiness, except from him; and they learn to prize “sanctification by the Spirit,” as highly as redemption by the blood of Christ. When such important concerns engross their minds, worldly objects seem dimin-

ished, and they learn to despise them, and to count them as nothing in comparison of the salvation of their souls. Thus they become willing to deny themselves, to forsake all, and to follow Christ, bearing their cross: whilst others perish in the vain attempt to serve God and mammon, and to reconcile the interests of time and eternity.

In this manner the hindrances, arising from the pride and carnal passions of the heart, being efficaciously removed, men readily learn under God their Teacher, the grand lesson, without which all others would be useless, and to which all else are subordinate. We must mention one thing before another; but it is not necessary to determine in what order these instructions are communicated, or whether more speedily, or more gradually. But, in his own time and manner, the divine Spirit will teach every elect person the nature, truth, and glory of the gospel of Christ; and show him, that in the divine Saviour, in his righteousness, sacrifice, intercession, and grace, all he wants or can desire, is contained: “He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.” John xvi. 14, 15. Now the sinner feels an ardent longing for an interest in Christ and all his blessings, and fears nothing so much as being rejected. Now he makes, trembling perhaps, his earnest application. “Behold he prayeth!” As a condemned criminal, a perishing sinner, he comes, he applies, he waits: he persists in waiting and praying, and, giving up every other hope, he says, “Lord, to whom shall I go? thou hast the words of eternal life.” Now he respects every instruction, observes every direction, uses every means, watches against every sin, attends to every duty; yet trusts in nothing but the free mercy of God through the redemption of his Son, whom he desires “to be made unto him Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption.” Now he is very apt to suspect that his mode of application is not right; and becomes jealous of himself lest he should be deceived. And, though he longs for relief from the burden of his guilt, yet he fears losing even his distress improperly, and still seeks for more earnestness and deeper humiliation. He will take no denial, yield to no discouragement, and be satisfied with nothing short of all that Christ died to purchase, and is exalted to bestow; pardon, righteousness, holiness, liberty, victory, and eternal life. Thus all, whom the Father hath given unto Christ, being taught and drawn of God, come unto him, receive him, and walk in him.—But is this our experience, or is it not? It is for substance, though with circumstantial variations, I trust, the experience of all true Christians: and yet I fear many, who are zealous for orthodox doctrines, continue strangers to this method of coming to Christ from day to day, for his complete salvation.<sup>12</sup> I proceed,

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<sup>12</sup> “As the godly consideration of predestination and our election in Christ is full of sweet, pleasant,, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as *feel in themselves*

however,

IV. To observe that Christ will most certainly receive all who come unto him. This is here most emphatically declared, “Him that cometh unto me, I will *in no wise* cast out;” and the double negation in the original is still more expressive. Had the vilest sinner, whoever trembled under the desponding apprehensions of having sinned beyond all reach of mercy, been allowed to draw up a clause for his own encouragement in coming to the Saviour, he could scarcely have worded it more favourably. Imagine the basest character, which ever disgraced humanity, and scourged the world; one grown hoary in multiplied robberies, murders, adulteries, rapes and unnatural lusts; and breathing out perjuries and blasphemies, as if ambitious of pre-eminence in profaneness: if even this man truly come to Christ, he will *in no wise* cast him out.” Suppose the most consummate villainy to the very verge of life, carried on under the broad visor of designed hypocrisy; or some wretch, emboldened in sin by the very gospel itself, who had given such scandal, that thousands in hell should curse him as the occasion of their perdition; or some vile apostate, some Judas, who had betrayed and sold his Lord. If even such persons *really come* to Christ in the manner that hath been described, he will, he can “*in no wise* cast any of them out.” He *cannot*; not from a *natural*, but a *moral inability*—*he cannot* deny himself: he cannot alter the word that is gone out of his lips. I determine not whether they ever do actually come, or whether it is much to be expected that they should: for “there is a sin unto death,” and “it is impossible to renew some unto repentance.” But did they come, even at the last hour, they should “*in no wise be cast out*;” for there is nothing in the constitution of the gospel to exclude them from mercy. Should there then be one present who is ready to despair, and trembles to approach the mercy-seat, because he expects and dreads a repulse; let him make the trial, and plead the promise and wait the Lord’s time in his way; and he shall find, that neither aggravated guilt, nor strong corruptions, nor inveterate evil habits, can exclude him from this full and free salvation.

No man has the least occasion in such circumstances to inquire previously whether he be elected, which he cannot possibly know in this stage of his experience. He needs only to ask himself, am I sincerely willing to be

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the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their minds to high and heavenly things; as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation, to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God: so for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God’s predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchedness of unclean living, no less perilous than desperation.”—(17th Article.)

saved from sin, and all its consequences, in the humbling, self-denying, method of the gospel? Do I believe that Jesus, and he alone, is able thus to save me? Do I apply to him and trust in him for these things: and am I so willing as to observe his directions, and use the means which he hath appointed for that end? Every *approach* to a temper and conduct, so opposite to corrupt nature, must be from some kind or degree of influence of the Holy Spirit; and whatever looks like it should be in a measure encouraged. But as many promising appearances are blighted, and the Scripture speaks of such as “had been partakers of the Holy Ghost, and had tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, who yet fell away:” we are constrained to add, that not every operation of this kind is that good work, which distinguishes the chosen people of God.—Nay, probably few perish, where the word of God is fully preached, without many awakenings, many fears, many desires, yea, and many feeble endeavours, which are all subdued and extinguished through the love of sin. “Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” Yet as far as there is any tendency to good in these things, they are to be ascribed to a good cause: and not only “hating the light,” and acting in defiance of their own consciences, but also “resisting the Holy Ghost,” will at the day of judgment be found among the aggravations of sin, in many that perish.

Nor are they who are saved free from the same guilt: but in them grace proves victorious; and, though resisted, by invincible efficacy it gains the ascendancy. This distinguishing work of God will in time show itself, and make it evident that the man was drawn and taught of God in coming to Christ. Hence, when all are invited, none will come but they who are *willing*: none are *willing*, but such as are made *willing* by God: he makes none willing but *the elect*: he would have all encouraged, who are willing: he will have all sinners left without excuse: no one can know his election, but by his vocation; nor his vocation, until he hath actually come to Christ: and there is no way to answer these ends, but by free and urgent invitations, connected with warnings, instructions, and exhortations. If this style of address be not adopted, you “quench the smoking flax, and break the bruised reed:” for the trembling penitent will be apt to say, “If any poor sinner may not come, how can I know that I may? For I know not that I am elected: but if everyone is invited, then I may come, and now I am heartily willing, and this gives me encouragement.”

Many are zealous for the system, who do not understand the arguments by which it is maintained: but he that does, will allow that this question is the very knot of the whole controversy; *who makes a man willing to be*

*saved in the method of the gospel?*<sup>13</sup> If any natural preferable disposition, or any improvement of nature, contribute to produce this willingness, then the doctrines generally called Arminianism must be true, and boasting must be introduced. But if *God alone produce this willingness without any help, and notwithstanding every hindrance, from man's evil nature, then the grand principles of Calvinism are established, and boasting is excluded.* Do not mistake my meaning. Notions in the head do not always suitably influence the heart and conduct. Many of those who are called, and who call themselves Arminians, are far enough from boasting, nay, are remarkably pious and humble: and too many Calvinists are haughty, dogmatical, censorious, and contentious. But a humble believer in Jesus is a brother, and entitled to our cordial love, though he cannot subscribe our whole creed.

This, however, being the real question, it contains nothing that militates against invitations: we invite *all that will* to come to Christ for his salvation: and as it is not necessary to make any limitation in respect of the *unwilling*, who sufficiently distinguish themselves; so we give the invitation in all respects general and unencumbered.—“As many as ye shall find bid to the marriage.” My fellow-sinners, if you are willing, you will apply to our merciful Saviour, and you shall find mercy and grace; but if any of you are not willing, raise no slander against him; charge him not with unwillingness, but be sure the fault is entirely your own.—I proceed then,

V. To observe that Christ's commission reacheth to the infallible and everlasting salvation of the body and soul of every individual who is given to him, who sees him, and believes on him. “This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all, which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” Indeed this unavoidably follows from all that hath been already discoursed; and likewise from that unchangeable wisdom, faithfulness, and love of God; and from his promise, covenant, and counsel, confirmed with an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie; we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast.” Heb. vi. 17–19. —“Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.—Moreover, whom he predestinated them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justi-

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<sup>13</sup> I say, *in the method of the gospel*: for every man is willing to be saved from misery and to be made happy, if it may but be in some way of his own, either favourable to his pride, or to his love of sin.

fied: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that *justifieth*."—"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?—For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. viii. 29–39. To object, that though nothing else can, our own sin may separate us from Christ, is a mere evasion; for nothing has any tendency to separate betwixt Christ and the believer, except sin, or as anything powerfully tempts him to sin.

In like manner Peter confirms the doctrine of "his beloved brother Paul," at the very opening of his first epistle, which begins in this manner: "To the strangers—elect according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus—Grace unto you and peace be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept *by the power of God through faith unto salvation*." 1 Pet. i. 7. Comp. Luke xxii. 22. And again, "Unto you that believe he is precious; but unto them that be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner; and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a *chosen generation*, a royal priesthood a holy nation, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1 Pet. ii. 7-10.—"For God had not *appointed* them to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thes. v. 9. Thus likewise says another apostle, "Of *his own will*, begat he us with the word of truth; that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." James i. 18. And our Lord himself says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are One." John x. 27–30. The only way in which Satan, or any other enemy, can endeavour to pluck the sheep out of Christ's hand, is by tempting them to wilful and final apostasy: but in this attempt every enemy must be unsuccessful, according to the obvious meaning of such express and absolute promises: and if this

conclusion may not be deduced from them, both these, and all the other numerous Scriptures which are calculated to give a strong consolation to them who flee for refuge to Christ, not providing against this only danger, mean just nothing at all.

What though many professors of the gospel apostatise! Who can warrant their preceding sincerity? “They went out from us, *because they were not of us,*” says one apostle. “There must be heresies” (false teachers and false doctrines) that they that are approved may be made manifest,” says another. But surely this is not applicable to all who decline in their profession! Let us then suppose the persons in question not to be apostates but backsliders. Can we positively say, this or that man dies impenitent? Such decisions belong to God, not us. Without all doubt if a professed Christian run into notorious sin, or renounce his religion, and live and die impenitent, “he will perish everlastingly:” for he alone, “who continueth unto the end shall be saved.” The doctrine of final perseverance is not at all concerned in this case; for the man’s apostasy is the detection of his hypocrisy: and the only question is, whether God hath not in his word engaged to preserve all *real believers* from thus finally departing from him.

Except a man be truly converted, he can only persevere in open ungodliness, or in hypocrisy. Except he have scriptural evidence of his conversion he cannot warrantably conclude anything concerning his perseverance: and if a professor of the gospel, while living in habitual sin, or in a negligent and slothful manner, encourages himself by this doctrine, he is guilty of awful presumption. But the true Christian, habitually and sincerely abiding in Christ, and walking in all his ordinances and commandments; amidst his sharp conflicts with corruption and temptation, and his fears of future consequences, may find a most reviving cordial to refresh his drooping spirits, and renew his strength; from the assurance that Christ will make him at length more than conqueror, and “preserve him from every evil work unto his heavenly kingdom.”

The stony-ground hearers, however flourishing, having “no root in themselves,” must one day wither away. The ground overgrown with thorns, the emblem of worldly professors, will “bear no fruit to perfection.” But “they who receive the seed in good ground, in an *honest and good heart,*” made such by divine grace, will “bring forth fruit with *patience.*” “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him,” says our Lord to the woman of Samaria, meaning especially the Spirit of life and holiness, “shall *never* thirst, but the water that I shall *give* him, shall be in *him* a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” It will spring up in all holy affections, and flow forth in all holy thoughts, words, and actions, until it be perfected in eternal glory. John iv. 14. vii. 37–39.

The real Christian is generally very far from thinking he has attained

perfection. As a poor sinner he still feels abundant cause for the daily exercise of repentance and faith; and he daily needs the free mercy of the Father, the precious blood of the Son, and fresh supplies of the grace of the Spirit. He has occasion for constant watchfulness and prayer: and he often wants reproof and chastisement. Seasons of slackness, and instances of transgression, he has to mourn over: and if he steps farther out of the way, his security lies in the following promises and assurances: “As many as the Lord loves he rebukes and chastens.” “They shall be my people, and I will be their God; and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them and of their children after them: and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good, and *I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.*” Jer. xxxii. 38–40. For in this manner the Lord brings back his offending children with weeping and supplication. The final perseverance of all who hold certain doctrines, relate plausible experiences, or make a credible profession, cannot be made to consist with matter of fact. But the final perseverance of the true penitent believer in Christ, who is delivered from the dominion of sin; who through faith in Christ hath in some degree overcome the world, and aspires after a more complete victory; who has learned to hate all sin, and delight in the law of God, and is hungering and thirsting after righteousness, is doubtless a truth of God’s word. Yea, without a peradventure, the meanest, feeblest, true believer on earth shall infallibly “be kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.” “For this is the will of him that sent me, that of all whom he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.”

And this leads me,

VI. To observe,—That all this is perfectly consistent with many things which some object to as Arminianism. It is surprising to hear some persons, who profess themselves Calvinists, in doubt whether their principles be consistent with the government of the world by rewards and punishments, proposed as motives to the hopes and fears of mankind. Surely if the Bible do in any part teach those doctrines which are denominated Calvinism, they must implicitly pervade the whole of it; and we can have no occasion to have recourse to an opposite system, in order to explain any part of the sacred volume! For what reason can anyone suppose that punishment is less deserved on these principles than on the other? The fore-knowledge, or secret purpose of God is not the effective cause or inducing motive of any man’s rebellion, impenitence, and rejection of the gospel; and therefore cannot form an excuse for him, or render his condemnation less just. This decree neither deprives a man of anything good which he either possessed or merited, nor puts any *evil* disposition into his heart. The Lord merely

determines to leave the sinner to himself; without any efficacious, invincible, or unmerited interposition, to prevent him from destroying himself by his voluntary wickedness and obstinacy. On the other hand, a man must deviate very far indeed from the whole scheme of Christianity, who supposes that the *reward of a believing sinner is merited*. Many Arminians allow as expressly, (though not perhaps quite so consistently,) as the Calvinists, that the reward is not of debt but of grace.—Fear of future punishment, yea, hope of future reward, (though blind and presumptuous,) answer, even respecting those who eventually perish, important purposes in God’s providence, exactly the same upon one scheme as upon the other. They are not effectual for the salvation of the ungodly; but they keep mankind in some measure of order, and prevent much wickedness: for what a world would it be were all the wicked entirely liberated from all the fear of future punishment, or wholly desperate! At the same time the Lord, in calling his elect, and in preserving them in his ways, draws them on, and effects his purposes of love, in a considerable degree, by means of their hopes of future happiness, and their fears of future misery.

What then is there in these doctrines inconsistent with charging guilt upon men’s consciences: warning them to flee from the wrath to come; laying open the law as the ministration of condemnation; calling upon sinners to repent and believe the gospel; and exhorting them to “labour for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life;” to “strive to enter in at the strait gate;” to search the Scriptures, to pray, “to press into the kingdom of heaven; to forsake their sins, and to separate from sinners?” These are the appointed means, which in all ages have been owned of God for the conviction of sinners: and though, without supernatural grace, they prove insufficient to overcome man’s strong corruption: yet they are suitable means; as suitable as ploughing and sowing to procure the crop, though here also God alone can give the increase: so suitable, that in the mouth of the prisoner Paul they made even a proud Felix tremble, and almost persuaded Agrippa to be a Christian!

What is there inconsistent with inviting sinners to come to Christ; with warning them not “to neglect so great salvation,” nor “to refuse him that speaketh;” or with declaring that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for those who reject the gospel? What inconsistent with exhorting men to “examine themselves whether they be in the faith;” and to “look diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God;” “to give diligence to make their calling and election sure;” and to be careful that no man deceive them, and that they do not deceive themselves? What is there inconsistent with distinguishing between the true Christian and the false professor: with exhorting Christians to adorn their profession; to glorify God, to “let their light shine before men;” to be “faithful to the unrighteous mammon;” to

“redeem their time;” to “walk circumspectly;” to beware of growing negligent: to press forward, and to be ready to every good work? What inconsistent with declaring that “hereby we know the children of God, and the children of the devil; every one that doeth not righteousness is not of God:” “Every one that committeth sin is of the devil?”

Finally, what is there inconsistent with discoursing to *Christians* very particularly concerning the Christian temper and walk; concerning relative duties, and all other duties; and admonishing, persuading, reproving, beseeching, exhorting them, in every method, and by every motive, “to walk worthy of God, who hath called them to his kingdom and glory?” There must be a vast disadvantage in arguing against these things, which are so fully handled in the Scriptures, and are so naturally expressed in scriptural terms; and if we be proved inconsistent, we have this consolation, that every writer of the sacred Scriptures will share the same censure.—But, in one word, are *means* any part of God’s plan?<sup>14</sup> If they are not, the argument not only concludes against *practical preaching*, but against *all preaching*; and we may as sensibly give over ploughing our fields, eating our food, and taking medicine.<sup>15</sup> But if *means*, as well as *ends*, be provided for in the divine counsels; then these doctrines form as firm a foundation for all exhortations, instructions, warnings, invitations, and expostulations of the preacher; and for all diligence, and watchfulness, and activity of the hearer, as the opposite tenets: and as long as I believe them *true*, I shall have no doubt but they give us an advantage in enforcing all these topics; for I shall not easily be convinced that *error subserves holy practice, and truth subverts it*. Indeed, besides the native tendency of these means, there appears a more close connection of the means with the blessing, from the consideration that the same Lord, who appointed the means, hath promised the blessing, and inclines the heart to use them.

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<sup>14</sup> That is, did God predestinate the end *with or without reference* to the means, by which he intended to accomplish the end?

<sup>15</sup> The apostle Paul was assured, in a vision, that the life of every individual who sailed with him should be preserved: yet afterwards he declared as positively, “That except the seamen continued in the ship, they could not be saved.” (Acts xxvii. 24–31.) Was the event then doubtful? Was there any alteration in the purpose of God? Was the apostle inconsistent? Or did the passengers act rationally, when, without hesitation, or any accusation of the apostle as inconsistent, they went and cut the cords, and let the boat fall into the sea, thus defeating the intention of the sailors?

This was (as a friend observed to me) common sense, which is a very different thing from the vain reasonings of men in matters of religion. The truth is, God determined to save the lives of Paul and those that sailed with him; but he determined to save them *in this precise manner, and in no other*; and the means were as infallibly decreed as the event.

And now in applying the subject I would observe,

1. That while numbers argue with the greatest vehemence against the points in question, and groundlessly charge them with implying the most dishonourable thoughts of God, and tending to the most pernicious consequences; others are ready to say, in extravagant zeal, to anyone of greater moderation, “If you really believe these doctrines, why do you preach them so sparingly, cautiously, and practically?”—I would desire such a man carefully to study even Paul’s Epistles, and to answer the objection himself. Perhaps he may thus find, that there is not a less proportion on such subjects in our sermons and publications, than in his writings: and that he as carefully guards them from perversion, and connects them as much with holy practice, as we can do. We generally meet with a few verses in an Epistle, upon the doctrines in question; a much larger proportion upon the person, love, and sufferings of Christ, and on faith in him; and whole chapters upon a holy life and conversation: and if we do not in the same manner, proportion, guard, and connect these doctrines, hypocrites will pervert them, infidels will despise them, and the weak will be stumbled by them. Indeed they are not at all proper subjects for addresses to sinners, to prejudiced hearers, or to newly-awakened persons; and are seldom, if ever, found in Scripture explicitly thus addressed: but a great part of our more public ministry is exercised among such persons. Let it not then be thought *carnal policy* to adapt our discourses to the occasions and wants of the hearers, while nothing inconsistent with truth is spoken, nothing profitable kept back. Our Lord himself says, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now:” and Paul writes to some, who had as good an opinion of themselves, as numbers now have, and with almost as little reason, “I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal.—I have fed you with milk, and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it; neither yet are ye now able:” and he gives a reason for this conduct, which proves that many in our congregations are not able: namely, the prevalence of strife and contention among them. Cor. ii. 2, Peter iii. 16.

The truth is, many persons would scarcely hear anything except these doctrines! but though I firmly believe them, and should be glad for all real Christians to have the comfort of them; yet, when they are *disjointed* from their practical influence, they form in my judgment a very small part of Christianity. If God be pleased to bless the word in bringing men to repentance, faith, and holiness, to a Christian hope, temper, and conduct, we shall in general find it no hard matter to convince them that this is the fruit of electing love, and the sure earnest of eternal glory. And if a few do not see their privilege here, they will eternally rejoice in it hereafter.

2. God’s secret purposes are consistent with his revealed declarations. Let then no sinner vainly endeavour to excuse his sins, or quiet his con-

science, by a perversion of these doctrines. Though the salvation of the righteous is wholly of the LORD;” the damnation of the wicked is wholly of themselves: and if the lustre of these truths dazzles the eyes of some poor distressed souls, some weak believers or inquirers, let them turn their attention to another part of divine truth. Still, this is true, “Every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”<sup>16</sup>

3. How careful should we be to ascertain the reality of our *conversion*, before we take the comfort of *perseverance*! An error in this matter proves fatal to thousands, who, mistaking some transient emotions and affections for a saving change, buoy up their hopes to the end by perverting these truths, and perish with a lie in their right hand. And let it be especially observed, that the scriptural way of “making our calling and election sure,” is, by giving all diligence, not only in the means of grace, but in following after holiness, and abounding in every good work. 2 Peter i. 3–11.

4. The genuine tendency of these doctrines, (as completely excluding boasting, leading us to ascribe all the glory of contriving, preparing, revealing, and applying salvation, wholly to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and thus producing deeper humiliation, and inspiring more lively gratitude, than any other system,) forms their chief excellency. Did we entirely and constantly live under their influence, we could never despise others, admire and prefer ourselves, or be angry with such as differed from us. We should “in meekness instruct those who oppose themselves:” we should argue, persuade, and exhort them; because these are the means which God hath appointed, and we may hope for his blessing on them. But, “as the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God,” we certainly should never slander or revile others, or contend with acrimony; or hold up an opponent to derision and contempt, whilst, with an air of conscious superiority, as if “we had made ourselves to differ,” we plume ourselves and our party, on pre-eminent *discernment*, if not integrity. These are none of the means which God hath appointed; we cannot expect a blessing on them, nor can they do any credit to the cause.

Take heed, therefore, beloved, that your zeal for the doctrine do not lead you into a spirit and conduct, diametrically opposite to that humility, compassion, meekness, and gentleness, which it is calculated to inspire.—If Calvinists dispute with acrimony, pass hard censures, spread slanderous reports about others, judge another man’s servants, and be quarrelsome and implacable, the doctrines which they profess are not to blame, nor yet their

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<sup>16</sup> “We must receive God’s promises in such wise as they be generally set forth in holy Scripture; and in our doings the will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the word of God.” (17th Art.)

belief of them; but their want of more inward holiness, if indeed they be not wholly un sanctified. Yet the cause suffers, and the truth is disgraced, through their misconduct: and one moderate man, who loves and is kind to Christians, without respect of party, and who differs from his brethren peaceably and charitably, where constrained to differ; and adorns his profession by a holy life and conversation, will do more even in bringing others, cordially and intelligently, to embrace his sentiments, than twenty angry disputants who humour the pride and the malignant passions of their own party, but disgust and prejudice the minds of all who differ from them—“Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” Neither let it be inferred from your conduct, that amidst the zeal of Calvinists for proselyting others to their tenets, they are less active in seeking the conversion and salvation of sinners, than their brethren whom they call Arminians. If indeed we are true believers, God hath made use of *means* and *instruments* to effect the secret purposes of his everlasting love towards us: and what is there in our peculiar opinions, that should render us less desirous of being his instruments in communicating the same blessing to others; or less sanguine in our expectations of success while using his appointed means? And what other *stimulus* can we want to excite our most self-denying, perilous, and zealous endeavours to spread his Gospel, than the special distinguishing love of God our Saviour, so freely shown in “delivering us from the wrath to come,” and “calling us to his eternal glory, by Jesus Christ our Lord?”

Finally, my Brethren, if you have attained to a scriptural assurance of your calling and election, “give diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: remember from what a dreadful state you are so wonderfully delivered; how free to you this deliverance; what a price it cost your Redeemer; and what he hath done for you, and prepared for you. While you rejoice in the Lord, rejoice likewise in your tribulations, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, in all your conflicts and temptations: and let “the love of Christ constrain you to live no longer to yourselves, but to him, who died for you, and rose again.” Be ye therefore steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”