

Washington Wilks

Complete Sanctification in Christ Alone

My reasons for not believing the sentiment of progressive sanctification are founded more particularly upon the following considerations. First, I cannot find it deducible from the work of God's Salvation. Secondly, I cannot find it in the experience of any of God's people. Thirdly, I have proved it to be in direct opposition to God's Word. First, I cannot find the sentiment of progressive sanctification, deducible from the work of God, to whom the sanctification of the whole family of God is ascribed, without the least thought, word, or deed, of the creature. The sanctification of God's elect, as ascribed to the first Person, in the glorious Trinity, is mentioned in Jude, verse the first, which includes the Father's Eternal Act of setting apart, from the rest of human nature, the persons of the elect in Jesus Christ, his Son, as the Federal Head, Representative, and Everlasting Father of God's chosen people. {"Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called."} Now the object of this Eternal Act of the Father's sanctifying the church, was, Paul tells us, that they might "be holy and without blame before Him in love." {Eph.1:4} Note, holy, not partially so; that is, in some small degree, admitting of a progress to be carried on, and consummated by the creature; no, but that they might be perfectly, spotlessly, holy. The believing spouse was told by her Lord, whose judgment may, and ought to be the standard of our faith, concerning the church's sanctification in Christ, that she was ALL fair, and that there was no spot in her. {Cant.4:7} Paul says, that Christ loved the church, and as a proof of this love, he gave himself for it; and the object of this gracious outgoing of love, was, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, that it might be like Himself, glorious in holiness, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but, that it should be holy, and without blemish; read the full account. Eph.5:25-27. Now, I suppose for the church to be without spot is to be perfectly holy in Christ, neither needing, nor admitting, of any after degrees acquired by the efforts of the creature. Christ, {Heb.9:14,} is said to have offered himself without spot to God; and if Christ's perfect holiness was thus described, we are bound to allow the same force of meaning, to the words, "without spot," when applied to the church. Ezekiel says, that the beauty of the church, which means her holiness, was perfect through the comeliness; that is, holiness of the Lord God, which was put upon her; and this is a blessed key to Cant.1:8, where the poor mourning and sorrowful spouse, bewailing her own deformity, and intimating her own ignorance, is told by her Lord, that she was "the fairest among women;" expressive of her sanctification, and holiness, which were superlative, admitting of no increase, or addition; for I contend, that the church, and every believer is arrived to, and partakes of, the highest and most perfect pitch and degree of holiness according to her covenant standing in, and eternal union to, her dear Lord, Head, and Husband, Jesus Christ. Secondly, the sanctification of the whole family of God is also ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ. {Some people are warned against the sin of adding to the word of God, others have need to be warned against the sin which presumes on adding to the work of God.} The church, or people of God, are revealed in Scripture, as being, from eternity, - in Christ; and according to this doctrinal statement, of a believer's Eternal Union to Christ, the church

must have been perfect, and complete, in their perfect Head, for there is no unrighteousness or unholiness in him; and if perfect and complete in Christ, they must have in Him, what was essential to their going to heaven, or seeing the Lord, i. e. holiness, or sanctification; wherefore, for proof, that this was, is, and will be the case, consult the following Scriptures. Paul, writing to the church at Corinth, I Cor.1:2, salutes them as "the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus," who is made unto them sanctification, ver.30. And if we wish to know how, or in what sense, our Lord is made the sanctification of the church, and the quality thereof, we must read Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, who treats on sanctification, as a chief subject in that epistle, as he did on justification in his Epistles to the Romans, and Galatians. The church's eternal sanctification, in Christ, is derived, first, from the eternal union that exists between Christ and his people; he being their Federal Head, whose holy nature, as the second man, was theirs, by their union to him, in the very same sense as Adam's pollution became mine, by my being federally united to him, nearly six thousand years before I had an ex-istence. Yes, the human race, were not only constituted dead, but unholy in, or by Adam's death, and unholiness; and just in the same sense, the church is not only made alive, but holy in Christ Jesus. Modern Calvinists consent to the doctrine of imputed sin, but not to the doctrine of imputed holiness. Christ is the church's sanctification, inasmuch as the church IN Christ, is perfectly absolved, cleared, acquitted, and made free, from all the uncleanness, pollution, and sin of the Fall; yes, they, whom the Son, by his atonement, makes free, are free indeed, for he cleanses them from all sin; they are, indeed, glorious to relate, and more glorious to believe, and live upon; by his precious blood, sanctified and separated from all the sin that accompanies their lives in general, and also their prayers, their reading, their meditations, their preachings, their writings, and their best obedience. The hymn writer justly observes; "Sin is mixt with all I do." And so it is, and yet O glorious belief; our Lord has so efficiently sanctified, and cleansed us from all general and particular sins, that it is not our sin, but his; for however angry poor mortals may be, at such a declaration, it is a fact, that Christ gave himself, that is, his holiness, innocency, and freedom from all exposure to judicial sufferings, to us, and took {by imputation} on himself, all our pollution, guilt, and liabilities to the wrath, and vindictive suffering, which must have been, either ours or his, but cannot possibly belong to both. It was this view of Christ, to which Paul referred when he declared that Christ "was made sin;" {II Cor.5:21;} yes, I add, Christ sanctifies the church, and absolves them, by delivering them from all sin, and doing the will of God himself, in their stead; which will, as done by Christ their Sanctifier, is their sanctification. "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." {Heb.10:10} And on this account, he hath "perfected forever, them that are sanctified." {Heb.10:14} Yes, "he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause, he is not ashamed to call them brethren." {Heb.2:11} Yes, one in perfect holiness, in the eyes of the most Holy God, so that neither iniquity, nor perverseness, does God behold in Jacob; {Num.21:23;} he is pure, even as Christ is pure. Of One; that is, of Christ. "For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the Root be holy, so are the branches." {Rom.11:16} If the Hebrew church, in the old dispensation, which was a type of the spiritual, under the new dispensation, were only freed, or absolved from the guilt of their sin, through the medium of the scape-goat, and not from the pollution of their sin, by the blood of the slain sacrifices, then, of course, they went back to their tents, in a state of defilement, though not of condemnation; and on an analogy of

reasoning, the most scriptural, if God's elect, are only freed from the guilt of their sin, by Christ's bearing their sin away, without being delivered from the pollution of it; by the same medium then, of course, they have only freedom from the guilt of sin, in Christ, they must look elsewhere for sanctification from the defilement of it; but let the advocates of such partial benefits, connected with union to Christ, read Is.1:18: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Now then, to what does this refer, but to their sanctification, from the defilement of the sin, which is mentioned as a loathsome disease, in verse the sixth. {"From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."} And because the people of God, are sanctified by the will of God, done by Christ, as well as justified by his being the end of the law for righteousness, I think the Scriptures speak as much of the imputed sanctification of the people of God, as of their imputed righteousness unto justification; but where can we find in this account, of Christ being the Perfect Sanctification of the Church, anything about progressive sanctification? Thirdly, I observe, that the sanctification of the people of God's choice, is ascribed to the "sanctification of the Spirit," {I Pet.1:2,} which sanctification, is much spoken of in the Scriptures. It is a New Covenant blessing, exclusively belonging to, because exclusively provided for, and bequeathed to, the children of God. This is the altar mentioned by Paul, whereof others have no right to eat, none but the elect, have either part or lot in this matter, neither can they, any more than fallen angels. The sanctification of the Spirit flows wholly {as the originating cause} from the love of God to the persons of the elect, while the fountain, or source of the Spirit's sanctification is in Christ, in whom, by faith in him, and his perfect doing of the will, or fulfilling the law of God, believers by the indwelling of God the Spirit, in them, receive the personal manifestation, knowledge, and enjoyment thereof; they receive out of his fullness, and grace for grace. They being sons, by eternal election, in due time; that is, according to the time of God's eternal purposing, the "Spirit of his Son comes into their hearts, crying Abba Father." {Gal.4:6} Observe, not they cry, but the Spirit of his Son cries, in their hearts, and this agrees with Romans 8:26,27. "The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." The Holy Ghost works all our works in us, He quickens us together with Christ. Sanctification of the Spirit, of which all believers are the subjects, is a perfect work? Why, doubtless it is, nor can any sentiment be fraught with more relative evils, than that which represents the work of the Spirit as imperfect; nothing can be more derogatory to the glory of the Spirit than to represent his work imperfectly holy. The Holy Ghost says, Ezek.36:25, "A new heart," not a mended, or old heart new modeled, but "a new heart will I give you;" wherefore, I should conclude, that such a heart would be perfectly holy, but I need cite no more Scriptures or produce any more arguments to prove that the sentiment of progressive sanctification is not, nor can be deducible from the work of the blessed Trinity, to whom the perfect sanctification of the church is ascribed. God is the Rock, "his work is perfect." {Deut.32:4} Before I conclude my communication upon sanctification, I shall advert to the false reasoning, of a late popular, modern Calvinist, notorious, for his avowed hostility to those of his brethren, who could not see with his eyes upon this Controverted point; I refer to the late Dr. Ryland, who, in his preface to Mr. Fuller's pamphlet, on Antinomianism, undertook to write in defense of

progressive sanctification, by affirming, that it is not only a scriptural doctrine, but it is a duty imperiously enjoined on all believers; this, I confess sounds very strange, that the sanctification of believers, begun as they tell us, by the Spirit in regeneration, should become the duty of the professor to perfect. After the doctor had made a most unchristian like, and false insinuation, concerning his brethren who believe in the imputed sanctification of Christ to believers, by insinuating that they deny internal sanctification, for he goes on to say, "but if there be any internal Sanctification, is it progressive; is there any such thing as growth in grace; and is growth in grace a duty? Here I understand {says the doctor} there are professors, who would return a negative answer." This question, I reply, is evidently complex, and plainly shows, either, that the doctor could not see afar off, upon his subject, or that he intentionally jumbled these two distinct objects into one question, as a designed snare, and net, for the unstable reader; for the last question or part, "is there any such thing as growth in grace," is evidently intended, as an underhand insinuation, that the persons who do not believe, and are not afraid to deny the dogma of progressive sanctification, disbelieve, and deny also, the same sentiment, the believer's growth in grace, or his perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord; a sentiment, the most remote from their minds and words, who disbelieve, in either creature holiness, or progressive sanctification. No Sir, but on the contrary, myself as an individual, and everyone who believes with the heart, and confesses with the mouth, the belief of the church's perfect sanctification in Christ, believes also that their perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord, wholly originates in, and flows from, the perfection of their sanctification or holiness, which they have in their Head, Christ. Ryland not only taught and urged, most vehemently, the sentiment, here opposed, but urged also that it was the creature's duty. With what propriety has that worthy author of a sermon, entitled "God the Doer of all Things;" {Edward Vaughan, 1823;} remarked, that "many who call and account themselves Calvinists, or Calvinistic, are in heart and understanding, if not avowedly, freewillers, squaring, as they seek to do, the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to the deductions of blinded human reason, and making a god for themselves, by blending shreds and patches of Scripture, with shreds and patches of their own imagination, instead of simply studying, lying at the feet of, and inhabiting, that Living and True One, whom the Scripture hath set forth, and the Spirit has published to make known;" though really such is the confusion of the sentiment, it being made up of contradictions; the most opposed, that all who have written, or spoken in defense of it, have only darkened counsel with words without knowledge. Whatever controverted point in theology is at war with that which is incontrovertible, is founded on falsehood, and not on truth. It is incontrovertibly true, that we are COMPLETE IN CHRIST, that we are blessed with ALL spiritual blessings IN HIM, and that, from the period of our being the elect of God, accepted in the Beloved; {in Christ;} also, that God's work is perfect. It having been proved, then, that the believer's sanctification is the sole work and achievement of the Holy Trinity and that the believer's sanctification must be perfect in Christ; and to contend otherwise, is to contend that the creature is bound, in duty, to perfect the work which God has begun. Now, progressive sanctification is directly opposed to the above incontrovertible text of Divine Revelation; and this proves, that progressive sanctification is human error, opposed to God's Truth. The Holy Ghost asks, with a view to discriminate between things and persons that differ, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from sin?" {Pv.20:9} To which I answer, none can say that in truth, {though many others have pretended to it falsely,} but the spiritual in

Christ Jesus; and can they? Some will exclaim, with as much amazement as if I was introducing some doctrine never yet found in the Bible; this however, shall not deter me from giving the most positive answer in the affirmative, this being the express case of all "who are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the WORD of God, {Christ,} which liveth and abideth forever." "Ye," says Peter, "have purified your souls, in obeying the truth, through the Spirit." {I Pet.1:22} It is positively affirmed, that the persons referred to, had purified their souls; here I might leave it, it being the testimony of the Holy Ghost, and warrants the most implicit faith; but we may remark further how they did it, "in obeying the truth;" what is implied by this? Why, believing the Gospel, which says, "Christ is made unto us sanctification," that "by one offering, he hath perfected forever, them that are sanctified," that he is his people's sanctification, by doing the will of God, in their stead, which will, as done by Christ, was in fact their doing it themselves, not in their first Adam's existence, but in the Second. So then, as "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness," so it is also in sanctification, for God is said, "to purify {sanctify} the hearts of his people, by faith," that is, faith apprehends Christ as the object, the source, or matter of heart purification, for "he that hath this hope {Christ as revealed in the Gospel, for the obedience or apprehension and reliance of faith, as the very substance of the believer's sanctification} purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure." {I Jn.3:3} But we must not overlook the power, or agent, by which believers purify their souls, which is, "the Spirit;" through the Spirit, believers purify their souls; how so? Why, by the Spirit taking of Christ, as provided by the Father, as his people's sanctification, and showing him in that covenant character, and union relationship, to the heaven-born soul, whose faith, by the sight of Christ, thus divinely provided, and divinely revealed, is called forth to act upon Christ, as such, and by which medium, the believer can say, "thanks be to God, for his unspeakable gift," by which "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin." But in which of all these texts, that treat so pointedly, and exclusively on sanctification, is there the most distant trace of the sentiment of progressive, in opposition to complete sanctification in Christ? Does not Christ call his church "a dove;" and does he not also compare them to "a chaste virgin;" in which representation, are we not taught to view the bride, the Lamb's wife so completely sanctified, as to be "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing?" But to all these plain and positive Scripture references, in defense of what I am contending for, the chimera of progressive sanctification is directly opposed. Washington Wilks "Fearless Defense of the Leading Doctrines, Preached and Received by Modern Antinomians, in Seven Letters." 1830.

**God's Absolute Will & Sovereign Decree
{Especially in Relation to Sin}**

Sin did not step in unperceived among created beings; no! He, whose single thought at once comprehends eternity's unbounded round, ordained its being, and fixed its limits with the utmost precision; nor shall a single thought, more or less, than is fixed, in the all-wise plan, be ever found among rational beings. Moral evil, that seemed to threaten with destruction the whole empire of God, is made by infinite wisdom, subservient to the manifesting and glorifying of all his moral excellencies, and must have been ordained and determined for that very end, as evidently appears from the Everlasting Covenant of Grace, in which such ample provision is made to deliver the guilty subjects from the dire effects thereof. Christ

could not have been set up from everlasting, and appointed to appear in the fullness of time, to purge away sin by the sacrifice of himself, had not the being of it then been fixed and determined. His engagement with the Divine Father in eternity is a full and clear demonstration that sin or moral evil is no accidental thing, but a wise and holy determination of God, for the manifestation of his own glory, in the Person of his dear Son, the adorable Redeemer, from it. Sin could not have existence contrary to the Divine will, it's being must be a consequent of the sovereign purpose. This is demonstrable from the infinite wisdom and unlimited power of God, by which he might, with the most perfect ease, have prevented its being, from its increase, and the extensive spread of its dire effects, when God could have stopped its progress in a moment, at any period of time, had it been his pleasure. And also, from the glorious provision and remedy prepared for its destruction, and the delivery of millions of its guilty subjects from its baleful and ruinous effects. These things, among others, indubitably prove, that the being of moral evil was a certain consequence of the Divine purpose; for if God had not determined its existence, it could not have had being; unless we suppose sin to be greater than God. It is objected, that this sentiment interferes with man's free agency. What is free agency? Why, as applied to any being save God, it is what Luther calls "freewill - a downright lie;" for, who else is, or can be a free agent, but one who acts in thought, word, and deed, independent of any influence out of himself. This I confess is what proud man would like to be, and, though he is not so, he would like to be thought so; and therefore, those hirelings who will sell their consciences to teach such a doctrine, are the most approved and the best rewarded by their deluded followers. Such an agent, man never was yet, not even in his primeval standing. Man may, or may not; sometimes he does, sometimes he does not act freely in what he does and thinks, but there is a wide difference between a man's doing what he does freely, and his doing what he does independently. This, however, is too plain in the language of common sense, and therefore, easy to be understood to need explanation, or to admit of refutation; consequently, I need only remark, in further refutation of the supposed ostensible objection, that man's crime can only originate in his not being a free agent, for where there is free agency, there can be no law to prohibit or bind, and no law no sin; a bond on law, being directly opposed to the very idea of independency, bring the Deity under law, and God himself at that moment ceases to be a free agent, insomuch, that Toplady has wisely argued, "that Christ himself was an absolute necessitarian," indeed he might have gone much further, and said that God himself in his covenant character, is not a free agent but a necessitarian, for such truly is the case, inasmuch, as he bound himself over to the service of the elect, from which he is not at liberty to retract. This therefore, disposes at once the foolish idea, which says, man cannot be the subject of crime, unless he acts as a free agent, not considering the difference between even a slave's doing what he does freely, and doing it independently. Did either sinner or saint act as free agent, the latter would have whereof to boast with "a well done I," in direct opposition to Jer.9:23,24, 10:13, Gal.2:20; while the sinner Judas, must be regarded as becoming the son or heir of perdition of his own freewill, and Pilate consigning over Christ to be crucified without power being administer or given to him, for the express purpose of his doing as he did. No sinner, the most diabolical, ever yet acted as a free agent; although every sinner, in the perpetration of the vilest deeds, invariably commits such acts freely, and from choice; the latter therefore, is sufficient to constitute crime, and render the subject of sin obnoxious to the justice of that God in whom he lives, moves, and has his being. Jeremiah most positively avers, "I know that the way of

man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," Jer.10:23. Daniel also is equally positive in his declaration, that "the wicked shall do wickedly;" Dan.12:10; while Solomon does not hesitate to say, "the disposings of the heart in man, are of the Lord;" texts point blank against the notion of man's being a free agent, though in perfect concord with the Scripture doctrines of man's accountability and culpability, the former originating in man's dependence, as a creature, justly obnoxious to the revealed commands of his Creator, as the rule of his actions; while the latter consists in his violating freely, by choice, the Decalogue, imposed as the guide of his actions; although in breaking the same, he, like those who crucified the Son of God, did only fulfill the determinate counsel or decree of God, in which Jehovah himself had appointed not only when, how, and where every human being should come into the world, but when, how, and where, every human being should go out of the same. This, therefore, ought to suffice for an answer to the fourth foolish objection. "Therefore," said the Son of God, to account for the unbelief of the Jews, "they could not believe because that Esaias had said again, he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." Jn.12:40. "These things," says Calvin, "many do refer to sufferance, as if, in forsaking the reprobate, he suffered them to be blinded by Satan. But that solution is too fond, forasmuch as the Holy Ghost in plain words expresseth, that they are stricken with blindness and madness by the just judgment of God." Such is the ridiculously foolish exposition of Scripture, given by modern Calvinists, who contend that when the Holy Ghost teacheth that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, he only means that God permitted his heart to be hardened; wherefore, with what pertinence does Calvin rebut such sophists, by turning their objections on themselves, by rendering the text, Ex.8:15, as follows, "but when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he permitted his heart to be hardened," &c.; although this fantastical twisting of the sacred text goes no further towards the cause of freewill than does the true sense of it; for, where the sinner is hardened, it matters not who hardens him, seeing he is thereby incapacitated for free volition." What then becomes of the golden calf called man's free agency? Is it not, as I before stated, what Luther designates, "freewill - a downright lie," designed to make the creature on a level with the Creator. This, however, by modern divines, is styled horrid blasphemy, "originating," to use the language of a fifth objector, "in my not distinguishing between God's prescience and his decretive will." In this objection, I am urged to adopt a system, {to avoid the charge of blasphemy} which represents the Almighty as foreseeing and foreknowing the existence of events in his dominions, which he did not will should occur; therefore, they occur, contrary, yea, in direct opposition to, and at war with, his Sovereign pleasure. But the question is not, whether the Almighty foreknew that angels and man would become sinners; but whether he foreknew those events, in consequence of his having decreed and determined both their occurrence and effects. In reply to this interesting inquiry, I shall here insert the unanswerable reasoning of great Tucker, "God must be infallibly sure of the things foreknown, or he could not be said to foreknow them. But whence could this certainty arise, if not from his own immutable will? His having determined them, must be the source, both of their certain existence and of his own immutable knowledge. For, as a late great master in Israel has observed, certain and immutable knowledge, is founded on some certain and immutable cause; which can be no other than the Divine will. God knows that such and such things will be; because he has determined in his will that they shall be. And, therefore, nothing can be infallibly foreknown,

but as it is known to be his immutable will. How, Antichristian therefore, and not less stupid, must it be in modern scribes, to teach, that God foreknew and foresaw that man would sin, but he did not will that such should be the case; whereas God himself can foreknow nothing but on the broad principle of his first willing the existence of the thing foreknown; let it be otherwise, and the Divine prescience must be founded, not in the Divine will, but in the contingencies of mutable existences. And then, what becomes of God's foreknowledge? Why, it will amount to a mere nonentity. It being demonstrated that the doctrine of Divine prescience, and the doctrine of absolute decrees or predestination, must stand and fall together. Indeed, I am at a loss to know how any person, especially a student in the Holy Scriptures, can read the prophecies contained therein, and afterwards object to believe in the absolute will of God, as the originating cause of all? What are Scripture prophecies, but the matter of Divine prescience predicated? And in what does God's foreknowledge consist? Why, in nothing else but his absolute knowledge of his own immutable will. For God, therefore, to foreknow his own mind, concerning what shall or shall not take place even to a creature's thought, his mind being his absolute decree, God prophesied {if I may so say} to Abraham, that his seed should go down to Egypt, in which place they were to exist four hundred years; also, that the people, among whom his seed were to sojourn, should afflict them, &c. Now, what was this predicated fact but the Divine prescience, foretelling the Divine Decrees, the latter being the life of the former. But was there no sin connected with the Egyptians afflicting the Hebrews? I should think there was indeed, if killing innocent children is sin; and was that sanguinary tragedy included in the Divine prescience? It was most certainly. Then must it not have been included in God's absolute will and decrees? Necessarily it was; nor can anyone living prove to the contrary, but by proving that man to be the only Christian, who teaches his votaries to believe, that "there is no God." Christian ministers, I add, are to preach the truth. Wherefore, not till it can be proved, that God's decree, as contended for in this letter, is error, as I at liberty to dispense with it in my ministrations, let wicked men make what use they will of such a sentiment. The Apostle Paul was too well acquainted with human nature, not to know, that not a few of his hearers, indeed all who were uninstructed by the Holy Spirit, would wrest his ministerial testimony to their own destruction, but did that deter him from preaching doctrines, which were hard to be understood? Certainly not; the fact is, {as far as it relates to myself} I should hesitate to continue to preach any sentiment, which did not provoke natural men to rebellion against God; nor do I hesitate to say, that the rebellion produced in the minds, words, and conduct of natural men, will be proportioned to the opportunities they possess of hearing the truth; and the more truth they hear, the more at enmity will they be, against the God of truth, because of the evil it genders in the minds, extorts from the mouths, and produces in the lives of natural men; it affords the most demonstrable proof, that sentiments, producing such effects on natural men, are the very acme of Gospel mysteries. Paul say, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet," which Divine prohibition, though the very truth of God, called forth Paul's lusting after prohibited objects. "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid!" The same may be said of Christ, as the truth, who, when on earth, made the Jews, especially the Pharisees, sin sevenfold more than they would have done, had he never come. And how did he do that? Why, by preaching the Gospel of Free Grace, in opposition to the Mosaic ceremonies. The same may be said of the Gospel of Christ, which I will answer, carries as many men to hell, as it does to heaven; it being, yet, the very preachers of it are said to be, "unto God a sweet savor of Christ," not only "in them

that are saved, but in them that perish;" the Gospel of Christ being, through their faithfully preaching it, life to the former and death to the latter. What shall we say then? Is the Gospel sin, or even error, because of the great evil to which it tends, in the minds, lives, and final destiny of those who hear it as natural men? God forbid! "Whence," says Calvin, {when combating the very same objection as the one I am now refuting} "I pray you, cometh the stink in a dead carrion, which hath been both rotted and disclosed by the heat of the sun, yet, no man does therefore say, that the sunbeams does stink; away therefore with this doggish forwardness, which may indeed afar off bark at the justice {and so at the truth} of God, but cannot touch it." Once for all, therefore, without detaining your attention longer on this part of my defense, ever remember, that the truest way to know, what is truth, is to ask, and get an answer to this question: What influence has the doctrine, advocated by your preacher, on the minds of those who hear it? Does it make the wicked do more wickedly? Driving them to desperation, and calling forth the most latent evil of their natures against the Christ of God; calling him, and his ministers, all manner of evil names? If so, you may rely upon it as the truth of God, which will be further manifest, by its opposite influence on the minds, words and doings of those, who are made partakers of the Divine Nature. See this in the life of Paul, the Gospel being like the sun, which while it melts the wax, it hardens the clay; nor can it be otherwise with the truth, it must melt the quickened together with Christ Jesus, to a state of evangelical contrition, while it hardens the unregenerate in their unbelief, impenitency, and enmity; making them reprobate to every good work; and this accounts for the vilest, and most hardened sinners, among mankind, being found among those, who, while they are most conversant with Gospel doctrines, are destitute of God's grace in their hearts; these are they, who will frame their excuses for sin, from God's truth; yes, like the philosopher Zeno's servant, who being caught in the act of theft, either with a design to ridicule his master's doctrine, or to avail himself of it, in order to evade punishment, said, "It was my fate to be a thief." But did that invalidate the truth of Zeno's philosophy? I should think not, indeed. And is it not the same with Gospel sinners? Do not these, when told of their abominable deeds, either with a view to excuse themselves, or to ridicule the doctrine of God's decrees, cry aloud, Oh; you teach that all things are decreed! And therefore, we were predestinated to live in riot, in drunkenness, in knavery, and such like flagrancies, as the open profligate would be ashamed of. But does such vileness of conduct, in which such professors encourage themselves, make God's truth, thus abused, a lie? Oh, no; truth is truth still, wherefore, let such ridiculers of Gospel doctrines know, that the time will come, when fearfulness shall seize the hypocrite, so that the sinners in Zion, shall be afraid, knowing to their cost, the truth of Zeno's reply to his hardened servant, who endeavored to ridicule his master's doctrine, by saying, "It was my fate to be a thief;" received for answer, "and to be punished for it," said Zeno. Wherefore, let such hardened wretches, who think to make a mock at God's truth, especially the Divine Decrees, by saying, they were predestinated to sin, recollect also, that they are also predestinated to burn in hell! At the same time, I beg to remark, that such abuse of the doctrine, will not be found in the life of any godly person, {except when subjected thereto by the power of temptation, which is not only a possible, but a too frequent case} on which account let me beseech believers to be very careful to avoid this temptation, and at the same time allowing that on some occasions, they feel their vile hearts capable of such demoniac delusions, let them, I say, be cautious, that they do not add to their sin, by denying or even objecting, to the doctrine of God's decrees, another

word for predestination, because they, under the power of temptation, have been left at some seasons of their pilgrimage, to make an unhallowed use of them. Nor will the godly in Christ Jesus follow their pernicious habits, who pretend, that the belief of God's having decreed all men's thoughts, words, and deeds, will furnish men with just authority to think light of sin, it being impossible, that those to whose consciences the exceeding sinfulness of sin has once been manifested, can ever be prevailed on, to think otherwise. Sin is to every believer, what it was to Paul, a source of unequalled wretchedness! Washington Wilks "Fearless Defense of the Leading Doctrines, Preached and Received by Modern Antinomians, in Seven Letters." 1830