

God's Absolute Will & Sovereign Decree.

{Especially in Relation to Sin}

By: Washington Wilks

**"Fearless Defense of the Leading Doctrines, Preached and Received
by Modern Antinomians, in Seven Letters." 1830**

*"Sin did not slip in unperceived among created beings; no! He whose single
thought at once comprehends eternity's unbounded round, ordained its being,
and fixed its limits."*

William Tucker "Predestination Calmly Considered." 1835.

*"God's will and pleasure, is the womb that conceived, and whence springs
every work of the creature, whatsoever it be, whether it be good or bad."*

John Archer "Comfort for Believers." 1661.

One thing believed by those who adhere to the Truth of God's Absolute Sovereignty, in distinction from modern Calvinists, as a part of the faith once delivered to the saints, refers to the Eternal Will, Purpose, or Decree of God, on which subject modern Calvinists say that Jehovah as a Trinity of Persons, wills or decrees the existence of what is morally good, whereas he does not decree or will, but permit only, the existence of what is morally evil; whereas Biblical Predestinarians, believe that the unerring disposer of all time events did from Eternity, Decree, Purpose, and Absolutely Will the actual and unavoidable existence of whatever takes place in this world from its creation, to the period when time shall be no longer.

Jeremiah says. "O Lord, I know that the way of men is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," were it otherwise, man would no longer be a subject, but a sovereign, these being the only two characters actually existing in heaven, earth, or hell. My object therefore in taking up this subject is to give honor and majesty to whom it is due by ascribing to God as the first great cause of all things, the exclusive character of Sovereign or King in the legitimate sense of the word whereby God on the principles of absolute monarchy {for to him it alone belongs} subdues all the creatures of his power under him, devoting them severally to such purposes as shall best serve his own glory.

Is God a King then? Yes, he is! Who then are his subjects? Are not men, angels, and devils? Most certainly they are. To what end then does he design the disposal of them? Why to that end which shall conduce most to the promotion of his glory, whose property all creatures are, and whom they serve in all things, insomuch, that Solomon said, "the Lord

hath made all things for himself; yea even the wicked for the day of evil." Prov.16:4. In contending therefore, for this doctrine, I am not acting with an unbiased will {another word for free will,} although my will freely acts, it being by the force of truth on my understanding that my will is constrained or made willing to act in fearless conformity to that sovereign injunction, "he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully; diminishing not a word." Such however would not, could not be my conduct, were I to refrain from a fearless and full avowal, either from the pulpit or the press, of those Scriptures which ascribe the most awful sins ever perpetrated by either men or devils to the determinate unavoidable counsel or will of God. This then is my apology for being found among the daring reasoners who will affirm, that the original fall and subsequent conduct of both devils and men, was not only designed but helped forward by the Will and Providence of God, addressing myself thus to some readers, I should have need to say, suspend your judgment, and spare your censures for a period; this however is not necessary to you, for you know as well as myself, that what Mr. Tucker says is true, which is "that God requires us to think of him consistent with that he has revealed of himself in his Word. If his Word is not our rule we are sure to err." This however is impossible on any other principle than that which ascribes to God the glory due to his character, as the first Cause, and the Ultimate End of all things, that ever did or ever shall exist in his dominions, from the smallest particle of matter to the most glorious spirit ever created, both alike being his creatures, both alike being prior to their creation predestinated to an unavoidable destiny, both of them acting in direct compliance with the design of their Creator, who does nothing in vain, though forsooth it would be far otherwise could such a thing be possible as that which insinuates, the Almighty created creatures without designing each creature his occupation and certain employment, as instruments in their Maker's hands by which he works the accomplishment of those things which shall most conduce to his everlasting glory. You must be aware that I can have no design short of God's glory, in undertaking to give a statement and defense of this Scripture doctrine, this being certain, whoever will seek the glory of God, by the defense of his truth, at the expense of public applause, must secure to himself all that odium necessarily connected with nonconformity to popular evils, and I know those who would urge this as an argument for my desisting from an undertaking that must secure to myself the cross of scandal as long as I live. This, however, to me savors so much of the spirit which urged Peter to inveigh with vehemence against the Lord's going up to Jerusalem to suffer, that I am truly disposed to treat it with similar regard to that which fell to the lot of the ignorant disciple. Do I believe the Bible to be the word of God? If not, I had better ease me of my present adversaries, instead of increasing them, which I might do with success and gracefulness by becoming an avowed Infidel; modern Calvinists, who in fact are my bitterest, if not my only enemies, having declared both Infidelity and Atheism to be preferable to modern Antinomianism; but I do believe the Scriptures to be the word of God, and it is on the probity of this article of my Christian faith that I also believe the existence of sin to have originated in the absolute will of God; for it is in the Scriptures I have been taught to believe in the existence of a Supreme Being call God; but where, I would demand, is his supremacy over all created existences, if there exists that single subsistence which does not exist as the immediate consequence of his own will? Must it not be the height of Atheism to talk of a God who sees that before his eyes which he wills not to exist? And, on the other hand, must it not be blasphemy, the most profane, to assign, in defense of such an assumption, that though God does not will the existence of sin, yet he permits it, for nothing can be plainer than the fact, that if it could possibly be an impeachment to the Divine character to will the fall of man, it must be equally so to the holiness of God to permit the sin which he could have prevented, unless they will allow that God permits its existence for good ends and purposes only; then what becomes of their disbelief of God's willing the existence of sin? Why it is effectually negated by their own concessions. But, with a view to greater perspicuity, I shall propose, in further explanation and defense of the subject, the following considerations.

First: What saith the Scriptures, that is, do they, or do they not positively ascribe the existence of sin to the will of God? Or, to use language more consistent with Scripture, to God himself, for to attempt separating between God and his will, may be worthy unmeaning words, but not worthy the character of God, or even good sense. Allow me to add, on this part of my subject, that whatsoever is not of faith is sin; now nothing can be of faith, which is not founded on the word of God. "To the law and to the testimony;" therefore, as to the unerring standard of right and wrong, in matters of faith, would I make my appeal, candidly confessing, that if I am not able to keep my standing by this rule, I will give up the field to my antagonists; but on the contrary, supposing that I succeed in establishing my belief from Scripture, I may rest satisfied that I shall meet with no obstructions from sound argument, or the most orthodox divines. I could have wished that it were as true as it is proverbial, "that the Bible is the religion of Protestants;" for in that case there would have been no need for my present undertaking; but, such not being the case, I hesitate not to say, that I go about my work with a good degree of confidence, in reference to the issue of my appeal to Divine Revelation, on this controverted point, however much it may be "opposed by the wisdom of the world, or run down by popular outcry." {Cooper on Predestination} "We must," says another, "separate the exercise of the understanding from the tendencies of feeling and imagination, and be prepared to follow the light of Scriptural testimony to whatever conclusions it may lead us, we must train our minds to the hardihood of abstract thinking, and inquire not what will be the consequences of the admission, or what other principles will be involved in it, or what shall we think on other collateral subjects; but to one point alone direct our attention, What saith the Scriptures?" This is an exquisitely beautiful passage, and well worthy our most unqualified attention, as an axiom of infallible rectitude to guide our present inquiries. Here, then, allow me to ask, in defense of the tenet for which I am now contending, was there ever conduct more replete with envy, malice, lying, cunning hypocrisy, and murderous designs, than that exhibited by Jacob's sons in their behavior to their brother Joseph? But to whom, I ask, does Joseph himself ascribe, suppose I say the oversight and chief management, of that bloody tragedy? What saith the Scripture? "And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you; and they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land; and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest; and God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." Gen.45:4-8 This passage is too palpable to admit of explanation by either parties; nor has there ever been an attempt made by good men, however learned, among modern Calvinists to dissuade the English reader from an unreserved reception of it in its most unqualified sense, by a single suggestion against the correctness of its translation from the Hebrew text; what then becomes of the acrimony of modern divines against the faith of saints, indignantly referred to as Ultra-Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism, Antinomianism? By which it is meanly insinuated that these Ultra- these Hyper-Calvinistic Antinomians preach higher doctrines than the Bible reveals, which is an assumption the most unfounded.

But why write I about Joseph? No Scripture is of any private interpretation; holy men of old wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and though Joseph, as one of those holy men, spake so pointedly in favor of the belief contended for by the faithful, as to render the denial of it decidedly infidel; yet there are numerous other instances, where the origin of evil, {even the most flagrant} is ascribed to the decretive will and purpose of God. For instance, what could be more sinful in the conduct of Eli's sons that their not hearkening unto the voice of their godly father? But why did they not hearken to the voice of their father? "Because Jehovah purposed to destroy them," or, as our English translation renders it, "because the Lord would slay them." Was Absalom guilty of moral evil when he went in unto his father's wives, in the sight of all Israel? Unquestionably he was; but with whom did

Absalom's sinful conduct originate? Or, in other words, was his so doing the will and determinate purpose of God? For answer to this, we have only to read II Sam.12:11. "Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, {the person nearest to thee, which will make the sin the greater, and the affliction more weighty,} and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun."

Again I may ask, was it, or was it not sin the most flagrant which marked the conduct of Shimei, when he cursed David, calling the Lord's anointed a "man of Belial," insomuch that the righteous wrath of Abishai, was justly kindled, seeing he saw no further than the man, even to a desire that he might go over and kill the hypocrite, but what saith David? Why, "so let him curse because the Lord hath said unto him, curse David; who shall then say, wherefore hast thou done so?" II Sam.16:5-10. The same might be said of David's numbering the people, which was a great sin, for which the people, not David, were greatly punished; and in what did that sin originate? Why in the will of God, that being his chosen way of bringing evil upon the people against whom the Lord's anger was greatly kindled. "And again, the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he {Jehovah} moved David against them to say, go, number Israel and Judah." II Sam.24:1. The same argument in defense of the origin of moral evil may be strengthened from I Kings 22:23, where Micaiah fearlessly tells Ahab, "Now therefore, behold the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee." Although the poor despised prophet got only bread and water for his sustenance with smiting and raillery for his clothing and reputation; nevertheless that did not invalidate his testimony. I wonder what my friends, who ascribe the origin of evil to men, would say if they were called upon to expound the following testimony from David! "He turned their heart to hate his people, and to deal subtlety with his servants." Psal.105:25, explained by Deut.2:30, "But Sihon King of Heshbon would not let us pass by him. For the Lord thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand, as appeareth this day." For a further exposition of this incontrovertible fact, compare Exod.2:16 with Acts 7:19, with the following reflections in proof, that there was nothing like blind chance or senseless permission, distinct from an antecedent absolute decree in all this; for in Gen.13:16, we read that God foretold to Abraham, that his seed should go down to Egypt, and that the Egyptians should afflict them for four hundred years, which conduct on the part of the Egyptians, as well as the conduct of Jacob's sons must have been the will of God decreed from eternity, as much as the issue designed thereby. Again what does David mean when he prays, "incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity;" Psal.141:4; the meaning of which is, as says Mr. Ainsworth, God moveth men's minds by Satan as appeareth, I Chron.21:1, with I Sam.24:1, So Matt.6:13, where the Son of God taught his disciples to pray, "lead us not into temptation." So Psa.119:36, "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies and not to covetousness." I refer you to this text as the directest way to find out the psalmist's real meaning in reference to God's inclining men's hearts; the import of which is the same in both passages, or otherwise they have no meaning at all; for proof of this, I need only refer you to the literal etymology of the word with the parallel texts, as Deut.2:20, I Kings 8:58, 22:22, with Isa.63:17. "O Lord why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our hearts from thy fear," compared with Joshua 11:20, Isa.6:10-12, Jn.12:40, each of which are in perfect agreement with the saying of Solomon, Prov.16:1, "the preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord." The margin very comprehensively explains this passage by rendering it "the disposings of the heart," which in fact have been already explained to us from Psal.105:25, where God is said to have disposed the hearts of the enemy to hate and deal subtlety with his people, which is further explained and substantiated from II Chron.18:31, where God is said to have rescued Jehoshaphat by moving the Syrians to depart from them. So in Num.21:18, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either

good or bad of mine own mind." Another passage of Holy Writ equally to the point is Dan.4:17, where it is said, "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men." Do remark this, and no more hesitate to oppose those who would take the scepter of universal and absolute dominion from God, and put it into the hands of the sovereign creature man, whereas Daniel is not afraid to teach that the "basest of men" are set up by the Most High so that not only Pharaoh was set up by God, but Ahab, of whom it is recorded that there was none like him, who sold himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord; this man I say was set up by God, to sell himself to work wickedness; for the wicked, Daniel says, shall do wickedly and the same may be said of Herod, Nero, and Bloody Mary, whose very names, in consequence of their wicked conduct, chill our blood on every remembrance of them, and yet God set them up, and that purposely, to act the base part which each party did act for had God set up these base characters, to practice good and not evil, then indeed, the thoughts and designs of God's heart in setting them up, were frustrated and made void, but how would this agree with the testimony of Isaiah, "the Lord, the Lord of Hosts hath sworn saying, surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass, as I have purposed, so shall it stand, for the Lord of Hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it." So as God is said by Solomon, to have a purpose for everything under the sun, he must have purposed that moral evil as well as good should or should not exist in the hearts and lives of mankind; for had not the Almighty willed the existence of all moral evil, as much as all good, he must have willed to the contrary, it being self-evident, that Jehovah could not be neutral in a case so immediately connected with his own glory and prerogative. I am quite aware that the opposite opinion to this is the most popular, it being the language of men in general to assert that "with our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own; for who is Lord over us." Again; "knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" So said the proud free-willer Pilate to the Son of God, but Jesus answered, "thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above;" and though Peter had been an eye witness to all the wicked proceedings of the Jews at the crucifixion of Christ, he was neither afraid nor ashamed to say, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Acts 2:22,23 with chap.4:26-28. "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord, and against his Christ, &c.," verse 28; "for to do whatsoever thy Hand and thy Counsel determined before to be done." Christ moreover, is said to be, "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed." I Pet.2:8. Jude also says, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation; ungodly men turning the grace of our Lord into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." Surely I need not enlarge the number of Scripture testimonies already adduced in proof, that "God does absolutely will, purpose, or decree the existence of moral evil." "I know," says a late admirable writer on this subject, "it is the fashion to say, that this and such like representations of truth have no color of authority, save in a few detached passages of Scripture; which, as some would teach you, have been torn from their bases, and wrested from their natural and just meaning, that they may seem to teach them." Of such tearings and wrestings I must, in this instance, at least, be pronounced guileless. "Nor am I," as says Mr. Cooper on Predestination, "determined to this opinion by the prejudice of education, but because after careful searches and researches, I am convinced of the Truth of it, upon what appears to me to be the strongest evidence; and the more I inquire into it, the more I see it to agree with the Holy Scriptures, and the Divine Perfections." "When God," says Mr. Cruden, "would show his absolute dominion over men, and his irresistible power over their hearts, he has often recourse to the similitude of a potter, who makes

what he pleases of his clay; sometimes a vessel of honor, and sometimes of dishonor." Wherefore, as saith Isaiah, "woe unto him, that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, what makest thou?" "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" Matt.20:15. "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his Power {sovereignty} known, endured with much long suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted {margin made up} to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" Rom.9:22-24. Whereas, "whom he will he hardeneth." It may serve the purpose of John Wesley and modern Calvinists to affirm, "that even the heathen could say,"

*"No evil can from thee proceed,
It's only suffered, not decreed.*

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

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

"This," says Luther, "is the highest degree of faith, to believe that He is merciful who saves so few, and condemns so many; to believe Him just, who of his own will, makes us necessary objects of damnation."

Thus far I have showed you that which is noted in the Scripture of truth, and under this impression, I shall proceed, according to my promise, to show secondly, not only "what saith the Scriptures;" but what saith sound argument in favor of God's willing or decreeing the existence of moral evil or sin. Here, however, in particular, to avoid prolixity, I shall excuse myself from conformity to studied formality. First of all, then, suffer me to remind you, that "God is one," and on this account, his mind must be one, not only in point of immutability and unchangeableness, which is the sense in which Job mentions it {Job 23:13,} but as opposed to that which is complex; and on this account, I conceive, that the Almighty must have willed by a determinate counsel, the fall of man and angels, and of course all the sin and immorality which followed, for one of these two things he must have willed, either man's continuance in the state in which he was created, or his fall therefrom. Now, that Jehovah did not either will, purpose, or decree; man's continuance in his state of primeval holiness is too palpable to admit of proof, for "the Lord of Hosts hath sworn, saying, surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; as I have purposed, so shall it stand." Isa.14:24. Solomon also says that, "there are many devices in a man's heart, nevertheless the counsel of the Lord shall stand." Pro.19:21. "There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel, against the Lord." Prov.21:30. "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" Dan.4:35. "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times, the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

Isa.46:10. Surely these texts contain sufficient argument to satisfy any unprejudiced inquirer after truth, that God did not will either man's or angel's continuance in their condition of primeval holiness, therefore he must have willed, decreed, and purposed their fall therefrom.

Indeed it was, I remark, secondly unavoidably necessary that God should will the existence of moral evil, by the fall of his holy creatures; that God did so will, I have fairly demonstrated, nor am I less able to prove that he could not have done otherwise, it being impossible that the Almighty should act unworthy himself; we have only to ask, then, what was the ultimate design of all God's conduct? Was it not his own glory? And will not this be effectually secured, by the introduction of moral evil into the world, in a way that it could not have been secured by any other method of Divine procedure? To suppose otherwise is to sully the Divine attribute, by insinuating, that another method, more worthy the Divine Glory, might have been decided upon in God's counsel, for the consummating his glory in the superlative degree. The fall of both angels and man, therefore, was a Divinely Appointed and Infinitely Wise method of distinguishing between perfectly holy, yet mutable creatures, and their immutably Holy Creator. Do not contraries best display each other? How, then, could the wide difference between a mutable creature, and an Immutable Creator, by better {I say better, for it would be an impeachment of the Divine wisdom, to suppose he had not adopted the best method of glorifying himself,} developed, than by God's willing that his mutable creatures should be consigned over to no better keeping than their own mutable perfections, the issue of which was sure and certain to be their fall from their first estate. Hereby I conceive God declared to all eternity his special glory and independent supremacy, as the alone I am, or Immutable Jehovah. It is most certain, I will add, that all things must hang either on the will of the creature or the will of the Creator. Now which think you is most worthy the supremacy of God, and answerable to the subserviency of all creatures? "What if it be true," says the late godly Vaughan, "that God can do nothing certainly except he do all things really? Yet nothing can be surer than this. For if there be a single act which is done in the world beside, and independently of the will of God, that single act may stand in the way of one, two, any number, nay, the whole chain of his intended acts, and may frustrate, or bring them to naught."

None will deny, I should think, who allow the Bible to be Divine, that Pharaoh was the subject of sin, the most flagrant toward both God and man, nor can any deny, without denying the truth of revelation, that his whole conduct was designed by God as a medium for the furtherance of his own glory. "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, {margin - made thee stand} that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." From this passage we see plainly that Pharaoh was just such a character as is mentioned by Peter, even one who stumbled at God's word, being disobedient, "whereunto also he was appointed," for which end, the Almighty, as the Potter, whose sovereign prerogative it is to do as he likes with his own clay, tells his servant Moses, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments." Exod.7:1-4. Of what unhallowed effrontery, then, must those professors be the subjects, who, in face of all this Scripture evidence to the contrary, designate it a "sentiment of horrid blasphemy, coming from hell, and leading thereto again, as opposite to truth as God is to the Devil," {all of which sweet Christian-like epithets have been inscribed on the character of my ministry} to say God wills and decrees sin, whereas Divine Revelation positively affirms not only that God "raised Pharaoh, up," but that his so doing was the effect of an antecedent "purpose," the end of which was, as says Jehovah, "that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." Some persons, and good men too, in their expositions of Holy Writ, have urged that Pharaoh was raised up of God as a type of the Devil; but, be this as it may, it is evident that he was a great sinner, nor did his sins

originate, as some modern authors would have it, by the mere permission of God, but by the determinate counsel of God, called his purpose, nor is it less certain, that the purpose of God, in which Pharaoh's extraordinary character originated was eternal and absolute, for in that purpose was involved the glory of God's name throughout all the earth as a Being of uncontrolled power and impeachable sovereignty. Here, then, let me submit to your notice three questions. Can God act unworthy of himself? Doubtless you will say, no. Then, secondly, does not God act worthy of himself, in willing that which is the furtherance of his glory? I anticipate your answer, as in the affirmative. As a third question, then, May I not ask, would God have acted more worthy of himself, had he prevented the introduction of sin into his dominions? I am sure you will say, no, it being essential to Jehovah's perfections, to act in every sense, as is most worthy to himself, and the promotion of his own glory. Then, fourthly, must not God have acted unworthy of himself, not to have decreed absolutely that both angels and men should sin, seeing such a purpose would have been less conducive to his glory than that which he has acted. This must be granted, from the undoubted fact, that God's present plan is most worthy of himself, and the ultimate end of all things, even his glory. Then, finally, ought not this to be considered and received as the most satisfactory argument, in defense of the point contended for, which is, that God absolutely decrees or wills all for his Glory. The truth is, to use the words of a late intelligent author, "God glorifies himself, by making himself known as what he is, so far as it is the good pleasure of his goodness to reveal the excellency which is in Him, the excellency of his essential nature." Now, there is no part of his essence, or, as some would speak, no attribute; as others would speak, no perfection of his, {but then, all that is called attribute or perfection in God is, in fact, essential to him; and so is, in reality, part of his essence} which could have been shown as it really is, that is, as it is now shown, {I say could; because why else has God chosen this method,} without the intervention of sin. Is it not matter of fact, that we are indebted to sin instrumentally, for by far the deepest and most penetrating knowledge that we have, of even the wisdom, power, love, grace, faithfulness, kindness, veracity, unchangeableness, immensity, infinity, and eternity of God? But is He not also {I mean, has he not also shown that He is, and why shown, but because He would have it known that He is} mercy, patience, wrath, hatred, vengeance! Let anyone inform me, then, how it was possible for God to show that He is these things, if the creature had continued good, very good, as He made it? But, thirdly, seeing it needs no further argument, in proof that God did decree the existence of sin, than to refer to the end of all God's purposes, that is, his own glory; may we not with equal propriety affirm, that the means whereby the Lord would accomplish or bring about his purposed glory, must have been equally identified in his all-wise counsels, or eternal decrees; if so, and who dare deny the accuracy of the conclusion? Let me ask, did Jehovah decree or purpose the sojourning of the Hebrews in the land of Egypt? Must he not then have willed the sin by which that event was brought about? Did God design the rescuing of Moses from the watery grave, and his subsequent existence at the Egyptian court? Then must He not have decreed that which led to it, that is, the murdering of all the male children of the Hebrews? Was it not the will or purpose of God that two such powerful nations as the Moabites and Ammonites should have existed? And must it not have been decreed by God how their existence should originate? That is, by the incest of Lot and his daughters? Was it not equally the decree of God that Jacob should receive the blessing, and not Esau? Who then will dare to invalidate the fact, that he must have decreed the means by which it was brought about? "It appears," says a friend of mine, "that if Moses had not struck the rock, he should have brought the Israelites into the land of promise, but as there is an appointed time for man, the date of his existence ceased before they reached the land, therefore there was a necessity for Moses breaking the revealed commandment of his God. Was it not according to eternal appointment, that Bathsheba should be the mother of Solomon? If so, then David's horrid crime was in God's purposes." "It was God's will," says Calvin, "to have the false king Ahab deceived; the Devil offered his service thereunto; he was sent with a certain commandment, to be a lying spirit in the

mouth of all the prophets, and if the blinding and malice of Ahab be the judgment of God; then the device of mere sufferance is vain, for it were a fond thing to say, that the judge doth only suffer {permit,} and not also decree what he will have done, and commands the ministers to put it in execution." {Calvin's Institutes, sec.1, ch.18} The same argument might be conducted to the greatest length, especially in reference to the most awful crime ever committed; I refer to the crucifixion of Christ. Did God decree, from all eternity, the glory that should follow to all eternity Christ's sufferings? Doubtless he did. Then could that glory have been brought about by other means than that of sin? Certainly not. For, first, without the fall of man, the glory peculiar to that inherited by the elect in Christ, as God's children, distinct from the reprobate, none of which were ever designed to have any glory exceeding that inherited before the fall, could have been brought about. The ingenious author of a sermon, entitled, "God the Doer of all things," says, the truth killed the angels, {Jn.8:44} a lie killed man; both fell by the will of God, and by His operation; by His will manifestly, for he had an ulterior design to accomplish, to which their fall was preliminary, &c." To what, then, was the fall of both angels and men, preliminary? Why, to the glory that should follow in the church's experience, through the mediation of their incarnate Lord, who loved them from everlasting; but, for that love to be known and enjoyed by the persons beloved, especially with a view to their loving in return, the original lover must adopt a plan whereby his love must be exhibited in the strongest light in which it is possible to have it represented, particularly so when the object designed is to secure superlative and perpetuated love in return. Now, then, if God, in manifesting his love to his people, has not adopted such a plan, with a view to secure their love in return, then he has not acted worthy himself, and that design which could but actuate God in loving his children; but I say Jehovah has thus acted; indeed, and enterprise so worthy God, could never have been achieved but by sin, for without this there would have been no room for God's becoming man, especially to the end designed thereby, which was his being crucified for the manifestation of his love to the elect unto death, but by sin Christ could not have suffered as he did. The elect's obtaining the righteousness of God in Christ were objects well worthy the love of God to the church, but their attaining to this dignity of spiritual holiness was an ulterior design to be achieved by the instrumentality of sin.

In the fourth place, therefore, I argue in the language of Mr. Tucker, that "God could not give being to that, the existence of whose nature, property, and tendencies were contrary to his determination, will, and choice." But, such truly must have been the case, if, as modern Calvinists contend, He did not choose, will, or determine the introduction of sin; for such, truly, were the properties and tendencies of the natures of both angels and man; otherwise, neither of their natures could have become subject to sin; the Deity itself, for instance, cannot sin, which is the meaning of James, in saying, "God cannot be tempted with evil," his nature having no tendency thereto. Such, however, never was the case with either angels or men, in their primeval standing; had it been, they would have been as much proof against temptation, as is the Deity. "I dare not say, therefore," says Mr. Vaughan, "that they might have stood, for it was the will of God that they should not stand;" and so say I, from the self-evident persuasion, not only that God ordained their fall, and, therefore, his "counsel must stand," let who will fall in consequence thereof.

Indeed the Bible authorizes me to say, that the separation between God's created intelligences, occasioned instrumentally by the conception of sin, in the nature of Lucifer, was according to the will of God, designed by him, for the carrying into execution plans, previously arranged by the Almighty I AM, for the development, I may say, in himself, the issue of which was to be his glory. "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Heb.2:10. Was it the eternal will and decree of God, then, with a view to himself being glorified in them, to bring many sons whom he would adopt unto glory? It was. And was Christ the Captain of their salvation, so designated prior to the creation of angels? Undoubtedly he was, and therefore called "the Lamb slain from

the foundation of the world." On the fall of angels, however, depended the actual accomplishment of all this; for as the Devil is characterized the begetter of lies, and a murderer from the beginning, on his lying depended the life of God in the soul of man and on man's sinning, depended the coming of Christ into the world to save sinners; in other words, on the fall, as a medium, depended the Captain's bringing many sons unto glory. I am quite aware, that for this train of thought, I shall be railed at by modern Calvinists, as "a daring reasoner." Such persons, however, will do well to recollect, that finding fault is easy, even with fools, but it strikes me, that my opponents will find it an insurmountable difficulty to disprove, or disjoint, the principles on which I have founded my reasoning. This doctrine, so decidedly asserts the sovereignty of God, and so effectually destroys the pride of man, that it is not at all surprising it should meet with vehement opposition. The bitterness and rancor, generally discovered in the opposition made to this doctrine, too plainly manifests from whence that opposition proceeds, not from a real concern for the glory of God, but from a proud concern for our own. On what, I ask, depended the Lord's slaying Eli's sons? Was it not their not hearkening to their father's counsel? On the lie told by Jacob, depended his obtaining his father's blessing, and yet who will dare deny that it was the will of God, that so it should be. On Ahab's prophets being lying prophets, depended Ahab's being deceived; but who can prove that it was not the decree of God that Ahab should be deceived? The same might be said of David's adultery, as the medium of Solomon's birth; and of the Sabeans thieving Job's cattle, and murdering his servants; but to multiply instances, in proof of what is so plain, for the bare reason that the subject is defended, is so unpopular is beside my purpose. The case of Judas selling his Lord, and betraying him into the hands of murderers with a kiss, is so much to the point, that it ought not to be overlooked. It is very evident, that the Son of God understood the subject, and believed the fact for which I am now contending, which is, that God must have decreed and willed the commission of sin, their so doing being essential to his glory, and the accomplishment of his eternal purposes. The Son of God longed for death, although he knew what death he was about to die, for on this death depended the glory that should follow, and on what did his death depend? Why the perpetration of the most awful crimes that human beings were capable of committing, even the crucifixion of the Holy One of Israel. And on what were the Saviour's murderers depending, in order to their obtaining the possession of Jesus, as their prisoner? Why the perfidy of Judas, of which the Lord himself was well aware, when he said to his treacherous assailant, "that thou doest, do quickly." And pray on what did all this sanguinary crime depend for its perpetration? Why on the will of God. "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."

A sixth argument, demonstrative of the truth of what I am pleading for, may be derived from the etymology of the words employed by the inspired penmen on the subject. What language, I would ask, can be more imperative, commanding and definitive, than that employed by the Holy Ghost, in II Sam.16:10? "The Lord hath said unto him curse David, who shall then say, wherefore hast thou done so," as if David had said he is the Lord's servant, therefore, what business have we to resist the ordinances of God, he will not utter an oath more than what it is the will of God, he should utter. But some will reply, that David did remember Shimei even on his dying bed, therefore, it must have been Shimei's act; and be it so, does that invalidate the assertion that God bid him do it? If one neighbor commands his dog to worry another neighbor's sheep, I suppose no one would think of denying the fact, that the dog's conduct, however injurious, and replete with evil, did not originate with himself, but with the person whose will it was that such an evil should be perpetrated. Again is it not said of the king of Sihon, that the Lord made his heart obstinate? Nor will it avail anything to carp, as some people do about now, there is the fact, and in order to a more plausible denial of it, such cavilers as like to impugn God's truth on account of its not suiting their feelings, should find out a lexicon never heard of by either

Parkhurst, or our honest translators, wherein a word can be found more significant of the original texts and less obnoxious to the severities of unbelievers. If a woman withholds food from her child, she as much kills the child as though she gave it poison; the process, therefore, by which God made Sihon's heart obstinate, is of no moment in the controversy. It is said, moreover, that God moved David against Israel, to say, go number the people. It is true we are told in I Chron.21:1, "that Satan stood up and provoked David," but then his standing up was only like Shimei's cursing David, it originated with the Lord, and it is certain, such must have been the Lord's will and determination, that David should number the people, which accounts for his adopting such an effectual method as that of moving David to sin, by the medium of Satan, who is always ready, whenever it is the will of God to empower him thereto. The same may be said of the word incline - "incline not my heart to any evil thing, &c." It is more than possible that when David offered this prayer, it was in remembrance of some such dreaded evil as he was the unlooked for subject of, when the Lord inclined his heart to practice the wickedness of numbering the people. It is evident the Son of God was no stranger to such a doctrine, otherwise, he would never have taught his disciples to pray "lead us not into temptation." This significant word {'lead'} is nowhere interpreted either by the literati, or orthodox divines in any other sense, than that of a verb active, on which account we need not hesitate for a moment, to reject as spurious, forced, and unnatural, the meaning ascribed to it by modern partisans, who, like John Wesley in his notes on this passage, would have us believe, that it only means permit, a construction decidedly opposed to the native simplicity of the word, which signifies, says the learned Ainsworth, to "make them go," and this is in perfect harmony with Mark 1:12. "And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness to be {says Matthew} tempted of the Devil," in which case the Son of God was actually lead into temptation by God, which is all I contend for; thereby proving, that the originating cause of all evil, is the will, purpose, or decree of God.

But would God, I ask, yea could God, regulated, as he declares he is, by working all things after the counsel of his own will, permit that to take place, which he willed should not take place? Such an error is too palpable to need refutation. But to return for a moment to the passage in Matthew, "Lead us not into temptation." "Such a petition as this is often to be observed in the prayers of the Jews, do not lead me neither into sin, neither into transgression and iniquity." {Gill} This prayer of the Jews not only furnishes Christians who are not too fond of their own dogma, {that God permits what he does not will} with a just exposition of the petition taught by our Lord, but it also furnishes us with the most correct exposition of such passages as Gen.22:1, II Sam.24:1, Psa.141:4, in each of which passages God is represented as leading his people into temptation or evil. To this, probably it will be objected, that the word temptation, does not always mean evil or sin, but only trials. I admit this most readily, but that this is not the meaning of Matt.6:13, is self-evident; for the saints of God are nowhere taught to pray, that God would not lead them into circumstances of tribulation, the very reverse of this being promised to befall them, as the unavoidable lot cast into their lap, the whole disposing of which is of the Lord. But, to increase evidence on a subject, in itself so incontrovertibly plain, will be to intrude unnecessarily on my reader's patience.

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

decree or will of God, itself. Moses taught the children of Israel to believe, that all God's conduct towards them was designed by God to do them good at their latter end. Deut.8:16, and this agrees with Rom.8:28. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." To sin, instrumentally, Joseph owed his preferment in the dominions of Pharaoh; to sin, as a medium, and surely the all-wise God decrees the medium by which he will accomplish his purposes, as well as the good designed thereby; by sin, therefore, I say as a medium, both Jacob, his sons, and their little ones were preserved from perishing from starvation; by Pharaoh's sin, God wrought his own glory and the accomplishment of his covenant promise to Abraham, Gen.15:13; by the sin of Eli's sons, God wrought the great good of Israel's obtaining Samuel for their priest and judge; by the sin of Saul sparing those whom God had commanded him to kill, God brought about his previously decreed good to his people, of making David their king; the same might be said of David's adultery, the issue of which, was, great good to himself and to the church of God; from that awful circumstance, the great king and sweet singer of Israel exhibited more of his special character, as a type of Christ, than before; from that awful circumstance, {to say nothing about the issue of it, in reference to the birth of the illustrious Solomon} came into existence one of the greatest blessings ever bestowed on the church of God in every age of the world, I mean those precious psalms, which are as a holy sanctuary to which the godly are flying, when no other part of Revelation will meet their case; nor do I hesitate to affirm, what I can but believe; namely, that thousands have had reason to bless God for David's fall, only for that they would have given up all hope of ever obtaining pardon for their complicated crimes, conceiving, as they have, that there never were sinners so guilty as themselves, but from the blackest despair have many souls been delivered by reading the 51st and 130th Psalm. The same might be said of Solomon's sin, from which issued the greatest good, both to himself and the church of God, even down to the present day; nor ought we to say less of the fall of Peter, of whose conduct too much evil cannot be spoken, except that it was not sin against the Holy Ghost; everything but this it certainly was. My reason for thus referring to the falls of David and Peter, is to refute the errors of modern Calvinists, who teach their hearers, that although Paul said, all things work together for good to them that love God, &c., he did not include sin among the all things; such, however, was not the opinion of the old school. Dr. Gill was of a very different opinion. For "all things," says he, "all evil things, sin, the evil of evils, original sin on the fall of Adam, which contains all other sins in it, was attended with aggravated circumstances, and followed with dismal consequences, yet has been overruled for good; hereby a Saviour became necessary, who was sent, came and wrought out salvation, and has brought in a better righteousness than Adam lost." And this every Christian ought to believe, and, for the same reason, ought to consent to the belief, that God decreed the fall of Adam, on which depended the greater blessing of obtaining grace, mercy, and Gospel peace, but Dr. Gill goes on to say, "Actual sin, inward or outward; indwelling sin, which is made use of, when discovered to abate pride, to lead to an entire dependence on Christ, to teach saints to be less censorious, to depend on the power and grace of God to keep them, and to wean them from this world, and to make them desirous of another, where they shall be free from it."

Again, what saith that great scholar, Archbishop Leighton; the more so, because he was never yet classed among either Supralapsarian or Antinomian divines, although he wrote like one of them, in his "Lectures on the Decrees of God." {Works, vol.4, pg.271-6} "Every artist, to be sure," says the archbishop, "as you also well know, works according to some pattern, which is the immediate object of his mind; and this pattern, in the all-wise Creator, must necessarily be entirely perfect, and every way complete. All that acknowledge God to be the author of this wonderful fabric, and all these things in it, which succeed one another in their turns, cannot possibly doubt, that he has brought, and continues to bring them all about, according to that most perfect pattern, subsisting in his eternal counsels; and those things, that we call casual, are all unalterably fixed and determined to him. For,

according to that of the philosopher, where there is most wisdom, there is least chance; and therefore, surely, where there is infinite wisdom, there is nothing left to chance at all. This maxim, concerning the eternal counsels of the Supreme Sovereign of the world shines clearly in the books of the sacred Scriptures. It is most necessary, and most salutary, for a Christian to know this also; that God foreknows nothing contingently, but foresees and purposes and accomplishes everything, by an unchangeable, eternal, and infallible will.

"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 by prevailed on, to think otherwise. Sin is to every believer, what it was to Paul, a source of unequalled wretchedness!