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AN EARNEST SEARCH FOR TRUTH:

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June 1993

IN A

SERIES OF LETTERS

TO

CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIANS;

ADDRESSED

TO A FATHER:

BY L. A. LOWRY: WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY

REV. ASHBEL G. FAIRCHILD, D.D.

CINCINNATI:

JOHN D. THORPE, NO. 12, FOURTH STREET.

1851.

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INTRODUCTION.

Cumberland Presbyterians have laid claim to new and important discoveries in Theology. They profess to have solved the great problem which has baffled the genius and learning of past ages—the problem of A MIDDLE WAY between the conflicting systems of Calvin and Arminius! But where, it is again and again asked, is this vaunted middle way? What set of doctrines, susceptible of clear definition, can they find lying half way between Arminianism and Calvinism? They answer our inquiries only by denouncing both systems as erroneous and dangerous, and telling us that they are neither Calvinists nor Arminians. But we have heard this much before. We did not ask what this middle way *is not*, but what it *is*. Again they answer that the doctrines of Calvin lead to antinomian fatality; and those of Arminius to self righteous Phariseeism; and that, as for themselves, they are equally removed from both. Thus it is: To all our inquiries, urging them to define their middle position, they give

only negative explanations, and he that looks for any other must wait till the Mississippi runs dry.

In vain do we resort to their confession of Faith, for light on this dark subject. That confession, it is true, contains some shreds of Calvinism and some of Arminianism, not coalescing into a harmonious whole, but scattered about in singular confusion. Like the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, the materials of which it is formed, "do not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with miry clay." But, if we mistake not, of late years, Cumberland Presbyterians pay little respect to their Confession as a doctrinal guide.

If, however, we seek to gather their distinguishing tenets from their sermons and printed productions, we may soon satisfy ourselves that there is not, in reality, any such thing as a middle theology among them. On two points of doctrine, viz.: Indwelling sin and the saints' perseverance, they simply follow the beaten track of Calvinism; and on all other points, as Foreordination, Election, Original Sin, Free Will, Atonement, &c., they closely pursue the beaten road of Arminianism. Such is Cumberlandism. It undertakes to join together what both God and man have put asunder.

Such being the state of things, let us suppose, for a moment, a person of liberal education is intro-

duced into the ministry in the Cumberland Church. His previous habits and all his mental training, dispose and qualify him to reduce whatever knowledge he acquires to a harmonious system. No argument is needed to convince him that in any series of propositions, if some are clearly contradictory of others, they cannot all be true. Let us suppose this man to set himself to the work of reducing to order the *membra disjecta*, the scattered parts, of his adopted creed. He fixes upon the doctrine of Indwelling Sin, and surveys it in its relations to other parts of the so called system, and here he finds, to his astonishment, that his church maintains each of the following propositions:

1. God commands all men to be perfectly holy.
2. All men have, at all times, full ability to comply with all God's commandments.
3. And yet no man in this life is able perfectly to keep the commandments of God.

He is mortified to find propositions so contradictory of each other retained in his church, and perceives at once that, if the Arminian notion of human ability be admitted, the doctrine of sinless perfection must be true; else God does not require perfect holiness of his creatures, or, in other words, allows a measure of unholiness.

Suppose he then takes the doctrine of the Saints Perseverance, and subjects it to the same scrutiny.

Here he finds Cumberlandism zealously supporting each of the following propositions:

1. It is essential to the free and accountable agency of man, that his will should universally determine itself, independent of any controlling influence exterior to itself.

2. God, according to his everlasting covenant, will, by the influence of his grace, so control the determinations of the believer's will, that he shall freely and infallibly persevere in holiness to the end.

Here, again, he finds that the Arminian notion of Free Will, is in direct conflict with the certain and final perseverance of the saints; and that, if the will determines itself, there is nothing in the universe to hinder the saint of to-day becoming a devil to-morrow. On the other hand, he sees that, if the Calvinistic view of the will be admitted, the whole Arminian fabric falls to the ground.

We can easily imagine the conflict which takes place in his breast when the truth thus stares him in the face. He must either abandon reason and common sense, or cease to be a Cumberland Presbyterian. If he has made up his mind to follow truth wherever she leads, he will soon find himself necessitated to withdraw from the church of his early choice, and seek a new ecclesiastical connexion.

Such, we believe, was substantially the experience of the author of the following "Letters." Al-

though born and brought up in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, he spent his collegiate course at Centre College, and studied Theology at Princeton, N. J. From these seats of learning he brought away ample testimonials of his talents, christian character, and ripe scholarship. While still indulging all the violent prejudices against Calvinism in which he had been nurtured, he was licensed and ordained by the Union Presbytery of the Cumberland Church, and located at Uniontown, Fayette County, Pa., the most important station in their bounds. It was here he entered upon those doctrinal investigations by which he was finally led to adopt the whole Calvinistic system. Just before his change of sentiment was divulged, he was invited and urged to accept of a situation in the South, where he was assured his yearly income could not be less than a thousand or twelve hundred dollars. Tempting as was this offer to a young man who was then trying to live on a salary much less than half that amount, he felt bound to make a disclosure of the state of his mind which, as he expected, would result in the withdrawal of the invitation. Down to this period he was beloved and respected by all classes of society, as a gentleman, as an exemplary christian, and as a faithful minister. Cumberland Presbyterians especially were loud in his praise, **boasting of him as one of the brightest ornaments of**

their church. But so soon as his change of sentiment was made known, the language of the latter turned to bitter and unsparing vituperation. A hundred rumors were instantly set afloat, tending to impeach the purity of his motives. When he requested the privilege of once more occupying the pulpit, with a view to defend himself against their rumors, he was peremptorily refused. In the meantime the editor of the "Cumberland Presbyterian," printed at Uniontown, commenced a sort of guerilla warfare against him, chiefly in the way of cowardly insinuations. When he asked leave to reply in the same columns he was again refused.

When he informed his Presbytery in kind and respectful terms of the change in his views, and requested a certificate of dismissal, they not only denied his request, but set themselves at once to devise matter of accusation against him. This they found to be no easy task. It required three whole days and a part of a third (the Sabbath intervening) to concoct even a miserable semblance of charges, against one whose deportment had been admitted by all to have been eminently exemplary. When he asked for the specifications of time, place and circumstances, to which he was fairly entitled, he was refused. When he asked for the names of his accusers, there was none to answer. When he demanded that some person or persons should, in ac-

cordance with their discipline undertake to make out the charges; and that the Presbytery should hold the investigation in Uniontown, where the alleged offenses had been committed, and where he could conveniently obtain witnesses for his defense, again he was peremptorily refused. He then requested a copy of the so called charges. They finally gave him a paper purporting to be the one he requested, but the signatures of the moderator and clerk were refused. Even down to this day, he has never received any authenticated copy of that document.

As the reader may be curious to know something of those charges, it may be proper to state that they are three in number, one of them setting forth that Mr. Lowry left his congregation without leave of his Presbytery; another, that he had slandered his congregation, in some way not specified; and another, that he had left them under false pretence, and was influenced by improper motives in wishing to leave the Cumberland Church. It was, however, well understood that nothing could be established against him, affecting his christian or ministerial character, and that the sole object in view in tabling charges was to preclude his admission into any other ecclesiastical connexion. Indeed the moderator of the Union Presbytery, at the famous meeting in September, 1849, at which these charges were made out, is known to have said to one individual, a worthy min-

ister of another denomination, "If Lowry would *stay where he was*, they would drop it," meaning the prosecution. To another, a distinguished elder of the Presbyterian Church, and resident in Fayette county, he said, "If Lowry would make the slightest acknowledgment *and remain*, they would drop the matter."

When Mr. Lowry, in the fall of 1849, applied for admission to the Presbytery of Redstone, he was already well known to the greater part of the members of that body. They were fully acquainted with his standing and character; and as he was able to produce abundant and satisfactory testimonials, he was, after the usual examination, unanimously received. .

The members of Union Presbytery thus foiled in their aims, commenced a newspaper war against him. One attack followed another in quick succession. A single one of their articles occupied no less than twelve columns filled with "old wives fables," and an incredible amount of idle gossip. Thus assailed by his former ministerial associates, Mr. Lowry has deemed it a duty he owed to himself, to his friends, and the cause of truth, to say something in vindication of his motives. In the following "Letters," by a circumstantial detail of the several steps by which he was led to renounce his former creed and embrace a system he once ob-

horred, his object is fully attained. These letters originally appeared in the "Presbyterian Advocate" published at Pittsburgh; and the author now yields to the urgent solicitations of numerous readers, in re-issuing them in a more convenient and permanent form. They contain abundant internal evidence of the writer's sincerity, disinterestedness, and ardent love for the truth. They will be read with pleasure and profit, by the lovers of sound doctrine in every branch of the Church of Christ. A. G. F.

SMITHFIELD, FAYETTE Co., Pa., Nov. 9, 1850.

ADVERTISEMENT.

It may be proper here to state, that the respected and beloved parent to whom the following letters are addressed, is a minister of the Gospel in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and for the last eighteen or twenty years has been acting under government as a missionary among the Winnebago Indians. He has, however, within a few weeks past, located at Lebanon, Tennessee, and become one of the associate editors of the "Banner of Peace and Cumberland Presbyterian Advocate," published at that place. Had not a singular combination of circumstances seemed to require something of the kind, these letters would never have been written. And I trust that those who do me the honor to peruse them, will bear in mind those circumstances, and extend that charity which the nature of the subject demands.

I am aware that, in consenting to publish these letters in their present form, I am widening the breach that has already been made between myself and many of those who were once my warmest friends. They, too, I trust will not forget the bitterness of the assaults that have been made upon me, and to which they have given countenance, impugning my motives for following truth to its legitimate and final results—and for giving testimony to those doctrines which I found, after mature investigation, to be revealed in the word of God, and confirmed by my own religious experience.

L. A. L.

AN EARNEST SEARCH FOR TRUTH,
IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.

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LETTER I.

DEAR FATHER:—I had hoped, on entering the ministry, to find a permanent and congenial home in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. It has been my ardent wish that our interests, our feelings, and views, in our ecclesiastical relations, might be the same, and our labors in life directed to the same ends. It has been the ardent and absorbing desire of my mind, and the devout prayer of my heart, that I might be permitted to labor as an ambassador of Christ, side by side with an aged parent; and if in the order of nature called upon to witness his departure from earthly scenes, to receive a father's mantle and a father's blessing. Nothing I can assure you could have given me greater pleasure; no earthly consideration could compensate me for such a loss; the imagination itself could not

have drawn a more pleasing and inviting prospect; the brightest of all earthly hopes beside, would have made but a feeble impression on my mind, when brought in conflict with this. But it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. God in his providence has disconcerted my plans, and led me in a way that I knew not.

I find myself in another branch of the Church, whose doctrines by the great mass of Cumberland Presbyterians are not only rejected but despised; and such have been the distorted views which they, in common with others, have taken of those doctrines, their opposition has often ripened into the most malignant hostility. Calvinism, says Alexander Campbell, is worse than atheism. Calvinism, says a prominent Methodist preacher of the north, is a libel upon Deity; a system of blasphemy and impiety. Calvinism has, I fear, said a loved Uncle, who has gone to his rest, and was once a co-laborer with yourself, done more injury to the cause of Christ, than the dogmas of the Romish Church. I myself, occupying the same stand point, once indulged similar feelings. But that opposition and growing hostility that had begun to take root in my mind, received a timely check. My prejudices have all been removed, and looking out upon the broad ocean of truth from a new and more elevated point of observation, I now love what once I loved to

hate. I therefore feel it to be my duty to give a full statement of the circumstances that have led to such a change; and I owe it to myself and friends to do it in a public manner.

I shall, in a few communications, endeavor to disclose to you only what shall be essential to the proper understanding of my own position, and the position of the Cumberland Church as I have viewed it; and I think that I have had every opportunity and every motive to judge correctly and impartially. Situated as you have been for the last eighteen or twenty years upon the extreme borders of the north-west, I am confident that you are not aware of the position the Church at present occupies, and the goal to which she is tending. Anything, therefore, that I may say I trust will not be construed into a violation of any filial duty, or want of a proper regard for the feelings of a parent.

Permit me, in the outset, to call your attention to an important fact which you have doubtless often seen verified in your intercourse with the world. It is this: Where a sect or party have nothing peculiar and distinctive, of a positive nature, of their own to present to the mind as a basis and bond of union, their constant aim is to tear down the systems of others, appropriate to themselves that which is popular, and poison the minds of the weak, the disaffected, and ignorant.

The Church furnishes to our hands, if necessary, many illustrations of this truth. In every age, some sect or society has been started, without any fixed or well-defined principles of its own, and has enlarged its boundaries in no other way than by poisoning the minds of the disaffected, the ignorant and the credulous, with distorted views of the truth. Since the time of the Reformation, Calvinism has been the watchword of alarm. Opposition has raged and waxed heated and fierce, till the enemies of truth, blinded by their own zeal, have been driven to the farthest extreme, and wrested every important doctrine of the Scriptures to their own destruction.

We have a painful illustration of the truth here referred to, in the history of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in many parts of the country. When they first made a start towards an independent organization, claiming a little latitude only on one or two points of doctrine, they repeatedly sought a reunion with the church from which they had been cut off; but having failed, they arrayed themselves in direct opposition and open hostility to those at whose door they had so long knocked for entrance which had been repeatedly and emphatically denied. From that day to this their opposition has increased, and continues to grow with their growth, and strengthen with their strength. There

is an obvious reason for it; yea, a pressing necessity that arises from the want of something *distinctive* to present to the minds of those upon whom they would operate. They boast, it is true, of a "middle way;" but nearly half a century has passed since the discovery was made, and it has not yet been clearly defined. The majority of those who are esteemed fathers in the Church are in the grave; the few that are left, with bending and tottering steps, are at its entrance waiting for the summons; and yet all that has been effected in the way of presenting a system of doctrines to the world, has been a mutilation of the Westminster Confession of Faith. This upon the floor of the General Assembly of the Church has been pronounced with emphasis, "a ragged affair," because it savored too much of Calvinism. Such a system, call it by what name you please, will not answer. A man may patch his garments with new or old cloth as suits his taste, but the truth in which the soul is clad must be seamless—woven from top to bottom. Principles will and must work out their appropriate and legitimate results. It has been lamentably true in the case before us; every development shows a tendency to the extremes of Arminianism. I will venture the assertion, if the whole can be judged by those with whom I have been conversant, that nineteen-twentieths of those who aspire to be teach-

ers, so far as they have any system at all, hold to all the essential doctrines of the Methodist Church, save the doctrine of falling from grace and sinless perfection;—the latter of which is now practically discarded by Methodists and those who sympathize with them, and the former to an alarming extent, is beginning to be confirmed by the *practice* of Cumberland Presbyterians whatever may be their *theory* upon the subject. There is nothing distinctive that furnishes a bond of union, a positive influence, or an attractive force. Repulsion, in most instances, is the only power that can effect anything. If you wish to operate upon those inclined to Methodism, you must get up a noise upon the doctrine of falling from grace, and expatiate largely upon the beauty of persevering to the end by the semi-omnipotent self-moving energies of the will. If you would turn the course of those inclined to the Presbyterian Church, you must poison their minds by distorted views and caricatures of the truth; raise the cry of “Atheism,” “impiety,” “blasphemy,” “popery,” and every other raw-head and bloody-bones the imagination can picture. I speak what I know, and testify what I have seen and felt. The united voice of the Presbyterian church in Western Pennsylvania will bear me witness, that this was the mode of operation practiced by those who commenced their labors there as “missiona-

ries;" who made their boasts that in a few years not a "grease spot" of Calvinism would be left to tell to posterity of its signal overthrow. Innumerable changes were rung upon the doctrine of "election," "predestination," "reprobation," "infant damnation," and everything else out of which any capital could be made; insomuch that if it were possible the very elect would have been deceived.

Their success for a time was unparalleled; but like everything else of the kind, there was no depth of root, and the churches thus planted soon began to show visible marks of decay. As the eyes of the community were opened, the repulsive force they had succeeded in producing in the minds of many ceased to operate, and they were shorn of their strength. Repeated efforts have since been made to stir up the minds of the people in opposition to Calvinism and the Presbyterian Church, but to no purpose. Every means and every energy has been applied, but nothing of any consequence has been effected. They have piped long and loud, but nobody has danced; from morn till night, as the children in the market place, they have mourned, but nobody has lamented.

If in any of our operations there is no distinctive and positive influence exerted upon the mind, no principle of vitality can be implanted, and the consequence is, our hopes are all blasted in the bud;



every plant must wither, and every field prove to be barren ere the time of harvest has come. Such has been the result of the operations of the "missionaries" of the Cumberland Church in Western Pennsylvania, and in many other places that might be mentioned. Although, at first, their success was beyond their highest expectations, the churches thus planted, with but few exceptions, have been for years dying a lingering death; some are already dead, and others have only a nominal existence.

At such a crisis, a new occasion is offered, and a new theme presented, by which to stir up the minds of the people, and drive the alarmed and scattered flocks together. A young man whom they had honored with one of their most important stations, is led, in the fear of God and by careful steps, to embrace the despised and rejected doctrines of grace. Something must be done to counteract the moral effect of such a change upon the minds of the community and the church abroad. They must make an effort to ruin his character; they must try to make it appear that the Presbyterians have taken to their bosom "a hypocrite," "a renegade," "a wolf," "a viper;" they must summon rumor with her thousand tongues, and accuse him of all manner of evil; they must heap upon him all kinds of epithets; brand him with all manner of infamy;

and throw as much odium and suspicion on his path as possible.

I myself was the person thus assailed. I have borne it all in silence that they might have a practical demonstration of their littleness and folly. My object has been accomplished; their shafts have returned to their own bosoms; their heated malice and abuse which they have poured into massive columns of the press have fallen upon their own heads. I therefore appear with a far nobler object in view, than to answer the miserable croakings of persons so regardless of truth, as to catch at every breath of rumor without even inquiring into its source; and then distort what they have thus gathered to suit their purpose, and hide themselves behind fictitious names, according to their own admission, to avoid being "skinned" in a court of justice. I shall dismiss all that has been said and done of a personal nature, by referring them to an important principle laid down by one who knew perfectly the hearts of men: "Every one that doeth evil," says Christ, "hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." John 3: 20, 21. In their deeds of darkness let this be their condemnation.

Your affectionate Son.

## LETTER II.

THEOLOGY A SYSTEM OF TRUTH—STARTING POINT—  
ORIGINAL SIN—CONDITION OF MAN—LOST IN THE  
FULLEST SENSE OF THE WORD—POSITION OF THE  
CUMBERLAND CHURCH.

DEAR FATHER:—One of the earliest impressions made upon my mind, in entering upon the study of theology, was that it was a *system* of truth, as all other branches of knowledge—of revealed truth, having the Spirit of God for its author, whose different parts are connected together by a logical sequence as inseparably as cause and effect that link together the phenomena of the natural world. It will not be my object, by any means, to develop the varied phases and elements of that system, in their different relations and consequences. Such a task would ill become a son, in addressing a father whose life has been spent in the active duties of the ministry. I shall only aim to disclose to you the workings of my own mind upon some of the leading doctrines of the gospel; and, with all due filial regard, to call your attention to the untenable and

undefinable ground occupied by the Cumberland Church. It is a painful task, I can assure you, but it is one that a high sense of duty impels me to perform.

In order to a correct understanding of the gospel plan of salvation, the system of truth revealed in the scriptures, we must examine well the disease for which it is provided; we must probe to the bottom the subject of human depravity, its nature, its origin, and results. It is one of those doctrines about which the student of theology, the well instructed scribe, and even private member of the church, must have clear, well-defined, and correct views. A single mistake here will vitiate the whole scheme of salvation, both in theory and practice. You have already examined it, and know its importance; I shall therefore simply glance at some of its more prominent features, which, in the outset of my theological studies, I marked as the necessary ground work of a system of grace.

“The sinfulness of the estate whereinto man fell,” says the shorter catechism, “consists in the guilt of Adam’s first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature—which is commonly called original sin,—together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.” Here then is the disease for which the gospel remedy was provided: it includes three alarming symptoms, un-

der the head of *Original sin*. 1. The guilt of Adam's first sin, the consequences of which have come upon us in view of a covenant arrangement. 2. The want of original righteousness, such as the creature possesses in a state of innocency. 3. The corruption of our whole nature. Our personal transgressions may also be included in the disease, but they are more properly the result or acting out of our corrupt nature. They come from it as the fruit from the tree, or as the stream from the fountain. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witnesses, blasphemies." Math. 15: 19. The immediate and remote consequences of this estate of sin into which we have fallen, so far as they relate to our happiness, are thus briefly and forcibly stated: "All mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever." Such is the language of the shorter catechism both of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and also of the Cumberland Presbyterian Confession as extracted from it. I have made the quotation, not with a view of discussing at any length the different points introduced, but simply that the reader may see the position the Cumberland Church once occupied, and contrast it with the goal to which she is now tend-

ing, as regards the first elementary principles, the very ground work of the whole gospel scheme. I shall only glance at some of the more prominent features of the subject which if properly apprehended will necessarily lead to correct views of all the others.

There is a single word that embodies in its meaning the whole subject; a word, which if properly understood and felt, would break down many of the barriers that now divide the Church. It is found in the reply of our Saviour to those who complained of his being a guest with "a sinner." "The son of man," said he, "is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19: 10. This, you recollect, was the passage assigned me to write upon, when I placed myself under the care of Presbytery. It led my mind into an easy and natural train of thought; and the opinions I then formed have remained with me to the present time. They constituted the foundation upon which I endeavored to build an Arminian structure that fell before it was completed, and upon which I now stand under, "a covert" and a "hiding place," formed of more durable materials. Man, I regarded as lost, in every possible sense in which the word can be used. This view is one I found not only revealed in the scriptures, but confirmed by reason, by facts, and personal observation. In whatever situation of life we

find him; at whatever period of his existence since the fall; in all countries and ages he has been found to be lost in the highest and fullest meaning of the word: at all times and under all circumstances the same alarming symptoms have prevailed.

**LOST AS AN INTELLECTUAL BEING.**—The light of nature, of science, and philosophy, with all the boasted wisdom of man, have been inadequate to penetrate the mists and the darkness that shroud the past, the present, and the future. The strange enigma of life, of death, of the providences of God, of human miseries, and the complete wreck of high moral capabilities, have, under all circumstances, transcended the limited and paralyzed faculties of the human mind. Where am I?—what am I?—whence came I?—and why the deep yearnings of the soul for some object of religious worship, and there is none but the wood and the stone, the workmanship of the creature's hands? When such questions as these arise from the great deep of our hearts where shall we go for a response? Nature is silent, science is dumb, and reason and philosophy only serve to bewilder, and render more gloomy and dark the mystery.

**LOST TOO AS A MORAL BEING.**—He is declared in the Scriptures of divine truth to be dead in trespasses and in sins; lost to a knowledge of God, and consequently to all holiness of character. "The

Lord looked down from heaven," says the Psalmist, "upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside; they are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Ps. 14: 2, 3. There is no possible qualification of the sad truth. We are born in sin, conceived in iniquity, the whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint, and all the affections of our carnal nature are alienated from God, and at enmity against him. The verdict the apostle Paul brought in, after the most careful and masterly review of the condition of the world in his day, was expressed in the strongest possible terms; from which he draws the conclusion that when the hearts and the lives of all who are under the law shall be tried, by the proper tribunal, "every mouth shall be stopped and all the world become guilty before God." Rom. 3: 19. But I need not enlarge upon this point. You have been sufficiently thrown in scenes, both of savage and civilized life, to have had a practical exhibition of the moral character and condition of the human heart in every conceivable light; and I presume that the great mass of Cumberland Presbyterians will subscribe to the doctrine of human depravity, to its fullest extent, if you will allow them the privilege, in common with all others who hold to Arminian sentiments, of stopping short of the legitimate consequences to which it leads.



A man must be under a strange aberration of mind who knows anything of himself or his kind, and, for a moment, can doubt the teachings of the Bible upon this subject, taking its language in the most unqualified sense, and in its strongest meaning. This, however, is but a part of the subject, and gives us but a partial and imperfect view of the condition of man as affected by the fall.

HE IS LOST ALSO AS A SUBJECT OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT.—It follows as a necessary consequence from the moral state of his heart developing itself in his life, and from the nature of the divine government and the character of God. “The Lord hath spoken,” says the prophet Isaiah, “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.” Isa. 1: 2. It is in this corrupt and rebellious state that man is met by the eye of infinite purity and justice; his acts, his feelings, and the moral state of his heart are all condemned, and the solemn curse of a broken and inflexible law pronounced against him. Upon this point also I imagine we agree. Your views of the holiness of God, of the nature of sin, of the operations of the divine government, and the consequent condemnation of the sinner, are thus far the same as my own, and such as a careful examination will lead every mind to adopt. But there is yet another important aspect in which the subject is to be viewed,

and concerning which our ideas must be clear and well defined.

The ruin of man is not complete until we have carried our investigations still further. He cannot in any proper sense of the word be said to be lost until we can give an affirmative answer to the following question: WOULD IT HAVE BEEN JUST, ON THE PART OF GOD, TO HAVE LEFT MAN IN HIS STATE OF CONDEMNATION WITHOUT A REDEEMER? A more important question could not be asked in the outset of one's inquiries after truth; it involves much that is vital, and furnishes an infallible test of one's theological creed. The Arminian, for example, *denies*, and builds upon his denial a system that is destructive of every principle of grace and love revealed in the Gospel, and degrades the gift of eternal life to *a debt* that God owed the creature for injuries he had received. The Calvinist, on the other hand, *affirms*, and builds upon his affirmation a system alike honoring to God and humbling to man; that magnifies the grace of God, and traces every offer of life and every blessing bestowed to the boundless and unfathomable love of the divine bosom, whose height, and depth, and length, and breadth, an inspired apostle could not measure. To this latter view I early and readily gave assent. It was the instinctive feeling of my heart; and if there is a truth within the lids of the sacred volume, it is the

feeling of every believer in his devotional moments, whatever may be his speculations when trying to bolster up a tottering and falling creed. You will pardon the unqualified expression; for I know that your heart and faith cannot be otherwise than with me here also. Struggling as you have been for the last eighteen or twenty years to elevate the darkened mind of the savage to a knowledge of gospel truth, you will not hesitate, I trust, to adopt the strongest language of the Scriptures on this subject as applicable to man in all his relations.

Here then briefly is the condition of man since the fall: his ruin is complete; he is lost in the fullest sense of the word—intellectually, morally and legally; is justly condemned, and by nature a child of wrath; the consequences of Adam's first sin are upon him; he is destitute of original righteousness; his whole nature is corrupt, and his whole life is but the acting out of that nature; he has lost all "communion with God" the only source of life and happiness; is under "his wrath and curse," and "made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and the pains of hell forever;" and were the darkness of the pit forever to close upon him, without even the *offer* of salvation, the character of God would be untarnished; he would still be holy, just and true; and the hosts of heaven would still mingle their responsive notes of praise around the eter-

nal throne unto him that lives and reigns forever. No other view of the lost and ruined condition of man can furnish the shadow of a foundation upon which to build a system of grace, of mercy, and love. There is no room for either, if God is a debtor to us instead of our being bankrupt and debtors to him. It was this view, I say, of our estate of sin and misery that I adopted in the outset of my investigations. Any other I found would destroy every principle of vitality the Gospel possessed. It is a view, too, pregnant with consequences of the first importance in a consistent theological system; consequences immediate and remote, which must sooner or later force themselves upon the conviction of every investigating mind. In fact in it as the foundation is necessarily involved the character of the whole superstructure; and were there no other revelation on the subject but that "the Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost," it would be enough; for from this may be evolved by a clear and logical sequence every important doctrine of the Gospel. Some of these doctrines I will endeavor to exhibit in their proper place.

I will close this communication with a single request. I would most earnestly and affectionately ask of you to consider well the importance of the view presented, and mark the position occupied by the Cumberland Church. Principles, I have said,

will and must work out their appropriate results; and none, perhaps, involve more than the question as to the justice of God in leaving man in his estate of sin and misery into which he is introduced by the Fall. Where, I ask, is the Cumberland Church upon this point? They are not upon Calvinistic ground; they have not struck out any new path, or made any new discoveries; but have taken as in all their travels the beaten road of Arminianism, their Confession of Faith and Shorter Catechism to the contrary notwithstanding. It is painful to see them in the dim distance, with new names upon their banners and boasting of a *middle theology*, threading their way upon the very heels of the followers of Wesley. It is painful to see them, in different parts of the country, indulging in the most bitter abuse of Presbyterians and Methodists, and yet not having a foot of ground *between* the two that they can call their own. It will not do. A Church that takes as its starting point the principle that the offer of salvation is a debt instead of a free gift, must in the end find themselves in Arminian ranks upon the mountains of Edom, or their carcasses, to the latest generation, will be left in *the wilderness* as a memorial of their folly. This conviction early forced itself upon my mind; but I hoped to find the middle way leading off from some other point.

Your affectionate son.

### LETTER III.

THE CAUSE OF OUR FALL—SIN OF OUR FIRST PARENTS—IMPUTATION—VIEW OF CLARKE AND WATSON—CONSEQUENCES—A MOUNTAIN PASS—THE CUMBERLAND CHURCH.

DEAR FATHER:—The view I have presented of the moral condition of man, is one that I found upon the very surface of the sacred page; one, too, that entered into all my religious feelings; and it is a view that must find its way to every heart that is properly exercised under the influence of gospel truth. It is not until the sinner is brought to feel his condition as one that is lost, in all its force, that he is prepared to feel his need of a redeemer; it is not until then he is prepared to pray the prayer of the publican, and receive pardon and life as *the gift* of God. I am confident that you will concur with me in the sentiment here expressed. But there is an important doctrine involved as its direct and immediate consequence, which is essential to a correct theoretical knowledge of the plan of salvation; a doctrine about which there has been much counsel darkened

by words without knowledge; and which in my early investigations of truth gave me many a painful struggle; and against which I contended for a time with a more determined and bitter opposition, than against any other in the Calvinistic system.

If all are born in sin and thus brought into the world in a state of condemnation, a question naturally arises as to the cause of such a state of things in the government of a wise, a holy, and beneficent being, who is infinite in all his attributes. Revelation alone can solve the difficulty. "By one man," says Paul, "sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Rom. 5: 12. Back of this, however, is another question, which must be clearly and definitely answered before we have advanced a single step. Upon what principle are we made sinners by the "one man," and our destiny thus linked with his?—in other words, what is the relation we sustain to him that furnishes a reasonable ground for involving us in the consequences of his first transgression? Both the Calvinist and Arminian agree in considering it, in some sense, a *federal relation*—a relation in which the acts of one individual are considered in law as the acts of those whom he represents. According to the Calvinist, the sin of Adam is imputed to his posterity, or considered theirs in a legal sense in view of a covenant ar-

rangement made with him as their federal head. The Arminian sometimes makes use of similar phraseology, but at the same time tells us that such a system would be unjust had not God provided a plan by which we might work our way out of the evils and ruins of the fall. Hence they tell us that as an offset or compensation for what we are made to suffer in our fallen state, all are restored by Christ, the second Adam, to a new state of probation. But hear them in their own language.

“Had not God provided a redeemer,” says Adam Clarke in his commentary on the fifth chapter of Romans, “he would no doubt have terminated the whole mortal story by cutting off the original transgressors; for it would have been unjust to permit them to propagate their like, under such circumstances that their offspring must be unavoidably and eternally wretched.” “Before any issue proceeded from the first pair,” says Mr. Watson, “they were restored to the divine favor. Had no method of forgiveness and restoration been established with respect to human offenders, the penalty of death must have forthwith been executed upon them.” Inst. v. 2, p. 87. A mortal stab is here blindly made at the very vitals of the Gospel. They may talk largely of the depravity of the human heart, of the federal relation between Adam and his posterity, of the justice of God in their condemnation,



and of the mercy and love of God in the gift of his Son; but it is all an unmeaning jargon of words. They may discourse much upon the efficacy of means and the moral power of divine truth; but if this their fundamental principle is carried out, the whole gospel scheme is reduced to a mere carcass, and the carcass maimed of its most important limbs; a carcass such as the mummies of Egypt which after having been robbed of their vitals to preserve them from corruption and decay, must be wrapped in the spiced and slimy garments prepared by the priest that ministers to the ignorance and pride of the human heart. A hideous object indeed is presented to the sight when it is exposed to the light, its bandages untied and its covering removed. But we can form no just conception of what we have embraced, until the unpleasant task is accomplished. Indulge me, therefore, for a moment while I call your attention to some of the more immediate consequences, in addition to what has already been said, to which this fundamental principle of Arminianism leads.

1. IT ROBS THE GOSPEL OF EVERY PRINCIPLE OF VITALITY IT POSSESSES. To this I have already alluded; and again I would ask, if the redemption of man from his estate of sin and misery was *a debt* that God owed the creature, where is the love, and where the mercy of the Gospel? and what is the

ground of our obligations to Christ for his obedience and sufferings unto death? There is none, and there can be none in such a system.

2. IT DEGRADES THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST TO THAT OF A MINISTER OF SIN.—He is made the cause of all the sin and misery that have afflicted our race, both upon earth and in hell, from the foundation of the world. Look again at the quotations made above from Clarke and Watson. “It would have been unjust,” says one, “to have permitted our first parents to procreate their like without a redeemer.” “Had no method of forgiveness been provided,” says the other, “the penalty of death must have been forthwith executed upon them.” If this be true, then our coming into the world with a depraved nature is conditioned, not upon the sin of Adam, but the death of Christ; and all the consequences flowing from that nature thus inherited are conditioned upon the same event. For example, if I knock a man down that I may have an opportunity of lifting him up again, in order to show how generous I am, that which I choose to call a generous act is the necessary condition of his fall. Precisely in the same sense is the death of Christ the necessary condition of the fall of man and his consequent misery, if the position before us of those who hold to Arminian sentiments be correct.

3. IT LEADS ALSO TO THE DENIAL OF THE VERY EX-

ISTENCE OF SIN—CONFOUNDS VIRTUE AND VICE AND EXCUSES MEN IN THE GREATEST CRIMES.—According both to the Calvinist and Arminian, the sins of our race flow from the corrupt nature we inherit. If, then, this nature is not ours upon just and legal grounds, surely we cannot be held accountable upon any principle of justice for the acts and feelings that flow from it whatever they may be. It is a clear deduction; and there is no necessity of drawing out a lengthy argument, or of multiplying illustrations, to render it more apparent. Look at it as it stands. The corrupt nature we inherit, says the Arminian, is not justly ours. The Bible teaches, and his own system teaches, that all sin proceeds from that nature as the stream from the fountain. What other conclusion can we draw, then, but that we are not accountable for anything we do in this our fallen state? And where is the goal at which we can stop?

4. IT MAKES INJUSTICE AND CRUELTY THE MOST CONSPICUOUS ATTRIBUTES OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER.—God is represented not only as holding us accountable for that which is not justly ours, but as heaping immeasurable reproach, ignominy, and suffering, upon an innocent personage when there was no necessity for it; upon one whom he repeatedly declared to be his only and well beloved Son. Where is the need of a redeemer in such a system? Where, I ask

is the necessity of such a sacrifice to satisfy the claims of the law and justice of God, when the law can make no demands, and the sinner himself has claims upon justice for injuries received at her hands? Go then to the garden and to the cross. What a spectacle is there presented! The Son of God bathed in tears and blood, and suspended upon the torturing spikes by a Centurion's band at the instance of a Jewish mob! For what! Not to atone for his own sins; for he was led as a lamb to the slaughter without spot and without blemish. Not to atone for the sins of others; for there is no sin for which to atone that might not have been pardoned without violating a single attribute of the divine character, or endangering a single interest of the divine government. What then? Can any satisfactory account be given of such scenes in such a system? None whatever. Consistency will necessarily lead either to a denial of the divinity of Christ and of his death as a sacrificial act, or to the absurd and blasphemous assumption that God is the most unjust and cruel of all tyrants.

**5. THE VIEW THUS TAKEN BY ARMINIANS INVOLVES A CONTRADICTION IN ITSELF.—**If it is necessary in the divine government that the sentence of the law should be executed in all its force as soon as the offence is committed, the result would have been far

different from what it was in the case of our first parents. Eve, being first in the transgression, would have fallen a victim to death the moment she was beguiled by the serpent and tasted the forbidden fruit. In that case Adam might have been saved from the ruins of the Fall and blessed with another helpmeet, or left alone to enjoy the blessings and bounties of earth till his probation should end. But it may be said that it pleased God, in his inscrutable wisdom, to link together the destiny of our first parents; that there was a fitness and propriety in it that we cannot comprehend. This is the very principle for which I am contending. If it be just thus to bind two individuals together, making the fall of the one conditioned upon the fall of the other, where then, I ask, is the injustice of conditioning the fall of a third or fourth upon the same event, if the natural and social ties that bind them together are equally strong? and what stronger ties can there be than those that exist between parent and offspring? If, however, those who subscribe to the view of Clarke and Watson are not willing to go such a length they must modify their view of what would have been the course of the law towards our first parents without the promise of a redeemer. They must consign Eve to perdition the moment she yields to the tempter, and let Adam go free, at least until

his superior wisdom and strength have been fully tested.

I might go on almost to any length multiplying the errors and absurdities growing out of this fundamental principle of Arminianism; but it is perhaps unnecessary. Enough has been said to show that both its immediate and remote consequences are ruinous in the extreme. I might also add that every difficulty and absurdity, real or imaginary, that is urged against the Calvinistic view of the subject may be retorted with a force and propriety that can be resisted only by those whose eyes are closed to the light.

It was such difficulties and absurdities that pressed upon me and drove me to a more consistent and safe position. I tried every means however to explain them away, but to no purpose. My way was always blocked up by a single passage of Scripture that declares us to be by nature *children of wrath even as others*. To this sad truth my heart gave a ready response; and finding no safe foothold on Arminian ground, I tried to find some other by which I might avoid the difficulties I felt would press upon me if I adopted the Calvinistic view of the subject. I read McKnight, Stewart, Barnes and others, but found no satisfaction. I had frequent discussions with my class mates and others with whom I was intimate at the Seminary, which served only to

deepen my prejudices. But as I advanced in my course, I obtained more enlarged views of the different points of theology; and in the whole range of my vision I could see but *one pass* through the mountains of difficulties that rose on every side. The whole question resolved itself into this: If the Gospel is a system of grace and the offer of life is a free gift, then is the sinner condemned; if he is justly condemned there must be a legal or federal relation existing between Adam and his posterity, in which relation his sin is imputed to them and their destiny linked with his. This view I found, on a more careful investigation, to be confirmed in the strongest and most unequivocal manner throughout the Scriptures. The fifth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans is sufficient to settle the question beyond all cavil or doubt. The wages of sin, the penalty of the law, he tells us is death; death temporal, spiritual, and eternal, as all are agreed. In the same connection we are told that death has passed upon all men in view of their relation to Adam as their federal head; even upon those who die in infancy, who have never sinned "after the similitude of Adam's transgression." Upon this also there is no controversy between the Calvinist and Arminian. It is contended however that the word death in the latter case does not comprehend as much as in the former. Be it so. It does not free the subject of a single difficulty; for if it be

just to subject us to a part of the penalty of the law, in view of our relation to Adam, the same principle is involved; and there can be no injustice in subjecting us to the whole of that penalty. And that such is the case, is stated by the apostle Paul in the same connection: "By one man's disobedience," says he, "many were made sinners"—"by one man's offense death reigned by one"—"by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation." Here, I say, was the only mountain pass through the difficulties and dangers that surrounded me. I entered it with the exclamation of the same apostle upon my lips: "how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out." The beetling cliffs towered high above me; with a trembling heart and careful steps I found my way through; I read again the oracles of God, and found a clearness, a beauty, and a force, in many parts which I had never before seen. But my mind was by no means yet prepared to receive the whole Calvinistic system. I paused to search for *the middle route*, while my companions traveled on in the beaten road. I used every possible precaution; I spared neither labor nor pains to accomplish my object. I noted well every landmark. To use a figure drawn from scenes with which you are familiar, I kindled camp-fires in every valley and upon every hill-top that I might obtain a correct knowledge of the country,



and strike out some course in which all difficulties and dangers could be avoided. With what success the sequel will show.

Permit me before I close this letter to call your attention again to the position occupied by the Cumberland Church. They are still with the Methodist Church; in the very center of the Arminian ranks. To a man almost, those who profess to be teachers in the Church will subscribe to the view of Clarke and Watson, and are chargeable with all the absurdities and consequences to which it leads. If I have judged correctly of your views and feelings, as presented in the pulpit, and in the devotions of the family altar, your heart is not with them. You will therefore, I trust, be able to appreciate what I have said, and recognize its importance in forming a correct system of theology.

Your affectionate son.

## LETTER IV.

THE REMEDY PROVIDED—AMBIGUITY OF TERMS—THREE  
VIEWS OF THE ATONEMENT—EARLY IMPRESSIONS—  
POSITION OF THE CUMBERLAND CHURCH—THE GOAL  
TO WHICH SHE IS TENDING.

DEAR FATHER:—Having presented the view of the moral condition of man that forced itself upon my attention and conviction, I would in the next place notice a few facts with regard to the nature of the remedy that is revealed in the Gospel. The object and limits of these communications forbid my entering upon a discussion of the subject in its details. I shall therefore simply present, in general terms, the different views that are current among the denominations of professing christians, and the early impressions I imbibed, together with other facts of importance that may be suggested. The subject is one that forms another important link in the chain, and should be well understood and clearly defined.

Every possible variety of opinion, concerning the character and work of Christ, has been invented by the ingenuity of man and ably and zealously advo-

cated. But when the question is narrowed down simply to the nature of that work, they may be all reduced to three, each differing from the others in its fundamental principle. Such are the different shades of meaning attached to words, in their metaphysical and theological use, that it is impossible for us to determine what a man believes, especially on the subject of the atonement, till he has defined his terms and we have succeeded in getting at the ground work of his system. The views of two or more individuals or denominations of christians on such a subject may appear to be different, and yet be substantially and radically the same; again; they may seem to coincide in every important particular, and yet, when the terms are defined, they are found to be widely asunder. More of this, however, at some other time.

For the three views of the nature of the atonement to which I have alluded, I am happy in being able to refer you both to Calvinistic and Arminian authority; such as Hill's Divinity and Watson's Institutes.

1. The first goes upon the supposition that pure goodness, or benevolence, is the absorbing attribute of the divine character; that his only object is to communicate happiness to his creatures, and the only ground of his hatred to sin is because it leads to misery. Hence the work of Christ was in no sense

propitiatory or vicarious; but simply that of a mere teacher, sent to reveal the clemency of God and to offer pardon upon condition of repentance, without any satisfaction being made for sin. Such is the Socinian view. "The great object of the mission and death of Christ," says Dr. Priestly, "was to give the fullest proof of a state of retribution, in order to supply the strongest motives to virtue. \* \*

Although there are some texts in which the pardon of sin seems to be represented as dispensed in consideration of the sufferings, the merits, the resurrection, the life or the obedience of Christ, we cannot but conclude upon a careful examination, that all these views of it are partial representations; and that, according to the plain general tenor of Scripture, the pardon of sin is in reality always dispensed by the free mercy of God upon account of man's personal virtue, a penitent upright heart, and a reformed exemplary life, without regard to the sufferings or merit of any being whatever." Hill's Div. p. 419. According to such a system the sufferings and death of Christ have nothing more to do with the sinner's salvation than the death of Stephen, of Paul, or any martyr to the truth, only as it was necessary for him to die to furnish an example to his followers, and confirm his doctrines by his resurrection from the dead.

2. The second system alluded to above, concedes to the first that the object of God in his work of cre-

ation and providence is the bestowment of happiness upon his creatures and that there is no difficulty, founded in his nature, that lies in the way of his pardoning the sinner without an atonement. But it is contended, that in the government of a righteous being some distinction should be made between an innocent person and a penitent criminal, and that, before any offer of forgiveness is made upon conditions of repentance, there should be some memorial of the evil nature of sin; which is all that renders an atonement necessary. This, of course involves a denial of the priestly office of Christ, and renders the whole gospel scheme a mere *expedient* in the divine government to cover up the guilt of those the law condemns without any proper satisfaction to law and justice.

The modern Arian view is substantially the same as this. Although it may appear to differ in some respects, yet, its fundamental principles are the same.—See Wats. Inst. vol. 2, p. 103. Hill's Div. p. 422.

I shall not enter upon an examination of either of the views here presented. It is sufficient to say, that they involve or lead to a denial of the divinity of Christ, and make the atonement as much applicable to the devils in hell as it is to the fallen race of Adam. If he died for a mere abstraction, simply to make a grand display of the character of God

and the evil of sin, or that it might be meet and proper for God to honor and reward his philanthropy by forgiving the condemned 'subjects of his moral government, then has Lucifer, Satan, or Beelzebub if you please, as much right to the benefits of his death as Peter, Paul, John, or any others of those who have received forgiveness in his name.

3. The third view has for its fundamental principle that there is a difficulty in the way of the sinner's pardon in the rectitude of the divine character, in his hatred of sin, as well as the nature of the divine government and the interests it upholds. Hence the sufferings and death of Christ are regarded as strictly and necessarily vicarious. He came not only to reveal and offer pardon, but to procure it; not merely to make an exhibit of the mercy of God, but of his justice also. He stands therefore in the sinner's place, and receives what he should have borne. His sufferings and death have reference, not merely to the interest of the divine government, but to the infinite purity and rectitude of the divine character, and are in the fullest sense substitutional, vicarious, and propitiatory. Such is the doctrine of the Westminster and Cumberland Presbyterian Confessions of Faith. There has been no alteration made in the latter so far as the nature of the atonement is concerned. See chap. viii, sec. 5.

It was this last view of the atonement that I

early adopted. I could find no other that recommended itself either to my judgment or my feelings. When first I felt that I had found peace with God, when first I was led to the cross and enabled to contemplate the sufferings and death of Christ in their true light, I felt that I had found something more than a grand display of the divine character; something more than a mere *expedient* to save the sinner without any satisfaction to the claims of law and justice. It was "a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest;" from the tempest that had spent all its force on him as the substitute of the sinner, upon whom was laid the iniquity of us all, and by whose stripes we are healed. A mere exhibition of philanthropy, or governmental display of the divine character will not do. When the fountains of religious feeling and emotion are broken up by the omnipotent energies of the spirit of God; when deep calls to deep, and guilt with its terrific voice pronounces the sinner's condemnation, the trembling soul finds no relief here. God is *holy* and *just* as well as *true*, and from his own nature is evolved the truth that he is a consuming fire; and in his own bosom there lie the sleeping storms that shall forever beat upon the unsheltered regions of the lost. Take from the Gospel the single idea of substitution, take from it the doctrine of a vicarious atonement, and there is nothing left worth contending for. It

is this doctrine, too, that not only provides a hiding place from the wind and the tempest, but presents itself as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," and furnishes "rivers of water" to the fainting traveler that measures over the parched deserts of life with a pilgrim's step. This doctrine I imbibed in the outset of my religious life as well as in my investigations of truth; and upon it I anchored all my hopes. I tried, however, to reconcile it with the doctrine that the atonement is general in its provisions, a leading doctrine of the Arminian system which led me into such a region of darkness.

I was called upon, again, however, to note the departure of the Cumberland Church from her own standards, and the danger of her position. Upon what ground, let me ask, do they stand as regards the nature and design of the atonement? Not upon medium ground; not, as upon other points, in the rear or center of the Arminian ranks, but upon the extreme left flank, crowding off into the regions of Pelagian darkness. Hear the language of one who has written a book upon the subject, and who stands high in the confidence and affection of the Church: "The atonement," says he, "is a sovereign and merciful *provision* introduced into the administration of the divine government, instead of the execution of the punishment on the offender. It is an *ex-*



*pedient*, which justifies the executive of the government in suspending the literal infliction of the penalty threatened." Such is the language of one who is now editing a religious paper, and who has been placed by the united voice of the Church at the head of her "Board of publication." His definition is taken almost verbatim from a work on the extent of the atonement, by a Dr. Jenkyn of England, whose views accord with the ultra portion of New School Presbyterians of this country. "An atonement," says he, "is any *provision* introduced into the administration of a government instead of the infliction of the punishment on the offender; any *expedient* that will justify a government in suspending the literal execution of the penalty threatened." I have neither time nor space here to develop the author's system; but by examining the work referred to, you will find that it not only destroys the vicarious nature of the atonement, but degrades the obedience, the sufferings, and death of Christ to a mere *apology* for restoring the guilty to favor, without any satisfaction in the proper sense of the word being made to law and justice. And his views of the nature of regeneration and the influence of the Spirit as presented in a work upon the subject coincide in every important feature with the views of Alexander Campbell, of Bethany Va.; are part and parcel of his theory of the atonement, and may be evolved

from the loose definition he has given, as adopted by the Cumberland Church in the only work she has yet produced on the subject.

Another who would be called great in the Cumberland Church, and who is hailed as one of the brightest stars in the constellation of her talent, occupies, if possible, more dangerous ground. For condemning whose opinions I have been charged with "slandering the brethren;" the author of the charge darkly insinuating that it was something too black to come to the light. Some time ago we were gravely told by him in an article in the "Cumberland Presbyterian," that there is a great amount of "stuff" sung at the present day by the "the orthodox," and cites as an example the familiar couplet:

"God in the person of his Son,  
Hath all his mightiest works outdone."

This is the same man, who, a short time since, found a fossil shell upon the top of the Alleghenies, and in his sophomoric rhapsodies on the wonders of geology tells us, that the greatest work of the Almighty is that of creation. He calls it "a poem," whose closing strains shall never be sung. The atonement, together with the redemption of man, is but an "episode" of that poem; and when this shall have been finished—when the purposes of God

upon earth shall have been accomplished, the great and the all-absorbing theme of heaven shall be, the new and the mighty works of creation he shall bring to light. What then, I ask, shall become of the monuments of Calvary that have been erected upon every plain and every field of the celestial world? What of "the song of Moses the servant of God and the Lamb?" Shall its sweet and sublime strains which now, "as the sound of many waters," burst upon the ravished ear of heaven be forgotten? Shall a new choir be ushered in to sing of a greater and more glorious work than that of redemption? No. Not a thought, not a note in the rounds of eternal ages but shall speak of Calvary and of Christ crucified; of "the Lamb that was slain," and that stands forever in the midst of the everlasting throne. This shall be the song, this the theme, this the poem of the redeemed of God. Away then with such "expedients," "apologies," "provisions," and "episodes;" and let not those who would minister at the altar, touch the ark of God with such unhallowed hands. And permit me here to add, that, if the Cumberland Church are to follow such leaders, they will sooner or later find themselves in a region of darkness and of night, where there is neither road nor course; and where the deluded traveler, for entering upon such forbidden territory, must give himself a prey to the

monsters of the deep, or be prepared to navigate as did a famous personage of Milton in passing the limits of chaos and night, that,

“O'er bog, or steep, through strait, rough, dense, or rare,  
With head, hands, wings, or feet, pursues his way;  
And swims, or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies.”

This is the end, to which many of the theological finger-boards of the present day point the anxious inquirer after truth; this is the land, to which such principles, and definitions, and ideas, as are now being stereotyped in the Cumberland Church will ultimately lead. Pardon me in such allusions. I do not sound an alarm to bring odium upon the Church; a Church that contains many with whom my heart still lingers. Far be it. I simply wish to call your attention to the development that is being made in the history of its doctrines; a development from which I have learned an important and useful lesson.

Your affectionate son.

## LETTER V.

APPLICATION OF THE REMEDY—A PAINFUL CONFLICT—  
A WRONG COURSE—UNIVERSAL REDEMPTION—UNI-  
VERSAL GRACE—A GLOOMY PROSPECT.

DEAR FATHER:—Having determined the disease and the nature of the remedy, the next question of importance relates to the application of the remedy. There are two questions that cover the whole ground. 1st. Upon what conditions are we made partakers of the purchased blessings of the Gospel. 2d. How are we enabled to comply with those conditions. With regard to the first of these, there is but little controversy between Calvinists and Arminians, though there is sometimes a wide difference in the meaning attached to terms and phrases employed by each. It would lead me entirely beyond my limits, to enter upon a discussion of these differences here. With regard to the second of these questions, there has been much heated controversy. Over this one subject, the dismembered body of Christ have wrangled and warred more than over any other that has divided the Church, and yet it is

far from being settled. Each generation gives birth to the same exploded error of the past, and the combat is renewed with the same degree of ardor as before. The question is one of vital interest, and demands of all a most careful and impartial investigation. There is no question, in the range of theology, that has left such an impress upon my mind as this; for by it I have been led through scenes more painful and trying than any I have met in the past, or expect to meet in the future.

The doctrine of election is one intimately connected with this question, and was early made a subject of thought and reflection. About the time I left home for the Theological Seminary, a friend placed in my hands a little work on "*The Divine Purpose.*" I read it with interest and profit. It made a strong impression upon my mind, removed many of the difficulties from a doctrine I had so often heard condemned, and led to further reading and reflection. I felt anxious to investigate thoroughly the system of which it formed a part, and compare it with others, and cast my lot where truth was to be found. I went to Princeton from the assembly in which their own Confession of Faith had been pronounced "a ragged affair." I went with the conviction on my mind that I would have to abandon the idea of laboring in the same field with one whom I loved. I asked, you remember, for a letter of

dismissal from the church to which I belonged, with the view of shaping my course according to my convictions of truth and duty. The effect produced on my mind by your reply to this I will not attempt to describe. The memory of it, itself, gives pain. Never shall I forget your appeal to my heart, warm with parental affection, when, pointing to "the ringlets of age," you asked me, with a father's tenderness to pause before taking such a step. I read your letter with painful feelings; I was grieved for having thus given pain to one whom I loved. I found relief only in tears and the consciousness of being actuated by the purest motives. Such an appeal at that time, doubtless, had a secret and powerful influence in determining my future course. I tried, however, in all my investigations, to remember that I was responsible, in such matters, only to the Searcher of hearts. The words of the Saviour were before me: "If any man come to me, and hate not father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." I continued my studies with the determination of following as my convictions of truth and duty might dictate. I paused as you had requested. There stood before me the doctrines of original sin, a vicarious atonement, a general atonement, and the doctrine of election. One or the other must be discarded. Of the first two I

felt fully convinced; nothing, if I knew my own heart, could have shaken my faith in them. If they are taken away, the Gospel is stripped of all its power; of its power to convince of sin and guilt, on the one hand, and to bring peace and joy to the troubled conscience, on the other. The idea of a general atonement with its blessings alike provided for all, had taken a strong hold upon my mind, and was one that I had been taught to cherish as the only warrant for preaching the Gospel "to every creature." Such a view of the extent of the atonement, however, could not be reconciled with the doctrine of election, without destroying its vicarious nature. I was again in trouble. It was an important crisis, a painful conflict, in which the tenderest feelings of my heart were called into exercise. One thought decided the case. I felt that I could discard with more safety and comfort to myself the doctrine of election, than that of a general atonement; that I could explain away the difficulties connected with the denial of the former more easily, than those that might follow upon the denial of the latter. I therefore discarded the doctrine of election, and with it there went by the board also "the decrees of God," "effectual calling," and other distinctive doctrines of the Calvinistic system. I was glad thus to have before me still the hope of finding *the middle*



*way*, and of gratifying a parent's wishes without doing violence to my own conscience.

Holding to the doctrine of a vicarious atonement general in its provisions, and denying the doctrine of election, I was led into the very heart of the Arminian system; so that there was but one way left for me to answer the question proposed, as to the manner in which we are enabled to comply with the conditions of salvation required in the Gospel.

The peculiar doctrine that flows from such a combination, I found, after mature examination, to be one calculated to lead its advocates into dangerous error, and had produced in the Church an untempered zeal destructive of the strength and vitality of religion. I allude to the doctrine of *human ability*; a distinguishing and necessary feature of an Arminian creed, which teaches that a dead soul, under the ordinary operations of the Spirit of God, may exercise the most important functions of life, prior to its being regenerated. The views of the Methodist and Cumberland Church, on this point, may be stated in the same words, and lead to the same results. Some of these are worthy of the serious attention of every lover of truth and order, which, craving your indulgence, I would here notice as the importance of the subject may seem to demand.

By way of introducing the subject, and of pre-

sending one of its important phases, I will resume and continue to some length a figure that has already been introduced—representing the doctrines of the Calvinist and the Arminian as so many different points, or localities, upon the roads traveled by each.

The points arrived at and concerning which my mind had become settled were these: the doctrine of human depravity—the complete ruin of man—the justice of his condemnation—the legal or covenant relation of Adam and his posterity—the necessity of an atonement—and its vicarious nature. These doctrines are mutual in their dependence, and in their proper and scriptural sense, belong exclusively, to the Calvinistic system. The Arminian, it is true, often makes use of the same phraseology as the Calvinist, but the meaning attached to it, is as different as the ideas conveyed by words of similar sound in two languages radically different. Because two places have the same name it is no evidence, to any one, that they lie in the same direction, or have the same locality. Two men, for instance, may publish that they are going to Boston, and instead of traveling together, and arriving at the same place of destination, may take opposite points of the compass; the one may travel with railroad speed towards Boston in Massachusetts, while the other is making his way

through the wilderness for some point in the far West containing a few log cabins, thrown up by some Eastern emigrants, to which they have given the name of their favorite city, to attract others by the power of association. To apply the illustration: The Arminian attempts to connect with his system the doctrine of a vicarious atonement, because the phrase has become a popular one; but when we come to examine it, and discover its proper meaning by the light of truth, it is not to be found there. He may hold on to the name, but that is all that can be claimed. The substance is as different from the view that forms a part of his creed, as Boston on the Atlantic coast differs from a Yankee settlement of the back woods. It is a doctrine intimately associated with that of Imputation; indeed cannot be sustained without it. It is a point hard by that which I have represented as the only pass through the mountains of difficulties that gather around the student of theology, in the outset of his investigations; and that increase upon his pathway, winding among their frozen summits, unless, guided by the light of heaven, he is enabled to find his way through.

Having, as before related, satisfied my mind with regard to the doctrine of imputation, I hailed with delight the doctrine of a vicarious atonement **as its necessary consequence; a doctrine which**

had previously found its way to my heart. At this point, however, I drove my last stake in the beaten road of Calvinism. I feared to pursue it further. I did not stop long enough to examine the doctrine of imputation, and the nature of the atonement, in all their relations and consequences. A little more reflection here would have saved me from many a hard trial; but I had heard of mountains, deserts, giants, goblins, and ghosts, in the ulterior regions of Calvinism that deterred me away. I had resolved, thence, to strike out for a popular point in the Arminian route; a point which I shall call the city of *Universal Redemption*. I knew it, however, to be a city of great resort; and one through which every road of error in Christendom, from Puseyism and Popery to Mormonism, is made to pass. But I was encouraged by the hope, that from such a depot of systems and philosophy, one path at least could be found that would be safe and attractive. I bore off to the left, in the supposed direction of the desired place, with the most sanguine expectations. Little did I dream of what was to be encountered. A wilderness was before me, unexplored and untrodden by the foot of man. Deserts, bogs, fens, and swamps, of every description, were to be traversed.

After many days and nights of peril and anxiety, I completed a hasty examination of the proposed

route. I conceived the wild project of clearing out the forests—leveling the mountains—filling up the valleys—draining the swamps, and of becoming a second St. Patriek, to go forth and destroy the many tribes of croaking reptiles by which they were infested. I was urged on, too, by the pleasing thought, that he whom Providence might raise up to accomplish such a work would not only be hailed as the greatest benefactor of his race, but at the same time, would acquire a fame as imperishable as that of the man who is yet to invent a perpetual motion, find the quadrature of the circle, or discover the North-west passage to the Pacific. On my arrival at the city of Universal Redemption, the great place of rendezvous for the Arminian forces and those who sympathize with them in any of their peculiarities, I began to feel that I was out of danger; but alas, was destined to meet with disappointments at every step, until I got back into the beaten path I had left. There was much yet to be learned—much in Arminianism and Cumberlandism that I had never dreamed of. I did not tarry here long, anxious to obtain some knowledge of the country beyond, and to complete my survey of the middle route which I thought I had found.

There were two villages in the vicinity situated upon the two great thoroughfares branching off

from this place, one of which I shall call *Universal Salvation*, the other *Universal and Sufficient Grace*. Those who take the former course hold that all are saved as well as redeemed; those who take the latter contend that, while only a part are saved, all have the ability and necessary means of salvation furnished to their hands—in other words that a certain amount of grace is given to every man at his birth, or when he arrives at the age of discretion, upon the proper improvement of which his salvation is suspended. The doctrine of Universal Salvation I had no hesitancy in rejecting as unscriptural and absurd. I accordingly entered my name immediately in *the omnibus line* that connected with the village of Universal and Sufficient Grace, and was happy, on my arrival, to meet with so many kind friends and acquaintances in a place of so much apparent catholicity of feeling and doctrine. I was soon elevated to an important position, in the discharge of the duties of which I was prevented, for a time, from continuing further my investigations and completing my plans of the projected improvements in the swampy and wilderness region I had passed; and even when I obtained a few days of leisure, instead of being able to carry out my purposes, I found some new and growing evil, each, if possible, worse than those preceding. Their number and magnitude

were such, that a reformation could be effected only by the severest remedies. The stables of the Elian monarch did not stand in greater need of the cleansing waters of the neighboring streams, as guided by the hand of Hercules, than did many places here. There was much which the fire alone could purify, but in the application of which there was danger of destroying the village itself in the flames. The surrounding fields had been sown broadcast with tares; the tares must be rooted up, or the fields abandoned entirely to the enemy that sowed them. Something must be done and done quickly.

The municipal regulations of the place, too, were bad, and extremely, inefficiently executed. Those in authority were mostly men wholly unqualified for the stations they filled; and last, but not least, their shameful and deceitful method of handling the word of God was much to be reprehended. Of this, however, I will speak in my next.

Your affectionate son.

## LETTER VI.

IMPORTANT FACT—OPPOSITION TO CALVINISM—ARMINIAN LOGIC AND ZEAL.

DEAR FATHER:—When a man has a bad cause, his only hope and aim is to distort the position and views of those who differ with him, and appropriate to himself that which properly belongs to his opponent. It is true in politics, in law, and religion also. The converse of the proposition is also true. When you see a man trying to distort the proper meaning of words, and presenting a garbled statement of the views of an opponent, there is conclusive evidence that he has a bad cause, and is on the wrong side; more especially when he is constantly at it, and manifests in all that he does a feeling of uneasiness and hostility towards those who oppose him. During my stay at the village of Arminian Grace, alluded to in my last, I was called upon to witness many such exhibitions that in the outset made any thing but a favorable impression on my mind. I found, in the first place, the most uncompromising and malignant opposition



to what is called *Calvinism*. This however was not to be wondered at; for there was not a man of them that could state fairly and fully what Calvinism was; and what few there were of them, that knew anything about it, had studied it only with its enemies. Their views were entirely one-sided and distorted, and these were constantly being presented before the minds of the people, thereby deepening their prejudices and drawing still tighter the dark folds of their mantle of ignorance and bigotry. In every sermon and lecture delivered, there was some fling made at Calvinism that evinced anything else than a clear head or a sound heart. And in addition to all this I found a species of religious excitement, very prevalent at certain seasons of the year, which, on many accounts, was neither to edification nor profit; but, on the contrary, was almost universally, in its final consequences, highly injurious to the cause of religion and morality.

Permit me here to present a characteristic scene, illustrative of Arminian logic and zeal, in which the advocates of such a system so often congratulate themselves—a scene, similar to which are of no unfrequent occurrence among those whose main stand point is this doctrine of Universal and Sufficient Grace—and, I am sorry to say, have sometimes been witnessed in the operations of the the Cumberland Church. Its counterpart will be

found in the early history of the church in Western Pennsylvania, as well as other parts of the country; the unpleasant and bitter fruits of which are now every day being realized.

I will locate the scene, to which I allude, in what is called a "Big Meeting"—a meeting composed of those who agree as touching this one peculiar feature of the Arminian system. As to the motives in which such meetings often originate I have nothing to say. My only object will be to present a faithful picture of real life, in as few words as possible.

After the meeting had been in progress several days, it was discovered that nothing was being effected. Sermons had been preached; the people had been exhorted, yet they were still cold and lifeless. Something more must be done; every means must be employed to get up some kind of an excitement; it will never do to let a *Big Meeting* close without a fuss of some kind; there must be a little fox-fire kindled, rather than have no fire; the dry bones must be rattled a little even if there should be no prospect of giving them flesh and sinews. The machinery was accordingly put in motion. Divers kinds of meetings were appointed, as time and circumstances would permit,—prayer meetings for old men, young men, and women; love feasts, conference meetings, general

class meetings, particular class meetings, and every other kind of meeting that could be thought of. Preachers far and near were solicited to attend. Among the most prominent of those who were to officiate on the occasion, were two very noted and distinguished characters—a certain Professor Aristotle and one Timothy Boisterous. Bills were accordingly posted up at every corner of the street announcing the fact, and that they would conduct the exercises greatly, no doubt, to the edification and profit of those who might attend.

The town hall was brilliantly lighted for the occasion; the bells had been rung; the hour had arrived; the people were assembled; and all eyes were turned towards the distinguished characters upon the stand. There was something remarkable in their appearance, though nothing very prepossessing. The one was a spare built, lean, cadaverous looking man, not quite six feet in height, apparently near sighted, and a little stooped in his walk. The other was in every respect the opposite, as the name would seem to indicate—a short, heavy set, puffy, pussy, windy looking man—a little pompous and self complaisant in his manner, on account of the many compliments he had received from the women for his good looks and eloquent preaching. It belongs however to the pencil of the artist to delineate the features of such. Their say-

ings and doings, on the occasion before us, alone demand our attention at present.

After the usual preliminaries, the Rev. Professor, with his colleague in the rear, arose and with solemn emphasis announced his text:—"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." Jer. xiii. 23. I can only give some of the leading thoughts of the discourse. The passage of divine truth before us, said he, is generally regarded as one of the strongholds of Calvinism; the doctrines of which, I am bold and free to assert and able to maintain, have done the world more injury than any other heresy or system of error. Atheism, Infidelity, and Popery itself, may hang their heads when it appears. Grim, dark, and forbidding, it is more to be detested than the wildest dream of Beelzebub or any other of the tenants of the Pit. It has ground the poor—exalted the rich—licked the blood of martyrs—and steeped the souls of men in bigotry, ignorance, and vice. I therefore, said he, invite and solicit your serious attention; and when I have finished my argument, if there is any one here who will have the assurance to quote the passage before us to bolster up the decayed, rotten, crumbling system of Geneva, I will venture to say that he will quote Scripture to prove the devil an angel of light.

So much for the exordium. Then followed a summary account of the creation, the fall of man, the antideluvian, the patriarchal, the Mosaic, and prophetic periods of the world's history; and, lastly, the gospel dispensation, in which *a sufficiency of grace* is poured upon all flesh—so that the Jew and the Greek, the bond and the free, the Christian and the Pagan, all have the necessary light and ability to enable them to become as perfect as the angels in heaven, if they would only improve the means placed within their reach. This is the doctrine to which we hold, said he: free grace and fair chance to all. But to the proof, the points of which were as follows: 1. The Ethiopian is a more sagacious and tractable animal than the leopard; for the Scriptures expressly say that “Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands;” whereas, no promise is made to the latter, except that he shall lie down with the kid “and a young child shall lead them.” There is a self-determination and ability exercised under the influence of motives and means implied in the one case that are not found in the other. 2. The language of the text plainly implies, that it is as easy for the Ethiopian to change his skin as it is for the leopard to change his spots; and of course a far easier task to induce him to do it, if he could only be convinced of the fact and the proper motives presented to the mind. 3. It is as easy for the

leopard, unless caged or confined, to change his spots as it is to perform any other act. There can be no greater mistake, said he, than is often found in the interpretation of a single word in the passage before us. The prophet is not here speaking of the inability of the leopard to shake off the beautiful and *spotted* covering that nature intended it should wear—this is a dogma of Calvinism—but simply of its power to go from one place to another as prompted by its instincts, its desires, its hopes, and fears. Precisely in the same way, said he, may the Ethiopian change his skin; by changing his relation to the outward circumstances and causes by which his dark and swarthy appearance has been produced. Let him change his spots—let him migrate from the hot, burning, sandy deserts of Africa, to the frozen and snowy regions of the North. Let him gaze upon the perpetual snows of the frigid zone, as he has upon the scorched plains of the torrid, and in the course of time he will become as white and as bleached as the polar bear. The argument, then, is briefly this: as surely as the leopard has the power of locomotion, and can change his spots, so may the Ethiopian change his skin, and ye also do good, who are accustomed to do evil. Where, then, I ask, said he, in conclusion, are the absurdities and dogmas of Calvinism? of election and divine effi-

ciency? Gone to the four winds—torn to rags, and the rags not worth carrying to the paper mill.

Thus closed the discourse of the “learned” professor, when his colleague addressed the audience, by way of exhortation, in his usual vociferous and vehement style. He surpassed himself and succeeded in raising the feelings of the numerous assembly to the highest point of excitement. The scene that followed beggars all description. The strongest hyperbole falls below the reality. The drums beat—the bells rung—the women shouted—the boys yelled—and every thing that could make a noise, from a horse-fiddle to a bag-pipe, sounded its highest note. The world was coming to an end—the judgment was just at hand—the stars were already loose in their sockets—and the moon was going crazy. The heavens are already black with the tempest, said Timothy; the old ship of Zion will soon be off—the last chance is offered—steam high—and already loosed from her anchorage! Come one, come all—change your *spots* and thereby change your *skins* and your *hearts*—old men and matrons, young men and maidens, with bonnets and boots, trimmings and trappings, luggage and baggage—hickelty, pickelty—roll in and let us roll off, ere the elements are melted, and the bending heavens empty themselves of impending wrath.

Amid such scenes of confusion, the wearied and

exhausted assembly tarried till the night was far spent. Had the priests of Baal been there, they might have found an atmosphere somewhat congenial to their own feelings. Had the old prophet been there who caused "the fire of the Lord" to consume the sacrifice, the wood and the stone of the altar, and to lick the water of the trench that surrounded it, he might have said to them as he did to those who strove with them: "Cry aloud for he is a god; either he is talking or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awakened."

But I forbear continuing this train of thought further. My object is not ridicule—far from it. Lest you should think me chargeable with such an attempt I will drop the figure, and in my next communication will endeavor to present this doctrine of *human ability* and *universal grace* in a more tangible form. You have here simply a picture of the impressions made upon my mind with regard to the logic and untempered zeal of those who make it their main rallying point.

Your affectionate son.



## LETTER VII.

SOURCE AND EVILS OF UNDUE EXCITEMENT—HUMAN ABILITY—SUFFICIENT GRACE—SAME AS ROMISH DOCTRINE—DIFFICULTIES AND ABSURDITIES INVOLVED.

DEAR FATHER:—The extravagances to which I have referred, I am confident you will condemn, as well as myself, as being often both injurious and disgraceful to religion. But in condemning them we indirectly condemn the doctrine under consideration. Let a man be convinced that all men, under all circumstances and conditions of life, have the necessary light and ability in order to salvation, and what else has he to do, if he is a minister of the gospel, but to get up some kind of religious excitement, that by some spasmodic effort the will may be brought into exercise—something like getting in motion a wagon that has been stalled in the mud. The way is clear, the horses have strength enough to pull it out, if they would only exert it. To accomplish this, all the driver has to do, is to get up a hurrah, and lay on the whip. But it will

not do in this case—the sinner will get still deeper in the mire—it must be a steady pull, a pull altogether, and an unseen hand must give motion to the wheels, or nothing can be accomplished. Thousands under the influence of such heated excitements as are here alluded to, may be led to shout their unmeaning hallelujahs, and run well for a time, but destitute of any clear views of the plan of salvation; and having no principle of vitality, their last end, in most instances, will be found worse than the first. In the Methodist Church such cases are more easily disposed of—they may be placed upon the list of those who have fallen from grace—but in the Cumberland Church, whose book of discipline has been taken from one intended for a different order of things, they will often-times be found, as the extra pots of manna in the Jewish camp, to breed worms and disease. I am not drawing upon my imagination; I speak what I have seen and felt, during my ministry in the Cumberland Church. I might cite you to numerous instances that have come under my own observation, illustrative of the evil here alluded to, but I forbear pressing the point further. I promised to present this doctrine of Human Ability and Sufficient Grace in a more tangible form. For the sake of convenience I will consider both together, as they are necessarily connected in the Arminian scheme.

I wish here to call your attention to an important fact, that is not sufficiently noticed, with regard to this cardinal feature of the Arminian system. It is a favorite doctrine of the Romish Church—of the disciples of Loyola—of the intriguing, plotting Jesuit, and constitutes an essential element in “the mystery of iniquities.” The decrees of the Council of Trent, on this subject, express the same views and feelings as are manifested by the great body of Arminians, of every grade throughout the country. “Whoever shall affirm,” say they, “that when man’s free will is moved and wrought upon by God, it does in no respect co-operate and consent to divine influence and calling, *so as to dispose and prepare* him to obtain the grace of justification; or that he cannot refuse if he would, but is like a lifeless thing, altogether inert, and merely *passive*—let him be accursed.” There is the same harmless shaft here blindly thrown at the shield of truth, from the hand of the “mother of harlots,” as now oftentimes comes in darkening showers from the Arminian ranks. This is no bugbear of the imagination. “The Jesuits maintain,” says Pascal in his Provincial Letters, who himself was a devoted Romanist, “that there is a grace given generally to all men, subject in such a way to free will, that the will renders it efficacious or inefficacious at its pleasure, without any additional aid from God, and

without needing anything on his part in order to act effectively—and hence they term this grace *sufficient*, because it suffices of itself for action.” This, I am sorry to say, is precisely the position occupied by the Cumberland Church in common with the great body of the Arminians. It would be an instructive lesson here to trace the many “iniquities” into which it has led its blinded votaries, as guided by Popes, Cardinals and Priests; but such a discussion would be foreign to my purpose. It is not my object to aim at presenting any new phase of the subject, but simply such views as he that runs may read and understand, and have operated upon my own mind in leading me from such a dark and dangerous position.

I found, it is true, many passages of Scripture, when isolated from their proper connection and meaning, that seemed to favor this doctrine, but follow it out by the light of other portions of the word of God, and no end can be found to the difficulties and absurdities into which it will lead us. Some of these I will now briefly notice.

It deprives the Church, in the first place, of every motive to energy and action in the great work before her—a work commensurate with the world’s immortal interests. I will not draw out a lengthy argument to prove this fact; it is unnecessary; it is a plain case, and may be stated in a few words.

The united voice of the Methodist and Cumberland Churches will tell us that Christ suffered and died in the same sense for every man; and in view of the purchase of his death God is in justice bound to deal out to every man a sufficiency of grace, to enable him to comply with the terms of life as offered in the gospel, and if these terms are not offered to some by a living ministry it must be done by inspiration, or some other way provided for their salvation than that of "repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." I am not speaking at random. "Since there is a future life," says Knapp, a popular author in the Lutheran Church "we may trust that God will there lead the heathen to that higher degree of happiness and clearness of knowledge which they did not attain in this life; because, without fault of their own, they were incapable of receiving it. To such a dispensation in the future world, there is at least an allusion in Rev. 22: 2,—in the tree of life by the river of life whose leaves are for *the healing of the nations.*" Knapp's Theo. sec. 121. "God," says Adam Clarke in his commentary on the second chapter of Romans, "has never confined himself to any *one particular way* of communicating his salvation, any more than he has confined his saving grace to one people;"—"as he is no respecter of persons, all nations are equally dear to him; and he

has granted, and will grant to him such discoveries of himself as have been, and will be, *sufficient* for their salvation." Where then, I ask, is the necessity of an organized Church or the means of grace? What advantage had the Jew, and what have we, from the fact that to us are committed the oracles of God? The millions of Asia, of Africa, of India, and China, although in the region of darkness and the shadow of death, although in a land full of the habitations of cruelty, superstition, and idolatry, they are, according to this system, upon the same platform of mercy with ourselves, have the same amount of grace, the same chance, and may have the same hope of heaven that we enjoy. And to what purpose, I ask, have you been laboring for the last twenty years with the poor savage upon our frontier, if prior to your labors he had a sufficiency of grace, of light, and ability in order to salvation? Such a doctrine is infinitely more calculated to destroy the energies of the Church than any in the Calvinistic system can be. I might here appeal to facts in the history of the Church as well as to standard authority, in proof of such a position; but I pass to another difficulty that stood in my way.

This doctrine of Arminian grace involves many principles not only unphilosophical, but ruinous to the cause of morals and religion, if carried to their

legitimate consequences. I shall not here enter upon the vexed question concerning the nature and condition of human volitions and the freedom of the will; it is wholly unnecessary; one or two thoughts of a more practical nature will suffice. The advocates of this doctrine, for instance, take for granted a commonly received maxim, which, if carried fully into practical life, would undermine the most important institutions of society—a maxim upon which the Pelagian, the Socinian, the Arminian, the Papist, the Jesuit, and the libertine, alike build their creed and their hopes. “Responsibility,” say they, “can only be commensurate with ability.” Take this away and all that is left of the system of each is in ruins. In order to test the danger and absurdity of such a position, apply the principle, for a moment, to the ordinary regulations of society. Let a proclamation be issued by the authorities of government, declaring that all persons disabled with regard to the performance of any duty required of them, shall no longer be amenable to law. Look at the consequences. The drunkard and the sot, whatever may be the crimes they commit while in a state of intoxication, must go free; not a hair of their heads can be touched, though for every bottle of rum they take the life of a fellow-being. Every man, too, in a state of heated passion, may plead the same excuse, whatever may be the crime he

commits. The debauchee, whose debasing and brutal habits have destroyed every refined feeling and sensibility of the soul, may wallow in sensuality and vice, till his body becomes as loathsome as the putrid carcass that would even nauseate the fowl and the worm that feed upon it, and yet we are to look upon him with the same degree of complacency that marks our intercourse with the virtuous. And, if the maxim be true, the blasphemies of hell are as innocent as the songs of Paradise; for there is no ability there to love God. If responsibility and guilt are to be measured by the ability of the creature at the time the offense is committed, then will Satan and the legions that may swarm at his command, be forever justified in their eternal and fiendish hatred of infinite purity and benevolence.

The principle I am contending for is simply this: God will not deprive any of his intelligent creatures of their ability to spiritual good, to virtue and holiness, without good, wise, and just reasons; when that ability is lost, I care not by what means or instrumentalities it departs, they are held responsible for all that flows from their corrupt nature. It is an important principle, and should never be lost sight of, founded in reason and Scripture, and furnishes the only safe guard to the institutions of society.

An opponent here steps up and tells me that he



is willing to grant all this, but contends that it is *a sufficiency of grace* that makes men responsible after all. I ask, is it *grace* that makes devils responsible, and fills all hell with blasphemies? Is it grace that has brought sin and misery into our world? Is it grace that has peopled the regions of despair with millions of immortal beings from earth? There is no escape from an affirmative answer to such questions, if it is grace only that makes men responsible; for without it, if this be correct, no charge could be brought against them; and if no charge could be brought against man, in that case, the devils in hell, we say, are unimpeachable for their blasphemies and eternal enmity to the throne of God. I am here told that a distinction must be made; that devils once enjoyed a probationary state in the immediate presence of God himself; but having rebelled, they were condemned and consigned to the burning lake; whereas, we come into the world with depraved natures, in producing which we have had no agency. In reply, I answer in the language of the Westminster and Cumberland Confession of Faith, that we stood probation in Adam, as our federal head, and "sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression;" or rather, in the more expressive language of the apostle Paul, "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners."

I would here call your attention again, in passing, to the necessity that is pressing upon the Cumberland Church, and driving her from every Calvinistic position in her creed into the broad and beaten road of Arminianism. Already the whole body of the Church, as I have before stated, have departed from this important and fundamental truth of the Gospel—the doctrine of imputation—so plainly laid down in her Confession of Faith, and by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans. And now there is scarcely a landmark that they can call their own, except a few outposts, that are being erected by individual effort, far off in the regions of Pelagian night. I will resume this subject, again, in my next.

Your affectionate Son,

## LETTER VIII.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED—CHRISTIAN DEPRIVED OF ALL ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAYER—AND GOD OF HIS GLORY, AUTHORITY AND POWER—GOD HUMBLED AND ABASED, AND THE SINNER EXALTED.

DEAR FATHER:—The principles that lie at the foundation of the Arminian doctrine of *ability* and *grace* are not only calculated to destroy the energies of the Church, and unhinge the institutions of society, as I have endeavored to show, but they go still farther; they enter the Christian's closet and destroy the life and soul of his private devotion; they are calculated to dry up every fountain, and destroy every spring of religious feeling and action. This you cannot fail to see by looking at the subject for a moment in a practical way—by directing your thoughts to one in whose present and everlasting well-being you can but feel the deepest interest.

You have a son, an only and a dear brother, who makes no pretensions to piety, and whose mind is absorbed in worldly pursuits and pleasures. Every morning and every evening a parent's heart

is burdened with petitions at a throne of grace for converting power that he may be made wise unto salvation. What encouragement thus to pray, can be drawn from a scheme of which this doctrine of universal and sufficient grace forms an important part? None. Not a ray of hope lightens up and cheers the Christian's closet when wrestling with God for the unconverted. If Arminians are right, if the Cumberland Church is right, heaven has already guaranteed to every man a certain amount of grace, and all the prayers of men, of saints, and angels, although clad in sack cloth, in dust and ashes, and prostrated before the eternal throne in the most humble supplication, could not prevail upon God to add anything to that grace already bestowed, until it is properly improved. And when the sinner improves that grace, as required of him, the attributes of God, yea, the throne of God is pledged for the bestowal of more; and if the new supply is improved, still more is granted; and so on till he is brought into the kingdom. If this be true, then, we say, all our petitions, although they may rise from burdened, aching and bursting hearts, can avail nothing for the salvation of the unconverted. How chilling the thought to the pious soul! What encouragement have we as ambassadors of Christ to give ourselves to prayer as well as to the ministry of the word? What en-

couragement can the devoted missionary of the cross draw from the fact that he is followed by the prayers of the church, and his cause stately remembered before a throne of grace? If salvation is conditioned upon the will of the creature, instead of the will of God, there can be none.

I have before shown that this doctrine deprives the Church of all motive to intelligent labor; what then is left for her to do, if her prayers can avail nothing at a throne of grace for the unconverted? She can only fold her arms in sleep, and wait for the day of *the creatures* power and will. Now and then, it is true, she may shake off her slumbers, and put forth a spasmodic effort in her fitful operations, not to enlighten nor to convince—for such influences are already guaranteed—but simply to get up some kind of religious hurrah to save the craft, and bring the will to its “self-determining” point. This is all that can be aimed at upon such a system; and when accomplished, what security have you that your work will stand for a single hour.

But we will go farther still. Not only do the principles contained in the doctrine of Arminian grace affect the Christian in his relations to the Church, to society, and to his God, as shown above, but they lead us into the very presence of God, and mar the most essential attributes of the divine char-

acter; yea, more, if carried out to their legitimate and utmost limit, they would even destroy every vestige of the glory, the authority, and power, of the Divine Being.

It is common for Cumberland Presbyterians and others to illustrate this doctrine by what is called "an equilibrium of forces"—the world, the flesh, and the devil, are represented as pulling the sinner in one direction and the Spirit of God in another, till the two opposing forces are equally balanced. It is then left "to the self-determining power of the will" to give *efficiency* to the one or the other, as it may see proper to decide. The same idea is sometimes presented under the figure of a balance—the pivot upon which it is suspended, representing the will. The devil is represented as hanging all his weights upon one arm of the scales, and the Spirit of God as suspending a counteracting influence upon the other, till an *equilibrium* is produced. It is then left to the self-moving power of the pivot to give the predominating influence. To say nothing of the philosophy contained in such illustrations, may I not with far more propriety bring the charge that is so often urged by Cumberland Presbyterians and others against the Calvinistic system?—the charge of mockery, and insincerity upon the part of God in his dealings with the sinner?—mockery, not only of the sinner himself,

but of him who died for his redemption? I say it with emphasis, yet with reverence and respect. Can it be that the Son of God was bathed in the sweat of his own blood, and hung and died upon the rugged spikes of the cross beneath the hidings of his Father's face, and yet all that is done for those for whom he thus died, is to deal out to them simply an influence equal in amount to that which is dragging them to the Pit? Can it be that the thousands that daily crowd the gates of hell might have been saved, if only one more ray of light had broke in upon their darkness—if the feeblest breath of heaven, the smallest particle of down from an angel's wing had only been thrown into the scales—if the least possible influence had only been added to that already exerted upon them, and yet that influence withheld? Is this the operation of infinite power as guided by infinite love? And can it be that the heart that beat in the bosom of God, and bled upon the cross for human woes is "satisfied" with such a display? Is it reasonable to suppose that infinite love, and wisdom, and power, could withhold so small a pittance of grace necessary to complete the work of the soul's redemption, that has already cost such an outlay of blood and treasure? If such questions can be answered in the affirmative,—as they must if this doctrine of Arminian grace be true—then, I ask, where are the

feelings in the divine bosom, corresponding to those revealed in his word?

When pressed upon this point, both Methodists and Cumberland Presbyterians tell us, that God does all he can do to save the sinner—that his power is *limited* by the free agency of the creature—that all the means that heaven could devise are exhausted. They go even farther than this. They tell us with a most unblushing confidence, that it is impossible for God to prevent sin in a moral government—that after the creation of man, omnipotence itself could not prevent him from falling. I will not attempt here to follow this view of the power and moral government of God to its legitimate consequences—its difficulties, absurdities and blasphemies—their name is legion, which no man can number and no man can bind. It involves the insecurity of heaven and earth, the wretchedness of God, and the everlasting misery of millions of his creatures whose salvation is beyond his reach.

Once more: Another tendency and necessary result of the doctrine under consideration is, to cultivate in the human heart a feeling, the destruction of which is the great aim of the Gospel, and essential to the happiness of man. It is that of pride—the strongest elementary principle of our carnal nature at work in the human heart. In its incipient stages, it has destroyed the image of God as stamped



upon the soul in a state of innocency ; it has brought ruin, misery and death upon our race ; it has done more to destroy the temporal peace and happiness of man, than any other feeling of his nature ; it has presented more obstacles to the plans and purposes of God upon earth, than any other ; and remains unmoved amid all his judgments and threatenings as revealed in his providence and word. A salvation from sin, then, must put down this feeling in all its workings. God must be exalted and the sinner abased. God must be just while the sinner is condemned ; and, if saved at all, the glory is due to sovereign and invincible grace alone. There is no foothold upon which the sinner can stand and claim anything to himself. Christ is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, that, according as it is written, he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord. 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. It is not so, if Arminianism be correct—it is impossible. Everything is here reversed ; God is abased and the sinner exalted ; God is unjust while the sinner is innocent and unfortunate in his condemnation ; God has humbled himself from the very necessity of the case ; the creature is exalted, not by the grace and power of God, but by the “self-determination” of his own will. God has done nothing toward his salvation but what he was in justice

bound to do ; and the creature has all the glory to himself. I am not now speaking of the extremes of Arminian error, as found in the systems of the Pelagians and others. I refer simply to that one fundamental principle of Arminianism upon which the Cumberland Church have learned to gaze as their *polar star* of theology. Look at the whole scheme as it stands out before us, and see if I am not right.

We are told, with confidence and emphasis, that without some method of forgiveness and restoration, the providences of God to our race would be unjust ; with a presumption bold enough to bring a blush upon the countenance of the father of lies, they tell us that without the offer of life, the misery, the wretchedness, and the death to which all are doomed would convulse the universe ; so say the oracles of the Methodist Church, and the same sentiment is loudly echoed from the pulpit of the Cumberland Church. As an off-set or compensation for these evils, say they, God has brought life and immortality to light through a redeemer ; it was a debt, then, that God owed to the unfortunate race of man. Here we find introduced the doctrine under consideration. It stands thus : God is bound, not by the laws of his nature merely, but by the necessity of the case, to furnish a redeemer, and bring life and immortality to light ;

he is, by the same rule, bound to furnish to every man a "sufficiency of grace" to enable him to understand and accept the terms of life. If, then, it is left to any imaginary spontaneity or "self-determining power" in man to render efficacious that grace, I ask, where is the mercy, the love, and the grace of the gospel?—grace is no longer grace—love is no longer love—and instead of justice and mercy reciprocating the kiss of reconciliation at the cross, it was justice and cruelty that met and embraced each other in mockery; justice with a sword bathed in innocent blood, and cruelty robed in the garb of mercy. And to what a degraded position is the great God brought upon such a scheme! He humbles himself to indemnify a race of creatures he has injured! He sends his Son into the world to reveal his will and the plan proposed—to make an apology to the universe for what he has done and what he intends doing; his spirit also is sent, a Church is organized, and a living ministry appointed to carry out that plan. And now to what a pinnacle of pride is the creature exalted, who, with his Maker under his feet as *debtor*, and with the keys of heaven and hell at his command, can do as he listeth. It is enough. The mind recoils from the contemplation of such absurdities; and my pen refuses to record the feelings of my heart.

A single remark, and I will close this communication. If Methodists and Cumberland Presbyterians would only look well to their own views, they would find cause to spare much of the abusive language and epithets they are accustomed to heap upon the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church, or rather their perversion and caricatures of those doctrines.

Your affectionate son.

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## LETTER IX.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED—ARGUMENT FROM SCRIPTURE—COVENANT OF GRACE.

DEAR FATHER:—Such difficulties as I have mentioned, growing out of the Arminian doctrine of “sufficient grace,” multiplying upon my path, led me to a more careful perusal of the Scriptures upon the subject. It was not until my mind was satisfied here, that I was induced to abandon the position, and receive the teachings of inspiration upon other points with meekness and submission. I shall not, by any means, attempt to collate and comment upon the many passages of Scripture

bearing upon this doctrine. I have neither time nor occasion to undertake such a task. Your attention is kindly solicited only to one or two, out of the many that might be adduced.

There is one passage on which my mind has often dwelt with delight and profit, both from its peculiar adaptation to the subject under consideration, and the circumstances under which it was delivered. It was first announced by the prophet Jeremiah to the disconsolate Jews, and reiterated with peculiar and marked emphasis by the apostle Paul in the eighth chapter of his letter to the Hebrews. It reads thus: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord. I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be mer-

ciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

Three distinct covenants have been entered into by God with man, in which have been offered to him the blessings of eternal life. Two of these having failed to accomplish their end, have passed away and are no longer in force; though the ultimate and secret purposes of God have been fulfilled in them, as in all that he does.

The first was a representative plan adapted only to a state of innocency, in which our first parents were placed upon trial, not only for themselves, but those also "descending from them by ordinary generation." The consequences in this case were disastrous—the covenant was broken, and the hopes of man seemed buried forever in the ruins of the fall. The sentence, "dying thou shalt die," shattered his physical frame, by which he was left exposed to the rude attacks of disease, and finally to become a victim of death and to rot in the grave; it left the immortal spirit deserted by the divine influence, and exposed to the withering and wasting moral disease that was to terminate in the deathless agonies of the second death; it left our world exposed to the curse of a broken and immutable law, and to the eye of sense, in a helpless and hopeless condition.

Vain now are the efforts of man to revive the

broken contract or the covenant of works, as it is called, as a means of salvation. Vain are the efforts of the moralist by which he goes about to establish a righteousness of his own, to secure the favor of God and the reward of eternal life. The "filthy rags" of such a righteousness will only serve to render still more exposed and deformed his nakedness and shame. Two insurmountable difficulties lie in the way. 1. The law requires an obedience which the sinner is not able to render; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself;" and "cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things written in the book of the law to do them." 2. The sinner's life is already forfeited for past offenses—the penalty of the law must be met and the claims of justice satisfied; for, "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins."

Since the fall of man and his banishment from the garden, two important covenants have marked his history, embodying the terms of life and pardon—the one under the old, and the other under the new dispensation. The former of which, proving to be defective, was annulled after the purposes of God were accomplished by it; the latter, being "established upon better promises," comes to us laden with all the purchased blessings of the gospel, and makes full and ample provision for all the

wants of man in his lost and ruined condition. The points of superiority of this covenant over the former, as presented to us in the passage already quoted, have an important bearing upon the subject under consideration, and are worthy of more than the passing notice I shall be able to give to them here.

1. It contemplates a universal diffusion of a knowledge of God—"All shall know me, from the least to the greatest." Under the old dispensation, all that was known of God was revealed in the law of Moses, the shadowy rites of the temple service, and the extraordinary communications made to those raised up for a particular purpose. Such sources of knowledge were limited and obscure, and were *insufficient* to save the Jewish people from idolatry and rebellion against God. But under the new covenant, or dispensation, it is not so. Every truth essential to the happiness and salvation of man is presented in the full revelation that God has made of himself in the Gospel of his Son, and every facility is offered for acquiring a knowledge of that truth. The promise is even now literally fulfilled. The covenant being made with Israel—with the Church of God—none says to his neighbor, know the Lord; for all know him, from the least to the greatest. The Sabbath School scholar may learn more of God and the plan of salvation, by means and facilities placed in his hands, than the most learned of the



priests or Scribes that ministered daily in the temple and the synagogue service.

It was in allusion to this fact, doubtless, that our Saviour said to the multitudes that had attended upon the ministry of John: "Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." What then, I ask, becomes of the leveling system of Arminians?—of "the discoveries of himself," that God makes to those who are not of Israel, according to Adam Clarke and those who sympathize with him in this doctrine of universal and sufficient grace? If the least in the kingdom of God has more of these "discoveries" than he who was sent to prepare the way for the Messiah, what an impassible gulf, what a world of night must there be between such and those upon whom the wrath of God abides, who have "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things;" "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Ro. 1: 23. Eph. 4: 18, 19.

2. This new covenant made with the Church of

God makes full and adequate provision for the forgiveness of sin. "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

In this respect, the covenant made at Sinai was defective also. It promised, it is true, forgiveness to those who would repent and turn unto God; but the institutions of that covenant, in themselves considered, contained nothing upon which could be based the full acquittal of the sinner from the charge of guilt. "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Nevertheless, the sacrifices and institutions of the ceremonial law, though having no efficacy in themselves, pointed the devout and believing Jew to the great sacrifice that God himself was to offer up in the fullness of the time. The time has come—the Lamb of God\* has been offered—ample provision is now made for the forgiveness of sin and the everlasting salvation of those who comply with the terms as presented in the Gospel; and more, to such the promise is, "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." I will be their God, their benefactor, their preserver, their defender, and everlasting source of life. But this is not all. The provisions of the covenant of grace stop not here, else man would still have been without hope.

3. It provides for the fulfillment of those condi-

tions upon which all is suspended. "I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts." Here was the prominent defect of the old covenant. When God descended upon the burning mount to deliver the tables of the law together with the ceremonial institutions of the Jewish economy, every promise made was conditioned upon some external act of obedience or of worship. If the Jew desired temporal prosperity or length of days, a strict obedience to *all* the requirements of the law was to be rendered; if forgiveness of sin, the smiles of God, and the hope of heaven, sacrifices were to be offered at the appointed time, and in the appointed way; and this with the eye of faith resting not upon the bleeding victim of the altar, but upon the victim that was to bleed upon the cross, "the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. But while every promise was thus conditioned upon the performance of some stipulated duty, the grace necessary to enable the sinner to comply with the required conditions was not pledged. Its language in this respect was similar to that of the law—do this and live. The vital principle thus being withheld, and prompted by their own hearts, the Jews not only failed to comply with the proposed conditions, but rebelled against God, "turned quickly out of the way, their fathers walked in," "went a whoring after other gods," and brought upon them-

selves the severest judgments of heaven. "They continued not in my covenant and I regarded them not, saith the Lord."

The same general idea is incidently, yet forcibly, presented in the fourth chapter of Paul's letter to the Galatians. "It is written," says he, "that Abraham had two sons; the one by a bond maid, the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bond woman was born after the flesh; but he of the free woman was by promise. Which things are an allegory; for these are the two covenants: the one from Mt. Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem, which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." According to this instructive allegory, we are born not as Ishmael, who came through the "combined agency" of the free and the bond—of Abraham and Agar—begotten by the power that was given to the one in his old and decrepid age, in connection with the youthful and native strength of the other. Such is not our birth. "We brethren," says Paul, "as Isaac was, are children of the promise." All the agencies concerned in our spiritual birth, as in the natural birth of Isaac, are fruitless even to old age, until made efficient by the power and grace of God. Here we say, was one of

the prominent and marked defects of the covenant made at Sinai, answering to the Jerusalem that once was; it left all those who were parties to it, and not to the new, in bondage, simply from the fact that no efficient grace was stipulated to enable them to comply with its terms.

But notwithstanding this failure of the Sinatic covenant, this its most prominent and defective feature is incorporated as a cardinal doctrine upon the system of those who hold to Arminian sentiments—it is found in the very doctrine now under consideration. Christ is set forth crucified as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; the promises of the gospel are held out to comfort and encourage; obedience is enjoined; pardon and the blessings of eternal life are offered; but all is conditioned upon the will of the creature, and no grace presented to secure the fulfillment of the conditions required; the free, sovereign, and efficient power, and grace of God, have nothing to do with the work. Those born under such a system, Paul would say, are children of the bond women and not of the free, and correspond to the Jerusalem that once was, and remained in bondage with her children till cast out. The Jerusalem that is from above and is the mother of us all is under a different covenant.

“This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord.

I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts." I will not only make a full revelation of myself in the character and work of one who shall be constituted the light of the world; but I will open the eyes of their understandings; I will so illumine the darkness of their minds that they may see and understand the wonderful things contained in my law, that they may know him whom to know aright is life eternal. Yet more: I will write my law in their hearts; they shall not only see and understand, but my grace shall make effectual the truth; my precepts and my commandments shall be engraven upon their hearts in as legible and durable a manner as the law upon the tables of stone upon the summit of the burning mount; they shall love me and walk in my ways, and I will be to them a God and they shall be to me a people.

Here is the plan upon which God bestows the purchased blessings of the gospel. Here is that everlasting covenant that was laid in the counsels of eternity, and executed under the sovereign will and purpose of God in his own time and in his own way. Here rest the hopes of the Church. The omnipotence of God is pledged for her defense; his sovereign power and grace are promised for the ingathering of those who shall be heirs of salvation. Nothing more could be desired, yet nothing less

would suffice. Look, for a moment, at the Israel of God under a covenant in which such an influence was not stipulated. See their fears amid the dividing waters of the sea, after they had witnessed such miracles as had been wrought for their deliverance. See them bowing to the golden calf at the foot of the trembling mount, whose summit is wrapped in clouds and smoke where God is holding converse with Moses, their leader. Follow them on through the wilderness, and mark their murmurings and their rebellion. Follow them on through all the judgments and mercies of God that are visited upon them, and what a lesson is furnished to us for the necessity of divine efficiency in the salvation of man.

Strike this one article from the covenant of grace as Cumberland Presbyterians, together with the whole body of Arminians, have done, and with it are entombed all our hopes for the Church and the world. And how sad the reflection that it is so often abused and caricatured, by those who would be heirs of the promises made to the spiritual seed of Abraham. But it is not to be wondered at—it was so under the old dispensation. “As then,” says Paul, “he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now.” And so it will always be, until “the bond woman and her son” are “cast out”—until there shall be found none in the family of Abraham, but those

who are willing to ascribe their spiritual birth to the sovereign power and efficient grace of God.

Your affectionate son.

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## LETTER X.

**SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED—TESTIMONY OF FAMILIAR  
PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE—A DIFFICULTY REMOVED.**

**DEAR FATHER:—**The view I have presented of the covenant of grace, illustrative of the doctrine of divine efficiency in the sinner's conversion, is one that beautifully harmonizes with every part of the plan of salvation; is sustained by every passage of Scripture, bearing upon the subject, when considered in its proper connection and meaning; and enters into the devotions of every pious heart. A fruitful field of illustration and proof is here opened out before me. If my time and limits would permit, I would like much to enter it with you and drink deeper of its living fountains, and taste more of those heavenly fruits that grow upon its paths. But I can refer you only to a few out of the many passages that might be presented.



“God, who is rich in mercy,” says Paul, “for his great love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.” Eph. ii. 4, b. The figure here introduced, is one in common use, and from which its meaning may be easily determined. Thus, when we say that a man is dead, without any qualifying expression, we mean that he is incapable of feeling or action; but when the word is used figuratively, its meaning must be determined by the connection. If I say of a man that he is dead to every feeling of humanity, you understand by the expression, that he is incapable of exercising a benevolent feeling till that particular feature in his character is changed. If I say of another who has become hardened in crime, and has trampled under foot every law and statute of the land, that he is dead to the interests and welfare of society, you understand me to say that he is incapable of another class of feelings, till his character is radically changed. If I say of another that he has become so steeped in drunkenness and debauchery that he is dead to virtue, to shame, and every refined feeling of our nature, you understand me to say that he is insensible to any other desire but that of gratifying a slavish appetite and his brutal passions; and so if I apply the word to any particular feeling or class of feelings, you understand me to mean that the

person to whom I allude is incapable of exercising those feelings, till he has undergone a radical change in his moral constitution. Precisely in the same sense must we understand the expression "dead in sins," as used by the apostle Paul in the passage before us, and elsewhere. If it means anything, it must mean that the sinner is incapable of originating a single holy thought, feeling, or desire, until the work of regeneration is complete—until quickened by the almighty power and grace of God, "for his great love wherewith he loved us." However much enlightened, however much wrought upon, by what ever agency you please, in his natural state, before the regenerating and quickening influence of the spirit of God is applied, he is "dead in sins;" as incapable of originating those states of mind that are acceptable to God, as the stiffened corpse of giving life and motion to itself.

Again: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14. It requires no lengthly argument to show that the expression, "natural man," is applicable to the sinner up to the time of his being made "a new creature" in Christ. The most superficial reader of the Scriptures, the Sabbath school scholar even, need scarcely be told this. There is but one step then to the con-

clusion, that a man must be regenerated before he can acquiesce in the plan of salvation as presented in the gospel. Until this important change takes place, everything therein revealed relating to the salvation of the soul, is foolishness, and cannot be understood in a saving sense; for there is nothing here but what is "spiritually discerned." The same idea is presented by the apostle in the first chapter of the same epistle. "The preaching of the cross," says he, "is to those that perish foolishness, but unto us who are saved it is the power of God." What avails then all our labors in the ministry of reconciliation, unless this healing and saving power is exerted to make effectual the truth? Any imaginary or supposed operation of the spirit of God short of this will avail nothing, if this single passage of the word of God be true. The sinner will still remain blind, and stupid, and dead, however loud may be the external call, however great his privileges and the means of grace he is permitted to enjoy. But this is not all.

"The carnal mind," says Paul, "is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Rom. viii. 7. The expression, carnal mind, as used here, has evidently the same application as natural man, in the passage already quoted. The word *carnal* throughout the New Testament is contrasted with *spiritual*, and is

applied to man in his unregenerated state, whatever may be the influences brought to bear upon the mind. "I would not speak unto you as unto spiritual," says Paul to the Corinthians, "but as unto carnal;" evidently meaning that he was compelled to address them as those who had never been converted. If you will turn to Adam Clarke's commentary on the eighth chapter of Romans and third of first Corinthians, you will find the same idea advanced. I might cite you to any number of passages in proof of the position, but it is unnecessary. It would be like attempting to prove that black is not white, or red is not blue; which if a man should choose to controvert, there would be no arguing with him. Substitute then in the passage before us an equivalent expression, and how does it read? "The unregenerate or unconverted mind is enmity against God; is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Where then, I ask, is the possibility of a mind in such a state originating any thought, feeling, or desire, that will render it acceptable to God, and upon which can be conditioned the bestowment of life and pardon?—a mind, in all the operations of which the ruling and regulating influence is enmity to God, and a determined and malignant opposition to his law? And what power, what influence shall be brought to bear upon that mind to overcome its enmity, and to

bring all its faculties into subjection to the will of God? Is there any amount of grace or power that would be *sufficient*, short of that which is *efficient and invincible*? None. The carnal mind is *enmity* to God, and *cannot* be brought into subjection to his law till its carnality is removed. Bring all the ingenuity and the learned criticism of the living and dead to explain away the proper meaning of the Scriptures, we surely cannot rise from the contemplation of this single truth without being convinced that if we are saved at all it must be by "*the effectual working*" of the power of God—a power which, in its operation upon the sinner's heart in his resurrection from the death of sin, is commensurate with that "which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Eph. 1: 20, 21.

"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase. 1 Cor. 3: 6, 7. Paul was wrong here, if Arminianism is right. In order for the passage to harmonize with such a creed it should have read thus: "I have planted, Apollos watered,

*God assisted*, but the sinner gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth, nor he that assisteth, but the sinner that giveth the increase." This is no sophism; it is no caricature, but stands out in bold relief as an embodiment of this fundamental principle of the Arminian system—a principle which Cumberland Presbyterians have embraced as their dearest idol.

Once more: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Phil. 2: 12, 13. There are three important propositions contained in this passage which must be taken together: The first is, *we are commanded to work out our salvation with fear and trembling*—the second, that *it is God that works in us*—the third, that *he works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure*. If either of these propositions is left out of view, or in any way concealed or obscured, we do violence to the whole scheme of salvation. The Socinian, for example, gives prominence to the first and discards the others. The Antinomian, on the contrary, takes only what the Socinian rejects. Both make shipwreck of the faith. The Arminian takes the first and second, and discards the third, in fact, if not in form. He, too, founders, and is lost in endless absurdities. But the Calvinist, allow me to

say, the man who endeavors to take the word of God as he finds it, receives with meekness each of these propositions. He endeavors to work out his salvation with fear and trembling, recognizing the fact that it is God that works in him, not merely to enlighten and persuade, but *to will* and *to do* of his good pleasure. Here, and here only, is safety.

I might multiply, to any extent almost, quotations from the Scriptures, each *sufficient* in itself to enable us to determine upon which side truth is to be found; but I have already prolonged this discussion farther than I had intended. There are other important aspects in which the subject might be viewed, if the limits of these communications would permit; enough however has been said, I trust, to satisfy your mind of the importance of the principles involved, and that the conclusions to which I have arrived are safe, sound, and scriptural.

I am aware that many hard things have been said with regard to the Presbyterian doctrine of divine *efficiency* and human *inability* as taught in the standards of the Church. I have heard them all. I have sifted them, weighed them, and examined them in every aspect, and in every instance have found them weak and harmless. My heart has been pained, too, in seeing the Cumberland Church gleaning up the blunted arrows that have so often

been hurled at the shield of truth by those who have gone before them, and left their carcasses in the wilderness or upon the field of strife. I might multiply examples illustrative of the ignorance and malignity manifested by them, in common with Arminians of every class, with regard to this important and vital doctrine of the gospel; one however will suffice. They are not satisfied with the charge of inconsistency, but go on to say that the Calvinist who commands and exhorts the sinner to repentance and faith, acts the part of "*a liar*" and "*juggler*"—a liar because he commands him to do that which he knows he is not able to do—a juggler because the means employed are inadequate to the end. I ask, in reply, was Peter a liar, when he said to the woman of Joppa, "Tabitha, arise," who having been sick had died, and was washed and laid out for burial? Was the blessed Saviour a liar and a juggler when he stood at the grave of one who had been dead *four days* and cried "with a loud voice" to the putrefying corpse, "Lazarus come forth?" What blasphemy is here involved in the charge so often brought by the Cumberland Church and the whole body of Arminians!—I speak with reverence and affection. My feelings would urge me to say more but I must forbear. A single thought and I will close this communication.



The ambassador of Christ, as you yourself acknowledge, must be a man given to prayer as well as to the ministration of the word. With this admission is answered every objection that is urged against the much despised and caricatured doctrine of inability. As Peter knelt and prayed for life giving power before he commanded the dead to arise; and as Christ lifted up his eyes to heaven in devout supplication, at the grave of Lazarus, before the omnipotent word went forth from his lips; so must we, as we exhort those who are "dead in sins" to "arise" and "come forth" to a new life, of repentance, obedience, and faith. As the prophet Ezekiel not only exhorted the bleaching bones of the valley to "hear the word of the Lord," but prophesied also to the winds, and prayed that the breath of heaven might breathe upon the slain; so must those who carry the message of life to the dead, whose "bones are dried," whose "hope is lost," till the spirit of the Lord breathe upon them that they may live. The exhortation to the sinner to "turn from his evil ways," must not only be presented to the mind, and pressed home to the heart and conscience, but at the same time accompanied by the humble and devout prayer, "*turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned.*" If we could but breathe this one sentiment, if we could but feel it in all its force, it would be as the leaven of the parable that would

prepare our hearts for receiving with meekness and submission many of the despised and rejected doctrines of the gospel.

Your affectionate son.

## LETTER XI.

ARMINIAN DOCTRINE OF ABILITY ABANDONED—STILL  
IN THE WILDERNESS—STEPS RETRACED—CALVIN-  
ISM ADOPTED IN FULL.

DEAR FATHER:—I have said enough, I trust, to satisfy your mind that the position occupied by the Cumberland Church in common with the whole body of Arminians, with regard to the ability and agency of the sinner in conversion, is involved in inextricable difficulties—difficulties far greater than can possibly be urged against the opposite view, even by its bitterest enemies. I have said, that it is calculated to lead the Church into the wildest extravagance, as shown in the operations of those who have made it their main stand point; that it tends to the most dangerous and ruinous error; that it is opposed to

the merciful and gracious terms of the covenant of grace; and that it is contradicted by every passage of Scripture, when considered in its proper meaning, that has any reference at all to the subject. If you will follow out the train of thought introduced under each of these heads, you will find that I am right.

It was such difficulties and absurdities that, either directly or indirectly, pressed upon me while I occupied this fundamental doctrine of the Arminian system as my main stand point in theology. I was again in trouble; my mind became unsettled, and I found no other way of ridding myself of the dangers that environed me, but by abandoning the doctrine entirely. I did so, but not without a lingering hope of finding the middle way somewhere. To call up a figure already introduced, the woodman's implements were again my companions. Camp-fires were again kindled in the unexplored and untrodden regions of thought. I had already acquired some experience in such explorations, and spared neither pains nor labor in the work. Every possible means were employed, to find some point by which to communicate with the great city of Universal Redemption more eligible than that of Universal and Sufficient Grace, but all to no purpose. Many a beautiful ridge was discovered that promised for a time a pleasant and continuous route; but they all either led the deluded traveler, delighted with the

grandeur of the scenery to the precipitous cliff, or sloped off into interminable swamps, where those who are so unfortunate as to enter them, are left to flounder in mud and mire without ever finding a solid basis upon which to stand and breathe safely and freely.

While my mind was being operated upon as before narrated, I was compelled, on philosophical and scriptural grounds, to yield assent to the doctrine that saving faith is a holy act or exercise of the mind, and can in no sense proceed from a corrupt and unregenerate heart. I was therefore compelled to abandon the Arminian position, and receive faith as one of the consequences instead of a condition of regeneration, as one of the essential and necessary fruits of the Spirit in his saving work upon the heart. I still however sought for a place in some exercise of mind prior to regeneration where the so called, "self determining power of the will" could operate, independent of the sovereign and efficient agency of the spirit of God. While prosecuting my investigations on this point, I had occasion to examine Dwight's Theology. I read with interest and profit his seventy-fifth sermon, on the subject of regeneration. After presenting in a forcible manner the exercises of the sinner's mind in conviction, he closes his sermon with the following paragraph: "In the struggle thus continued, and thus earnestly conducted, he learns how obstinate his sinful dispo-

sitions are, and with what hopeless difficulty they are to be overcome. Convinced at length, that all his efforts must, without the immediate assistance of God, prove entirely vain, he casts off all his dependence on himself, and turns his eye to God, with the feelings of *Peter* when beginning to sink, and cries out in *his* language, *Lord save me, or I perish.*" Here, said I, is the proper place for *the self-determining power* to operate—here is the place where the will of man puts forth its efficient and self-determined act in deciding for God and for heaven. It flashed upon my mind at first with a dazzling and winning brightness. I hailed it as a new and important discovery in theology—as one pregnant with sound, wholesome, and popular doctrine—but alas, it was soon found to be embarrassed with all the dangers, difficulties, and absurdities that I have already rehearsed. I found, indeed, the exercises of the sinner's mind under conviction as Dwight and other Calvinistic writers, and oftentimes even Arminian writers, have recorded them, but was at last forced to admit that back of those exercises there must be a divine, a sovereign, and efficient, and omnipotent agency at work.

Having been led to the adoption of this all-important and vital doctrine of the sovereignty and efficiency of the agency of the spirit of God in the salvation of the soul, there was but one alternate left

I had either to abandon the idea of ever finding a continuous route, a complete *system* of truth, or to retrace my steps for the point I had left in the beaten road of Calvinism, and follow it as God might give me faith and strength. I had either to die in the wilderness, or encounter "the giants," "the Enims," and "the Anakims," of which I had so often heard, from those who loved "the onions" and "the garlic" of an earthly creed more than the clustering fruits of a sound theological system. Which shall it be? You may better imagine the mental suffering and conflict of feeling through which I passed, in answering this question, than I can describe. There was the warmest filial regard and affection for others that held me bound as by some strange spell—there was pride that would lash me into some still wilder visions than any that had yet entered my mind—there were fears and unbelief that would deter me from encountering the imagined difficulties and dangers of the ulterior regions of Calvinism. Love, pride, fear and hope, were all commingled together, urging me in one direction, while the strongest convictions of duty were driving in the opposite—convictions that came as the whirlwind to the patriarch of Uz—a whirlwind from the Lord. There came also the same voice that reminded the patriarch of the ignorance, the weakness, and the folly of man:

“Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God let him answer this.” What other reply could I make but the patriarch’s answer: “Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.” “Then answered the Lord out of the whirlwind, and said, Gird up thy loins now like a man.” It was the same voice that had addressed the prophet who had fled to the wilderness through fear, and hid himself in the cave of the mountains: “What doest thou here, Elijah?” “Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus.” It was enough, I obeyed the call. I retraced my steps. I returned on my way, not through the wilderness of Damascus, but through the wilderness of “Universal Redemption” and “Sufficient Grace,” the wilderness of Arminianism, to the point I had left in the Calvinistic route. I read again the oracles of God, and found that the whole Calvinistic system, as set forth in the Scriptures of divine truth and the standards of the Presbyterian Church, was involved in the principles I had already imbibed, as before related.

There was but one path in which I could travel with any safety or comfort to myself. I entered it

with the determination to follow wherever truth might lead the way. The doctrines of *original sin* and a *vicarious atonement*, led me on, as the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night of the camp of Israel. I followed on as those who were not permitted to settle in the mountains of Edom, and who had seen the carcasses of the generation that had preceded them, fall in the wilderness because of their fears, their murmurings, and their unbelief. Every difficulty was met and every fear removed; for there was nothing to fear. The fabled giants and hydra-headed monsters of which I had so often heard were no where to be found: "the walled cities" and ramparts of the enemy fell as the walls of Jericho before the blast of the ram's horn in the mouth of the Levite; every difficulty and danger disappeared before the light of truth. The vine-clad hills and vales, the fields of olives, the inviting gardens of pomegranates and figs were before me. I entered them, and, for the first time, experienced the pleasure of tasting the rich and soul-satisfying fruits of a sound, safe, healthy, and consistent system of theological truth.

What an hour of triumph was that to the trembling faint-hearted Jew, when the Jordon rolled back its sacred tide for him to enter and possess the land he had so long sought! What a joyful hour was that, when for the first time he was permitted



to celebrate the feast of the Passover, and to eat of the old corn, the unleavened cakes, and the fruits of the land! But Joshua himself, if you will allow such a comparison, did not experience greater joy upon that day than did I, when for the first time it was my privilege to eat of the old corn, the unleavened cakes, and the fruits of scriptural Calvinistic truth as gathered by my own hands from the ripening fields. My only sorrow was, that many with whom my heart still lingered with the fondest and tenderest affection were yet in the wilderness, and doomed perhaps the remainder of their days to wander over its trackless waste, vainly in search of that which no where existed. But I forbear pressing the analogy farther. You will pardon me in its use. Convinced as I was, that the sentiments I had adopted were the eternal truths of God, upon which are anchored all our hopes, my feelings toward those whom I had left behind could not be otherwise. I know from experience something of the strength of religious prejudice—of prejudice fronted by distorted views of the truth, and backed by the secret workings of the pride of the human heart—and have, therefore, learned to regard with sympathy and charity those who are made its unfortunate victims.

Your affectionate son.

## LETTER XII.

DOCTRINES INVOLVED IN THOSE ALREADY STATED—  
ELECTION—DEFINITE ATONEMENT—CONFIRMED BY  
SCRIPTURE—OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

DEAR FATHER:—If my time and limits would permit, I would like much to enter into a more full and satisfactory discussion of the several points I have so hastily presented, and many more that I shall be compelled to leave untouched. My object has been, however, simply to give prominence to a few of the leading doctrines of the Calvinistic system which have been most assailed by its enemies. Growing out of these plain doctrines of the Gospel, there are several important truths which it becomes necessary for me to notice.

From the doctrine of imputation, as I have before stated, flows the doctrine of a vicarious atonement. They both stand or fall together. Let the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin to us be once rejected, and the doctrine of the imputation of our sins to Christ must go too, and also of his righteousness to us, and with these must go by the board also

the only foundation of the Christian's hopes, the doctrine of justification by faith without the deeds of the law, and when this is gone there is nothing left worth contending for. These three aspects of the doctrine of imputation, God himself has joined together, and no man can put them asunder, without destroying the whole gospel scheme, and making shipwreck of his faith; they are the mighty links in the chain that terminates in the doctrine of justification by faith—the anchor that holds the soul steadfast and safe in all its peaceful moorings. “As by one man's disobedience;” says Paul, “*the* many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall *the* many be made righteous;” from this plain statement of the doctrine of imputation as connected with the nature of the atonement, it follows that it is definite in its provisions. Nothing else can save, from Universalism, the Arminian as well as the Calvinist who looks at the substance as well as the names of things. And from the single word *vicarious* that enters into each of their creeds—from the single idea advanced by the prophet Isaiah, “surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows,” and by the apostle Peter, in speaking of the sufferings of Christ,” who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree”—from this grand cardinal feature of the Gospel, upon which every Christian's faith must fasten, may be evolved

the whole Calvinistic system—the whole scheme of salvation by grace according to the full, the free, and definite provisions of the purchase made upon the cross.

Again: from this view of the nature and extent of the atonement, and also from the doctrine of divine efficiency which I have discussed at some length, flows the doctrine of election—a doctrine against which the pride of the human heart has hurled many a harmless and blunted shaft. It is a doctrine, too, that not only flows from what has gone before by a logical sequence, but is also confirmed by the plain and direct testimony of the word of God, and is there made a subject of the most intense joy and the highest praise: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” says Paul to the Ephesians, “who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath *chosen* us, in him, *before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having *predestinated* us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, *according to the good pleasure of his will*, to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath *made* us accepted in the Beloved; in whom we have redemption, through his blood, the forgiveness of sins *according to the riches of his grace.*” Eph. 1: 3–7. Could language be less

ambiguous?—could anything be plainer than the doctrine here presented?—but to make it, if possible still more clear and emphatic he adds, “in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, *being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*, that we should be to the praise of his glory.” vs. 11, 12. The whole chapter and the one following are full of instruction upon this important doctrine; and as I read by the light that now shines upon the sacred page, I cannot possibly see how it can be rejected by the candid and prayerful inquirer for truth. Admitting for a moment the doctrine to be true, I ask, could it have been expressed, even by an inspired writer, in language more clear, more emphatic, more forcible, or more elevated? Admitting, I say, the doctrine of election to be true, need a single word of the passage be altered?—could its most rigid advocate have made it stronger or more emphatic?—could John Calvin himself, with his burning glass of thought, have thrown words to a brighter focus to express his own peculiar views of the subject?—if standing by the apostle in writing to his Ephesian brethren, could he have desired him to have altered a single expression, a single word, or a single thought? This however is only one out of the scores of passages that might be adduced—passages, too, the obvious mean-

ing of which all the learning of the living and the dead can never explain away. And the only possible way for the Arminian to escape from the plain yet hard and unpalatable doctrines to the carnal mind which they contain, is for him to close his eyes upon the light, and amuse himself with the goblins and the ghosts that dance before his darkened and disordered vision. It is only by amusing himself with the phantoms of his own creation—by dwelling upon the imaginary difficulties connected with the Calvinistic system, and by continually and fiercely urging the most absurd objections, that he is enabled to fortify himself in his own belief, and his unauthorized and unsafe positions. Pardon me in the expression of such a sentiment—it is the sentiment of my heart as confirmed by observation and my own experience.

The same general remark applies to the doctrine of a definite atonement, which is intimately and essentially connected with the doctrine of election. We have here, also, principally to meet objections and imaginary difficulties that are continually being urged. It is true we are often told in the language of our Saviour, that, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." But it requires no small amount of inge-

nity to torture even this passage to give countenance to the Arminian view of the nature and extent of the atonement. If God so loved the world as to give his only begotten son in the sense in which the Methodists and Cumberland Presbyterians understand the phrase, why, I ask, is not the whole world saved by the purchase of his death? The answer I know is that the influence of Satan and the enmity of the human heart have defeated the purpose of God. What strange language this! Are not these the very things that Christ undertook to destroy—the very enemies of heaven and happiness he engaged to vanquish, so far as they conflicted with the plans and purposes of the almighty? Can it be that the counsels of heaven have been defeated? Can it be that the blood and the treasure that have been spent for the recovery of man have been squandered for nought, and made the trophies of hell? Strange counsel that which has infinite wisdom for its source, and eventuates in such a result! and still stranger love is that which will purchase the release of millions from captivity, and yet leave them in the galling chains of their bondage, without any effectual means to apply the benefits of the purchase! There is no possible way of escaping from the endless absurdities into which we are led by such a view, than by returning and taking the language of the Saviour as he himself has given it:

“God SO loved the world THAT he gave his only begotten Son THAT whosoever believeth,” &c. The divine love is here plainly measured by the *nature* of the gift, and the *extent* of the gift is measured by its *application*. This is the clear and obvious meaning of the passage, and he that runs may read and understand it thus, and all the ingenuity of man cannot extort from it anything more.

In answer to all that can be said, however, we have again and again reiterated in our ears the language of Paul to the Hebrews, where it is said that Christ was “crowned with glory and honor, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” But by referring to the original text, it appears that the word *man* is not there, and that the word rendered *every*, instead of being a distributive pronoun, is most commonly translated *all*, and has an ambiguity of meaning that can only be determined by the context, or the nature of the subject: as when it is said that *all* Jerusalem and Judea went out to the preaching of John, no one would infer that *every* man, woman and child were there; and when the woman of Samaria published in the city that she had found a man who had told her *all* that she ever had done, no one understood her to mean that he had rehearsed to her *every* act of her life. And so it is in every case where the word *all*



occurs, either in the Scriptures or in ordinary conversation: the context and subject-matter must determine the extent of its application.

The Arminian, being thus driven by sound criticism from passage to passage, has recourse to the many objections and difficulties which a fruitful and perverted imagination has invented, and when these have failed, his only resort is to the lowest, the meanest, and most pitiful slanders and misrepresentations the abundance of his heart can produce. He stretches forth his rod over every stagnate pool within his reach, and takes to his bosom the slimy, croaking reptiles that swarm at his bidding—he gathers from the four winds of heaven every noxious vapor that passes, and pours from his heated and inflated breast the foulest breath of slander and abuse—vainly imagining that, by such means, he will be enabled to accomplish his purposes. But every effort serves only to show the blindness, the weakness, and the folly of man, and, in the end, to exhibit more effectively the beauty and the power of the truth thus assailed.

I shall not attempt here to notice the many strange and willful misrepresentations that are continually being made of election and its associated doctrines, as taught in the standards of the Presbyterian Church; nor shall I attempt at present to notice the many objections that are continually being urged

against those doctrines. There is one, however, that demands of me more than a passing remark, in view of the fact that it was urged upon my attention, when a student of theology, with considerable effect by yourself. You then presented, in a most feeling manner, the supposed difficulty under which the Calvinist labors in reconciling the doctrine of election and a definite atonement with the general call of the Gospel. I might easily evade such an objection, by calling upon the Arminian to reconcile his idea of a general atonement with the particular or limited call of the Gospel; for the call is far from being general, in the sense in which he uses the term. Two-thirds, and more, of the human race have never yet so much as heard of the name of Christ, and are shrouded in the grossest ignorance, idolatry, and superstition. Why is it so? Let the Methodist or Cumberland Presbyterian attempt to give a rational explanation of such facts, in the providence of God to our race, that stare him in the face, and he will find himself involved in far greater difficulties than those which are so often and so blindly urged against the Calvinistic system: he will find it a far more difficult task to reconcile the choosing of many with the calling of a few, than the calling of many with the choosing of a few—and a far easier task to reconcile the latter with the providences of God and the plain teachings of his

word; for the Saviour himself has told us that "many are called but few are chosen."

But I do not wish to answer such an objection simply by urging another as a offset to it. Turn, if you please, to that remarkable scene in the temple recorded by the evangelist Luke, when the aged and devout Simeon, who had long waited for the consolation of Israel, took the infant redeemer in his arms, and with up-lifted eyes blessed God for having spared his life and permitted him to witness the salvation he had prepared. After having predicted the future greatness and glory of the child, he turned to Joseph and Mary, and having blessed them, said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against—that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Luke 2: 34, 35. By referring to the original, or to almost any critical commentary on the passage, you will find that the word *again* is not a part of the text, and does not add anything to the sense, but rather obscures it. Comment is unnecessary. Language could not express in plainer terms the doctrine of election and a definite atonement, as associated together, than are here given; nor could the objection you have so feelingly urged upon my attention against those doctrines be more plainly and satisfactorily answered. The standards

of the Presbyterian Church nowhere give countenance to the idea that the blood that was shed for the redemption of man is limited in its *value*. And in view of the infinite sufficiency of the atonement, and the very nature of the law promulgated, God has laid all his intelligent creatures under obligations to love and serve his Son: even the devils in hell are eternally increasing their condemnation for refusing that allegiance. It is in view then, I say, of the infinite *sufficiency* of the atonement and the very nature of the law promulgated under the Gospel that our Saviour said to his disciples, "go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." And thus as I go in obedience to the command as God in his providence may call, I shall ever remember that, in the wise, the holy, and mysterious counsels of heaven, Christ is set for the *rise* of some and the *fall* of others; and that as I endeavor to urge the claims of his Gospel upon the hearts of men, there are revealed thoughts and feelings that shall furnish the evidence for their acquittal or their everlasting condemnation in the judgment of the great day.

Under such presentations of the truth the Arminian, driven to his last resort, is in the habit of urging his hypothetical charges of the most wanton cruelty and injustice on the part of God to the creature. Let an inspired apostle answer such an ob-

jector in his summary way: "Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" When will men cease their cavils, and learn to receive the teachings of the Bible as the words of inspiration? how long, in the very face of the plainest declarations of the Scriptures, will they continue to cavil and speculate as if they were wiser than God? "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor, and another to dishonor? What if God willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted 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?" Rom. 9: 20, 23. But if Paul's summary answers to such objections are not satisfactory, let us go back to first principles—let us go back to the dark hour of the fall, and see the whole race lying under the curse of a broken law. Here lie all the difficulties involved in the whole subject; and if the Arminian can comprehend why it is that God has permitted sin to enter his moral government with all its fearful train of evils—if he can rid this question of its insuperable difficulties, then, and not until then, can he with any show of consistency or propriety urge his objections to any part of the Calvinistic view of the plans and purposes of God as revealed in his word.

Your affectionate son.

## LETTER XIII.

ANOTHER IMPORTANT DOCTRINE—DECREES OF GOD—  
FEELING OF CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIANS—STATE-  
MENT OF THE DOCTRINE—OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

DEAR FATHER :—Before closing these letters, it becomes necessary for me to notice another important doctrine in the Calvinistic system, which is also involved in the views I have already presented, and which has given me many an anxious hour of thought. I allude to the doctrine of the divine decrees, as presented in the standards of the Presbyterian Church, and confirmed by the plain teachings of the Scriptures, in accordance with the principles of both reason and common sense.

There is no doctrine, perhaps, in the whole Calvinistic system that is more caricatured and misrepresented by Arminians of every class than this—and none against which Cumberland Presbyterians have manifested more violent and bitter hostility. A single incident will serve as an illustration of the state of feeling that prevails throughout the Church.

Before I felt it my duty to sever the many ties

that bound me to the Church—the Church of my friends, my home, and my birth—I was strongly solicited, as you are aware, to take charge of the paper published at Lebanon, Tennessee. I felt anxious, then, to serve the Church in some capacity, and to go as far as a sense of duty would permit in accommodating myself to your feelings and plans of usefulness in declining life. But before giving a definite answer either way, I felt it my duty to unbosom to those who had manifested so much friendship and kindness my whole heart. I did not wish to keep back anything, notwithstanding it might disappoint the expectation of friends and the fondest hope of a parent's heart, whom I had learned to regard with the warmest and tenderest affection. The very first intimation, however, of my feelings and views upon the subject of doctrine, called forth in reply a strange epistle from one who occupies the highest position in the Church, from which the following is an extract: "Can it be," says he, "that you too are a convert to the system that teaches the blasphemous doctrine that God prefers the damnation of millions of the human race, and has brought them into being for that special purpose?—that he has ordained and brings to pass the very crimes for which he damns the sinner? If, indeed, you have any sympathy with that very simple and very absurd system of

fatality, an editor's chair in the Cumberland Church is not the place for you." Concerning the writer's views of the qualifications of a Cumberland Presbyterian editor, I have nothing to say, but against such abuse and caricatures of those doctrines which, after mature investigation, I have found in the word of God, I must be permitted to enter a most solemn and indignant protest.

When men become imbued with the knowledge, or rather ignorance, that puffeth up, they imagine in their vain conceits that they are able to scan the ways of the Almighty, and to understand the secrets of his counsels. They will go so far as to presume to dictate to God, as to what is the proper course for him to pursue in the administration of his moral government; and in their blinded zeal for creeds and confessions, both written and unwritten, will even at times exalt man to the place of God, and give him a power over himself which Deity cannot control. The ignorance and presumption of such can only be equalled by their bigotry and their pride. And when the eternal truths upon which rest the throne of God and the happiness of man are held up to illumine the darkness of their disordered visions, they have no other means of defense but to close their eyes upon the light and raise the cry of "blasphemy" and "impiety"—forgetting that they themselves are guilty



of the charge, while thus railing at the purposes and counsels of God.

Turn if you please to the third chapter of the Westminster Confession of faith, and read there the statement of the doctrine as held by the Presbyterian Church and drawn from the Scriptures of divine truth: "God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established." Is there anything here condemned by what is revealed? Is not the language of the Scriptures even stronger upon the subject than this? As we turn the pages of the Sacred volume, the doctrine seems every where to stare us in the face in the most unqualified form. Take, for example, such passages as the following, which might be multiplied to an indefinite extent: "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all." "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." "The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the

thoughts of his heart to all generations." "What his soul desireth even that he doeth." "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." "My word shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will." "The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea even the wicked for the day of evil." "A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps." "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Ps. 113: 19. Dan. 4: 35. Ps. 33: 11. Job 23: 13. Isa. 46: 10. 55: 11. Prov. 21: 1. 16: 4, 9. Matt. 10: 29, 30.

Time would fail me even to cite the numerous passages bearing upon the subject—passages which the learning and ingenuity of man cannot wrest from their proper meaning and application. The subject, in every aspect in which it can be viewed, is exhaustless. There is scarcely a doctrine revealed in the word of God that is supported by clearer and more weighty evidence, when once it is properly understood; and yet there is scarcely a doctrine that has been more bitterly assailed, and against which more fruitless objections have been brought—objections which are continually being

urged, both from the pulpit and the press, in a most unchristian manner. Bear with me for a moment, then, while I call your attention to several of the more prominent of these objections, and the painful task which I have undertaken will be done.

It is said, in the first place, that the Calvinistic view of the divine decrees and the administration of the divine government, makes God the author of sin. I repel the charge and call for the proof. No Westminster Calvinist, no sound Presbyterian, has ever yet advocated any view that would lead to such a result. The Confession of Faith expressly states that the decrees of God are such as that he *is not* and *cannot* be the author of sin. The affirmation is not contained in an isolated proposition, but is a part of the doctrinal formulary itself. Read again the language of the Confession of Faith as quoted above. What more does it say, or what more can it be made to say, than that God has wisely, freely and unchangeably ordained whatsoever comes to pass, YET so AS, he is not the author of sin. Let language be taken in its most obvious meaning, and the whole difficulty is at once made to disappear; let a proper stress be laid upon the three little words which are here made emphatic, and the far famed ghost has forever vanished, which has so often haunted the pathway of the student of theology, and of which the Armin-

ian delights to relate such marvels and wonders. I never yet have seen or heard of a Presbyterian who held that God exerted any physical agency or direct influence upon any of his creatures to lead them to sin. If any Methodist or Cumberland Presbyterian will be so kind as to inform me of one, I will go as far to see him as I would to see a sea serpent or any other prodigy of nature. And until this can be done, the charge, that Presbyterians make God the author of sin, applies with equal force to their own system. They cannot deny that God is the author of all his intelligent creatures, and also of the circumstances that gave rise to the introduction of sin into his moral government. But in admitting this self-evident proposition, they have admitted that in which the whole difficulty is involved.

Another objection that is urged against the Calvinistic view of the decrees of God, is that it destroys the free agency of the creature. I might answer this objection by asking what is meant by free agency? This, however, would lead me into a discussion foreign to my present purpose. By referring again to the doctrinal formulary as quoted above from the Confession of Faith, you will find that upon its very face this objection is also clearly obviated. We are there plainly told, in language that cannot be misunderstood, that the decrees of

God concerning every event are made in accordance with his wisdom and holiness of character, SO AS THEREBY neither is he the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creature. If anything more is needed, turn to the Scriptures. Listen to Peter on the day of Pentecost, as he charges home upon the Jews the murder of the Son of God: "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. Here is a clear case where the act and the manner of the act had been fixed by "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," and yet it was done freely and with wicked and cruel hands. But this is not the only case. I might turn over the leaves of the Bible at random, and upon every page almost find an illustration of the same principle. Nothing can be made plainer than that God ordains the time, the place, and the circumstances of events, and yet leaves men free in acting while they are bringing to pass what he has wisely ordained. The Arminian tells us there is a difficulty here that he cannot comprehend. Is this any reason why

the plain teachings of the Bible should be rejected, and exchanged for the vain and foolish imaginations of men? Upon the same principle we might reject every important doctrine that God has revealed to man.

But if the Arminian wishes to make the limited faculties of a fallen and corrupted worm a standard by which to measure the purposes and ways of the Almighty, he must look well to his own system. There is a beam in his own eye which must be removed, before he can see clearly to take the mote from his brother's eye. The same difficulty he is urging against the Calvinistic view of the divine sovereignty and decrees cleaves to his own; and in condemning his brother he is condemning himself. The foreknowledge of God presents the same difficulty. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, saw it and was frank enough to acknowledge it. Adam Clarke, the Sampson and the Hercules of learning among his followers, saw it and was led to the denial of one of the essential attributes of God, which, if we were disposed to retaliate upon the enemies of Calvinism with their own weapons, we might in truth pronounce to be "a libel upon Deity;" for what can be more essential in an architect in rearing a massive building, than to know whether it will stand or fall, especially if its tenants are to be buried in its ruins.

I am aware, however, that an attempt is made by many to show an imagined difference between the consequences of foreknowledge and foreordination; but it is far from being satisfactory. A distinction can easily be drawn between the two when viewed with reference to the mind of man, whose knowledge is drawn from experience and observation, and who reasons from cause to effect over which he has no control; but in the mind of God, the great First Cause or Creator of all things, the one necessarily involves the other. For example, I am as certain that the sun will rise to-morrow as I can be of any event—though of this I am not absolutely certain; for the fiat of God may unhinge the universe before the morning light—but God foresees it with perfect vision and with absolute certainty, because he has foreordained it. Again, the prophet Isaiah foresaw through a long vista of years the sufferings of Christ, yet he cannot in any sense be said to have foreordained them; but God who sent his Son into the world for the redemption of man, and raised up Pilate and Herod, the Gentiles and people of Israel, was able to throw the burning picture upon the vision of the prophet, because he had *foreordained* that they should be gathered together to do whatsoever his hand and counsel *determined* before to be done. Acts, 2: 23. 4: 27, 28.

I am ready to concede that there is a wide difference between foreknowledge and foreordination when viewed with reference to finite beings; but in the mind of God, the one necessarily involves the other. If I am certain to be saved, or certain to be lost, and God is the author of my being, a denial of the doctrine of foreordination or even of foreknowledge itself, does not free the subject of a single difficulty. In fact each denial serves only to multiply and increase the difficulties ten-fold greater.

The whole subject of the divine decrees is involved in two simple questions, which every one is doubtless prepared to answer. First, did God when about to exert his creative power in bringing into existence a universe of creatures, comprehend in his infinite mind a perfect plan of his work? And second, is the existing state of things in accordance with that plan? If a man can answer both of these questions in the affirmative, he stands upon Calvinistic ground; if in the negative, he has no foot-hold either for an Arminian or any other intelligible creed. If an omniscient God has no plan of his work, or if the existing state of things is not in accordance with that plan, where, I ask, is the goal, short of the denial of the most essential attributes of the divine character? And that goal many in the Cumberland Church, following in the foot steps of those who have gone before, have al-



ready reached. They tell us, as do Arminians of almost every class, that both the wisdom and the power of God have been exhausted in endeavoring to prevent the introduction of sin into his moral government, and to defeat the machinations of devils and those in rebellion against him, and yet he himself is defeated! Heathen fatality is often charged upon the Calvinistic system; but here it is in its worst possible form. Jupiter while he was under the dominion of the Fates still held an empire over mortals; but an all wise and omnipotent God is here brought under the dominion both of the Fates and of mortals too.

It was such strange absurdities in the Arminian system that pressed upon me and drove me to the stronghold of the sovereignty of God, "who doeth according to his will, in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, whose hand none can stay, or say unto him, what doest thou?" Dan. 4: 35.

Your affectionate son.

## LETTER XIV.

### SUMMARY PROPOSITIONS—CONCLUSION.

DEAR FATHER:—I have endeavored to present in as clear and brief a manner as possible, some of the operations of my mind, upon a few points of doctrine that divide the Church, in reaching the position that I now occupy. Much remains to be said. Subjects of the deepest interest and importance are opened out before me, which I would gladly present in addition to what has already been said; but I must forbear. I have already continued these letters longer than I intended when I commenced. Enough has been said, I trust, to satisfy you that I have acted wisely, at least cautiously, in the change I have made in my ecclesiastical relations. I wish, in conclusion, to sum up what I have written in a few propositions; and would seriously and affectionately urge them upon your attention as you may find leisure and inclination to examine them.

1. **ARMINIANS ARE WITHOUT ANY CONSISTENT AND HARMONIOUS SYSTEM OF DOCTRINE.** It is true that in speaking of the doctrines of those who hold to Ar-

minian sentiments, we are in the habit of using the word *system*, but it is only as a matter of convenience and courtesy. Some of those doctrines may sustain a logical connection with others—such as the doctrine of falling from grace and the denial of divine efficiency in conversion and sanctification—but Arminianism, as a whole, is a coat of many colors, that has been patched and pieced since the days of Pelagius, according to the taste and caprice of the man that wears it.

2. THEIR PRINCIPLES DIRECTLY AND NECESSARILY LEAD TO THE MOST DANGEROUS AND RUINOUS ERROR. It requires not the logic of an Aristotle or a Bacon to follow them out to their legitimate consequences. He that runs may read them, though a way-faring man and a fool in worldly knowledge, if he has only a few correct principles to guide him, and will open his eyes to the light. It is painful to witness the ignorance and stupidity of men—their malignity and opposition to the truth—who have learned to misrepresent, caricature, and abuse Calvinism, with such bitterness of feeling, till, like a rattlesnake in dog-days, they have become blinded by the poison of their own minds. It requires but half an eye to see, that the view of the fall of man and the relation we sustain to Adam, as found in the standards of the Methodist Church, vitiate the whole gospel scheme; that the principles growing out of

the view there presented, lead to fundamental error with regard to the nature of virtue and vice, and destroy all human accountability; that the nature of the remedy found in the same standards necessarily destroys all motive to intelligent action and labor upon the part of the Church in the great work before her; holds out no encouragement to prayer; degrades the character of God to that of a debtor and apologist for injuries he has done to the creature; and exalts the creature to heaven by a kind of semi-omnipotence of his own. Such consequences as these, I say, are *dangerous and ruinous*. They have already been noticed in connection with others, but the half has not been told.

3. THERE IS NO WAY IN WHICH THOSE WHO REJECT THE DOCTRINES OF THE CALVINISTIC SYSTEM CAN ESCAPE THE DIFFICULTIES AND ABSURDITIES OF ARMINIANISM. Starting with the Calvinistic doctrine of human depravity, as Methodist and Cumberland Presbyterians are compelled to do, in form, if not in fact, there is no point from which we can diverge from the Calvinistic route, if we continue it a single step, until we get beyond the doctrine of imputation—until we have found our way through the mountain pass of theology. Having got thus far, we are compelled to adopt views of the nature of the atonement and the moral condition of man, wholly incompatible with every principle of Ar-

minianism. Moreover, the man who can subscribe to the Calvinistic doctrine of imputation cannot, with the least show of consistency, urge a single objection to any of the other parts of that system—after swallowing and digesting a camel, it is then too late to begin to strain at gnats—having got thus far, there is no other alternative but to continue on, if we wish to escape the perils of *the wilderness*; for every difficulty in Calvinism may be resolved into this one doctrine. But if a man's unbelief and prejudices are such that he cannot subscribe to the doctrine of imputation, he must be content with following upon the heels of Arminianism, and adopting all its errors and absurdities; or crowd off into the numberless by-paths that lead the deluded traveler into the ulterior and darker regions of Pelagianism; or he must wander like the Arab of the desert, who pitches his tent as suits his convenience, lives upon his camel's back, and clothes himself with the spoils of the plundered merchant.

4. THE POSITION OF THE CUMBERLAND CHURCH, IN A DOCTRINAL POINT OF VIEW, IS ONE THAT CANNOT LONG BE MAINTAINED. "The middle way," is everywhere the watch cry of her leaders; but where is it? No intelligent answer has yet been given to this question. The world is tired of waiting. It is true the Westminster Confession of Faith has been mutilated and patched by unskillful hands, and

published to the world as containing new and important discoveries in theology—as containing some of the prominent points in the newly discovered middle route. But something more must be done to save the hopes and credit of the Church; she has departed from the most important principles contained in her Confession of Faith; upon the floor of the Assembly, as I have before said, it has been pronounced “a ragged affair,”—a sentiment which I would not repeat, were it not for the fact that the man who uttered it was furnished by the same Assembly with means and countenance to establish a Church paper.

Every development made in the history of her doctrines shows, as I have before said, a tendency to the extremes of Arminianism. In proof of this you have not merely the result of my own observation, but the publications of the Church so far as any have yet been made. I have before me a book entitled, “A Plea for the Cumberland Presbyterian Church”—its author is the lamented relative to whom I referred in my first letter. It is a work of some five hundred pages, and has for one of its leading objects, as stated in the preface, “to answer the inquiries so often made as to what the Cumberland Presbyterians believe, and wherein they differ from others.” Now turn to that part containing an “apology” to the Methodist Church,

and you will see that the only point of difference in theology considered worthy of notice, is with regard "to the perseverance of the Saints." What, then, has become of the Calvinistic doctrines of the fall of man, the imputation of the sin of Adam to his posterity, the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer in justification, and others I need not mention, found in the Cumberland Confession of Faith, as taken verbatim from the Westminster? They have been gradually discarded and given place to the rankest Arminianism, or something worse. The doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints must go too. It is impossible for the man who holds to one or two principles of Arminian *philosophy*, to advocate such a doctrine with any show of consistency, whatever, notwithstanding it may be found upon every page of the sacred volume. The doctrine of "falling from grace" is no where found in the Scriptures, as you yourself are ready to acknowledge. It has been forced upon the Methodist Church by a singular philosophical and practical necessity, and the Cumberland Church must take it also, or abandon her philosophy and practice.

5. THE CALVINISTIC SYSTEM, AS LAID DOWN IN THE STANDARDS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, IS THE ONLY ONE THAT I COULD FIND, CONSISTENT WITH THE WORD OF GOD AND WITH ITSELF. That it is a system, is admitted upon all hands—even by its most bitter

opponents—and that it contains much important, fundamental, and saving truth. In this admission every thing is conceded. Truth is ONE, and indivisible; it can no more be made to unite with error, to form, *a system* harmonious and complete, than oil and water can be made to mingle together their liquid drops. Light has no fellowship with darkness—nor Christ with Belial—nor truth with error.

Here, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter. In all my investigations I have found many creeds, but *one system*—and that is Calvinism—a system, solid and compact as the temple of old, where God displayed his presence and glory, the stones and timbers of which had all been hewed and numbered at the quarry and among the cedars of Lebanon, so that the most inexperienced workmen could fit them together, if the foundation was properly laid—a system which I found, after the most careful examination, to be seamless, woven from top to bottom—a chain, whose golden links unite heaven and earth together, and bind the humble and contrite to the throne of God.

For the present, I will lay down my pen, which I can assure you was taken up with a trembling hand and an aching heart. If I have said anything calculated to give offense to those whom I love, I trust you will extend to me a father's char-



ity, and attribute all to a praiseworthy zeal for those truths which have cost me so many painful struggles and such a sacrifice of friendly feeling.

I am, as ever,

Your affectionate son.

THE END.

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