

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES.
Vol. VIII....No. 3.

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21, 1863.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXVII....No. 3.

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

Predestination.

The following Essay, by the Rev. Isaiah Wallace, was read at the last meeting of the Annapolis County Conference of Baptist Ministers, and is now published by the request of the Conference.

Predestination is a doctrine that is clearly taught in the Scriptures of divine truth. In its usual signification it implies the purpose of Jehovah in reference to the redemption of man.

When any great work is about to be entered upon, a suitable plan is at first instituted, and as the work progresses due regard is paid to that plan. No skilful architect would attempt the erection of a magnificent superstructure without having previously devised a judicious design or plan. Having carefully prepared his design, as he proceeds with the contemplated structure he strictly adheres to its directions: so in the glorious work of man's redemption, a purpose characterized by infinite wisdom was formed in the divine mind even before the foundation of the world, and the declarations of Scripture in reference to the doctrine of predestination indicate that the salvation accomplished by Christ and applied by the Spirit, is but the development of that original purpose.

The Scripture testimony shews most plainly that this purpose has reference to the *Salvation* itself—"Who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his purpose and grace." 1 Tim. i. 9. "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began," Titus i. 2.

It is also clear that the divine purpose has reference to the *Saviour*—"According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord," Eph. iii. 11. "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world," 1 Peter i. 20. "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," Rev. xiii. 8.

It is no less apparent that God's purpose includes the *saved*. "To them who are the called according to his purpose; for whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called," Rom. viii. 28-30. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children," Eph. i. 4-6.

The Bible testimony further shews that the divine purpose comprehends the *means*.—"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth," 2 Thes. ii. 13. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, 1 Peter i. 2.

We perceive also that the divine purpose has reference to the *end*. "In whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son," Rom. viii. 29. According as he hath chosen us—that we should be holy and without blame before him in love," Eph. i. 4. "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," Mat. xxv. 34.

These quotations present before the mind the nature of the doctrine of predestination. From these we perceive that the purpose of Jehovah to save sinners was formed "from the beginning." Those to whom the doctrine now under consideration and its kindred doctrines are obnoxious, argue that men are chosen to salvation subsequent to their conversion, and that God's purpose to save them is not formed until they have embraced the gospel. From the above passages however it is most apparent that God graciously designed "from the beginning," even "from before the foundation of the world," to save rebellious men and the accomplishment of that design is realized in the repentance and faith of every soul that turns to Him.

It is also evident from the above quotations that *sovereignty* characterizes the divine purpose to save sinners. It has been alleged that God's choice of His people was condi-

tional upon their believing the gospel and bringing forth the fruits of righteousness. Such a conclusion however is opposed to the declarations of Scripture. It would make salvation to be dependent upon works, whereas it is distinctly stated that God "hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his purpose and grace." "It is not of works lest any man should boast." In the formation of the purpose to save a people for his glory, Jehovah, according to the dictates of infinite wisdom and as a righteous sovereign, predestined to save those whom it pleased him.

From an examination of the passages above quoted, it will be seen that the purpose of the Most High in reference to those whom he designs to save is *immutable*.

Men may form purposes with regard to future conduct that appear judicious; but circumstances may transpire over which they have no control, that renders a change expedient. This however cannot be the case with the Omnipotent One. No event can possibly take place for which he is not prepared, or that will cause a change in the original purpose necessary. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world," Acts xv. 18. It is not unfrequently the case that the best laid schemes are changed for want of ability to execute them. This can never be the case however with the Almighty. To intimate such a thing would be blasphemy. In his power as well as his wisdom he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

Many modern theologians tenaciously argue that the divine purpose, with regard to men, must change: that God may predestinate men to eternal life to-day; to-morrow doom them to reprobation; and the day following cherish his original purpose to save them. That, to-day our name may be recorded in the Lamb's book of life; to-morrow be erased, and the day following be restored. Such views of the divine mind are irreverent and preposterous: they are opposed to the considerations already adduced with regard to the eternity of the divine decrees, and also to those passages that so strongly prove their immutability. Hear the statements of Paul: "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." A celebrated writer in remarking on this passage justly observes that "a chain stretches from eternity to eternity, not one link of which can be broken." "Whom he did predestinate, them he also glorified."—This is the uniform testimony of Scripture in reference to God's elect.

The question has been asked with regard to the finally impenitent:—"Is their reprobation predestined?" Those who believe the Scriptures afford an affirmative answer to this question quote such passages as the following:—"The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil," Prov. xvi. 4. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh: 'even for this same purpose have I raised thee up that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout the earth.' Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?" Rom. ix. 15, 16, 17, 18, 21. "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offence even to them which stumble at the word being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed," 1 Peter ii. 8. For there are certain men crept in unawares who were before of old ordained to this condemnation," Jude 4. Notwithstanding these quotations seem to favor an affirmative reply to the above inquiry, the general tenor of the Scriptures leads us to the conclusion that the salvation of believers is ascribable alone to God's eternal, immutable, sovereign purpose to save them, the destruction of the wicked is attributable to their fatal perseverance in impenitency.

Although the doctrine of predestination is so prominently set forth in the Scriptures and develops so strikingly the attributes of the

Divine Being, there are found even among the professed disciples of Jesus, many who wickedly urge objections against it.

Some urge that if men are predestinated to eternal life, why use the means of grace? why preach the gospel? why call sinners to repentance? We reply to such objectors that the means employed in winning souls to Christ are a part of the gracious scheme; God has just as certainly purposed the means or agency that will prove effectual in leading sinners to Christ as he has purposed their salvation. This is apparent from the above quotations. From them it will be seen that Jehovah has predestinated that those will be saved and those only who "believe the truth;" who *obey the commands*; who are *sanctified by the Spirit*; and who receive the *sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*.

Others contend that this doctrine is calculated to promote licentiousness. They allege that if God has predestinated from all eternity to save a part of the human family, the enjoyment of the felicities of Heaven is secured to them irrespective of their holiness. Were these objectors carefully to study the Bible testimony on the subject, they might learn that God has predestinated that His people should be "conformed to the image of his Son;" and has chosen them that they might be "holy and without blame before him in love." None then give evidence that they have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world but those who yield the fruits of righteousness. While therefore sinners repent and believe in Jesus, and believers abound in the work of the Lord, there is seen a development of the divine "purpose and grace."

Notwithstanding there may exist in some minds prejudice against this doctrine, we believe its moral tendency is highly salutary. Not only does it humble the pride of man, exalt the grace of God and afford peculiar consolation to Christians, but it also gives the greatest encouragement to those who labor in the vineyard of the Lord.

The heralds of the Cross as they go forth in their Saviour's name are prompted to faithfulness by the assurance that God has purposed to save, through the foolishness of preaching, all that believe. In every effort to make known the Gospel, christian laborers are animated by the fact that their divine Master will not suffer His word to return to Him void, but will cause it to accomplish that which He pleases and to prosper in the thing whereto He has sent it, Isaiah lv. 11.

The Copernican System Defective.

The following article from the pen of the Rev. W. L. Loomis, pastor of the Baptist Church at Martindale Depot, New York, appeared first in a late number of the *Scientific American*. It will open up some interesting enquiries for the mathematician and astronomer.

THE REVOLUTIONS OF THE STARS—AN ERROR DETECTED.—In the appearance of nature the times of the revolutions of the stars are so graduated to each other that, when one appears to set out from a given point in its diurnal and annual revolutions, the time of the apparent diurnal star will bring it to the same absolute point which is occupied by the apparent yearly star at the close of the sidereal year. The times of the apparent revolutions of the stars, as given in the accepted system of astronomy, involve the absurdity of a star being in two different places, a little more than one-fourth of the circle of the heavens distant from each other, at the same instant of time. From this it is certain that the astronomers' times of the apparent revolutions of the stars have no foundation in truth. Herschel says the time of an apparent diurnal revolution of the stars is 23 hours, 56 minutes, 4.09 seconds; and the time of the apparent yearly revolution of the stars is, in solar time, 365 days, 6 hours, 9 minutes, 9.6 seconds, which is equal to the time of the sidereal year. The proportion that these times bear to each other is that, in the time in which a star will make one apparent yearly revolution, it will also make, in appearance, 366 diurnal revolutions and an arc of 92°+. The result which follows from this should be that, if a star sets out from a given

point in its apparent diurnal and yearly revolutions, at the close of the sidereal year, the apparent diurnal star will have reached a point 92°+ beyond the point at which the apparent annual star finishes its yearly revolution. To illustrate this, take, for example, the point where the circle of the ecliptic intersects the circle of the celestial equator; and suppose a star to set out in its diurnal course, appearing to move in the plane and circle of the celestial equator, and at the same instant to set out in its yearly course, appearing to move in the place of the ecliptic. Because the star is said to make an apparent diurnal revolution in 23 hours, 56 minutes, 4.09 seconds, at the close of 365 solar days, 6 hours, 9.6 seconds, the apparent diurnal star will have finished 366 revolutions and an arc of 92°+, and the apparent place of the star in consequence of its diurnal motion will be advanced in right ascension 92°+ from the point at which the star completes its yearly revolution in the plane of the ecliptic. Hence from the accepted star time it is demonstrated that a star can be in two different places at the same moment; the intervening distance being a little more than one-fourth of the circle of the heavens! The absurdity of the demonstration is obviously a most serious interference with the astronomers' claim that the science of which they are the masters "is founded on laws which are immutable."

A Deceived Heart.

In a busy street of one of our cities, it is said there is a gold-lettered sign, in a conspicuous position, upon which may be read this remarkable advertisement:—"Black and bruised eyes painted to imitate the healthy portions of the face." This is very suggestive, especially in its bearings upon the morals of that city. Yet the agency, seemingly so novel, is really at work, though perhaps not so openly, in every community, from the largest city to the smallest hamlet in the land. The deceiver is everywhere. He employs a great variety of subordinate agencies, and carries on a great many branches of business. But his object is ever essentially the same. It is to make the worse appear the better, the false the true, the broad road to destruction the narrow pathway to life. He paints a lie, and persuades the deceived heart that it is the truth. He masts his batteries of death with arbors of beautiful overhanging flowers, and then entices his victims to march up to their inviting shade. He gives to the black and bruised eye of moral deformity and shame an appearance not its own, and so deceives its owner with the idea that he may pass himself off as respectable.

But the man who is under the influence of such an agent is in a deplorable condition. "A deceitful heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Here is the fruitful source of all error, all wanderings, all apostasy from God. The heart once deceived, itself perverts the truth, "turns the grace of God into lasciviousness," and makes life itself a practical lie. It looks upon the mock dial plate of moral probation, and believes its hands mark the true time. It reads the guideboard which, though with the word *Heaven* emblazoned on it, points downward, and fancies that, in pursuing the downward road, its steps are toward the heaven that is upward.

But we need no argument to prove that a heart, thus deceived, is not the less on the way to ruin. He who follows its dictates, receives the painted lie only to be led on to disaster. He sits down in the cool shade of the masked battery only to be shot; he yields to the influence of the false eye of guilt and shame, only to fall a victim to guilt and shame. And it does not render the deception any the less sad to know that the ruin was as unsuspected as the delusion that leads to it. Nor does it mitigate the terribleness of the ruin. On the contrary, it enhances it, especially because it comes instead of expected blessedness, and thus involves the bitterest disappointment in addition to the ruin itself.

But is there no way to avoid or escape a deception so ruinous? Clearly, there is. If it be true that it is "a deceived heart" that leads astray to their destruction, it is manifestly a dictate of reason as well as of Scrip-